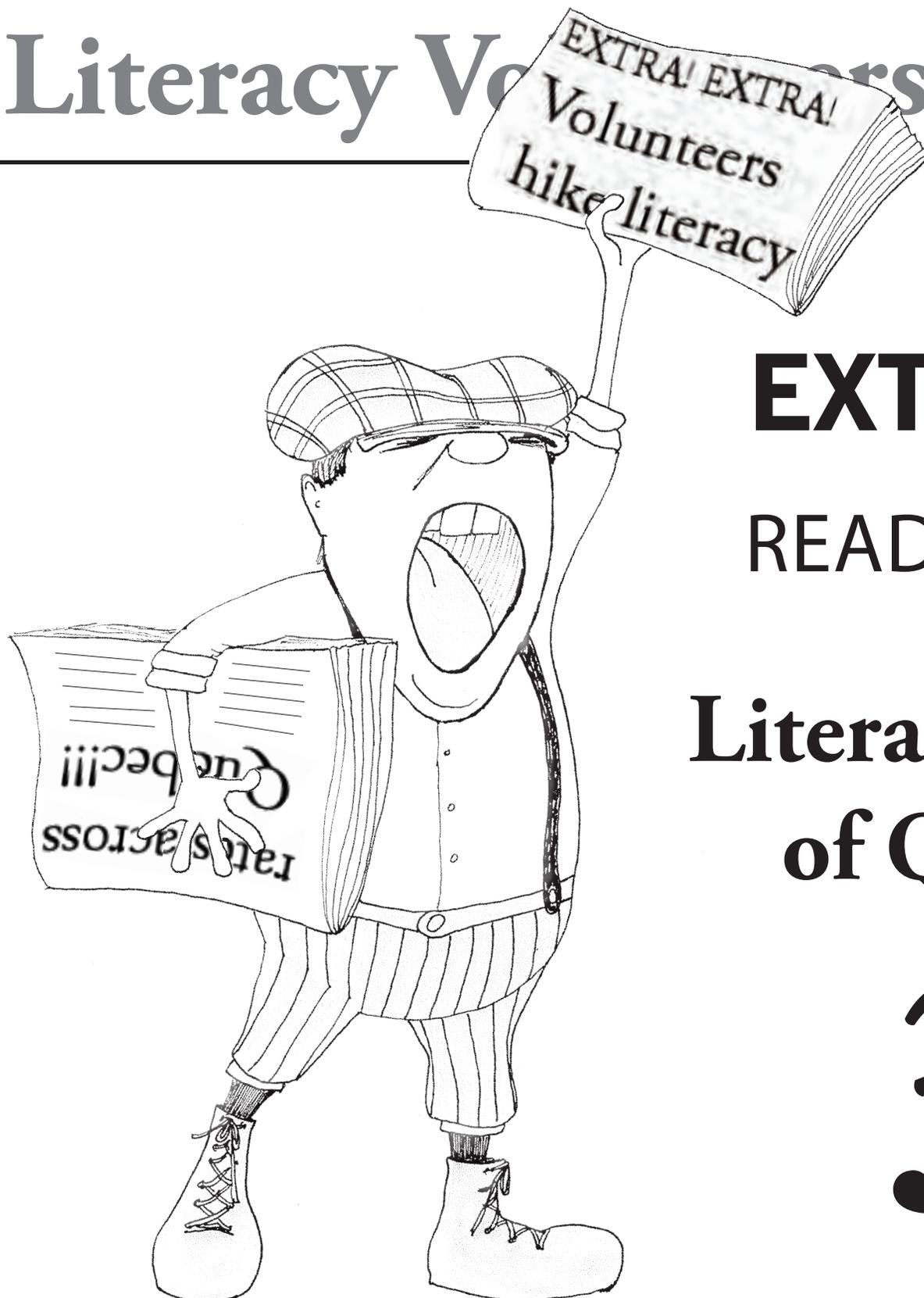


# Literacy Volunteers of Quebec

November 2010



**EXTRA! EXTRA!**  
**READ ALL ABOUT IT!**

**Literacy Volunteers  
of Quebec turns**

**30!**

“Without the provincial organization, we couldn’t have functioned.”

Marilee DeLombard,  
WQLC executive  
director and past  
president

“I really felt the people involved were so committed, I thought it has to be something good.”

Danielle Hay, past  
president on her first  
LVQ meeting

“The group always attracted very able managers, organizers, performers... I never had any doubt about their capacity to run things themselves.”

Gerald Bleser, past  
QLWG member

“The fact it has survived through thick and thin shows the need for a provincial organization.”

Cornelia Fischer,  
tutor, past  
president

“It’s our pearl anniversary! Woohoo! Woo! Hoohoo!”

Simon, the  
newspaper boy



Each one, teach one: Early volunteers in Quebec's adult literacy movement, Suzanne and Joanne, learn how to tutor students at a workshop at the Townshippers' Reading Council - a founding member of LVQ, now called Yamaska Literacy Council.

## Inside... 30 years of history

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## La ministre de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport félicite LVQ



J'aimerais vous féliciter et vous remercier chaleureusement pour la qualité de votre travail et le soutien que vous apportez aux personnes désirant approfondir leurs connaissances en lecture et en écriture, et ce, depuis 30 ans. En les aidant à atteindre leurs objectifs, vous leur donnez la confiance nécessaire pour exercer leur rôle dans la société avec autonomie et fierté. Je ne peux que saluer votre grande générosité.

Reprendre le chemin des études à l'âge adulte nécessite de concilier plusieurs responsabilités, ce qui, parfois, peut prendre l'allure d'une montagne difficile à escalader. Cependant, une fois le sommet atteint, la satisfaction quant aux efforts déployés est considérable. Je profite donc de l'occasion pour souligner le courage et la détermination des gens qui s'investissent dans ce processus d'apprentissage.

Grâce à vous, les personnes en démarche d'alphabétisation sont guidées vers un monde de découvertes. Vous leur permettez, en plus de faciliter la réalisation de leurs tâches quotidiennes, d'appivoiser de nombreux aspects de notre culture qui, auparavant, ne leur étaient pas accessibles. Bref, vous donnez des ailes aux gens que vous côtoyez.

Longue vie à votre organisme !

LINE BEAUCHAMP

Québec

*I would like to congratulate and sincerely thank you for the quality of your work and the support you have provided over the last 30 years to people wishing to improve their reading and writing skills. By helping them achieve their goals, you have given them the confidence they need to function independently and with dignity in society. You deserve to be recognized for your great generosity of spirit.*

*Adults who go back to school must juggle several responsibilities at the same time, which can sometimes feel like a difficult mountain to climb. However, when their efforts lead them to the top, they feel an enormous sense of satisfaction. I would like to take this opportunity to salute the courage and determination of those who commit to this type of learning process.*

*Your efforts have helped guide literacy learners toward a world of discovery. By making it easier for them to carry out their daily activities, you enable them to partake in various aspects of our culture that would never have been accessible to them otherwise. In short, you empower the men and women you work with.*

*May your organization enjoy many more years of success!*



LVQ pioneers prepare: Conference organizers meet one last time before hosting a national literacy conference in Lennoxville, Quebec, in June 1983. From left, Susan Craig, Louise Caron Orr, Ann Gauvin (in yellow), Gerald Bleser, and Edgar Sutherland. Behind the couch between Ann and Gerald is past LVQ archivist Aileen Ossowski, whose diligent record-keeping was invaluable to this 30-year retrospective of LVQ.

## Senator Joyce Fairbairn thanks and congratulates LVQ and its members



It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Literacy Volunteers of Quebec on the celebration of your 30th anniversary.

I especially want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the many people whose extraordinary commitment and dedication are so important to what you do for those who need your help.

Literacy is indeed the foundation of everything we do every day of our lives. It is critical to the prosperity, productivity, social fabric and success of any country. It contributes to the success of individuals—our personal pride and

fulfillment, our well-being, and the breadth of opportunities we enjoy.

It is a delight for me to be a partner with the Literacy Volunteers of Quebec. You continue to be a source of inspiration and delight for me, and as you continue with your important work, remember that this volunteer is with you every step of the way.

Sincerely,

SENATOR JOYCE FAIRBAIRN  
Literacy Advocate

## LVQ presidents celebrate three decades on literacy's front lines



Wendy Seys

While much has changed in the literacy landscape over the past thirty years, the core values and mission of Literacy Volunteers of Quebec remain steadfast. As an organization, we have navigated through changing trends in volunteerism, increased funding and accountability measures, opportunities (and headaches!) created by new technologies, professionalization of the milieu and restructuring of governance models, to name a few.



Cathy Nolan

Change, albeit challenging, keeps us vibrant and responsive to the needs of those we ultimately aim to reach and teach! Supporting our members to carry out the front line work is vital. The type and delivery of support has necessarily changed over time, but what remains constant is the commitment and caring of the people who

choose to make a difference in the lives of people with low literacy.

As LVQ moves forward, let us celebrate thirty years of our rich history, offer congratulations and thanks to the pioneering spirits who charted the course, and encouragement to all those who continue to dedicate their time and expertise to advancing literacy.

Cheers!

WENDY SEYS  
Outgoing LVQ president

CATHY NOLAN  
Incoming LVQ president

### Letters, letters and more letters:

- LVQ – Literacy Volunteers of Quebec
- QLWG – Quebec Literacy Working Group
- LLC-Q – Laubach Literacy Canada – Quebec
- LLC-Q/LVQ - Laubach Literacy Canada-Quebec / Literacy Volunteers of Quebec
- MELS – Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport
- CLCQ – Concerted Literacy Councils of Quebec
- IFPCA – Initiatives fédérales-provinciales conjointes en matière d'alphabétisation
- PSAPA – Programme de soutien aux organismes d'alphabétisation populaire autonomes
- PACTE – Programme d'action communautaire sur le terrain de l'éducation

## Quebec school boards recognize gap in English literacy services: 1970s

Quebec adults seeking improved English literacy skills had few options before 1980. The English school board in Montreal offered some literacy classes, and other school boards had basic English classes for adults. But adult learners needed more flexibility. They were discouraged by the rigid hours and curriculum offered by the boards. Students who'd had difficult school experiences in their youth were often reluctant to return to a traditional classroom setting. The Lutheran church began literacy training in Quebec in the early 70s, but success was limited.

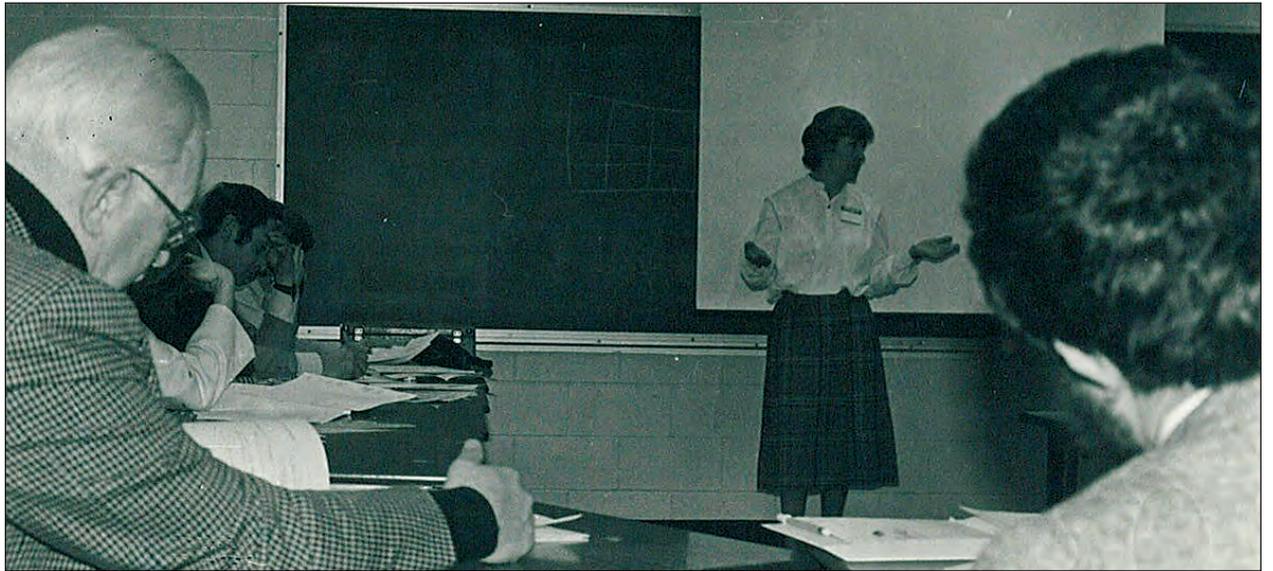
In the late 1970s, Gerald Bleser, an adult education coordinator for the Bedford school board, wondered if volunteer literacy tutors might best meet the literacy needs of adult students. With a little research, Gerald soon found himself at a literacy conference in Syracuse, New York.

There, he met two literacy trainers who ran a program out of a library in Pennsylvania. It was based on a literacy method developed by American missionary Frank Laubach. Once Gerald learned more about Laubach's "each one teach one" approach to literacy, he decided, "This is a system that will work."

Gerald invited those two trainers to Cowansville in December of 1979 to teach local volunteers the Laubach method.

In February of 1980, a Laubach advocate named Thelma Blinn came to Cowansville from Nova Scotia. At a two-day conference, she gave a workshop called "How to start your own council" for local volunteers and representatives from five of Quebec's school boards. The seeds were planted for what is now the Yamaska Literacy Council, and for the other councils that would soon form.

Around the same time, Quebec's education ministry was recognizing the serious problem of low literacy. Several school board representatives who worked in adult education, like Gerald, were convinced the Laubach system was part of the solution. They formed the Quebec Literacy Working Group (QLWG), and the planning began.



This workshop called "How to Start Your Own Council," was held in Cowansville in 1980 and taught by a pioneer in Canada's Laubach literacy movement, Thelma Blinn, from Nova Scotia.

## Seeds planted for first literacy councils

1980 saw the dawn of a provincial English literacy network. Convinced of the efficacy of the Laubach method, Quebec English school boards made a plan to recruit and train volunteers from various regions. They organized a crucial meeting for these volunteers in November, 1980.

"The idea was, after we'd been trained as tutors, we would go back to our respective geographical areas and start councils. In fact that's what we did," said volunteer Nina Nichols, who founded the South Shore Reading Council with the assistance of the South Shore school board and other volunteers.

Tutor training at the 1980 meeting was led by Thelma Blinn, a Laubach organizer from Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. The meeting was held at the High School of Montreal, on University Street, and began on a Friday evening. Several of the twenty participants were concerned they might miss the very famous "Who Shot J.R.?" episode of the TV show *Dallas*, which happened to be airing that night.

"We just couldn't wait to get out of there so we could go back to our hotels... and watch that!" joked Ann Gauvin, one of the volunteers. She learned of the meeting from an ad in the Quebec City English newspaper, the *Quebec Chronicle Telegraph*.

"I couldn't believe there were people in Canada who were living with problems with reading and writing," said Ann, who was inspired by the training. "It was a cause that

I could really embrace." She returned to Quebec City to work on setting up a literacy council there, and was soon hired by the Quebec City school board to work for adult education. She became the provincial coordinator of QLWG – the table of adult education coordinators working on literacy.

Momentum built after the meeting in Montreal, and councils sprouted up one by one in various regions in Quebec where there were anglophone school boards. Volunteers worked hard to set up councils, and support and resources were available from both QLWG and the larger Laubach network, based in Syracuse, New York.

Any fledgling council in Quebec had a model on which to structure itself. Volunteers understood that they were part of a wider Laubach movement that was now taking shape in Canada.

"We were all committed to the cause to ensure there was some stability to this group of volunteers," said QLWG member Gerald Bleser, who was also key in the founding of Laubach Literacy Canada (LLC). Stability was to be found in creating a formal provincial network that was distanced from school boards, and could link more directly to the growing Canadian Laubach movement.

In 1982, the provincial network of volunteer-based one-on-one literacy councils was officially incorporated as Laubach Literacy Canada – Quebec (LLC-Q), which is now called Literacy Volunteers of Quebec (LVQ).

# Literacy for all: Frank Laubach's worldwide movement spreads to Quebec and Canada

**F**rank Laubach was an American Christian missionary who made “each one teach one” literacy popular in many parts of the world. He encouraged all who knew how to read, to teach someone who didn't.

His first mission began in 1930 in the Mindanao region of the Philippines. There he worked with the Maranaos, traditionally Muslim people known for epic oral literature. Laubach developed a written version of their language in the Roman alphabet and he and

other missionaries taught it to the Maranaos.

Laubach later travelled to more than 100 countries, continuing to help transform orally-based cultures to written ones, and spreading “each one teach one” literacy programs.

He spoke often of low literacy and poverty being barriers to peace and justice.

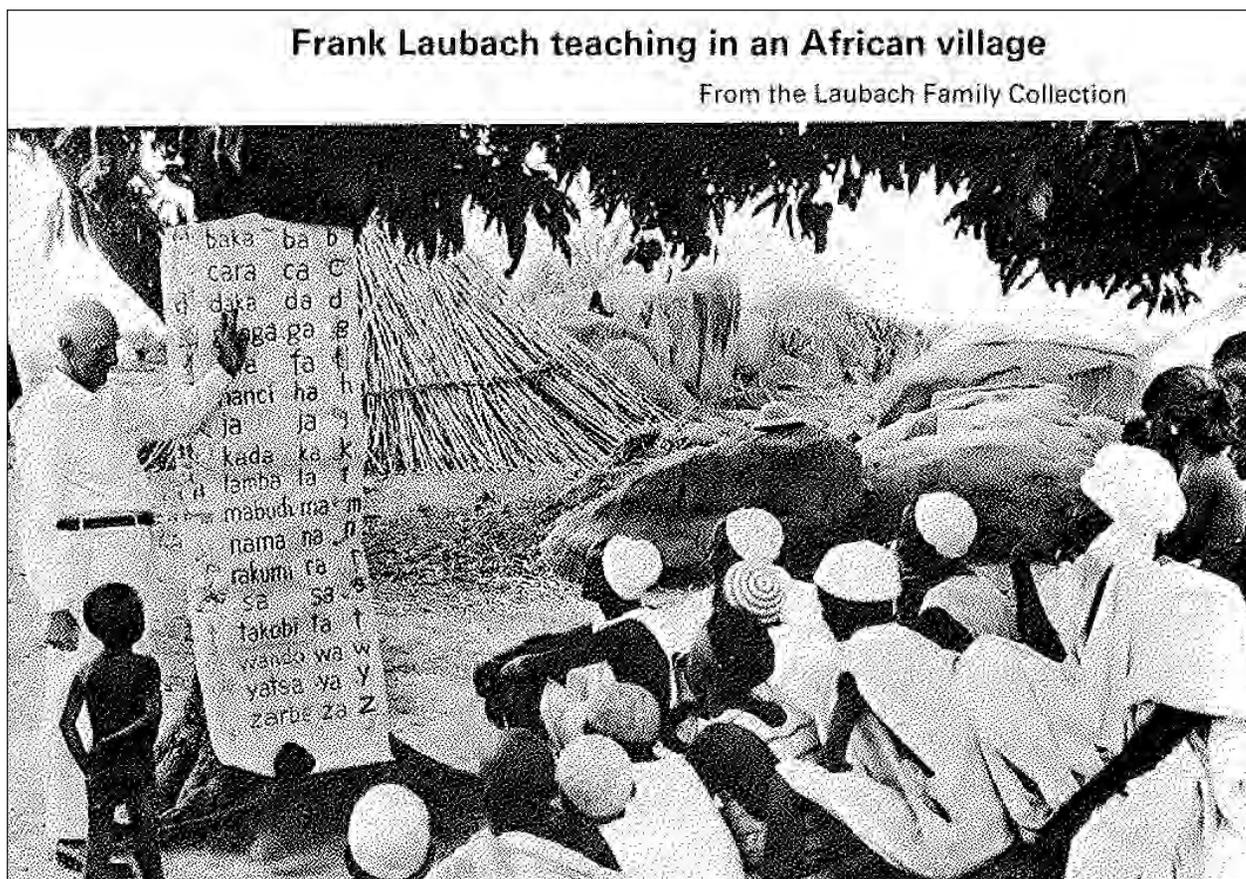
In 1955, he began Laubach Literacy International. Through it, he continued promoting a worldwide literacy movement based on the method he'd devised. The movement continued after his death in 1970.

In the 1970s, Laubach literacy councils started to develop in Canada, especially in Nova Scotia. A Canadian network of Laubach councils called Laubach Literacy Canada was incorporated in 1981. LVQ was a big part of its founding.

The Laubach method is very structured, and one step builds upon another. Students learn phonics, connecting sounds to letters, and then move on to understanding the meaning of many words put together in sentences. Tutors are trained to use visual, auditory and kinaesthetic cues. Combined, these tools are



This Frank Laubach stamp was released in 1984 by the US Postal Service as part of their Great American series.



Frank Laubach (left) became known as “Apostle to the Illiterates.” This picture and the text above are from a storybook for new students. The book was published by New Readers Press, a company in Syracuse, New York, started by Frank Laubach and his son, Dr. Robert Laubach.

effective for beginning readers who have a variety of learning styles.

“It's a really good tool. It does work,” said Grace Saabas, a founder of RECLAIM Literacy Council in Montreal.

Grace got her first Laubach training in 1972, when the Lutheran church initiated a short-lived program in Little Burgundy. She said she still relies on the Laubach materials, but also uses other teaching methods.

“The methodology seemed so uncomplicated. Everything was provided for you. Books, training... you couldn't go wrong,” said Ann Gauvin, past LVQ president, reflecting on her first encounter with the Laubach method in 1980.

“Watching videos of Dr. Laubach, he was a bit like a preacher. You were almost mesmerized by this cause.”

Ann was referring to Frank Laubach's son, Dr. Robert Laubach. He was charismatic

like his father, and to this day continues to promote the cause of literacy.



Frank Laubach's son, Dr. Robert Laubach (right), and beside him, his wife Frances at the first LLC national conference in Lennoxville, Quebec, hosted by LVQ and the QLWG.

## LVQ volunteers learn how to organize, gain independence

By 1984, LVQ had eleven member councils, and the organization was slowly learning to stand on its own feet.

"The early meetings were about how to make things work," recalls Grace Saabas, an early LVQ president and founding president of RECLAIM Literacy Council in Montreal.

Meetings were mostly mixed with representatives from each council and QLWG members, and held in the cafeteria of the English school board in Montreal in NDG.

Louise Caron Orr was LVQ's first president. She was one of the original school board representatives to receive Laubach training in Cowansville in 1980. In 1983, she wrote a letter to Susan Craig, who was also at the Cowansville training and was now leading QLWG. The letter said, "From the beginning we realized, I think, that there would be some confusion and duplication between LLC-Q and the QLWG. Looking back over the year, I believe it is hard if not impossible for these two groups to function completely independently of one another..."

Time would prove Louise wrong, but it would be a long road ahead for the organization to forge its own identity. It was going to take hard work and persistence from competent, committed volunteers.

The national organization Laubach Literacy Canada (LLC) was itself still in development, with LVQ as one of its pillar pro-



Dog days of summer: LLC-Q's executive meets at Farnham Centre in June, 1984. Back row: Edgar Sutherland, Kathe Lieber, Nina Nichols, Susan Levesque, Susan Craig, Lise Huck. Front row: Ann Gauvin, Paula Kemp. Sandy the dog, not officially part of the executive.

vincial groups. A 1984 report from LVQ to LLC reads: "There is a concern that school boards may decide that literacy is not a priority therefore (our) members are striving to organize on a completely voluntary basis."

Volunteer councils had other incentives to distinguish themselves from the school boards. Their "each one teach one" method was nothing like traditional classrooms associated with the school boards. Councils had much more in common with their Canadian Laubach counterparts, and as an independent network, they would be better able to communicate directly with Laubach Literacy International, which provided support and materials. LVQ's independence was also strongly encouraged by this larger Laubach network.

Some LVQ meetings were held at Redeemer Lutheran Church, in NDG, where Grace Saabas's husband was the minister. There, council representatives would work with easels and chalkboards as they discussed mutual challenges, and how to keep growing. They brainstormed ways to reach new students. They talked about fundraising and their relationships to local school boards. They came up with ideas about how to draw public attention to the problems of low literacy. "Sometimes, when you have less money, you do more work," Grace said of the early years. Each member was dedicated to ensuring the success of the organization. They sought guidance from the Laubach network in the US, still their source for learning materials such as the skillbooks. And they networked with other Canadian councils through LLC.

If you can read this,  
consider yourself  
fortunate ...  
If you know an adult who can't,  
suggest a call to

**282-2738**  
**THE GAZETTE**  
**LITERACY**  
**HELP LINE**

A community service of ...  
**The Gazette**

The Montreal Gazette's Literacy Help Line directed adult students in Quebec to the nearest LVQ member council.

## LVQ in the news: literacy starts making headlines

Media coverage for LVQ picked up in 1984, thanks in part to publicity and communications officer Paula Kemp. Her media campaign for International Literacy Day resulted in radio interviews on CBC radio and CJFM, several community newspaper headlines across Quebec, and a wide distribution of LVQ brochures.

Literacy really rolled into the public spotlight in the late '80s. Reports of "the scourge of illiteracy" were showing up in newspapers, and on television and radio across Canada.

In 1987, a Southam Literacy Survey found 5 million Canadians couldn't read, write, or use numbers well enough to function in society. They ran a seven-part series devoted to literacy, which ran in papers across Canada. The Montreal Gazette soon

offered a province-wide literacy help line.

"Literacy received more concentrated publicity over the past 12 months than at any other time in its history," read a 1988 report from LVQ's publicity officer, Gilbert Smith. "The Southam Literacy Survey created widespread interest and awareness in the extent of illiteracy in this country. The Gazette Literacy Line in Montreal brought record numbers of tutors into LLC-Q councils... And, a heavy concentration of media coverage both in the print and electronic areas of the media... rewarded our efforts to acquaint the public with this important (issue)."

Public attention to literacy was even more pronounced in 1990. UNESCO declared that year International Literacy Year.

## The results were in: literacy councils changed students lives

Everyone had an interest in seeing the councils succeed: the larger Laubach association, the QWLG, the Quebec education ministry. And of course, the volunteers that were working hard to ensure the councils got going. It was students' success stories that kept them motivated.

"When I first came to register I was lacking self-confidence. I was also nervous! I also was very shy. I was too proud to let the other students know that I could not read or write. So now I am learning to have more confidence in myself. When I see other people going back to school I have more self-confidence."

- Elaine, student, RECLAIM Literacy Council, 1986

"The first time I came to see Susan I was very nervous. I thought that people were going to laugh at me because at the time I didn't know how to read. I didn't know how many people were like me. Susan explained it to me. I felt better. At first I asked for a private tutor. I was too nervous to go into a class. I had a tutor from September until June. The next year I went into a class. I had to stop because there was a sickness in the family. My father died in December, so I came back in January. I have been here ever since. I will keep on coming until I understand what I read better and until I can put my thoughts on paper."

- Audrey, student, RECLAIM Literacy Council, 1986

"Alice had not had much formal education as a child because she had to work on the farm and her father didn't encourage school attendance. When she heard of the local literacy program, she began lessons with a tutor and has finished Skillbook 5. Now 30, she's gone from being almost entirely illiterate to reading books, including drivers education manuals so she can take a driving course."

- Townshippers Reading Council, now Yamaska Literacy Council, 1984

"Stan is in his mid-40s, the extent of his education having consisted of grade four. He was one of 13 children, having been brought up on the family farm. Stan always had difficulty with reading from the start of school and thereby never achieved.

He left school in grade four to help support his family. His frustration grew with his inability to read the local newspaper, in particular, auction items. Initially he felt incapable of learning how to read, but after finishing Skillbook 1, was encouraged to continue. He is using the skills he has learned to facilitate his everyday life: reading restaurant menus, filling out forms when required, reading notices at

work, reading road signs. He is now able to read the local newspaper with enough knowledge to comprehend the main idea. He has experienced success and is confident of continued improvement."

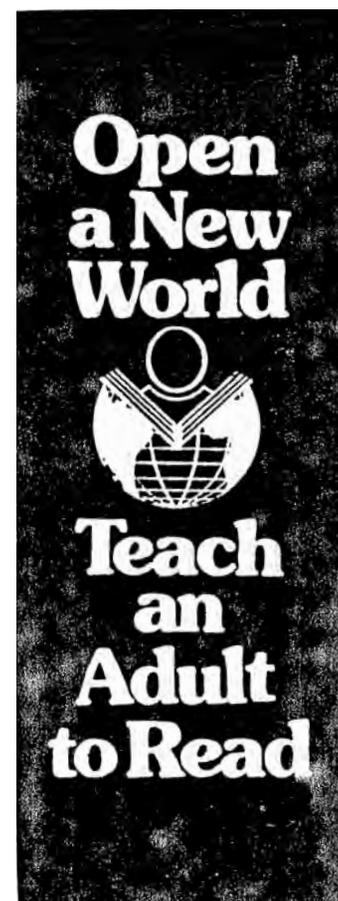
- Diane Hayvren, tutor, Chateaugay Valley Literacy Council, 1984



Tutor Margery Simpson (standing) with her student Shirley and Shirley's guardian, Edna Thompson (left).

"Shirley is 49 and could barely write when she started with her tutor three years ago. She has cerebral palsy and could not read as schooling had been a problem for her. Her father has now died and Shirley is on her own. Shirley is eager to send in articles for our newsletter. It's true that she will most likely never be able to work, but she has reached her personal goal of being relatively independent."

- Laurentian Literacy Council, 1984



## Councils explore new ways of teaching, expand literacy's scope

Attention to literacy was growing, as were the councils. But some councils were outgrowing the very approach to literacy on which they had been founded.

They wanted to broaden their methods beyond Laubach. Some volunteers began adjusting the Laubach method and even finding new teaching materials altogether. "There was a feeling there had to be more than this!" said Ann Gauvin, who was provincial coordinator of QLWG. She said many tutors found the Laubach material to be too simplistic.

It created a split within the organization. Members had all been founded on the Laubach approach, and they were used to being run in similar ways.

But now that some members were trying new approaches, others stood more firmly attached to the Laubach methodology.

"We have grown wiser that literacy is not just reading and writing," said Nina Nichols, of the South Shore Reading Council. It was several years before her council, and many others, began shifting from being pure Laubach councils. Nina, trained in the Laubach method in 1980, has now introduced other approaches to her tutoring. "There are math skills, numeracy skills, life skills, grocery shopping, reading a telephone

book, computer skills... and more."

### An expanded concept of literacy

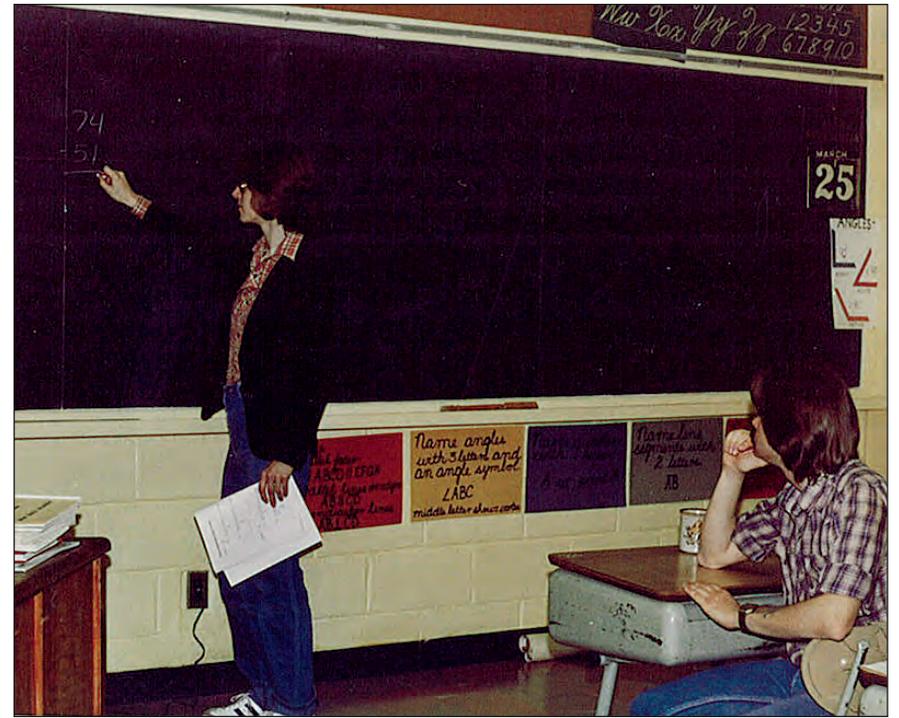
Councils slowly began changing the way they talked about their work.

"We used to talk about illiteracy like it was a disease. We used to talk about eradicating it," said Wendy Seys, coordinator of the Yamaska Literacy Council, and former LLC provincial training officer. "It was very black and white."

"It was very much an issue that had a lot of stigma around it and I think we've tried to reduce the stigma and make people aware that everybody has different strengths and weaknesses, and literacy is just another skill," Wendy said.

"Now we talk about levels of literacy. We don't say illiterate anymore, and realize literacy is on a spectrum," she added.

"Everything's got literacy at the end of it now, like environmental literacy, financial



More than letters: Math skills became a part of many tutors' lessons, helping students manage banking, grocery shopping, taxes, and more.

literacy, etc."

Seeing the bigger picture of literacy, she explained, can help people see how low literacy is related to problems in which people find themselves: health problems, poverty, and criminality. Prevention, or family literacy, also soon became a focus in the literacy world, with many councils starting to work with young people who were struggling with literacy, and working with parents of preschool aged children.

## Provincial organizing transformed by new communication technologies

“Gone are the days when we used to mimeograph things.”

- Wendy Seys, on her early days as a Laubach training officer.

Clunky typewriters, rotary telephones, and big manila envelopes mailed out to members with information about meetings. This is how early LVQ organizers used to communicate. New communications technologies helped organizers communicate more quickly and efficiently. Photocopiers began to replace the wax stencil technology of mimeographs, and word processors slowly replaced typewriters.

Now, members receive most information by email, and meetings are no longer coordinated by phone.

"We've got digital, we've got Power Point, we've got all those things now," says Cornelia Fischer, past president.

The changes were a lot to adapt to. Those on the front lines of literacy could also see how new communications technologies affected the lives of students.

Computers began appearing in some councils in the mid-90s. And it became clear that for students to become more autonomous in society, they needed to become computer literate. Now, many students seek help not only for reading, writing, and math skills, but for how to do online banking, use an ATM, Facebook, and send emails.





Tutor Alain Lefevre from Laurentian Literacy Council poses with student Eliza McLeod, as she cuts the ribbon on her book, "The Barmaid's Story."

## Students and tutors launch their own books

Students and tutors from councils across Quebec teamed up to write their own books, in the early '90s. The books got published, were formally launched at a 1993 party, and then distributed throughout the LVQ network of councils and to local libraries.

"Low-level, childish books are demeaning when adult students are trying to learn how to read, said Nina Nichols, past LVQ president and a tutor at the South Shore Reading Council. "They don't want to see Dick and Jane Run, and Mothergoose," said Nina. "They want adult subjects."

Participants from each council came to writing workshops in Montreal hosted by a professional writer, Kathe Leiber, who had worked for the Montreal Star. They then went back to their councils and started writing.

"Writers would meet up again after writing one or two chapters," Nina recalled. "And The Star writer would critique the work. Just to make sure we were on the right track."

Published titles included: He Hit Me, Bad Family Secrets, When I was Small, 101 Ways to Save on Your Utility Bills, and Murder in Oak Valley. All the books were colour-coded to correspond to the

Laubach skillbook levels, with green for level one, red for level two, and so on.

"They had a terrific time doing it," remembers Marilee DeLombard, executive director at the Western Quebec Literacy Council. She was nearby when a tutor and student from her council worked on an alphabet book.

"Each had a great sense of humour, and when they got together for a les-



The 1993 book launch was held at Le Faubourg Ste-Catherine in Montreal.

son, they'd brainstorm a new letter, like M, and come up with hilarious poems. It was really hilarious. They wrote and wrote, and in the end had to cut the majority of material, but they had so much fun doing it."

This project was funded through the Concerted Literacy Councils of Quebec.

## Volunteers pull together as some member groups grow apart from network

The early 90s were difficult for the provincial organization, but a handful of dedicated volunteers kept enough momentum going so that by the end of the decade, members had reason to celebrate.

LVQ relied on the little money it got in membership dues. Some members in the early 90s were considering dropping their membership in the organization. One or two already had.

The issue was they found the Laubach approach limiting. While no one questioned that the Laubach method was effective, some were using different approaches to literacy education, and even moving beyond just reading and writing.

At this time, councils in the organization were expected to follow Laubach guidelines, which including using Laubach materials, having all tutors trained in the Laubach method, and sending in regular reports to the LLC. It was simply how the provincial organization defined itself.

There were some LVQ members who were protective of the Laubach approach. It had helped each council achieve so much over the past decade.

It provided a clear framework for how to operate, and it kept members networked to each other, and to the larger Laubach network. Some members just weren't sure how to solve the disagreement. Morale was low, but enough volunteers believed in the provincial organization to keep it going. Nina Nichols was the first of a few who were brave enough to take on the presidency at this time.

"It was pretty close to giving up," said Marilee DeLombard, whose impression of the first LVQ meeting she ever attended in 1992 was that it was a last gasp for air.

"Freda Hudson, the Vice President, had organized the meeting and was not willing to let it die."

The group met when they could. They dug into their own pockets and made their way to Montreal, or sometimes the Eastern Townships, at least a couple of times each year.

They had potlucks in homes, or brought brown bag lunches to anywhere they could meet for free. They continued sharing their successes from their councils, and brainstormed strategies for overcoming the challenges they faced.



Ricki Goldstein was executive director of RECLAIM Literacy Council and an LVQ director. She and a few others worked hard to reach consensus between Laubach councils and councils who were moving in new directions. Ricki worked on several CLCQ grants that would benefit all councils, including the local book project and a series of workshops about learning disabilities.

## Concerted effort made in spite of hard times

Funding for creating local books, and many other projects that followed, came from a federal provincial grant that was awarded to the Concerted Literacy Councils of Quebec. The CLCQ had almost the same membership as LVQ, but was formed so that all councils, Laubach or otherwise, could be eligible for federal grant money.

The Concerted projects, as they came to be known, were a way to bring councils together around yearly projects. Each year a member group wrote a grant proposal. Although usually it was RECLAIM Literacy, in Montreal, who was responsible for writing and submitting the proposals and, if successful, to receiving and managing each grant.

For awhile, said past president Marilee DeLombard, it was the Concerted Projects that kept LVQ alive.

The funding program applied to was called IFPCA, or Initiatives fédérales-provinciales conjointes en matière d'alphabétisation. The program was created by the fed-

eral government in 1988. In Quebec, the IFPCA program was set up as a joint agreement, so while funding was federal, the Quebec education ministry coordinated the program. It was also available for school board projects.

The CLCQ proved useful for LVQ. Even many years later, when LVQ was to get regular provincial funding, CLCQ was a viable way to get funding for unique yearly projects.

In 1999, a CLCQ project on family literacy was done. LVQ members produced book kits. Each kit featured activities centred on the theme of one book. One included activities related to insects, another was about hand-knitted finger puppets, and another, about board games. The kits were made available for purchase across Quebec. Other CLCQ projects through the years, funded by the IFPCA program, would include: student assessment, exchanging the best practices of running a council amongst members, and strategic planning.

## Provincial network opens its membership to non-Laubach councils

The LVQ board knew it had to overcome the standstill between Laubach and non-Laubach councils. With their very little money, they hired a local school board consultant, who helped all the councils come together to eventually reach a consensus. In 1993, after many long debates, LVQ decided its members could now include all volunteer-based literacy councils in Quebec, not just strictly Laubach councils. "The literacy movement was dependent on all of us continuing together!" said Ann Gauvin, who attended the mediation meetings in Montreal. She praised the efforts of Freda Hudson and Ricki Goldstein – LVQ board members at the time – for encouraging all the councils to sit together at these meetings. Despite personality differences and disagreements on how to approach literacy,

the councils were committed to finding a way to work together. Without a unified front, the organization and all of its members stood little chance of securing adequate funding. Also, while LVQ was just struggling to survive, it did not have the resources to be very supportive of its members. Danielle Hay, who would eventually become president of LVQ, remembers one of the mediation meetings well. It was the first LVQ meeting she had ever attended. The room was dungeon-like. Not knowing LVQ well at all, Danielle said, she listened closely. "I thought it has to be a good thing," she said of the organization. "The people that were there since 1980 and 1981 really were dedicated, and they really wanted it to keep on going. So I felt it was worthwhile to keep the organization together."

In 1994, Literacy Volunteers of Quebec was officially added to the LLC-Q name. It was now legally known as LLC-Q/LVQ.

"'Please explain your method.' The answer to this frequent request must disappoint many. We have no final method yet, expecting to be forever dissatisfied, to beware of adhering too closely to any one theory or authority, to study all methods, to try those that look most promising, to adopt what is best, to improve on them where possible, and to throw them away the moment something better appears."

- Dr. Robert Laubach, son of Laubach method founder, Frank Laubach

“It’s the only opportunity in the year that councils get to see who else is involved in literacy!” - Lillian Hartley, past LVQ coordinator

## Coming together at conferences

Members unite for networking, learning, sharing and fun



Chateauguay Valley Literacy Council members at the 2009 LVQ conference. Back row (left to right): Adlyn Hall, Gigi Ramos, Angee Mercuri, Kathy Norton, Diana Jeans and Lane Rice. Front row: Sylvia Pinto, Antonietta Marcogliese and Cheryl Hoyte.

The annual conference was – and still is – a highlight for people working, learning, and volunteering in literacy in Quebec.

Stepping out of their local councils, everyone enters into a larger world of literacy. They meet other people doing the same kind of work and build new skills through workshops, lectures, and conversation. Tutors share their stories of success. Students find out they are not alone. If one council is having a problem, they can ask another, “How does your council do it?”

“If they went to the conference, volunteers always felt they learned so much, and the motivation they got out of it helped them motivate students in turn,” said Danielle Hay, past executive director of Laurentian Literacy Council.

Conferences are a chance to explore new ideas about literacy. Past workshops have explored health literacy, computer literacy, how to promote reading in families, learning disabilities, reading body language, and introducing new materials for tutoring, including online and multimedia tools. Professional development workshops are also a part of conferences, helping councils’ staff and volunteers with fundraising, recruiting stu-

dents, accounting, legal issues, conflict resolution, and volunteer management. Hands-on workshops for volunteers and students are also common, like learning how to make a book from recycled materials. Everyone gains new skills and ideas, and when they go home, they are ready to apply what they’ve learned at their local council.

And conferences are fun! People working on the front lines of literacy share, laugh, eat, and learn together. For many people arriving from rural parts of Quebec, it’s a chance to see Montreal, enjoy the company of dozens of people who are also immersed in literacy, and enjoy the comfortable settings of conference centres or hotels, like Ruby Foo’s and the Maritime Plaza Hotel – two popular conference locations over the years.

Conferences and LVQ’s annual general meeting used to be combined and were together often called the AGM. The general meetings grew to be confusing when they included all conference delegates. Often, each individual wanted his or her own vote, instead of one vote per LVQ member. Since 2007, the conference and the annual general meetings have been held separately. At AGMs, it’s one vote per member to make decisions.



Participants talk and enjoy lunch at 1982 LVQ provincial conference



Huffing and puffing: Susan Craig and others blow up balloons to celebrate St. Jean Baptiste Day during an LLC conference in 1983. It was the first national LLC conference, hosted by LVQ and the QLWG



Jim Wagner from Brock University came to the March 1984 LVQ conference to give three days of workshops on identifying and helping adults with learning disabilities.



Participants at the 2009 conference. From left to right: Marilee DeLombard, Tom Fox, Jenn Robert-Weese, Martha Shufelt, and Norma DesRosiers.

# Literacy Volunteers of Quebec

In 2010, Literacy Volunteers of Quebec unites and represents 14 members. It is a provincial not-for-profit coalition that supports community, volunteer-based literacy groups through professional development, communication and advocacy for English literacy. LVQ is an effective voice for English literacy in Quebec. Member groups are diverse, each with different realities. In rural areas, councils serve large territories. They may have fewer volunteers and students, fewer local resources to partner with, and great distances to travel. Urban councils have more resources at their fingertips, and bigger more diverse populations to serve. Together, our members have improved the literacy skills of thousands of people in Quebec since 1980!

## Laurentian Literacy Council

Founded 1981  
450-562-3719

Serves the Argenteuil region

Offers help with reading/writing, math and life skills difficulties, through one-on-one tutoring sessions for kids and adults, with the generous help of volunteers. Tutoring done in Lachute office, and in various municipalities. Our goal is to help individuals find self confidence so that they can realize their full potential.



## RECLAIM Literacy Council

Founded 1980  
514-369-7835

Serves Montreal Metropolitan area

Offers free and confidential literacy services to English-speaking adults. Individual learner needs are respected in an atmosphere that is welcoming, dynamic and supportive.



## Literacy Unlimited

Founded 1981  
514-694-0007

Serves from Verdun all the way to the Ontario border

Literacy Unlimited offers free one-on-one tutoring for English-speaking adults who want to improve their basic reading, writing and math skills. They also have a computer skills program, an in-school literacy program and participate in Family Literacy

Day activities. Literacy Unlimited reached out to 195 people last year and has 150 dedicated volunteers on their team.



## Western Quebec Literacy Council

Founded 1984  
819-647-3112

Serves a large territory from the Ottawa River through the Gatineau River Valley

Literacy services can be delivered to widespread communities thanks to the one-on-one tutoring method. Trained volunteer tutors work with one adult learner in weekly lessons in their home community. These private lessons provide a strong foundation upon which to build life long learning.

## The Learning Exchange

Founded 1989  
450-688-2933 ext: 3126

Serves Laval & Northshore

Offers one-on-one and small group tutoring. TLE is proud of the incredible level of commitment of its membership. Success would not be possible without the many passionate, committed and dependable people who contribute their valuable experience and time.



## Deaf Anglo Literacy Council

Founded 2002  
514-486-3771 (TTY)

Serves Montreal and surrounding suburbs

Provides basic literacy, communication and computer skills for deaf anglo-phones. Instructors are deaf and workshops are in American Sign Language.



## Frontier College

Founded 1899  
514-528-1001  
or 1-866-528-1001

Serves Montreal, Quebec City, and Sherbrooke



Every summer, literacy instructors work with native communities in Quebec to offer literacy camps to Aboriginal children. The programming includes learning games, activities related to local culture, and exploring the pleasure of reading and writing.

## YWCA Words for Women

Founded 1992  
514 866 9941 ext. 278

Serves Greater Montreal

This bilingual, free, tutoring literacy program offers women with nine years or less of schooling the opportunity to improve their reading, writing and arithmetic skills so they can increase their personal and economic independence. Each year,

from 50 to 60 participants are paired with trained volunteer tutors.



## South Shore Reading Council

Founded 1980  
450-671-4375

Serves Montreal's South Shore

Offers Mother Goose storytime for infants to 3 year olds; workshops to help parents of 3 to 5 year olds with school readiness; reading and homework support for elementary school kids; a peer-tutoring program at Champlain CEGEP and in local high schools; adult one-to-one tutoring, and a service for seniors for access to English-language information.



## Literacy in Action

Founded 1980  
819-346-7009

Serves the Estrie region, including

Coaticook, Des Sources, Granit, Haut-Saint-Francois, Memphremagog, Sherbrooke, Val Saint-Francois  
Literacy in Action is proud of its unique training for tutors, its quality one-on-one tutoring for adults, and its community partnerships. Special projects have included the Summer Reading Camps, the Learning Wall, drop-in high school tutoring, a fun early literacy booklet for parents, a "Let's Read" book bag, and a Clear Writing and Design Handbook.



## Quebec City Reading Council

Founded 1980  
418-681-1258

Serves the Quebec City region

Volunteers are the backbone of QCRC.

Without their endless hours of dedication and commitment, we couldn't reach as many adults and families as we currently do. We offer one-on-one tutoring, help getting back

to school, computer and internet skills, help filling out forms and understanding important documents.



## Gaspésie Literacy Council

Founded 1984  
(418) 368-4184

Serves all the south shore of the Gaspesie from

Listuguj to Gaspé, the Metis Beach area, the North Shore, including Baie Comeau, Sept Isles and Schefferville

Offers small group literacy courses, including computer literacy with seniors. The council works with MicMaq and Naskapi first nations school children to help them be successful. Adult education students can also get pre-tutoring through the council.



## Chateauguay Valley Literacy Council

Founded 1982

450-698-0342 or 1-888-598-0342

Serves Kahnawake and the Chateauguay Valley

Offers one-on-one tutoring, computer courses, educational outings and a weekly class. CVLC is most proud of its students' many achievements, including winning Canada

Post Literacy Awards, the Bleu Metropolis Learners Award, finding work, becoming Canadian citizens, and more. The council is also very proud of its volunteers who work thousands of hours each year to help students achieve their goals.



## Yamaska Literacy Council

Founded 1981

450-263-7503 or 866-337-7503

Serves the western section of the Eastern Townships School Board

Offers quality, innovative one-on-one tutoring, small group classes and family literacy programs. YLC also has a prison literacy program at the Cowansville Institution. It includes training inmates to tutor other inmates.



At this student conference workshop in 2008, participants learned about the benefits of positive self-talk and came up with their own examples.



## Students discover possibilities, meet others with low literacy

At LVQ conferences, students get a chance to see that there are other adults working on improving their literacy.

“At conferences, it’s been so important for students to discover they were not the only ones having trouble,” says past LVQ president Danielle Hay.

Students meet and talk together

at special sessions, and Danielle says it sometimes becomes quite tearful. After one workshop, Danielle remembers, a student came up to her crying and said, “This is the best thing that’s ever happened to me in my life. I was always called ‘dummy’ or ‘bozo’ in school... I’ll never be the same again!”

The student eventually completed high school and became a machinist.

In the mid-90s, Danielle Hay, Marilee DeLombard, and other LVQ board members began organizing dedicated student conferences to coincide with the LVQ AGMs. It was a chance to link students with other stu-

dents around Quebec, and to be in a positive learning environment together.

“That was something that I really believed in,” said Danielle. Student conferences have included visits to the Botanical Gardens a tour of the Montreal Gazette’s printing presses, and workshops on health.

“I learned how to purify water by adding a few ingredients to it and by using different filtering methods. And the end result was crystal clear water. But the best part for me as a student was the way

we all worked together asking questions and giving each other information. We all worked as a team to accomplish the filtration. We had fun in our laboratory!”

- Doreen Aubertin (pictured above)



Norman Latour filtering water at 2008 conference

## Learner writes about conference day

I liked the day it was good. The first workshop on phobias I really enjoyed it. It helped me recognize my own fears. The instructor told us about people’s fears and how they conquered them. There were people that discussed their own fears. There were quite a few people in the class. I had a good time in that class.

The afternoon class was fun. She explained about good exercises

and we also did some. We did some standing up. She suggested drinking lots of water, which is good for your health. There were quite a few people in that class as well.

I enjoyed the raffle. The meal was good. Overall it was a really good day and I learned new things. It was a good trip down and back. I enjoyed the ride there and back.

- Jean Clark, student conference delegate, November 2007

Literacy is a fundamental human right.

www.literacyvolunteersqc.ca  
1 866 581-9512



Literacy Volunteers of Quebec

## Women a major force in volunteer literacy work

Women have been attracted to Quebec's literacy councils since they started, making up the vast majority of volunteers and staff, and taking on leadership roles in the provincial organization.

"Well, who are the caregivers in life?" asks Nina Nichols rhetorically, when asked for an explanation. "Women want to do something constructive, not just play cards."

Nina, a volunteer with her council since 1980, and past LVQ president, has also been an active volunteer with Girl Guides, elementary schools, and her church. "My husband jokes, 'If I had a dollar for every hour you put into volunteering, I could have retired at 30!'"

Past LVQ president Marilee DeLombard said it could be because there were fewer women in the paid workforce.

Jill Roberts, executive director of Literacy Unlimited echoed that perspective. Many women, she said, like stay-at-home moms, had more time to help in their communities.

"Women's psychology is well-suited to the multi-tasking required of organizers (in lit-

eracy)," Marilee also suggested. Within the organization, she said, women have thrived doing the important jobs of assessing needs, thinking at the group level, working and cooperating with a variety of personalities and individual quirks.

"It's the nurturing thing," offers Gerald Bleser, who worked alongside the dozens of women volunteers who filled tutoring and council organizing roles in the early years.

"Women always tend to flow toward those roles. And sometimes they were women who had been teachers, but had retired and wanted to keep a hand in."

"Volunteering used to be what women did. Not in addition to another job," said past LVQ president Grace Saabas. Now, she said,



Joan Wilson conducts a workshop at the LVQ conference in October 1982. She was a trainer and board member from Laubach Literacy Canada. This is at the High School of Montreal, on University Avenue.

more volunteers are also working people.

By the mid-nineties, a well-functioning LVQ had come to rely on hours and hours of volunteer time spent meeting, tracking numbers, creating documents, contacting members, and so on.

How could a provincial organization keep running smoothly if a critical mass of volunteers were increasingly busy in the paid workforce?



**Retreating to strategize:** from left to right: Ed Chaffey, Grace Saabas, and Danielle Hay.

## Retreats: literacy leaders head for the hills

To work as a team across the distances, LVQ members sometimes needed to let their hair down together, build some trust, and create some bonds. A memorable part of the organization's past are retreats.

"We got to know each other on a personal basis," says Danielle Hay of the retreats, which happened nearly each year until a few years ago. Danielle, the former executive director of the Laurentian Literacy Council, remembers people showing off baby pictures, talking about what was going on in their lives, and building relationships. The retreats were held at camps or confer-

ence centres, usually in the Laurentians or Eastern Townships. The daytime would feature one or two workshops, the evenings, after dinner, might be spent playing games like ice-breakers, even dressing up



The 2002 retreat was held at Lac Simon in the Laurentians.

and role-play acting. "It led to greater camaraderie, free thinking, and discussions with students," said Gary Briand, a member of the Gaspésie Literacy Council since 1983.

"When we came back to our councils, we'd be inspired to do something."

Mainly for staff or volunteers who were doing administration at each council, the retreats were a chance to frankly discuss the nuts and bolts of running literacy services.

"They were profound learning experiences," said Gary.

"People would go back fired up to change or improve programs."

## LVQ seeks provincial government recognition

The federal government recognized LVQ in 1997 when it commissioned a report on Quebec's anglophone groups. Universalia conducted the study, and LVQ participated. Following the report, a coalition was formed of community groups and school boards doing literacy work in Quebec. LVQ and its members were founding partners of the coalition, called the Quebec English Literacy Alliance. QELA now has stable, multi-year federal funding and its work focuses on improving workforce and essential skills.

Thanks to a handful of determined individuals, LVQ made it through the trying times of the early 90s. But it had no core funding.

The provincial government gave money to groups doing community-based popular education work, just like LVQ. But the government didn't officially recognize LVQ.



Danielle Hay

"My main goal was to get us accredited at the government level," said Danielle Hay, whose first term as LVQ president began in 1994. At that time, the provincial gov-

ernment was starting to put more money toward literacy, and toward anglophone groups. That included LVQ's members.

"Our funding went up drastically," said Marilee DeLombard, executive director of the Western Quebec Literacy Council. In 1995, her council's budget shot up to \$25,000 through a provincial-program called PSAPA, for adult popular education groups. "We thought we were in heaven." Other councils got this core-funding too, and no longer had to rely on time-consuming yearly grants. Councils could start meeting their individual needs. They could hire staff, buy books, and develop new programs. Before this, the Laurentian Literacy Council didn't have a

stable location, and just met in homes or churches. Now they could establish a centre. Through membership fees, LVQ benefitted from councils' budget increases. It could have more provincial meetings. It started an annual student conference. But Danielle and others within LVQ knew it could be eligible for provincial grants directly. What they didn't know was it would take another four years. Danielle remembers facing skeptics at the education ministry. "They kept saying, 'Do you really need money?'" she said. They figured, she said, that since volunteers were doing the teaching work, staff weren't necessary for LVQ. The lobbying work began.

## Literacy leaders share student success stories

When tutors are asked why they decided to volunteer, a common response is: "I love to read, and I can't imagine life without a book." With every success of the students they work with, tutors have more reason to keep up the good work. Here are just a few stories of how improved literacy has changed students' lives:

"One young man wanted to learn to read to his children. He'd come for his lesson early Sunday morning so he'd be home when his kids got out of bed. The last thing he did during the lesson was practice reading a story, so he'd remember it when he got home, so he could read the story to his kids when they woke up.  
- Martha Shufelt, longtime tutor

"A woman from Granby worked in a sewing factory. Very menial, didn't make much money. Her husband was an executive in a large manufacturing company. One of the reasons she want-

ed to pursue literacy was she had learning disabilities and one of her sons was experiencing the same thing: failure at school, put downs, the whole thing. I remember her looking across the desk, saying, "I don't know how that makes you feel, but it makes me feel terrible." She was just in tears. She got paired with a tutor, and it's clear that literacy – a lot of it is about politics. Interpersonal relationships as well as at other levels. Her husband clearly kinda liked the fact she was powerless. And through the period of time she was with the tutor – she became powerful."

- Gerald Bleser, QLWG

"I taught a Romanian engineer. He couldn't get work as an engineer in Canada, he was working as a technician, in French. His English was terrible when I met him. He would thump a book with his fingers, and then thump his chest and say, 'Me Book.' We met once a week for six months and then he said, 'I write my exam.' ...I thought to myself, 'He's a smart man, but that's asking quite a bit,' but I said to him, 'Good luck to you,' and he wrote his exam and passed to become a junior engineer. I was very proud that he had done that."

- Nina Nichols, longtime tutor

"One of the students spoke one year, and it was probably the best speaker I ever heard. He talked about what his life was like before he learned how to read, and how reading changed his life. He told us a really amazing story. He was from Northern Ontario and went to Niagara to pick peaches one summer. After, he wanted to go north to see his family. He didn't read, and the road ahead was washed out. There was a sign, but he didn't know what it said. So he ended up getting stuck. When he came back to Niagara the next year, he heard about literacy and decided it would be a good idea to learn how to read. So the next time there was a sign up that said "Road washed out!" he knew what it said.



Grace Saabas

- Grace Saabas, longtime tutor

## Mission accomplished: LVQ gets accreditation and core funding

Meeting followed meeting, followed meeting. And finally, LVQ was accredited in 1999, while Cornelia Fischer was president.

"I can't tell you how many meetings I went to in those years. I almost lost my mind!" recalls Cornelia, laughing. In 1997, she joined Danielle Hay and Ann Gauvin, lobbying on behalf of LVQ and going to meetings in Quebec City and Montreal.

"I do recall the incredibly steep learning curve at the beginning, trying to master the acronym jungle," said Cornelia, listing off PSAPA, IFPCA, QELA, LLC-Q/LVQ, and others.

In 1998, Cornelia, Danielle, and Ann wrote a letter to the ministry of education making the case for LVQ's accreditation. The letter said how they had already applied twice for accreditation, after being encouraged by the ministry to do so, yet had only received a reply saying LVQ was eligible for accreditation. The letter continued:

*"There are many changes in funding forecast for accredited provincial literacy groups in the near future. It is therefore imperative that our English provincial organization has equal access to these new*



Worth the effort: From left to right, Cornelia Fischer, Ann Gauvin, and Grace Saabas, all past LVQ presidents.

*opportunities, not just from a financial perspective but also with a view to representation on key provincial committees."*

The letter went on to explain that since it started, LVQ *"has only survived off the funding provided by its membership, which the individual councils accomplished by fundraising. This diverted energy and time from the councils' primary raison d'être of providing service directly to the communi-*

*ty. The continued existence of the provincial body under adverse circumstances underlines the need for such a body."*

Accreditation came soon after this letter was sent. It was no coincidence that LVQ then started to get direct provincial funding in 1999, through PSAPA.

With core funding, LVQ could hire a coordinator. It was a big job to carve out this position. It would require good administration skills, people skills, the ability to manage many jobs at once, and a vision for the organization. The first coordinator hired, however, left the post within months to join a nunnery.

Cornelia Fischer, still president at the time, is credited with carrying LVQ through this difficult time.

Lillian Hartley was hired as the organization's second coordinator. "Our second coordinator turned out to be a godsend," said Cornelia. Lillian was president of the South Shore Reading Council when she was hired, and had been a tutor since 1997. Under Lillian's coordination, LVQ became more organized, gained focus, and its relations with Quebec's education ministry strengthened.

## Communicating in French means LVQ is heard

LVQ's very purpose is centred around acquiring language skills. Still, some members took convincing it was important to communicate with the provincial government in its official language, French. As president, Danielle Hay insisted that anyone who represented LVQ to the Quebec government be able to speak French. "I kept telling them there are openings to get money," said Danielle, who is fluently bilingual. She insisted that by not attending education ministry meetings, LVQ was losing out on funding opportunities.

"We became much more active with the Quebec government," said Lillian Hartley, who took on lobbying the provincial government, in French, when she became LVQ's coordinator.

Lillian also said she had to lobby within LVQ. Many people didn't like the idea of working with their francophone counterparts. The francophone popular education movement

operated much differently. It was also very effective. Lillian saw the benefits of creating partnerships.

"Up to this point, people feared the government and the grant system," Lillian said. "I have learned from experience that you just have to know how it works."

Lillian actively met with francophone literacy groups and people in the education ministry. "We were warmly welcomed and given a voice equal to that of the various francophone groups even though we represented only a very small proportion of the population," she said.

From this point, LVQ had a voice in Quebec's education ministry, and amongst other groups funded by PACTE, the provincial funding program for popular education community groups that replaced PSAPA in 2003.

With this lobbying, LVQ's provincial grants - and those of its members - became more



Meeting with the ministry: Diane Mockle (left) meets with LVQ members in March 2001

secure. Everyone was guaranteed certain amounts for a period of three years. "That was a biggie," said Lillian. "And we fought hard to keep it too."

During these years of lobbying, LVQ communicated a lot with Diane Mockle, who worked for adult education in Quebec's education ministry. Diane understood the community sector, having worked there herself. She effectively explained the reality of the anglophone literacy sector to the Quebec government.

"She was very, very helpful," said Lillian.

## LVQ shapes its future, grows...

Twenty years old, LVQ was becoming a mature organization. With reliable core funding, members met more often, became more cohesive, and could be given far more assistance. First though, it needed a plan.

At the urging of the education ministry, LVQ underwent a series of planning meetings that made the organization more professional. It developed a strategic plan in 2000, a communications plan in 2001, and in 2002, created an orientation manual, which laid out standard policies and procedures.

"The planning processes forced us to structure," said Lillian Hartley, past LVQ coordinator. "They forced us to reflect on the organization, on what we wanted to accomplish and how. It was a good thing."

The overhaul of LVQ's operations was federally funded, through IFPCA. Besides laying a framework for long-

term success, LVQ also created standards. For example, there were now basic criteria for financial reporting. "Before that," recalled Lillian, "People were practically handing in stuff written on the backs of napkins!"

LVQ also now had the stability to run yearly projects that helped member councils.

This included working with the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal to learn about screening volunteers. Another project looked at ways to assess students' ongoing progress.

In 2004, LVQ looked at the best practices of running a council. Each council was surveyed about their operations. Many had similar concerns, like how to best

recruit students, retain them, and how to best train new tutors. Councils identified their strengths and weaknesses. At a two-day meeting in Bromont, the results were shared. Councils that excelled in a certain area would give a presentation. For example, Literacy Unlimited had effective publicity, and so shared its strategies with all members. Chateauguy Valley Literacy Council was really good at involving its students in its activities, and so other LVQ members learned from that council. When there were no councils that excelled more than others in a certain area, everyone would sit at a roundtable to discuss that particular issue.

Funding for these yearly projects also came through the IFPCA. The federal government funded the projects, but they were administered provincially.



Lillian Hartley



Ann Gauvin leads strategic planning in 2000

Charting the course: LVQ's board meets at Chateau Vaudreuil in August, 2000 to map LVQ's future. Back row: Ricki Goldstein, Marilee DeLombard, Wendy Seys, Wakefield Harper, anonymous, Ed Chaffey, Nina Nichols. Front row: Jan McConnell, Michelle, Ann Gauvin, Kate Strickland, Danielle Hay, Jackie Hall.



Retirement cheer and a new year: LVQ volunteers help Ann Gauvin celebrate her retirement from the Quebec City school board, coinciding with New Year's Eve 2001. Back row, from left to right: Cornelia Fischer, Jan McConnell, Freda Hudson, Marilee DeLombard, Nina Nichols. Front row: Martha Shufelt, Danielle Hay, Gary Briand, Ann Gauvin

## Literacy advocates talk tutoring

"It was the inability to understand that in a country like ours there would be people who couldn't read or write... this was a cause I could really embrace. I felt that I could do some good, that I could change somebody's life."

- Ann Gauvin, on learning about the movement in 1980

"The volunteers are very independent, self-managing kind of people. And the ones who are manipulative and going for control, they don't last. It just isn't tolerated. Don't forget, it's education populaire.. your objective is autonomy and skills to manage their own lives, not to be controllers. Volunteers are good-hearted people, love reading, and understand implicitly that process of trying to help people become more autonomous."

- Gerald Bleser

"Tutoring no question is the most rewarding thing."

- Martha Shufelt

## LVQ makes progress, partners

In 2005, Joani Tannenbaum was hired to run the provincial organization. She had been a volunteer at the Yamaska Literacy Council for a decade, as a tutor and board member.

Following Lillian's lead, Joani has maintained regular contact with the education ministry, MELS, in French.

Core funding from MELS increased in 2006 and then again in the following years.

"In leaps and bounds," said LVQ's outgoing president Wendy Seys, on the boosts. "We didn't complain and we didn't ask too many questions."

Joani has made it a priority to keep the ministry informed of LVQ and the work of its members.

Relationships with other community group coalitions have also been developed.

"Partnerships are a good way to link into networks of community organizations and increase the visibility of LVQ and member groups, and raise awareness about literacy," Joani said. When community groups know about the literacy services available, she added, they are more likely to refer people they work with to LVQ's members.

In 2006, LVQ partnered with other groups doing anglophone literacy, including QLWG. They created the annual Adult Literacy Recognition awards, to honour students, volunteer tutors, and teachers in community groups and in school board programs.

In 2006, LVQ also became a member of the Coalition pour l'alphabétisation. This provincial coalition represents 16 groups who fight low literacy. It in-



Joani Tannenbaum

cludes English and French, and formal and non-formal groups. Through this, LVQ has strengthened its position as the voice for Anglophone community literacy groups in the province.

Outside Quebec, Joani has continued building on a strong relationship with Laubach Literacy Ontario, and has networked with Literacy Alberta and other literacy groups across Canada. LVQ's board of directors was restructured in 2007. Until then, each member was represented on the board, and professional development meetings then were more about managing LVQ. The board was reduced to five members. "Now when members meet, the focus is on professional development," said Joani.

In 2008, the national organization, LLC, closed its doors. Quebec councils had relied heavily on LLC's training certification. It offered certification for tutor trainers, who would train new volunteer tutors, and for trainer-trainers who would train the people who trained new tutors. Without LLC, there was a gap in this formal training process.

With the loss of LLC, LVQ changed its name a third time. Until 2008, it was called LLC-Q/LVQ. The organization took on the name it uses today, Literacy Volunteers of Quebec / Bénévoles en alphabétisation du Québec.

At the same time, bylaws were revised and redrafted in plain and simple language. They were written in a question and answer format. "The philosophy was to make them comprehensible to not only literacy students, but staff and volunteers as well!" Joani said.

"Joani as executive director has been extremely helpful," says Jill Roberts, executive director of Literacy Unlimited.

"It's really nice that I have somebody to go to. She's a wealth of information. If I have a question, a problem, a concern, she can put me in the right direction."

“ We talk about the costs of illiteracy: it ranges from workplace accidents, people who can't read danger signs or read labels, to simple inefficiencies that cost the employer. Everything right up to the cost of the prison system. The average reading level in federal penitentiaries is about three or four... The cost of low literacy is enormous.”

- Cornelia Fischer, tutor and past LVQ president



Dedicated to the cause: Past presidents of LVQ at the 25th anniversary, at Hotel Ruby Foo's in Montreal, November, 2005. Standing (left to right): Ann Gauvin, Cornelia Fischer, Grace Saabas, Marilee DeLombard, and Gordon McConnell. In front: Freda Hudson (left), and Nina Nichols.

## Autonomous Community Action

Literacy Volunteers of Quebec is generously funded through La Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport as an autonomous community action group. To qualify, LVQ meets these criteria:

- Not for profit
- Roots in the community
- Members involved in committees, AGM, meetings, etc.
- Freedom to determine mission, approach, practices, orientations
- Created through community initiative
- Objectives must encourage social transformation
- Practices must be citizen-based and broad approaches based on the globality of the problem sought to be addressed
- Administered by a board of directors independent of the public system

## Freda Hudson inspires literacy movement

While in her 70s, Freda Hudson took the tutor training workshop offered by the Townshipers Reading Council. It was 1984, and during the next two decades, the literacy movement benefitted from her effective leadership. She was active in her local council, provincially and nationally.

"If there is a grandmother for LVQ, it would be Freda," said Gary Briand, of Gaspésie Literacy Council. "She had an overwhelming influence on the English literacy movement in Quebec."

Freda is often credited with helping keep the organization

alive and hopeful during the tough times of the early 1990s.

"She was a beacon in

a dark time," says Cornelia Fischer. Freda served as president and director of LVQ for several years, and she also served on the board of LLC. Her colleagues remember her as organized, intelligent, direct, creative, and graceful. She believed that communication and good publicity were key to the success of the literacy movement. Freda's contributions to the movement included authorship of several Canadian publications, many of which are found in the libraries of the literacy councils today.

Throughout her advocacy, Freda always tutored. She was the first to bring students to meetings at her local council, which was now called Yamaska Literacy Council.

One of her students, Trudi Brown, wrote in 1996: "After 8 years, I am a student graduate of YLC. I thank Mrs. Hudson because she helped me, not only with my reading, but with writ-

ing and grammar, and most of all, my self-esteem. I feel more sure of myself now and I am not afraid to speak for myself."

Freda passed away in 2006.

The next year, LVQ created the "Freda Hudson Volunteer Recognition Award."

The award is presented annually to a volunteer who has made a remarkable contribution to literacy.



Leading light: Freda Hudson



Grace Saabas, 2007 winner of the Freda Hudson award, honours 2008 winner Martha Shufelt. Grace is attaching this silver pin (left), designed by Kate Strickland to honour Freda Hudson and recognize other great literacy volunteers. Mona Arsenault received the award in 2009, and Cornelia Fischer was awarded the pin in 2010.

## Literacy councils' doors are open! LVQ spreads the word

Free, confidential help is available for adults who want to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills. Advertising this

has always been a priority for LVQ and its members. Word-of-mouth is widely recognized as the most effective way to recruit. In

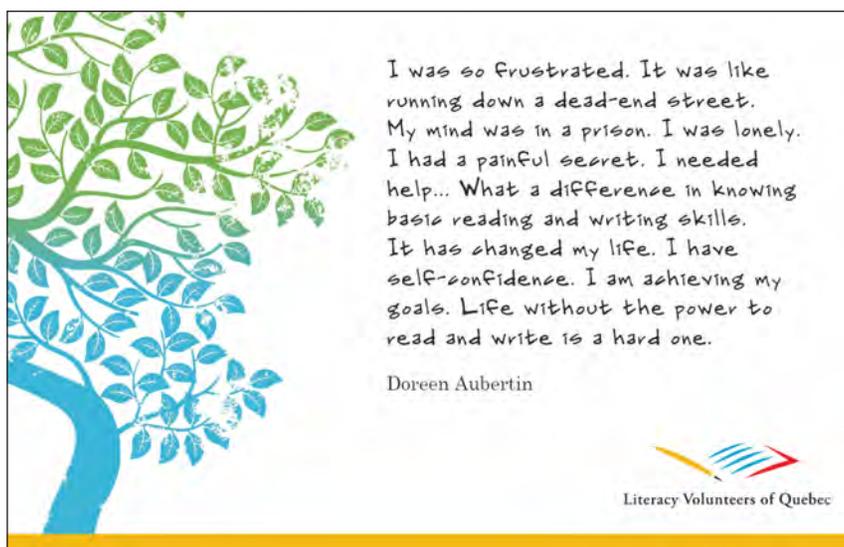
2008, LVQ trained a team of students from member councils to be literacy advocates. The Students Unlimited Network, or SUN team members, speak at public events about the impact of improved literacy.

"I have self-confidence. I am achieving my goals," writes one SUN team member, Doreen Aubertin. Her words, and those of others, were made into postcards. LVQ also started a toll-free phone number in 2008. Callers from anywhere

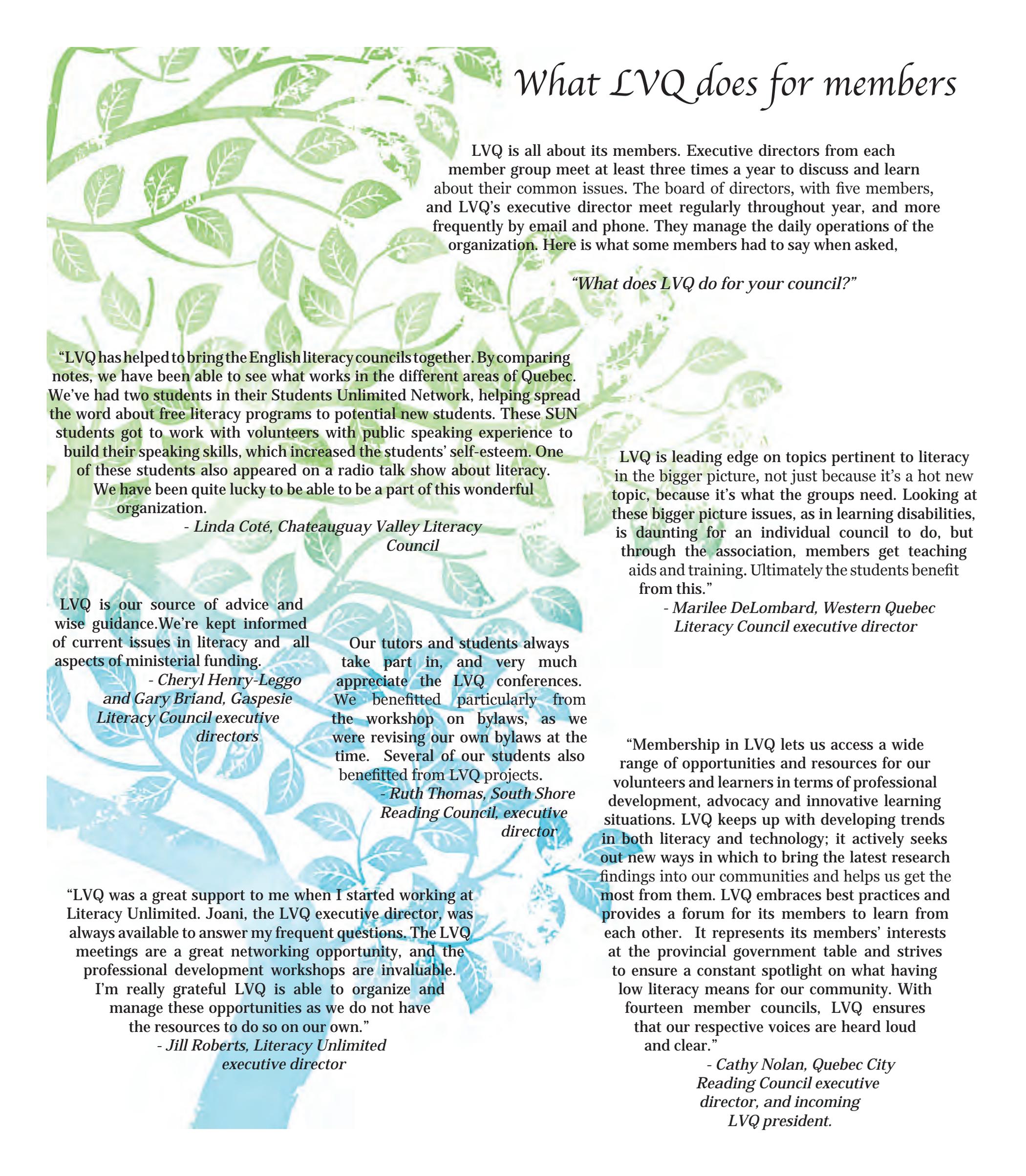
in Quebec can be referred to a local literacy council. In 2009, LVQ produced a DVD called "More than words on paper: building literacy one reader at a time." It featured students and tutors from across Quebec, and promoted LVQ members' free literacy services. LVQ and its members also work to promote literacy services through local media, posters, at community fairs, and more.

"Our doors are not being broken down by herds of people saying 'Teach me how to read and write!'" says tutor Nina Nichols at the South Shore Reading Council. While low literacy affects an estimated 55% of Quebec's adults, only a small fraction are seeking the available help.

"It takes a very brave person to come forward and say, 'Look, I really need help with this, I can't read,'" said tutor Martha Shufelt. They have to be very, very motivated."



This postcard is one of a series produced by LVQ to spread the message about literacy.



# What LVQ does for members

LVQ is all about its members. Executive directors from each member group meet at least three times a year to discuss and learn about their common issues. The board of directors, with five members, and LVQ's executive director meet regularly throughout year, and more frequently by email and phone. They manage the daily operations of the organization. Here is what some members had to say when asked,

*“What does LVQ do for your council?”*

“LVQ has helped to bring the English literacy councils together. By comparing notes, we have been able to see what works in the different areas of Quebec. We've had two students in their Students Unlimited Network, helping spread the word about free literacy programs to potential new students. These SUN students got to work with volunteers with public speaking experience to build their speaking skills, which increased the students' self-esteem. One of these students also appeared on a radio talk show about literacy.

We have been quite lucky to be able to be a part of this wonderful organization.

*- Linda Coté, Chateauguay Valley Literacy Council*

LVQ is our source of advice and wise guidance. We're kept informed of current issues in literacy and all aspects of ministerial funding.

*- Cheryl Henry-Legger and Gary Briand, Gaspesie Literacy Council executive directors*

Our tutors and students always take part in, and very much appreciate the LVQ conferences. We benefitted particularly from the workshop on bylaws, as we were revising our own bylaws at the time. Several of our students also benefitted from LVQ projects.

*- Ruth Thomas, South Shore Reading Council, executive director*

“LVQ was a great support to me when I started working at Literacy Unlimited. Joani, the LVQ executive director, was always available to answer my frequent questions. The LVQ meetings are a great networking opportunity, and the professional development workshops are invaluable.

I'm really grateful LVQ is able to organize and manage these opportunities as we do not have the resources to do so on our own.”

*- Jill Roberts, Literacy Unlimited executive director*

LVQ is leading edge on topics pertinent to literacy in the bigger picture, not just because it's a hot new topic, because it's what the groups need. Looking at these bigger picture issues, as in learning disabilities, is daunting for an individual council to do, but through the association, members get teaching aids and training. Ultimately the students benefit from this.”

*- Marilee DeLombard, Western Quebec Literacy Council executive director*

“Membership in LVQ lets us access a wide range of opportunities and resources for our volunteers and learners in terms of professional development, advocacy and innovative learning situations. LVQ keeps up with developing trends in both literacy and technology; it actively seeks out new ways in which to bring the latest research findings into our communities and helps us get the most from them. LVQ embraces best practices and provides a forum for its members to learn from each other. It represents its members' interests at the provincial government table and strives to ensure a constant spotlight on what having low literacy means for our community. With fourteen member councils, LVQ ensures that our respective voices are heard loud and clear.”

*- Cathy Nolan, Quebec City Reading Council executive director, and incoming LVQ president.*



Literacy Volunteers of Quebec marches in the 2009 St. Patrick's Day Parade. Carrying the LVQ banner, from left to right, LVQ administrative assistant Vicky Swift, LVQ executive director Joani Tannenbaum, and LVQ volunteer Karen Hillsdon. Behind the banner, volunteers from local councils, SUN team students and LVQ directors ride in a decorated Volkswagen bug. They are wearing bright sweatshirts with letters stuck to them. About 700,000 spectators came to the parade, and LVQ marched again in 2010.

## Pencils sharpened, LVQ marches toward bright future

At 30 years old, LVQ is financially stable, efficiently managed, and organized.

It's come a long way from where it was 30 years ago, but the heart and soul of its work is the same: to support the work of volunteers on the front lines of literacy.

The organization owes its success to volunteers at LVQ member groups who have spent so much time organizing, collaborating, and advocating on the provincial level, often while still keeping active in their own local literacy groups.

LVQ now has an executive director, an administrative assistant, and hires contract positions for short-term projects.

With less time to devote than their counterparts of past decades, volunteers at LVQ members group can rely on a strong provincial organization. Through LVQ, volunteers can access a provincial network of literacy providers, professional development tools, resources to promote literacy and their local council, and more.

"I think it's much more pro-active now," says Gary Briand, co-executive director of the Gaspesie Literacy Council. He's been an LVQ member since 1983. "Before, problems would occur and we would all react."

Member councils are regularly represented at the provincial government, and to their francophone counterparts. Councils know where they stand with the government, and funding is deposited directly into their bank accounts. Important dates are clear.

"It's a relief for councils," Gary said.

"It's become more professional, more accountable, more business-like... and that's a good thing," said Jill Roberts, executive director of Literacy Unlimited, and past LVQ director.

A smoothly-functioning organization means that when members meet, they are not consumed with trying to make things work. They have time to discuss common issues and exchange information.

Now, LVQ is reaching out to sectors outside

of the literacy community. This past year, healthcare professionals across Quebec participated in an LVQ videoconference about the link between low literacy and access to health information and services.

LVQ is now developing a toolkit to educate future healthcare workers about literacy and health literacy issues before they enter the workforce.

LVQ's latest project will bring training online, responding to the training gap left when LLC closed its doors in 2008.

LVQ continues to expand its networks, building relationships with other provincial literacy organizations.

All these efforts are made with the goal of supporting the members and literacy volunteers so they can provide high quality front-line literacy services to English-speaking Quebecers. All of LVQ's work is guided by the belief literacy is a basic human right, and the movement will stay strong as long as there is a need.

# Milestones in LVQ History



- 1980** Adult education coordinators at each regional school board initiate the establishment of a volunteer literacy council in each region by recruiting, training and supporting volunteers.
- 1982** Laubach Literacy Canada – Quebec (LVQ) is formally incorporated, with Louise Caron Orr as the first president.
- 1983** The first national Laubach Literacy Canada (LLC) conference is hosted in Lennoxville, Quebec, by LVQ and the Quebec school boards. Comedian Dave Broadfoot performs.
- 1984** Freda Hudson, along with five other volunteers, gets her tutor training at a workshop in Cowansville. For more than two decades she would be dedicated to advancing the volunteer literacy movement in Quebec.
- 1986** The first literacy conference for LVQ's students and tutors is held at Domaine St. Laurent.
- 1988** LVQ reports there are 248 active students throughout 11 councils in the province.
- 1989** LVQ and Quebec's school boards host a national Laubach conference in Montreal, including a banquet dinner and tour of the Montreal Gazette.
- 1991** LVQ reports there are 413 active students in 12 councils in Quebec.
- 1993** After much discussion LVQ agrees to include all volunteer-based community literacy groups in its membership, not just those affiliated with Laubach.
- 1995** Councils across Quebec begin receiving regular core funding from Quebec's education ministry.
- 1999** Quebec's education ministry gives accreditation to LVQ, resulting in regular core funding for the organization.
- 2000** Goals and values are discussed and agreed upon when LVQ develops a strategic plan.
- 2001** Lillian Hartley, a literacy tutor and president of the South Shore Reading Council, becomes LVQ's provincial coordinator.
- 2003** LVQ defines itself as the voice for community anglophone literacy groups in the province as it participates in the education ministry meetings, and talks directly with its francophone counterparts.
- 2005** Joani Tannenbaum is hired as LVQ's executive director, after a decade of volunteering at Yamaska Literacy Council.
- 2007** The Freda Hudson Volunteer Recognition Award is created.
- 2008** Laubach Literacy Canada closes its doors. LVQ changes its name from LLC-Q/LVQ, to Literacy Volunteers of Quebec / Bénévoles en alphabétisation du Québec.
- 2010** LVQ celebrates 30 years as a provincial organization of community, volunteer-based literacy groups! It proudly represent 14 members.

