

VOLUME 61 ISSUE 1

SPRING 2023

QFHSA NEWS

THE NEWSMAGAZINE FOR HOME AND SCHOOL MEMBERS



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The Quebec
Federation of
Home and School
Associations

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations Inc. is an independent, incorporated, not for profit volunteer organization dedicated to enhancing the education and general well-being of children and youth.

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations Inc. promotes the involvement of parents, students, educators, and the community at large in the advancement of learning and acts as a voice for parents.

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All submissions may be edited for length, clarity, accuracy, grammar, and spelling.

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A huge thank you to the local Home and School Associations that shared their photos for this issue.

We welcome your letters!

You are invited to send us your comments/suggestions on this edition of the QFHSA News by email to news@qfhsa.org.



The QFHSA's Annual General Meeting: *Engaging in the Democratic Life of the Federation*

THE QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS thrives, thanks to the dedication of our staff and a vast number of volunteers. Simply stated, our federation could not exist without the impressive contributions of volunteers both at the provincial level (our board of directors and committee volunteers) and at the local level (the countless individuals active in the Quebec-wide network of local Home and School Associations).

Once a year, the QFHSA gathers everyone for an Annual General Meeting, an essential activity in the democratic life of our federation. At this year's meeting, the following will be discussed and voted on:

- **The Auditor's Financial Review**
- **The Proposed Budget for 2024**
- **The Proposed Resolutions for 2023**
- **The Proposed Slate of Directors for the 2023/24 QFHSA Board of Directors**
- **The QFHSA's Book of Reports 2022-23, which chronicles the activities of the federation's committees and staff**

This year's Annual Meeting will take place on Thursday, June 1st on Zoom.

Every local Home and School Association is strongly urged to send a delegate to the QFHSA Annual General Meeting. **The participation of our local Home and School Associations is an essential ingredient for the success of this event.**

QFHSA Resolutions: *Voicing the Concerns of our Community*

Each year, the QFHSA's committees closely follow the latest developments in Quebec education and politics—developments that will affect our parents and our students. This leads to the creation of resolutions that reflect the federation's stance on the issues of the day.

This year, the QFHSA's Resolutions Subcommittee is focussing on the following issues/topics:



The new *Culture and Citizenship in Quebec* course (curriculum, development, consultations, and implementation)

Continued on the next page



The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations




79th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING


**Thursday, June 1st, 2023
7:00 p.m. on Zoom**


Each local Home and School Association is required to send one delegate to the meeting. Registration forms are now available.


For more information, please contact the office at info@qfhsa.org or the president of your local Home and School Association.


QFHSA's Annual General Meeting
Continued from the previous page


 Parental access to Student Ombudsman services in English


 English education for English-speaking immigrating children on humanitarian grounds

 Use and legality of the Notwithstanding Clause (specifically in relation to provincial Bills 21 and 96)

 Federal Bill C-13 and the dangers it poses to the English-speaking minority in Quebec

 Increased support for teachers/school staff

 A plan to address and aid students who have fallen behind due to the pandemic

 The changes to Sexuality Education and how it is to be taught (embedded in the *Culture and Citizenship in Quebec* course)

The research and discussions continue among the QFHSA's committee members. The draft resolutions will be sent out to Home and School members by April 20th for consultation in advance of the Annual General Meeting.

Again, we cannot overstate the importance of our local Home and School Associations' participation at the QFHSA Annual General Meeting.



This Page: Images from Adobe Stock

Join the discussion!

Natasha Drysdale,
Chair, Education, Rights, and Resolutions Committee

Dates to Remember

Sunday, April 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline for Submissions for the QFHSA's Major Awards and the Newsletter Prize • Deadline to RSVP for the QFHSA Awards Banquet
Monday, May 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline for Submissions for the Golden Torch and Unsung Hero Awards
Monday, May 1 and Thursday, May 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Council Meetings with Local Home & School Associations (7 p.m. on Zoom)
Friday, May 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QFHSA Awards Banquet at Novotel Montreal Airport
Thursday, June 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QFHSA's 79th Annual General Meeting (On Zoom)
Wednesday, June 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline for Submissions for the "Focus on the Locals" section of the <i>QFHSA News</i>— Summer Edition

The Lifelong Gift of Reading

A Message from the QFHSA's President



Did you know?

- 33% of high school graduates in the United States never read another book the rest of their lives
- 42% of American college graduates never read another book

And how are we doing in Canada? According to a 2021 survey shared by the Wordsrated website, 79% of adult Canadians read at least one book in the past year, but that number has decreased by 10% since 2014. Moreover, according to ABC Life Literacy Canada, "48% of adult Canadians have literacy skills that fall below a high school level."

When I read all of these statistics, I was left scratching my head. I could never go a day without spending some time reading a book and I am so thankful that both my daughters also love to read.

That love of reading begins at home and is strengthened at school. Most of our schools host a "Love to Read Week" every year and the Lester B. Pearson and the English Montreal School Boards take part in the high school "Battle of the Books" contest.

Reading skills also come in handy for solving those word problems in mathematics. And, by the way, congratula-

tions to all the participants at the Lester B. Pearson "Math Olympics," an annual event that was held in late March.

Given the importance of strong reading skills, I am extremely grateful for companies that donate boxes of books to educational organizations. The QFHSA is so thankful to First Book Canada for giving us thousands of books these past years. The books have been distributed to many via the QFHSA's Born to Read Program and Reluctant Reader Literacy Project. In addition, for the past couple of years, the QFHSA has donated a treasure trove of First Book Canada books to local Home and School Associations for their December holiday basket collections.

You may also have noticed that the QFHSA's gift of choice for local Home and School Associations participating in our major events, including our Annual General Meeting, is usually a book for the school library.

And, thinking back to those statistics, I see the positive side of those numbers: 67% of U.S. high school and 58% of U.S. college graduates make reading books a part of their lives along with almost 80% of adult Canadians. Much better!

Please keep on reading and take care and stay safe.

Rosemary Murphy



Finding a Clear Path Forward

A Message from the Executive Director



EVERY NOW AND THEN, the QFHSA has an opportunity to apply for a grant to support a project. We don't apply for grants just for the sake of getting money. We wait until something comes along that we would really like to do. Then when an opportunity arises to fund that project, we get into gear. Such was the situation with the **Community Services Recovery Fund**. (See page 12 for more information.)

When we learned that funds were available to support organizations hobbled by COVID, our first reaction was that the QFHSA does not need help. We have a strong board, excellent staff, solid funding, and a noble purpose. However, we were aware from all the discussions at the Regional Council meetings that many of our member associations have been struggling.

Part of this struggle is because parents have been graduating out of the schools over the past three years. Meanwhile, the families who joined school communities during the same period did not get to experience well-supported and vibrant Home and Schools—the kind of Home and School life that so many of us enjoyed before the pandemic hit. With little or no in-school volunteering opportunities, with fewer activities/events to enjoy, it is entirely understandable that our new families have felt less engaged in their local associations.



Photo from Adobe Stock

In addition, when the veterans leave without establishing a strong replacement team to carry the momentum forward, things can start to fall apart. No one wants to see that happen. A Home and School can do so much for the school, for the kids, and for the community.

This is where we perceived a need. The Community Services Recovery funding would give local Home and School Associations a chance to get a clearer picture of where they were before the pandemic, what sorts of things were let go during the shut downs and restricted access, and what was left to build on for the next cohort of parents.

Keep in mind, too, that the QFHSA archives can also play

an important role in providing a picture of life in our local Home and School Associations pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and post pandemic.

At the end of every year, each Home and School Association is required to submit to the QFHSA an activity report from the president and a financial report from the treasurer. These year-end reports can provide new leadership with a historical perspective on their local association. New Home and School executives can find out what

sorts of things the association was doing last year, 5 years ago, and even 10 years ago. This can be crucial if outgoing leadership fails to leave behind enough archival material to support the new team of interested parents.

Once the Community Services Recovery funding has been secured, we will get in touch with our member Home and School Associations to invite them to participate in the project.

The slow recovery process our Home and Schools are experiencing has led me to think about the QFHSA's own membership ups and downs through the years. I have pulled some of the data together to look at the big picture. This data shows that the QFHSA had to do some rebuilding of its own in its over 75 year history. I invite you to read more about our federation's membership history in the article on

page 11. It is interesting to see when the seminal changes happened in the history of our federation.

Each Home and School Association could tell a similar story about its membership highs and lows, its triumphs and challenges—and the pandemic has certainly provided its share of challenges. With the help of the Community Services Recovery Fund, the QFHSA will be able to provide greater assistance to our local associations in their recovery.

Spring brings fresh air and new possibilities for everyone. Open the windows and let it in.

Carol Meindl



The QFHSA's Regional Council Meetings: *Sharing Information and Making New Connections*

IN LATE JANUARY, an enthusiastic group of parents, QFHSA board members, and QFHSA staff gathered on Zoom for a Regional Council meeting. The discussion was lively and a great deal of information was shared during the 2-hour event.

News from the QFHSA

QFHSA Membership Services Coordinator Marlyn Brownrigg got things underway by providing the federation's latest news with help from several board and staff members.

Natasha Drysdale, chair of the federation's Rights and Resolutions Subcommittees, gave an overview of the committees' recent activities. We learned that the Rights Subcommittee is studying the new citizenship course, which is currently being piloted in Quebec schools. The subcommittee also prepared a couple of timely press releases. The press releases express the QFHSA's support for an investigation into the use of the **Notwithstanding Clause** and **the appointment of a federal special representative on combatting Islamophobia**.

From Board Member Samantha Patel, who chairs the Education Subcommittee, we learned that her team is reviewing school curricula, sexuality education in schools, and exploring new ways to promote the QFHSA's Born to Read Program. The committee is also working to boost literacy in our schools by providing books for classroom and school libraries.

Mimi Tabaczuk, the QFHSA's administrative assistant, shared the news that the QFHSA would be offering free family workshops this winter. Mimi organized a series of workshops: cooking workshops with *Épiculiste* and nature appreciation workshops with Ecomuseum Zoo and *le Nichoir*. See the article on page 16 to read more about these special events, which took place in February and March.



In Person or Online Events: *What's the Preference?*

QFHSA event planning was the evening's first topic of discussion. Given the cancellation of the November in-person Fall Conference due to low registration, QFHSA staff and board members were eager to gauge from local Home and School executives their appetite for future in-person events. Here is the feedback from the meeting:

While Zoom events are efficient and easier for parents to attend, they do not provide the same opportunities for networking and socializing that in-person events do. As one Home and School member explained, at this point in the long COVID pandemic, we all feel a need for connection,

a need to start seeing people again.

But what is the ideal format for in-person events? The QFHSA's Fall Conference was to be an all-day Saturday event. However, with the lifting of pandemic restrictions, Saturdays have once again become busy for families. Often there are multiple activities to coordinate (children's sports and other leisure pursuits, birthday parties, etc.). Given this reality, parents find it hard to dedicate an entire weekend day to an event. Regional Council participants suggested that the QFHSA organize shorter events, perhaps on a Thursday or Friday evening.

When it comes to planning parent workshops, participants see the value of hybrid events, a format that gives parents the option of attending in person or tuning in online. In addition, varying where the in-person meeting is held gives parents from different neighbourhoods/regions the opportunity to attend in person.

Would Home and Schools welcome the return of an in-person awards dinner this spring? The answer was an overwhelming "Yes." Home and Schoolers at the meeting felt parents would very much enjoy this opportunity to get together and celebrate. This was welcome news for the QFHSA as the staff and board are also looking forward to reconnecting in person with our local Home and School Associations. You will find information about this year's event on page 10.

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News for You

Regional Council Meetings

Continued from the previous page

Noticing Pandemic Learning Gaps this Year?

The discussion then turned to how our children are faring at school this year. We learned that some are clearly struggling. One parent summed up the situation as follows: The curriculum has not changed, but kids are not as prepared to meet it. Parents wondered if the Quebec government could do more to help bridge the learning gaps.

Elementary-school parents and teachers at the meeting expressed several concerns.

- Students in the early grades seem to be struggling with reading. This is a real worry given that strong reading skills are an important ingredient in future school success.
- While the kindergarten program was changed in favour of more play and less structure, the Grade 1 learning targets have remained unchanged. Is the transition to Grade 1 a lot harder for students now?
- The pandemic cohort of young learners spent their early school years with masked teachers, losing out on the benefits of learning from facial expressions.

Parents of high schoolers also shared their worries for their children. One parent noted lower class averages in her child's report card, an indication that our children are struggling.

The good news is that some elementary and high schools are taking steps to close the learning gaps by offering

tutoring and homework workshops before class, at lunch, and after school. Parents are also taking the initiative by enrolling their children in the free tutoring offered by LEARN.

In addition to academic gaps, parents and teachers are noting behavioural gaps. As one parent explained, we are seeing the consequences of those missed opportunities for group interaction during the pandemic. This is particularly true for students in Grades 1 to 3, who spent most of their early school years learning remotely. There are more instances of fighting and conflict. A Grade 1 teacher at the meeting remarked that she is spending more time dealing with behavioural issues. Our students are dealing with a lot of anxiety, too.

At the meeting, we learned how one elementary school is tackling behavioural issues by encouraging children to visit the "calm room" during the 15 to 20 minutes between their morning arrival and the start of the school day. Not a bad way to begin the day!



Photo from Adobe Stock

How Involved Are Parents in Home & School this Year?

Then the discussion shifted to parental involvement in local Home and School Associations. As we know, most local associations had to operate very differently for the past few years. What effect has the

pandemic disruption had on our local associations? For one thing, parents of children in Grades 1 to 3 have not had a "normal" Home and School experience during their child's early school years. It is no surprise, then, that they feel less engaged in their Home and Schools. However, now that the schools have once again opened their doors to in-person volunteering, there is an opportunity to re-engage parents. In addition, families new to schools this year are helping to renew and reinvigorate their local associations.

High-school level Home and School Associations typically do not get the same parent engagement enjoyed by neighbouring elementary schools. It may be that after being so involved at the elementary level, parents are looking to step back by the time high school rolls around. Marlyn, a veteran volunteer at both the elementary- and high-school levels, said that it is important to reassure parents that the volunteer commitment at the high-school level is much lighter. With fewer activities to organize, volunteers are less busy.

Volunteering at your son or daughter's high school has a number of benefits. The biggest perk? It gives parents the chance to connect with one another. Indeed, one parent said that attending Home and School meetings is often the only way to meet other parents. The meetings also allow you to "get the pulse of the school and more of a feel of what is going on," according to another parent.

It is an observation often made: In local Home and School Associations, a lot of the work is accomplished by

Continued on the next page

Regional Council Meetings

Continued from the previous page

a small group of hard-working volunteers. Has the pandemic worsened this situation? It seems so. However, Home and Schools are working hard to boost meeting attendance. Some shift from in-person to online meetings during the winter months; others offer a hybrid format, always giving parents the choice to attend in person or online. And the good news is that despite struggles with volunteer numbers, Home and Schools have been able to organize very successful events this year with the help of parents who volunteer/participate in large numbers for these big events. One Home and School, for example, had double the number of attendees they expected for their comedy night.

Sharing Ideas

What activities are Home and

Schools doing this year? Are they keeping some of the new things they tried during the pandemic? Are they bringing back their pre-pandemic activities? Here are some examples of what local associations have been organizing:

- A modified **Santa Lunch**. The traditional turkey dinner was changed to a school-wide pizza day. Holiday decorations and volunteers dressed as elves made the event special.
- A triumphant return of a **Holiday Sing-Along**. The outdoor event attracted over 1000 people and featured a bake sale and book fair.
- An online **Holiday Toy Auction** using the online site, 32auctions. Parents donate toys and prizes; bidding/purchasing is done online. It's the second year the Home and School organized the event.

- The return of an **In-Person Book Fair**. Not as popular as expected at one Home & School, but another had great success.
- A new **Felix and Norton Cookie Dough** fundraiser was a hit.
- **The DFS Fundraiser Catalog**: an easy fundraiser
- **Lunchtime food fundraisers** are continuing—but pizza lunches are more volunteer heavy when individual pizza boxes are no longer available.
- **Pizza 900 pizza kits** for families.
- **Bake Sale** at a high school Open House.
- **Comedy Night**: Some are bringing back this event; others are trying it for the time.
- **Movie Nights**.
- **Plus For Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week (TSAW)**:
 - **Monetary donations** from families
 - **Box lunches** for teachers (introduced during the pandemic and now the staff preference)
 - **Free front-line worker COVID gifts** where still available
 - **Christmas/holiday gifts that parents will not use** are donated to Home & School for staff gift bags
 - **Local businesses** can be amazingly generous

As the above list shows, our local Home and School Associations are finding ways to make an important impact in their school communities—despite the challenges presented by this not-quite-back-to-normal school year.

Carry on, wonderful volunteers!

Karen Henchey, *Communications Officer*

Tips for Boosting Parent Involvement at Your Local Home & School Association

Take advantage of every opportunity to connect with your parents.



- **Use social media.** Some Home & Schools have a communications volunteer who regularly posts on the Home & School's Facebook page and any other Facebook pages or groups associated with the school.
- **Send out a Home & School newsletter.**
- Ask your school administration to **include Home & School news in the school's newsletter to parents.**
- **Take advantage of Open Houses.** Have a booth, make a presentation to parents to explain what Home & School is all about.
- For High School Home & Schools, **connect with the feeder elementary Home & Schools.** Explain the benefits of getting involved at the high-school level.
- **Start small with new parents.** Ask them to bake or cook for events, teacher appreciation, etc.
- **Design a "Why Parents Should Get Involved" poster.** Use it at events, display it in areas at school where parents will see it.



The QFHSA's 2023 Awards



Celebrate Your Local Heroes The Golden Torch, Unsung Hero, and Newsletter Awards

EACH YEAR, THE QFHSA HELPS local Home and School Associations recognize the heroes in their midst—the Home and School volunteers who have made an important impact in their school communities. Who would you like to recognize in 2022/23?



Photo from Adobe Stock

The Golden Torch and Unsung Hero Awards

To find out more about the **Golden Torch** and **Unsung Hero Awards**, please visit our website (qfhsa.org). From the left menu, select "Events," then "Awards." Choose the award you are interested in from the list to read more about it and get the nomination form. (Note: There is one nomination form for both awards.) You can also use this link to access the nomination form: <https://bit.ly/3GuQAI5>. The cost for the certificate and lapel pin for each award winner is \$12.50.

Deadline for Submissions: May 1

The Newsletter Prize

Recognize the valiant efforts of your communications volunteer(s) by nominating your Home and School's newsletter for the QFHSA **Newsletter Award**. The nomination form is available on the Home page of our website (qfhsa.org) or you can use this link: <https://bit.ly/43I3MZw>.



Deadline for Submissions: April 30



Good News! Our Annual In-Person Awards Banquet Is Back!

Invite your local Home and School Association's award winners to a wonderful night of celebration and fun! Purchase your tickets at <http://bit.ly/414EMEv> or by emailing info@qfhsa.org.

RSVP Deadline: April 30th

We're Back!



**The QFHSA
Awards Banquet**

**Friday, May 26th
5:30 P.M.**

**Novotel Montreal Airport
2599 Alfred Nobel Boulevard
Ville St-Laurent, Quebec, H4S 2G1**

Cocktails, Dinner, and a DJ!

Ticket information will be sent to local Home and School executives soon.



Celebrate Exceptional Educators, Initiatives, and Volunteers

It's not too late to submit nominations for the following QFHSA major awards: [Pat Lewis Environmental Award](#); [Pat Lewis Humanitarian Award](#); [Gordon Paterson Award](#); [Lewis Peace Prize](#); [Home & School Volunteer of the Year Award](#).

For more information about the awards, click on the titles above or visit our website (qfhsa.org). From our Home Page, select "Events" on the left menu, then select "Awards."

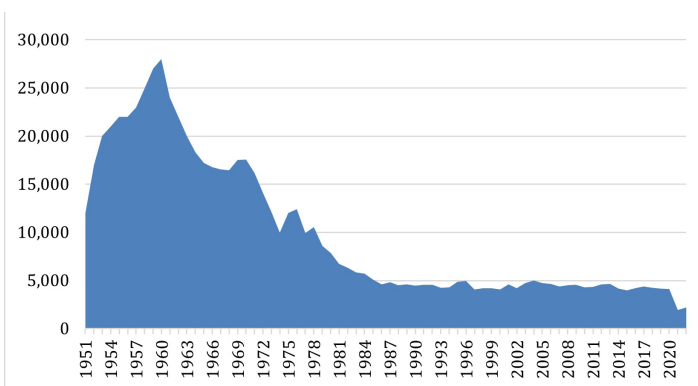
Deadline for Submissions: April 30

Home and School Memberships: The Ups and Downs 1944-2022 *A Statistical Perspective*

SIMILAR TO THE WAY WE SLOWLY EMERGE from this long, cold winter into a brighter, warmer spring, our local Home and Schools are emerging from the long years of COVID and reestablishing themselves for a brighter future. When members look back on the past few years, they will see a "dip" in their membership numbers. That "dip" will be just one more example of how the pandemic has impacted our community.

The QFHSA has seen such dips and blips in its own long history. The federation saw a steady increase in membership from our founding in 1944 as more and more parents joined this social movement. As the graphs show, we peaked in **1960** with 185 associations and a whopping **28,000** family members. This was as much about the Baby Boom as it was about parents wanting to get involved in education after the Second World War. All those babies born in the late 1950s were entering elementary school and their parents became actively engaged in the school community. It was a time when elementary schools were opening up all over the place. Once those parents and students moved on to high school, the numbers began to shift.

Number of H&S Family Members 1951-2020



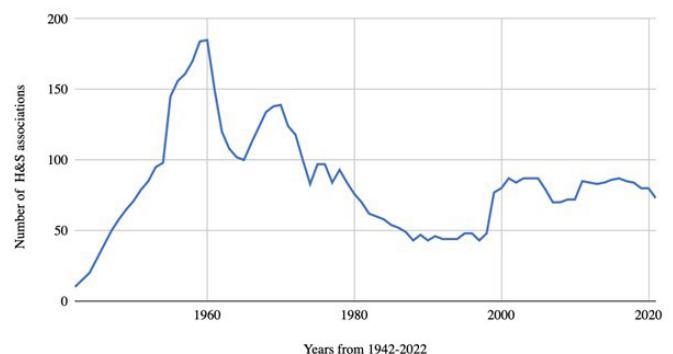
Then in 1977, Law 101 came into effect and enrollment in the English school sector saw a steep decline. School after school closed. It was heartbreaking!

In 1997, our lowest point, we had only 43 member associations and 4064 family members. (It is interesting to note that at 43 associations or 85 associations, the number of members stays stable at approximately 4000 fami-

lies. This may be because school populations are smaller. More schools on board, but all smaller than they were in the '80s and '90s.)

Then in 1998, there was the switch from parochial school boards to linguistic school boards and the QFHSA gained schools. By 2004, we were at 87 member associations and 4980 family members. Things rolled along fine for a few years and then we had a dip again in 2006, when we lost eight Home and Schools. In 2007, we lost another nine Home and Schools and were at only 70 member associations. By 2011, we were back up to around 85 member associations and 4330 family members. We have stayed steady at that number ever since, with the closing/merging schools balancing out against the new schools joining the federation.

Number of H&S Associations 1942-2022



In 2020, the pandemic hit and Home and Schools reduced their programs and did what they could to stay open, but it was harder to get parents to sign up when they could not volunteer in the schools. We had 73 active Home and Schools in 2021 and only 1920 family members.

And now, in 2022/23, we are finally seeing some recovery. We are at 2510 family members and rising. And to our delight, a few new schools are knocking on our door asking to become a Home and School! (Is it 1998 all over again?)

So, take heart. All organizations have their ups and downs, but if the cause is good, they will survive and flourish.

Carol Meindl, *Executive Director*

News for You



THE QFHSA APPLIED RECENTLY for a grant from the Canadian Red Cross Society. Created through the Government of Canada's Community Services Recovery Fund, the Red Cross grant is meant **to assist community service organizations to strengthen and adapt their ways of working and build their resiliency** as they support communities in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The QFHSA has earmarked this funding to support our local Home and School Associations.

Pandemic Challenges

The members of the QFHSA Board of Directors are keenly aware that many of our local Home and School Associations have been struggling during the pandemic years.

Many of our Home and School Associations were strong in 2019, offering a wide variety of activities, events, and ways to involve parents in school life. When the pandemic hit, schools were closed to parent volunteers and activities were drastically curtailed. Home and School executives maintained activities as best they could under extremely difficult circumstances. And, as we well know, this has not been a short-lived pandemic.

Its effect on Home and School life has been felt since March 2020 and continues to this day.

It has meant that parents joining school communities in the fall of 2020, the fall of 2021, and even in the fall of 2022 did not experience "hands on" active Home and School Associations. At the same time, veteran Home and School executives have been graduating out of Home and School leadership roles as their children move on to high school or CEGEP. This has left a dearth of valuable experience available to the associations.



How Would the Funds Be Used?

Given these circumstances, the QFHSA Board of Directors believes the Red Cross grant could be very useful to help our local associations recover from the pandemic years. With the funding, the QFHSA would embark

on a consultation process with our local Home and School Associations to determine their needs. Then the QFHSA would develop tools and resources to address those needs.

The project would start in May and wrap up by the end of June 2024. The anticipated timeline is as follows:

- **Early May to end of August—Initial Consultations:** Meet with and survey local Home and School Associations to gauge their needs pre-pandemic and post pandemic and identify gaps in expertise and services.
- **September to end of December—Produce Materials:** Develop presentations, resources, and workshops to address the needs of each association and create a road map for attracting volunteers, retaining leadership, and providing knowledge transfer.
- **January to end of March—Follow-up Consultations:** Conduct follow-up visits with local associations to tailor the support to each association's unique circumstances.
- **April to end of June—Report on the Project:** Prepare a final report on the project to share with funders and stakeholders.

We anticipate creating the following materials:

- **Field guides** to Home and School recruitment, retention, and enjoyment
- A **library of activities** to foster a healthy Home and School community
- **Strategies to gauge parent satisfaction and enjoyment** in volunteering
- **Workshop outlines**

Continued on the next page

Healthy Home and Schools

Continued from the previous page

Local associations could tailor the materials to their needs and update them as needed. The documents will be incredibly valuable for future generations of parents in leadership roles at the local association.

Personnel Required

The QFHSA will only know later this spring if our grant proposal has been accepted. However, we want to give notice to Home and School executives who might be looking for part-time work that if the QFHSA does receive the grant, we will be recruiting

for the following positions:

Researcher and Workshop Facilitator:

- A 1-year part-time contract
- Main tasks: Conduct consultations, develop workshops, and create resources
- Some travel will be involved to meet participating Home and School Associations in different regions of Quebec

Graphic Designer:

- A part-time contract
- Main tasks: Design field guides, posters, and banners

If you are interested in learning more

about this project or applying for the positions (should they become available), please call the QFHSA office and we will be happy to answer any questions you have.

We see the Red Cross grant as an important opportunity to provide focused support for Home and Schools that are struggling, helping them to once again become vibrant and satisfying enterprises to the benefit of all. It is no secret: Thriving Home and School Associations do so much for their school communities and provide wonderful opportunities for parental engagement in school life.

Carol Meindl, *Executive Director*



Youth Exploring Science: *The kids are having fun!*

OUR YOUTH EXPLORING SCIENCE (YES) Program is on a roll! The micro-grants have been distributed, the materials purchased, and the projects are underway!

At **Waapihtiwewan School** in Oujé-Bougoumou, Teacher Pouria Tabaeini proposed a **hydroponic blueberry garden**.



As the soil in the area is poor, Ms. Tabaeini thought it would be a great idea for the students to nurture a

small indoor blueberry farm. With their teacher, the students decided to plant a few other things as well just in case some of the blueberry bushes did not bloom. The herb and greens garden is doing well and a first crop of lettuce has already been harvested. The blueberries will come later in June. **The YES micro-grant was used to buy containers, soil, fertilizer, and seedlings.**

At **Metis Beach School** in Métis-sur-Mer, Teacher Tracy Sim wanted to create **mini labs**, small laboratory activities designed to reinforce the science concepts her students are learning this year. As mini labs were new to the school, the school unfortunately did not have the basic equipment required for most of these labs. **The YES micro-grant will provide the funds to purchase the needed materials.**

At **Souvenir Elementary** in Laval, Teacher Jill Davey had the fun idea of **combining nursery rhymes and STEM**. Her Grade 1 students are strengthening their STEM skills by building various items to go with the different children's stories they are exploring.



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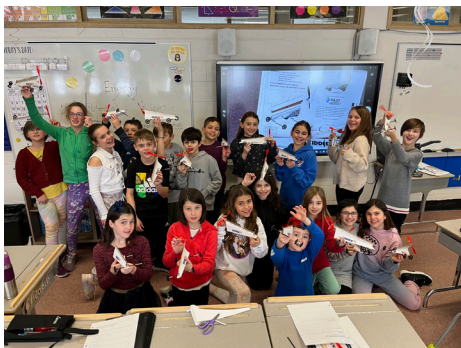
News for You

Youth Exploring Science

Continued from the previous page

After they read a story, nursery rhyme, or fairy tale as a class, the students are given a related problem to solve. The first project? To help the Gingerbread Man get over a river. Which is the better way, by bridge or by boat? **The YES micro-grant was used to buy household and office materials to build boats, bridges, and more.**

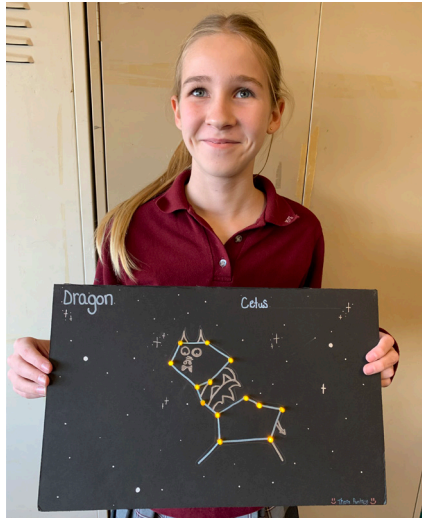
At **Boucherville Elementary** in Boucherville, Teacher Bettina Piccini proposed a YES Project on **simple machines**. The students built their first rubber-band racer cars this year and loved it!



The project led them to investigate kinetic and potential energy. Ms. Piccini enjoyed giving students this welcome opportunity to explore their science curriculum through a hands-on project. **The YES micro-grant was used to buy pulley and gear kits.**

At **Royal Vale Elementary** in Notre-Dame-de-Grace, Teacher Avelino Morais proposed a project combining **constellations and circuits**. After learning about constellations and electric circuits, students used a common pattern of stars to design their own constellation, write a short myth or story about it, and make a light-up constellation using electric circuitry. Through this project, stu-

dents learned how to recognize constellations and the uses of stars/constellations. They also learned about circuits and how to differentiate between series and parallel circuits. **The YES micro-grant was used to buy such materials as foam boards, activity books, batteries, wiring, and diodes.**



At **La Tuque High School** in La Tuque, Teacher Kirk Dinan proposed an **addition to the school fauna**—a bearded dragon lizard! The first step: Order a terrarium and the paraphernalia that go along with it. The class waited an extra month or so before purchasing the lizard from the pet store. They wanted to give the lizard time to grow, mature, and become robust enough for the rigours of classroom life.



Reuben the Rebel is now a class favourite and students from other classrooms wander into Mr. Dinan's class to visit this fascinating little creature. **The YES micro-grant was used to buy the terrarium, food supply, and the little reptilian rascal.**

And finally, at an **elementary school** in the Lester B. Pearson School Board, a teacher wished to introduce his students to **the material world and matter**. Through different activities conducted throughout the school year in different seasons, weather, and temperatures, students are learning how to classify objects according to their properties—their shape, colour, and texture. Students observed the objects under a microscope connected to their class smart board. **The YES micro-grant was used to buy two digital microscopes.**



Although YES applications are closed for now, a new season of Youth Exploring Science will begin in September 2023. Keep your eyes open for the invitation to propose a science project and submit it to the QFHSA Selection Committee.

Carol Meindl, *Executive Director*

Spotlight on the QFHSA Board of Directors: *Nick Giannakoulis*



Nick and Family

Nick Giannakoulis was elected to the QFHSA Board of Directors on June 3rd, 2021. A longtime Aylmer resident, Nick has been engaged in his local community for 20 years, volunteering at several community associations and with advocacy boards and school-board related committees to enhance public education.

A father of two, Nick initially joined the South Hull Elementary Home and School Association in 2010, where he held various positions over the years. Since 2010, he has also been active on local governing boards—at South Hull Elementary, Symmes Junior High School, and D'Arcy McGee High School. He was a parent committee representative for a number of years. Nick was also a member of the English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA) from 2014 to 2020.

In 2014, Nick was elected as a parent commissioner for the Elementary Sector at the Western Quebec School Board. In 2020, he was elected as commissioner for Ward 9, a position he currently holds.

Originally from Winnipeg, Nick has worked in the federal public service in the National Capitol Region for the past 25 years, primarily at the Public Health Agency of Canada. Through the years, Nick has held various elected local and national executive union positions. As a union representative, he advocated for the interests of his members on broad committees and collective bargaining.

Describing his work with the QFHSA, Nick writes that he “feels privileged to serve our diverse QFHSA members across Quebec, to continue to advance our common educational interests.” And for its part, the QFHSA is benefiting greatly from Nick’s diverse knowledge, experience, and expertise.

A belated, but warm welcome to Nick Giannakoulis, another one of our pandemic-elected board members!

Join our team!



Recruitment Continues for the QFHSA Board of Directors

Interested in getting involved in the Home and School movement at the provincial level? Consider joining the team of volunteers who serve on our board of directors.

The QFHSA's board of directors meets about eight times a year. Here are some of the things our directors do:

- They discuss Home and School policy.
- They keep informed on issues related to education and rights.
- They explore new projects for Home and School students, parents, and families.
- They offer best practice advice to local Home and School Associations.
- They participate in community round tables, ensuring that the parent's perspective is heard.
- They draft resolutions and briefs that are shared with the federal and/or provincial governments.
- They help to plan QFHSA events.

Being part of a board of directors can be a very rewarding experience. If you or someone you know is interested in joining us, please call the QFHSA office at 514-481-5619 or email info@qfhsa.org. The Nominations Committee would appreciate receiving applications by April 20th.

News for You

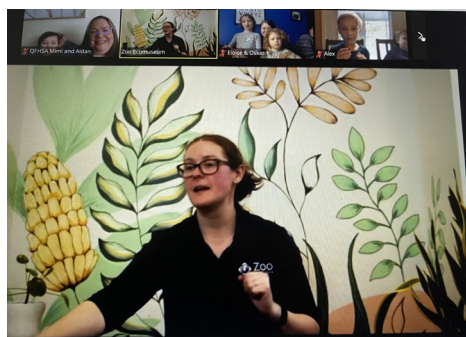


THE SECOND ANNUAL QFHSA Family Workshop Series returned in full force in February and March 2023! After last year's success, we added two new events to the roster, the Ecomuseum and *le Nichoir*. The online workshops took place on five consecutive Saturdays, from February 11th to March 11th.



On February 11th, we welcomed back Jeannette Barrow, our star chef and the owner of *Épiculiste*. Jeannette started off her three-class series with a **Fearsome Aztecs** workshop featuring a lovely chocolate cake for Valentine's Day.

The families who attended learned many new cooking techniques, including how to fold ingredients into a batter, how to use a *bain marie*, and how to alter recipes to substitute for available ingredients. Our little chefs (and big ones) had a difficult time resisting the temptation to lick chocolaty spoons and beaters!



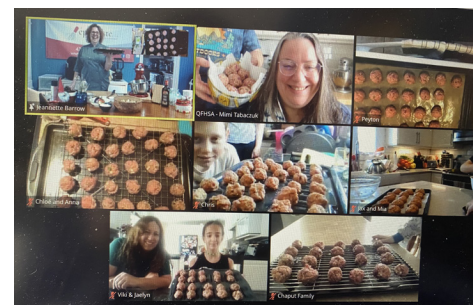
Our next event was the February 18th workshop on **Quebec's Biodiversity** with Zoologist Nicki Fleming from the Ecomuseum Zoo in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue. This zoo houses orphaned, injured, and domesticated wildlife. We started off learning about amphibians and reptiles. We looked at a turtle carapace, an example of an exoskeleton.



We then slithered into snake territory and learned about our shy friends and their preferred habitats and diets. The kids were especially dialled in to the story behind the milk snake's name! Did you know (We didn't!) that milk snakes do not actually drink milk? Farmers gave them that name because they believed the snakes were drinking their cows' milk. In fact, they were hanging out with the cows and being helpful by feasting on rodents living in the barns.

The presentation continued with introductions to furry friends like the lynx, Arctic fox, and the biggest in the bunch, the black bear. We learned so much!

Jeannette from *Épiculiste* was back for her second class on February 25th, this time with recipes from **Glamorous Greece**. We rolled out meatballs and made a tzatziki dip that was soooo delicious. A Greek salad wrapped up this morning event. We had a healthy lunch to enjoy at the end of it all.



Saturday, March 4th took us virtually to Hudson, Quebec, to meet Biologist Élise Laferrière from *le Nichoir* and participate in an **Avian Detectives** workshop.



Our group learned about the different reasons birds are brought to *le Nichoir* and how they are helped. Élise shared her expertise and explained six cases this bird recovery

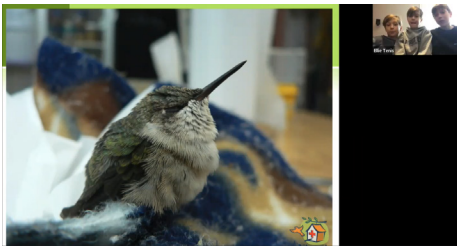
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Photo from Adobe Stock

Family Workshop Series

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centre has received in the past. The children looked at photos and X-rays of the birds and took their best guesses on what had happened to our feathered friends. We can safely say the bird world is a bit safer thanks to the knowledge our budding avian detectives gained in this workshop!



The series wrapped up on Saturday, March 11th with a return visit from Chef Jeannette Barrow. We celebrated Caribbean food with a **Gruesome Pirates** party! Arrr, we armed ourselves with fruity pirate swords made of pineapple spears, chowed down on the Cap'n's pinwheel sammies, and washed it all down with a hearty smoothie, mates!

Suffice it to say, we had a metric tonne of fun with this workshop series. We travelled the world in our kitchens and we learned about local fauna with amazing scientists from the Ecomuseum and *le Nichoir!*

We can't wait to see all of the families who participated again next year, and we hope many new families will join our fun at the QFHSA Family Workshop Series 2024!



Mimi Tabaczuk,
Family Workshops Organizer and Administrative Assistant



Remembering C. Owen Buckingham 1931-2022

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations was saddened to learn recently of the passing of Owen Buckingham, a former president of the QFHSA's Board of Directors.

Owen Buckingham was an extraordinary volunteer. It was a lifelong calling that intensified during his retirement years. Numerous organizations and individuals have benefited from Owen's deep commitment to serve others: local hospitals, libraries, cultural organizations, and schools—to give just a few in a very long list of examples.

Though born in Notre-Dame-de-Grace, Owen had deep roots in Pointe-Claire, the city where he lived from the age of 10. In his early years, he attended Cedar Park Elementary School. A teacher by profession, Owen had a 35-year career with the Lakeshore School Board. During his long career, he returned to Cedar Park Elementary, first as a teacher and then as the school's principal. He also taught at John Rennie High the very first year it opened and remained there for 11 years. He worked in other West Island schools and finished up his career at the school board's headquarters.

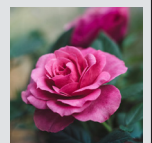
Owen's daughter Susan recalls that her father "was known for his fair-minded approach, kind-heartedness, and strong work ethic." The Quebec Home and School movement was one of the many beneficiaries of Owen's

incredible gifts. In addition to volunteering for local Home and School Associations, Owen took on the role of QFHSA board president from 1981 to 1983. During this time, he represented our federation at the Canadian Federation of Home and Schools.

Owen once said, "My volunteer activity gives me great personal satisfaction, because of the immediate help I am able to provide to follow members of our community." And help others he did.

Owen received numerous awards for his stellar volunteer service, most notably the 1992 Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada; the 1995 Canada Volunteer Award—Certificate of Merit; and in 2000, Centraide's Antoinette-Robidoux Volunteer Award.

The QFHSA salutes Owen Buckingham for his many years of dedicated service to Quebec education and his remarkable commitment to his community and the well-being of its citizens.





Overuse of the Notwithstanding Clause: Why Its Use Should Be Referred to the Supreme Court of Canada *A Commentary By Brian Rock*

“Trudeau has good reason to limit use of the Notwithstanding Clause. Governments are too willing to invoke the Notwithstanding Clause pre-emptively when our rights are an inconvenience.”

– Peter McKnight, Journalist

LET US TURN BACK THE POLITICAL CLOCK to Saturday, June 15th, and Sunday, June 16th, 2019. Yes, the members of the Québec National Assembly were sitting during extraordinary sessions over the weekend following the imposing of closure, which limited debate. The result: Bill 21: *An Act respecting the laicity of the State* including the enactment of the Notwithstanding Clause to prevent court challenges was passed. At 11:00 p.m., in the residence of the Honourable J. Michel Doyon, the Lieutenant-Governor of Québec, Bill 21 was granted assent. How ironic for legislation dealing with laicity to become law so late on a Sunday evening!

Me. Julius H. Grey, a highly respected constitutional lawyer out of Montréal, argued before the Superior Court of Québec against Bill 21. That case has proceeded to the Court of Appeal of Québec. Me. Grey remains ever hopeful that the Supreme Court of Canada will rule that the Notwithstanding Clause cannot be used as the Government of Québec pleases.

Let us now move on to Tuesday, May 24th, 2022. This time around, the *Coalition Avenir Québec* government proceeded with its controversial decision to apply the Notwithstanding Clause

to the entire Bill 96: *An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec* to shield the legislation from any Charter of Rights and Freedoms challenges. Lieutenant-Governor J. Michel Doyon granted assent on Wednesday, June 1st, 2022.

The Honourable David Lametti, former professor and associate dean (Academic) of McGill University's Faculty of Law, is now the minister of justice and the attorney general of Canada as well as the member of parliament for the Montréal riding of LaSalle–Émard–Verdun. Me. Lametti reacted to the passage of Bill 96 and took exception to the proactive use of the Notwithstanding Clause to shield Bill 96 from constitutional challenges, which effectively shut down debate and proper judicial review of the legislation. Lametti termed the action an “unintended negative consequence in our political system. The Notwithstanding Clause was meant to be the last word in what is, in effect, a dialogue between the courts and legislatures. It wasn't meant to be the first word.”

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, the prime minister of Canada as well as the member of parliament for the Montréal riding of Papineau, recently expressed concerns over the Notwithstanding Clause, condemning its use. The prime minister indicated that he is investigating the possibility of regulating its use.

Québec Premier François Legault criticized the prime minister for “attacking Québec's democracy and people” by proposing to limit the use of the Not-

withstanding Clause. Premier Legault termed it a “frontal attack” on the Québec nation's ability to protect its collective rights. Given that his *Coalition Avenir Québec* political party won 90 of the 125 seats in the National Assembly in the province's general election on October 3rd, 2022, Legault may very well be ready to confront a Liberal minority federal government daring to challenge Québec's use of the Notwithstanding Clause.

It may very well be time to invite the Chief Justice of Canada, Richard Wagner, the presiding judge of the nine-member Supreme Court, Canada's highest judicial body, to study the implications of the overuse of the Notwithstanding Clause.

Brian ROCK, B.A., M.Ed., a past president of the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHSA), is a retired school principal and a former secondary English and history teacher. Brian serves as the corporate secretary of the CEGEP Heritage College Foundation in Gatineau.

Brian also serves as chairman of the Coalition For the Future of English Education in Québec (COFFEE-QC) as well as chairman of the Committee for the Enhancement of the Curriculum of the History of Québec (ComECH-QC). Brian remains active with the QFHSA as vice-chair of the Rights and Resolutions Subcommittees.

Note: The opinions expressed in this commentary are those of the author and not necessarily those of the QFHSA.

News from QFHSA Committees

From the Literacy Subcommittee...



Souvenir Home & School Shares the Love of Reading with *Born to Read* Books!



At Souvenir School, the school principal distributed lovely "Born to Read" book bags to the younger siblings of students. The delivery included a sweet letter from Librarian Ms. Toni, who encouraged the very young readers to enjoy the books daily. Ms. Toni added that she couldn't wait to welcome them to the library in a few years!



Would you like to bring the QFHSA's **Born to Read** Program to your school? In this program, parents in the school community with young toddlers receive a book bag filled with board books to nurture a love of reading. The QFHSA supports new programs by donating 10 book-filled bags. For more information, please email carolmeindl@qfhsa.org.

A Very Successful Book Delivery



A book for every child! Late this fall, the QFHSA sent several boxes of books to Grosse-Île School in the Eastern Shores School Board. From *Loula* to *Lawn Boy*, from *Ellray Jakes Is a Rock Star* to *The Night Garden*, there was something for everyone!



It was a pleasure for the QFHSA to send the books and an even bigger pleasure to receive the wonderful photos of Grosse-Île's avid readers.



Marlyn Brownrigg,
on behalf of the Literacy Subcommittee



A Few Words From Membership Services: *The Year-End Round Up*

Tidying Up:

- Are there outstanding documents and/or fees due to the QFHSA? Please send them in asap. Please Note: If too many items are overdue, event insurance requests will not be processed by the QFHSA office.
- Are digital files available to hand over to new executive officers coming in?



School needs insurance for year-end events. Please allow seven (7) to ten (10) business days for processing insurance applications and keep in mind that bouncy games are not covered by the QFHSA insurance policy.



Good luck with all of your spring events!

Marlyn Brownrigg,
Membership Services Coordinator
marlynbrownrigg@qfhsa.org; 514-481-5619

Reminders:

- Do your **constitution** and **by-laws** reflect current Home and School practices? If not, now is the time to make the changes. The notice deadlines are listed in the constitution and by-laws.
- Presidents and treasurers (2022-2023) are responsible for sending **year-end reports to the QFHSA**. If you require sample reports, please contact Marlyn.
- **Elections:** If your association would like help running elections, please book a date with Marlyn as soon as possible.



April to June:

- **QFHSA Regional Councils:** The last set of regional council meetings for this school year will be held on May 1st and 4th.
- **Recruitment:** Does your association have a succession plan? How many executive positions will be vacant? Start approaching volunteers now.
- **Welcoming New Parents:** Ask your school principal to invite incoming parents (Kindergarten/Grade 7) to your final Home and School meeting/social of the year.
- **Insurance:** Please remember that your Home and

Join Us in May on Zoom!



The QFHSA's
Regional Council Meetings for all
Local Home & School Executives

Monday, May 1 or Thursday, May 4
7 p.m. on Zoom

Join the discussion! These Regional Council Meetings will feature a short presentation on:

How to Conduct Home & School Elections

It's a timely topic as Home & Schools gear up for spring (or fall) elections of their 2023/24 executive.

An invitation for the Regional Council meetings will come your way soon by e-bulletin!

Focus on the Locals

In the *Focus on the Locals* section, we share news and information from our local associations. **Thank you to all of the Home and Schools that contributed to this issue.** We would love to hear from your Home and School too! Before sending photos, please make sure you have the permission of those appearing in the photos. We invite Home and School Associations to send their news to news@qfhsa.org.

Festive Days at Baie-Comeau High School

Following its Annual General Meeting and first meeting in September, Baie-Comeau High School's Home and School Association wasted no time in planning and scheduling activities for the year.

Students, staff, and family members were invited for a "Welcome Back to School" lunch in mid September. Hot dogs, corn on the cob, chili, fruits, and homemade desserts were on the menu.



It's a "Back to School" Party at Baie-Comeau High School!

This was followed by Hallowe'en treats and costume parade prizes on October 31st.



Hallowe'en Fun—Baie-Comeau style!

Next on the agenda: A fantastic Christmas lunch on December 22nd. Home and School has started to use non-disposable plates and cups at our events thanks to a generous loan from the Anglican Church of St. Andrew and St. George. We hope to continue this partnership with the church for future Home and School events; it helps us to cut down on unnecessary waste and cost.



A Christmas feast—and cake too!

We teamed up with Baie-Comeau's Manoir du Café for our annual fundraising initiative. Parents and friends of Baie-Comeau High School were able to purchase a bag of freshly roasted coffee for \$20, of which about \$6 per bag was pure profit. It was an easy way to not only raise funds, but encourage a local business. A second order for coffee will be made in the spring to help finance year-end activities.

Home and School treated the entire school staff to a St-Hubert lunch during Staff Appreciation Week, which was held from February 6th to 10th.

Preparations are underway for the annual Bean Supper wherein the community is invited for a meal complete with beans, wieners, salads, meat pies, and homemade desserts. Let's hope COVID restrictions allow us to have an in-person event.

*Submitted by Stephen Kohner,
Baie-Comeau High School Home and School Association*

Focus on the Locals

Meanwhile, in a galaxy far, far away...



The Force is strong with the staff at Westwood Junior and Senior Campuses. So we celebrated our staff with a Star Wars-inspired week. Our themed days included a **Padewan Popcorn Bar**; **May the Forks Be With You** (our lunch at each campus); **Luke, I'm Nacho Father**; and a **Jedi Snack Bar**. (Come to the dark side. We have chocolate.) To cap off the week, all of the staff went home with a **Yoda Jar** (Yoda Best) filled with edible Ewoks.

A big thank you to our Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week coordinators and our parents for their donations to make this week a great success.

*Submitted by Angel Johnson,
Westwood High Home and School Association*



Baby Yoda image by Hansuan Fabregas, C-3PO + R2-D2 image by Jean photostock, spaceship image by Gerhard Janson, all from Pixabay

Focus on the Locals

At Clearpoint Elementary: Comedy Night and Sandwich Making for a Cause

Clearpoint Elementary Home and School hosted an adults only Comedy Night in February.

Not only did this serve as a successful fundraiser, but it also brought our community of parents and teachers together for a fun night out at a reasonable cost. With a cash bar and several talented local comedians performing, the laughs were plentiful all evening. The feedback from attendees was extremely positive.



While our Home and School does many fundraisers and events for our school community, we are also trying to put more focus on events that allow us to serve our wider community. It provides opportunities for students to put the International Baccalaureate (IB)

attributes they learn about in the classroom into action.

On a Sunday afternoon in January, students and parents worked with a local charitable organization, Bread and Beyond, to make 500 sandwiches. The organization distributes sandwiches daily to homeless shelters throughout Montreal. The event was easy to organize and ended up engaging a wider number of families in our school than we traditionally reach. It was a feel-good afternoon for those who participated and we definitely plan to organize more events like this in the future.



*Submitted by Angela Dandy,
Clearpoint Home and School Association*

St. Patrick's Teachers and Staff Travel Around the World in 5 Days!

The teachers, staff, administration, and daycare workers mean the world to the children and their parents at St. Patrick Elementary. Through the generosity of family donations, our Home and School was able to treat them to a week

of appreciation during the annual TSAW (Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week). In fact, even the school administration jumped on the bandwagon and catered a delicious Italian lunch on the first day to kick off the week.

We planned a week of worldly travel for our beloved staff. They were in France on Tuesday, with a chocolate fountain, fruit, and croissants for Valentine's Day. On Wednesday, they travelled to Germany for beer (to take home) and giant pretzels and, best of all, chair massages!



Closing out the week, they were swept away to Great Britain with tea, flowers, and a calming yoga class. They found their way back to Canada by way of Mexico, where they stopped for yummy tacos and Jarritos.



Once the Canadian shores were in view, they hit the gangplank, stopping in front of, what else, a Beaver Tails truck—to remind them that coming home to St. Pats is always the sweetest part. We hope they felt that because for our kids, St. Pats is home and the best part of their days, too. Thank you, St. Patrick teachers and staff, for all that you do!



*Submitted by Mimi Tabaczuk,
St. Patrick Home and School Association*

SHARE YOUR NEWS!



Photo by Anissa Thompson from Freemages

What is happening in your Home and School community? Fun fundraisers? Special events? Please let us know and we will be happy to share your news in our *Focus on the Locals* section in an upcoming issue of the *QFHSA News*. Send your submissions to news@qfhsa.org

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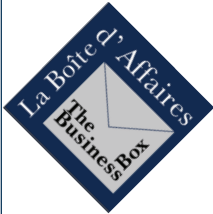
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