

Our Students, Our Community, Our Future!

A Message from George



Dear WQSB Staff,

As the school year winds down, I want to say “thank you” for your unwavering commitment and the strength you’ve shown through challenge and change.

Allow me to share a short story (that most if not all of you are familiar with) that speaks to the heart of resilience:

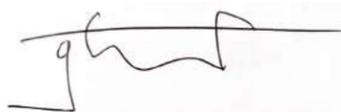
The Bamboo and the Oak

In a forest, a mighty oak stood tall and proud, while a slender bamboo swayed gently nearby. One day, a fierce storm swept through. The oak, rigid and unyielding, snapped under the pressure. But the bamboo, bending with the wind, survived.

When the storm passed, the bamboo stood tall once again—proof that flexibility and quiet strength can weather even the harshest storms.

This year, like the bamboo, you’ve adapted, supported one another, and stood strong through uncertainty. As we begin planning for the year ahead, let’s carry that same spirit of resilience and collaboration forward.

Thank you for everything you do. Wishing you a productive, and successful last month of the school year!



Speech-Language Pathology Team

“Feeding Minds”: The Power of Conversation During Snack & Lunch Time



As the 2024–2025 school year wraps up, the Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) team would like to reflect on the collaborative work we’ve accomplished with teachers, support staff, and students. This year, our focus was on building language foundations through engaging, evidence-based practices.

Highlights included Shared Storybook Reading, phonemic awareness activities, the use of the Expanding Expression Tool (EET), story grammar instruction, and Structured Word Inquiry. These classroom-based supports were designed to enhance listening comprehension, vocabulary, expressive organization, and early literacy skills.

Looking ahead to the 2025–2026 school year, we are excited to launch a new initiative focused on conversational competence. This is a skillset deeply tied to academic success and social connection. Our project, “Feeding Minds: The Power of Conversation During Snack & Lunch Time,” aims to use natural social moments in the school day as powerful learning opportunities.

Aligned with Competency 9 of Quebec’s educational program (“To communicate appropriately”), the project will focus on helping students practice essential conversational skills, including:

- Turn-taking
- Topic maintenance
- Variety of turn types (e.g., asking questions, adding ideas, making comments)
- Conversational repair strategies (e.g., clarifying, rephrasing)

During snack and lunch times, students naturally engage in dialogue with peers. These everyday moments offer rich, low-pressure opportunities for building communication skills in meaningful contexts.

To support implementation, the SLP team will provide:

- In-class workshops to model and guide conversational skill-building.
- Teacher-friendly checklists for easy, real-time observation and assessment.
- Printable tools like role-play cards, sorting games, and classroom posters to reinforce learning.

We look forward to collaborating in the coming 2025–2026 school year. Let the conversations begin—at the table and beyond!

Spotlight

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South Hull Visits Funtopia

South Hull students recently took a field trip to Funtopia. This field trip was specifically for our centre at South Hull.



We also added other students with special needs from regular classrooms and they all did amazing!

Julia Horner

Artist Inspired Art

Catherine Clarke's Kindergarten 4 class studied and created works of art inspired by the Artists in the photos. The K4's then created a gallery in the library for everyone to enjoy.



Julia Horner

Land Art Installation at Eardley

Vanessa Turner, the Community Development Officer for Eardley's Elementary's Community Learning Centre organized a fun week with Marc Walter. Marc worked with each class to create a school community land art installation of a wolf.

This project supports the outdoor education program at Eardley.

Yvonne Haddad

A Week of Culture, Community, and Connection at the Anishnabe Adult Education Centre

The week of the 5th to the 9th of May, students and staff from the Anishnabe Adult Education Center took part in a powerful five-day hide tanning workshop that blended hands-on learning with cultural teachings. Led by Elder Brenda and Elder Audrey, the experience offered a rare opportunity to connect with traditional practices, community, and the land.

Throughout the week, participants learned to skin and prepare deer hides, craft tools from moose bone, and began the detailed work of scraping, sanding, and softening hides using natural methods including a deer brain solution to condition the hide. Students also dyed a portion of hide that will be used to make drums in the winter.

Alongside learning the technical skills, the workshop was filled with meaningful teachings, shared meals, and time spent around the fire, a space where stories, and laughter were just as important as the work itself.

We were honoured to host guests from the school board and equip-choc, as we got to meet with the amazing staff behind-the-scenes and who got to share in our wonderful workshop. Our guests got a firsthand look at the Anishnabe culture, community, and were able to connect with centre staff, students, and Elders.



This is only the beginning of the journey. The hides will be safely stored until we gather again in the winter to complete the process.

Here are some words from our dedicated students:
"This was my first time experiencing a workshop like this. I was appreciative of the Elders and others a part of the workshop and connecting with my culture."

– Aylissa

"I enjoyed this workshop, it was my first time doing something like this and I've learnt so much within just a week. I would for sure do this again."

– Lakeisha

"This opportunity was a fun learning experience! I loved learning and getting the chance to do this with my mom. It's important to us and is valuable knowledge that we can carry and pass on to the next generations. I hope to do something like this again in the future."

– Ashanti

Thank you to all who participated and most importantly, Meegwetch to our Elders. Your wisdom and presence made this experience unforgettable!

Dodie Payne

Relay for Life

On behalf of our entire school community, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Katie and Sarah for their incredible leadership in organizing this year's **Relay for Life**. Thanks to your tireless efforts, creativity, and dedication, we've achieved something truly remarkable — **raising an astounding \$59,730.80 for the Canadian Cancer Society!**



From Katie and Sarah:

Abbey Murree's mom delivered an extremely powerful speech to kick off our event - detailing her own experience with Cancer and with a striking message to our students to stop smoking and vaping now while they're still young because it's not worth the consequences.

The students laughed, cried and didn't sleep throughout the night competing in activities like Family Feud, Food Games, Leg Waxing, Field Games and so much more. We're incredibly proud of our group of 12 students who organized this whole event, they worked hard and it all paid off!

Sarah and I would like to thank everyone involved - whether they volunteered, donated, or simply encouraged students to participate, it's events like these that show just how incredible our entire school community is.

Thank you, Katie and Sarah, for making this possible. You've helped create memories that will last a lifetime and made a meaningful difference in the fight against cancer.



Selina Gervais

A Universe of Wonder: Planetarium Visits Onslow Elementary School

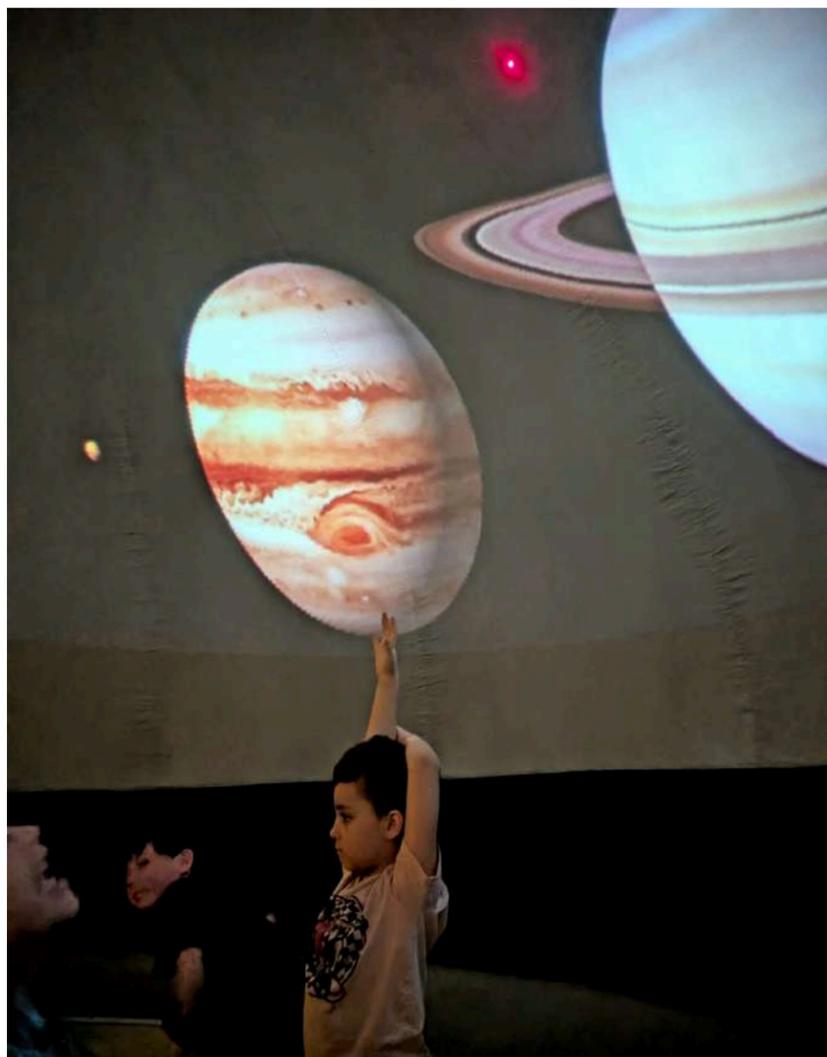
Onslow Elementary School was filled with awe and excitement this week as a mobile planetarium from Observatoire Pontiac made a special visit to the school, turning an ordinary day into an extraordinary journey through space. Students from K4 to grade 6 were given the opportunity to experience the wonders of our solar system in a truly immersive way. its students.

Set up in the school gymnasium, the inflatable dome transported students to the stars without ever leaving the ground. Inside the planetarium, students were treated to a visually stunning and engaging video presentation that explored the

planets, their unique characteristics, and their positions within the solar system. The show also touched on moons, asteroids, and other celestial bodies, sparking curiosity and enthusiasm across all grade levels. "It was like being in space!" one Grade 3 student exclaimed; eyes wide with excitement. "I didn't know Saturn had so many rings!"

Teachers and staff were equally impressed by the level of engagement. "It's not every day you see students this captivated," said Mme. Louise. "Even our youngest learners were completely focused and asking great questions."

This visit from Observatoire Pontiac was more than just a show - it was a launchpad for imagination and learning. Onslow Elementary is proud to provide enriching opportunities like this to inspire a lifelong love of science and exploration in its students.



Annie Lance

Showcasing Student Creativity at SMHS's 4th Annual Showcase

After a month of planning by a student-led committee, on May 8th St. Michael's High School's gymnasium became a vibrant and engaging hub of creativity for the fourth Annual Student Showcase.

The highlight of the unique event was a large-scale art display crafted by carpentry students, inspired by the committee's vision. The showcase featured student work from a wide range of subjects—French, Carpentry, Spanish, ELA, Science, Outdoor Ed, Art, and Photography. Students also contributed personal projects, adding a personal touch.

Grade 11 photography students presented powerful social justice pieces, while interactive stations offered hands-on activities like fuse beads, drawing tables, button making and collage sewing.

During fourth period, the gym buzzed with excitement as students performed live music while others explored, created, and celebrated each other's talents.



Kate White-Swenson

D'Arcy McGee Launches Successful Six-Week Tech & Trades Integration Camp

Under the leadership of Kate White-Swenson, a dedicated Recreational Technician at D'Arcy McGee High School, 17 students recently completed an intensive six-week Technology and Skills Integration Camp, focused on Welding and Automobile Mechanics. The initiative, supported by instructors Wei Jun Shang, Victor Tran, and other skilled professionals, offered hands-on, career-oriented experience to high school students eager to explore the trades.

Held every Wednesday over six weeks, the mini-camp was structured to give students real-world technical skills in two key areas: Automobile Mechanics and Welding/Fitting. Classes took place at the Western Quebec Career Centre, with full-day immersive sessions designed to maximize learning through practical application.

In the Automobile Mechanics stream, students worked in the automotive shop and lab environments, performing real tasks on vehicles and their components. "This program was perfect for automotive enthusiasts looking to learn new skills or deepen their knowledge of car systems," said Miss White-Swenson. "It was rewarding to see their growth and enthusiasm each week."



Meanwhile, students in the Welding stream focused on the Gas Metal Arc Welding (GMAW) process using mild steel. Each student who completed the course received an in-house certification, recognizing their efforts and new skills gained. "This camp gave students not only technical ability but also confidence in their hands-on capabilities," said Wei Jun Shang, one of the welding instructors.

A heartfelt thank-you goes to the students, the Western Quebec Career Centre's staff, and especially to Miss Kate White-Swenson for spearheading this enriching program. Through her vision and coordination, along with the contributions of skilled instructors, the camp became a powerful example of what community-based educational partnerships can achieve. Plans are already being discussed for a repeat of the program next year, with hopes of expanding capacity and adding new trades.



Amanda Mackechnie

Onslow Elementary Hosts Heartfelt Mother's Day Celebration for K4 and K5 Moms

Onslow Elementary School recently hosted a heartwarming evening to celebrate the special mothers in K4 and K5. Spearheaded by Amanda Mackechnie, the event was a true tribute to the love and appreciation families feel for their moms.

The evening began with a delicious supper and dessert, generously provided by Café 349. The warm and welcoming atmosphere allowed families to relax and enjoy a meal together, setting the tone for the rest of the celebration.

Following dinner, guests participated in a hands-on flower workshop led by the talented team from Homegrown Garden Centre. With guidance and enthusiasm, children carefully crafted beautiful flower pots for their mothers — each one a unique and thoughtful creation.

As the event ended, every mom left with a flower pot made with love, a lasting reminder of a special evening shared with their child. It was truly a memorable experience filled with food, flowers, and love — a perfect way to honor the wonderful mothers of Onslow Elementary.



Selina Gervais

Wild Encounters: “Meet the Keepers” Brings Animal Adventure to Onslow Elementary

Onslow Elementary School turned into a mini zoo for the day as students were treated to an unforgettable experience with some truly fascinating creatures! The "Meet the Keepers" program visited the school, bringing with them a lineup of exotic animals that left students wide-eyed and full of questions.

From the moment the presentation began, excitement filled the air. Students had the chance to meet and learn about a variety of amazing animals up close, including a fluffy giant rabbit, a massive 7-foot boa constrictor, a friendly Tarantula, and a careful turtle!

Each animal was introduced by expert handler who shared fun facts, interesting behaviors, and conservation tips. The giant rabbit brought lots of “awws” from the crowd and of course, the 7-foot boa made jaws drop—and just a few students squirm a little—as it slithered calmly in the arms of its keeper.

“This was the best day ever!” said one fourth grader. “I never thought I’d get to see a real boa that close!”



Teachers praised the presentation for being both educational and engaging. “The keepers did an amazing job explaining each animal’s role in nature and how we can help protect them,” Ms. Peck noted. “It was a great mix of science, storytelling, and hands-on learning.”

The "Meet the Keepers" visit supported the school’s efforts to bring learning to life and spark curiosity about the natural world. It was a truly wild day that students won’t soon forget!

Larissa Sansom

Building Foundations for Literacy: Reflections from the ELA Cycle 1 Literacy Network

This month marked the final session of the ELA Cycle 1 Literacy Network, a dynamic professional learning community comprised of outstanding Grade 1 educators from across the Western Quebec School Board. In collaboration with special education consultants and speech-language pathologists, the network embarked on a year-long journey to unpack the complex and essential elements of foundational reading instruction.

From exploring the earliest concepts of literacy—understanding that sentences, words, letters, and sounds carry meaning—to adopting strategies that deepen comprehension, the network covered the full spectrum of early literacy development. Sessions ranged from examining the latest reading research to exchanging practical ideas and classroom experiences, fostering a rich and collaborative professional dialogue.

A particular highlight of the year was the opportunity to participate in the Resource Teacher’s Network session led by Kari Yates, co-author of *Shifting the Balance: 6 Ways to Bring the Science of Reading into the Balanced Literacy Classroom*. This session served as both affirmation and inspiration, providing educators with concrete strategies to integrate evidence-based practices into their teaching.

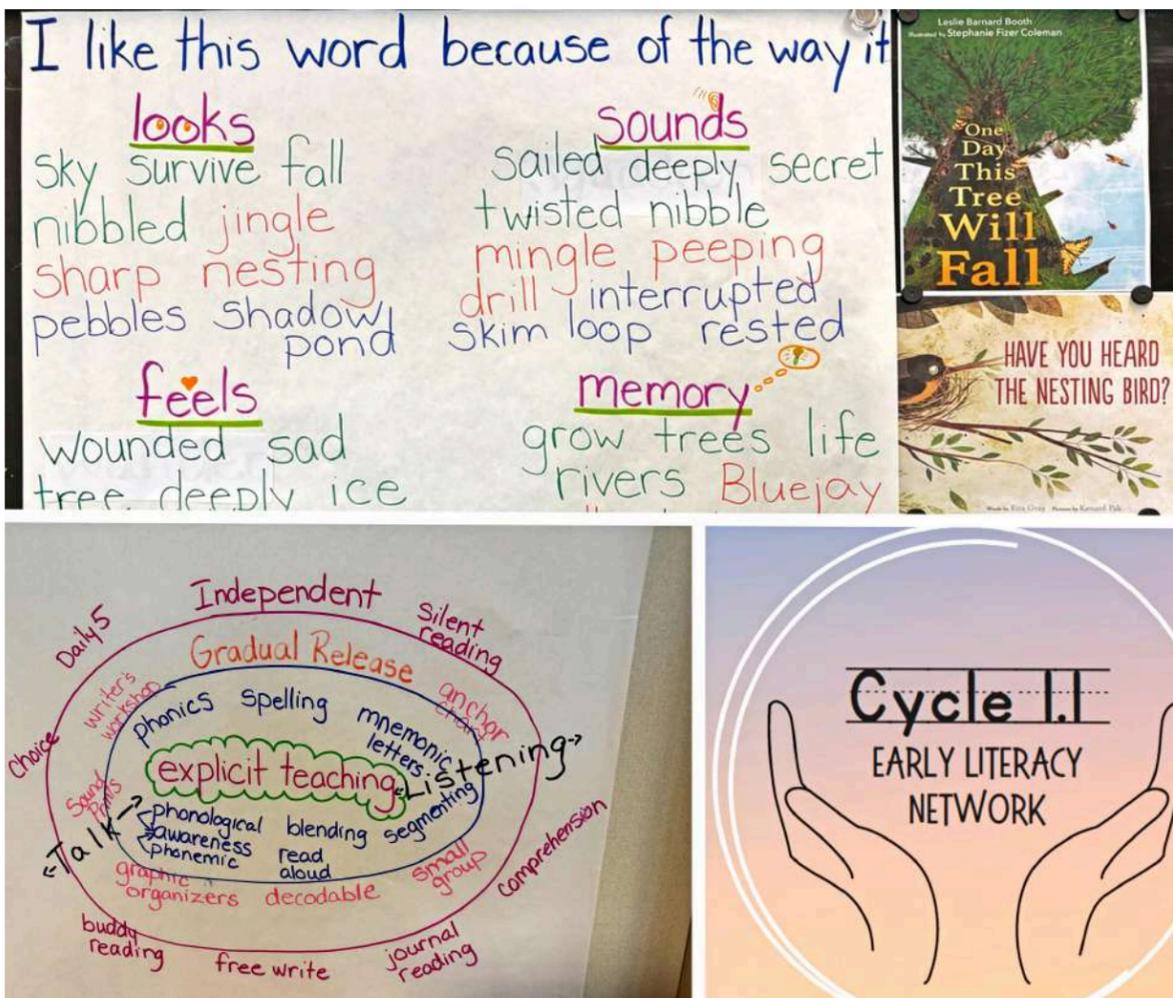
For many participants, the network was not only a space for professional development but also a source of connection and encouragement.

“I loved learning new ways of teaching ELA and discussing how to apply what we’ve learned to our classrooms,” shared Tracy Hodgson-Drysdale, a Grade 1 teacher at Queen Elizabeth School. “I also loved hearing what other teachers are doing in their classrooms.”

The impact of the network extended beyond pedagogy—it transformed classroom practice and student outcomes. Lauren Armstrong, a Grade 1 teacher at Chelsea Elementary School, reflected: “Participating in the Cycle 1 Literacy Network was an inspiring and impactful learning experience. The tools and strategies shared not only encouraged me to rethink how language and word choice are used and taught in my classroom, but they were also highly practical—filled with templates and resources I could implement right away. The impact was clear: as I reflected on my students’ progress over the year, I was astounded by the growth in their language skills, confidence, and engagement.”

As we look ahead, the momentum continues. Plans are underway to expand the network to include Grade 2 teachers, who will begin their own journey of discovery into supporting early readers as they build fluency and stamina. Meanwhile, Grade 1 educators will shift their focus toward writing instruction, continuing to grow as a community of learners dedicated to literacy excellence.

The Cycle 1 Literacy Network stands as a testament to the power of collaboration, research-informed practice, and educator-driven professional learning. Together, these dedicated teachers are building not only foundational literacy skills—but also a culture of lifelong learning.



Stuart Gray and Lisa Diner
Did you know?
 Education Technology

Did you know that we have a website dedicated to all things "education technology"? You can find it at: edtech.westernquebec.ca.

On this site, you can find interactive tutorials, resources, and even live calendar booking links to connect with your Education Technology Consultants, Lisa Diner and Stuart Gray.

If you forget the website address, you can also always get to the site from the "Quick Links" section of the WQSB homepage at westernquebec.ca.

Let's work together to increase the digital competence of all members of our WQSB community!

Matthew Russell

Student Vote

On April 28, 2025, millions of Canadians cast their ballots in the 45th federal election, and on the same day many Western Quebec students cast their ballots in the 2025 Student Vote! Student Vote is a joint program of CIVIX and Elections Canada that improves civic literacy, teaches about democracy and how to participate as responsible citizens in their communities.

In 2025, over twenty Western Quebec schools participated in the Student Vote program – one of the highest participation rates in the province!

Student Vote is a perfect complement to the Culture and Citizenship in Québec program where students from grade 5 to 11 learn about different aspects of democracy and citizenship. According to research by Elections Canada if a person votes in the first election that they are eligible for after turning eighteen they are likely to be a lifelong voter.

Correspondingly, people who do not pick up the voting habit young are unlikely to do so later in life. Students who learn about how our democracy and government system works in school are



A student casts their vote at Symmes/D'Arcy McGee

more likely to vote in their first elections. In civic education, one of the most powerful learning activities is taken part in a mock vote.

Student Vote however encompasses more than just voting. Through the program, students explored the government system, built media literacy skills, analyzed party platforms, and compared their own perspectives on the issues with the various platforms.

Participating in Student Vote was an important step for many of our student in their journey on becoming full citizens.

More resources for Culture and Citizenship Education can be found [here](#).



Counting the votes at Lord Aylmer

Human Resources

HR Team

Teaching Opportunities at the WQSB for 2025-2026

Please keep an eye out for upcoming teaching opportunities, which will be posted on the [WQSB website](#) and on [ApplyToEducation](#). These positions may include 100% replacement contracts, part-time contracts, and full-time contracts. Human Resources will also email all staff directly with the available postings.



Job listings will be open to all qualified teachers, who will be invited to apply directly to the school principal around mid-June.



Library Team

Coups de Coeur

As we approach the end of another school year, I've been feeling reflective. I like to look back at the year as I plan for the year ahead.

What did I learn? What will I do differently? What worked well? And of course, as librarians, we always have a list of books we've read that we love to talk about and so, as the final booklist of the 2024-2025 school year, I asked Lee Randall and Jennifer Davies for their Coups de Coeur so we can share the love with everyone.

We wish you all smooth sailing in June, and a beautiful, restorative summer. May all your summer reads be the perfect summer reads for you.

See you in September!



Picture Book

Lee: Telephone Tales, by Gianni Rodari

Jennifer: Carson Crosses Canada, by Linda Bailey

Erin: The Three Billy Goats Gruff, by Mac Barnett

Middle Grade Novel

Lee: How to Stay Invisible, by Maggie C. Rudd

Jennifer: Wolf Hollow, by Lauren Wolk

Erin: Apartment 713, by Kevin Sylvester

Middle Grade Audiobook

Lee: Alone, by Megan E. Freeman

Jennifer: Refugee, by Alan Gratz*

Erin: Those Kids from Fawn Creek, by Erin Entrada Kelly

Young Adult Novel

Lee: Legendborn, by Tracy Deonn*

Jennifer: Speak, by Laurie Halse Anderson (*graphic novel)

Erin: A Phở Love Story, by Loan Le*

Young Adult Audiobook

Lee: Two Sides to Every Murder, by Danielle Valentine

Jennifer: The Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue, by Mackenzi Lee

Erin: So Let Them Burn, by Kamilah Cole*

Graphic Novel

Lee: Halfway There, by Christine Mari

Jennifer: Hey, Kiddo, by Jarrett J. Krosoczka

Erin: Squire, by Nadia Shammas*

Adult Novel

Lee: The Three-Body Problem, by Cixin Liu*

Jennifer: Beartown, by Fredrik Bachman

Erin: Cold, by Drew Hayden Taylor

* Titles can be found in French

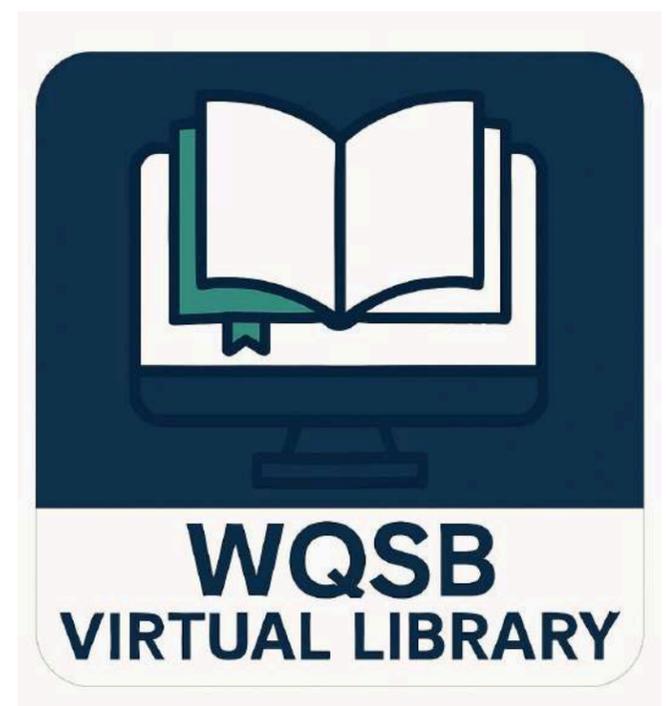
Lee Randall

Virtual Library Spotlight: The newly updated Virtual Library

If you haven't already heard, the WQSB Virtual Library is newly designed and updated! All your favourite resources are still there along with a few new ones, like Mauril and Boukili.

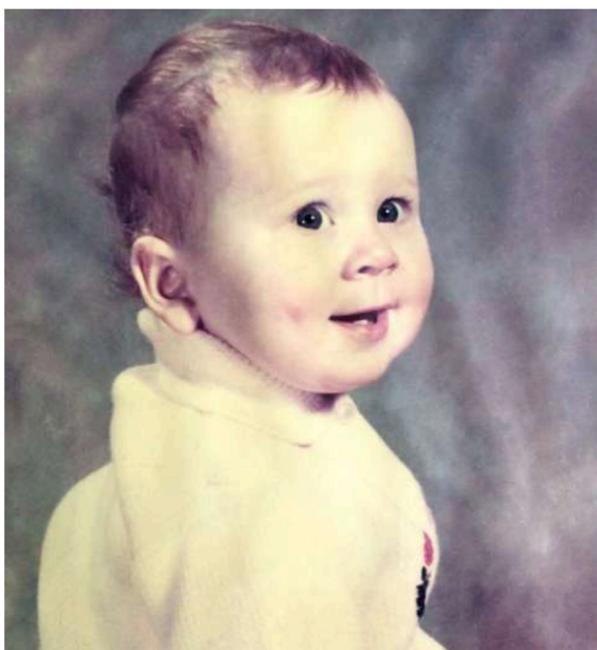
Please visit the staff guide for log-in information and feel free to share the student guide with students and parents.

The WQSB Virtual Library is available 24/7 from school or home and remains a great resource to support students' summer reading.



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Found in the WQSB Time Capsule...



This only child from Otter Lake has been with the WQSB for 30 years, first as an elementary school teacher in Campbell's Bay Elementary where her skill as an effective educator was recognized right away.

Since then, she has worked in elementary as well as in the adult and vocational education sectors in various roles including secondary teacher, academic advisor, vice-principal, and principal. This individual loves the outdoors, spending weekends at the cottage boating and four-wheeling. She also enjoys travelling.

She currently works at 15 rue Katimavik leading and supporting the mission of the WQSB. Her vast experience in various settings and sectors is a tremendous asset, as is her sense of humour. She is also known for her ability to truly connect with students. Her caring manner and her dedication to ensuring schools and centres across the board always have what they need to support students, make her an invaluable member of the WQSB team.

THANK YOU

We extend our gratitude to our contributors this month

George Singfield, Amanda Mackechnie, Annie Lance, Carole Belanger, Claudia Loschmann, Dana Johannsen, Erick Tremblay, Erin Millar, Fatima Sow, Isabella Poitras, Jennifer Davies, Julia Horner, Larrisa Sansom, Laura D'Alessandro, Lisa Diner, Matthew Russell, Nancy Peterson, Sophia Orfanos, Stuart Grey, Sunglee Randall and Yvonne Haddad



Gazette created by Fatima Sow & Laura D'Alessandro