

NEWSLETTER

LEA ROBACK FOUNDATION



Number 15, April 2017



The Garment Workers Strike (1937)

Archives of the Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec, Les Midinettes de Montréal, 1937. Federal Photos

A word from the President

FROM ONE SEASON TO THE NEXT... KEEP ON KEEPIN' ON

I'm writing this *Word from the President* where there's just a little something permeating the air that seems to suggest that spring is just around the corner. I know that winter may not have said its last word, but there are signs that can't be missed. The days are getting longer, the sun hotter and in the garden, the birds are singing as if there's no tomorrow. For several weeks now, nature, albeit silently, is gently preparing this annual renewal and, once it's time, the buds will be ready to blossom forth.

And likewise, this is how things feel at the Foundation. There's nothing wild and wonderful going on, just a sustained and constant effort to continue helping women in need, who demonstrate a social commitment, notwithstanding their difficult living conditions, and for whom a return to school or a continuation of their studies is made possible thanks to the financial assistance provided by our Foundation.

To do this, as we do every year, we are expanding our efforts to increase donations and extending our sphere of activity.

Our annual fundraising campaign and our various initiatives to solicit *Partners* and *Great Partners* have produced results of which we are not only proud, but also honoured. It's imperative that I draw your attention



here to the support we've received from the *Sœurs de Saint-Joseph de Saint-Hyacinthe* who have chosen to renew their partnership with the Foundation for the next five years. The generosity shown by both individual and institutional donors clearly illustrates how much the cause that we champion is an important one, but also to what extent the memory of Lea Roback still elicits solidarity.

To enable us to reach and to help even more women, the Foundation is continuing its collaboration protocol with the group *Maman va à l'école*. In our first year of implementing this protocol, we achieved the objectives that we had set out to attain. The education incentive scholarships have enabled us to network with several School Commissions and

Adult Education Centres, with whom the Foundation has long sought to establish closer links; to accept the assistance of numerous people who are engaged in their respective milieus and devoted to the cause of education; to provide financial help to women in the process of earning a first diploma, a prerequisite for continuing on to qualifying courses and ultimately, a career path that offers exciting prospects for the future. The scholarship award ceremonies likewise provide us with a means for raising awareness about both Lea Roback and the Foundation.

As is the case every year, over the next few weeks, the members of the Board of Directors and the administrative secretary will be devoting hundreds of hours to the scholarship awards operation: to the distribution of information, the receipt of applications, the analysis of the dossiers, as well as to the pre-selection and selection exercises. A job performed in the shadows, but that truly nurtures our primary motivation: advancing the right to an education for all women. Without this demanding work, the donations that are amassed could not play their crucial role in improving the situation of these women who have turned towards us for assistance.

This is how, from one task to the next, for over 20 years now, soon to be 25, the Foundation keeps on keepin' on.

At each change of season, nature reminds us: life is all about movement and change. Like Lea Roback, we believe that commitment and solidarity enable us to remain in movement and accordingly to foster change. Thank you for believing in all this with us, and on behalf of all the women who are counting on us to experience a new Spring in their lives.



Lorraine Pagé
President

AN INSPIRING AND MOTIVATING TESTIMONIAL

“I’m making this donation as part of the International Women’s Day 2017 ‘BeBoldForChange’ campaign, of which one of the themes is precisely education. I’ve included a link to your Web site and have invited my colleagues to take part in the change. I’m hoping that this will raise awareness about the Foundation, increase donations and thereby enable several women to gain access to training. The fact that women from regions all across Quebec, as well as immigrant women and refugees can receive scholarships was a decisive criterion for me to select the Foundation.”

Marie-Josée Charland

Dézy Guimont

FROM VOLUNTEERING TO GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

Mutual assistance and perseverance are essential ingredients in the life of Dézy Guimont, one of the Lea Roback Foundation scholarship recipients in the 2016-2017 academic year. This 27-year old young woman is working towards a Diploma of Collegial Studies (DEC) in Visual Arts and Dance, at the CEGEP de Drummondville.

A PASSION FOR THE ARTS

Dézy talks enthusiastically about her study program, stemming from her passion for artistic expression: “I harbour a desire to perform and I love to learn”. Visual arts attracted me, just as much as dance: “I was simply unable to choose one discipline and abandon the other.”

Being initiated into classical ballet, doing contemporary dance and jazz ballet, she just “adores it”, because it teaches her how to be “disciplined” and to work with precision. The music that is chosen pleases her, although she definitely leans toward metal, electro and techno.

She also puts a lot of herself into painting and sculpture: “I know that I’m going to create something beautiful”, not in the sense of a “beautiful drawing”, but rather as an insightful example of how she feels things. She likes projects where she can invest herself emotionally.

TRACES FROM THE PAST

When I ask her about the origin of her interest in the arts, she opens up a small window on her life as a child and as an adolescent: “In the foster family where I was living, we would all do handicrafts together. They were artists. I liked that.” Later on, still in the foster family, she took piano lessons. As a teenager, the Spice Girls became her idols and, like many other young girls her



age, she adored dancing to their songs. At 14-years old, she took dance classes. In the youth centres and group homes where she spent some time, a number of activities gave her the chance to indulge in the visual arts and in dance. And, to immerse herself in fantasy literature and the adventures of Harry Potter.

Education and developing her artistic skills provide a solid foundation, but it doesn't always suffice to protect one from life's obstacles and challenges. Dézy went through more than her share of difficult periods, where artificial nirvanas would serve as her refuge. She wasn't even 20 years old when she gave birth to a baby girl, but she wasn't able to take care of her, because she was a substance abuser. The baby was therefore placed in a family.

Dézy's substance abuse was nearly fatal. But thinking about her little daughter got her to accept help and step back from the abyss and thereby survive a long and painful process, jam-packed with many obstacles. But perseverance and mutual assistance would nurture her struggle.

SOCIAL COMMITMENT AS A WAY TO SURVIVE

It's clear, in this young woman's story, that several community bodies in Drummondville played a key role in helping her take back control over her life. She notably mentions the Food Bank, the *Carrefour d'entraide* and her community kitchen, the *Drummond Coalition for the Defence of Social Rights* (RDDS) and the *CALACS La Passerelle*, amongst others.

Meanwhile, it likewise seems clear that Dézy had the qualities to cultivate her commitment as a volunteer with these bodies: she was open to others, curious, felt the need to be useful, had a sense of solidarity and a capacity to speak up and share her thoughts. Since 2015, she sits on the RDDS Board of Directors.

This young woman thus began to take her place as a responsible citizen in Drummondville. She got to see her daughter again, who is today eight years old, and she has gone back to school: in 2012, she started her DEC in visual arts and dance; after one session, however, she had to leave. In 2016, she rolled up her sleeves again and today, she really seems to have the wind in her sails.

A MAJOR PROJECT

Dézy Guimont is also driven by the hope to one day realize a major project: to create a place for young people who have tread a difficult path in life, where they could be exposed to art. This project helps motivate her to continue with her studies, to obtain her DCS, then a certificate as a dance instructor and finally, training as a counselor. She thus hopes to be able to teach in this centre, because the arts, she swears, "saved her life".

ARE YOU A BENEFICIARY OF A LEA ROBACK SCHOLARSHIP?
WE WOULD LIKE TO PUBLISH YOUR STORY IN OUR NEWSLETTER.
PLEASE CONTACT US AT
INFO@FONDATIONLEAROBACK.ORG

Our mission

We repeat it often enough, Lea Roback believed that education is an ideal way for women to advance forward towards equality.

Lea Roback was definitely very happy when her friends created a Foundation bearing her name and whose goal was to award scholarships to women. For nearly 25 years now, this has been our principal mission, if truth be told, our sole mission.



In fact, since 1994, the Foundation has granted 239 scholarships to 207 students, some of whom have received more than one scholarship. Only one scholarship of \$3,000 was given out in 1994.

The total amount allocated to the scholarships has been growing over the years. In fact, prior to 2010, less than \$15,000 was paid out, while in 2010, and 2012, the total was nearly \$25,000 that was disbursed.

Since 2013, the Foundation devotes more than \$30,000 annually to the scholarships it awards. In 2016, the Foundation awarded 12 scholarships for a total amount of \$31,000 and five education incentive scholarships valued at \$500, within the framework of its protocol with *Maman va à l'école*.

In order to do all this, namely, to increase the amount paid out in scholarships, the Foundation cannot rely solely upon the revenue

raised during our annual fundraising campaigns, but sometimes must dip into the funds that have been built up in its favour, from amongst other sources, bequests received over the past few years. This of course means that your generous support is always indispensable to enable us to fulfil our mission. (1)

The Foundation is multiplying its efforts to raise awareness about our scholarships. This year, for example, we've sent out a poster to over 600 community organizations. For the first time, more than 150 e-mails were also sent out to Adult Education Centres and school commissions across the Province. Of course, this does not take into account our various digital tools: our Web site, obviously, but also and more and more often, our Facebook page. Over the years, the Foundation has tried to improve

our scholarship recipient selection process. Candidates are required to provide more information to support their applications that are then studied by a pre-selection committee, and subsequently by a selection committee.

SCHOLARSHIPS THAT ARE STILL PRACTICAL

Of course, several organizations award scholarships, but it remains worthwhile to receive a scholarship from the Lea Roback Foundation: the amount can be as much as \$3,500, there are no requirements in terms of academic performance, high school students are eligible, women from every region, and immigrants as well. And women can always benefit, seeing as equality is still not a *fait accompli* in 2017.

Next May 31, the Board of Directors will be choosing the 2017 scholarship recipients. As decided recently by the Board, we hope to disburse some \$33,500 in scholarships and from \$3,500 to \$5,000 as education incentive scholarships within the framework of our collaboration with *Maman va à l'école*.

The work continues to keep our mission alive and well.

(1) To find out more about the Foundation's financial situation, please take a look at the Financial Statements posted on our Web site on the Publications tab, or on the Canada Revenue Agency Web site in the Charitable Organizations section.

Our fundraising campaigns evolve

From one year to the next, our annual fundraising campaigns do evolve. Accordingly, the fall 2016 campaign collected some \$35,600. Contributions from our partners totalled \$20,005. Contributions from individuals, trade unions and other groups amounted to \$15,095. The total amount of all the donations received in 2015 was \$30,824. We therefore witnessed an increase of \$4,775 in 2016.

The last round of the Foundation's annual scholarships enabled 17 women to undertake or to continue a program of study or career training to thereby enable them to improve their living conditions.

The annual fundraising campaign constitutes our major regular source of funds. The loyalty of our donors vis-à-vis the Foundation and their financial support are indispensable to fulfilling the mission that has been conferred by Lea Roback to us. The Board of Directors is immensely grateful for this sustained collaboration over the years.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE SŒURS SAINT-JOSEPH DE SAINT-HYACINTHE

Amongst these steadfast collaborators, we'd like to mention the Sœurs de Saint-Joseph de Saint-Hyacinthe religious order, who donated a sum of \$5,000 during our recent campaign. This donation epitomizes the commitment of this community towards the Foundation's mission. Elisabeth Bergeron, a native of the Saint-Hyacinthe region, founded this community of teachers in 1877, although she herself had received little formal education. Another example of support for the Foundation from people dedicated to education.

Collectif des Fondations (Foundations Coalition) Symposium

Four Board members participated in the *Collectif des Fondations* symposium held last January under the theme "A compendium of policies seeking to reduce inequality". We were first presented with a portrait of the current situation. Céline Thévenoz from the OECD Centre for Opportunity and Equality demonstrated, with numbers to back up her argument, that income inequality remains at record levels in the developed world. In Canada, it is also growing, pointed out Dr. Marie-France Raynault, Director of the Lea Roback Research Centre. Quebec, a province whose wealth is lower than the Canadian average, stands out however owing to its social programs that reduce social inequalities.

After the foregoing observations, Stéphane Paquin from the ÉNAP presented a portrait of the Scandinavian countries, where Quebec could surely still draw some inspiration. Grappling with a standstill in their economic growth and public deficits, the latter were obliged to cutback their expenditures. Although forced to thoroughly review their model of operations, they succeeded in maintaining their social standards. Scandinavians trust their institutions and maintain an ongoing dialogue between the different social actors.

Speaking next was the former President of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, Claude Lesard, who insisted that it's high time to give a shot in the arm to our elementary and high school education system, and to introduce more equity into it. Private schools are recruiting more and more pupils and the school commissions are multiplying the number of enriched programs and special projects. Poor families, immigrants and special needs students are paying the price. In his opinion, it's high time that the divergences in quality between our schools be reduced and that we increase social and academic diversity in order to boost or academic success rates. The symposium ended with exchanges between the participants on the measures that should be favoured in the Province of Quebec. The *Collectif* will be doing a follow-up with its members. It should be recalled that the Lea Roback Foundation is a member of this *Collectif*.

GREAT PARTNERS OF THE FOUNDATION:

The Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ);
the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN);
the Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec (FIQ);
the Fondation Solstice;
the Sœurs de Saint-Joseph de Saint-Hyacinthe (comité solidarité SJSH);
Ms Pauline Lantz;
Ms Nicole Ranger
and a donor who wishes to remain anonymous.

PARTNERS OF THE FOUNDATION:

The Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux (APTS);
the Association des retraitées et retraités de l'éducation et des autres services publics du Québec (AREQ-CSQ);
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 (FNEEQ-CSN);
the Fédération québécoise des professeures et professeurs d'université (FQPPU);
Gestion Jeannine Bouthillier inc.;
the Organisation des retraité-es de la CSN (ORCSN);
the Syndicat de l'enseignement de l'Ouest de Montréal;
the Syndicat des professionnelles et des professionnels du milieu de l'éducation de Montréal (CSQ);
Ms Laura Alper;
Mr Richard Hart;
Ms Donna Mergler;
Ms Lorraine Pagé;
Ms Lucille Panet-Raymond;
Ms Katherine Roback
and Ms Annalee Yassi.

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Traduction vers l'anglais : Allen Gottheil

Coordination : Céline Lamontagne

Graphisme : www.dizingdesign.com

Photos : Fondation Léa-Roback, Centre d'archives
de la Bibliothèque publique juive, Archives de la
Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du
Québec et Dézy Guimont

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