

NEWSLETTER

LEA ROBACK FOUNDATION



Number 11, May 2015



A Word from the President

The winter of the deep-freeze

Everybody's talking about it and has done their best to get through it: we've just had one of the toughest winters in several decades. And as if that wasn't enough, another icy-cold wind is blowing through our society; the austerity squall. Indeed, ever since this new Government took office in Quebec City, they have introduced several measures to attain a so-called zero deficit.

Reduced daycare fees were shamelessly swept away and just too bad, for this remarkable progressive gain for women! We know however that this measure has helped numerous mothers remain in or return to the work place and that it has played a key role in diminishing poverty amongst families with children. We also know that education-oriented childcare socializes children, prepares them for school and therefore constitutes a measure that favours the equality of opportunity.

People receiving social assistance have also been put under the microscope by the Treasury Board and new cutbacks were introduced. Even the Human Rights Commission intervened to ask the Government to annul some of the foregoing given that, according to their view of the situation, they cultivate various stereotypes and prejudices regarding the more destitute in our society.

Can one then be surprised that a coalition of Quebec Foundations has seen the day and is taking action to address this "harsh budget discipline" that runs a great risk of expanding social inequality? Our Foundation knows very well that when poverty increases, when the

assistance provided to the more destitute is under attack, when the Government abandons the goal of equal opportunity, it becomes increasingly difficult for more and more people to view the future with hope, since it becomes next to impossible for them to go back to school or to continue their studies.

Thanks to your generosity, which never wavers from one year to the next, you provide a way for the Foundation to offer scholarships that open new doors to women confronting overwhelming obstacles. The winter may indeed be tough and austerity icy cold, but your donations and your solidarity still constitute and will always represent a reason for hope, a commitment to the right to a decent education and an instrument that fosters the right to equality and dignity.

Thank you once again for believing, along with us, that it is still possible even after a long winter, characterized by exceptionally cold winds and brazenly cold-hearted political choices, to be "happy that a sweet warm spring breeze is brewing," as Paul Piché so aptly sings.

The winter may indeed be tough and austerity icy cold, but your donations and your solidarity still constitute and will always represent a reason for hope...

Government programs reform

A Coalition of Foundations worries

“At a time when several government programs are being called into question and when the tax system is the subject of a thorough examination, we’re concerned about the possible impact of all these changes on our society.”

These were the words used by the Foundations*, including the Lea Roback Foundation, in a group text,** which appeared in the *Le Devoir* newspaper last March 11. The signatories explained their concerns particularly regarding the effects of certain program modifications upon social inequality. Quebec is recognized as being the most egalitarian society in North America. Notwithstanding the foregoing, one can’t help but observe that disparities are growing and inequality is more profound than thirty years ago.

The coalition is asking the Government to “carefully gauge the consequences of its projected reforms upon the Province’s citizens and communities”. According to the coalition, a Government should always weigh, when it decides to revise programs or make reforms, whether the foregoing will result in reducing inequality between the most well-off and most disadvantaged elements in our society.

This alarm was sounded by a Coalition of private Foundations, a coalition that saw the day last November upon the initiative of the Béati, Chagnon and Sosltice Foundations. Following an invitation from these trailblazers, the Lea Roback Foundation got involved from the start.

This public intervention is not the only gesture made by the Coalition. On February 4, a letter, signed by the Presidents of the Foundations, was sent to the Quebec Premier. In it, the representatives of the Foundations solicited a meeting with him. To date, no date has been scheduled and the Coalition has only received a formal acknowledgement of receipt.

Moreover, the Coalition organized a half day symposium on April 22, at the Excentris cinema, for the members of the Foundations. This symposium was intended to be a collective reflection upon the impact of public policies on social inequality and the instruments for measuring the foregoing.

The Lea Roback Foundation was represented by 15 persons : members of the board of Directors, Partners and donators.



*The Béati Foundation, Berthiaume-Du-Tremblay Foundation, YMCAs of Quebec Foundation, Dufresne and Gauthier Foundation, the Lea Roback Foundation, the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation, the J.W. McConnell family Foundation, the Solstice Foundation and the Montreal Women’s Y Foundation.

** <http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/quebec/434025/de-grandes-fondations-privees-inquietes-les-risques-de-la-rigueur-budgetaire>

Annual Fund-Raising Campaign

Autumn 2014

Our fund-raising campaign last fall enabled us to collect

\$13,037.

We very warmly thank all the individuals and organizations who, from one year to the next, support the Foundation's mission, and of course, all those who have come on board this year.

Our deepest expression of gratitude to our Partners. Their substantial donations go a very long way towards the annual granting of scholarships to economically disadvantaged women. Numbering about 15, including six Great Partners, their total contributions range between \$10,000 and \$12,000 from one year to the next.

The members of the fund-raising Committee would really like to increase their number.

*Since 1994, 212 scholarships
have been granted to
188 women.*

A historic brunch

at La Maison du Egg Roll

On the occasion of Lea Roback's 90th birthday, about a hundred people attended a brunch on October 31, 1993 to salute Lea at the Maison du Egg Roll, a mythic restaurant that used to be located at 3966 Saint-Jacques Street West. In addition to having a party for Lea and celebrating her lifelong commitment and action, it was a fitting opportunity to give her the gift of the Lea Roback Foundation that is rooted in her ideals.



As Lea liked to say, ***“education is the hallmark of self-realization, and above all, a key to people’s freedom!”***

And ever since this date, to help women who are socially active and committed, but experiencing financial difficulties, to continue with their education, the Foundation annually awards scholarships. To recall this eventful day, here are some of the words spoken by Nicole Lacelle, one of numerous people who shared their thoughts on the occasion.

“For anyone who knows her, Lea Roback is a constant inspiration owing to the clarity of her judgment and vitality of her personality. It is literally impossible to adequately describe her effect upon other human beings and the course of events, because it is so multidimensional. At the end of the day, perhaps no words exist to describe someone who is such a genuinely natural individual. Lea is simply Lea.

One might say that she is generous, joyful, that her commitment has been absolute and fertile, that she has given of herself for others and devoted her life to justice, but we’re still then only skirting her essence and all that makes her special: ***a woman who has succeeded in personifying the enigma of love, forever inscrutable and beautiful.”***

What's become of our scholarship recipients?

The story of one scholarship recipient: Marguerite Nyandwi

Now and in the future, we would like to discover and share with you news about our former scholarship recipients, accordingly, in this newsletter, we'll pay a visit to Marguerite Nyandwi. So, don't be surprised if we try to contact you, or you could contact us, we'd be very happy to hear from you.

Marguerite Nyandwi

When she fled to the countryside of her country to escape violence, torture, rape and death, Marguerite Nyandwi could not possibly imagine what her future would bring.

As was the case with many other young women, she tried to save her life. With fear in the pit of her stomach, she ran, hid, endured, kept quiet, scurried.

A few people managed to survive this hell, but they prefer to only ever so discreetly relate what happened.

Let the ghosts of fear and pain lie still.

Don't feed the hatred.

Live.

Go forward, head up.

Marguerite Nyandwi is courageous, determined, resourceful, and undoubtedly blessed with a bit of luck.

She finally ended up in Kenya, in a refugee camp. She will spend six years in Kenya.

But in the camp, it's impossible to study, impossible to complete one's education, impossible to even contemplate the future.

Ever since she was little, Marguerite dreamed about becoming a nurse; in the camp, she volunteered for the Red Cross. She gives shape to and lives her ideal, helping others.

She has an ambition: complete her education, take care of others.

To be able to study, Marguerite Nyandwi left the camp, got some assistance and became a medical laboratory technician.

Armed with her diploma, she wants to find her brother, who is living in Canada, in Montreal.

In 2008, she arrives alone in Montreal, her brother is there for her, but he must also provide for his own family. Marguerite finds help and counsel at the Montreal Refugee Action Centre, which provides her with the support she needs to continue to move forward.

The diploma earned in Kenya isn't recognized in Quebec, so she must complete her studies here, pass new examinations, so she decides to make use of the education credits that are given to her to realize her dream; to finally become a nurse.

The challenge is not a small one and she must also provide for her own needs; soon her brother finds a new job in another Canadian province; and he leaves Montreal with his family.

Marguerite is once again all alone, she makes do as best she can.

At the Montreal Refugee Action Centre, someone suggests that she apply for a scholarship from the Lea Roback Foundation.

Her first application is accepted; she will twice be a scholarship recipient, which will enable her to complete her education and earn a DCS in nursing.

“You simply can't imagine how important it was for me, I was in a very difficult situation, all alone in Montreal, I had to work and study, the scholarship made all the difference. I was thus able to complete my studies. Today, I work the night shift in a geriatrics centre. I love it. I don't think about the hardships. I'm a can-do person. I move forward. I'm married, my husband is a good man and he understands me. I'm putting money aside. I want to go to university.”



Are you a Lea Roback scholarship recipient? We are looking for your story!
info@fondationlearoback.org

Great Partners of the Foundation

the Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux (APTS);
the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ);
the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN);
the Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec (FIQ);
the Sœurs Saint-Joseph de Saint-Hyacinthe;
the Syndicat des conseillères et conseillers de la CSQ, Fonds de solidarité;
and a donor who wishes to remain anonymous.

Partners of the Foundation

Bâtirente;
the Caisse d'économie solidaire Desjardins;
the Fédération autonome de l'enseignement (FAE);
the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ);
the Fédération nationale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec (FNÉE);
the Syndicat de l'enseignement du Haut-Richelieu (CSQ);
the Syndicat de l'enseignement de l'Ouest de Montréal;
the Syndicat des professionnelles et professionnels du milieu de l'éducation (SPPMÉM);
Ms Laura Alper;
Ms Anna Marie Labelle;
Ms Lucille Panet-Raymond;
as well as one foundation who wishes to remain anonymous..

News Bulletin, Lea Roback Foundation
P.O. Box 48509, Outremont (Québec) H2V 4T3
Contributors: Jeanette Biondi, Irène Ellenberger, Céline Lamontagne,
Lorraine Pagé, Ghislaine Patry-Buisson.
Translation: Allen Gottheil,
Graphic design: www.dizingdesign.com
Photos : Lea Roback Foundation, Jewish Public Library Archives, Montreal,
Louise de Grosbois.