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Educational Crises

St. Leonard Schools and the Maple Spring

Busking Politics

Montreal Metro Performers Gain a Voice

Before the Boat People

Quebec's Cambodian Community Leads the Way

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Cover: Ida Marsillo's desk, from the Yellow Line Project.
Photo: Cassandra Marsillo

EDITOR'S DESK

Edgware Road

by Rod MacLeod

"I hope you're well acquainted with the Arabic language," the cabbie chortled over his shoulder as he drove my parents and me through the London streets from Victoria Station to the apartment they were subletting just off Edgware Road. The cabbie's point was that the area had become home to a high percentage of London's population that hailed from the Middle East and boasted a great many Middle Eastern shops and restaurants – to the point where some locals were claiming that they could no longer be served in English. I was mortified that my parents should have to be greeted with such prejudice, and it was with great relief that I was finally able to bundle them out of the cab and wave its opinionated driver on his way. But for my parents, over the following few weeks, there would be no escaping the twin realities of the area's notable Arabic flavour and the resentment shown by many of their Anglo-Saxon neighbours.

Edgware Road, London. Google Street View, 2014.

This was 1985 and I was particularly sensitive to displays of racial intolerance, having been living, in another part of London, in a non-profit housing association whose mandate was to accommodate grad students from around the world in a cooperative and respectful environment. This residence had been established by a group of refugees from Nazi Germany who had wished to repay the country that had taken them in at such a crucial moment and allowed them to prosper. It was hoped that, having lived some years in this atmosphere of tolerance, students would return home and disseminate these values in their own countries – including Canada. Intriguingly, the residence's long-serving administrator had a slightly different take on its purpose: she felt that enabling people from "developing" countries to obtain higher education in Britain was one way for the former colonizers to make reparations for what they had taken from the colonized. When I described the place to Canadian friends, most of them readily accepted the "pay-it-forward" philosophy but some had difficulty with the reparations argument, feeling that developing countries had long benefitted from the Empire's educational largesse and that England owed them nothing. They also pointed out, not unreasonably, that the people from places like India, Sudan and Zambia who were able to study abroad constituted their countries' educated elite, and so were already much more likely than the rank and file populations to embrace the values of tolerance. OK, so maybe I was living in a bit of a bubble during my London years. Still, I felt there was no excuse for the bigotry shown by Edgware Road Brits recoiling from the smell of curries and kabobs.

Or maybe there was. Towards the end of my parents' stay, my mother gave me pause by expressing some sympathy for the can't-be-served-in-English crowd. It couldn't be easy, she reflected, for people whose whole lives had been framed by tea and biscuits, pubs and brollies, fish & chips and the BBC to see much of that gone within a few years and replaced by curries and kurtas and unusual tunes. I saw her point. I see it even more strongly several decades on. It isn't easy to accept change. It is, however, all too easy to agree with politicians who extoll the supposedly entrenched values of the majority culture (be it English, French, Spanish, German, Hungarian, American, etc) and advocate limiting the influence of those who represent a challenge to said culture. Slowly but steadily, the world is shifting towards knee-jerk resentment and expressions of cultural entitlement. This trend is truly frightening – but in order to resist it we have to understand it. And, up to a point, sympathize.

Here in Quebec, our own existential crisis has been playing out for some time, and has now taken the form of a debate over wearing religious symbols. Some see the recently-adopted "Act respecting the laicity of the state" (Bill 21, in Anglo parlance) as a reasonable effort to assert the church-state separation that is so crucial to modern societies. Others see it as racist. Arguably, both approaches are unhelpful: it is hard to listen to the discussions of Quebec values without also hearing something more troubling on a lower frequency, yet calling it racism gets so many hackles up that the discussion invariably grinds to a halt – just when we all need to be thinking outside the intellectual box we have created for ourselves.

I have, alas, felt the need to expound more than once already in these pages on the subject of secularism – notably that a secular society is (or should be) one where the state endorses no particular religion and is in turn not directly influenced by religious doctrine. This means that state / public institutions

should sport no identifying religious insignia, such as crucifixes in classrooms, hospitals, or the legislative assembly. (I give enthusiastic kudos to our current government for at long last removing that contentious item.) Secularism does not mean, however, that people have to check their religious feelings at the door to public institutions, not even if such institutions are their places of employment. Those who choose to work in public service often do so from a sense of moral duty, which may well have its origins in religious belief. Normally we don't concern ourselves with what motivates people to work in such capacities; it is only when they wear certain clothing or accoutrements that we even consider that religion might be a factor in how they live their lives. In any case, motivations are surely irrelevant. The wearing of religious symbols is only significant as evidence of diversity. Indeed, having public employees (be they police officers, judges, or teachers) of obviously diverse religious backgrounds is proof that the public sphere is truly neutral when it comes to religion; without such obvious indicators, we would have no way of telling whether a state is neutral or whether it has simply banned employees of specific religious backgrounds. That is, of course, where the supporters of Bill 21 and I differ: most of them seem to think that a teacher wearing a hijab violates state neutrality, whereas I say that it really serves to reinforce it. We could agree to disagree – except that their definition will result in people losing their jobs and other acts of overt discrimination.

Supporters of Bill 21 tend to see it as part of a long transformation of Quebec society that began in the 1960s. This is a logical enough interpretation, since the principal goal of the Quiet Revolution was to neutralize the power of the Catholic Church in Quebec, particularly when it came to public services, and replace it with a secular state bureaucracy. This trajectory has parallels in other traditionally Catholic societies, France especially, that at various times have identified the Church as the critical obstacle to modernity. In British tradition, the church-state separation has had a longer pedigree, born out of hard-won religious compromise and a systemic fear of opinionated kings. (Yes, I know, having the English monarch also the head of the Church of England is the antithesis of church-state separation, but maybe that's a case of the anomaly proving the rule.) Arguably, therefore, the Rest of Canada should recognize Quebec's ongoing efforts to secularize as a case of getting to roughly the same place (ie, church-state separation) by slightly different means. The problem is that by banning religious symbols, Bill 21 essentially targets religious minorities, and that is an affront to multiculturalism, which many see as a basic Canadian value. The spectre of multiculturalism, of course, raises almost as many hackles in Quebec as accusations of racism.

And so, identity politics has driven a firm wedge between what might have passed for two slightly different but compatible historical tendencies. Multiculturalism is not a Quebec value, the supporters of Bill 21 (and many others) argue. Secularism is. Or, rather, laicity is. I have heard various attempts to explain how laicity is different from secularism, just as I have heard attempts to explain how "interculturalism" differs from "multiculturalism," but my gut tells me that such distinctions are principally about driving that wedge in further between two supposedly incompatible historical traditions. Laicity, we are told, is a fundamental Quebec value. That's fine in itself, so long as it is clear to everyone that this value has been established by consensus over the past few decades and is hardly typical of Quebec's historical experience. It's always dangerous to claim that a value is somehow innate to one's culture; certainly for centuries most French-speakers in North America would have deemed Catholicism their fundamental value and considered laicity not only objectionable but foreign. The same was true overseas, where the French Revolution overturned centuries of "fundamental" social and religious values – and whose own values (*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, etc) were seen as wicked and foreign by half the population until at least the mid-twentieth century – arguably, to this day. From the perspective of History, nothing is innate. It would be quite logical to argue that the values of the Quiet Revolution represent an aberration, even a foreign aberration, in Quebec history. Yet if one challenges the claim that laicity is a fundamental value, the challenge is seen as an affront to Quebec itself – or, at any rate, the criticism is dismissed as coming from a different culture that does not understand Quebec.

In other words, the suggestion that Bill 21 discriminates against certain non-mainstream elements in Quebec society is automatically refuted as an attempt by critics to muddy the waters. It should be "clear," proponents argue, that the legislation is about establishing rules for everyone, and that if some people are inconvenienced by these rules, that is an unfortunate but necessary side effect. But is it really all that clear? Since religious symbols and a neutral state are perfectly compatible according to one interpretation of laicity / secularism (i.e., mine), then the only reason one need talk of "inconvenience" at all is because one insists on a different interpretation. The debate has become less about the merits of secularism itself than about whose version of it is right – or, at any rate, whose is appropriate for Quebec.

But why should the question of what is appropriate for Quebec hinge on whether a public school teacher wears a hijab or not? If the Act respecting the laicity of the state was merely about the laicity of the state, surely it would have made sense to have dropped all the Bill's controversial aspects and focused on the declaration that Quebec's public sphere is no longer beholden to Catholicism – or any other religion. Whether such a declaration needed to be made is another matter. Indeed, many would argue that Bill 21, like several of its precedents, addresses non-existent problems. What threat does the hijab represent? Certainly none to the French language. Arguably, immigration did once pose a threat to the French language, since the vast majority of newcomers adopted English as their second language and had their children educated in the majority language of North America; Bill 101 addressed that problem. Although Bill 101 was not, to say the least, a universally popular piece of legislation, it addressed a legitimate problem. The only problem Bill 21 addresses is the need to appear distinct from the multicultural-minded Rest of Canada.

There is more, however, bubbling beneath the surface. It should concern us deeply that discussions about religious

symbols have led to, or at the very least coincided with, public attacks on people wearing them – even on people speaking Arabic. Far from creating the social harmony that supporters of Bill 21 claim it seeks, the legislation has exacerbated social tension. This is not to say that most officials want to exacerbate social tension, but it certainly seems disingenuous to deny the connection, as many do. Continuing to promote legislation that clearly has the opposite effect from what is intended suggests either obstinacy or that something else entirely is at stake.

A recent article by Lise Ravary provides a key to understanding what's going on. On first reading, I was puzzled by its tone, given that Ravary is a small-l liberal columnist who spends a lot of time arguing for civility and understanding in our cultural debates; writing articulately in English, she often strives to make Quebec culture intelligible to the Rest of Canada. Indeed, "Bill 21: a lucid choice by a mature society after long debate" (*Montreal Gazette,* June 25, 2019) begins with the admission that establishing a secular society involves change, and that in some cases we must abandon cherished traditions: Saint-Jean Baptiste parades, for instance, have been willingly recast as secular Fête Nationale celebrations. True to form, Ravary also emphasizes the "moderate" character of the law, which may well require limited sacrifice by a few in the interest of a much higher cause. And that cause?

"Francophone Quebecers' only home on Earth is a piece of land, most of it barren, in the northeast corner of North America," she writes. Now, this is a very odd statement to make – indeed, a tautology: if the definition of a Francophone Quebecer is someone living in Quebec who speaks French, then it goes without saying that such a person couldn't meet that definition anywhere else. (Try replacing that phrase with "Anglophone Quebecers" to see the fallacy.) But Ravary's intention here is no doubt to assert that it is only in Quebec that French language and culture can thrive. She may be right: efforts at Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the Rest of Canada notwithstanding, the fate of most French-Canadian communities across North America has been linguistic and cultural assimilation. But whether Quebec's more successful track record in this regard constitutes exclusive ownership rights to this barren piece of land is another matter – and problematic, to say the least, within the context of colonialism.

Ravary then pulls off the gloves: "Full-blown multiculturalism, which encourages newcomers to keep their own cultures and does too little to promote integration, would mean the end of an extraordinary experiment that started in 1608, when Samuel de Champlain founded a settlement that would become Quebec City." Ah, there you have it. Again, leaving aside the colonial implications of "extraordinary experiment," we're confronted with the bold claim that it is an ethnic group at risk here. This is the supposedly critical problem that Bill 21 addresses: without it, one particular group, which claims Quebec as its unique home, would suffer. So it's not about secularism at all, and the resistance to multiculturalism isn't just because it's Canadian but because it's dangerous. Bill 101 protects the French language, ensuring that Quebec will remain a pocket of Francophony in an otherwise essentially English-speaking North America. Bill 21, by contrast, aims to protect the direct descendants of Champlain's extraordinary experiment from the corrupting influence of other cultures, particularly those that visibly impact the landscape with religious symbols and unusual items of clothing. The need is presumably dire enough to justify the law's implicit focus on hot-button groups (Muslims, especially) and women in particular. In almost any other context this would be universally recognized as discriminatory. Here, the relatively small number of people affected ("a minority of state representatives," as Ravary describes public servants who sport the offending items) serves to pooh-pooh the criticism, instead of sounding alarm bells.

Bill 21 is the legislation the older generation in London's Edgware Road would have enacted had they the means back in the 1980s. It stems from a profound fear of change. Such fear, we need to acknowledge, is all but universal, and by no means exclusive to bigots. Scratch anywhere, and you will find people uncomfortable having to accommodate unfamiliar practices and share space with unfamiliar others. Even for the most tolerant, there is a substantial learning curve. Those who have been on the receiving end of prejudice themselves may have a harder time than most accepting the need to accommodate; at any rate, one can sympathize with their difficulty. Francophone Quebecers fall into this category: one can understand the "extraordinary experiment" talk in the light of a two-centuries-long struggle against assimilation.

Nevertheless, the world in changing. The refugee crisis of recent years has drawn universal attention to the relentless migration of peoples, but the phenomenon has been decades in the making. Since at least the end of the Second World War, Europe has seen a steady influx of people with darker skin, principally as imperialisms collapsed and colonials turned to metropoles for a better life. Some people in what are often called "host societies" (a term that always suggests to me that we expect immigrants to go home when the party's over) feel that a little colour is OK so long as it doesn't alter the tone too much. Others, like the administrator of my London housing association, feel that a "mi casa es su casa" approach is the least that former imperialists can do. In North America, the issue is more complex, given our long history of colonialism, immigration and slavery, but the challenges are similar. Those who have asserted and enforced cultural hegemony for much of the past few centuries are now finding their legitimacy questioned by other groups – groups who for the most part have always been here but are now gaining a voice thanks to the gradual normalization of diversity and multiculturalism. Some within the Old Stock camp see conspiracy at work, a "great replacement" of White Europeans by people of other ethnicities. We are a long way from this sort of language in our current debate in Quebec – yet the fear of it is being used to justify discrimination: supporters of Bill 21, including Ravary and the premier himself, have suggested that it will serve to placate extremists and counter the rise of demagoguery. It does not seem to have occurred to them that another way to do this is to analyze openly our collective insecurities, think critically about our history, and work to accept cultural differences.

Of course, we should be concerned for the survival of “traditional” culture; that’s practically a given in the heritage field. Culture, be it poetry or pottery, is always fragile. But very little of the threat to culture derives from ethnic diversity; culture can be enjoyed by anyone, regardless of ethnic background and hue of skin – which is not to say that such enjoyment comes easily to everyone. In any case, a much greater threat to the survival of culture is economic globalization, mechanization, and the ubiquity of social media. Here in Quebec, French-language culture has always been at risk given the juggernaut that is the rest of North America – yet, it survives and (touch wood) is flourishing 180 years after Lord Durham declared it non-existent. Bill 101 played a significant part in this process.

Bill 21, by contrast, adds nothing to the survival of French-language culture. Those whose first language is not French, and those who are not native to Quebec, nevertheless inhabit a society in which French is the official language. And although we may revel in other cultural traditions (QAHN’s raison d’être), we recognize that there is a wealth of prose, poetry, drama and song that is unique to this place. But what we wear on our heads or around our necks has nothing to do with this appreciation.

And it can’t go both ways: either Quebec is a diverse, multicultural, principally French-speaking society, or it is the home of a single cultural group (assuming, of course, that such a thing is possible) obsessed with every challenge to its identity. If it is to be the latter, then there is really no room for outsiders other than as barely tolerated visitors – certainly no room for people who stand out by their dress, their beliefs, and the colour of their skin.

Equally, no room for me.

In other words, my Quebec includes hijabs and kippahs and turbans. But then it really doesn’t matter what I think or what anyone claims: the reality today is multicultural and multicoloured and multifaith. Rather than quibbling over policy and haggling over symbols we should simply bundle all our hostility towards this inevitably changing world into a big black cab and send it on its way.

Lost Treasures

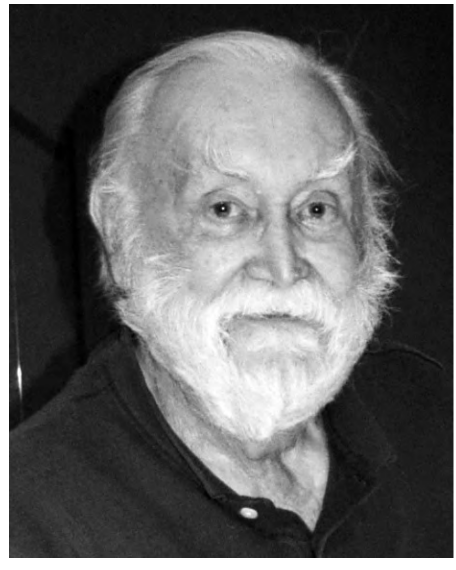
Byron Clark:

Magdalen Islands Historian

2006 Marion Phelps Award winner Byron Clark has passed away peacefully at his home, surrounded by family. Born at Old Harry, in the Magdalen Islands in March 1933, Byron Clark was active in his community in many ways. He served for many years as the organist at Holy Trinity Church; as mayor for one term of Grosse Ile; as the founding general manager of Cap Dauphin Fisherman’s Cooperative; and as a local historian who contributed invaluable historical information to the community, in particular in relation to its local English-speaking inhabitants. After his career as a fishery officer, Byron Clark became an avid researcher of history and was the author of several books on local history, including *Gleanings on the Magdalen Islands*, published in 2000.

Derek Hopkins:

Family History



Long-serving QAHN board member Derek Hopkins died in August, leaving family and friends with countless fond memories. An engineer by profession, Derek applied his tinkering skills in retirement to the cause of family history, notably by transcribing church and cemetery records for genealogical databases. Derek came to QAHN from the Quebec Family History Society and other genealogical organizations, offering his services for web design, bylaws revision, and both the Communications and Montreal committees. He was also chief barkeep at QAHN’s annual Montreal Wine & Cheese. Colleagues remember his lovable quirks: the marmalade sandwiches he consumed at committee meetings, the perpetual bottle of pepsi at his side, his ability as a driver to pick the fastest routes through the densest traffic – a skill acquired in his youth as a competitor at car rallies.

Derek was born in England in 1934, old enough to remember the Blitz. He loved to tell the story of when he dragged his mother to the window of a cake shop, begging her to buy him a treat. Mindful of wartime rationing, she hesitated, then acquiesced. No sooner were they inside the shop when a bomb exploded in the street, shattering the window. Had Derek and his mother still been dithering over the displays, they would almost certainly have been killed. Instead, Derek went on to study electrical engineering, a career that brought him to Canada in the 1950s. Here, he worked notably for Northern Electric (the iconic enormous red brick building Point St. Charles) and later for Pratt and Whitney, in Longueuil.

DONORS & DREAMERS

CAPITAL IDEA

Getting ready for a capital campaign

by Heather Darch

This is the seventh in a series of articles by Heather Darch addressing the perennial question of Fundraising. It was inspired by her work on QAHN's DREAM project.

If there was one thing that intimidated QAHN's DREAM conference attendees, it was the term "capital campaign." By definition, a capital campaign is an intense effort on the part of a non-profit to raise a significant amount of money in a particular amount of time. For most of us, that sounds so daunting that we don't do it.

Professional fundraiser Camilla Leigh says that "capital campaigns are complex" but if we have our "ducks in a row" in what is called the "planning or quiet phase" of the campaign, we all can be successful.

To begin with, we need to determine the campaign objectives by asking: "What do we need and why do we need it?" Your answer won't be just about the building of a new site or replacing a roof; it's all about increasing your organization's impact in the community. You are not only asking people to support a specific project but a vision as well, so you have to think big enough about your goals so that the money raised will see your project realized and actually make a meaningful difference.

The donor pyramid helps capital campaign fundraisers identify their community donors and major contributors.

Creating compelling cause-related goals and a capital campaign budget will make you think carefully about the scope of your project and its costs before you begin. Consider if your budget is large enough to get the work done, if there is a contingency plan if something goes wrong, if there is enough time to raise funds, and if the budget will make sense to your donors.

Camilla Leigh cautions that it is easier to lower the goals in the financial plan than it is to raise them, so begin with broad objectives and an all-encompassing budget; donors like project ideas that have potential and long-term viability, that cause excitement and that can deliver impactful changes in an organization.

Every capital campaign requires a case for support. This will be your tool that will serve as the basis for your campaign's project ideas, specific goals, messaging, solicitation and thank you letters, ethical guidelines, gift acceptance procedures and so forth. Everyone involved in the campaign will be on the same page and have a solid grasp of the campaign's objectives.

It's everyone's job in your organization to support the campaign. From the start, though, it is important to identify the campaign leadership. This type of fundraising requires many people to fill a variety of roles, including finding potential donors, making introductions, engaging donors in conversations about your organization, writing solicitation and thank you letters, and hosting events for donor prospects and the people who will ultimately make the "fundraising ask" of a major donor. It will also require people to maintain a positive relationship with a donor after a gift and keeping them connected with your non-profit.

Capital campaigns are all about developing long-term relationships with donors. Leigh calls it "the donor pyramid," whereby the base of the campaign is made up of many community donors who will give in small increments, to the next level where fewer donors give special gifts in larger amounts, to the top of the pyramid where just a small number of major donors will account for most of the funds raised.

A capital campaign focuses on the top of the pyramid first. In fact, before you even launch your capital campaign and move into the public phase, most of your fundraising has already been realized through major donor gifts. This allows you to have great momentum right out of the gate and it gets people on board and donating with confidence knowing that their money will make a difference.

The practical tools needed before launching a capital campaign include software to store and track donations and an on-line donations capacity. The essential tools like vision, time, creativity and tenacity will go hand-in-hand with the people who have connections or who are not timid about asking for support. Setting up the campaign with attention to detail in the quiet phase means that you will be successful and may even surpass your goal.

Photo: courtesy of Brome County Historical Society.

The Cushings of Lower Canada

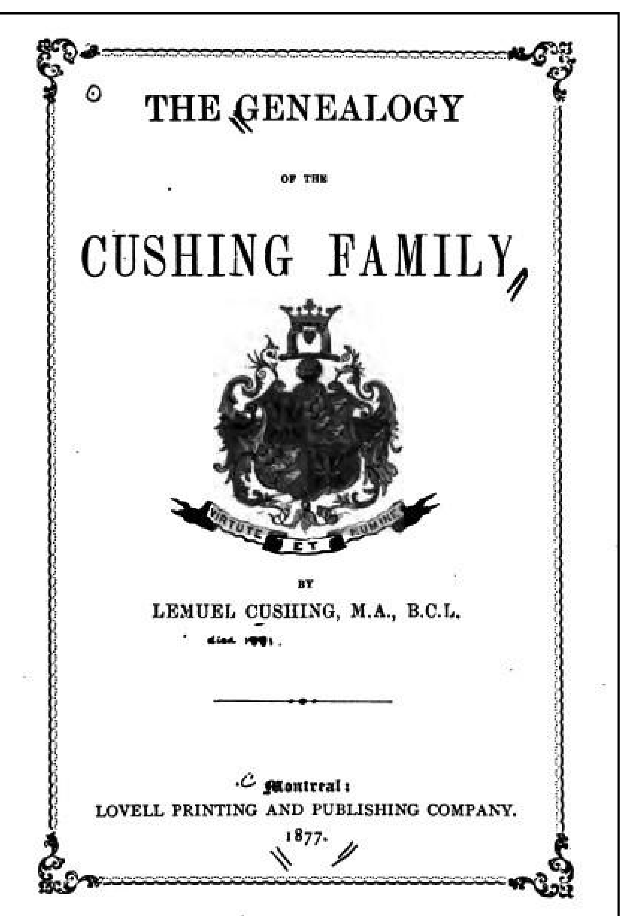
Part III: The Legacy of Lemuel Cushing

by Joseph Graham

Editor's note: Portions of this article have appeared in different form in the Montreal Gazette.

When Lemuel Cushing acquired the right to have a post office in his store in Chatham in 1841, he was 35 years old, and he and Catherine Hutchins, originally of Lachute, had yet to celebrate their fifth wedding anniversary. Eventually they would have 13 children, including eight sons.

The 1840s was a period of growth for the region, and Cushing, young, dynamic and cautious, was well positioned to appreciate it and take full advantage of the opportunities. He was a councillor, mayor of the township and county warden, as well as a successful merchant and businessman. He was probably among the first to recognise the potential and importance of tourism, and became interested in Caledonia Springs, a natural salt-water source in Prescott County, across the Ottawa River. As early as 1835, he bought land and built a hotel there, calling it Canada House, which he subsequently sold to William Parker. The original hotel was destroyed by fire soon after, and Parker built a larger one with the same name. Even though Parker sold land to raise money, Cushing must have stayed involved at some level, because by 1866 the property was acquired by the Caledonia Springs Hotel Company, of which Cushing was the most important shareholder. Caledonia Springs was a destination of choice during this period, and the developer counted among his clients Peter McGill and John Sandfield MacDonald (the lawyer who would become premier of the province of Ontario), as well as members of the Legislative Assemblies of both Lower and Upper Canada.


THE GENEALOGY
OF THE
CUSHING FAMILY
VIRTUTE ET NUMINE
BY
LEMUEL CUSHING, M.A., B.C.L.
Montreal:
LOVELL PRINTING AND PUBLISHING COMPANY.
1877.

Cover of The Genealogy of the Cushing Family*, 1877.*

Lemuel Cushing's name also figures in the list of patent letters issued for 200 acres of land in Chatham County, meaning that he acquired this parcel from the Crown. He bought and sold goods, maintaining a dock on the Ottawa River, probably at Carillon, and a home on Metcalfe Street, Montreal, in order to give himself the best access to the markets. Goods and products coming in and going out of the Chatham area were transported by water when the river was not frozen over, and that meant that it was hard to get goods, not just to and from Chatham, but also to and from Montreal.

Cushing was aware of this problem and watched the development of the railroad with great interest. In the 1840s, the Montreal Board of Trade entertained proposals from a number of coastal cities hoping to become Montreal's winter port. Among the contenders were a group that proposed a rail line from Quebec City to Halifax and two American groups, one from Portland, Maine, and the other from Boston, Massachusetts. The lower colonies offered free land and petitioned the British Government to build their rail link, entirely in the British territories, but the British could not see the importance, so the real rivalry rapidly fell to Boston and Portland. In fact, Boston was on the verge of signing an understanding when an enterprising lawyer named John Poor, who was promoting the Portland route, heard that the decision would be taken at the Board of Trade meeting in Montreal on Monday, February 10, 1845. Poor was in Portland in the middle of a blizzard on the Tuesday evening, February 4, and he knew that his whole venture, and the economy of Portland, depended upon his presenting his option to the Board. In ideal conditions, he could have hired a sleigh and, with changes of horses, made it to Montreal in 30 hours, but under the circumstances, he had difficulty even finding a driver. Exploring the possibility of making the trip, he went outside and discovered fierce winds, hail and huge drifts of snow interspaced with glare ice. Undaunted, before sunrise he had found a driver, and they headed north. The story of his trip is one of the great snow stories of the time. He lost his way five times in the storm-ravaged countryside, changed horses, drivers and sleighs, climbed 45-degree snowbanks with the assistance of local young men and teams of horses in towns that he passed through, and successfully

covered the distance in five days, or 123 hours, instead of the usual day-and-a-half. Arriving in Montreal at 5:30 a.m. on Monday, February 10, Poor slept for three hours before meeting with the Board of Trade and convincing them to postpone their decision to sign with his rivals.

An agreement was made whereby a steamer would drop mail at Portland and Boston for transfer overland to Montreal. Teams were set up along the route to assist both couriers, but the mail arrived from Portland in 12 hours less time than the mail from Boston. The distance from Portland was 246 miles, and from Boston, 351. Poor's proposal carried the day, and the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railway was established, leasing its services to the Grand Trunk in 1853.

The Grand Trunk was incorporated in 1852, and Lemuel Cushing was among its supporters, and likely a founding shareholder. By 1859, he had acquired a large island in Casco Bay, Portland, called Bangs Island. Ezekiel Cushing, a distant ancestor, had owned it a hundred years earlier and Lemuel changed its name to Cushing Island. Following through with his interest in tourism, he built the Ottawa House Hostel on the island. His son, Francis Cushing, would convert the island to a vacation colony, hiring Frederick Law Olmstead, the same man who designed Mount Royal Park in Montreal and Central Park in New York City, to landscape it. He also rebuilt the Ottawa House in 1888.

James Brock Cushing, Lemuel's eldest son, took over responsibility for the Cushing Post Office and store, and rose to inherit many of his father's other responsibilities and titles, becoming Justice of the Peace, and eventually Colonel of the Militia.

The next postmaster of Cushing was Thomas Weir, and the post office closed when he retired in 1915. More than 100 years later, the name Cushing persists, and the Commission de Toponymie describes it as a "hameau" in the municipality of Brownsburg-Chatham. "Hameau" translates as hamlet, and one definition of a hamlet is a village without a church of its own but belonging to another village or town. This fits well with Cushing today, but when Lemuel still lived there, he was a stalwart supporter of St. Mungo's Presbyterian Church, where he was finally laid to rest in 1875.

Sources:

Cyrus Thomas, *The History of the Counties of Argenteuil, Quebec and Prescott*, *Ontario,* Montreal, 1896.

Andrée Desilets, "Lemeul Cushing," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography.*

John Alfred Poor, Memorandum, February 12, 1845, Maine Historical Society.

***Joseph Graham**, author of* Naming the Laurentians*, is writing a book that re-examines much of our early history, the elements that drove European society, and the extraordinary damage these ideas inflicted on North America.*

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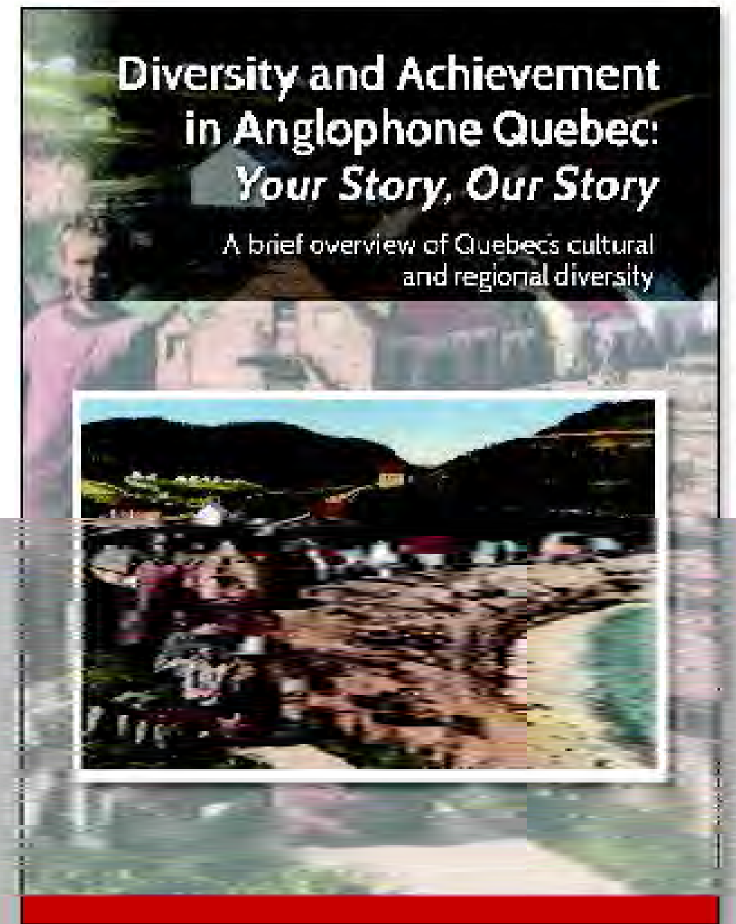

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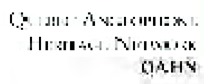

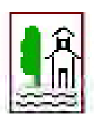

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Canal Stories

Introduction to the Oral History of Quebec

by Steven High

For the past ten years, I have been listening to stories about my adopted Montreal neighbourhood of Point St. Charles. I am originally from Thunder Bay in Northwest Ontario. My father was railway, so the Point's history of railway work links me to my own past. I grew up next to a railway yard. I live next to one now.

As an oral historian, I've heard some great stories since moving here. Childhood stories are often the most vividly detailed. Asked to share her first memory of the Lachine Canal, Élise Chèvrefils-Boucher told us that her father once worked on the Canal as a docker. Before 1959, ships constantly passed up and down the canal and the bridges at Des Seigneurs and Charlevoix were turned regularly. Each bridge had a hut where the operator worked (see photograph). Her father used to know that a ship was arriving when it went "Boup! Boup!" For her, the boat had a "nasty sound in our little corner. It said, 'Les débardeurs, come here, the boat has arrived.'" It was so loud, the noise would surprise people standing nearby who hadn't been in the area before. There were boats constantly passing, and their sirens punctuated Francine Gagnière's childhood: "It is a memory of childhood: the sound of the boat sirens mixed with the siren of the Sherwin-Williams factory which sounded the hours; it sounded at six o'clock in the morning the shift change, at noon, and at six o'clock in the evening to mark the shift change. And me, I experienced these sounds during my childhood." For his part, Denis Smyk recalled: "At day and at night. I remember in the summertime lying in my room trying to sleep, it was hot, the windows were wide open and you'd hear these boats 'brrrr.'"

The sounds of the canal then mingled with those of the factories. In Francine Gagnière's account of her childhood in Point St. Charles, the sirens of passing ships blended together with that of the nearby Sherwin-Williams paint factory which sounded the shift changes: "at each break a sound would go off. It was very funny. Then the Canal, it was a siren 'Humm' then the ships, the ships alongside the Canal we would hear them. The ships and the noise that they would make as they passed by, this I remember."

Without a doubt, the single most popular canal story that I've heard over the years was the "tour de pont," when area children "rode" the Charlevoix and Des Seigneurs swing bridges as they made way for passing ships. It was a shared memory:

> *Have you ever done a tour de pont? When we heard the boat sirens, that meant that a boat was arriving. You heard "Ding ding ding ding ding ding" and the barrier was closed. For us it signalled a tour de pont. A tour de pont involved getting on the bridge, and the bridge would start turning. But we were not allowed on. It was a challenge to trick the bridge operator. There was a cabin next to the bridge and he would say: "Watch out, kids, or I will call the police." Kids would hide next to the bridge and wait. As soon as he rang the bell we would know that the boat was approaching, then the operator would begin to turn the bridge. As soon as we saw the bridge was about to start moving we would start running. The bridge would turn slowly. And we would ride the bridge. Then the operator would see us and would complain but the bridge was moving and there was nothing he could do.*
>
> *The bridge turned and the ships would pass. We would be happy because we would see the sailors close-up, all the workers and sailors and we were happy to see that. Sometimes they would throw pennies. We would wave at the sailors and we would yell. They were nice and some of them would play harmonica. It was fascinating to see the bridge turn like that. It was the thrill of the day to go do a tour de pont.*

The Charlevoix Bridge over the Lachine Canal with the Steel Company of Canada's Notre Dame Works in behind. Photo: courtesy of Parks Canada, Lachine Canal.

For Elise Chèvrefils-Boucher, the tour de pont was forever linked in her mind to her memory of waving goodbye to her father while he worked high above them from the street at Robin Hood flour in Little Burgundy. She noted that his window was right next to "The Robin Hood man. He's still on the building. And if you look up, just near his little face there is a small window. When my mom wanted to make us happy she would take us on a tour de pont and then after that it would be a walk on Notre Dame Street until we got to St. Lawrence Flour Mill to say bye bye to father who was in the last window at the top."

It is hard to say when the "tour de pont" stopped being a thing for children. Born in 1949, Harold Simpkins was one

of the youngest interviewees to participate. The practice appears to have been stamped out at some point by the federal authorities. At least one interviewee spoke anonymously of a neighbourhood girl who died when she attempted to jump on a turning bridge and missed, and was crushed to death. The redirection of shipping to the new locks of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, and the staged closure of the Lachine Canal in the decade that followed, ended this children's game for good.

But there were other dangers. Many boys continued to dive into the polluted waters of the canal during these years. David Fennario, a playwright famous for his 1979 depiction of daily life in Balconville, once told my class about how he and his friends would "jump the rainbow." In this game, kids would jump from bridges (one assumes turned bridges) over the oily wake of passing ships. For his part, Gaston St-Germain returned home one day after covertly swimming in the canal when his mother smelled the oil on him: "You smell like oil, where have you been?" He pleaded that he had no choice as his dog had fallen into the canal, but even in the interview he didn't sound too convincing on this point.

Parents were right to worry. Denis Smyk cut himself swimming in the canal: "My old man told me 'DON'T EVER DO THAT AGAIN!' He's telling me stories about guys with ear infections, penis infections, throat infections." Smyk had to get a tetanus shot.

The canal was a dumping ground, even before its closure. Not only did all the factories dump their effluent untreated into the canal, but, Ted Moreman recalled, cars were sometimes dumped and there were "a lot of bicycles, I mean hundreds of bicycles, sitting on the bottom of the canal when they cleaned it out." One day, when the canal's waters had been drained to near zero, Jacques (Jock) Pichette and a friend made their way down a ladder and then a rope (as the ladder did not reach the muddy bottom of the canal). They were throwing rocks at something, and it turned out to be a body.

These kinds of stories bring a place to life. Now, I can't help but think of these stories every time I cross the Des Seigneurs bridge to go to work at Concordia. They bring new meaning to my new home-place.

This special issue of *Quebec Heritage News* offers you several other pathways into the intangible heritage of our province. People's stories often complicate the sweeping generalizations that are applied to the world around us. "Immigrants" and "refugees" are usually spoken of in the abstract. But behind these categories are real people. In the pages that follow, we hear for example about the exclusion of Italian-Montrealers from the city's French schools during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the courageous efforts of Montreal's nascent Cambodian community in the late 1970s to raise awareness about the unfolding tragedy of the Killing Fields of the Khmer Rouge that killed 1.7 million in their homeland. Life stories can even be mapped: geographers José Alavez, Sébastien Caquard, and Lilyane Rachédi explore immigrant family stories of death as the bodies of loved ones are repatriated to distant homelands for burial. These are transnational stories, but also local ones. In this era of gun violence, Lea Kabiljo shares the fascinating story of Twinkle, whose husband was killed in 1972 by a 14-year old boy in downtown Montreal; in response, she founded Leave Out Violence (LOVE), a non-profit group seeking to prevent violence amongst at-risk youth. We also hear about the underground history of busking and the struggle to play inside Montreal's metro stations, as well as the Anglophone contribution to the 2012 student strike. Each of these articles offers us unique insights into the past.

All of the contributors are affiliated with Concordia's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, a world leader in the field. Last year, COHDS hosted the largest gathering of oral historians in North American history. Founded in 2006, COHDS has archived more than 1,800 life stories to date – many of them involving Quebec Anglophones. Hundreds of other interviews are held by historical societies affiliated with QAHN. There are some great community-based oral history projects under way right now, including the Black Community Resource Centre's current project, but much more work needs to be done. Visit the COHDS website for more information about us: storytelling.concordia.ca.

__Steven High__ is a founding member of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling at Concordia University.

Top: The lock keeper performs the opening manoeuvres, Lachine Canal in Montreal, August 1948. Photo: BAnQ, P48,S1,P16588 (Fonds Conrad Poirier).

Bottom: Swing bridge on the Lachine Canal, Montreal, 1932. Photo: McCord Museum, MP-1999.6.55

The Yellow Line

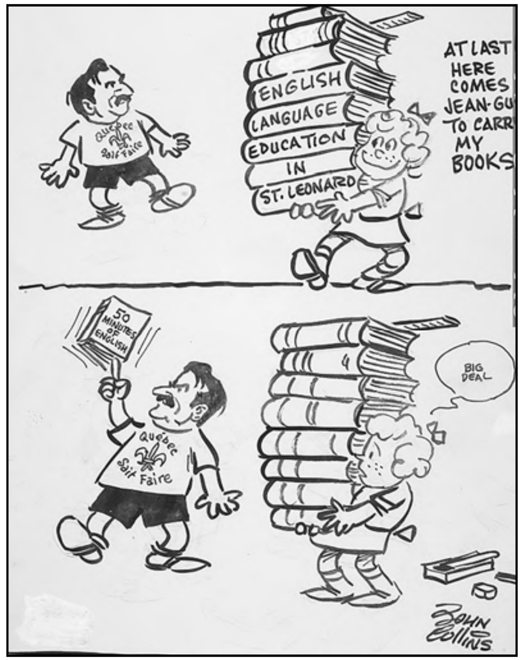
Italo-Canadian Oral Histories from Backyards and Schoolyards

by Cassandra Marsillo

That's why we went to English school… We weren't allowed in the French schools. And I remember having a conversation with one man, actually he was a professor of the Université de Montréal… and he said it, and this is an educated person, he had told me, he says, "Our biggest mistake was not to let the children of immigrants into our school." I says, "What do you mean?" He says, "If we would have done that in the 50s and the 60s, we wouldn't have this problem now." I says, "What problem is there now?" He says, "With this English."

- Rosa

It's hard to write about oral history interviews. No matter what I include, there is so much I know I am leaving out. Even as I chose the stories that would go into the 19-minute audio clip that played overhead at The Yellow Line Exhibit,* held at the Casa d'Italia from March 22 to 24, 2019, I struggled. I didn't want to choose; everything was too important. We all speak of different experiences, lives, and families. We all grew up in different contexts, but, in this short piece, our stories intertwine. We move between past and present, and look forward to a future I hope we face differently. In this short article, while reading about our pasts, I ask that you also reflect on the yellow lines – the places of confrontation, but also of meeting – that linger on our pavement today.



John Collins, "Starting the New Term," 1969.
McCord Museum, M965.199.6870.

The sacrifices were hard, but... the thing that was even more... more terrible, more... the thing that I will never forget... When my mother-in-law came after I had Francesca... my mother-in-law said, "I don't want to steal your daughter, for the love of God, not at all, but I have to go." Then... I remember that my husband hugged me he said, "My mother... she won't let the child suffer." It's not that I didn't... well, I didn't want to, a mom can't... In any case, we sent her with her grandmother... She was 8 months... Franca... went to Sicily... and then returned... and it was terrible. That was perhaps the saddest moment of my life... I will never forget. I pretend to forget but you always have it right in front of your eyes... Life is like that, an immigrant's life is hard, it's hard... very hard, no one can imagine how hard... I'm alone but, I'm loved by my children... I live for them... and life goes on.

-Angela LoDico, talking about the moment she and her husband decided to send their daughter, Francesca, back to Sicily to be raised by her grandparents.

Growing up, I went to Dante Elementary School in St. Leonard. Dante's neighbour was and still is École Lambert-Closse. We were separated by a thick yellow line running the length of the playground. Lunch monitors would patrol this area at morning and lunch recess making sure we didn't cross to the other side. Often, kids would get into fights.

We weren't aware of the implications of this seemingly Anglo-Franco meeting point, where confrontations so often happened. We didn't know that the fact that we spoke primarily English and they spoke primarily French, had its roots in a colonial history that began long before our grandparents or parents landed at Halifax or Ellis Island or even Dorval Airport. We weren't yet aware of our role in that colonial history, of the implications of the accepted textbook narratives of the place we inhabited. We didn't know why we were on separate sides of the yellow line.

The six Italo-Canadian narrators whose stories are the backbone of this project – Angela LoDico, Francesca LoDico, Tony Ludovico, Marie Moscato, Ida Marsillo, and Rosa – were rejected from French schools between 1950 and 1977, directly or indirectly, for a variety of reasons. But what do their stories have to do with mine? Historians emphasize that post-World War II immigrants in Montreal, including Italians, chose English schools for their kids because it was regarded as the language of opportunity. The story of their

For the exhibit, each narrator was asked to fill up a desk with objects or photos that they felt represented them and their story. These desks - one for each of the six narrators - allowed viewers to pause and get to know the individuals that formed the collective story told through the framed photographs, displayed objects, and audio recording. To listen to the audio clips, visit www.theyellowlineproject.com.

rejections, then, became a myth, and was even forgotten as they became part of the English-speaking community. Thirty years after the narrators' stories, my classmates and I were placed firmly on the "English" side of the yellow line, even though many of us didn't learn to speak English until we started school.

I worked closely with Angela, Francesca, Tony, Marie, Rosa, and Ida to tell this story. While that was our common goal, each narrator also brought their own life story to the project. These came together into a complex narrative of immigration, identity, and belonging that was told through The Yellow Line Exhibit, inviting people into Montreal's backyards and schoolyards through the photos, objects, and stories the narrators and I shared.

Grade 1 class photo, Alphonse Pesant School, 1968. Tony Ludovico: first row, second from the left. Photo: Ludovico family collection.

> *I'm trying to think of my childhood. Yes, we got along, I grew up on St. Denis Street. My mother had a business there, so I learned joual before I learned French... Then high school came, and high school changed their views... however friendly [they were] with me, because they would say, "Mais…Marie, c'est pas toi... C'est parce que... tsé les anglais. Ils ont tout pris de nous autre... Mais c'est pas toi..." And, you see, once the FLQ came in... Gangs. Well, gangs... If you were an Italian boy walking alone in [and] around Jarry Park, it wasn't wise."*
>
> -Marie Moscato, a third generation Italo-Canadian in the 1960s, talking about growing up on St. Denis Street.

Marie's family has been in Canada since the 1890s. By the time she was born, her family was very much "Canadian." They weren't part of the associations the new immigrants started forming in the 60s.

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She told stories of being too Canadian for the Italians and too Italian for French-Canadians. Her story reminded me of going to Garibaldi Park behind Dante School with my sister and having sand thrown at us because we were speaking English.

> *It was a pretty normal childhood... I mean, nothing really special except... there was always that rivalry with the French-Canadians, you know. We used to be called "les maudits italiens..." And then there was that confrontation with the school boards... So, what they did, they put us... in trailers at Pius XII Park... And that's where a lot of confrontations happened... And I remember the trailers going up in flames one night and they had to... they had no choice but to transfer us. That's when we came to Dante School... It wasn't that easy because we came from the other side of the Metropolitan... We came from the north side and they're on the south side, if you want to look at it that way... I remember the second day at Dante School... I had a fight. I still remember the person I had a fight with, nice guy today.*
>
> -Tony Ludovico, on growing up and going to school in St. Leonard in the 1960s.

> *I would wake up in the morning and the radio, they'd have the radio on CFMB, the Italian radio station, where the hosts were speaking the formal Italian, the "real"... you know, the proper Italian... And then, while we're having breakfast, we would be speaking the dialect, and then I would leave the house, let's say to go to school, to go to university, and I'd get to the metro, and if I had to talk to the... the bus driver, it would be in French. Then, when I got to school, I'd be speaking in English... and then, I remember even, the distinction between speaking "English" and... and being worried, when I got to university, if I had an accent that identified me as an ethnic-Anglo... Even now as an adult... there are elements of my relationship to Quebec culture, to French Quebec culture, that is tainted by guilt... There's a sense of guilt at... not speaking French perfectly, at not being this perfect... French-speaking citizen. And at the same time, there is resentment and anger because of how that happened... Because of the politics of it... Because my mother did try to take me, register me in French elementary school, and we were refused.*
>
> -Francesca LoDico, reflecting on the intersection of her identity with language.

My most intimate cultural experiences in Montreal are Italian: Italian associations and their parties, festivals at Parc Ladauversière, decorated with pennant banners of green, white, and red and blue and white. Before high school, less than a handful of my friends were not Italo-Canadian. Being Allophone but growing up Anglophone, like five out of the six narrators, you reach a certain point where you realize that disconnect. How do we reconcile that if we're forced to choose a side? Or given a side; assumed to be on a side.

> *So when my aunt came from Buffalo, my mother said, "See if you can find out, she's gotta go to school..." My sister and my brother were working but... I was too young. I was nine... "She's gotta go to school, see if you can find." We went down the street from us on Dandurand. It was a... there was a school and my aunt took me there, and when they saw us walk in, my aunt started talking... She was an American, she started talking to them in English, and... the person that was there, I presume it was the principal, she says, "Well this is French school. You want the English school... You have to go further up. You have to go on Rosemount." And she gave my aunt directions to go... to the English school up in Rosemount... The first few times... my aunt took me there because she was here, and I had to learn the way by myself. It was quite a distance to walk, from Dandurand and Iberville... to Rosemount and Ninth, where the school was. And I did that morning, noon, and night.*
>
> -Ida Marsillo, on registering for school.

I remember listening to this story, wondering what would have happened had my Italian-speaking great-grandmother brought her, knowing what happened to Angela and many others who got yelled at or kicked out for reasons that remained unclear to them. As I listen to each interview for the third, fourth, fifth time, there are so many connections to be made. Perhaps the clearest is their constant desire to compare the present to their past. Throughout every stage of this project, the political present has been central: the 2013 Quebec Soccer Federation turban ban when I first started my research, the Charter of Quebec Values in 2014, Bill 21. We make these connections and we realize that our yellow lines can lead us in-between and beyond this assumed "bilingual and bicultural" divide, towards the more complex individual and collective lived experiences that do not easily fit into this mold.

Cassandra Marsillo *is a public historian based in Montreal. From Concordia University she holds a BFA in Studio Arts with an Italian minor and a BA (Honours) in Public History. She just completed her Master's degree in Public History at Carleton University; her research project was The Yellow Line: Italo-Canadian Oral Histories from Montreal's Backyards and Schoolyards. Interested in immigration, identity, collective memory, autobiography, and the role of the imaginary in history, she is currently working at Dawson College.*

Interviews:

Rosa. Interviewed by Cassandra Marsillo. August 4, 2018.

Angela LoDico. Interviewed by Cassandra Marsillo, July 29, 2018.

Francesca LoDico. Interviewed by Cassandra Marsillo, July 29, 2018.

Tony Ludovico. Interviewed by Cassandra Marsillo, October 6, 2018.

Ida Marsillo. Interviewed by Cassandra Marsillo, October 14, 2018.

Marie Moscato. Interviewed by Cassandra Marsillo, September 21, 2018.

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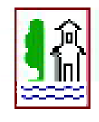

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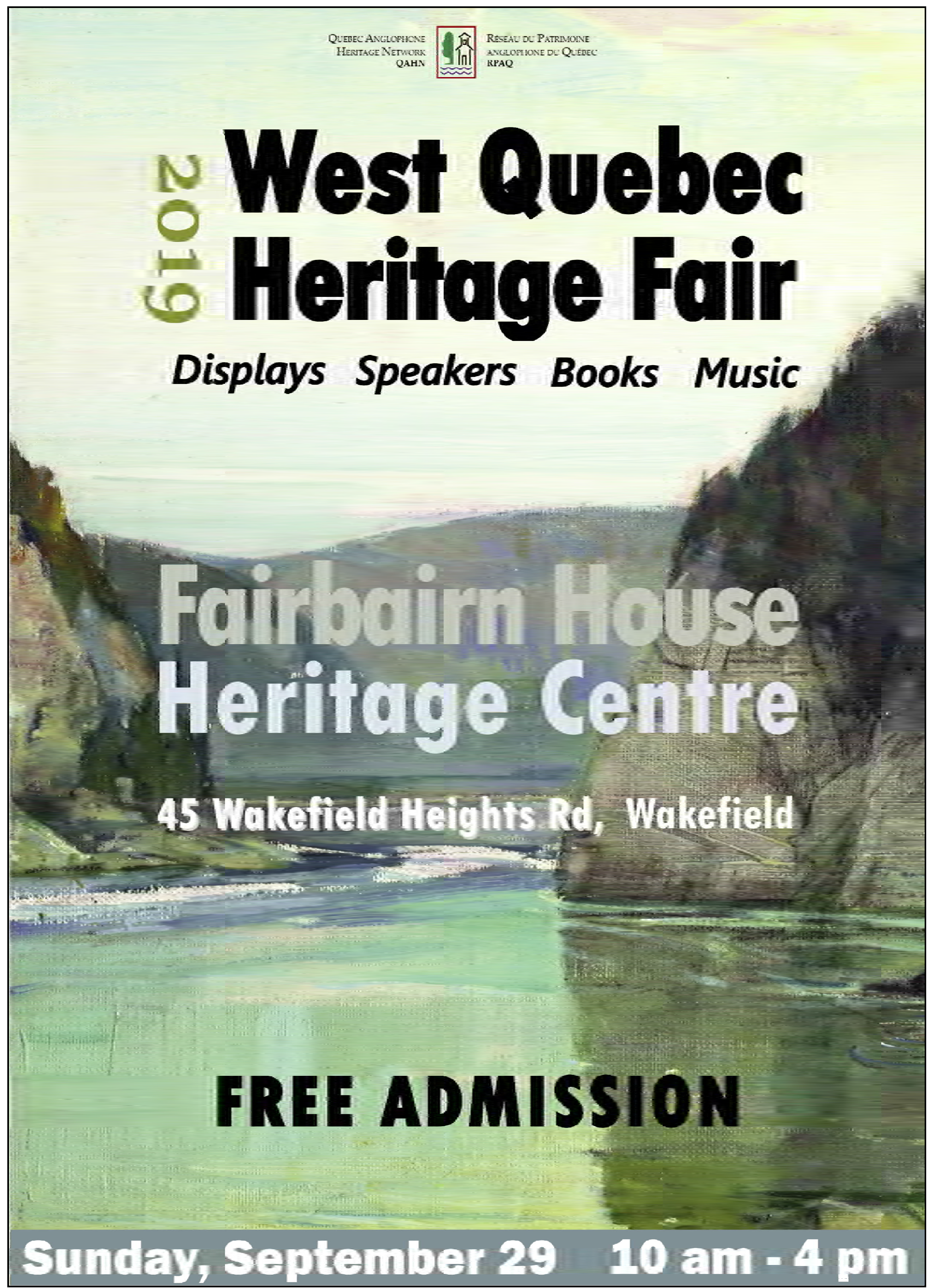
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Beyond the End

Mapping Postmortem Mobilities of Exiles in Quebec

by José Alavez, Lilyane Rachédi and Sébastien Caquard

What happens to exiles when they die in Quebec?

Every year many exiles die far away from their home country. However, as argued by Lilyane Rachedi, Béatrice Halsouet and colleagues (Quand la mort frappe l'immigrant: Defís et adaptations. Montreal, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2017), death is not the end of their diasporic journey; it is just another step. Their bodies may remain where they perished or may travel long distances to return to their home country, city or village. Their family and friend networks might be mobilized to help with emotional support, religious ceremonies, financial expenses and the administrative burden of repatriation and burial. Memories of the deceased also travel physically or virtually through the people who hold them as well as through the photographs and artefacts associated with them. Bodies, memories, social networks and artefacts share a common characteristic in the situation of death in exile. They often keep on moving in time and space, perpetuating the mobility embodied in any exilic experience. In that sense, these postmortem mobilities can be considered an integral part of the exile and diaspora processes.

Studying postmortem mobilities of exiles is not an easy task since there is no official or reliable data available on that topic. General information about bodies' repatriation between countries is difficult to find, and data related to local burials, memories, artefacts, and social networks is too personal to be tracked easily and collected systematically. The main source of information to track such postmortem mobilities is, therefore, the memories and stories told by friends and families of the deceased. In this project, we propose to explore postmortem geographies and mobilities of exiles through the mapping of five stories of loved ones who died while in exile in Quebec.

This work is the result of the collaboration between a research team interested in the social dimensions of death in context of migration – the international project "Morts en Contexte de Migration" (MECMI) hosted by the Department of Social Work at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) in collaboration with the Laboratoire d'ethnologie et de sociologie comparative (LESC) from France and a research team interested in the conceptual, methodological, cartographic and technological challenges of mapping stories, the Geomedia Lab at Concordia University. Researchers of the MECMI project have interviewed thirty exiles who lost a loved one in Quebec, to study the impact of death on the experiences of exiles. Among these thirty interviews, five were selected, based on their representativeness and geographical richness, to be mapped.

The mapping process started with the identification and collection of spatial data using a close listening methodology of the interviews. Once collected, these data were mapped with an open source software named Atlascine that was specifically designed to map stories. This software enabled the simultaneous representation of different dimensions of these interviews: the places where events occurred in the stories represented by points (e.g. countries, cities, hospitals, cemeteries), the connections between these places materialized by lines (e.g., journeys, conversation between two people through phone calls), the relative importance of each event and place in each story represented by the size of the symbols, the type of event conveyed by the color of the symbol, and the temporality of the events conveyed by the animation of the map (see map). Simultaneously mapping these dimensions provides a unique opportunity to synthesize the complexity of these stories and to examine their spatiotemporal elements.

The systematic examination of each story through a cartographic lens of lines and symbols emphasizes the multiple mobilities often characterizing the lives of exiles. These mobilities are often imposed and triggered by external forces, as illustrated in one of the interviews:

> *Our girls had started university, but after one and a half years, the government decided to close the university for women, for girls. And they had to stay at home. So, my husband said, "No, we left Afghanistan so that our girls have an education, we will not stay here if they cannot go to school." That was the reason that led us to Canada.*

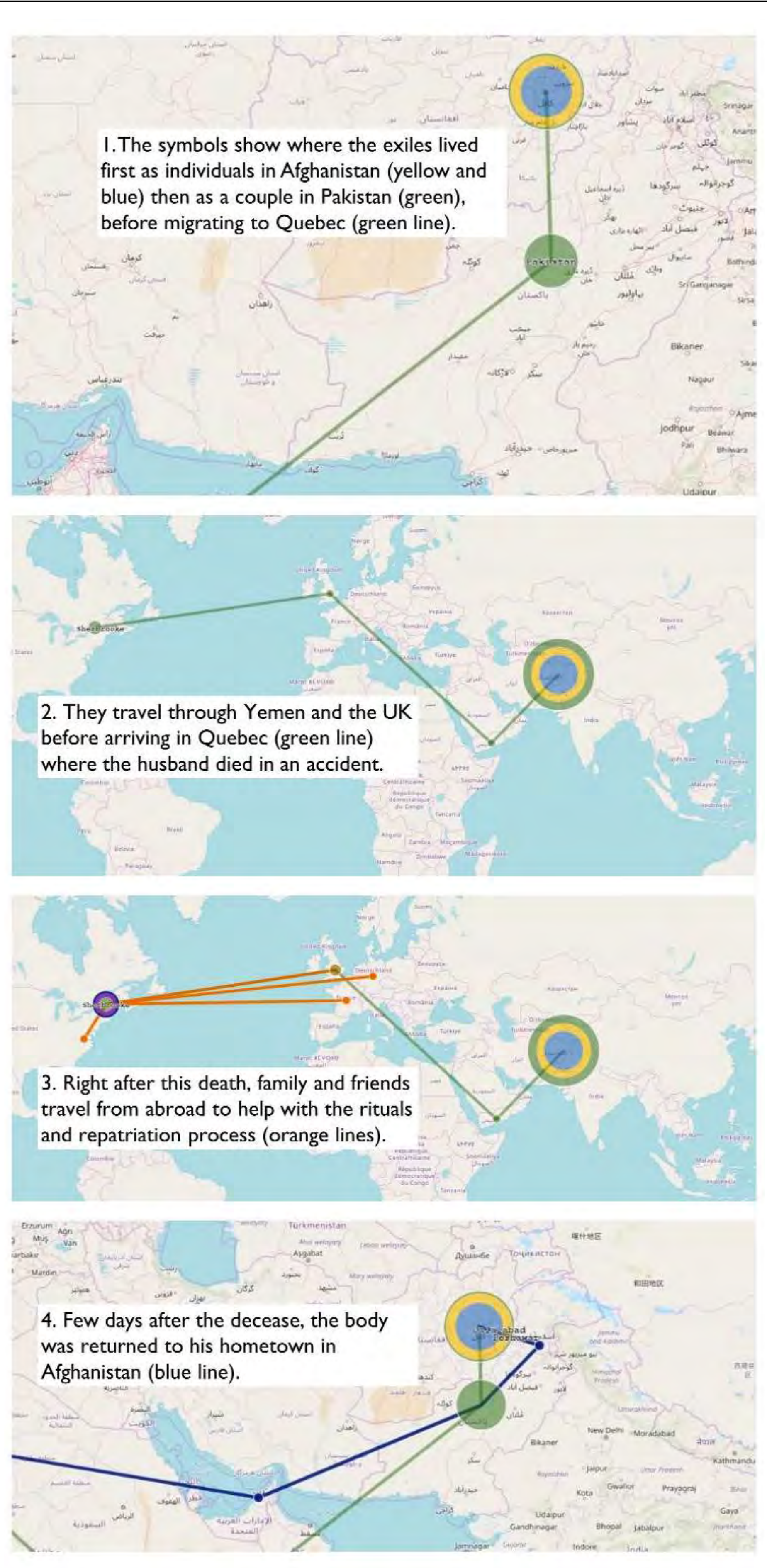
These maps also materialize death as a convergence point of these mobilities that is grounded in a common exilic destination – the province of Quebec in this case – but that is associated to a diversity of particular places such as a hospital or a car where the phone call announcing the death of a loved one was received:

> *That day, I arrived in Montreal. I was with my daughter. My cousin called me to tell us that he (my husband) had an accident. I bought the plane ticket to return to our country, but on the way to the airport, he called me again to tell me that my husband had died.*

Appropriately representing death cartographically is both easy and impossible. It is easy because it can take the form of an abstract symbol locating either where the death happened or where it was witnessed, but it is impossible because this abstract symbol can never come close to conveying the emotional depth triggered by this kind of event. In this project, the maps were envisioned as a way to represent and structure some of the facts mentioned in these stories, rather than to try to convey some of these profound emotions.

Looking at the spatial structures of the five maps produced for this project, we noticed indeed that mobility did not stop at death. In fact, death triggered new mobility challenges, such as the movement restrictions faced by the corpse:

> *The burial was done in Cameroon, so we had to repatriate the*



> *body and follow the (administrative) procedures. Actually, the funeral was performed in the village (where) he was born.*

The maps also helped to reveal other mobilities triggered by death, such as the travel trajectories of family and friends, visits to the gravesite, and the movement of inherited objects and assets between countries, friends and family members.

> *It (the body) was exposed in a coffin, but before the exhibition, we did all the rituals according to our tradition… And all this was organized by the cousin of my husband who came from Germany for the ceremony. Also, my brother-in-law was there, another brother-in-law who lives in U.S.A., my sister and her husband and my brother (they live in France), they were with me.*

While death in the context of exile is often perceived as the end of a migration process, it triggers a series of new forms of mobilities. Although these movements are expressed in the interviews, they are often buried within the high emotional context that characterizes these stories. Given the capacity of maps to convey facts dissociated from their emotional context, mapping postmortem mobilities helps to reveal some of these movements. It offers a new entry point into these stories. Mapping these different kinds of movement is a first important step toward a better understanding of the complex geographies of the postmortem mobility of exiles and exploring potential partnerships between Social Work and Cartography.

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Thanks to Amelia León and Javorka Sarenac for their helpful comments and suggestions.

Twinkle's (Other) Story

by Lea Kabiljo

So, I've seen in this process all the mishmash of who I am, but I've also recognized that it's turned me into a person that thinks in a multifaceted way; that will spend time with people who feed that need in me, to think not outside the box but outside any box. In other words, I don't fit into a box. The only time I'll fit into a box is when I die. But I don't fit into a box. I fit into the moment.

-Twinkle Rudberg

An Internet search for "Twinkle Rudberg" instantly returns thousands of results. The numerous national media articles and interviews, the honours and awards, the recurring references to "inspiration" and "change maker" – all give the impression that Twinkle Rudberg is somewhat of a celebrity. And with every mention of Twinkle, there inevitably follows the acronym LOVE, for the stories of Twinkle and LOVE are one in the same.

On September 30, 1972, Twinkle and her husband, Daniel, headed out for a night of dancing with friends in downtown Montreal. While trying to get their bearings after a wrong turn, they witnessed a mugging: a boy jumped out of a double-parked minivan, snatched the purse of an elderly woman on the sidewalk, and fled. Daniel gave the wheel to Twinkle, who, unable to park, drove around the block while Daniel and two friends exited the car. One man tended to the victim, the other looked for a phone to call the police, and Daniel ran after the boy. Minutes later, as Twinkle returned to where she had left her husband, she saw a crowd gathered in the lot towards which Daniel had run. Forcing her way through the crowd, Twinkle saw a body on the ground and recognized Daniel's shoes. Though nobody would confirm it in the moment, she knew her husband was dead. Later, she would learn that Daniel caught up with the boy, cornering him in the bushes at the back of the lot. The boy panicked and stabbed Daniel with a knife, killing him.

Twinkle's world collapsed. In a matter of seconds, the happily married woman about to dance the night away became a widow left to cope with her grief. Many years passed before Twinkle came to terms with Daniel's death. She knew that the boy who killed Daniel was caught and charged in juvenile court. While she was trying to heal from her loss, Twinkle decided to pore over the court proceedings in an attempt to discover what could compel someone to commit such a heinous act.

As it turns out, what she learned about the boy who killed her husband surprised her. Kurt was only fourteen years old at the time of the crime. He was raised in Baltimore by a single mother who worked three jobs in order to support her family. The boy ran away from home, eventually making his way to Montreal, where he joined a gang. On weekends, the young men would raid the city, stealing money for food and drugs. On the day of his initiation, the day he was to commit his first robbery, Kurt was high on LSD. The more she read about Kurt, the more Twinkle realized that he, much like Daniel and her, was also a victim of the cycle of violence. If this one boy abandoned by society had so easily fallen through the cracks, she wondered how many others with no guidance would take a turn for the worse.

Inspired to end the cycle of violence in the lives of young people, Twinkle founded LOVE: Leave Out Violence. LOVE is a non-profit organization that offers at-risk youth violence-prevention programs centered on media arts, namely photography and journalism. The organization Twinkle founded in 1993 began its operations with fifteen young people in the photo labs of Dawson College in Montreal. Today, LOVE spans the country, with chapters in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, working with hundreds of youths each year through its in-school and afterschool media arts and leadership programs.

During the six years I worked at LOVE alongside Twinkle, I told her story many times. At first, I told Twinkle's story to the youth I worked with as an intervention worker and to the CEOs of multimillion-dollar corporations, hoping to secure funding for the future of the organization. With every audience the story had the same effect: all were touched and inspired by Twinkle's resilience. Her ability to turn a personal tragedy into a success story helped thousands of at-risk youth over the years to find their voice through LOVE. For me, as for everyone else, Twinkle and LOVE were inseparable, two intertwined threads of the same narrative.

After I left LOVE to pursue new challenges, Twinkle and I stayed in contact. Over time, our conversations moved from professional to personal. We formed a sort of intergenerational friendship and I began to glimpse Twinkle's other story, one composed of complex life experiences that made her into the woman she is today. Undeniably, Daniel's tragic death and the events it triggered played a significant role in shaping her, but they weren't the only influences. Through our encounters, I understood that Twinkle sometimes asked herself if her entire existence was reducible to the public face of one well-known tragedy. As our intimacy grew, so did my interest in revealing Twinkle's other story, the one I was just coming to know.

I proposed to Twinkle a project that combined oral history with photography. Together we would intend to reveal her life story; the one before and after the tragic event that changed her life so profoundly.

Over a period of few weeks, Twinkle and I recorded more than seven hours of conversation. She talked about her memories. We looked at old photographs and visited places from her youth. Through this process we were able to uncover, discover, and recover various shards of information. As our recorded conversations became increasingly personal I had the privilege to discover the complex woman that she was. Twinkle told me the story of her

adoption at one day old, and how she would never know her biological parents. Her adoptive parents, Romanian Jews, came to Montreal at the beginning of the twentieth century, seeking a better life. She revealed how she got the name most knew her by: her father always said she was the twinkle in his eye. She told me stories about her trips, her first kiss, about her friends and her school, about dancing and arts and music, all with an evident love. Twinkle told me stories, and I listened, like a mesmerized child, imagining all the characters and situations she so vividly conjured. She showed me a photograph of herself at the age of six or so, playing a piano that still sat – she gestured toward it – in her living room today. Another picture showed her father wearing his riding boots, which perched like weathered talismans on a shelf in her office. Through these photographs and Twinkle's stories, the past and the present began to merge and I saw how all these facets of a life contributed, mosaic-like, to the totality of the woman I was coming to know.

Following our interview sessions, and based on meaningful objects and memorable moments from her life, we came up with ideas together for different photographs. I remembered the one of Twinkle as a little girl playing the piano and suggested we take some photos inspired by it. Twinkle retrieved the original from her pile of albums. I photographed her with the picture of her as a young girl in the foreground and the woman in the background, playing the same piano. Not formally posing, but rather candid and at ease, Twinkle seemed to bridge the many years between her and the girl she had been with a kind of emotional continuity. I asked Twinkle if I could photograph her father's old riding boots, also a feature of several family pictures. As if channeling the whimsy of the girl at the piano, she strapped them on, sat down and propped her feet on her father's old desk. I started to take pictures – boots out of focus, Twinkle looking at the picture of her father, holding his old pipe. As I clicked away, I got closer, cropping out the surrounding objects. Among the dozens of photographs, I knew when I had the one I'd been after. I showed it to Twinkle, and she agreed: We had the perfect shot.

That picture. *That* was Twinkle.

The photograph, seemingly simple, captures the many aspects of the Twinkle I had the privilege of discovering during our meetings. In it, she wears her father's boots. From her stories it was clear that Twinkle had been not only devoted to her father but admired him as well. After he passed, she took over the family business, forced to metaphorically fill his shoes. With her feet on the desk, Twinkle embodies confidence and assertiveness, affecting a not-to-be-trifled-with air. The soles of the boots, the main focus of the photograph, are worn and stained, symbolic of the long and often difficult journey of Twinkle's life. Twinkle herself, however, is out of focus. This blurred depiction of Twinkle represents a dimension of her character I have gotten to know only recently, a woman who, despite her considerable strength, is quite shy, preferring to remain out of the spotlight. She gazes at the camera with a faint smile, the subtlety of which only adds to its intrigue. Through this photograph she is telling us a story. This is Twinkle's other story. It is the story of a woman beyond the tragedy that publicly defined her.

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Twinkle with her father's boots. Photo: Lea Kabiljo.

Organizing to Stay Legal

Montreal Metro Musicians' Journey from Illegality to Self-policing

by Piyusha Chatterjee

There have been buskers in the metro since the early 80s. Well, there were buskers in the metro before that. But then there was a big conflict with the STM. It wasn't formalized, you know what I mean. There were no rules surrounding it. So, in the early 80s, I think it's '83 if I am not mistaken, in '83 there was a court case, the buskers versus the STM, and the court basically told STM that you have to make spots available for the buskers… Me, personally, I don't believe in policing at all. If the STM weren't trying to police busking, we wouldn't need the Regroupement at all.

-Lucas Choi Zimbel, member of the Regroupement des musicians du métro de Montréal (RMMM)

Busking was not new to Montreal when the metro system was introduced to its urban landscape in 1966. Evidence of itinerant performers and musicians on the streets of Montreal exists in the municipal bylaws since the nineteenth century. As early as 1841, the city council introduced a fee of £5 on itinerant performers, equestrians and show men. So, while the tradition of busking was not new to the city, the underground was a new kind of public place in the 1970s and '80s, with its own set of challenges and rules. A debate re-emerged in the public sphere in response to increased policing of musicians playing in the metro. This time, the musicians were themselves involved in generating public opinion and fighting the Commission de transport de la communauté urbaine de Montréal (CTCUM) in court to preserve their right to play music in the metro. What followed was the creation of a not-for-profit association of metro musicians with the mandate to fight for the rights of all musicians in the metro. Over the years, the association worked to maintain and create new spaces for musicians in the metro through self-regulatory practices and by engaging in negotiations with the transport authority.

This article traces the history and evolution of the organization, and the fight to keep busking alive in the metro, making use of oral history interviews and personal and public archives. The story of the RMMM is an example of what buskers, often relegated to the margins of society, have contributed to Montreal's history and culture.

Poll conducted by the STM in 2018. Photo: Piyusha Chatterjee.

Until 1983, a rule prohibited playing any kind of musical instruments in the metro. Musicians recall being fined by inspectors. Things changed after a musician won a court case because of a loophole in the language of the rule. Grégoire Dunlevy, who was involved in organizing the metro musicians at the time, recalled the court case and the circumstances under which he and some other musicians decided to circulate a petition to generate public opinion in their favour:

In the rules of the metro, there was a rule, it said... it was illegal to play a radio or musical instrument. So, anyway, here I was facing a possible $1,600 in fine. I didn't know how I was going to pay $1,600. I had my two kids with me... I was talking with my girlfriend... I said to her... maybe we can get the public to sign a petition for the metro musicians, you know, because everybody was experiencing the same problems... We [Dunlevy and another musician] left the Salon des metiers d'art when it closed at 10 o'clock that night with over a thousand signatures on the petition. The following day, I phoned around to the newspapers... I got hold of La Presse*, so they put me over to their editor. His name was Claude Gravel and he said... "I think things are going to work a lot better if we do this after the holiday..." So, the 3rd of January, I give him a call... The next day, on page 2 of* La Presse*, is a half-page article.... That started a whole snowball effect... We went into court, I think it was the 3rd or 4th of February...*

This was February 1983. There was about 17 of us. Somewhere between 17 and 20 something... We had gotten hold of a young legal-aid lawyer called Pierre Denault. Pierre Denault today is a judge. So, he took our case and got all of us put on the same day, so it was just one after the other after the other [laughs]... 17, 18, or 20 cases, one after the other... Then he comes to the trial of Steve Smith. This was a guy who had already had his preliminary before... He [the lawyer] had a copy of our petition, which by now, in a little over a month, we had accumulated over 10,000 signatures... Now in the English translation [of the rule], it said, you are not allowed to play a radio or a musical instrument in the metro. And in the French trans-

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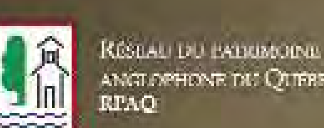

lation, it said, c'est interdit de faire fonctionner, it is forbidden to make function, un appareil de radio ou un instrument de musique. "Mais, votre honneur," he [the lawyer] said, "you know you can faire fonctionner un appareil de radio, an automobile, a sewing machine, all kinds of apparatuses and machines, but you cannot faire fonctionner un instrument de musique, you play an instrument of music, vous jouez un instrument de musique..." [Laughs] So that's it, we won.

Thus, l'Association des musiciens itinérants du métro was formed in 1983. The lyre signs went up in 1986 and the association later changed its name to l'Association des musiciens indépendents du métro de Montréal (AMIMM). According to Dunlevy, the word "itinerant" conveyed a sense of wandering about without a purpose, which made them switch to the word independent. In fact, what Zimbel referred to as the "formalized" relationship between the musicians and the transport authority also made it imperative for the association to distinguish the identity of the musician from that of panhandlers and homeless people in the metro. Dunlevy remembered some incidents involving panhandlers and musicians in the metro:

You see, at the very beginning, panhandlers did not come into the metro with a musical instrument. Once we got the signs starting to go up, that's when one or two panhandlers got the idea... So, whenever we would run across these people, we tell them look, this spot is for musicians and you are not a musician, would you please leave? And if they started arguing, we'd say well, we can get the police in here, you know, the security and they'll get you to leave. Some of the musicians were harassed by beggars too.

The association had to engage in self-policing for fear of losing spots. In one case, over 20 musicians signed a complaint against one "itinerant musician" for disrupting the peace, safety and tranquility of the metro. (The letter, dated November 30, 1987, was signed by over 25 people; it is among Dunlevy's private papers.) In the early years, the association also actively engaged in negotiations with the transport authority to find and designate new spots for musicians in the metro. And the transport authority seemed willing to get into conversations with the association and work together. For example, in 1986, the Société de transport de la communauté urbaine de Montréal (STCUM) adopted a resolution that limited the noise level of any musical performance to below 80 decibels. (Procés verbal de l'assemblée ordinaire publique du Conseil d'administration de la STCUM, July 3, 1986: Archives of the Société de transport de Montréal.) In the public meeting that followed, many metro musicians were in attendance. To a question by Dunlevy regarding the lack of lyre signs at many stations where musicians could play, a representative of the STCUM conceded that it might be possible to identify such spots with signs if the association were to provide a list. (An extract of the transcript of this public meeting is in Dunlevy's private papers.) In a follow up query, the STCUM also agreed to discuss the hours when each spot was open for performance by musicians. This was just the beginning of a longer conversation that continued over the years between the association and the transport authority. The association also received contracts from the STM and other organizations that they then passed on to members. In 1991, it co-organized in a much-publicized event called MétrOlympiade with the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Being an association gave them bargaining power before the transport authority and other employers, but it also involved a lot of work on behalf of all musicians, many of whom were not even members. Penny Hamer, a former metro musician who was a member, remembered a moment of controversy:

The same problems were often discussed at the meetings – the problem of musician's noise level and the problem of people taking spots who probably should not... And then the big controversy started over the possibility of having auditions... And, although I understood both sides, I was in favour of having auditions. I thought that if we lose spots because of bad behaviour or bad or non-existent music, then what have we got?

Auditions for membership were introduced, and the association was revived and renamed as the RMMM in 2009 when Dino Spaziani took over. Zimbel says that communication between the now Société de transport de Montréal (STM) and the RMMM has come to a standstill since the Les Étoiles du métro programme stopped. The programme was introduced in 2012 as a partnership between the STM and the RMMM. In 2018, the STM conducted a poll of metro musicians that did not involve the RMMM. While the RMMM finds itself pushed to irrelevance at the moment, Zimbel believes it may well be in the interest of the metro musicians to keep the association alive for the future. Lara Antebi, reflecting on her experiences as a metro musician, said:

The regroupement did, definitely, feel like there was a community in that they were organized. I was really impressed that the board, especially the

Sondage

Association des musiciens indépendants du métro

Depuis combien de temps jouez-vous dans le métro? 8 yrs

Depuis quand connaissez-vous l'AMIM? 3 yrs

Dans quelles stations jouez-vous? Snowdon Ville Marie Cote Vertu, St Mathieu, Peel

Êtes-vous satisfait du travail de l'AMIM, pourquoi? Yes

Que pensez-vous du système de liste? Its not perfect but most of the time it works, It is difficult to replace it with something that would leave us with the freedom to play when we want.

Nommez 3 des problèmes que vous rencontrez le plus souvent
1- Cold stations
2- Loud muzak
3- Students coming in at Christmas + Holidays

Sur quel problème l'AMIM doit-elle se porter prioritairement? To assure the musicians who work all year don't lose out at Christmas.

Survey conducted by the metro musicians' association in the 1990s. Source: private papers held by Grégoire Dunlevy.

> *president really, that they had a vision for how to represent the interests of their members and buskers as non-members so that they have a collective voice to negotiate with the STM. So, when I realized how much pressuring power the STM does have and how much resistance and effort they have had to put in just to maintain that space or even to create that space in the first place, I was really impressed that there were people who came together to mobilize on that.*

With the possibility of an online system replacing the tradition of paper sign-up sheets stuck behind the lyre signs, some musicians feel they may be losing their autonomy because the old practice was both democratic and organic. The RMMM's history thus not only represents a struggle to open up the underground for musicians, it also tells the story of self-governance of metro musicians that is quite unique to Montreal.

Author's note: The names of musicians and officials occurring in the archives and private papers have been removed for privacy concerns. This research is funded through a doctoral scholarship of the FRQSC and MTL 2050 Fellows Program at Concordia University. I also acknowledge the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling for providing space and resources for doing the interviews.

Piyusha Chatterjee *is a Ph.D. candidate in the Individualized Program at Concordia University. She is working on an oral history project with buskers in Montreal that examines their place in the political economy of the city.*

Interviews:

Lara Antebi, Montreal. Interviewed by Piyusha Chatterjee, April 17, 2019.

Grégoire Dunlevy, Dunham. Interviewed by Piyusha Chatterjee and Eliot Perrin (camera) February 8, 2019, and by Piyusha Chatterjee and Ioana Radu, May 17, 2019.

Penny Hamer, Montreal. Interviewed by Piyusha Chatterjee, May 1, 2019.

Lucas Choi Zimbel, Montreal. Interviewed by Piyusha Chatterjee, May 29, 2019.

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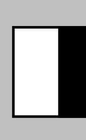
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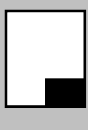
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Part of the First Wave

Oral Histories of Cambodians in Montreal, 1975-1980

by Pharo Sok

While the vast majority of the seventy-five Cambodians who participated in the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling's Montreal Life Stories project (2007-2012) lived under the brutal Pol Pot regime (1975-1979), a handful managed to resettle in Montreal before April 1975 and, thus, avoided a genocide where over 1.7 million perished. This article examines the experiences of three of them. This trio of narratives opens a window onto a Cambodian community that only numbered about two hundred in the mid-1970s. It also complicates the mythology surrounding Canada's response to the so-called "Boat People" refugee crisis of the late 1970s and 1980s.

With the collapse of the nationalist Lon Nol government in Cambodia and the rise of the Pol Pot's communist Khmer Rouge in April 1975, Cambodians living abroad looked internationally for safe harbors to avoid the danger engulfing their homeland. Nealy Dara, Thong Ngoun Ith, and Meng Try had made Montreal their home in 1974, after migrating from France, where they had been studying. Ith contrasts the first Cambodian immigrants with the thousands who would later come to Canada as refugees:

> *Some of [the refugees] lived in the city... However, many of them were from the countryside... The way of living [between people from the city and country] was completely different. Like sky and earth... On the other hand, the majority of people who arrived here first were those who came out to study or to work just like myself. These people received some education, so generally they had at least a basic level of English or French. Hence, the earlier group of people had higher education and their knowledge of languages made their adaptation into this society easier."*

Geographical and educational differences are just a couple of factors that Cambodian interviewees point out between those who migrated to Canada before and after 1979. Furthermore, it is these diverging characteristics, in addition to political leanings, that many cite as the reasons why Cambodian Montrealers in the twenty-first century remain disorganized and prone to conflict with each other.

Heritage Minute: Cambodian Boat People welcomed to Canada. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/cambodians.

Two of our three interviewees recall that information coming out of Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea was scarce, and the need to take action was high. "Every now and then in the news," Dara recalls, "we found out that there were massacres happening. That's all we heard… At the time, my husband and I tried to follow the news for any bit of information." This near-complete communication blackout motivated Dara to become politically active. She and her husband spread news about Cambodia to the broader public, educated Canadians about Cambodian history and culture, petitioned for the admission of Cambodian refugees, and, with her husband, founded the first Cambodian community organization in Canada, Communauté de Khmer au Canada (CKC). In the 1970s, "there were no Cambodians here to represent Cambodians," she recalls. "So, it was me, who was part of the first Cambodian wave representing all Cambodians. You see? Singing, going on television, singing in Khmer… We were always *very active* [emphasis by narrator]. From 1975-78, we were very active." Ith supports Dara's recollections of the first years, adding that Cambodian Montrealers were a significant factor in the eventual Canadian humanitarian effort at the end of the decade:

> *The Cambodian people who were here first made a plan together to ask Canadian government to accept Cambodian refugees here. The Canadian government did not get informed by themselves about Cambodians fleeing the Khmer Rouge to [refugee camps in] Thailand. [Rather,] it was Cambodians here [who] made requests and plans together about what Canadians should do to help the newcomers.*

These assertions run counter to Canadian national myths about the refugee crisis which obscure the efforts of Cambodians in favor of valorizing Canadians and the Canadian state. This event is often seen as key in the development of Canada's multicultural and humanitarian national identity. Surely, the sponsorship numbers were unprecedented as tens of thousands of Southeast Asian refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos were resettled in Canada. Indeed, looking at Cambodians alone, with the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, over

18,000 Cambodians relocated to Canada between 1980 and 1992 (McLellan). Typically, private and state sponsorship is lauded for the incredible speed and size of refugee resettlement. The function of this narrative is to uphold the idea of both a paternalistic and benevolent West that must save the world, and a passive, victimized "Other" in need of rescuing.

This way of remembering the crisis remains common well into this century. For instance, former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's support of the "Memorial to the Victims of Communism" exemplifies how this moment has been incorporated into national myth. In his 2014 keynote address to the organization's financial donors, Harper recounted the globe's "harrowing" twentieth century and the threat of "communism's poisonous ideology" that "slowly bled into countries all around the world, on almost every continent." Reinforcing an image of Canada's diverse ethnic mosaic and of the country's commitment to fighting oppression, Harper claimed that, for people fleeing from Russia, Ukraine, Vietnam, and Cambodia, a new home awaited: "Safety, freedom, opportunity, hope. That was Canada. And that is still our Canada today."

Dara and Ith's narratives nuance this nationalistic reading of the period by turning our attention to the activism of Cambodian Montrealers and groups like CKC. While official and popular sources about this work are few, the role it plays in the life stories of Cambodians who were active during this period cannot be ignored. Here, we see how individuals can use oral storytelling to make sense of their own lives and open up new ways of understanding the past and what it means to them.

Try's narrative from the same period further reveals the hypocrisies of this myth that frames Canada as uniquely attuned and sympathetic to the plights of Global South peoples. Unlike Dara and Ith, Try says nothing about the work of CKC and its allies and mentions community activism only when his life story transitions to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1979. As a result of border skirmishes between the two communist powers, Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea fell at the beginning of 1979 and the pro-Vietnamese People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) was founded in its place. Citing historical conflicts between Cambodia and Vietnam, Try remembers the impetus to take political action: "Me, personally, and the majority of people who came and demonstrated [against Vietnam] thought that we were going to lose the country. That Cambodia would disappear, like Kampuchea Krom [a former piece of Cambodian territory annexed by Vietnam]. That's what we were afraid of. And that's what pushed us to demonstrate." He adds that refugees were largely uninvolved in these efforts:

> *[The refugees] weren't for it because, at that moment, the Khmer resistance [against Vietnam] was a coalition between supporters of [Cambodian independence crusader] Norodom Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge, nationalists, and [former Defense Minister of Democratic Kampuchea] Son Sen. But, legally, it was dominated by the Khmer Rouge faction. The refugees were not motivated to demonstrate in favor of the Khmer Rouge.*

Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Phnom Penh, March 2016. Photo: Albeior24.

Although Try's recollections of activism differ from Dara and Ith's in terms of what motivated people to come together, all three stress the work of ordinary Cambodians who created spaces for political interventions and protest in their relatively new homes. These stories serve to challenge the image of refugees and displaced persons as passive recipients of Western aid and instead present histories of dynamic community-building rooted in transnational connections. These interviews also allow us to disrupt the idealized presentation of Canada's role on the international stage.

Throughout the 1980s, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) fought politically and militarily against the perceived Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. Like Try, much of the international community, including the United States and Canada, chose to support the CGDK because of Cold War politics. Despite several attempts by the leaders of the PRK to claim international recognition, they were blocked from occupying the Cambodian seat in the United Nations for the duration of their existence (1979-1989). So, while Harper lauded former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and other Western leaders for "successfully and decisively" ending the Cold War in his aforementioned speech, he conveniently occluded how the Canadian government lent support to the CGDK and, by extension, to the genocidal Khmer Rouge throughout the 1980s. Mark MacGuigan, a former Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs and Attorney General of Canada under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, offers an insider's perspective of the Canadian government's rationale at the time in his 2002 memoir:

> *"Canada's policy... was to recognize the Pol Pot government as the legitimate holder of Cambodia's seat in the General Assembly, a matter which came up for vote every fall. This was not out of any affection for the murderous Pol Pot... However, we felt that we could not recognize the alternative People's Republic of Kampuchea, which was sustained in power only by Vietnamese troops and organized by Vietnamese 'experts.'"*

Although MacGuigan follows this passage with attempts to justify Canada's and his own position regarding the matter of the CGDK, citing his nation's proposal for a United Nations-backed intervention team in the region, the admission of support for the genocidal regime exists uncomfortably alongside Prime Minister Harper and other Canadians' narrative of Canada's historically fierce stance against

communism and fascism. This hidden history that entangles the Khmer Rouge and Canada in a complex web of Cold War power relations undermines an imagining of Canada as a defender of the oppressed throughout the world.

Dara, Ith, and Try's oral histories can tell us many things. Their interviews reveal stories of how new beginnings in Montreal are deeply tied to families, friends, and homes in Cambodia. They also provide us with a platform to consider how Canadian myth-makers' work ignores community-led activism and obscures uncomfortable contradictions in the service of nation-building. Listening to this trio of interviewees' political activism and contrasting it with the political and popular memory of the Southeast Asian refugee crisis, we can get a glimpse of how ethnic and national communities come to be formed through remembering and forgetting in the stories that we tell each other.

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A Taste of the Maple Spring

by Aiden Hodgins-Ravensbergen

One of Shane Lynn's first tastes of Quebec was arriving in Montreal amidst a massive student protest against the Charest government's tuition hike back in the spring of 2012. He had come from Ireland, where a €3,000 tuition increase (without any accompanying increase in loans or bursaries) had pushed many to quit school after the 2008 global financial crash, which struck Ireland particularly hard. "I was impressed," he recalls, at the sight of Quebec's students. Irish students had also mobilized against increases in tuition, notably with the slogan "education, not emigration," but many ended up having to face the difficult choice of either accepting increasing debt and growing anxiety, or leaving school. Yet Quebec's students gave Shane hope. The girl he came to Quebec to be with, Lea, remembers what it all meant for him:

> *I think he just felt such a sense of apathy there... His parents were hit so badly by the crash they had to leave Ireland... For years they couldn't find stable employment. They went through a really hard time... When we got off the bus and there was a big strike right past us as we were walking with our suitcases, I remember it was just so exciting for him, because it showed that people care and are going to do something about it. And that's amazing, because there's just so much apathy and unwillingness to stick your neck out, to refuse to go to class and see what happens, to take to the streets, to really talk about these things and to make democracy happen.*

Students across Quebec did just that, but that hope and democratization were years in the making. Quebec has a proud history of social movements, and within that heritage lies a powerful legacy of student mobilizations intricately entwined with the historically oppressed Francophone majority's demands for accessible higher education in their own language. This tradition gave birth to the Université du Québec network in 1968, won increases in loans and bursaries in the 70s, halted tuition hikes in the 80s and 90s, and kept more than 103 million dollars of scholarships from turning into loans in 2005 – to name only some of its achievements. Yet what is often neglected is that Anglophones have also claimed space within that history to cooperate with their Francophone neighbours, from McGill's political science association joining the 1968 strikes, to the catalyzing work of Stanley Gray in the "McGill français" movement, all the way to today.

The story of 2012 was no exception. It must be understood within the context of that history, but also as a new phenomenon, because it went further still. Officially lasting almost seven months, it was the longest student strike in North America's history and the largest student mobilization in Canadian history: it saw close to 310,000 students out of 400,000 in the province go on strike, significant public support heard through the banging of pots and pans and, ultimately, the fall of a government that had been in power for over nine years.

Instead of being ignored, the Quebec student movement sowed the seeds of a broader, much deeper contest against the Quebec Liberal government. Finance minister Raymond Bachand had hailed what he himself called a "cultural revolution" two years earlier when he announced a budget that included austerity measures, a health tax, increases in hydroelectric billings rates and a 75% increase in tuition, the largest Quebec had ever seen. And so resistance to "the commodification of education" and demands for its accessibility became emblematic of a clash of worldviews. There were those who saw education as a personal investment within the frame-

work of human capital theory: “Well, we should increase tuition because you go to school to get a job and then you can pay off your debt like everyone else in North America.” Others retorted with some big questions: “What is the point of education? Why are we going to school to get jobs? We go to school to learn… Why do you think it’s OK to pay what you pay?... And is education a commodity, something you exchange for a job, or is it a right, a fundamental human right, that we should be able to access regardless of our economic background?” Students protested that the intellectual baggage underlying the budget brought costs down “on individuals and really separates people.” As a principle it ran “counter to the idea of even having community.” The community they themselves built grew to use up the city’s supply of red felt, as pots and pans rang out coast to coast from Vancouver to Halifax and even from New York to all the way to Paris.

Yet, just as they saw today’s political economy separating people, some saw a divide amongst the students.

“Quebec’s mindless mobs reflect French / English divide,” penned the *National Post* in a provocative headline that spring. McGill professor Aziz Choudry remembers reading similar assertions in the *Montreal Gazette*, a subsidiary of the same corporation that owns the *National Post*, about how “on the night demos you’ll never hear anything other than French being spoken… And I thought, that’s funny, because I was out last night and, you know, I heard English, French, Spanish, Tagalog, Arabic, Hindi [laughs]. It was just this kind of construction that was just false.”

In “An Open Letter to the Mainstream English Media,” the group known as Translating the Printemps Érable wrote: “News coverage of Quebec almost always focuses on division: English vs. French; Quebec-born vs. immigrant; etc. This is the narrative that has shaped how people see us as a province, whether or not it is fair. But this is not what I feel right now when I walk down the street.” The writer described this feeling instead as “an overwhelming sense of joy and togetherness.”

Indeed, the students I spoke with told a different story than Postmedia’s journalists. They felt as if, even though the cultures and histories of English and French institutions were different, bridges were built across the divide between the two solitudes of old. One philosophy student acknowledged there were “institutional connections already,” but “we definitely saw ourselves as part of building stronger relations with them and the French institutions as well.” A Francophone student who studied at McGill thought 2012 “definitely” brought the two groups closer together. “There was a dismissal of the old ways of doing,” she said. “It’s just that we have a very different culture of organizing,” explained another student. At McGill and Concordia “there is a lot of organizing through affinity groups,” she continued, “whereas on the Francophone side... rather than trying to get people who already think like you, you have to go talk to people that think very differently from you and have a lot of hard conversations.” Myriam Zaidi affirmed that “in terms of student activism it’s different, but “that doesn’t mean they don’t speak to one another.”

Indeed, while this story does highlight how different the two institutional cultures were, it also shows the growing connections between them. As part of the “élargissement” strategy adopted by CLASSE (Coalition Large de l’Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante), Francophones worked hand in hand with Anglophones to bring them into the strike campaign. But, as Myriam Zaidi reminds us, “it came from within too.” Rushdia Mehreen recalls how Francophones “reached out to us to ask both Concordia and McGill... ‘Do you want to come to a meeting and talk about how we can really work together and make this strike happen?’” Some Francophone students were already in English schools and, as one Anglophone organizer commented, they “had the hard skills and the experience and could share with us what they knew.” One Francophone student even joined Concordia to “help us mobilize,” recalls Rushdia, although it should be said he was also fascinated by the Simone De Beauvoir Institute’s women’s studies program. “I think links are important. Things don’t happen in isolation,” reflected Rushdia. “We just really switched our organizing strategy,” concluded another one of Concordia’s organizers. Through that switch, the history of Francophone schools played a key role: “we definitely relied on the historical progress that Franco institutions had... It’s really great that Concordia took the step it did to establish itself in that history, and McGill too,” said another Anglophone student.

And establish themselves they did. Zoë Erwin-Longstaff, an organizer at McGill, recognized the significance of her department’s “overwhelming majority” strike vote as she stood in a two-kilometre-long wave of people along Montreal’s streets. “It is historic. I am so proud. I’ve never been more proud to be an English student!” A McGill professor from the same department commented

Demonstration against higher tuition fees, Berri Street, Montreal, March 22, 2012. Photo: Chicoutimi.

on McGill's role in the student movement in the midst of that same demonstration: "I'm surprised to see this participation and I think it's fantastic! I think people at McGill need to remember they're part of Quebec too." The professor also noted: "We're part of this movement. People at McGill benefit directly from the low tuition that has historically been part of education in Quebec and I feel like all students are implicated by these decisions."

Indeed, even though "Francophone institutions were much more involved and they deserve to be recognized for that," Anglophones and Allophones alike also resisted what Université de Montréal philosopher Michel Seymore has described as "the Charest government's capitulation to the Anglo-American, entrepreneurial model of education." As one Anglophone student put it, "The university funding plan is changing the philosophy behind education." He then commented on why he felt the histories of Anglophone and Francophone institutions had converged to become part of the same movement in 2012: "I know Quebec has fought for 40 years, especially the Francophone universities... As an Anglophone university we couldn't just sit back again; otherwise we might as well get that increase right away." It seems 2012 was part of a new era in that history, as many students, both Anglophone and Francophone, felt a duty to work together.

Thus, framing the strikes as a reflection of Quebec's "two solitudes" fails to take into account the worthy perspectives of those who actively renewed a different history with a spirit of openness and cooperation. Such constructions don't just neglect people's realities; they also misinform the history books and, ultimately, end up erasing lots of hard, valuable work. "A strike doesn't happen out of the blue," Rushdia Mehreen reminds us. She is quite right: it was the fruit of years of work. One student recalled the initial hill to climb: "When I came to McGill, it was assumed no one would join a strike movement, as well as Concordia. It was like, you know, 'we won't even try.' But we tried and it worked!"

As Mark Twain once said: "they did not know it was impossible, so they did it."

Let us not be mistaken however: while this story is one of bridge building, that does not erase the divisions that do exist in Quebec. While it seems we are moving past the two solitudes of old, Rushdia Mehreen highlights how "there are many solitudes." All interviewees I spoke with expressed their concerns about the charter of values that was put forward by the Parti Québécois after the strike and likened it to the CAQ government's recent passing of Bill 21. Many also regretted and took lessons from the movement's "missed opportunities" to broaden its analysis further and connect with the realities of Indigenous and racialized peoples. Nevertheless, while many felt like the movement didn't speak to them, others found "value in claiming space" within this story. One of those students was Rosalind Hampton and it seems only appropriate to conclude with her words:

> *For the first time in my life, during the student movement, I read French-language newspapers and watched Francophone news broadcasts. I struggled alongside White Francophone Québécois/es and, while I was never under any illusions that issues of race and racism had simply vanished, my experiences suggested, and at times confirmed, the potential for French and English, White and non-White, acts of solidarity.*

Aiden Hodgins-Ravensbergen *is an Honours undergraduate student at Concordia, majoring in History with a minor in Classical Civilizations. On weekends and in the summer, he bids farewell to the city in favour of the home where he was raised in the bilingual community of Hemmingford, where he works at the local CLSC as well as on his family's farm. He also sits on the board of directors of the Hemmingford Environment Committee and is a spokesperson for Québec solidaire. He hopes to continue studying and transmitting our history, while offering local fruits and vegetables, hay, and, of course, maple syrup as sustainably as possible to Quebec's communities.*

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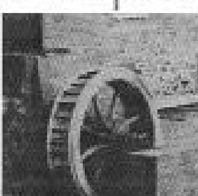

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