Yes, I admit it—I am totally comfortable in Côte-des-Neiges. It’s my ‘hood. So what if my Mile End and Rosemont friends look down on me! I’m a Côte-des-Neiges gal. I’ve lived here for over 12 years and I love it so much that I decided to buy a house and raise my family here. My daughters were conceived here, born here, breastfed here and will grow up here… And I hope they live here for a long time to come.

In Côte-des-Neiges, there’s the top of the hill and the bottom of the hill, separated by the Jewish General Hospital. The top of the hill is frequented by a more edgy crowd, with the Olivieri and Renaud-Bray bookstores, the Exofruit grocery store and the Jean-Brillant market (open 24/7!). At the foot of the hill, where Van Horne Avenue borders Outremont and Town of Mount Royal, places of worship abound in this lively, more working-class part of town.

But I want you to discover (or rediscover) the many places that make Côte-des-Neiges so much more than just a multiethnic neighbourhood. You’ll see that Côte-des-Neiges is a beautiful place!

**SAINT-JOSEPH’S ORATORY OF MOUNT ROYAL**
Ok, ok, I could be more original, but I can’t help talking about the Oratory, Montreal’s mini-Sacré-Coeur. Saint-Joseph’s Oratory was built over a period of 50 years (from 1904 to 1956) and its first chapel was blessed by Frère André himself!

When I pass in front of it, I think of all the times I went in because of an important change in my life. I climbed the Oratory’s steps the day before I married the father of my daughters; and again 42 weeks into my pregnancy to encourage my baby to come into the world, and every time I needed to find an answer to one of my existential questions!

I always tell people who have never visited the Oratory to go on a summer evening, when the sun is setting, to admire the beauty of Montreal’s lights… A dazzling sight!

**JEAN-BRILLANT PARK**
Even though Côte-des-Neiges is known as a multicultural student neighbourhood, it’s also one of the areas where you’ll find the most families. Aside from access to the city’s largest medical institutions, it boasts many parks, pools and recreational facilities. Everything to keep the little ones busy!

Developed in 1966, Jean-Brillant Park is one of my favourite places. Some recent improvements to the park have made it very versatile. The covered stage in the heart of the park is perfect for outdoor concerts and the ideal place for yogis, dancers and neighbourhood athletes. There are several play structures and, of course, in the summer, a paddling pool and water games, which are open for almost 12 weeks.

**THE INTERCULTURAL LIBRARY**
An intercultural library and community centre are housed under one roof, known to locals as “6767.” Converted from an office building, its most striking feature is the full-glass façade overlooking the street. Inaugurated in 2005, the intercultural library offers countless books in an array of languages, including Arabic, Vietnamese, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil and Tagalog. I’ve spent many a happy hour there with my daughters, borrowing books of all kinds, and participating in wonderful family activities such as story time and arts and crafts workshops.
VIETNAMESE PAGODA CHÙA QUAN-ÂM ON COURTRAI STREET
I discovered this Vietnamese pagoda during a neighbourhood tour called “Jane's Walk.” The guide warned us: Courtrai Street, despite its urban layout with an industrial feel, conceals architectural treasures like the Buddhist Temple Chùa Quan-Âm.

In the 1980s, the Quan-Âm Buddhist Society, along with the Vietnamese community, began their spiritual activities in the present-day temple on Courtrai Street. In 2004, a monastery was built beside the temple to house Buddhist monks and meditation sessions.

The most striking feature of this site is the beauty of its garden. I had a chance to visit the pagoda in the spring, when the magnolias were in full bloom. I thought I was in Indochina!

GIBEAU'S ORANGE JULEP RESTAURANT
A favourite summer spot! My daughters can count on it. An outing to the Orange Julep means a late bedtime, drinking super-sweet juice made with ice cream and admiring that big orange ball built in the ‘60s. It's a pretty impressive site, even today!

On weekends, the restaurant’s parking lot is jam-packed with motorcycles and vintage cars. Japanese tourists get off at the Namur metro station to photograph the big orange sphere. The Orange Julep beckons drivers caught in the endless traffic jams on the Metropolitan… If I had to choose an icon for Montreal, this would be it! For everything it represents: kitsch, audacity, colourfulness, location and even the gulls that pester us as we eat at a picnic table!

Of course, I could have also mentioned Saint-Kevin Church, Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery, Plaza Côte-des-Neiges, Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, Kent Park… I could have told you about CDN's many faces, its diversity and its unique charm. For years, I've moved from place to place, from country to country. Now, at last, I can hang up my hat once and for all. I'm a Côte-des-Neiges gal through and through!