

Minutes of QAHN board of directors meeting

January 22, 2005

Lennoxville

Directors present: Rod MacLeod, Michael Cooper, Richard Evans, Heather Darch, Philip McMaster, William Campbell, Doreen Lindsay

Staff: Valerie Bridger, Dwane Wilkin, Kathy Teasdale

1. Meeting convened

Rod MacLeod called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. Doreen Lindsay and Richard Evans requested the addition of two items to the agenda, prompting a brief, informal discussion about QAHN's role and responsibility in the shaping of heritage policy in Quebec, particularly with regard to preservation. Doreen wished to know if QAHN had guidelines for assisting local heritage groups and historical societies in concrete ways to protect local historic buildings, for instance. On a more general note, Philip McMaster suggested that QAHN would benefit from having an internal protocol for responding to heritage crises as they arise.

2. Approval of the agenda

Dick Evans moved to approve the agenda, with modifications. Motion seconded by Heather Darch. All voted in favour.

Prior to adopting the minutes from the October, 2004 board meeting, there was some further, informal discussion about the functions QAHN can realistically be expected to carry out on behalf of its core members. Dick Evans recalled that QAHN was originally conceived as a liaison between member historical groups and various funding agencies. Whereas QAHN may be able to and should in some instances help process necessary paperwork for local groups seeking financial assistance for their own projects, the actual administration of such projects must remain with the local groups.

3. Approval of the minutes

Philip McMaster motioned to approve the minutes from October's meeting. The motion was seconded by Doreen Lindsay.

4. Status Report

For the special benefit of new board members Doreen Lindsay and William Campbell, Rod MacLeod took a few minutes to review how QAHN's activities are financed, laying emphasis on the important program-funding channel constituted by the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN), of which QAHN is a part. Rod praised the effort of Helen Meredith, QAHN's long-time program officer who works out of the Department of Canadian Heritage's Montreal office.

4.1 Department of Canadian Heritage

Dick Evans noted that QAHN has been highly regarded by the Department the last five years. Rod added that if QAHN can continue to perform as well as it has, it can expect to continue to receive operational funding. Because of recent cutbacks to the operating grant of Alliance Quebec, another QCGN member, Rod noted that there will be even more money in the QCGN envelope in the coming fiscal year, some of which QAHN might reasonably be expected to attract for its own operations.

Phil McMaster opined that, along with possible funding increases in the coming fiscal year, (2005-2006), and in view of Alliance Quebec's difficulties, QAHN should be prepared to evolve as an "authority" on heritage matters in Quebec, even if the positions we take are occasionally at odds with the federal minister of Canadian Heritage.

Dick Evans expounded on the consequences of forcing non-profit community groups in Quebec to compete with one another for funding. The Department views the structure of the QCGN as a way to put pressure on the English community to sort out what its needs are, but in effect, community groups feel increasingly like tools of the federal bureaucracy. Dick observed that QAHN now has to phrase its applications for program funding and its activities reporting to reflect Departmental priorities; the foisting of results-based management reporting requirements on non-profit groups such as QAHN helps bureaucrats use local activities to show results within the Department. Nevertheless, Dick said that QAHN must strive to be seen as a "helpmate" and not a competitor with other community groups.

Doreen Lindsay suggested that one way of building and maintaining support for QAHN at the community level would be to reserve or create another seat on QAHN's board of directors for representatives of other community groups. She suggested inviting the president of each organization to sit on the QAHN board for a year, on a yearly rotating basis.

Dick responded that a lack of money was QAHN's main obstacle. He said QAHN has reached the point where the organization must obtain a higher level of funding or else convince people in the communities to be more vigorous themselves in raising funds for their own activities. "If we were successful," Dick said, "then every community group would be able to do \$200,000 worth of work a year in their community."

Rod MacLeod reviewed current federal funding procedures which continue to keep QAHN in a difficult cash-flow position: laborious application requirements, an advance payment in the spring; an interim reporting period, followed by the signing of a contribution agreement in summer, followed by a further partial payment, then a final and rigorous year-end reporting protocol that must be complete before the final ten per cent of QAHN's annual budget of \$60,000 may be released. Phil McMaster commented that QAHN was being "wagged" by its funders and wondered aloud if QAHN had any time to do anything other than fill out bureaucratic forms. Dick added that QAHN would not be able to fully fulfill its role until it can reduce its dependency on government funding.

4.2 Economic Development Canada (EDC)

Rod MacLeod also reviewed the funding QAHN has received from Economic Development Canada (EDC) for its Heritage Portal project, which includes the Quebec Heritage Webmagazine and Heritage Trails pamphlet series. He reported that EDC is very proud of the Heritage web magazine that QAHN created.

Valerie Bridger, QAHN's executive director, reported on the status of the Heritage Portal project. Though the project was complete as of December 1, 2004, Valerie reported that QAHN will not receive final funding of \$10,000 from EDC until the Department has taken receipt of the final project report, with audited financial statements. Since all of QAHN's outstanding bills related to this project need to be paid before the remaining money is released, QAHN faces a difficult cash-flow situation.

4.3 Ministère de la culture et communications du Québec

Rod MacLeod was pleased to report that QAHN is about to benefit from provincial government funding for its operations, for the first time in its five-year history. The province's Culture and Communications Ministry (MCCQ) has accepted to grant QAHN \$15,000 toward the cost of operations. At this point Valerie recommended that the board postpone any decision about where to spending this money until the end of the current fiscal year, 2004-2005. Rod indicated his support of Valerie's view.

Michael Cooper moved to put the MCCQ's \$15,000 grant into QAHN's general operating budget until criteria and conditions for its expenditure arrive, at which point the board would meet. Phil McMaster seconded the motion.

5. Projects

5.1 Oral History

Dick Evans offered to write an article for Quebec Heritage News about an Oral History project that is very successful, in hopes of stimulating similar interest in oral history among other community groups. Phil McMaster urged board to develop a mechanism for promoting QAHN's existing Oral History products. Doreen Lindsay suggested that local groups could collect interviews and tape recordings, and QAHN could assume responsibility for transcribing them. Phil indicated that he thinks QAHN should try to sell any Oral History content that it collects, and he added that QAHN needs to do a better job marketing the Oral History Guide to educators and community groups.

Michael reminded those present at the board meeting that QAHN had, in fact, accomplished everything it said it would do with the Oral History Project. Dick Evans suggested that QAHN might apply for new project funding to transcribe and possibly publish Oral History tape recordings on a specific theme. Doreen expressed the view that QAHN should act as a resource for volunteer groups such as hers which cannot afford to undertake expensive tape-transcription projects. "QAHN has money," she said. "We have no money." Phil cautioned against creating the perception among community groups that QAHN is a source of funding.

5.1 Outaouais regional web magazine

There was some discussion about QAHN's proposal to develop and publish a new regional heritage website. Rod MacLeod noted that Phase III of the Heritage Portal project envisioned development of two new regional webmagazines; these would be added to the existing Townships Heritage Webmagazine and Laurentians Heritage Webmagazine. Valerie Bridger reported that the Department of Economic Development is still reviewing QAHN's application for Phase III funding.

In Valerie's view, the results of Phase II are impressive and in her opinion should elicit support from EDC for further support. However, she suggested QAHN contact the Department office soon to enquire about the status of the funding application.

Rod MacLeod also reported that the Department of Canadian Heritage's own Development Fund committee recently approved QAHN's letter of intent to develop a third regional webmagazine, and has invited QAHN to submit a full application.

5.2 Heritage Contest and a Historical Figures Inventory

Dick Evans introduced his idea to promote the collection of information on "significant historical figures" from communities across Quebec and to set up a database that could be of use to researchers, educators, students and others with an interest in Quebec's historical development. The idea was enthusiastically received. Phil McMaster suggested that the inventory could grow out of this year's Heritage Contest for schools.

At this point, Michael Cooper recounted his experiences working with a group of Grade 6 students from the Outaouais region who put together a short video documentary on the legacy of Queen's Park, in Aylmer and submitted it to Historica Foundation as an instalment in the Foundation's series of popular Heritage Minute television segments.

Michael moved to make this year's Heritage Contest an invitation to Quebec schoolchildren to research and write Heritage Minute scripts of their own about the significant historical figures and events in their communities. The motion was seconded by Doreen Lindsay.

6. Future program funding

Rod MacLeod briefly discussed the Global Development Plan now being prepared by the QCGN, and suggested, hopefully, that QAHN could be looking at a much larger

operating budget than it has had in the past. He reported that QAHN has requested more than \$220,000 in operations funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage in 2005-2006.

Valerie, who wrote the request, said she's optimistic about the way the program funding committee will review the request and said she thinks QAHN is likely to receive somewhat more than \$60,000. If Canadian Heritage were to grant the full amount requested, it would allow QAHN to increase its staffing level.

7. Quebec Heritage News magazine

Interim director Dwane Wilkin reported that QAHN may be eligible to receive some financial support for its flagship publication, Quebec Heritage News, from the Canada Magazine Fund. Current eligibility restrictions prevent QAHN from applying to this fund for support for the publication as a newsletter, however. Dwane asked the board for the authority to proceed with revisions to the appearance of Quebec Heritage News so that the publication may be deemed to be a magazine, and therefore eligible for support.

Philip McMaster moved to give the interim executive director authority to investigate a redesign of Quebec Heritage News so that it may be officially classified as a magazine. The motion was seconded by Heather Darch.

Citing recent delays in the production of QHN, Rod suggested that the deadline for submissions to future editions be at least 30 days prior to publication.

8. PCH Consultations and QAHN's Profile

Rod Macleod reviewed QAHN's status as a member of the federal government's Quebec Anglophone Coordinating Committee. The work of the committee informs the ongoing development of QAHN's Global Action Plan, piloted by the late Ed Laberee and presented by the consultant Susan Grundy last year as a working document. The document is supposed to help guide federal policy in the setting of objectives for the next five years of spending on official minority-languages community development.

Michael Cooper, who represents QAHN on this committee, reported highlights of the committee's Nov. 19, 2004 meeting and distributed copies of an intriguing study of youth attitudes among Quebec's English-speaking communities, prepared by Bill Floch.

The survey presents glimpse of the status of French-English relations, perceptions of citizenship among the young, their attachment to Quebec and their sense of cultural identity.

Rod proposed that QAHN seize opportunities as they arise to promote English-speaking heritage in Quebec as a federally funded Official Language initiative.

9. Heritage at risk

Rod and others expressed a desire to see QAHN formulate a concrete policy for reacting to enquiries and appeals for help from individuals and community groups hoping to preserve local heritage at risk. Doreen Lindsay expressed the frustration that her own group, the Westmount Historical Association, has faced trying to protect two local historical buildings: the historic Hurtubise House and the old Westmount Train Station. Michael, Rod and Dick discussed the need for QAHN to develop the capacity to respond to local groups facing similar heritage “emergencies.” Dick noted that QAHN’s strength should be in the area of communications: helping people in the field find resources and gain access to existing support mechanisms.

Michael added that QAHN needs to develop a larger pool of resources and knowledge in the area of heritage preservation, and a procedure to follow whenever QAHN is asked for help. It was generally felt that any response to heritage-at-risk queries should have four main components:

- handling the initial receipt of new information from clients;
- analyzing the information for accuracy and relevance;
- formulating a recommendation to the client;
- maintaining a record of successes and failures for future reference.

Michael moved to work with interim director Dwane Wilkin to formulate a draft protocol for handling heritage-at-risk crises in the future. Heather Darch seconded the motion.

10. Upcoming events

10.1 Annual General Meeting – 2005

Interim director Dwane Wilkin reported that the Railway Museum in St-Constant on Montreal's south shore has been chosen as the venue for the 2005 QAHN annual general meeting. The date for the AGM has been tentatively fixed for Saturday, June 4. It was agreed that participants will be asked to arrive for registration between 9 and 9:30 a.m. with the meeting to convene no later than 10 a.m.

10.2 Heritage Project Award

Rod MacLeod asked the board to consider offering a new annual award recognizing an individual project in the field of heritage promotion or preservation that merits special recognition. On Michael's suggestion, Rod agreed to circulate a rough proposal by email to the other board members, outlining his idea in more detail. The notion of issuing an annual "lemon" reward to cite a particular blunder in the field of heritage was rejected by a majority of board members.