



Voice of English-speaking Québec

2019-20 ANNUAL REPORT

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ABOUT VOICE OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUÉBEC

As an active, non-profit organization that currently has over 3300 members, VEQ has played a vital part in the preservation and development of community life for the English-speaking community for over three decades. Currently, VEQ has active partnerships with over 60 community organizations, institutions, and groups in the area.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Voice of English-speaking Québec is an autonomous, non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of a dynamic English-speaking community in the Greater Québec and Chaudière-Appalaches regions and to the promotion of its interests.

GOALS

- Act as a hub of information for the English-speaking Community
- Foster community cohesiveness
- Support the development of the community
- Promote the interests of the community

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The last 13 months have been an eventful time for the Voice of English-speaking Québec. We continue to be very active within our local English-speaking community as we continue to reach out to the French-speaking population to create links and provide opportunities for joint activities. We have provided services to a large demographic, been active in creating new programming, supported community partners with their programs, expanded our regional mandate and been active in lobbying for the needs of English speakers in the Greater Quebec City region. Finally, when COVID hit, we were creative and adjusted what we were doing to provide direct services to members of our community. That is quite a large span of activities. All this was accomplished thanks to the leadership of our Executive Director, Brigitte Wellens and her dedicated staff.

One of the most important changes that took place this year is on a provincial level. VEQ withdrew its membership from the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN), and helped found the Regional Development Network (RDN), a new network that would support regional associations like VEQ. We believe this fundamental change will ensure that English speakers outside of the Greater Montreal Region will have a better opportunity to voice their concerns and develop partnerships that will make a difference to our stakeholders.

Furthermore, we continued to provide important services through our Newcomers Program. This program is recognized by the City and our partners in the French-speaking community as a valuable, effective service that helps support new arrivals to the region. This year, 2019-2020, we provided support to **397** newcomers. **81%** of the people we served were met within the first year following their arrival. **26%** were from another Canadian province, while **74%** were from **48** different countries all across the globe.

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We continue to sit with other community stakeholders at the immigration table and work in partnership with the City by attracting and integrating newcomers to the Greater Quebec City region. We help recent and not so recent members of our community find employment through the Job Bank, and through a partnership with YES Montreal, we facilitate 1-on-1 business coaching sessions. VEQ continues to play an important role in the Greater Quebec City region and is recognized more and more by local stakeholders as a valuable partner in helping our region grow and retain newcomers and their families as we provide cultural activities to the greater population.

Getting community members together to develop and explore their creative side was a huge success this year. We provided various workshops led by local artists, who helped community members explore pottery, Japanese traditional art and crochet to name a few. It was a success but also a bit of a disappointment as we had to cancel our vernissage at QHS at the last minute, as COVID-19 threw a wrench in our plans. It also delayed the launch of our online exhibit.

Every year the VEQ staff is successful in securing funding for events and projects. This year, Fall Fest was a great success bringing together more 45 community groups and over 630 visitors. We also continued to provide valuable services to our seniors through safe transportation to various outings and community events. VEQ also brings the community together with their well-attended social events. If you haven't been to our annual Holiday Happy Hour at the Morrin Centre, or our annual Spring Fest, you are missing out on some fun evenings and opportunities to see some familiar faces and meet some new members from our community.

To conclude, I have enjoyed my year as president of VEQ. Our community's future is in great hands. The VEQ staff is dedicated, helpful and involved. Our community is supportive of one another and VEQ has become an integral part of the English-speaking community's vitality and the Greater Quebec City region's growth.

Sincerely yours,
Warren Thomson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

I cannot start my Executive Director's report without first thanking my team. Their hard work and dedication to the organization, and the community we serve, is without a doubt what makes VEQ so successful. Our achievements in the past year would not have been possible without them. These very important individuals are Alexandra Hartley, Catherine Baboudjian, Dominique Paddock, Francisca Rojek, Jessica Price, Maria Castro, Melissa Wan, Paige Wilson, Ross Bartleman, and Susanna Tang. They make my job easy and I am proud to work alongside them.

Despite ending the year with cancelled or postponed events, and a lot of uncertainty about the future, one thing I am certain of is VEQ has had a positive impact in community members' lives. It has been another very gratifying year, for which we can all be extremely proud. I am honored to be part of it all, and extremely satisfied with VEQ's accomplishments. The year ahead will undoubtedly be transformed, as we find new and innovative ways of reaching community members with our programs and initiatives.

This past year, VEQ opened a satellite office in Shannon. Having that local presence will allow us to better meet the needs of community members in the Northern perimeter of the Greater Quebec City region. VEQ was also responsible for carrying out several projects, ongoing programs, and new initiatives. From the **18** information sessions and activities that we organized for newcomers, to the **50** artist-led workshops that allowed community members of all ages to explore knitting, crochet, watercolour, Japanese calligraphy, sumi painting, origami, weaving, ceramics, and quilting, there was a little something for everyone.

Thanks to the financial support of the Jeffery Hale Foundation, VEQ was able to continue providing free and safe transportation for English-speaking seniors, to a variety of outings throughout the year. The Out and About Program enables English-speaking seniors to keep their independence and reduces social isolation.

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This year, **34** outings were organized, directly benefiting **347** seniors. We also carried out, thanks to funding from Employment and Social Development Canada, a choir project called Local Vocals. A total of **58** practices, and **3** performances were held with an average of **9** participants per practice. VEQ maintained its strong partnership with the Jeffery Hale Community Partners (JHCP) and the Jeffery Hale Community Services (JHCS) and continued to collaborate on valuable programs for the English-speaking community such as the Volunteer Income Tax program and the Take-a-Break Drop in Program.

Most of what we do depends on strong partnerships. The ones we maintain with the region's schools allow us to reach youth, and collaborate on interesting projects that benefit the entire community. From tech workshops for seniors to ceramics workshops, these partnerships are vital. VEQ also remains particularly involved in developing and strengthening partnerships with key organizations in the French-speaking community. Our continued role on the Table régionale de concertation en immigration and the Comité pour le recrutement et la rétention du personnel bilingue of the CIUSSS-CN, are just two examples. A new initiative has VEQ connecting with the local Carrefour jeunesse emploi offices, to help them better serve the needs of English-speaking youth.

These essential partnerships facilitate the establishment of new collaborations between VEQ and organizations in the French-speaking community, and enable us to maximize our ability to continue to provide quality services to English-speakers.

I am extremely grateful to be part of such a wonderful team and I look forward to all that lies ahead in 2020-2021.

THANK YOU to VEQ's Board of Directors for volunteering your time and expertise, and thank you to our partners, funders and supporters!

Sincerely,
Brigitte Wellens

OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

Community events

VEQ has a mandate to organize community events that bring members of the English-speaking community together to network and socialize. Here are the highlights from the events we organized and sponsored in the past year.

Annual General Meeting

- **38th** AGM held on May 30, 2019
- **60** community members attended
- Nomination of **4** new Board Members
- **3** Board Members re-elected for a 2nd term

Fall Fest

- **10th** Annual Fall Fest held on Sept. 21, 2019, at St. Vincent's Elementary School aimed to foster intercultural understanding.
- **45** community groups/businesses were on hand to present their services.
- Over **630** participants took part in a sun-filled day and enjoyed bouncy castles, the smoothie bike, a coloring corner, songs by the Local Vocals choir, traditional dances from the Philippines performed by the Nations Québec intégrations dance troupe, Irish dance by the Shannon Irish Dancers, a high voltage performance by Brazilian rhythms group, Pé Na Rua, and a performance by the Quebec Art Company, who offered the crowd several songs from their production of Fiddler on the Roof.

Holiday Happy Hour

- Holiday Happy Hour was held on Dec. 4, 2019, in partnership with the Morrin Centre.
- Over **145** community members took part in this evening that is organized in support of the Community Christmas Hamper Campaign.
- The Local Vocals choir invited attendees to join them in some caroling.





Community outreach

CQSB Performing Arts Festival

- Over **535** elementary and secondary students from schools across the Central Quebec School Board, took part in a day of artist-led workshops that included, among others, sound production, button making, theatre, photography and waxart. The day concluded with a show where members from both linguistic communities were invited to watch the youth perform.

Community Christmas Hamper Campaign

- VEQ was once again very proud to contribute to the **24th** edition of the campaign, by being part of the organizing committee, contributing to the printing and distribution of publicity material, as well as playing a key role in the counting and dispatching.
- Over **\$28,500** was raised, helping over **200** families in need.

St. Patrick's Day Parade

- Unfortunately, this year, the St. Patrick's Day Parade was cancelled due to the pandemic. We look forward to taking part again when the event returns.

Transportation to community events

- VEQ regularly offers free transportation to members of the community, allowing them to participate in events they normally would not be able to attend.
- **3** community members were able to come out to Fall Fest.
- **11** community members from Shannon and Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier attended the Quebec Art Company's performance of Fiddler on the Roof.
- **10** community members rode the bus out to Shannon for the annual Shannon CWL Breakfast.
- A bus was scheduled for the annual Shannon Irish Show but the event was cancelled due to the pandemic.

Employment & Entrepreneur Services

Job Bank

- VEQ maintains a well-consulted online Job Bank that posts employment opportunities requiring English language skills or bilingualism.
- A total of **132** positions were posted during the year
- The Job Bank received **22,451** page views from **10,642** unique viewers from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020, making it the most visited page on our website.

YES Montreal - One-on-one business coaching

- VEQ renewed its important partnership with Youth Employment Services (YES) Montreal, which focuses on one-on-one business coaching in Quebec City as well as online.
- Over the past year, YES offered **215** sessions to a total of **42** English-speaking entrepreneurs, to help them develop and expand their own business.
- YES also hosted **2** workshops in partnership with VEQ, with a total of **46** participants.

In Partnership with the Valcartier Family Centre

- VEQ maintains a strong partnership with the Valcartier Family Centre.
- Many clients continue to be referred to the FORT Program.
- **1** CV clinic was held in the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Other employment related activities & events

- VEQ had a presence, and helped sponsor an employment event at CEGEP St. Lawrence in November 2019.
- VEQ also participated in the CIUSSS career day at the Jeffery Hale Saint Brigid's Hospital on February 8, 2020.
- VEQ remains involved in the Comité pour le recrutement et la rétention du personnel bilingue du CIUSSS-CN.



Newcomer Services

Some statistics

- Over the 2019-20 fiscal year, VEQ provided a range of services to **397** newcomers.
- **81%** were served within the first year following their arrival.
- A total of **1232** services were provided ranging from in-office one-on-one meetings, info sessions and numerous phone and email inquiries.
- With the help of our partners, more than **200** newcomer's packages were distributed.
- Newcomers are vital for the growth of our community. Every **5** years, **20%** to **25%** of our region's population is renewed by newcomers.

Finding Your Niche for Newcomers (FYNN) events

- VEQ organized and carried out **18** FYNN events in the past year.
- A total of **381** participants took part in the events.
- The events included, among others, a boat tour, a History of Québec event, a potluck, a game night, and a day of snow tubing.
- Several info sessions were also offered on a variety of different topics such as on the health system and winter in Québec.
- We also offered our yearly Winds of Change workshop in partnership with Jeffery Hale Community Services.

Other info sessions, events and committees

- VEQ participated the City's welcome ceremony for newcomers where we met over **100** new arrivals to Québec.
- **3** valuable information sessions with representatives from Service Canada, the Canada Revenue Agency, and Revenu Québec were held. **58** participants attended these sessions.
- VEQ continues to be a member of the Table des familles for Ste-Foy and the Table régionale de concertation en immigration.





50+ activities

Out and About

- The Out and About program provides English-speaking seniors with free transportation to activities and outings, helping to reduce social isolation and allowing seniors to live autonomously as long as possible.
- This year, **34** outings took place, including an outing to the aquarium, the museum, a sugar shack, a ferry ride and several shopping trips to the mall.
- A total of **347** seniors participated in the outings.

Technology workshops

- VEQ partnered with Quebec High School once again this year to offer tech workshops for seniors.
- **6** workshops took place over the course of the year.
- **19** students participated in empowering our seniors in the face of technology.
- **27** seniors were reached.

Local Vocals - Seniors' singing ensemble

- The goal of the Local Vocals project was to increase seniors' social participation and inclusion by providing them with an opportunity to be part of a professionally led choir.
- Total of **58** practices, and **3** performances, with an average of **9** seniors per practice.
- Over **750** people reached.

Lifelong Learning

- VEQ is proud to partner with the Quebec City Reading Council on this important initiative for seniors in our community. Every year, a variety of peer learning activities are organized, providing opportunities for growth and intellectual development.

Online activities calendar and phone line

- VEQ continues to regularly update its online calendar and phone line that were created to promote the social activities for English-speaking seniors in the Greater Quebec City region.



Be Active Québec

- Be Active Québec (BAQ) works in collaboration with many schools and partner organizations to help promote a physically active lifestyle and healthy eating habits.
- This year, VEQ organized **4** smoothie bike sessions where over **700** smoothies were made.
- VEQ also provided staff and/or financial support for programs such as Take-a-Break, Baby Chat, and Travellin' Toddler Time, as well as events in the schools such as the CQSB Cross Country Run and the Pentathlon des Neiges.

Connecting the Community through Creativity

- This 7-month cultural project aimed to increase community members' sense of identity while introducing them to different arts and crafts, via workshops led by local artists.
- Media explored include knitting, crochet, watercolour, Japanese calligraphy, sumi painting, origami, weaving, ceramics, and quilting.
- **50** workshops were organized and carried out.
- **361** participants took part in the project's activities.
- The vernissage event was cancelled and the launch of an online exhibit was delayed because of the pandemic.

Pathways Project

- This 18-month project began in October 2019 and has the goal of connecting high school youth to post-secondary programs and related career opportunities in the Greater Quebec City region.
- In partnership with Quebec High School, VEQ sent over **140** students to the Salon carrière formation.
- **2** information sessions carried out by CEGEP St. Lawrence at St. Patrick's High School, with the purpose of introducing their Business Program.
- **5** workshops that were planned in partnership with YES Montreal, and scheduled in the 3 local high schools, had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.
- More to come in 2020-21!

Enhancing Regional Community Capacity (ERCC) Program



Photo by Allison Kirkwood

- The Enhancing Regional Community Capacity (ERCC) Program is funded by the Government of Quebec, through the Secretariat for relations with English-speaking Quebecers.
- This two and a half year project aimed at expanding the territory that VEQ serves, began in the fall of 2018.
- **21** community members in Shannon, Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier and Stoneham-et-Tewkesbury took part in focus groups in the fall of 2019, to discuss the needs of their communities.
- VEQ also participated in many community events in Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier to promote the organization and its services.
- A satellite office was opened in Shannon in January 2020, with the aim of meeting the needs English-speaking community members who reside in the Northern perimeter of the Quebec City region, by implementing current VEQ services and initiatives, including community outreach and development, services for seniors, youth and newcomers, and acting as a hub of information.
- VEQ has developed strong partnerships with local municipalities, non-profit organizations, schools (Dollard-des-Ormeaux and Valcartier Elementary School), and various community stakeholders.
- VEQ partnered with local organizations and institutions to sponsor and promote:
 - The Family Skate Night in Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier, that attracted over **200** community members;
 - The Horizon Leadership Conference at DDO School that brought over **200** students from schools across the province;
 - A Shop & Brunch outing for **16** seniors from Shannon and Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier;
 - A Story Time with Seniors initiative in partnership with DDO School that was to start in March but had to be put on hold because of the pandemic.
- Stay tuned for more in 2020-21!



Story Time with Seniors

- This project that aimed to provide seniors with an opportunity to interact with children, by reading stories to them, began in September 2018, and concluded June 30, 2019.
- Over **50** reading activities took place.
- We reached **55** seniors.
- A total of **710** children were reached by the project's activities.

Expanding Horizons Project

- This two-year project that ended in May 2019, aimed to provide English-speaking special needs and at-risk youth with on-the-job training, and adapted employment opportunities, and was a joint initiative between VEQ and Jeffery Hale Community Partners.
- The project successfully provided on-the-job training and adapted employment opportunities for **15** individuals.
- **3** of the project partners who offered these opportunities were in the private sector, **5** in the not for profit sector and **3** from government entities such as schools and municipalities.
- Several employment opportunities continued well past the funded period.

Summer Student

- VEQ received funding through the Young Canada Works Program to hire a summer student to work with the staff on projects and activities throughout the summer.
- VEQ was fortunate to have Paige Wilson join the team.
- Paige's main task was working with seniors participating in the Out and About Program. She planned many of the activities and accompanied the seniors on each outing.

WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED, OUR WEBSITE GOT A FACELIFT! KEY FEATURES CONTINUE TO BE UPDATED REGULARLY, SUCH AS:

- The **Job Bank**, which is the most visited page of the website.
- The online version of the **Community Connection Directory** with options to download the entire directory or view the listings directly online.
- The **Newcomers Information** section, providing useful tips about topics such as Activities, Health Care, Immigration Services, Utilities, etc.
- The **Upcoming Events** page, listing interesting activities happening in the English-speaking community.
- The **Information Request** box allowing community members to fill out a box requesting information about specific services.
- The **Community Bulletin Board** section where members can post information on the website for free.
- **NEW Quebec Expressions** section that lists some of the most commonly used expressions in French in Quebec. Know of an expression that is not in the list? Email us at info@veq.ca
- There is also a live feed from our **Facebook** page, a growing resource for connecting with our community - now with over **3,200** followers - a **28%** increase from the previous year!

VEQ continues to use **Mailchimp**, a web-based database system, for membership emails. This program allows VEQ to more easily track its membership and create mobile-friendly emails with more interesting design options.

Our newsletter is sent out **3** times per year, both electronically and to over **325** members by mail.

VEQ also sends out a monthly e-bulletin to newcomers.

PARTNERSHIP WITH JEFFERY HALE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

VEQ has always had a strong partnership with the Jeffery Hale Community Partners (JHCP) and during the past year, both organizations have worked together to coordinate programs for the English-speaking community.

- **Take-a-Break Drop in Program**

VEQ worked with JHCP on their Take-a-Break Drop in Program and provided staff support. This activity allows parents to drop off their preschool children ages 2 to 5 with caring volunteers and take a break, while their children play. Babies are welcome to stay with the parents. **Take-a-Break** occurs twice a month on Friday mornings from 9:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. during the school year.

- **Volunteer Income Tax Program for Low Income Individuals and Families**

VEQ coordinated the Volunteer Income Tax Program once again this year. Volunteers who enjoy working with numbers and taxes received access to tax software free of charge, and then worked diligently to complete tax files for the 2019 tax year.

A VEQ team member worked with the clients and social worker, ensuring that the volunteers had all the appropriate information, and the clients received the government benefits to which they were entitled. This year **45** tax files were completed. Volunteers gave more than **50** hours of their time to complete the files.



OUR FUNDERS

Funding was made available through the support of the Development of Official Language Communities and the Enhancement of Official Languages Programs at the Department of Canadian Heritage, Community Innovation Fund, Enhancing Regional Community Capacity Program through the Government of Québec, Employment and Social Development Canada, and the Ville de Québec

Additional funding provided through the VEQ Foundation, Jeffery Hale Foundation and the Jeffery Hale Community Partners.



Canadian
Heritage

Patrimoine
canadien

Canada

Québec



Community Innovation Fund
Fonds d'innovation
pour la communauté

VILLE DE
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Fondation
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Partenaires
communautaires
Jeffery Hale
Community Partners
Une communauté de soins
A Community of Care

OUR DEDICATED TEAM

Nothing would happen at VEQ without the hard work and dedication of the staff and the Board of Directors. Thank you!

VEQ Team

- Alexandra Hartley, Coordinator
- Brigitte Wellens, Executive Director
- Catherine Baboudjian, Coordinator
- Dominique Paddack, Coordinator
- Francisca Rojek, Administrative Assistant
- Jessica Price, Newcomers Coordinator
- Maria Castro, Newcomers Coordinator
- Melissa Wan, Administrative Assistant
- Paige Wilson, Summer Student
- Ross Bartleman, Coordinator
- Susanna Tang, Coordinator

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