

TOWNSHIPPERS' ASSOCIATION: A QUARTER CENTURY OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

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Throughout the past twenty-five years, Townshippers' Association has continually provided a myriad of services to the Anglophone community of the Eastern Townships region. The board of directors and the members of the executive represent the "who's who" of a very active contingency of resident volunteers who serve every age and socio-economic group of this community. In addition, the Association's staff has provided excellent job experience for the next generation of concerned residents. Over the years Townshippers' has achieved accomplishments in a variety of areas: community development, education, job opportunities, health and social services, heritage and cultural affairs and advocacy on behalf of the Anglophone population of the Eastern Townships.

Townshippers' members have supported this local organization since its inception, which according to registration patents deposited with the *Ministère des Consommateurs, Coopératives et Institutions financières, Direction des companies* in Quebec, Canada, occurred on 17 October 1979. *L'Association des Anglophones de l'Estrée Inc.*, also known as the *English Speaking Townshippers Association Inc.*, was registered as a non-profit volunteer organization that aimed to address and respond to the needs and concerns of the English-speaking community of the Eastern Townships (*appendix 1*).¹ *The Dialogue between the Government of Quebec and representatives of English-speaking Townshippers* that took place on 16 June 1979 at Alexander Galt Regional High School, Lennoxville, made clear the position of the Anglophones in the Townships as a minority according to the perception of the Quebec government. This meeting provided the impetus for Townshippers to develop an organization that could communicate with the government and the other areas of Quebec with a voice that represented a significant percentage of the English-speaking population within the traditional Townships region (*appendix 2*).

The organization's name was quickly shortened to what is now referred to as *Townshippers' Association* and over the years the association has acquired a reputation for responding to the needs of the community in a professional, fair-minded manner within the financial restraints of its operating budget. The mission statement of the organization reflects the Association's community role, which is to

promote the interests of the English-speaking community, strengthen its cultural identity, and encourage the full participation of English speakers in the community at large in the historical Eastern Townships of Quebec. (Crossroads 2005)

In the past year alone, according to Executive Director Rachel Garber (2005), Townshippers' has proceeded with a number of initiatives such as the *Partners for Health and Social Services* projects in both the Estrie and Montérégie areas of the Townships. These initiatives have included carrying out an extensive health and social needs assessment in both areas, the Healthy Active Living 50+ senior's project, a Volunteer Bank, a new phone line for confidential Information and Referral calls, and assistance to the newly developing Mental Health Estrie. Townshippers' also published

Taproot III: Poetry and Prose from the Eastern Townships, and organized its first *Townships Leaders of Tomorrow* awards offering \$500 prizes to three young Townshippers.²

Townshippers' Association provides unique opportunities to researchers through its collaboration with the Eastern Townships Research Centre of Bishop's University. Projects concerning the Anglophone community of the Townships are launched at conferences. For example, *The Eastern Townships English-speaking Community: Coming? Going? Staying?* (2005) was coordinated by the association and the research centre to raise awareness of the reality of the Townships lifestyle and current concerns or issues.

It is not always "work and no play" at the organization. Any group that coordinates gatherings called *Spring Fling* and *Townshippers' Day* knows how to have a good time. Townshippers' Day is an insti-



Leaflet (1st Townshippers' Day 1980) : P038 Townshippers' Association fonds

tution within the Anglophone community and open to all who wish to take part. It is a one-day event held each fall, where Townshippers of all walks and ages gather from far-flung areas of the traditional Townships' territory to meet their neighbours, reconnect with old friends, catch up on the news or gossip (whichever you prefer) and have a good time. Activities range from clogging, music for all tastes, exhibitions, food, children's activities, kiosks and ... did I mention food? Rain or shine, it takes place. The host town changes every year allowing different areas an opportunity to promote the beauty and lifestyle of their corner of the region.

Fall 2004 *Townshippers' Day* was held on Merry's Point, in Magog, situated at the head of lake Memphrémagog. It was so cold and windy that the kiosks almost took flight. Not to be deterred, the participants pulled on their gloves and hats, oblivious to the weather, and intent on enjoying themselves. This is also an occasion for various agencies to make contacts with the geographically dispersed Anglophone population. It is not uncommon to see municipal, provincial and federal representatives at this event promoting their services to the participants.³

Organizing an event like *Townshippers' Day* annually is a large undertaking considering that most of the preparatory work is done by volunteers. In addition it is not without its stressful moments such as, for example, the hiring ... or not ... of CBC's "On the Road Again" host Wayne Rostad as an emcee for *Townshippers' Day* 1992 (*Townshippers' Day* archives 1992). Susan C. Mastine, then Executive Director of Townshippers, was organizing a bi-centennial *Townshippers' Day* in Richmond on 19 September 1992 with the help of the community. One must understand that by 1992 the association had a certain expertise (12 years) at organizing this event so Mr. Rostad was contacted early and by February 13 had signed a contract through his agency, Laurie-Ann Entertainment Agency Ltd., and Gastoni Attractions of Brossard, Quebec (*appendix 3*). A month later Karl Nerenberg, the executive producer of CBC's *On the Road Again*, appeared to be in agreement with Mr. Rostad's appearance in Richmond. By June 4, however, a fax between Susan Mastine and Nicole Bélanger of the CBC indicates that procurement of an emcee is proving difficult. Susan tactfully requests "[we] would appreciate all of your help with this – it's getting hard to be patient ..." as negotiations do not appear to be advancing for the release of Mr. Rostad for his Richmond appearance by CBC (*ibid.*). The minutes of the *Townshippers' Day* Committee dated July 6 begin with "Wayne Rostad is not available"



Townshippers' Day (two ladies at a table) : P038 Townshippers' Association fonds

under business arising (*ibid.*). All is not lost however, as a fax between Ms. Mastine and Wayne Rostad indicates on July 9: "GREAT NEWS! We have managed to find the money to cover the cost of the plane to bring you to the area Saturday morning, thanks to the efforts of Nicole Bélanger. The \$950 will be paid by CBC – 50% CBC Network Communications, – 50% CBC Quebec Region" (*ibid.*) This successful negotiation for the emcee, Wayne Rostad, was announced to the *Townshippers' Day* Committee members on



Four musicians (Townshippers' Day 1992) : P038 Townshippers' Association fonds

August 17 by Susan C. Mastine, barely a month before the event took place. The 1992 bi-centennial celebrations on *Townshippers' Day* in Richmond, Quebec proved to be an organizational challenge extraordinaire.

In the 1980s, Townshippers' Association also engaged in serious lobbying on behalf of the Anglophone population with the state, both provincial and federal. It was a time of linguistic insecurity for the community members and a series of changes were being implemented by the provincial government that directly impacted the English-speaking population. Rural Anglophones, collectively through the Townshippers' Association, ensured that their interests would be represented in the decision-making process. For example, 17 briefs and papers were submitted to the provincial and federal governments from 21 May 1981 to 11 May 1988 (Townshippers, administration & organization briefs 1980–1996). Titles included among the submissions to name but a few were:

- 21 May 1981: Brief to the Council on the French Language
- 11 May 1983: "Brief concerning Bill 3 – Archives Act" submitted to the Commission on cultural affairs
- 8 October 1984: "Brief presented to the Standing Committee on Culture in response to the document *L'Évolution de la population du Québec et ses conséquences*"
- May, 1985: "Brief presented to the Special Senate Committee on Youth"
- 8 September 1986: "Brief for the Parliamentary Commission on the Charter of the French Language"
- May, 1986: "Brief on the Availability and Accessibility of Health and Social Services in English in the Eastern Townships to be presented to *La Commission d'Enquête sur la Santé et les Service Sociaux* (Rochon Commission)"
- September, 1987: "Recommendations to the CRSSS(E) Working Committee concerning the Isolation of the English-speaking Community"
- 4 March 1988: "Brief on the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord to be presented to the Senate Committee of the Whole"
- 11 May 1988: "Brief to the Legislative Committee on the Official Languages Act (Bill C-72)"

This brief list provides an overview of the collective lobbying on behalf of the Anglophone population in the Townships. By the early 1980s the effectiveness of Townshippers' Association drew the attention of the urban lobby organization, Alliance Quebec of Montreal (Off-Island Committee Of Alliance Quebec 1982–84). Coordinated lobbying efforts were attempted but it became apparent that there were philosophical differences regarding each organization's methods of advocacy. The rural/urban experiences provided barriers to possible integration of the two although they continued to recognize each other's efforts regarding their respective constituents.

Townshippers' Association continues to inform the English-speaking population about available services within the Townships, both governmental and private, through the publishing of information books for free distribution. The most recent one, entitled *An English Speaker's Guide to Life in the Eastern Townships* (2005), is a first, disseminating general information pertinent to the Townships as a whole. Almost all of the 10,000 copies were snapped up within a month. An earlier attempt was the *Directory of English-Language Institutions in Sherbrooke and Surrounding District* (1983), an information brochure for the area Anglophones.

In 1984, Townshippers' Association petitioned on behalf of the seniors within the Anglophone community in regards to obtaining an English translation of a Quebec government document describing the services provided to seniors. This campaign lasted two years and success was realized with the launch of the *Seniors Guide* in October 1986, thanks to the efforts of Majorie Goodfellow and Della Goodsell who both served as President of the Board during this time period (*appendix 4*).

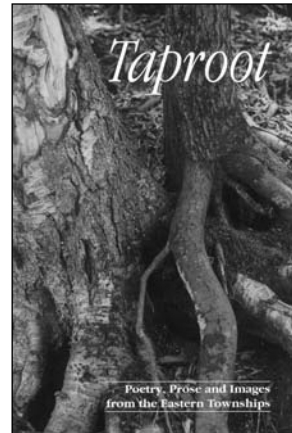
One of the most active aspects of the Association's work is communications. Immediately following the disposition of the patent documents with the government, the members took it upon themselves to inform the government about who exactly the Anglophone community was, disseminated facts about issues of importance to the government, the Anglophones isolated in smaller communities within the Townships and the Francophone community-at-large. Various means were developed to coordinate these efforts. Strategies such as the *Keeping in Touch* column in *The Record*, *Crossroads*, nominations to the *Comité régional de Radio-Québec Estrie*, a mini-series *Les Anglophones en Estrie*, workshops on Communications, Customs, and Conventions in French, and Liaison with the French-speaking Community were implemented to

increase the visibility of the English-speaking Townshippers (Communication Committee 1978–1993). The communications and outreach committees provided a broad conduit for informing the community-at-large about the very real economic, health and social services, as well as educational problems existing within the Anglophone minority and helping to deconstruct the myths surrounding them. They also helped to maintain the bonds between those Anglophones who are isolated in small rural areas with those who live closer to Sherbrooke and District.

Townshippers' Association actively developed programs and encouraged community members to embrace with pride the achievements, the history, and the beauty of the area. A few of the activities and projects that were supported over the years were: *The Way We Were* 1984, Photo exhibition: *As We Were* 1980–1987, *Cemetery Project* Western Sector and *Cemetery Project* Eastern Sector 1980, Stanstead and Rock Island Walking Tours, *The Treasure of Place Names* 1982–1983, and *An Oral History of the Granite Industry of Beebe* 1984 (Heritage and Culture Committee 1980–1991).

Pride in the community is cultivated through connections with the tourism industry and intergenerational support is an ongoing concern for the membership. From its inception to the present day, Townshippers' Association has reached out to young people. It provides a liaison to local industry and thereby job opportunities. Furthermore, access to training to improve job skills for those who are in need are promoted via programs developed expressly to encourage youth participation and to discourage, if possible, out-migration of the next generation (Youth Committee 1984–). A website, www.toppportunity.ca, provides information about the top 40 job prospects in the Eastern Townships and how to qualify for them.

To this day, Townshippers' Association continues to network with community resources to address the most apparent needs of the Anglophone Community and to inform the governments (local, provincial and federal) of these needs in a timely fashion, including demographic statistical analysis to provide credibility to the community demands (Floch & Warnke 2004; presentations by Floch and Warnke, 2005). It maintains contact with other organizations



Taproot : Publication of
Townshippers' Association

throughout Quebec, and is a member of the Quebec Community Groups Network. One call to the information line can provide an Anglophone with information about resources or services in the area, or if necessary, the coordinator will tell the caller who to contact. The volunteers and the employees of the association work diligently to maintain the visibility of the English-speaking community's concerns; this is done in conjunction with active advocacy efforts directed to the various governments, and nominations of English speakers to boards and committees, so that the community is fully represented in all decision-making processes. The promotion of the English-speaking Townshippers' heritage and cultural community will continue to provide challenges and opportunities to the Townshippers' Association well into the next quarter century.

NOTES

- 1 The patent documents of the organization are on exhibition, where they are held at the time of this writing, in the Old Library at Bishop's University, Lennoxville, Quebec, Canada. Another note of interest regarding these documents is given that this period is post second wave feminist movement the females are required to state their marital status while the males do not.
- 2 See *Townships Crossroads* March 2005 for a detailed update on the Townshippers' current activities in the region.
- 3 Townshippers' Day 2005 is planned for September 17 in Bedford.

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APPENDIX 1

Ministère des Consommateurs, Coopératives et Institutions financières,
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 compagnies, 3^e partie)*, *L'Association des Anglophones de l'Estrie Inc./
 English Speaking Townshippers Association Inc.*, in Townshippers'
 Association Collection of the Archives Department, Eastern
 Townships Research Centre, Bishop's University, Lennoxville, QC,
 P038/100.01/001.



Gouvernement du Québec
 Ministère des Consommateurs,
 Coopératives et Institutions financières
Direction des compagnies

LETTRES PATENTES
 (Loi sur les compagnies, 3^e partie)

Le ministre des Consommateurs, Coopératives et
 Institutions financières, sous l'autorité de la
 troisième partie de la Loi sur les compagnies,
 accorde aux requérants ci-après désignés les
 présentes lettres patentes les constituant en corpo-
 ration sous le nom de

L' ASSOCIATION DES ANGLOPHONES
 DE L'ESTRIE INC.

et sa version

ENGLISH SPEAKING TOWNSHIPPERS
 ASSOCIATION INC.

Données et scellées à Québec,

le 79/10/17

Le Ministre

Signé par délégation:

Je certifie que ce document a été

enregistré le 79/12/07

au libro C-1041, folio 89

Le Ministre

Signé par délégation:



APPENDIX 2

Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère du Conseil Exécutif (1979).

Dialogue between the Government of Quebec and representatives of English-speaking Townshippers, June 16, in Townshippers' Association Collection of the Archives Department, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Bishop's University, Lennoxville, QC, P038.



Gouvernement du Québec
Ministère du
Conseil Exécutif

Le ministre d'État
au Développement culturel

DIALOGUE

between the Government of Quebec

and

representatives of English-speaking Townshippers

June 16, 1979

Alexander Galt

Regional High School

Lennoxville, Quebec

APPENDIX 3 (*chronological order*)

- Laurie-Ann Entertainment Agency Ltd. *Ad Hoc Committees, Townshippers' Day (1992)*, Townshippers' Association Collection of the Archives Department, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Bishop's University, Lennoxville, QC, P038/400.03/013.
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APPENDIX 4 (*chronological order*)

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*Senior Citizen Guide to services 1984:
P038 Townshippers' Association fonds*

Townshippers Association

The Townshippers Association (or English-Speaking Townshippers Association, Inc.) evolved from a symposium on the future of the anglophone minority in Quebec in June 1979. The symposium was attended by Cultural Development Minister Camille Laurin and about 700 area residents.

Many of the concerns expressed at that meeting contributed to the founding of the Association, in October, 1979. The Association is administered by a 29 member Board of Directors, and a nine person Executive Committee. Day-to-day co-ordination of the professional staff is handled by the Executive Director, David Weiner.

The Association maintains two offices, the headquarters in Sherbrooke and a regional office in Cowansville, that is open half days. The Sherbrooke office is located in Room 310, 31 King West, J1H 1N5, telephone (819) 566-5717. It houses four of the five permanent staff.

About 5,000 members have been signed up in the Association, for a \$2.00 membership fee. Primary funding is from the federal Secretary of State's Aid to Minorities program.

The Association has several goals, set down at its founding meeting. They are the promotion of the interests of the English-speaking community in the Townships; the strengthening of their cultural identity; the encouragement of the participation of English-speaking Townshippers in the community at large and the collection of funds through dues, donations or grants, to further the interests of the organization.

The Townshippers Association is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that obtains its grassroots input through a system of regional tables that operate from six main areas. A series of Task Forces has also been established to address several key concerns of the Association. They are health and social services, education, employment, heritage, and participation in Quebec society.

The Townshippers Association is involved in several successful undertakings, among them a summer student employment project, the publication of a quarterly tabloid newsletter and ensuring that anglophones are represented on the various administrative regional councils.

**English Speaking Townshippers Association, Inc.
L'association des anglophones de l'Estrie, Inc.**

31, ouest rue King W., Suite 310, Sherbrooke, Qué J1H 1N5: (819) 566-5717
Succ. Cowansville: (514) 263-4422



Meeting (Townshippers' Association early 1980s) : P038 Townshippers' Association fonds



Spring Fling (Townshippers' Association 1986) : P038 Townshippers' Association fonds

