



ANNUAL REPORT

2018 – 2019

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Message from the President

On behalf of our board of directors, I would like to thank all of our RECLAIM Literacy members for yet another successful year of continuing to grow as an organization, and for making yet more great strides in supporting a community of lifelong learners.

Speaking of lifelong learning, we're pushing forty! Yes, founded in 1980, RECLAIM is now at that stage in life where many of us take a moment or two to do a little reflecting and to think about what comes next.

This is a brief letter so we won't go into humble beginnings, but will instead simply take a moment to thank all the helpful folks who have given their time and energy over the years. All of the effort from so many contributors over the years allows us this moment to look back and see thirty-nine years of very fine growth. From Saint-Henri to Verdun, our organization has moved, adapted, and perpetually extended its services and programming to remain as accessible as ever.

Looking at just this past year alone we can state with pride that there have been more exciting projects developed through technology and intergenerational exchanges. We have also continued and further extended our community book sharing installations in an attempt to reach more of the community at large. In addition to all of these projects and initiatives, RECLAIM has also worked to further its wholistic approach to community literacy by working with youth as we have worked to support programs such as "CCS Little Learners".

So the next time someone you know complains about approaching middle age, have them look at some of the things happening here. We think it might put a little hop in their step.

Happy almost forty, RECLAIM!

Board of Directors 2018-2019

Gary Purcell: President

Mary Di Marzio – Vice President

Pia A. Messoro – Treasurer

Selina Antonucci – Secretary

Patricia Chiricosta – Administrator

Gundie Robertson – Administrator



Executive Director Message

It takes a village to raise a reader! This famous quote really exemplifies what our move in 2017 has meant to RECLAIM. From our volunteer tutors, board members, special event volunteers, staff, partners and those who came out to participate in our various activities and programs, each and every one has contributed to helping us meet our mission of making low literacy something the next generation will only READ about.

Being in a vibrant community setting has enabled us to form new partnerships and to widen our network. Although our main program remains helping adults acquire the literacy skills they need to lead fully engaged lives, the ability to reach the community as a whole has opened the doors for so many new opportunities to help ensure that families are aware of our services and our ability to help and support them with their literacy needs.

We can only do what we do thanks to our village. From volunteers giving their invaluable time to donors giving funds to help support special initiatives, our staff and board keeping the organization running like a well-oiled machine, the participants in our programs and those using other aspects of our service, this village is growing.

As we enter our 40th year since we first began providing services to the English speaking population of Greater Montreal, countless hours have been logged helping those who need help. Our greatest pride is in knowing that of the hundreds who have passed through our doors, each of them has had their life enhanced in one way or another by the hard work and dedication of the hundreds of volunteers who have been engaged in helping move our learners towards their goals. Though each of our learners has different goals (these goals often measured in small steps of achievement), the greatest success we have been able to offer is HOPE: hope that they can pass a driver's test, hope that they can read to a child, or grandchild, hope that they can order from a menu, hope that they can feel more at ease in their communities. This hope comes directly from the village that has been created. From older learners welcoming new learners into the program, from paying it forward and reaching out to support other groups in the community, from mentoring and supporting, each and every effort is made to ensure that those passing through our doors, or us passing through theirs, are given hope.

Our program and services continue growing and will continue to grow provided we have our village with us. It takes a village to raise a reader, and a village to keep that hope alive! Thank you to everyone who has been along for the ride this past year.

Joy Fyckes Executive Director

Primary Programs

Learning Centre

During the year 2018-2019 the Learning Centre continued to grow. The program enables adult learners to work on improving their basic literacy skills, working in small groups or individually. In 2018-2019 we welcomed 13 new learners to our program.



The majority of current learners attend the centre 16-20 hours per week. We also offer part-time opportunities for several learners who are working or attending other programs.

In all, over 15800 hours of learning were recorded by our learners this past year, for an increase of approximately 17% over last year. Many of our new learners are dedicated to achieving their goal of moving on to the formal education sector in Adult

Education Centres.

We continue to use the program “the daily five”, loosely adapted from the book by Gail Boushey and Joan Moser, *The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades* (2006). This method offers learners the following five choices of activities to work independently toward personal literacy goals:

- Read to Self
- Work on Writing
- Read to Someone
- Listen to Reading
- Word Work

We are upgrading our reading materials, and most recently have added five new laptops to our tech lab. We will be expanding our tech lab and hours for those learners who find the use of technology a useful tool in supporting their literacy needs. This past year we were also able to purchase over 300 new titles of high-interest, low-level books that have been added to our resource library.

Our pilot project of offering a one-hour period of French conversation has proven to be a hit with our learners. We have found that not only does this help the learners to become more fluent in using French in their everyday lives, it also helps them improve their listening skills. We continue to evolve the learning centre as the needs of the individuals using our services evolve.



We are so happy to have been able to continue to welcome Greg Santos from Vallum Magazine's Outreach Program, who began in 2017 to give a series of Poetry workshops to our learners. Three workshops were held throughout the 2018-2019 session.

The learners have become very comfortable in writing their own poetry and look forward to his sessions. It has added a new dimension to their learning. We look forward to finding a way to highlight many of our learners' works in the near future, either with a publication or an exhibit.

Our Learning Centre, and the success we see, is only possible thanks to the dedication, devotion and commitment of our centre volunteers. We currently have a team of 14 volunteers covering our learning centre hours. These volunteers each put in an average of 6 hours per week (including preparation time), for a total of over 4000 hours for the year.



One-on-One Tutoring

Our one-on-one tutoring program is finally back on track. With our move into the Verdun community, we have been able to offer space within our location to allow for one-on-one tutoring, as well as continuing to use other locations within the greater Montreal area.

Throughout the 2018-2019 year we had 19 pairs of learners and tutors (an increase in 25% over the previous year), many working to achieve specific literacy goals (drivers permit, citizenship, access to adult education programs). Most of the pairs meet once a week for a two-hour period, while a couple meet twice per week.

Over 1600 hours of tutoring was achieved throughout the year, with 2400 hours of volunteering. We have seen much success coming from these learners, with two having passed driving tests to attain learner's permits, two others passing entrance tests to enroll in adult education courses at the local adult education centre, and finally one having been granted Canadian citizenship.

Special program: Paying it forward

We continue to encourage our learners to "pay it forward" by serving as volunteers in the community. Our Lunch & Learn has been a wonderful way to have the learners engaged in volunteering.

Lunch & Learn

RECLAIM hosted monthly Lunch & Learn sessions throughout the year, excepting a month off in July and a replacement event in August.

Here was our line-up this past year:

Thursday, April 12:	Cabane à Sucre Luncheon
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">With Jillian Ritchie, Manager of Networks and Community Social Health, who spoke about community activities offered by Collective Community Services and the Anglo Family Council.
Thursday, May 10:	Mental Health Week Celebration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">With Marilène Paquin and Laura Skrupskas from Centre Évasion.
Thursday, June 14:	Literacy Topics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">With guest speaker Margo Legault, Executive Director, Literacy Quebec.
Thursday, August 9:	Summer BBQ
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We took a break from our usual Lunch & Learn format to host a Summer BBQ. Special guests were Literacy Quebec and Suspicious Fish who collected stories, artwork, photos, jokes, pictures and poems: anything that tells a story about our Verdun community!
Thursday, September 13:	Environmental Turning Point
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">With Diego Creimer, a journalist and story teller, currently in charge of communications and public affairs at the David Suzuki Foundation in Quebec. Diego has spent the last 12 years reporting and communicating solutions to the environmental crisis we collectively face.

Thursday, October 11:	Me and My Community
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An interactive workshop to solicit feedback about attendees' needs for future workshops.
Thursday, November 8:	Remembrance Day Celebration
Thursday, December 13:	Holiday Lunch & Learn
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsored by the Erin Sports Club. Christmas Sing-Along.
Thursday, January 10:	Introduction to Programs Offered at Epiphany
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With Reverend Brian Perron. We were introduced to "Campus Epiphany" highlighting many of the new programs now happening at Epiphany Verdun
Thursday, February 14:	Share the Love of Reading
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants were invited to take home a book
Thursday, March 14:	The Verdun Stories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With Literacy Quebec, who presented stories collected at our August Lunch & Learn and introduced their new blog.

Our format was hosting a learning session followed by lunch. In order to make sure we are feeding the mind as well as the body, we instituted a policy in November to only provide lunch to those attending the learning session, to enable us to move the focus to learning, and away from it being just a place to get a meal.

Thank you to all of our wonderful guest speakers and sponsors. And special thanks to our partner, the Church of the Epiphany, for hosting the sessions and to all the volunteers who work so tirelessly to make these events happen! On average, 45-60 people participated each session.



Our learners have also been active volunteers in the Annual Poppy Campaign of the Royal Canadian Legion. This year seven learners participated.



Volunteers

Each April, we take the opportunity to celebrate our many volunteers.

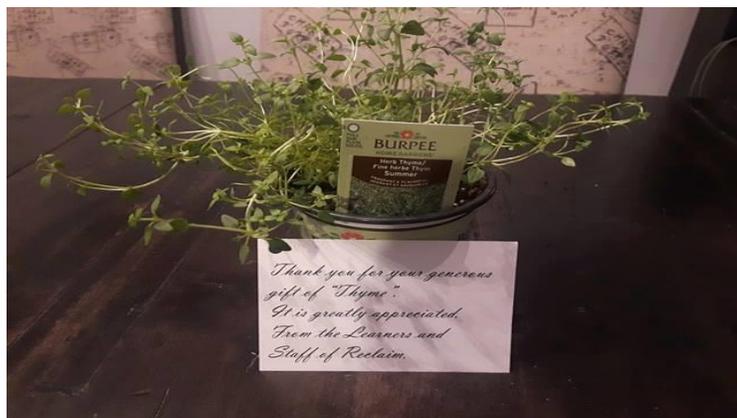


This year we asked our learners to write a short paragraph of what the volunteers mean to them.

"I appreciate the tutors taking time out of their schedule to help me. They are loving, caring, honest, and patient with me. They have a great sense of humor. They will always be in a special place in my heart. They help me to express myself better through reading and writing. They explain everything to the best of their ability."

"Every year, I like to write something about each tutor. This time I am going to combine them into one piece. All of them from Monday to Thursday help to teach us and make it interesting in different ways. They help us learn to improve at our own speed. Learning to read and write is slow and sometimes hard to do. The tutors understand this and they work with passion to help move us further. This is why I have great respect for all the tutors."

-R.



RECLAIM would like to thank all of our volunteers for everything they have done and continue to do. RECLAIM would not be what it is today without them!

Annual celebration & Annual General Meeting



Another great “wine and words” evening was held on June 28, 2018. We celebrated our learners and volunteers, presented some writings and poems the learners have worked on this past year, and were served a great buffet by our wonderful Board of Directors.

All the festivities were followed by our AGM and the evening ended with a ‘send-off’ Alphabet cookie bar. Thanks to all who came out, our bartenders Brian and Joyce, the Board of Directors (Gary, Mary, Pia, Selina, Marcia & Patricia), Lorraine ... and our go to guy, Gordie! It was a great way to start the summer session! The AGM was attended by 11 members of the corporation



Family Literacy

We continue to reach out to families to express the importance of using literacy activities in their everyday lives. Our most popular form of outreach is through our “alphabet pancake stations”.

This past year we held five pancake events starting with the family literacy evening at LaSalle Elementary. Over 200 families participated in the literacy evening.



We also served up pancakes at special events at Epiphany|Verdun during the summer months.



For six weeks in the summer, RECLAIM ran a pilot program “come read with me” where we set up a reading corner in a local park / playground. Books were available for children and their parents to read while taking a break from the swings, slides, etc. We are looking to continue the program for the summer of 2019. Each week between 6-12 families participated, as well as some other families who were in the park.



In September, we held a special event in honour of International Literacy Day: a great storytelling hour held at Epiphany and hosted in collaboration with Literacy Quebec. We invited special guests to read to the children.

Huge thanks to our special guest readers: Isabelle Melancon, MNA, Sterling Downey and Marie-Andrée Mauger, city councillors, Joyce from Epiphany and, via video, David Lametti, MP all supported us in our mission of making low literacy something future generations will only READ about!



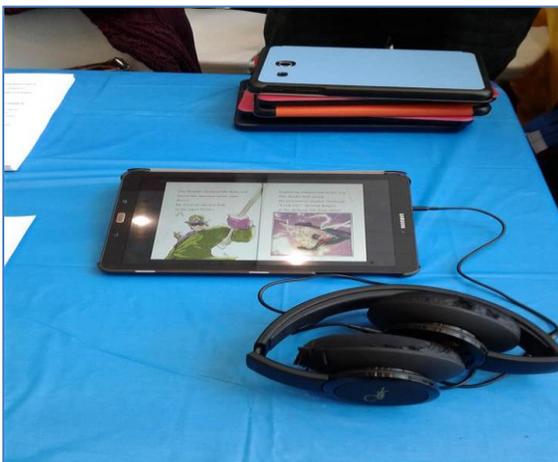
Once again this year, our Executive Director was up bright and early cooking up hundreds of alphabet pancakes to celebrate Family Literacy Day! This year, after serving over 70 children at Verdun Elementary Breakfast Club, she made her way over to the CCS Little Learners group to serve up yummy letters to the children and their parents. All the children were treated to our loot bags containing “Freddie the Alpha-Ghetti, along with a pamphlet outlining literacy activities to do as a family.



The goal of making alphabet pancakes is to show families how easily a literacy activity can be done at home. The children get excited to see what 'letters' they get.

Special thanks to the team at Verdun Elementary who welcome us each year ... and to the Little Learners group who waited patiently for their names to be written in pancakes! Twelve children and their parents enjoyed the special treat.

Our first time participating in the annual Family Literacy Day Event at the Montreal Children's Hospital was a great way to cap off our family literacy activities for the year. Throughout the morning our booth was visited by over 150 people from the MUHC staff and patients and their families.



Our team was busy introducing our newest project 'children's books read on digital devices', something we feel will get more storytelling to more children, particularly to children who are in hospital and may appreciate hearing a special story read to them.

We also had the opportunity to showcase our adult education programs to members of the MUHC staff, who can share the info with parents of the patients.

Special Projects

Literacy Lab / Recording Studio

Thanks to a grant from Réseau Réussite Montréal, RECLAIM, in partnership with the English Montreal School Board, embarked on a project to promote reading among young adults.

Our project began in 2017 by setting up a literacy lab / recording studio at James Lyng Adult Centre. The goal was to have the students learn to record books to be able to share them with young children or seniors.

With year one a success, we continued our partnership with the Atwater Library to have their digital Literacy specialist, Eric Craven, serve as our coordinator for this effort.

Year two saw the space open to a more diverse clientele, and a learning plan was designed to enable others to use the space for their digital literacy needs. One group that jumped at the chance was a specialized Autism class at James Lyng.

Year three, which began in November 2018, has seen the program continue at James Lyng, while branching off beyond the doors of the Adult Education Centre. Many stories have now been recorded and are hosted on our special website, with launches taking place in late spring. This project is a multi-year effort – and we only see great things happening in the coming months.

“The book nook” – take a book, leave a book



Thanks to a grant from the New Horizons for Seniors program, RECLAIM was able to initiate a project of making English books more accessible to seniors in the community. The project involved the creation of mini mobile libraries being housed in places where seniors gather (church groups, community centres, medical clinics, senior residences, etc.).

We were also able to formulate a plan to make audio books available to seniors at a minimal cost, using technology to have books available on mobile devices.

From book donations to investing in Quick Reads and mobile carts, the program will help bring seniors and books closer together.

Outreach and Networking

RECLAIM continues to be an active participant in the Anglo Family Council, helping not only in their activities, but having a seat on the steering committee.

In June of 2018 RECLAIM hosted a lunch event to kick off the annual Health and Wellness fair, serving up a healthy meal of whole wheat pasta and salad. Sixty-eight members of the community were served.

The mission of the Anglo Family Council is to bring together groups in the community that provide services in English to the population of Verdun and the Southwest.

Also in June, we hosted a year-end BBQ/Fun Day celebration for the families of the Little Learner's group. Twenty families participated in activities organized by our learners. Activities included a reading corner, vegetable planting followed by a wonderful lunch prepared by our RECLAIM learners. A great time was had by all ...





As a new member of the Verdun community, RECLAIM was invited to participate in the Fête de quartier: Verdun Aux Mille couleurs, at Quai 5160 – Maison de la culture de Verdun. Well over 2000 families visited the various kiosks set up. RECLAIM partnered with Literacy Quebec to offer free books for the children to take home.

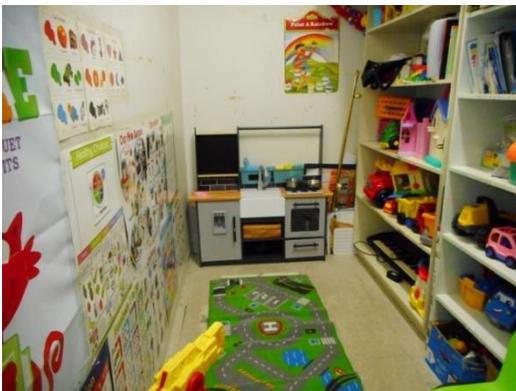
Throughout 2018-2019 RECLAIM continued to reach out to groups in the community to reinforce positive Literacy experiences, and purchased books for several programs. In all, more than 350 books were donated.

Some of the beneficiaries of the books included the “LGBTQ Rainbow Umbrella” group in Verdun. The group is a not-for-profit organization that strives to create safer inclusive spaces promoting awareness, acceptance, respect and equality for LGBTQ Youth of Verdun. We also made donations to CCS Little



Learners and Early Head

Start programs. In March, we stepped up to help out Riverview Elementary School (Following a devastating flood which destroyed the school library). RECLAIM donated over 200 new and lightly used books to help restock their library.) Being a member of First Books Canada, enables us to have access to children’s books at very reduced prices.



In 2018-2019 we continued our support of the CCS Little Learners group, a pre-school group focused on promoting readiness skills in children 2 to 5 years of age. RECLAIM was the recipient of a wonderful donation of \$5000 which enabled us to fully stock their classroom with new furnishings.



RECLAIM also played host to the Little Learners group for a fun day of Halloween activities at Epiphany|Verdun. Fifteen children and their parents participated in the activities that our learners created, set up and ran. Another team of RECLAIM learners served up a lovely meal for the participants. The day ended with the little learners trick or treating to different areas in the Hall. A great time was had by all!



In November RECLAIM hosted a “lasagna and literacy” fundraiser for Little Learners to help pay for their outings and special events. It was a huge success! Over 650\$ was raised. We are grateful for the support of our wonderful team of learners and volunteers: Lorraine, Gordie, Fran, Elena, Angie & Patricia for their fantastic work in the kitchen; Literacy Quebec for their support in organizing the event; Margo Legault and her mom for the fabulous xmas craft table (proceeds of which were donated to the total raised); Epiphany|Verdun, for hosting the event; and all the folks and little ones who came out for a wonderful evening.



In February, RECLAIM along with Literacy Quebec attended the local launch of Hooked on School Days. This event was to encourage youth to remain in school



Hooked on School Days with Luc Gagnon, Isabelle Melancon, Sterling Downey, Joy Fyckes and Margo Legault at École Lévis Sauvé in Arrondissement de Verdun.



Dr Laurent Tardiff, NFL player and doctor (spokesperson for Hooked on School Days, discussed the importance of physical activity, school pride and having the courage to ask for help when you need it



Our network of followers continues to grow! Our main source of keeping people up to date with what is happening is our Facebook page. With an average of 2 to 3 posts per week this past year we reached 301 followers. On average our posts reached 45-80 people.

#LiteracyMatters

In addition to our social media presence, we relaunched our monthly newsletter in January 2019, and currently have 68 subscribers



Fundraising

Our direct mail campaign this past year raised a total of \$3610 thanks to donations from 22 individuals.

We were very fortunate to also receive close to \$11K of memorial donations. Losing members of our ‘family’ is never easy, however the donations we receive help to keep their memory alive with books and programs being named in their memory.

Finally, we relaunched a “light version” of our Oodles and oodles in support of family literacy. RECLAIM held our Oodles and oodles of noodles event on Monday February 18th, and was able to raise just over \$500 for our family literacy initiatives. Thanks go to our wonderful kitchen team of Lorraine, Elena, Frannie, Sophie, Patricia, Sue, Sara & Alexi, for preparing and serving a fabulous pasta buffet to our 55+ guests. Special thanks to Epiphany|Verdun for being our hosts and to all who came out to support us. We are especially grateful to the Erin Sports Association for being there for us for the past 12 years.

In Memorium

We sadly lost members of our RECLAIM “family” in 2018-2019.



February 25th, 2018

Beata Thau – Beata spent many hours poring through our files as the volunteer statistician collecting data on volunteer hours to report to the now defunct Laubach Literacy. With its closure, Beata had retired from her job. She was a life-long learner who was passionate about literacy.



June 19th, 2018

Dorothy Slapcoff – Our longest serving one-on-one tutor. Dorothy’s passion for literacy was matched only by her passion for music.

(Thanks to a wonderful donation by a local foundation – we have set up the Dorothy Slapcoff Literacy & Rhythm program – bringing music and literacy to the lives of children and their families)



October 16th, 2018

Peter Russell – A long-time tutor at our learning centre, he specialized in teaching basic math skills to our learners.



Our Partners, Sponsors, and Donors:

Allion School

Atwater Library

Breakfast Club – Verdun Elementary

Centre Ivirtivik

Church of the Epiphany

Collective Community Services

CCS Little Learners, Early Head Start & Mother Goose Programs

Éducation et Enseignement Supérieur Québec

Employment and Social Development Canada

English Montreal School Board

Erin Sports Association

First Books Canada

James Lyng Adult Education Centre

LaSalle Elementary (Junior and Senior Campuses)

Literacy Quebec

New Horizons for Seniors Program



A Few Words from Our Learners

Love

Living life

Old

Vacation on the beach

Enjoy peace

By Pat

My Man

Gorgeous

Round

Unlucky

Man

Painter

Yoyo

By Elena

A Few Words on Love

By Ramsay

Love is like an oven
It can heat your love
Or you can fire out

If your heart breaks
Give it a shock
And bring it back to love.

Love is like a bowl of jelly
Love can bounce around

Love is a best seller

Look out

Observe

Valentine

Excitement

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