

Missionaries of Africa

White
Fathers



Would you dare an encounter with Africans “in the style of Jesus”?

A journey to Africa... A few years service... A lifetime commitment...

The Missionaries of Africa, sons and daughters of Lavigerie, are present and active in 25 countries of Africa, as well as in the African World outside the continent.

Since 150 years, their aim is to commit themselves by words and actions in the “style of Jesus”. Their motivation is to expand the action of God in the history of humankind, as we understand it when reading the Bible and the Gospels. At present, there are more than 500 young people between the ages of 20 and 35 who are in formation in our Missionary Society.

Are you interested? Curious? We offer you a preparation before joining those who dare an encounter with Africans in “the style of Jesus”.

For more information, you can contact Father Serge St-Arneault:

E-mail: sergestarno@gmail.com

Telephone: (1) 514 849 1167 # 217

or contact the Missionaries whose addresses are listed on the last page of this News Letter.



The Missionaries of Africa on the Internet Do you know these Websites of the White Fathers?

Canadian Website: Montreal

www.mafr.net

American Website: Washington

www.missionariesofafrica.org

Mexican Website: Guadalajara

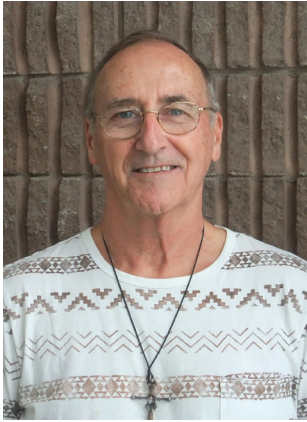
www.misionerosdeafrica.org.mx

International Website: Rome

www.mafrome.org

And also our Websites in Spain, France, Great-Britain, Belgium, Italy, Burkina-Faso...

Lent, a time of grace for all of us



We have started our annual retreat before Easter. The daily readings of the Eucharist affect us more deeply, since they reach our lives. They invite us to look back at our life style and to question ourselves again: Am I really living the dreams of my youth, those which energized me enough to face life, to add my grain of salt in the building of a better world, a more human and more Christian one? Am I really at my place? Do I use all the gifts God has given me for his service or the service of the community where I live? Have I not become too individualistic, closed in on myself? Have I lost my missionary zeal, telling myself that I have done enough and that from now on I leave the place to others?

Do I still believe that Jesus can work through me if I allow him to use my feet to reach those who are suffering and marginalised; to use my hands to bless and encourage those who need to be taken care of, to use my ears to listen to the cries and the joys of those who cannot be heard? Am I aware that Jesus can use my eyes to look with tenderness at the sisters and the brothers close to me? Am I aware that my mouth can repeat the words of consolation and compassion of Jesus who knew how to rekindle hope in the heart of people who had lost it? Many similar questions challenge us in this time of meditation.

Lent is really a time of grace, since I am invited to remove from my rucksack what prevents me from walking with my head up and keeping only what can help me to be fully alive and be a giver of life to my neighbours. What is certain is that the more I live the style of Jesus, the more my life is unified, and the more joy, peace and love become the usual residents in my heart...

In this letter, you will find, among other things, the life experience of a lay person, who became familiar with the charism of the Missionaries of Africa, when as a young man he was nourished by the spirituality centered on the person of Jesus to come into contact with men and women from every parts of the world, and especially with those coming from the African world. For more than thirty years, he has involved himself wholeheartedly to this mission.

You will also be invited to share in a project from an underprivileged corner of Africa. Until now, your involvement has allowed us to work miracles in the lives of people who are grateful to you. Let us keep this evangelical spirit of sharing.

While concluding, may God accompany you in your preparation for the feast of Easter so that we may be able to shout with joy and love on the day of the Resurrection: "Jesus has risen! Alleluia! Jesus has vanquished death! Alleluia! Jesus is alive! Alleluia!"

Real Doucet, M.Afr.

Life journey of a lay missionary

I was born in Jonquiere, Saguenay. I am the son of Remi, the father of Sebastien and Nicolas. And I am a missionary, following Christ. My name is Jean-François Bégin.

I am the eldest of a family of four children. From the age of 11, because of the premature death of my father, heavy responsibilities were given to me. This tragic event has deeply touched my family, my social and professional life. All along my adult life, the choices in which I had to be involved have always been linked with responsibilities leading me to take care of people, to look after their wellbeing, to put more colour and joy in their lives.

Social involvement

At the University of Montreal, while earning my studies in physical education, I had to animate groups of elderly people on loss of independence, to make them move and make them more active. Later on, in the middle of my studies, I went through a significant experience working among heavily handicapped persons so as to fully integrate them to the society by removing them from their institutional environment. During three years, I took care of them in their homes; therefore I developed links of friendship that developed in me the ardent desire to walk along with them and the passion to get to know people of different horizons, in search of a meaning to my life.

In 1988, after my studies, I decided to go to Europe and live an adventure with my rucksack and my dreams. Then I met the living God. It had been a long time since we had seen each other! On the way back from this outstanding experience of four



Jean-François Bégin.

months, I had a strong desire to discover the African continent.

Without knowing how, I pursued my way in search of people who could help me in fulfilling my dream. I met the Missionaries of Africa who convinced me that I should not rush without first understanding the important meaning of this project. I listened to them and I made the choice to make a vocational discernment as an associated lay member, while obtaining a certificate in Missiology from St Paul University, in Ottawa.

Fulfilling my dream

I shared the life of the community, praying with them and adopting their way of life. The welcome and the warmth that I found there allowed me to slow down for a moment. There, I could recharge myself. My course had finally led me to the well. So much time spent in prayer and reflection on the way to dedicate my life. After that time of discernment, I felt the call to set off again on an adventure

with the Missionaries of Africa and fulfill my dream. Suddenly, it dawned on me that I was going to be 12,000 kilometers away from home!!! I would be in Africa, in Uganda for a period of three years. There, reality will be different. And my life would never be the same again.

Like so many before me, I learned to get to know the Africans through their language; their customs, their family, the bush, the city... When I arrived in Kampala, I found myself in a Youth Centre called SHARING where I would be living and working for the next three years. Slowly, I settled down and found my place in this project. Its mission is to fight against poverty and human degradation. My work with the youth in the slums brought me great joys, and equally some challenges which to my mind were greater than nature. The life of these kids seemed to me miserable and without solution.

Through sports and daily life at the Sharing Community Centre, I became their big brother while becoming little by little a social worker. I discovered these children and I understood that when we show some interest in a human being, deprived and without resource, when we detect some talents and gifts, and when we value them by making them responsible, they find hope, the courage to go forward and the joy of living. It is a great lesson of life that I learnt with these children from the slums of Kampala, since I was a privileged witness of the emancipation of the youth coming back to life. I am filled with gratefulness for these precious memories from Africa written in my flesh.

Between my involvements toward these kids and the daily routine, I got to



Kirsten and Jean-François's wedding.

know the Missionaries of Africa (Fathers and Brothers) coming from the four corners of the world, who would give back dignity and confidence to so many. I have seen them working in the fields of health, building schools for the orphans, some of them living in deprived areas among the excluded... Those I have known are people filled with faith and courage. I shared their table, taking part in the challenges of missionary life. I shared with many of them, my joys, my sorrows, my difficulties, and also the privileges of missionary life. As the disciples of Christ had been sent and came back filled with joy, it is in Uganda that I understood the deep meaning of communion: that I am also a disciple following Christ.

A few weeks before leaving Uganda, I met a German volunteer working far in the bush as a nurse. As she was coming to town to buy what she needed, she would come to greet a German White Father with whom I shared community life. We got to know each other and a sweet complicity settled between us. At that time, I was not ready to be involved in such a relationship. I needed to be alone with myself and God. After



Jean-François with a young girl in Uganda.

three years of missionary life, I wished to go back home, and discern what the Lord expected of me...

My missionary life in Canada

Coming back from Africa in 1993, I knew that my African experience was not going to stop abruptly. I still had too many things to share with the Africans. The Missionaries of Africa suggested working with them in their program of missionary awareness in the schools and universities. Also I gradually involved myself with the intercommunity team of missionary training. Meanwhile, I started a sustained correspondence with the beautiful German girl that I had met in Africa...

We got married in 1994 in Germany by Father Hans Pfeiffer, with whom I had lived for a period of three years in Uganda.

During those years spent as a trainer and a facilitator, I met several young people interested by Africa and its reality. Together with missionaries of different religious communities, we gathered many students and young workers and we shared our dreams and their dreams of Africa and adventure. Some of them started a period of

discernment for some sort of involvement. Some of them left for the missions. That time was a period of grace in my life.

I often saw myself with my dreams and my yearnings before reaching Uganda.

At the Afrika Centre

Later on, I was offered to work at the Afrika Centre, started by the Missionaries of Africa in 1988. With an important increase of Africans living in Canada, the White Fathers became aware of the many difficulties concerning the integration and the social insertion of these newly arrived in a foreign country. This Centre became in the meantime a sort of home for the Africans in Montreal as well as for any other person interested by the African world.

Refugees, future managers, participants at different social networks, youths involved in the international solidarity or committed Christians, many come to the Centre to be accompanied and directed toward different human resources answering their needs and their yearnings. Many groups come here to meet (such as small Christian groups, cultural groups, artists, associations, etc.) What is striking with these people is that



The family of Jean-François, with Sébastien and Nicolas, his children, and Kirsten, his spouse.



Farewell party of Jean-François with the Missionaries of Africa, Montreal in December 2019

their presence at the Centre allows us to discover what is being lived in the African communities and to know much better those involved with them. In this way, we can work to open for them the doors of different areas of activities in the life of Montreal and the Province.

Over the years, with the experience and all the projects and activities that we were able to accomplish through the Centre or through the schools or the public space, I understood that my missionary task was to welcome unconditionally those coming to us for different reasons, and to follow them attentively and with respect. While listening to the needs of the persons, it always hides a real search to find a place in the society. Whatever their dream and their desire, my wish has always been to shed light on their inner beauty, their talents, and their life experiences.

Today, in the light of my life journey and everything that I have learnt from the migrants and the refugees, the youth in the slums in Africa, the handicapped persons, the aged in their loss of independence, I have acquired the certainty that all these

human beings whoever they may be, are filled with vitality and dynamism. To help them face the challenges that they meet, to be able to contribute to their well-being, so that they may find their dignity in the natural order of things, it is enough to be interested in what they are while putting into practice the most beautiful virtues, being high appreciation and acknowledgement.

I would not know how to express all my gratitude to God for having put all along my way, significant persons. The Missionaries of Africa are included. I remember my first encounters in 1989 with these Fathers as I was searching for a meaning in my life... Imagine! I just wanted to leave for a few months. More than 30 years later, I feel privileged to have been at the heart of the African world and my missionary life with the great family of Lavigerie.

Today, I feel called for a pause and a time of renewal so that I may be able to listen to God, following Jesus who will invite me to set off again in my journey with him, to open up new horizons.

Jean-François Bégin
jfbegin64@gmail.com

An inspiring profession of Faith

The profession of faith of Dom Helder Camara has inspired the life of our witness, Jean-François Bégin. Mgr. Camara, who died in 1999, was the Catholic Brazilian Bishop known for his fight against poverty in his Diocese and in the world. The preparation for his canonization is underway.

I believe in God, father and mother of all human beings to whom he has entrusted the earth.

I believe in men and women of peace who are coming to encourage us and to cure us, to deliver us from any powers, and to proclaim the peace of God with humanity.

I believe in the Spirit of God working in every man and every woman of good will.

I believe that God, at the end, will break the powers of evil in us and in every human being.

I believe that man and woman will live in the life of God for ever.

I do not believe in the right of the strongest, in the language of the arms, in the power of the mighty.

I want to believe in human rights, in the open hand, in the power of the nonviolent.

I do not believe in race and riches, in privileges and established order.

I want to believe that all human beings are humans and that order through strength and injustice is a disorder.

I will not believe that I do not have to care of what is happening far from here.

I want to believe that the whole world is my home, and that all can harvest what they have sown.

I will not believe that I will be able to fight elsewhere the oppression that I tolerate here.

I want to believe that the right is one, here and there, and that I am not free as long as one human being is still a slave.

I will not believe that war and hunger are inevitable and that peace is inaccessible.

I want to believe in action being modest, in love with bare hands and in peace on earth.

I do not believe that any trouble is useless.

I will not believe that the dream of a human being will remain just a dream, and that death will be the end.

But I dare believe, always and nevertheless, in the new man and the new woman.

I dare believe in God's dream itself: a new heaven, a new earth where justice and peace will live.

Jean-François Bégin

Project 58: Centre New Hope, Centre Akamuri in Burundi

Project 58, from Letter to our Friends of March 2020, will be presented in two parts: a request to help the Centre New Hope and a request to help the Centre Akamuri. Father Ludwig Peschen, a Missionary of Africa, sends us this request:

Centre New Hope



A young orphan with AIDS, helped by the Centre New Hope.

Dear friends,

The Centre New Hope was created in 1990 for the diocese of Bujumbura (Burundi) with the financial help of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers). The Centre is involved in tracking down, treating and following persons having contacted HIV/AIDS.

I was given the responsibility of the Centre. In 1993, the Bishop at that time, Mgr. S. Ntamwana, had asked me to do something about the ever increasing number of sick people with HIV/AIDS, who came regularly to the door of the bishop's House. This new situation was difficult to manage. There was no

remedy against this form of illness and the diagnosis VHS was simply a death sentence. A lot has changed since then. At the beginning we have organised some home visitation for the patients who hesitated to present themselves, in order to relieve their suffering. Initially, some financial help were necessary, at least for having something to eat. Prevention was the only thing that was possible at that time.

Today, 26 years later, more than 2,534 patients are registered to receive treatments and help, and more than 2,962 orphans and children, in a varied form of urgency can receive some help. Because of this impressive number of patients to be taken care of at the Centre New Hope, we dare to come back to you for some financial help.

In the name of all the patients and the staff of New Hope, I wish to thank you for your interest and particularly for your generosity. Thank you for what you can do.



A nurse distributing medicine to an AIDS patient.

Centre Akamuri

I met a group of nearly 25 children and adults last year. They had one thing in common: they lived with a form of

When I visited them, Jules came to give a speech, while many thought that he was unable to do so. His words were very moving: because he revealed that most of them, who had gone to school



Father Ludwig Peschen with a group of children suffering from a mental or physical handicap.

handicap, either mental, psychological, or physical; some were suffering of trisomy, others of autism, others of microcephaly, and others of congenital malformations or paralysis. The poorest of the poor were with us.

Since many years, some of them have learnt some important things at the Centre Akamuri. Some can walk now, others eat alone, and others can tell their name and the one of their parents; the most advanced can even present themselves in front of a group.

previously, now lived somewhere in the alleys of the slums of Bujumbura. Moreover he made a simple and coherent report about their actual situation. They had been rejected out at a certain time and nobody cared for them. In order to eat, they had to beg or steal some food. He concluded thus: “Patiri (Father), we need an Imuhira iwacu” (We need a house called a home).

The urgent and honest call of this handicapped young man did not leave us at peace. Something had to be done so that

these children and young adults could find a decent home.

At our Centre New Hope, we already had the idea to create for these children and adults some lodgings, in which they could live together as a family. There was already a site at Maramvya, some 25 km north of Bujumbura, in a rural environment. We had hoped that over there, it would be easier for these young people to settle down and to be accepted. We built a house for them on a small plot. The financial support came from many sources and even some neighbours brought us some rice and bags of sweet potatoes. Thus these young adults started a new life. They even helped in building their new home which was quickly called "Imuhira iwacu" (Our house is our home).

The people understood very quickly that they were new neighbours and they did not have to be afraid. We live harmoniously with them. Meanwhile, our



Father Ludwig Peschen helping children to make water channels in their paddy field.



Young and not so young from the Centre Akamuri smiling at the camera.

initial little house became a modest centre. Regularly, mothers bring handicapped children and they ask us to take care of them.

So far, with the help of many friends in Europe and here on the spot, we have succeeded in buying a plot 90 meters long. What joy, what pride, especially for these young people: here, they will be able to prove that they have the strength and the power to work like the others, and that gives them a true dignity. They are like the others!

We wish to express our thanks to all those who have contributed in one way or another. However, we allow ourselves to ask again for your help. Can we still hope for your help, which is always necessary and indispensable? It will enable us to assure a better future for this work! Many thanks!

Ludwig Peschen, M.Afr.

Roquetas de Mar - Spain: Our Mission Post

Our Mexican confrere Oscar Arturo Garcia Padilla was sent on a mission in the city of Roquetas de Mar, in Spain. With a team of Missionaries of Africa, he is working with African migrants. Fully alive with his faith in Jesus-Christ, and inspired by the charism of our Missionary Society, he adapts himself to all so as to help each one to grow in human dignity. He tells us about his missionary experience.

The phenomenon of migration

The phenomenon of migration have been shaped by it throughout history. Today, as we can see around us, this phenomenon has polarized certain segments of the population. The poor understanding of the problem of migration coupled with the poor account of the facts makes the answers given equally poor. Neither the policies that invest incredible amounts of money in strengthening borders nor the media help us to see, with serene and positive eyes, the arrival of new and different people to these lands. Fear and suspicion seem to have the upper hand for the time being; the challenge to pass from hostility to hospitality remains on the table.

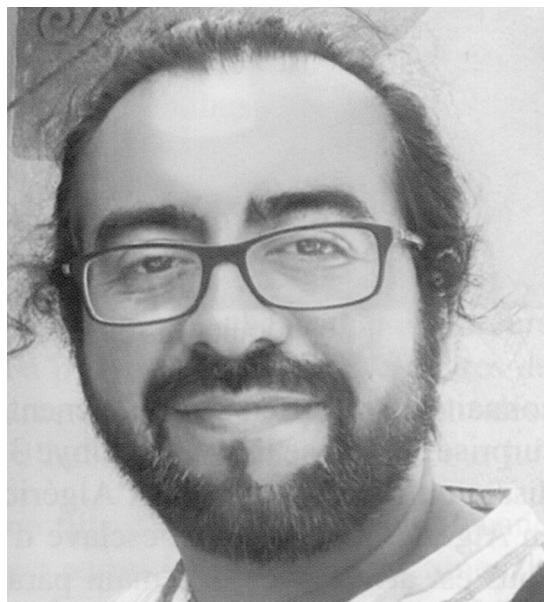
People move, in general, because they are looking for a better life. The desire for a more dignified life for themselves and those they love is the basis of the impulse to leave their own land in search of better opportunities elsewhere. Generally, this desire arises because the conditions for a dignified life cannot be found in their own countries.

Armed conflicts, the expropriation of natural and mineral resources, situations of violence, climatic changes and economic inequality have a decisive influence on the desire to risk their own life trying to reach other lands where it is perceived that «milk and honey» flow freely.

These migrations have consequences both in countries or areas of emigration and immigration and in both cases can have both positive and negative effects.

For emigration (leaving the country), it could have some positive consequences that go from the alleviation of some overpopulation problems, the reduction of pressure on resources to the investment of remittances sent by emigrants. But, at the same time, on the negative consequences, these situations lead to multiple problems in families ranging from the aging of the population, the departure of young people with the strength to work to decreasing public income (due to emigration of working people).

For immigration (coming into a country), it can mean the rejuvenation of the population and increasing cultural diversity so that the country begins to experience new cultural manifestations among many other positive consequences. On the negative side, imbalances may arise in terms of structure by



Father Oscar Padilla, Missionary of Africa.

age and sex; a greater political, linguistic and religious diversity arises, forming completely segregated and marginalized groups; immigrants often accept lower wages than the local population and this creates conflict, plus increased pressure on the need for more services, especially care and education.

The reason for our being here in Roquetas de Mar

For 15 years now, the Missionaries of Africa have been working in ‘Roquetas de Mar,’ in the Diocese of Almeria, Spain. At the moment we are three confreres and one of our M. AFR. students who continue this service with Africans in Roquetas de Mar. At the request of the local church our M. AFR. Society is committed to its mission of working with African migrants.

Obviously, we are not the only ones who work in the world of migration in Roquetas. The service that we as Missionaries of Africa, give is like a drop in the water when we take into account the immensity of the challenge that migration entails. In several areas such as the daily running of our «Centro Intercultural Afrika», Urban Youth Camps, Catechumenate for African immigrants, Migrants Day celebration), we are networking with other laypeople, lay associations and religious communities in order to give a better service.

Our mission in the neighbourhood

We live in a neighbourhood that, despite its bad reputation in the rest of the city, is a sympathetic, lively, colourful and multicultural place. Here you will find poverty, prostitution, the buying and selling of a variety of small goods and all different kinds of things, even drugs, but equally you will find solidarity. Here you have a taste of Africa in this city that is renowned throughout

Spain for its tourism. This neighbourhood where we live is also the place where newcomers from Africa are often received by people from their own countries, who house them, feed, and help them to make the first steps in this new country, even to find a small job in agriculture. And, since we are here, they can even find us as well.

To welcome and accompany them seems the best way to describe our mission in Roquetas de Mar. These two attitudes come together in a concrete way, on the one hand through the social dimension of our presence (Centro Intercultural Africa and all its social services), and on the other through what we might call a specifically religious dimension (Catechumenate for African immigrants in several parishes around our area).

Mission experiences in Africa that have transformed us into the men we are today, can be a help in our ministry of compassion required in these circumstances. However, they can also be the reason for our difficulties in adapting our way of serving these very men and women who are outside their usual environment. They live in a social context that does not look positively on them; living in groups but far away from their own families; alone and with little capacity to find a suitable partner. They live with the pain of knowing that the «milk and honey» that they sought can be seen and almost touched, but that it does not belong to them yet. They are strong and resilient people.

Thus it is that our mission continues in this coastal town of southern Spain that lies just across from the African continent. It is the same mission whose call we accepted in our youth to announce the Good News”

Oscar Padilla, M.Afr.

In all simplicity... to help us

Parents, benefactors and friends

If you wish to help the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers),

- * Donation for a specific project (see page 9)
- * Donation for the works of the White Fathers, in general
- * Life annuity investments
- * Requests and legacies
- * Bursaries for Missionary of Africa candidates
- * Gift of publicly traded securities

You can use page 15 of this letter to our friends, fill it according to your intentions, cut it out and send it with the return envelope to one of our addresses on the last page.

You can equally go to our Website (www.mafr.net) to make a safe online donation.

You can also go and meet a missionary at one of our houses.

Thank you for keeping Africa in mind

The policy of the Missionaries of Africa concerning the projects published in the Letter to our friends:

- 1- All the projects published in the *Letter to our friends* are exclusively for Africa
- 2- The whole amount received is sent to Africa
- 3- Under the section “Acknowledgment” in the Letter to our friends, the beneficiaries inform the readers about the progress or the completion of the project
- 4- It is essential to have a Missionary of Africa (White Father) as a respondent.

Proverb

Even if a piece of wood stayed in the water for a long time, it would never become a caiman.

Meaning

Human nature cannot be changed.





(Cut here and insert in the return envelope with your donation)

I wish to help the Missionaries of Africa

(For an **ONLINE DONATION**: www.mafr.net > Online Donation)

Donation\$ for the Missionaries of Africa.

Donation\$ for Project No 58 (see page 9)

For a donation of \$10 or more, you will receive a receipt for tax purposes.

Other ways of helping the Mission:

• Life annuity investments

- *I you are 60 or over, you can put your money into the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) Life annuity investment. This annuity is guaranteed for life and offers a varying rate according to the life expectancy.*
- *You will receive a tax receipt for at least 20% of the sum paid. Only a small part of the payments you receive could be liable for tax.*

• Bequest and legacies

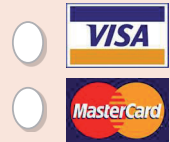
- *“Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend, and do not let it rust under a stone and be lost. .” (Si. 29:10)*

• Bursaries for our 500 Missionary of Africa candidates

- *One-year scholarship: \$ 1,700*
- *Three-year scholarship: \$ 5,000*

I enclose a cheque payable to the Missionaries of Africa

I prefer to pay by credit card (tick which card)



Card number:.....your CVV.....

Expiry:Signature:.....

• Gift of publicly traded securities

- *You will receive a charitable donation receipt.*

N.B.: *If you do not receive this newsletter “Letter to our friends”, on request it will be sent to you free of charge, once a year, as well as a calendar.*

Postal address:.....

.....

Email:.....

Telephone:.....

Thank you!

1640 Saint-Hubert St., Montreal QC H2L 3Z3
Telephone: 514-849-1167 extension 111

“Keep Africa in mind!”
<http://www.mafr.net>

Missionaries of Africa Addresses in Canada



QUEBEC

- **Montreal - Provincial House**
1640, St-Hubert
MONTREAL, Quebec
H2L 3Z3
Tel. : (514) 849-1167
(Benefactors: ext. 111)
ams.secr@mafr.org
- **Quebec**
430-2900, Alexandra St
BEAUPORT, Quebec
G1E 7C7
Tél. : 418-666-6058
418-666-6045
418-666-6047
sup.quebec@mafr.net
- **Sherbrooke (Lennoxville)**
100, Du Cardinal-Lavigerie St
SHERBROOKE, Quebec
J1M 0A2
Tel. : (819) 346-4844
sup.sherbrooke@mafr.net
- **Saguenay (Chicoutimi)**
927, Jacques-Cartier St E
CHICOUTIMI, Quebec
G7H 2A3
Tel. : (418) 549-1055 #166
guyla2005@yahoo.ca

ONTARIO

- **Toronto**
56, Indian Road Crescent
TORONTO, Ontario
M6P 2G1
Tel. : (416) 530-1887
mafrtoronto@rogers.com

IN THE WEST

- **Winnipeg**
402-151, Despins St
WINNIPEG, Manitoba
R2H 0L7
Tel. : (204) 237-4098
psorin@resdespins.ca

