

Goldbloom Award Winners Bechervaise, Briand, Gatre Guemiri and Orr Know How To Get Things Done

For Immediate Release

Montreal, August 26, 2015 - The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) is pleased to announce the winners of its seventh annual Sheila and Victor Goldbloom Distinguished Community Service Award. Among them are two regional pioneers of Quebec's English-speaking community's advocacy movement, Lynden Bechervaise and Gary Briand, as well as two proponents of English community diplomacy, former Alliance Quebec president Royal Orr and Fatiha Gatre Guemiri, the multicultural, multilingual director of the East Island Network for English-Language Services.

Bechervaise and Briand are the founding fathers of the Committee for Anglophone Social Action and a number of other English community organizations on the Gaspé coast. During the politically charged 1970s, Bechervaise and Briand founded Quebec's first regional association to promote and protect the interests of the English-speaking community. That same year they also founded the enduring weekly SPEC newspaper. Bechervaise has been a founding father of a number groups including the Gaspé-Jersey-Guernsey Association, the Council of Quebec Minorities, Alliance Quebec, the English Adult Education Directors Association, the Quebec Community Newspaper Association and CEDEC, to name a few. Presently he works to educate the young and young at heart about traditional shipbuilding and the evolution of the industry on the coast. Briand, who writes a regular column for SPEC, was also a founding member of Vision Gaspé-Percé Now and the Gaspesian Literacy Council, which he co-founded more than 35 years ago. Despite ailing health, he is determined to ensure that local children and parents have access to English books and literacy-focused activities.

A perfectly trilingual new Canadian, Gatre Guemiri works to establish harmony between individuals of different cultures and languages in her professional and personal life. Gatre Guemiri was nominated for her work as director of the East-Island Network for English-language Services, an organization she co-founded. She is also recognized for her intercultural and interspiritual dialogue work between the Jewish and Arab communities as a member of the Canadian Council for Muslim Women. Her sense of diplomacy is credited with establishing a language for common ground to increase access to services in English while respecting the right of health and social service employees to work in French and her perseverance in sealing a partnership between her network and the health care planners to improve access to front line services for vulnerable English-speaking seniors across four CSSS (Centre de santé et service sociaux) territories.

Orr was nominated for his dedication and leadership, as both a volunteer and a professional, supporting the English-speaking communities of Quebec and vulnerable communities across the globe. A past-president of Alliance Quebec and executive director of Townshippers' Association, Orr has devoted countless hours to improving the situation of English-speaking Quebecers. He has also volunteered for a number of organizations including Montreal City Mission, the Immigration Clinic at St-James United Church, and has worked with the Church in Tanzania to improve access to basic health services and HIV care. As a professional, Orr has been a thought-provoking host at CBC, CJAD and Vision Television. He is a communications consultant who has gone above and beyond expectations in providing invaluable advice to the community, most recently to the English-speaking community of the Quebec City region on controversial reforms in health and social services.

"All of our winners are champions of their communities who are widely recognized for their ingenuity, their exceptional communications skills and their ability to get things done," commented QCGN board member and jury chair Irene Tschernomor. "Not only are they exceptional community builders, they are real bridge builders between our English-speaking community and our partners in Quebec society."

The Sheila and Victor Goldbloom Distinguished Community Service Award, which honours individuals who have gone above and beyond in contributing to the vitality and reputation of the English-speaking community and who have built bridges of understanding between Quebecers of different backgrounds, was created by the Quebec Community Groups Network in 2009. This year's winners were selected by an eminent jury of past winners and judges including James Hughes, Judy Martin, Kevin Tierney, Father John Walsh and Tschernomor.

The Goldbloom Awards will be presented during a community recognition evening at Montreal's St. James Club on Thursday, Oct. 8. The ceremony will be emceed by Sonali Karnick, host of CBC Television's *Our Montreal* and CBC Radio's *All in a Weekend*. You can reserve your tickets online now at <http://qcgnevents.com/>

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together more than 45 English-language community organizations across Quebec. As a centre of evidence-based expertise and collective action, it identifies, explores and addresses strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of the English-speaking community of Quebec and encourages dialogue and collaboration among its member organizations, individuals, community groups, institutions and leaders.

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