

VOLUME 58 ISSUE 3

WINTER 2020

# QFHSA NEWS

THE NEWSMAGAZINE FOR HOME AND SCHOOL MEMBERS

## Yes, We Are Resilient!

*Keeping up our spirits and navigating our way through an endlessly surprising school year*

## Fall Conference Memories:

*Zooming and learning together, p. 8*

## Parenting Insights:

*How to help your teen or almost-teen with the special challenges COVID brings, p. 20*

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

# Creativity and Resilience in Exceptional Circumstances

THIS NEWSLETTER IS A TRIBUTE to the QFHSA community. We are most definitely *not* living in normal times. However, our creativity and resilience is shining through during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this issue, you can read about the **QFHSA's first ever online conference**. Over six evenings, we participated in Zoom workshops on a variety of topics. The range of ideas explored was vast—from bringing Canadian Black history to the classroom to taking care of our mental health during a pandemic and finding smart ways to make at-home schooling a success. Find out more in the articles about the workshops in this newsletter.

In addition, QFHSA board members and staff, local H&S members, and people from the community are gathering on Zoom for **QFHSA committee meetings**. The Education Committee met in mid December, while the Resolutions Committee will be meeting on January 13th. New committee members are always welcome! If you are interested, please email [carolmeindl@qfhsa.org](mailto:carolmeindl@qfhsa.org). Read more about the QFHSA's committee activity and advocacy for English education rights in these pages.

the Locals” section of this newsletter. So many lovely photos arrived from local H&S organizations that we had to share some here too! In addition to news about creative Halloween and holiday celebrations, there are inspiring stories about the Western Québec School Board's Volunteer of the Year and a truly amazing outdoor classroom project.



From the Pumpkin Patch at École Primaire Beaconsfield

As parents, we do our best to bolster our children's mental strength and resilience—an especially big task this year. On this topic, be sure to read the article on **Karen Delage's December parenting workshop** on helping teens stand strong and tall at a turbulent time of life made extra challenging by the pandemic.

You have probably heard the saying, “If you want to get a job done, give it to a busy person.” No question about it—Home and School volunteers have been extra busy this year managing their children's unusual school year, COVID-19 worries and challenges, and their Home and School commitments. Kudos to all who are making the very best of these exceptional circumstances!

Karen Henchey, *Communications Officer*



Halloween Smiles at Grenville Elementary

We learned from our November survey the **real challenges local Home & Schools are experiencing**. We have also seen how local associations are figuring out ways to meet those challenges. They are sharing ideas on the [QFHSA Think Tank Group](#) on Facebook on everything from fundraising to how to successfully organize pizza lunches during a pandemic. We invite you to read about the **wonderful ways H&S volunteers have helped enrich the lives of students and school staff** in the “Focus on

# Message from the President

## *An Incredible Year, A Better One to Come*

THERE IS NO DOUBT that 2020 was an incredible year. We have witnessed some unimaginable occurrences both tragic and uplifting. It seems like we have seen and felt more this year than we have over the course of human events in our lifetimes and we have for the most part risen to the challenge.

I think of the brave parents who have sent their kids to school even amongst great doubts about the safety conditions within our schools. I think of the teachers and administrators on the frontlines, so to speak, doing their best to ensure the health and safety of their charges. I think also of the parents, teachers, and administrators working together to normalize the situation as best they can so that the students are not traumatized by the experience and will not lose a year of schooling due to the pandemic.

*“I could not be prouder, nor more humbled by the yeoman’s work and effort you and your associations have put into reducing the stress endured by all in the school setting.”*

We are now facing a lockdown like the one that panicked many in March. We were all worried, lacking information, and confused by conflicting advice from health and government officials. Slowly, new information emerged, plans were formed, and authorities and the community began to work in unison to face the challenges presented by COVID-19. We adapted with online services and curriculums, and parents, like yourselves, used technology to communicate with one another, stay informed, and continue plans to aid your respective schools.

Local Home and School associations faced the challenge and still organized lunches, activities, and events so that students would have some sense of normalcy in their school day. Your associations are still managing to enrich the educational experience for your students as you have done in the past. You have remained undaunted and have resolved to be a part of the school life, just in different ways than you have before. From all reports you have

made a difference in the life of the school amidst arduous conditions and your efforts are greatly appreciated by students, staff, and administrators alike.

As President of the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations, I could not be prouder, nor more humbled by the yeoman’s work and effort you and your associations have put into reducing the stress endured by all in the school setting. You have endured and overcome many obstacles along the way, and yet the work is not done. We face nearly five months more of uncertainty and we do not know what the rest of the school year will look like. However, I am confident that the parents involved in our local Home and Schools will continue to find a way to contribute to the enrichment each child’s school experience.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I thank you for your hard work and dedication and wish you all a better New Year in 2021.

Linton Garner, *President*



Pumpkin time at École Primaire Beaconsfield!

## Weathering the 2020-2021 School Year

SCHOOLS CLOSED EARLY for the holidays and students, along with teachers, principals, and support staff, were sent home. Everyone wanted an opportunity to make the 2020 holiday season meaningful and memorable... in a good way. The strain of the past 10 months has been great and we all certainly deserved this break.

Running a Home and School has definitely been a challenge this year. Some Home and Schools have decided to take a hiatus, and others shifted fundraising to online and were fortunate to have teachers and lunch monitors offer to help out with Halloween celebrations and pizza lunches.

Home and School parents have missed being part of everyday school life. The usual routine of things, which can be such a comfort, has been missing this year. Looking back on 2020, everyone will feel it was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic—in the news and in every conversation. And yet we are beginning 2021 with a bit of light on the horizon. The vaccination program has begun, school board elections were postponed, and it has been a relatively mild winter so far.

### What Can We Expect for the Rest of this School Year?

For parents, students will still be shifting from in-school to at-home education as schools will still experience outbreaks. At the time of writing this article, there was every hope schools would indeed reopen

on January 11th, but we know what this virus tends to do to best-laid plans... It will take a long time before everyone is vaccinated, and in the meantime, we still have to wear masks, wash our hands frequently, keep distant, and go out in public as little as possible. The vaccine will keep people from getting sick, but we will still have the potential to be carriers and to further spread the virus.



Visiting the Pumpkin Patch at École Primaire Beaconsfield

For Home and Schools, it means little access for parents in the school and more dependence on the collaboration of school staff and administration to enrich the students' education in as many ways as current and new restrictions will allow. We have to recognize and accept our limitations, relax, and do what we can.

The QFHSA will be looking toward a busy 2021 in terms of Education and Rights. We will continue to support



the "No to Law 21" campaign as well as the opposition to Law 40. If anything good has come out of this year's struggle with the government over Bill 40, the on again/off again school board elections in the middle of a pandemic, and the snail's pace at which the Ministry of Education is testing the air quality in our schools, it is this: It has proven how crucial it is for the English community to control and manage its school boards. For the Minister of Education, English-language education and the needs of our community are always afterthoughts.

The QFHSA's Youth Exploring Science Program is ongoing. With the help of our micro-grants, Metis Beach students will launch their **Rocket Club** and Westwood students will launch their **Green Racer Project**, which will allow them to explore the science behind alternative energy sources. We look forward to receiving more proposals from science teachers as applications are being accepted throughout the year.

Our Literacy Program continues with *Born to Read* and *Reluctant Readers*. If your school would like to participate in any of these initiatives, contact our

*Continued on Page 6*

# Coming Up – Dates to Remember Jan./Feb. 2021

January 13	Resolutions Committee Meeting
January 16	QFHSA Board of Directors' Meeting
January 18, 19, 20, 25	Home & School Presidents' Meetings
January 21	Education Committee Meeting
January 27	Family Literacy Day
Early February	Regional Council Meetings
February 8-12	Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week

## Executive Director's Message

*Continued from Page 5*

office for more information. It is best to email [info@qfhsa.org](mailto:info@qfhsa.org) as our physical days in the office are still reduced.

Our Annual General Meeting, usually held in May, will undoubtedly need to be held online via Zoom once again, but we will endeavour to make it less “nothing but the facts, ma’am” and more interesting and enjoyable (but still brief).

Our Regional Councils and Presidents' meetings will continue on a regular basis so that everyone can benefit from hearing about each other's experiences. After all, Home and School is 50% education enrichment and 50% community building, and every opportunity we have to talk with one another is beneficial.

Now that we have firmly shut the door on 2020, let us look forward to a new and more promising year. There is no better way to celebrate a fresh new beginning than with a plate of Snickerdoodles!

See you soon!  
*Carol Meindl*



*We welcome your letters!*

Please share your thoughts with us on this newsletter and its contents. We welcome your comments/suggestions! Email [news@qfhsa.org](mailto:news@qfhsa.org).

## Snickerdoodles

1 cup shortening	2¾ cups flour
1½ cups sugar	2 teaspoons cream of tartar
2 eggs	1 teaspoon baking soda
	¼ teaspoon salt

Cream the shortening and sugar together, add eggs and beat. Add dry ingredients and mix. Form into tablespoon-sized balls and roll in a mixture of cinnamon and sugar (2 tablespoons sugar, 2 teaspoons cinnamon). Press down to flatten on cookie tray.

Bake at 400°F for 8-10 minutes. Cool on a wire rack. Makes about 30 cookies. (Best if eaten all within the 1st hour!)



## CORRECTION

In the Fall 2020 edition of the *QFHSA News*, we incorrectly spelled **Dr. Pierre Olivier Bonin's** name in the article, “Does Community Activism Make Quebec Anglophones Happier?” which appeared on Pages 20-21. We apologize for this error.

## Our Survey Says...

### *Home and School Activity in Fall 2020*

IN EARLY NOVEMBER, Marlyn Brownrigg, the QFHSA's Membership Services Coordinator, created an online survey for local Home & School presidents. The goal was to find out how the 2020-2021 school year was unfolding in these most exceptional times. Close to one quarter of Home & Schools completed the survey. Thank you very much to all who responded. The following is a summary of what the QFHSA learned from those responses, which reflect H&S activity until November 10th, 2020.

*We are adapting to the "new" normal.*

#### **How are Home & Schools Managing this Fall? *With a lot of creativity!***

**Home & Schools continue to play an important role in school life.** Close to 60% of respondents had organized activities for the students, and over 80% provided financial support to their school in some way.

**H&S meetings** are definitely still happening. (Close to 90% of respondents had already had two or more meetings.) Holding those meetings on Zoom is definitely helping attendance, but people are missing the camaraderie of in-person meetings.

*We haven't been as successful fundraising as we have in previous years. We are currently doing an online coffee sale, and we did do an online mask sale as well as our book fair online.*

*It will be a challenging year but I believe if we stay practical and open minded to new ideas, processes and ways of operating, there will be new opportunities.*

**Fundraising** in the time of COVID-19 has been a bit of a challenge—forcing a lot of schools to rethink their usual activities. It was great to hear that over 75% of respondents have been organizing in-school or online fundraisers.

**Recruiting volunteers/H&S members** is more complicated this year. Indeed, quite a few respondents talked about their struggles with membership. However, most Home & Schools were not worried about achieving quorum if the 2019-2020 members whose memberships were temporarily extended to December 31st did not end up rejoining.

*It has been a challenge to get new families as paid members. We lost our ability to present at orientation this year. It has impacted.*

This is definitely an unusual year for Home & School associations. They are learning to work differently and with the help of fewer people. And, thankfully, most associations are doing alright despite the circumstances.

Karen Henchey, *Communications Officer*

# A Look Back—The 2020 Fall Conference

LIKE SO MANY THINGS IN 2020, this year’s edition of the QFHSA’s Fall Conference was done a little differently. Instead of our traditional day-long event, we reimagined our conference as a series of evening workshops on Zoom. Six workshops were held between November 17th and 26th.

The QFHSA would like to thank Marketing and Events Professional **Samantha Whipps**; Family Life Educator **Karen Delage**; **Dr. Michael Canuel**, **Carolina Toteda**, and **Robert Costain** from LEARN Quebec; Historian **Dr. Dorothy Williams**; Software Developer **Corinna Rake**; and **Joanne Lawson** and **Christopher Laurin** of the Champions for Life Foundation for sharing their knowledge and expertise with us.

The advantages of this new format were clear. People could attend the events in the comfort of their homes.

And with no workshops running concurrently (as is the case at our in-person event), participants could attend as many as they wished.

We were happy to learn from our follow-up survey that most respondents (81.3%) anticipate using what they learned in the future, either personally or at their Home & School.

For the QFHSA staff, the lessons learned from this first online conference will be useful when planning future events. Perhaps the biggest lesson: Most participants found the frequency of the workshops (6 in 2 weeks) challenging. We will need to spread out future events over more than 2 weeks!

We have invited a number of contributors to share what they learned at the workshops. You will find their observations on this and the following pages.

## Media Literacy: *Reading Between the Lines in our Digital World*

Presenter: *Samantha Whipps*

THIS WORKSHOP WAS FACILITATED by Samantha Whipps, a parent of two children in elementary school. Samantha’s background is in marketing and events and she is also a member of a local Home and School association.



Photo by Julia M Cameron from Pexels

Samantha led a discussion on media literacy, specifically her concerns about the thinking skills needed to evaluate the content that our children view every day. Not only are children watching television, they are viewing clips, absorbing “news,” etc., from a variety of sources. Most have not ever known a world without easily accessible internet.

Are children developing critical evaluation skills? Are they well equipped to detect media bias and marketing and advertising strategies? Can they authenticate information? Do they know about online “stranger danger”?

There are important discussions that parents can have with their children. Here are examples of questions you may want to explore with your children:

- Are YouTube stars being paid to promote a product?

- What is the motive behind the advertisement?
- Is there media bias behind the content?

Samantha recommended parents check out the items in the following list. They are good jumping-off points for more research (and more discussion).

- [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com) — For fact checking.
- [www.mediasmarts.ca](http://www.mediasmarts.ca) and [breakthefake.ca](http://breakthefake.ca) (Canadian) — For fact checking. Media Smarts created the now famous “House Hippo” campaign.
- <https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus> — A fictional tale that shows that you can’t always believe everything you read.
- *The Social Dilemma*: This documentary is available on Netflix, but the content is not for all ages.
- And finally, Google “Media bias charts – Canada and U.S.” and see what you find out.

As parents, we also have to examine the content we view and evaluate what we see. How can we help our children become discerning viewers—especially since most of the research for projects, etc., has switched to online sources? How do parents ensure that critical thinking skills are part of the school curriculum? Samantha hopes that the discussion will continue and encourages parents to advocate for media literacy programs in our schools.

*Marlyn Brownrigg*



# A Look Back—The 2020 Fall Conference

## Head and Heart — *Caring for our Emotional and Mental Health*

Presenter: Karen Delage

THE PRESENTER of the Fall Conference's second workshop, Karen Delage, invited her 15 virtual participants to be active learners in a discussion on COVID-19 and how it has affected our emotional and mental health. Karen is a family life educator who has worked with a number of English school boards and with the Youth Protection mandate for over 15 years.

For many of us and for our families, these challenging times are taking things to a whole other level! We often (unknowingly) resort to self-sabotaging thoughts and behaviours. This webinar aimed to strengthen our awareness of these subconscious reactions and lessen their negative hold on us. It explored tools and strategies to support a stronger sense of self-awareness, control, and balance—both inside and out.

In her webinar presentation, **Karen explored how our thoughts and behaviour can work against us and identified concrete tools and strategies that encourage strong mental and emotional health.**

In her introductory remarks, she pointed out and made us aware that during COVID-19, we are often thrown into the unknown; we have to live with the lack of predictability; and we constantly have to adapt to situations over which we have little or no control. This can lead to **big time and prolonged stress**, and judgmental and unforgiving expectations, the major source of anxiety and depression.

Moreover, we need to be aware of our **cognitive distortions**. This is a type of distorted thinking that causes people to view reality in inaccurate and often negative ways. Some examples of cognitive distortions: adhering to and using “should” statements for oneself and others; labelling people; engaging in “black & white” thinking; making judgmental comments and overgeneralizations.



Photo by Visionpic .net from Pexels

She emphasized the fact that thoughts have power: “Change your thoughts and you change your world.” Being mindful of these common cognitive distortions will help us understand ourselves and others better, and improve our decision-making skills. We learn to not take something personally that may not be personal and to not see events as consequences of our actions when there are other possibilities.

**Furthermore, Karen underlined the value of being able to self-regulate.** This is the capacity to pause between how you feel and how you react to a situation. Karen describes the process as follows: “I connect with what I am feeling and allow my emotions to exist, but I do not let my feelings/emotions take over.”

Some helpful suggestions:

- If you “lose it” in an interaction with someone, be accountable and take ownership.
- Since there are always two sides to every story/situation and the truth usually lies somewhere in the middle, seek out the “middle.”
- Use mindfulness, gratitude, and affirmations. For example: “I will do something today that my future self will thank me for.”
- Adopt the “Sandwich” technique—compliment, coach, encourage when giving constructive criticism. This helps us tackle a problem, learn from it, and move on.

Everyday strategies for strong mental and emotional health:

- Find time for creativity, fun, and play (board games, etc.)
- Improve quality of family life
- Daily walks and capture photos
- Self-care and self-love
- Share and talk
- Healthy diet and movement
- Humour

We all learned from Karen Delage's personalized, adapted and strengths-based hands-on approach, which empowers us all with prevention-based education and skills.

For Karen Delage's list of helpful resources, please see Page 21 of this newsletter.

*Renate Sutherland*

# A Look Back—The 2020 Fall Conference

## School at Home

Presenters: Dr. Michael Canuel, Carolina Toteda and Robert Costain, LEARN Quebec

IN MARCH 2020, 1.6 billion students around the world suddenly found themselves online learners. What has this meant for those students and the parents trying to guide them through this unprecedented situation? Michael Canuel, Ph.D., the CEO of LEARN Quebec, explored this question and more in his presentation. He was assisted by Carolina Toteda, LEARN's communications/marketing lead and Robert Costain, LEARN's IT manager. Both Carolina and Rob are parents of online learners.



Photo by Julia M Cameron from Pexels

### Is Online Learning Better or Worse than In-Person Learning?

According to Dr. Canuel, **where a child learns** (online or in a classroom) **does not matter as much as the pedagogy**. In other words, it is all in the teaching! Both online and in-class lessons can be very interesting and engaging. The opposite is also true: a poorly-executed online or in-person lesson will not spark learning. Wherever they teach, the role of the teacher remains the same: to create trust, understanding, and engage learners so they can own their learning. As Dr. Canuel explains, **“Good pedagogy always wins out.”**

It is important to distinguish online learning (where teachers adapt the material to this learning method) from the “emergency remote teaching” that was thrust upon teachers (and families) at the beginning of the pandemic. Dr. Canuel believes online learning has come a long way since those early days of the pandemic. Teachers are adapting, school boards are creating engaging materials,

and the Ministry of Education is providing more resources. It is also true that some teachers have proven to be more adept at pivoting from the physical to online classroom than others. The hope is that teachers continue to embrace the change and find creative ways to work within these new parameters...

### What Has Online Learning Meant for Students?

As a parent of any teen will tell you, our teens (and younger students too) are definitely missing the social part of in-person learning. That said, the quality of the education should not suffer, whatever the teaching vehicle.

### How Can Parents Support Online Learning?

First things first: Don't be too hard on yourself and expect to suddenly become an A-1 teacher! As Dr. Canuel explained, parenting requires a particular skill set, teaching requires another (with some overlap). That said, **remote learning does require more parent/family involvement**. According to Dr. Canuel, children of any age learning online need their parents' support, for example, with managing time and creating a home environment conducive to online learning.

Dr. Canuel's presentation was filled with practical suggestions, which you will find on the next page. The most important suggestion of all: **Don't stress!** Dr. Canuel reassured us that our children will be able to catch up. Although this school year (*and last spring*) has brought unusual, sometimes challenging circumstances, Dr. Canuel reminded us that the pandemic has taught our children new ways to learn. Their newly-acquired skills (time/energy management; independence; creative thinking) will serve them well in the future.

This was a reassuring workshop for parents. We were able to benefit from LEARN Quebec's many years of experience in the field of online learning. We learned tips, strategies, and suggestions for dealing with issues. We came away from the workshop feeling better equipped to manage what comes our way in this time of change.

Karen Henchey

# A Look Back—The 2020 Fall Conference

## Carolina's Tips for Creating a Good Learning Space in Your Home

- The ideal setting: A **quiet, uncluttered space** with an adequate workspace (an area where the student can sit comfortably and focus—preferably away from the T.V./family relaxation hub).
- Have more than one learner at home? Create **separate cubicles** with cardboard, etc., and get the kids involved in the project.
- **Reduce the amount of background movement/sound** as much as possible.
- **Make sure there is adequate lighting.** For video classes, front lighting is best.



Photo by Sharon Mccutcheon from Pexels

## Robert's Home IT Recommendations

### Basic Tech Requirements:

#### System Software:

- Windows 7, 8, or 10
- macOS 10.9 or higher
- iOS 8, Android 5 or higher

*Memory:* 4 GB minimum

*Browser:* Chrome (compatible with most systems), Firefox, Safari, Edge

*Bandwidth:* Broadband with 5 MB/sec download speed (recommended) *Test your internet speed at <https://speedtest.net>*

### Optimal Conditions:

- Wired connections (*Ethernet cable links*) are generally more reliable than wifi.
- Your wifi should be as close to the internet router as possible.
- High speed internet not reliable at home? Tether your connection to a cell phone (if you have a good data plan). *Note: The Ministry of Education is planning to subsidize parents who need to use their cell phones for an internet connection.*
- Unstable connection? Use your phone for audio. (Some platforms offer local or toll-free numbers you can dial into.)
- Invest in a headset with a built-in microphone (Cost: \$20-30). Be sure to set up the microphone properly and test it.
- Reduce internet usage when classes are in session (No Netflix).
- Using a webcam? Disable HD in video settings (to free up bandwidth).

## LEARN's Tips for Learning Well at Home

### 1. Move and stand.

Be active 15 minutes for every hour of screen time. When possible, limit overall screen time to 2 hours a day (excluding homework).

### 2. Hydrate and eat your meals (and healthy snacks).

Poor hydration affects mental performance (memory, attention, and concentration can decrease by as much as 10%).

### 3. Focus on micro-learning.

Learn information in small "bite-sized" chunks. This is an efficient way to take in information.

### 4. Start and stop.

Use mindfulness:

Focus your attention on the present

moment and clear your mind of other thoughts. Slow things down and let your child's brain process the information.

### 5. Learn the right things at the right time.

Mornings are best for acquiring new knowledge. Afternoons are best for reinforcing the learning.



Photo by Julia M Cameron from Pexels

# A Look Back—The 2020 Fall Conference

## The ABC's of Canadian Black History

Presenter: Dr. Dorothy Williams

WHAT DO YOU DO when you notice that teachers and students are sorely lacking information on Canadian Black history? You create materials for them! This is what Dr. Dorothy Williams did with the help of Linton Garner, her partner in the *ABC's of Canadian Black History* project.

A writer, historian and archivist of African Canadian history, Dr. Williams is often invited to speak at schools, especially during Black History Month. It was during these visits that she saw a real need for teaching/learning materials that could, as she describes, “provide an abundance of material for teachers and their students to integrate discussions about Black history throughout the school year.”

Dr. Williams explained that the history of Blacks in Canada dates back to the time of Samuel de Champlain. Using her considerable research skills, Dr. Williams mined Canadian Black history through slavery, Confederation, and to the present day for stories of leadership, innovation, and the pioneering spirit.

Exactly what is the *ABC's of Canadian Black History*? It is a classroom kit containing the following:

- 2 sets of 26 collector cards
- 8 activity sheets
- 26 lessons
- A teacher's text for each card complete with key words, suggestions for activities, and ideas for further exploration
- A teacher's guide containing answers to the questions in the teacher's texts; a glossary;

an activity guide; in-class exercises with lesson plans; 11 games (*The guide also links the material with Quebec Education Plan objectives.*)

- A timeline poster



Each collector card tells a story about Canadian Black history, one for each letter of the alphabet. The story may be of a person, place, or event. In addition, the cards are colour coded by theme (Arts & Science; Politics; Military; Place; Pioneers; Human Rights; or Sports). Dr. Williams emphasized the versatility of the kit: you can approach the material by the alphabet, by chronological order, or by theme.

Although originally planned for Grade 4 students, the kit works equally well with adult learners, as Dr. Williams's focus groups have shown. Whether used in elementary schools or at higher grade levels, the goals of the *ABC's* are the same:

- To open students to culture and diversity in positive ways and build empathy
- To broaden the definition of what it means to be Canadian and deepen our understanding of other people's contributions

- To prepare students for multi-ethnic experiences they will have in higher education and the global workplace

Dr. Williams believes that the deeply upsetting racial incidents of 2020 and the Black Lives Matter movement have made the existence of the *ABC's of Canadian Black History* all the more relevant. Through the kit, students learn to talk about racism; challenge stereotypes; illuminate biases; explore implicit messages; help give voice to silent/hidden communities; and more.

Launched in 2016, the kit has been purchased by schools and school boards and is meant to be shared among teachers/classrooms. The kit costs \$499.95 and is available in both English and French. *Note that the QFHSA currently has a cost-sharing program for the kit, which can help bring the kit to your school. Find out more by emailing [info@qfhsa.org](mailto:info@qfhsa.org).*

For Dr. Williams, the *ABC's of Canadian Black History* is the culmination of her life's work. Through it, she shares her passion for the history of Canada and her desire to make this information available across the country. And the journey continues... A “GoFundMe” campaign has begun to help pay the cost to digitize the kit. For more information, visit the [GoFundMe](#) website and search for: **Make Black History Month Your Legacy!** or use this link: <http://bit.ly/2LnY1ah>.

Thank you to Dr. Williams for sharing the *ABC's* with us!

Karen Henchey

# A Look Back—The 2020 Fall Conference

## It's 2020—Is Now a Good Time to Move our Home & School "Online"?

Presenter: Corinna Rake

CORINNA, A FORMER HOME AND SCHOOL VOLUNTEER at Clearpoint Elementary in Pointe-Claire, is also a website developer. She designed a web platform for Clearpoint Home and School and is now providing support through her company, Online Empowerment.

Corinna began the workshop by asking participants the following questions: What are the biggest challenges you are facing in your Home and School role? What are the biggest time-wasting tasks? How much time is expended compiling data, organizing activities, and transferring the procedures to the next co-ordinator? Are the time demands leading to burnout? Can energy be better expended elsewhere?



This is why the idea of moving processes and procedures online can be very attractive for Home and Schools. It is important to keep in mind that all online platforms and automatic payment providers have associated costs. If going the online route,

Home and Schools have to decide whether to absorb the costs (less profit) or add them to the price of the item. Most off-the-shelf platforms are not designed for all the activities Home and Schools run, i.e., fundraising activities, membership drives, staff appreciation celebrations, etc.

Corinna showed us some aspects of Clearpoint Home

and School's online platform and demonstrated what can be done with such a system. When creating an online platform, it takes effort to put together the "must haves" and the "extras." The process can be done in stages. It is important to figure out what your Home and School's priorities are for the system. Is it pulling data for reports, evaluating fundraisers, creating volunteer lists, making class distribution lists?



For the Clearpoint H&S site, Corinna uses WordPress, which has some pre-made templates, and WooCommerce. Mailchimp is integrated into these platforms. If your Home and School's webpage is hosted by the school board's website, you may have to work with the school board webmaster to move forward with this project.

Covid-19 has certainly encouraged (or pushed, compelled?) Home and School associations to adopt online processes. How far Home and Schools move online will depend on volume, cost, and volunteer availability. Thank you, Corinna, for showing participants what is possible!

Marlyn Brownrigg

**Note:** Given the interest in this topic, the QFHSA plans to organize an online meeting early in the new year to further discuss moving Home & Schools online.

# A Look Back—The 2020 Fall Conference

## Supporting Your Child’s Physical Literacy Development at Home

Presenters: Joanne Lawson and Christopher Laurin, Champions for Life Foundation

“Physical literacy” is not a misnomer! As our kids work through levels of proficiency in academic literacy, there is also the very crucial, often overlooked **literacy in movement** that our children need to acquire. This was the important message shared by our friends from the Champions for Life Foundation at this year’s virtual Fall Conference.

Joanne Lawson, Program Director and Curriculum Developer, and Christopher Laurin, Director of Marketing and Business Development, respectively, shared their wealth of information on movement strategies for kids, families, and schools alike. They walked participants through the skill sets and short mindful activities that help children gain an understanding of their bodies and how they can move and use them with purpose and skill. They have outlined these fundamental movement skills as:

- **Locomotor skills** that enable moving through space (walking, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, swimming, skating, climbing)
- **Non-locomotor skills** (balance, stretching)
- **Object manipulation** (throwing, catching, hitting, kicking, dribbling)

Keeping these skills in mind, parents can plan activities that both align with their kids’ interests and encourage the acquisition of those skills.

With organized sports under heavy restrictions in the midst of this global pandemic, finding viable alternatives to keep everyone moving and healthy can be a challenge. [Championsforlife.ca](http://Championsforlife.ca) has bountiful resources, strategies, and methods to introduce or expand on family fitness. Exercises like the Crab Walk Challenge, Popcorn Balls, Alphabet Soup, and Toilet Paper Roll Bowling can capture and hold younger kids’ attention in exciting and fun ways. These easy-to-learn games can inspire motivation and create a level of confidence that grows a life-long love of physical fitness. Older school-aged children can join parents in their fitness activities by going for a family fun-run, yoga session, dance-off, or, with winter upon us, a snowshoe excursion.

Other ideas Joanne and Christopher shared to inspire us included an “up and coming” trend in which families living in smaller homes or apartments empty their main living areas of breakables and unneeded items to free up space for movement and play. While we are all reimagining and reinventing our lives for work and school in 2020, why not for fitness as well?

It can be easy to dismiss the importance of movement and minimize the impact or extent of the problems associated with inactivity. However, the cold hard facts are sobering. The 2020 ParticipACTION Report Card gives a D+ grade to Canadian kids because only 36% of them meet or exceed minimum levels of recommended physical literacy. Given this bleak assessment, Champions for Life has a goal to inspire 1,000,000 kids to move well by 2030. While they work hard on their ambitions through education, program development and advocacy, we must take up the cause at home too.

Please take time to explore their very accessible website and help spread awareness of physical literacy and its positive impact. Perhaps consider introducing this valuable resource to your school’s phys ed department, if they are not already aware of it. Active lifestyles are learned, so let’s teach.

Mimi Tabaczuk

### Did you know...?

The QFHSA is on YouTube, where you can watch recordings of the following Fall Conference workshops:

- **Digital Literacy:** *Reading Between the Lines in our Digital World*
- **School at Home**
- Supporting Your Child’s **Physical Literacy** Development at Home



Visit [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) and search for QFHSA!



## Air Quality in Classrooms: *An Update*

IN OUR LAST ISSUE, Executive Director Carol Meindl wrote a very timely article on the question of air quality in classrooms (*QFHSA News*, Fall 2020). In it, she chronicled how the quality of the school environment (sanitation, proper maintenance, clean air circulation) has been a real concern for the QFHSA since as early as 2001.

In the past few months, parents and school boards have really zeroed in on the ventilation issue in our schools. This makes perfect sense given that we now know the COVID-19 virus can spread through airborne droplets. Healthy air circulation had become a top priority as schools scramble to provide a safe environment for students and staff. The solution of keeping classroom windows open is not feasible during our Quebec winters.

When they did not see any sign of concrete action from the Quebec government on this issue, the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB) decided to take on the issue itself. A CBC News article on November 12th shared the news: “Instead of waiting for a government solution, the board is spending half-a-million dollars on new, portable machines for schools without mechanical ventilation.” As reported on their website, the LBPSB purchased 420 HEPA filters for the 17 schools/centres that do not have mechanical ventilation. The plan is to install the filters by mid-December. For those schools with mechanical ventilation systems, the filters will be upgraded. For more details, please visit the LBPSB website (<https://boardsite.lbpsb.qc.ca/>). Search “air purifiers” for the board’s latest infor-

mation on the topic. You can also use this link: <https://bit.ly/386R5G3>.



Photo by Jan Kopřiva from Pexels

The English Montreal School Board (EMSB) soon followed on December 3rd with its own commitment to purchase about 800 HEPA filters for its buildings without mechanical ventilation systems. A total of 30 buildings will receive the filters, representing an investment of \$1.75 million. The EMSB has made a request to the Ministry of Education for reimbursement for this expense. For more details, visit the EMSB website (<https://www.emsb.qc.ca/>) and scroll down the Home page for the link to the “EMSB to purchase air purifiers” article or use this link: <https://bit.ly/34hz1kl>.

It has been very heartening to see English school boards take on this important health issue in our schools.

What is happening in French schools? There has been much talk about a letter parents received from a school in the Marguerite Bourgeoys board. On December 8th, Global News reported on the letter and the controversy it created. In the letter, the school

administrator told parents (some of whom had purchased air purifiers for classrooms) that the Ministry of Education (MEQ) has forbidden the use of air purifiers. This is not true, said Geneviève Côté, a spokesperson for the MEQ when reached by Global News. She also stated: “The best approach consists in applying the INSPQ’s (Quebec Institute of Public Health’s) recommendations, knowing how to properly maintain existing ventilation systems and keep them working non-stop during the day and opening windows in classes without mechanic ventilation without students in them three times a day for 15-20 minutes.” Global News wrote: “The education ministry also noted that their sample studies show ventilation in schools is appropriate, that they are performing more air quality tests and that if they find something isn’t working properly, they will adjust.”

This story is not over as school air quality will continue to preoccupy us in this time of COVID-19 and beyond. What can parents do? For one, make sure your children continue to dress warmly for school as they may find themselves in a breezy classroom this winter as teachers do what they can to keep everyone safe.

We are all closely watching and waiting for the Quebec government to release a concrete plan to invest in our schools so that our children may breathe clean air in a safe and healthy school environment.

Karen Henchey,  
*Communications Officer*

### Those Who Cannot Remember the Past Are Condemned to Repeat It!

*A Commentary By Brian Rock*

THE TITLE OF THIS ARTICLE is the memorable saying of George Santayana that became so popular in the aftermath of the signing of the treaty that ended the Boer War in South Africa on May 31st, 1902.

Unfortunately, the saying rings true some 118 years later for the recent debates on the curriculum of the history of Quebec taught to our Secondary III and IV students.

The challenges with the history curriculum began during the tenure of Education Minister Marie Malavoy, who held the position during the *Parti Québécois* government led by Premier Pauline Marois from September 2012 to April 2014. During this time, the history curriculum was revised and the result was a new curriculum with a strong emphasis on Quebec nationalism.

The shortcomings of the new history curriculum were not remedied during the subsequent 4-year tenure of the Quebec Liberal Party at the helm of our provincial government. There were four education ministers while the Liberal government was in power, but the difficulties of the curriculum never got to the front burner.

Since François Legault and his *Coalition Avenir Québec* came to power on October 18th, 2018, the curriculum has remained unchanged. It has been 26 months and counting, which is also the time our current education minister, Elementary School Teacher Jean-François Roberge, has held the position. *A little political footnote: In the last*

*7 decades, the tenure in office for ministers of education in Quebec has been a little over two years...*

The result is that instead of providing 15- to 17-year-old Quebec adolescents with a story to provoke critical thinking, they are receiving a slanted account of the history of Quebec virtually bereft of the significant contributions over the centuries of the minority groups of our society. Very little is taught about Anglophones, Allophones, First Nations, Blacks, and the Jewish community, all of whom have played a critical role in the development of the Quebec that we know today.

The Quebec history curriculum further attracted controversy in the Black Lives Matter era of 2020. In the fall, it came to light that a Quebec history textbook uses the “N” word in reference to Pierre Vallières’ 1968 book, which compares the struggle of Quebec Francophones with that of North American Blacks. Also this fall, Premier François Legault stated he does not believe systemic racism exists in Quebec. He made the statement when the province (and the country) was in a huge uproar over the treatment of Joyce Echaquan, an Indigenous Quebecer, by staff at a Joliette hospital.

Meanwhile, the Committee for the Enhancement of the Curriculum of the History of Quebec (ComECH-QC) is morphing into a very active coalition of advocacy. The group is comprised of 28 members and 8 observers. These individuals, in turn, are linked to over 20 English-



language community organizations by virtue of their active involvement in these organizations—as members, administrators, or directors. The QFHSA is very well represented on ComECH-QC.

On December 14th, ComECH-QC met virtually with Mr. Christopher Skeete, M.N.A. for Sainte-Rose and Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier for Relations with English-Speaking Quebecers, and his political attaché, Mr. Julien Apelian. A follow-up meeting with Mr. Skeete is planned for January. Discussions will also be held in early January with Mr. William ‘Bill’ Floch, *Secrétaire adjoint, Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d’expression anglaise.*

There is a veritable cornucopia of valuable historical resources about our province and it is so very important that these resources be made available to our secondary-school history teachers responsible for

*Continued on the next page*



### Those Who Cannot...

*Continued from Page 16*

teaching the history of our province as well as teachers of social studies at the elementary level. ComECH-QC will be advocating to facilitate access to this plethora of priceless historical resource materials. ComECH-QC will also endeavour to keep everyone informed on the progress of this important educational dossier.

It is a sentiment well worth repeating: ***Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it!***

*Brian Rock, B.A., M.Ed., is the Chairman of the QFHSA Education, Rights, and Resolutions Committee and the Immediate Past President of the QFHSA. A former secondary-school teacher of the history of Quebec and Canada and school principal with the Eastern Shores School Board, he is also*

*the Chairman of the Committee for the Enhancement of the Curriculum of the History of Quebec (ComECH-QC). Brian writes a monthly column, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place," for the Aylmer Bulletin, the Pontiac Journal, and the West Quebec Post, which delves into the mysterious dealings in education, politics, and history, as well as other subjects of current interest.*

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



## Opposition to Law 21 Update



THE SUPERIOR COURT CHALLENGE TO LAW 21 began on November 4th, 2020. The hearings in Montreal combined four separate lawsuits challenging Law 21 into one trial, which lasted 6 weeks before Superior Court Justice Marc-André Blanchard. Quebec's religious neutrality law passed in the provincial legislature in 2019 by a vote of 75-35. It bars police officers, teachers, and judges from wearing religious garb at work in the public service, although there are some exceptions. By November 23rd, all of the evidence had been presented before the court; the witnesses and experts had been examined and cross-examined.

On November 30th, the court began to hear almost 3 weeks of legal arguments, beginning with the team of lawyers opposing the law. They explained to the court why, notwithstanding the notwithstanding clause, the law banning religious symbols in many workplaces is unconstitutional and must be struck down. The three other plaintiff parties, the government respondents, and multiple intervenors also had their opportunity to be heard by the court. The trial concluded on December 17th, 2020.

The plaintiffs were able to demonstrate immediate harm to citizens as a direct result of the implementation of the law. Law 21 harms immigrant and racialized communities in particular. The government should not be allowed to impose its beliefs on the people of Quebec, nor should it be dictating to individuals what they can and cannot wear. The women who choose to wear scarves, hats, and turbans should have a right to freedom of expression and religion, and to make their own choices, like all people in Canada, without the government interfering. Law 21 violates the equality of men and women.

At the end of the trial, the judge indicated that he would not be rendering a judgment before February 2021. Hopefully, what this means is he intends to have something done by the end of February. That would be unusually fast for a trial like this. No matter what he decides, there surely will be an appeal. That means the case would go to the Court of Appeals. After that, the Supreme Court would be the last and final stop.

The real problem with Law 21 is the dangerous precedent it sets. If governments can take away the

fundamental human rights of their minority-community citizens only because they perceive it to be "the will of the majority," without having to show evidence of an emergency situation with imminent harm, where will it end? What and who will be next?

*First they came for the Communists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Communist.*

*Then they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Socialist.*

*Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.*

*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.*

*Martin Niemöller (1892–1984)*

Law 21 must be defeated. **We fight this law on behalf of everyone currently experiencing discrimination and for future generations of Quebecers.** QFHSA has advocated against discrimination since 1947 starting with the "Outremont Question" and we will continue to advocate against discrimination.

Carol Meindl, Executive Director



Coming  
Soon!

## The QFHSA's Newly Revised and Updated *Children's Literacy Resource Guide*

WE ARE PLEASED TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS that the QFHSA's *Children's Literacy Resource Guide* has been completely updated and given a brand new look. First developed in 2005 by Marion Daigle and Dorothy Nixon, members of the QFHSA, the guide is filled with information from experts in their fields—researchers,

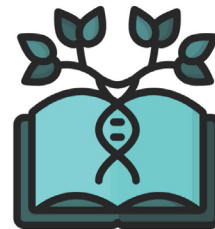
academics, teachers, librarians, and many others.

Thank you to Mayali Cousineau-Paley for her wonderful work on this project. Even better news: the guide will be available soon on our website! In the meantime, we are happy to share a sample page with you.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY STORIES

*At home, at school, in the community*

Discussing family history or heritage is a multi-generational activity that can be done at home (just flip through the pages of an old photo album or take a tape recorder to Grandma's), in the elementary school setting, and in high school.



On December 1, 2004, students at Laurier MacDonald High School launched their very own professional quality publication "Faded Dreams" - fifth in a series of heritage anthologies featuring poignant student-written stories. For many years, students in the media studies program at this multi-cultural school in Montreal produced these anthologies, with teachers acting only as mentors, and garnered world-wide attention for it.

At Carlyle Elementary School in Montreal the sixth-grade class worked on a scaled down version called 'Treasured Memories', even getting parents (many of them new Canadians) involved in the process.

### Why Tell Family Stories?



Because a good story, told from memory, has the same structure as a book style story, and helps children get ready for reading books without the stress of having to decode words;

Because oral stories encourage children to use their memory and learn how to predict what is going to happen, a skill they greatly need when they learn to read;

Because storytelling brings families closer together and gives children a sense of belonging, that they have roots.



# For Parents: News and Information

## Standing Tall, Staying Strong *Tips on Helping Our Teens During the Pandemic*

IT IS NOT EASY being a teen. In this very destabilizing time of their lives, teens need the support of their parents and families to stand tall. Like young plants, our teens need to bend in the strong winds, but stay intact; they also need to have the right components to be strong. With this plant metaphor, Family Life Educator Karen Delage began her very well-received presentation on December 9th, a webinar offered by the QFHSA in partnership with LEARN Quebec. Parents, Karen explained, are the plant growers who do their very best to make their plants become healthy, strong, and resilient to the winds of change blowing in their lives.

Karen invited us to think back and remember just how complicated and awkward our own teen years were. Starting from about 12 years of age, a child's life takes on a whole new look as he/she begins the journey into adulthood. We become egocentric. We are hyper-focussed on our own identity. Experimentation, drama, our peers, our best friends/worst enemies are all huge parts of our lives. As parents, we see our children gravitate closer to their peers and away from us.

It is extra challenging to be a teen during the COVID pandemic. At a time when social interactions are so important in their lives, teens have seen the quality and quantity of their time with their peers diminish drastically. Less time at school, cancelled school activities and special events, fewer sports and other extracurricular activities—all of these losses have an impact on our teens' lives.

When discussing these losses and the grief that accompanies them, Karen observed: "We do not get over grief, we get through it." The grief and loss our teens feel can affect their sleep and eating habits. The pandemic can also take a toll on teen mental health. Increased levels of anxiety can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms. Karen reminded us that parents have a significant role to play during the teen years, even though it seems our

teens are pulling away from us. What can we do to help our children navigate through these tumultuous years made all the more challenging by the grief and loss the pandemic has dealt them? Here are Karen's suggestions:

### 1. Learn How to Decode Your Teen's Behaviours

Karen used a drawing of an iceberg to describe how the behaviour we see (the small tip of the iceberg above the ocean's surface) does not always represent what is really going on beneath the surface. As parents, our role is to see beyond that surface behaviour, which can sometimes be quite challenging, and try to help our children explore what is really going on in their minds.

However, as Karen explained, we are all human and there are days when we can get angry and exasperated by that tip of the iceberg behaviour we see in our teen—the sighs, the resistance, the shutting down. On those days when it feels impossible to regulate our own emotions and have anything near a productive exchange with a child, remember this: There is always another chance to take up the conversation again with your child—maybe in an hour, maybe in a few days... The goal is to open up an ongoing dialogue with your child so that you can support your teen through whatever challenges he/she is dealing with below the surface.

### 2. Create a Welcoming Environment for Expressing/ Sharing Emotions

- Make your home a safe place for sharing emotions. Everyone (parents included) should feel comfortable articulating how they are feeling, even when the emotions they are feeling are difficult ones.
- Your message to your teen is: "You are important to me." Be sensitive to what your child is experiencing/living. Remember that it is a big deal for them!

*Continued on the next page*



Photo by Daino\_16 from FreeImages

# For Parents: News and Information

- Fight the impulse to swoop in and “fix” things for your child. Your role is to be with them and their emotions. Empathize, saying words like “I hear you.” Ask your teen how you can help; make suggestions of how your teen might work through the problem.
- Avoid making false reassurances. This won’t give your child the tools he/she needs to deal with the situation.

### 3. Build Your Child’s Resilience through a Strong Family Foundation

As we know, resilience is the capacity to adapt—the ability to deal with whatever life throws our way and move on. Her many years working with youth protection has shown Karen that helping a teen stay strong starts in the home. As parents, we want to be role models to our children in many ways, including by the resiliency we display in the face of our own challenges. As a unit, the family can work together to reinforce strength and resilience.



Photo by Any Lane from Pexels

For some families, the slowdown of life brought on by the COVID crisis has given them an opportunity to step back, reflect, and define what really matters to them. Karen encourages families to try this exercise: Gather the family and work together to identify the values that are important to the group. Maybe your family value is honesty; or being kind; or being respectful of others’ feelings. As Karen explains, when we can settle on shared family values, we create a solid foundation for our family and those living in it. This will help your teens to stand tall. They are given the gift of a strong foundation on which they can construct their identities. Karen recommends redoing the family-values exercise periodically to see if updates are needed.

There is an additional benefit to that family-values discussion. When everyone knows what the values are, it makes sense that there will be consequences when those values are not respected. But how should parents handle children and teens who are not respecting the family’s core values? Karen advocates strongly for the “Three Strikes, You’re Out” discipline technique. The first time the child breaks the family rule/value, the child gets a reminder. The second time, the child gets a second reminder plus a warning that there will be a consequence if the behaviour does not improve. And if there is a third time, the parent needs to follow through with a consequence. That said, it is important to also remember that your home is a safe space for your teen to share his/her emotions. Try not to overreact and remember that we all make mistakes.

Equally important, Karen says, is acknowledging your teen when their words or actions show respect for an important family value. As she explains, “The more you shine a light, the more you can make it grow.” It is a good reminder: Rewarding good behaviour benefits your teen and the entire family. Karen also asked the question, “What gold star did you give your teen?” This reminds us to focus on the things our teens do that we are proud of, the things that they are doing right. Let them know when you catch them in those moments; tell them what you admire about them.

The presentation ended with another important reminder from Karen: Parents need to take care of themselves too—we are doing an important job and we need to carve out time for self-care so we can keep up our own strength and resiliency.

Karen Henchey, *Communications Officer*

### Karen Delage’s Resource List

- [Empoweringparents.com](https://empoweringparents.com)
- [Verywellmind.com](https://verywellmind.com)
- Parents Help Line 1-800-361-5085
- Kids Help Line 1-800-668-6868 or Text 686868
- 1-866-APPELLE - Mental Health
- Karen’s one-on-one counselling and group workshops. Email [parenteenfocus@gmail.com](mailto:parenteenfocus@gmail.com) or call 514-575-5591

# Membership Services – The Latest News

## News from Membership Services

I AM ALWAYS AMAZED at the creativity shown by Home and Schoolers and this year is no exception. After navigating the bumpy roads at the beginning of the school year, many local associations found work-arounds and, in some cases, actually organized fundraising activities, membership campaigns as well as Halloween and holiday celebrations. Thank you to the administration and all the school staff who went the extra mile to offer moral support and hands-on help over the past few months.

### Membership News:

Recognizing that recruiting members has been challenging, **the QFHSA extended the membership deadline to December 31st, 2020.** As of January 1st, 2021, only 2020-2021 members may vote at your meetings. Online meetings have increased attendance so hopefully quorum will be reached easily.

**Not receiving the QFHSA e-bulletins?** It may be because the QFHSA office does not have your 2020-2021 Executive List. **The following are now due:**

1. Executive List 2020-2021
2. Local Association Membership Renewal Form 2020-2021
3. Administration Fee Invoice 2020-2021
4. Membership Fees 2020-2021 (Send the Membership Summary Form 2020-2021 with the fees.)
5. Local Association Membership List 2020-2021
6. 2019-2020 President's Activity Report
7. 2019-2020 Treasurer's Report

Please visit our website ([www.qfhsa.org](http://www.qfhsa.org)) and click on the "Forms" tab to find Items 1-5 in the above list.

**Constitution and By-Laws:** If your Home and School is going to continue with online meetings, your by-laws should reflect this change. In general, it is a good practice to review these documents every few years to ensure they are still relevant. Strike a small subcommittee to start the review and send the proposed revisions to Marlyn at [marlynbrownrigg@qfhsa.org](mailto:marlynbrownrigg@qfhsa.org) before the suggested changes are sent to the membership.

A by-laws template is available on our website ([www.qfhsa.org](http://www.qfhsa.org)). Again, go to the "Forms" tab and find the Local Association By-Laws Template.

### Other News:

Another round of Presidents' meetings will be scheduled for January 2021. (See the calendar on Page 6 above.)

As the QFHSA will be using the Zoom account for meetings in January, we might not be able to accommodate your Home and School meeting schedule. Did you know that recently some Home and Schools have successfully subscribed to a **free extended Zoom Plan** by using their school board-issued email address during registration (e.g. [homeandschool@lbpearson.ca](mailto:homeandschool@lbpearson.ca))? Zoom does allow educational groups to have this added access without added cost. If your H&S has such an email address, give it a try! Meeting times will be extended beyond 40 minutes, which is very handy. If you do not have this type of email, contact your school's administration. They can send a request to the school board on your behalf.

I wish everyone a healthy and "back-to-normal" 2021!

Marlyn Brownrigg, *Membership Services*

## Congratulations to the Winners of our Book Giveaway!

QFHSA member Jennifer Enright and her family have seven new books to add to their home library! They are the winners of our "Cool Cuts" book draw from



the Summer QFHSA News. Here is Jennifer's update: "My 3-year-old enjoys *Cool Cuts* because he is getting his hair cut soon. My 6-year-old's favourite is *Dream Builder* because he likes the story of how Philip Freelon became a builder. My 8-year-old's favourite book is *I am Enough* because she can read it herself and the story make her feel good." The books, which the QFHSA acquired from First Book Canada, all feature Black main characters.

*Happy Reading!*

# Focus on the Locals

In the *Focus on the Locals* section, we share the news and information of our schools. We would love to hear from your school too! Before sending photos, please make sure you have the permission of those appearing in the photos. We invite H&S members to send in your news to [news@qfhsa.org](mailto:news@qfhsa.org).

## Lord Aylmer: Celebrating our Volunteer of the Year!

The Lord Aylmer community would like to extend its congratulations to Lianne Pickhard, one of our long-standing Home & School members, for receiving the **Western Québec School Board Volunteer of the Year Award for 2019-2020**. This award is given in recognition of Lianne's dedication and exceptional leadership in her volunteer work with our Home & School, as well as the Lord Aylmer School.

Lianne is our Treasurer, Co-Coordinator of our Christmas Bazaar, our Pizza & Subway Diva, and has been active in all of our fundraising events. She has also volunteered countless hours at the school, helping lead the renovations and painting at the Junior Campus library and also getting the library system up and going at the Senior Campus. We thank you, Lianne, for your passion, perseverance and commitment to our students, teachers, staff, and school community. **Congratulations!!!**



## PUMPKIN DAY at École Primaire Beaconsfield!

**On October 19th, over 350 pumpkins arrived at ÉPB!**

The *Foyer-école* at École Primaire Beaconsfield usually hosts our Pumpkin & Bake Sale, an annual fundraiser where families visit the pumpkin patch set up at the school entrance to select their pre-ordered pumpkins and enjoy the baked goodies table with all items donated by parents.

Many classes incorporated their pumpkins into a class art project. It was heartwarming to see the kids enjoy this event filled with autumn spirit! *Foyer-école* also provided a Halloween surprise—candy bags for every student on Friday, October 30th!



This year, with COVID measures, we had to do things differently. So to keep the autumn spirit alive and well, we offered... **Pumpkin Day!** This special event was a gift to all the students. Each child received a field pumpkin. Throughout the day, classes came to visit the pumpkin patch to select their very own pumpkins.



# Focus on the Locals

## Wonders in the Woods at Forest Hill Junior

In May 2018, Madame Sylvie Ozell, a Grade 1 teacher at Forest Hill Junior Elementary School, had a vision for a project that would soon become her obsession. Inspired by the large outdoor space and wooded area surrounding the school, she saw an opportunity to bring the classroom outdoors. There are many studies that tout the benefits of outdoor education for children—reduced stress, increased creativity, improved social/



emotional well-being, better focus and concentration, and increased engagement in their educational activities.

However, you don't need to be a scientist to recognize the positive effects Mother Nature can have on children. As parents, we can clearly see these effects for ourselves as we watch our children run, play, jump, imagine, and adventure their way through a field, a forest, or even our own backyard. So as Mme. Sylvie began putting in countless hours to make her vision a reality, it was an easy decision for the Forest Hill Junior Home and School Association to throw its support behind her.



When the project began in the fall of 2018, the school yard was the perfect unblemished canvas to begin building what would become an integral part of our school. With the help of an educator and some students from a nearby education centre, pathways were designed and built into the forest in October of that year. A parent volunteered to build a bench for the classroom around a large tree, and with funds from Home & School, the first outdoor structure was built, where classes could take place.

Building and additions continued through the summer of 2019, always led by the passion and tenacity of Mme. Sylvie. On October 22nd, 2019, the official opening of the outdoor classroom took place with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by many excited, enthusiastic students and their families. Nina Segalowitz, a member of the First Nations, was invited as a guest of honour. Through a haunting musical performance, she reminded all in attendance of the importance of our connection to the land and our obligation to protect the environment that surrounds and provides for us all.

Since its inception, the classroom has been used not only to make the outdoors a location of the children's education, but also to make the outdoors a tangible part of the education. Students at



Forest Hill Junior learn number recognition and math by writing equations with sticks, or counting and adding rocks, leaves, pine-cones, and acorns. Music class takes place in the forest alongside the musical wall that has now been built there. The children make art with leaves, flowers, and even snow. They learn to read and spell using the letters that Mme. Sylvie has painted on the outdoor classroom rocks.



Circle time at the story station, yoga on the outdoor platform, and even gardening are all regular activities for students in this wonderful school. They can learn about insect life cycles by observing their very own insect hotel, or about structural engineering

by experimenting with tires and spare pieces of wood in the "constructors' corner." The outdoor mud kitchen, the "Forest Hill TV" frame made from branches, the fairy tree where children can leave letters to the fairies (who sometimes even write



# Focus on the Locals

## Forest Hill Junior Cont'd

back!), and the row of wooden seats for the “school bus” all fuel the children’s imaginations and encourage them to create their own new ideas.



Meanwhile, Mme. Sylvie’s imagination runs just as rampant with new ideas for the classroom, and she continues to spearhead this marvelous project. Earlier this year, she applied for and received a grant from the TD Bank Foundation to support the development of the outdoor classroom. She was also recently recognized by the Monique Fitz-Back Foundation for her work and commitment to this project. Her enthusiasm is undeniably infectious, and the

Forest Hill Junior community eagerly looks forward to helping with each new addition.

The outdoor classroom has been a boon to this community and continues to provide emotional, cognitive, and pedagogical benefits to all our students. It is a cornerstone in the foundation of life-long learning for all our children, so it has been an easy decision for the Forest Hill Junior Home and School Association to continue putting its support behind it. While no one could have foreseen the events that 2020 has thrown at us, we have certainly been grateful to have a well-developed, well-supplied outdoor space where our children can continue to learn, take risks, and thrive.

*Not all classrooms have four walls.* Visit the Forest Hill Junior Outdoor Classroom Facebook Page at <https://bit.ly/347mJJP>.

## Christmas Comes to Genesis Elementary!

The Genesis Home and School elves have been hard at work! The Holiday Decorating Team beautified the school grounds with gorgeous homemade pieces. The

multiple school yard entrances were livened up and made cheerful thanks to their efforts and creativity. It is the first year we decorated outside for the holidays, and with such a warm response from the community, it definitely will not be the last!

The Christmas Committee put together a beautiful gift for every student, which contained products from local merchants. Volunteers dressed up on the last day of school and spread Christmas cheer as the children arrived at Genesis. Even Santa dropped by and maintained his social distance!

We have big plans for 2021. Here’s hoping that the new year will be sweeter than the last!



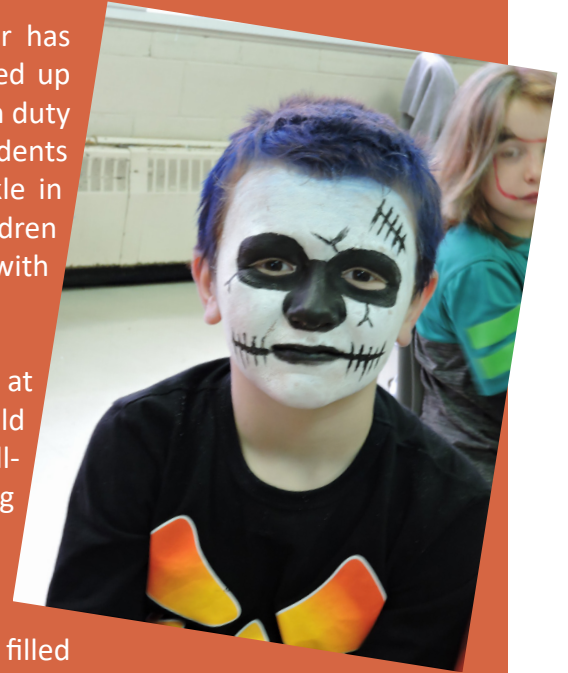
# Focus on the Locals

## Halloween, Crazy Hair, and Crazy Carpets at Grenville Elementary!



The days have gotten shorter. Winter has arrived. Every morning, buses are lined up at 8:05 a.m. waiting for the teacher on duty to open the gate. One by one the students march! You can see the smiles twinkle in their eyes. Lots of happy chatter. Children eagerly walk to the school yard to be with their friends.

Halloween was a fun time for all at Grenville Elementary. Every child received a pumpkin to decorate, a full-sized bag of Swedish berries, and a bag of chips.



To celebrate Christmas, each child received a personalized water bottle filled with chocolate kisses and a Juicy Fruit gum pack. YUM! Home & School purchased extra hats and mitts too so that no child has to wear gloves at recess when they're soggy and wet.

At Grenville Elementary, our kids play hard! Oh, and guess what? We got a donation—Crazy Carpets! Thank you, RONA in Grenville!



Once we have all had our winter break, our Home & School will be looking at

new fun and creative ways to fundraise for the remainder of the year. I can't wait to share our adventures with you in June!

*Happy Winter!*

Michelle Deslauriers



## Winter News from Children's World Academy

The Children's World Academy school year has been progressing well. Halloween was lots of fun. The children dressed up and had many in-class activities. Those activities ranged from online escape rooms to fun computer games, all planned by the Grade 5 and 6 Student Council. CWA Home & School donated a goodie bag to each student and helped decorate the hallways.

This year, the CWA Home & School organized three different concurrent Christmas fundraisers. All three were done online and were contactless.

One of the fundraisers was **Recettes En Pot**, which offers a variety of jarred recipes such as cookies, pancakes, and soups. For each jar sold, a meal is donated to a person in need.



The third fundraiser was **Bad Monkey Popcorn**, which offered three amazing sets of sweet and salty treats to choose from.

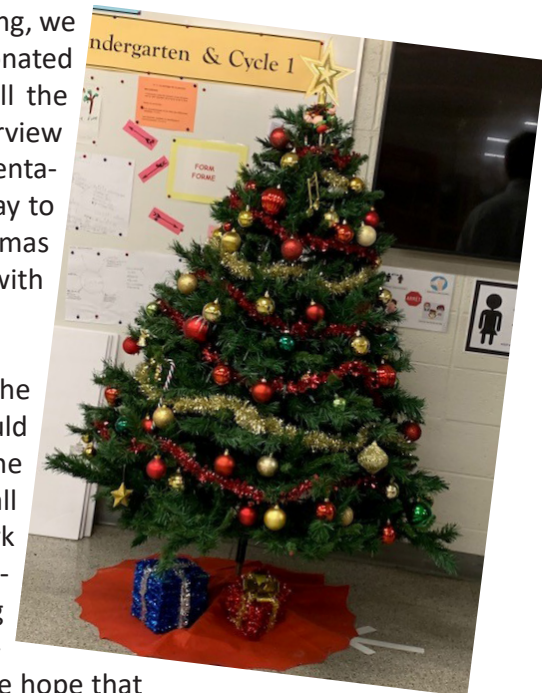
As the cold weather approached, we started our third annual Children's Winter Clothing Drive. We asked our community to donate gently-used hats, scarves, mittens, jackets, snow pants, and boots, which are donated to a school in need in our area. The response has been very generous.

With the challenges of COVID-19, we could not hold our annual Breakfast with Santa event, but no fear, other plans were made! The children dressed in their festive holiday wear on December 15th. On December 16th, we distributed "Snowman Soup" for their enjoyment at home along with individual bags of Bad Monkey popcorn to enjoy at school while they relaxed in their pajamas and slippers!

In the spirit of giving, we prepared and donated goodie bags for all the students at Riverview and Verdun Elementary. What better way to celebrate Christmas than to share it with our friends!

On behalf of the CWA H&S, we would like to thank the CWA staff for all their hard work during these difficult times keeping our children educated and safe! We hope that everyone had a safe and restful break!

The CWA H&S sends our very best wishes for a prosperous New Year!



**BoSapin**, our second fundraiser, is a service where a Nutcracker delivers a Christmas tree to your home.

This was so popular that it sold out before its December 1st deadline!

## 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](mailto:news@qfhsa.org)

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