



Voice of English-speaking Québec

# 2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT

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## ABOUT VOICE OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUÉBEC

As an active, non-profit organization that currently has over 4000 members, VEQ has played a vital part in the preservation and development of community life for the English-speaking community for over three decades. Currently, VEQ has active partnerships with over 60 community organizations, institutions, and groups in the area.

## MISSION STATEMENT

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

## GOALS

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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Despite the continued challenges in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, the past 12 months have nonetheless been extremely productive for the Voice of English-speaking Québec. Our outstanding executive director Brigitte Wellens and her staff have continued to effectively create and carry out valuable programming for our community, integrate newcomers, and serve as our voice at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.

VEQ has maintained important relationships with government officials at all levels, including the provincial Secretariat for Relations with English-Speaking Quebecers. Like many of you, VEQ is concerned with the implications of the provincial government's proposed Bill 96 as they relate to our community, and we are working with decision-makers to better understand its effects and to make sure our community's voice is heard.

Another important aspect over the last year has been the growth of the Regional Development Network (RDN), of which Brigitte Wellens is the president. RDN, which brings together 14 regional organizations, serves as a united voice in the sector of socio-economic development for English speakers off the island of Montreal and provides governments with a better understanding of the challenges they face.

We continue to offer a wide array of programming initiatives for residents of all ages. In May, we received a grant from Canadian Heritage to produce the "My Quebec City" podcast, which will allow our region's youth to share their stories and experiences.

Additionally, in April, the provincial government confirmed funding for the Enhancing Regional Community Capacity program, which will allow us to improve our services in the northern perimeter of the region (Stoneham, Shannon, Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier, and Portneuf), as well as allow VEQ to improve its organizational capacity.

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Seniors are also an important component of our programming: in addition to our Seniors Out and About program, Employment and Social Development Canada, as well as the provincial Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux, both funded new initiatives. One to help reduce social isolation and one to bridge the technological gap among seniors in our area, including a tablet lending library and other virtual activities for community members. Finally, we continue to work with local employability service providers from both linguistic communities, to promote and improve access to their services.

VEQ has also continued to serve as our region's "front door" for English speakers who are new to the area. The Newcomers program provides orientation and referrals regarding community and social programs and services in the area. With funding from Canadian Heritage and the Ville de Québec, we offered a range of services to **371** newcomers from **51** different countries, for a total of **2,113** services. **81%** of the newcomers we met were met within the first year following their arrival. Over the course of the 2020-21 fiscal year, VEQ organized and carried out **26** Finding your Niche for Newcomers events and info sessions. Additionally, I am extremely pleased that we have been able to resume in-person newcomers' activities this summer, with a walking tour of Old Quebec, a hiking trip, and a ferry ride to Lévis already taking place.

It has been a pleasure serving on VEQ's Board of Directors for the last six years, as well as serving as its president this year. I am consistently impressed by the dedication and resourcefulness of its staff, and I am truly proud to have been part of the organization. Our community is strong, vibrant and supportive, and I have no doubt that this will continue in the years to come.

Sincerely,  
Hoffman Wolff

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2020 will go down in my history book as a year of great resilience in response to challenges I never thought we would have to face. It was a year of cancelled activities, modified projects, and the year of Zoom! Despite the uncertainty that lied ahead the entire year, VEQ adapted and adapted some more, and then, adapted a little more.

The individuals who are part of my team are the reason we weathered this COVID storm and remained active in the community. Our achievements in the past year would not have been possible without them and I am extremely appreciative of their hard work and continued dedication to VEQ, and to the community we collectively serve. These very important individuals are Catherine Baboudjian, Dominique Paddack, Francisca Rojek, Maria Castro, Maria Hoyt, Melissa Wan, and Susanna Tang.

This last year, I have to admit that I was fearful that we would not have the same impact in the community, and that whatever impact we did have, would be difficult to measure. With the move to mostly online activities and remote services, I was cautiously optimistic that what we were doing would still reach our community members. I am happy to report that any fears I may have had were quickly set aside when my team members, and community partners, shared the positive feedback they were hearing about VEQ. It gave us the fuel we needed to continue. Finding innovative ways to reach community members became our daily mission.

Early in the year, the team worked together and scoured the internet for information on COVID-19 and related resources, as well as things to do from home during the pandemic. For nine consecutive weeks, we shared this information, and our findings of things to do for children, youth, families, and seniors, all from the comfort of home.

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From educational resources to breakdance and online bingo, there was no shortage of ideas to keep community members informed, educated, and entertained.

We also found ourselves developing services that VEQ had never offered before. We helped community members with the scheduling of vaccination appointments and offered transportation to those who needed it. We also shopped for and delivered groceries when needed.

In this year of transformation, our Out & About program, which normally provides seniors with free transportation to a variety of outings throughout the year, became the telephone check-in program. From quick chats to longer conversations about the pandemic and the impact it was having in their lives, these check-ins allowed us to get to know them a little better each time, creating friendships that will live on.

Even if our new satellite office in Shannon saw less foot traffic than we had hoped, it didn't stop us from collaborating on several initiatives that had an impact in the community.

VEQ maintained its strong partnership with the Jeffery Hale Community Partners (JHCP) and the Jeffery Hale Community Services (JHCS) and continued to collaborate on valuable programs for the English-speaking community such as the Volunteer Income Tax program.

Most of what we do depends on strong partnerships. The ones we maintain with the region's schools allow us to reach youth and collaborate on interesting initiatives that benefit the entire community.

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VEQ also remains particularly involved in developing and strengthening partnerships with key organizations in the French-speaking community. Our continued work with the region's Carrefour jeunesse-emploi offices is allowing us to reach our goal of increasing awareness of the realities of the community and helping them to better serve the needs of English speakers.

VEQ continues to play a role on the Table régionale de concertation en immigration de la Capitale-Nationale and the Comité pour le recrutement et la rétention du personnel bilingue of the CIUSSS-CN.

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

2020 may be the year we all want to forget but I will remember how resilient our community is and how when we all work together, we can accomplish great things.

As I have said every year since I have been executive director, I am extremely grateful to be part of such a wonderful community and to have the privilege of working with such dedicated individuals.

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

Sincerely,

Brigitte Wellens



## OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

### *Community events*

VEQ has the mandate to organize community events that bring members of the English-speaking community together to network and socialize. We were thrilled to be able to connect with community members even most of it had to take place online. Here are some highlights.

#### **Annual General Meeting**

- **39th** AGM held online on June 18, 2020
- **28** community members participated
- Nomination of **3** new Board Members

#### **Fall Fest**

- The **11th** Annual Fall Fest was celebrated online in 2020-21. The community showcase consisted of short videos from **17** partner organizations. These videos were shared on VEQ's YouTube channel and on Facebook.
- **5** virtual performances were also offered to community members.
- In total, Virtual Fall Fest received over **935** views between September 2020 and March 2021.

#### **Sing-Along at Christmastime**

- For the holidays, **4** choir director-led virtual sing-alongs were offered to community members.
- Each sing-along had a minimum of **15** participants.

#### **Holiday Happy Hour**

- For our traditional Holiday Happy Hour, we once again partnered with the Morrin Centre to offer a musical performance to community members via a Facebook live event.
- The hour-long show received over **680** views on Facebook and nearly **120** views on YouTube.

#### **Curfew Social**

- VEQ organized **2** virtual game nights where community members took part in friendly trivia competitions.
- Both events combined attracted **79** participants.



## *Community outreach*

### **COVID-19 Community support**

- In partnership with Jeffery Hale Community Partners, and Jeffery Hale Community Services, VEQ offered support to **39** community members for the scheduling of vaccination appointments. Transportation was also offered to those who needed it.
- VEQ also supported community members by offering to shop for and deliver groceries. Over **30** shopping trips were carried out.

### **Community Christmas Hamper Campaign**

- VEQ was once again very proud to contribute to the **25th** edition of the campaign, by being part of the organizing committee, contributing to the printing and distribution of publicity material, as well as organizing fundraising activities.
- Despite a transformed campaign due to the pandemic, this huge community undertaking helped over **200** families in need.

### **St. Patrick's, in September**

- VEQ proudly collaborated and helped sponsor the “St. Patrick’s Day in September” event along with The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, the Shannon Catholic Women’s League, and the Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier Historical Committee. This festive virtual event was streamed live on Facebook on September 19th, 2020 attracting over **5000** viewers. Locals were thrilled to tune in and celebrate the Irish-influenced musical heritage of Shannon, Valcartier, and Kinnear’s Mills.

### **Pop-Up Pages**

- In partnership with the Central Quebec School Board, the Morrin Centre, the Wellness Centre, the Quebec City Reading Council, and La Maison Anglaise, **9000** books were purchased to create **12** book bins for the schools, and **1** community bin filled with **152** books.
- VEQ supported the recording of **75** book readings at Holland Elementary.



## Employment & Entrepreneur Services

### Job Bank

- VEQ maintains a well-consulted online Job Bank that posts employment opportunities requiring English language skills or bilingualism.
- A total of **174** positions were posted during the year
- The Job Bank received **20,874** page views from **17,244** unique viewers from April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021, accounting for **38.07%** of the traffic to the website.

### YES Employment + Entrepreneurship

- VEQ renewed its important partnership with Yes Employment + Entrepreneurship, which focuses on one-on-one business coaching.
- Over the past year, YES offered **192** sessions to a total of **32** English-speaking entrepreneurs, to help them develop and expand their businesses.
- YES also hosted **2** workshops in partnership with VEQ. A *Transferable Skills* webinar and a *Pricing your Goods and Services* info session.

### In Partnership with the Valcartier Family Centre

- VEQ maintains a strong partnership with the Valcartier Family Centre.
- Many clients continue to be referred to the FORT Program.
- **1** series of **3** *Remote Work* webinars was held.



## *Employment & Entrepreneur Services*

### Employment related activities & events

- VEQ established and strengthened partnerships with **3** regional Carrefour jeunesse-emploi (CJE) centres to increase the accessibility of their services to English-speaking youth.
- VEQ published a ***Report on Youth Employability in the Greater Quebec City Region.***
- VEQ updated a list of over **100** regional employers with jobs requiring English-speaking skills.
- VEQ supported the translation of **13** cover letters and resumes and **3** program documents for its Carrefour jeunesse-emploi partners.
- In October 2020, VEQ created a Youth Council (**6** participants) who in turn inspired a youth-to-youth mentoring initiative. Through group and individual meetings, they helped their younger peers further develop their communication, leadership, and creativity skills.
- **1** Financial Literacy and **2** Budgeting workshops were offered in partnership with Option Travail.
- VEQ remains involved in the Comité pour le recrutement et la rétention du personnel bilingue du CIUSSS-CN.
- VEQ participated in the *Quebec City Talent Matching* initiative in partnership with CEDEC, Quebec International, and the Central Quebec School Board.



## *Newcomer Services*

### Some statistics

- Over the 2020-21 fiscal year, VEQ provided a range of services to **371** newcomers.
- **81%** were served within the first year following their arrival.
- A total of **2113** services were provided ranging from a handful of in-office one-on-one meetings, info sessions and numerous phone and email inquiries.
- With the help of our partners, we were still able to distribute over **200** newcomer's packages despite the pandemic.
- Newcomers are vital for the growth of our community. Every **5** years, **20%** to **25%** of our region's population is renewed by newcomers.

### Finding Your Niche for Newcomers (FYNN) events

- VEQ organized and carried out **26** FYNN activities in the past year.
- A total of **242** participants took part in the activities.
- The events included, among others, a sunset ferry ride, **2** walking tours of old Québec, a physically distanced picnic and **2** yoga in the park activities.
- Several virtual info sessions were also offered on a variety of different topics such as the health system in Québec, a Travel the World through Cooking series, and a financial literacy workshop.
- We also offered our yearly *Winds of Change* workshop in partnership with Jeffery Hale Community Services.

### Other info sessions, events and committees

- **2** valuable information sessions with representatives from the Canada Revenue Agency and Revenu Québec were held. **16** participants attended these sessions.
- VEQ continues to be a member of the Table familles de Sainte-Foy and the Table régionale de concertation en immigration de la Capitale-Nationale.



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## *50+ activities*

### **Out and About**

- The Out and About program aims to provide English-speaking seniors with free transportation to activities and outings, helping to reduce social isolation and allowing seniors to live autonomously as long as possible. Due to the pandemic, no outings took place this year. We refocused our efforts on telephone check-ins to ensure the welfare of our senior population.
- VEQ carried out over **3000** telephone check-ins.

### **Technology workshops**

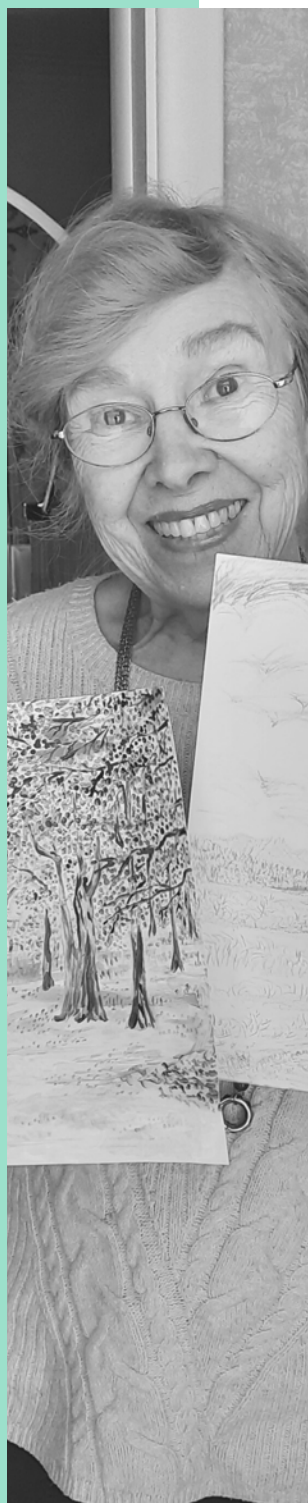
- VEQ enlisted the help of a volunteer who agreed to record video capsules that we then shared with seniors via email, on our YouTube channel, and on Facebook.
- **7** capsules were produced and viewed a total of **151** times.

### **Active Seniors**

- the initial goal of the Active Seniors project was reducing social isolation through movement. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we enlisted the help of an Art Therapist and transformed the project into a wellness art project.
- **287** art kits were delivered to participating seniors.
- **40** seniors benefited from the activities of this project.

### **Lifelong Learning**

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



## *50+ activities*

### **Tablet Lending Library**

- This project that began in January 2021, seeks to combat social isolation as well as help to bridge the digital divide, for community members over the age of 50.
- VEQ has **26** tablets equipped with data plans available for lending.
- Participants have the opportunity to borrow a tablet for a period of time while participating in bi-weekly online programming to help strengthen their social connections and digital literacy skills.
- Set-up of the devices and continuous digital help is available to participants.
- A partnership with Atwater Library and Computer Centre allows us to provide professional tech sessions to help users learn how to use their tablets

### **Online activities calendar and phone line**

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



## *Be Active Québec*

- Be Active Québec (BAQ) works in collaboration with many schools and partner organizations to help promote a physically active lifestyle and healthy eating habits.
- VEQ also provides staff and/or financial support for programs such as Take-a-Break, Baby Chat, and Travellin' Toddler Time, as well as events in the schools such as the CQSB Cross Country Run and the Pentathlon des Neiges.
- Due to the pandemic, no activities took place this year.

## *Bilingual Book Club*

- This project aimed to promote linguistic duality and allow participants to practice their second language.
- **9** books were selected and read by participants from June 2020 to March 2021.
- Book Club meetings were facilitated and held virtually twice per month for a total of **17** meetings.
- **71** participants took part in the project.

## *Pathways Project*

- The aim of the Pathways project was to coordinate Career Day events to introduce the English-speaking high school students to the various education and career paths available in the Greater Québec City Region.
- Due to the postponement and eventual cancellation of in-person events, we created a podcast series known as The Pathways Podcast featuring interviews with **19** locals talking about their career journeys.
- **16** podcast episodes were produced and shared via our Youtube channel and Facebook page collecting a total of **2 245** views.
- **53** post-secondary programs at vocational schools, CEGEPS, and Laval University were highlighted in an online companion guide to accompany the podcasts





## *Enhancing Regional Community Capacity (ERCC) Program*

- The Enhancing Regional Community Capacity (ERCC) Program is funded by the Government of Quebec, through the Secretariat for relations with English-speaking Quebecers.
- This two-and-a-half-year project aimed at expanding the territory that VEQ serves began in the fall of 2018 and focuses its actions in the Northern perimeter of the City.
- Strong partnerships are key! **28** formal and informal meetings took place with over **50** community stakeholders in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

### **Some of the activities that were carried out during this most unusual of years include:**

- **2** virtual focus groups with community stakeholders to evaluate our progress and research community needs. These focus groups brought together voices from Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier, Stoneham-et-Tewkesbury, Shannon, and Portneuf.
- A Christmas carol video initiative with the participation of nearly **100** talented and energetic elementary school students from **8** different classes.
- Our collaboration with the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, the Catholic Women's League of Shannon, and both historical societies of Shannon and Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier, to bring **3** local heritage and St. Patrick's Day virtual events to community members from near and far. These events were viewed by over **5000** people.
- A March 2021 Saint-Patrick's day parade and Irish stew meal in collaboration with Valcartier Elementary and the Municipality of Valcartier. Videos and pictures of the event reached over **1700** people.



## WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

EVERY YEAR, WE ADD NEW SECTIONS TO OUR WEBSITE WHILE WE CONTINUE TO REGULARLY UPDATE KEY FEATURES SUCH AS:

- The **Job Bank**, which is the most visited page of the website.
- The online version of the **Community Connection Directory** with options to download the entire directory or view the listings directly online.
- The **Newcomers Information** section, providing useful tips about topics such as Activities, Health Care, Immigration Services, Utilities, etc.
- The **Upcoming Events** page, listing interesting activities happening in the English-speaking community.
- The **Information Request** box allowing community members to fill out a box requesting information about specific services.
- The **Community Bulletin Board** section where members can post information on the website for free.
- **NEW "I chose Québec because..."** section providing community members with a place to share their relocation stories and experiences. Want to share yours? Head to our website to tell us all about it!
- **NEW Cost of living calculator** tool that contains all the information and reminders one needs when budgeting for the first time, renting a first apartment or when moving here from far away.

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

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

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

## PARTNERSHIP WITH JEFFERY HALE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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

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

VEQ coordinated the Volunteer Income Tax Program once again this year. Volunteers who enjoy working with numbers and taxes received access to tax software free of charge and then worked diligently to complete tax files for the 2020 tax year.

A VEQ team member collected and delivered documents, and worked with the clients and social worker, ensuring that the volunteers had all the appropriate information, and the clients received the government benefits to which they were entitled. This year **21** tax files were completed. Volunteers gave more than **20** hours of their time to complete the files.



## OUR FUNDERS

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

*Additional funding was provided through the VEQ Foundation, the Jeffery Hale Foundation, the Fondation des Premières-Seigneureries, and the Jeffery Hale Community Partners.*



Canadian  
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Patrimoine  
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VILLE DE  
QUÉBEC



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Partenaires  
communautaires  
**Jeffery Hale**  
Community Partners  
Une communauté de soins  
A Community of Care

## OUR DEDICATED TEAM

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

### VEQ Team

- *Brigitte Wellens, Executive Director*
- *Catherine Baboudjian, Coordinator*
- *Dominique Paddock, Coordinator*
- *Francisca Rojek, Administrative Assistant*
- *Maria Castro, Newcomers Coordinator*
- *Maria Hoyt, Coordinator*
- *Melissa Wan, Administrative Assistant*
- *Susanna Tang, Coordinator*

### Board of Directors

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- *Razvan Petre, Secretary*
- *Warren Thomson, Member-at-Large*
- *Ashley Byrne, Director*
- *Joan Chandonnet, Director*
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