



# Preserving Our Heritage Together

A Brief submitted to the  
House of Commons Standing Committee on  
Official Languages (LANG)

by the  
Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN)

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“The English-speaking communities have to deal with a majority population whose priority is to preserve the French language. The survival of English is not a key issue for Quebec. For the English-speaking communities, the challenge rather lies in insuring their survival and supporting their vitality in all regions of Quebec.”

*The Vitality of Quebec's English-Speaking Communities: from Myth to Reality*, Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, 2011

### **QAHN -- Background:**

Founded in 2000, the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) is a non-profit, non-partisan umbrella organization engaged with its members in promoting the preservation of the built, cultural and natural heritage of Quebec.

QAHN aims to promote a greater understanding of the history of Quebec's English-speaking communities by informing, inspiring and connecting people through its activities. Membership is open to any organization or individual, regardless of language or cultural affiliation, with a positive interest in the history, heritage and culture of Quebec's English-speaking communities.

As a network, QAHN encourages cooperation and communication among members. QAHN assists member societies and organizations in obtaining resources and related services for their activities and facilities.

Members include organizations such as museums, historical societies, foundations, community and research groups, archives and libraries, as well as individuals interested in Anglophone heritage in Quebec. Currently, in addition to several hundred individual members across Quebec and Canada, nearly 90 organizations in Quebec hold either core or affiliate membership in QAHN. A number of our member-organizations are primarily French-speaking.

### **Anglophone Heritage:**

Many Quebecers have links to Anglophone heritage even though they see themselves as having some other linguistic or cultural attachment. There are also many communities in Quebec that communicate in English but whose members do not come from what are traditionally thought of as English-speaking countries. QAHN does not focus exclusively on the heritage of the British Isles, but on all groups that expresses themselves in English.

Similarly, there are many instances where Anglophone heritage is being preserved by members of Quebec's French-speaking community. QAHN, therefore, speaks of Anglophone heritage as a field of interest. QAHN is non-political and totally inclusive. QAHN's concern is with the preservation of the English-speaking community's heritage, not with language.

### **Funding:**

QAHN's primary sources of operational funding are the Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH) and the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine du Québec (MCCCF), with additional funding through such other sources as subscriptions to our print magazine, *Quebec Heritage News*, advertising revenue, merchandise sales, conference and workshop registration fees, and occasional support from foundations.

In addition to these sources of operational funding, QAHN also receives funding for projects from the Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH) through the Community Life component of the Development of Official-Language Communities Program, and through the Roadmap for Canadian Linguistic Duality 2008-2013 (from PCH and Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions).

### **Challenges Facing Quebec's English-Language Heritage Groups:**

Without adequate funding, museums, historical societies and other cultural groups would see their ability to function severely, if not totally, curtailed. These institutions depend on varied sources of funding to conduct research, mount exhibitions, publish magazines and books, develop tours, create online resources, and undertake a host of other services to the general public.

A 2009 survey of QAHN's core member organizations identified under-funding as a major source of concern for the English-language heritage community of Quebec. The vast majority of groups who participated in this survey reported that they depend on some form of municipal, provincial or federal government funding to support their activities.<sup>1</sup>

"Most of the survey respondents who had received or who were applying for public financial support," QAHN's 2009-2014 Strategic Plan noted, were "dissatisfied with existing government funding programs."<sup>2</sup>

Other equally profound challenges facing Quebec's English-language heritage institutions have been identified in recent years. Not the least of these has been the steadily diminishing populations of many rural communities in Quebec. Particularly vulnerable to this alarming demographic trend, a trend that has been widely documented, have been Quebec's rural English-speaking communities.

In general, the heritage sector tends to depend heavily on volunteers -- particularly older volunteers. A quick survey of just about any local historical society will reveal that many, if not most, board members are well into their retirement years. The demographic trends facing the rural -- especially the rural Anglophone -- population of Quebec has placed an even greater strain on the already diminishing pool of volunteers that are available (and willing) to contribute to the activities of local English-language heritage institutions. The existing pool of volunteers is aging, and there seem to be few younger replacements in

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<sup>1</sup> Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, *Report on the 2009 Core Member Survey*, 2009, 10-13.

<sup>2</sup> Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, *2009-2014 Strategic Plan*, 2009, 4.

sight. What will the future hold for historical societies, archives, cemetery associations, and even local museums that depend to such a large degree on aging volunteers?

We have already seen the results of this trend. QAHN's 2008 study on the state of "at risk" cemeteries in Quebec found that a primary problem facing local cemeteries associations was "an aging population and a dwindling pool of committed, local, able-bodied volunteers." Communities that were once vibrant, the study concluded, are "dying out or have already disappeared, leaving cemeteries with no one to look after them in the vicinity [...] Cemeteries that once had active associations managing them are now being overseen by a handful (at best) of senior citizens." These problems, QAHN noted, were most acute in regions where the English-speaking population is diminishing.<sup>3</sup>

Cemetery associations, of which QAHN has several as core members, are among the most vulnerable institutions in Quebec's English-language heritage sector. Many of the problems facing these institutions, however, are the same as those facing other organizations: diminishing rural populations, diminishing pools of local volunteers, and lack of funds.

Compounding these already potentially devastating problems are the difficulties that many volunteers have (especially seniors) navigating the increasingly complex maze of funding programs available at different levels of government. This problem is compounded in Quebec where, at the provincial level, much of the documentation is available only in French. Filling in complicated government funding applications, along with the myriad of supporting documents that are required, is difficult enough in one's own language. It is infinitely more difficult when one is attempting to do so in one's second language. And when this task must necessarily be performed by unpaid volunteers, there being no competent, paid staff available, the job is all the more daunting.

This brings us to another challenge faced by local volunteer-dependent heritage institutions: a lack of competent, trained personnel who are able to navigate their way through the labyrinth of government funding programs. Simply put, reading, understanding and submitting funding applications can be a demanding, full-time job in itself. It is extremely difficult depending on volunteers, even the most skilled volunteers, to see to this task. It is an art that takes experience, awareness of funding jargon, and time.

Equally challenging for many small heritage organizations – and this too was noted in QAHN's 2009-2014 Strategic Plan – are the administrative requirements related to many funding programs. Many heritage groups, it was reported by QAHN, said that funding programs were "unduly complicated by paperwork and that the amount of money they are able to raise after going through all the administrative hoops invariably falls well short of their needs."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, *Inventory of Cemeteries at Risk*, Cemetery Heritage and Restoration Initiative, 2008, 5-14.

<sup>4</sup> Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, *2009-2014 Strategic Plan*, 2009, 4.

Of course, the fact that many funding programs are geared only towards non-recurrent projects has meant that a number of worthwhile projects have been launched over the years, with great success and broad support within the local community, only to come to an end once the project funding has expired. This “onerous restriction,” as the QAHN Strategic Plan called it, has meant that organizations that have successfully developed a project (and that as a result have created certain expectations within the local communities) are inevitably forced to “drop the ball” due to a lack of recurring funding.

QAHN has always believed that for English Quebec culture and heritage to survive, the community needs to have a firm grasp of its collective heritage. The following succinct vision statement for that cultural heritage was put forward by the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN), in consultation with QAHN, in the QCGN’s *Community Development Plan for the English-speaking Communities of Quebec 2005-2010*:

“Through a well-integrated trans-Quebec effort, the heritage sector must develop an improved sense of identity within the English-speaking communities. It must determine what needs to be preserved, e.g., documents, artefacts, and sites, for the lasting identity of the English-speaking communities. It must learn effective means of sustaining this identity and correctly communicating it to the entire Quebec population. We must go beyond the simple preservation of heritage and develop in peoples of all ages and cultural backgrounds an appreciation of their heritage.”<sup>5</sup>

### **QAHN’S 2009-2014 Strategic Plan:**

QAHN’s 2009-2014 Strategic Plan was a direct result of the Network’s survey of its core member-organizations, as well as of previous operational reviews. This five-year plan identified key strategic issues facing QAHN and its core-member organizations representing the English-speaking heritage community. It also enunciated four priority goals which, along with collective statements of vision, such as the one expressed above, would guide QAHN in the future: strengthening core members; engaging communities; sharing stories; and increasing resources.<sup>6</sup>

The first three of QAHN’s priority goals directly involve enhancing or improving the services the Network provides to Quebec’s English-language heritage institutions. To elaborate:

#### ***I: Priority Goal #1 -- Strengthening Core Members***

*Building a closer partnership with core member-organizations through networking and communication, member services and project collaborations.*

Over the past several years, QAHN has worked to build collaborative relationships with its core member-organizations and with other partners, and to provide concrete beneficial advice and services to heritage and cultural groups in diverse regions of the province. In

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<sup>5</sup> Quebec Community Groups Network, *Community Development Plan for the English-speaking Communities of Quebec 2005-2010*, 2005, 43.

<sup>6</sup> Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, *2009-2014 Strategic Plan*, 2009, 14-16.

addition to our regular outreach activities, the list of innovative projects successfully brought to completion by QAHN in recent years, in collaboration with its partners, is impressive.

Projects that have helped to cement QAHN's reputation as a leader and spokesman for the heritage sector in Quebec include, among others, the *Quebec Heritage Web* Internet portal; the Heritage Awareness and Stewardship Training Initiative (HASTI); the Cemetery Heritage Inventory and Restoration Initiative (CHIRI); the Heritage Online Multimedia Enhancement Initiative (HOMEI); the Spoken Heritage Online Multimedia Initiative (SHOMI); and most recently, the Inspiring Heritage Engagement, Renewal and Identity Together (INHERIT) and StoryNet initiatives.

Through these initiatives, through others that have been proposed and are awaiting approval -- such as the Significant Objects for Telling Identity (SOFTI), Mapping the Mosaic, and "Memory on the Move" initiatives -- and through regular outreach activities, such as conferences, workshops and AGMs, QAHN provides networking opportunities for its diverse membership. Through the communications tools at QAHN's disposal, including its five bilingual regional heritage webmagazines (*QuebecHeritageWeb.com*) -- themselves major collaborative efforts involving numerous partners; its organizational website ([www.Qahn.org](http://www.Qahn.org)); and its print publication (*Quebec Heritage News*) -- all of which have undergone major upgrades in the past year, QAHN has markedly improved its ability to communicate with its membership and with the public at large.

The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network has a substantial track record of collaborating with organizations, both Anglophone and Francophone, in Quebec. In 2010, for example, QAHN (in collaboration with the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) in the Gaspé) helped to organize the Gaspesian Regional Heritage Summit, a major outreach and consultative event that took place -- in French, English and Mi'kmaq -- on the Gaspé coast, and that brought together representatives of dozens of heritage organizations, cultural groups and officials from various government agencies from around the region. That same year, QAHN collaborated with the QCGN and the English Language Arts Network (ELAN) through the Greater Montreal Community Development Initiative (GMDCI) to create the *Montreal Mosaic WebMagazine*, now a part of QAHN's *Quebec Heritage Web*. In 2011, QAHN organized the successful "Ways of Memory" conference at Concordia University, which involved participation by a number of high-profile Montrealers, including Dinu Bumbaru, Michael Fish and Helen Fotopulos.

Other recent partnerships have been concluded, for example, with Quebec's province-wide network of Community Learning Centres (CLCs) -- as part of QAHN's INHERIT project (2011-2012); with Concordia University's Centre for Digital Storytelling -- as part of the SHOMI project (2011); with ELAN and the Quebec Writer's Federation -- as part of StoryNet (2012-2013); with the QCGN -- relating to that organization's "My Quebec Roots Video Contest" (2012); and with the French-language Fédération Histoire Québec (FHQ) and the Société d'histoire de Sherbrooke -- to co-host the annual FHQ convention (2012). These are just a few examples.

All of these successful collaborations have been carried out with the aim of serving -- and strengthening -- QAHN's core membership. That membership, of course, consists of local historical societies, museums, archives and other heritage and cultural groups that have taken part in (and, in many cases, received funding through) these projects as active participants.

HOMEI, for example, involved the creation of new online content (housed on QAHN's webmagazines) by eight organizations in four regions of Quebec. SHOMI entailed the creation of multimedia exhibitions by ten local groups, and the digitization of the oral history collections of twelve organizations in seven regions. INHERIT, which is currently under way, involves the delivery of workshops promoting youth involvement in local heritage projects to educators and heritage professionals in four regions of the province.

## ***II: Priority Goal #2 -- Engaging Communities***

*Providing strategies and tools to encourage more and younger Quebecers to join, use and support the work of volunteer-based local heritage organizations.*

QAHN has actively sought to increase the appeal of heritage and heritage organizations to the younger segment of the public. This remains a challenge, but the Network has launched a number of initiatives aimed directly at fostering a greater interest in history and involvement in this sector among young Quebecers.

A few recent examples include the creation of a new Heritage Photo Contest in 2012, aimed at high school students and complementing the already successful Heritage Essay Contest (aimed at grade school students); the INHERIT project, which was especially designed to inspire interest among youth in heritage and to incite them to volunteer in heritage activities within their communities (this project also includes a youth heritage fair and the inauguration of annual youth recognition awards); and workshops sponsored by QAHN and designed in part to assist heritage groups in attracting volunteers.

QAHN is constantly trying to "engage" communities in other ways. Our efforts seem to be paying off, especially in outlying parts of the province, with a notable increase in organizational and individual memberships in 2011 and 2012.

This is certainly a result of the numerous project and outreach activities that have been conducted by the Network in recent years, resulting in greater exposure for QAHN and its activities, and a perception that QAHN is doing good work with and for its member-organizations and local communities.

And, as mentioned above, *Quebec Heritage News* and *Quebec Heritage Web* – the latter a vast bilingual platform for disseminating information about heritage in Quebec – have been significantly upgraded, resulting in a perception of better value for membership in QAHN.

### ***III: Priority Goal #3 -- Sharing Stories***

*Creating high-quality original content for our print and online publications that will continue to engage new subscribers, contributors and advertisers.*

Given the budgetary constraints faced by QAHN, disseminating the stories pertaining to the heritage and culture of our diverse membership remains a challenge. Major improvements have been made, as we have mentioned, to our print magazine, *Quebec Heritage News*, to our five bilingual regional heritage webmagazines (*Quebec Heritage Web*), and to our organizational website (www.qahn.org). Increasingly, these interconnected media are serving as the platforms through which local heritage organizations and individuals in Quebec are choosing to promote and publicize our collective heritage.

In recent years, QAHN has been working to build up a pool of contributors to its print and online publications. Our efforts have been paying off, and no doubt, improvements to our media platforms have helped to attract contributors.

Other temporary measures have enabled QAHN to improve its offering. In 2010-2011, for example, we received a one-time contribution of \$15,000 from Canadian Heritage to allow the Network to pay for content and editorial services related to *Quebec Heritage News*. In 2012, we received an Experiential Learning internship from Bishop's University. This program, which we plan to renew on a per-semester basis, has furnished us with a history student to work on providing content for the magazine.

QAHN continues to develop innovative projects to facilitate the preservation and dissemination of local stories in audio and video formats. HOMEI and SHOMI, both funded through the Roadmap, although by different departments, were two very successful initiatives that helped to stimulate local storytelling and the publication of histories in various forms.

Other initiatives, such as Mapping the Mosaic: Montreal and Its Diverse Neighbourhoods, StoryNet and Significant Objects for Telling Identity (SOFTI), will allow QAHN to continue this valuable service to our far-flung local communities.

### **QAHN and the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality -- an Indispensable Tool for Quebec's Anglophone Heritage**

Over the past three years, the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, and hence, local heritage organizations, have been fortunate to be able to tap into some of the project funding available through the Roadmap.

On one occasion, Roadmap funding came through Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions. The project in question was QAHN's Heritage Online Multimedia Enrichment Initiative (HOMEI), a \$115,000 initiative that spanned two fiscal years and that involved the participation of eight heritage organizations in four regions of the province. Partners included: Missisquoi Museum, Hudson Historical Society, and Greenwood Centre for Living History (Montréal); Eaton Corner Museum and the

Haskell Free Library and Opera House (Eastern Townships); Cascapedia River Museum and Heritage New Carlisle (Gaspésie); and Maison Fairbairn House (Outaouais).

HOMEI involved a complete redesign of the five regional heritage webmagazines (known collectively as *Quebec Heritage Web*) that QAHN maintains with the support of its member-organizations, and the development of new multi-media content in English and French for each of these webmagazines. As a result of HOMEI, these highly respected Internet resources, which serve to spotlight the heritage and culture of the Gaspé, the Eastern Townships, the Laurentians, the Outaouais, and Montreal, have vastly improved their ability to promote the regions and the local organizations they serve.

Material developed directly by participating groups, including original text, photography, audio and video, was designed to promote local museums and other heritage attractions, and enabled participants to contribute in a meaningful way to their own local economies through the promotion of heritage tourism.

Heritage New Carlisle, one of the project partners based in the Gaspé, expressed its enthusiasm with the possibilities afforded by HOMEI. HNC President Normand Desjardins described the project thus:

“[This is] exactly how we should promote ourselves and [is] definitely using the *Gaspesian Heritage WebMagazine* to its fullest.”<sup>7</sup>

Another partner, the Eaton Corner Museum, in the Eastern Townships, praised the value of the project to a small, poorly funded museum:

“These days, having a presence on the Internet is a must for letting people know who we are, what we do, and what kind of collections and archives we have. It helps researchers who live far away discover where to find information they need about family histories or regional history, and online ‘exhibits’ act like ‘teasers’ to encourage visits to the museum [...] the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network has offered us a way to promote [the museum] on *Townships Heritage WebMagazine*, a well established web presence.”<sup>8</sup>

On two occasions to date, QAHN, and through QAHN, numerous local heritage organizations, have received invaluable funding through the Department of Canadian Heritage’s Cultural Development Fund.

The Cultural Development Fund has been vitally important in that it has enabled QAHN to further its mission of collaborating with its members in promoting the preservation of heritage in Quebec; advancing the knowledge of the history of Quebec’s English-speaking communities by informing, inspiring and connecting people through its activities; encouraging cooperation among members; and assisting member organizations in obtaining resources and related services for their activities and facilities.

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<sup>7</sup> Communication, Heritage New Carlisle to Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, May 22, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Newsletter, Eaton Corner Museum, Spring 2010.

The Fund has assisted us in fostering innovative heritage-related projects across Quebec, and has facilitated our pursuance of the priority goals mentioned above – namely, strengthening our core member groups; engaging local communities; and sharing stories.

***Spoken Heritage Online Multimedia Initiative (SHOMI):***

In 2010-2011, QAHN received funding through the Cultural Development Fund for a project called the Spoken Heritage Online Multimedia Initiative (SHOMI). This \$220,000 project, which was carried out over three fiscal years, involved the participation of a dozen heritage and community groups from all over the province, including: the Colby-Curtis Museum, the Eastern Townships Resource Centre (Bishop's University), and Compton County Museum (Eastern Townships); the Gatineau Valley Historical Society (Outaouais); the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (Gaspésie); the Missisquoi Museum, the Hudson Historical Society, Greenwood Centre for Living History, and Hemmingford Historical Archives (Montréal); Morin Heights Historical Association (Laurentians); and the Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders (Magdalen Islands). Through SHOMI, oral history archives from each of these organizations were preserved for future generations.

Other organizations were involved in this project, as well. A major collaborator from the educational field was Concordia University, whose Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling oversaw the digitization of decades-old (analog) oral history tapes and their integration into a searchable online database. Audio files in this database are annotated and search tools allow the general public to locate files related to their interests.

Phase 2 of SHOMI entailed the creation of multimedia exhibits using sound, video, text and images, by heritage and community partners in various regions of Quebec. Participating organizations included: the Colby-Curtis Museum (Eastern Townships); the Alfie Roberts Institute in Montreal; the Fairbairn House, in collaboration with Wakefield Elementary School and St. Michael's High School (Outaouais); Heritage New Carlisle (Gaspésie); the Missisquoi Museum, Hudson Historical Society, and Greenwood Centre for Living History (Montréal); the Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders (the Magdalen Islands); the Coasters Association, in collaboration with the *Commission scolaire du Littoral* and the CLC Netagamiou (Lower North Shore); and QAHN itself.

As an indication of the importance of SHOMI to the regional partners involved, Heather Darch, curator of the Missisquoi Museum in Stanbridge East, Quebec, reported the following:

“As the curator of a small museum that struggles to keep the history and heritage of our community relevant in society, I was pleased to participate in this initiative that served to link our museum and historical society to a wider arts, culture and heritage community. Limited in staff, funding and a knowledge base with which to address some of our most pressing issues it is difficult for our organization to initiate projects that will serve our organization as well as other heritage groups beyond our local community.

The SHOMI project permitted us to address a pressing concern regarding our collection of fragile audio cassette tapes which contained oral histories and interviews with

members of our community. These tapes were made in the 1970s and preserved the observations, knowledge and memories of people who knew our community and its history. They contained conversations about farming methods, family remembrances and local history that were not available in any other format [...]. In most cases the individuals on the tapes had passed away [...]

We were [also] able to reach into the community and schools through the production of a community exhibit module that permitted the narratives to be heard by a wide audience. Our “Passages” exhibit, which featured oral histories in an exhibit about the various times that our region saw the crossing of people into its borders such as the Loyalists and the Patriotes, was very successful. Students came to the exhibit and were able to listen to a collection of stories on iPods while they examined the artefacts [...].

Through the SHOMI programme, we were able to create a dynamic and positive experience for the students and teachers. The multimedia exhibit was presented at a time of year that the museum is traditionally closed for the season. By opening our doors to students for this exhibit, the museum was lively and busy with a sense of purpose and we increased our attendance by 100% [...]. Since that exhibit, we have loaned the modules and the recordings to teachers for in-class programmes which have again been successful. The SHOMI project has been a very positive way to collaborate and develop relationships with schools in our community.

On behalf of the Missisquoi Museum [...] I offer my continued support for QAHN's efforts in keeping historical societies and heritage groups linked across the province. We were honoured to think that our historical society could collaborate with your organization and play a role in the broader understanding of our heritage, history and place in Quebec.”<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, Michael Cooper, president of Maison Fairbairn House in Wakefield, Quebec, had the following to say about his organization’s involvement in SHOMI:

“I take pleasure in confirming the value of the SHOMI project in which Fairbairn House participated for our first outreach project. As you know, the house is currently undergoing the necessary renovations to become a heritage centre serving the Lower Gatineau Valley. Our mandate is to ensure that the stories of this valley are known, understood, and appreciated [...]

We know that operating a “historic house museum” from May to October would limit school use, so we are planning an outreach program, which will ensure that schools, students and educators have access to our services year-round. Consequently we were delighted to benefit from the SHOMI project, which was judged a huge success by the participating school communities.

Schools in the Gatineau Valley serve small rural populations spread over a large area. As a result, in-school resources are limited, and experiential learning opportunities infrequent. The SHOMI project brought skilled experts to the three classes involved,

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<sup>9</sup> Communication, Missisquoi Museum to Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, March 8, 2012.

provided new technology in both hardware and software, and focused on new skills and outcomes [...]

I can confirm the high interest in the oral history and digital photography components, and the creativity in preparing both the websites and dramatic bilingual posters, now hanging proudly on view.

The value of funding such unique initiatives in remote rural Anglophone communities in Quebec cannot be overstated. In future, we at Fairbairn House will rely on such programs to develop tools and resources for our communities [...] We look forward to working with QAHN on future projects for cultural development.”<sup>10</sup>

***StoryNet:***

This year, QAHN received funding from the Cultural Development Fund for an initiative called StoryNet. Spanning the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 fiscal years, this \$216,000 project – like SHOMI – is bringing together partners in the heritage and cultural fields all across Quebec.

Together, QAHN and its partners are exploring, gathering and presenting the stories that are important to Quebec's far-flung English-speaking communities and thereby contributing to strengthening the arts, culture and heritage of these communities.

Among other partner organizations, this initiative is bringing together the Quebec Writer's Federation (QWF), the English Language Arts Network (ELAN), local museums and heritage groups, and other partners such as CBC Radio and the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), to develop and promote creative non-fiction, programs for broadcast radio, and documentary films by English-speaking Quebec creators. Together, QAHN and its partners are contributing to the cultural development of official minority language communities in which nearly one million Canadians live.

StoryNet content is focusing on people, experiences, memories and events in a range of voices, and is seeking to adhere to the highest technical and editorial standards. Its approach is to foster the creation of strong original narratives from across Quebec's minority English-speaking communities.

Although we are still in the early stages of this exciting project, there is already a great deal of interest among partner organizations. Guy Rodgers, executive director of the English Language Arts Network (ELAN), which is collaborating with QAHN to work with emerging and established documentary film producers, is very enthusiastic. The StoryNet initiative, he writes, “promises to be an exciting project.”<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Lori Schubert, executive director of the Quebec Writers Federation (QWF), another StoryNet partner, is working to develop a new non-fiction writing mentorship

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<sup>10</sup> Communication, Maison Fairbairn House to Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, March 7, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Communication, English Language Arts Network to Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, February 2012.

program for future contributors to *Quebec Heritage News* magazine. “Things are going too well. I have a feeling we're going to get a lot more than 35 applications.....,” Schubert writes. “Thanks again for the opportunity to work with QAHN on this great project!”<sup>12</sup>

***Significant Objects for Telling Identity (SOFTI) – \*\*pending funding through the Cultural Development Fund:***

Like other projects funded through the Cultural Development Fund (and other funding envelopes), the Significant Objects for Telling Identity (SOFTI) initiative will, by its nature, entail a broad collaboration among QAHN’s province-wide network of museums and local heritage groups. The idea is to create a collective portrait of the culture and heritage of Quebec's disparate English-speaking minority.

In a nutshell, each participant will be asked to select one object, document, image, or work of art from its collection that represents a significant facet of Quebec Anglophone culture and heritage. In all, QAHN’s partners will develop 100 “stories.” Collectively, these will tell the “story” of English-speaking Quebec through the lens of that community's most significant cultural artefacts. Submissions will describe the artefacts. More importantly, however, they will explore the context behind them. And while some artefacts will have great intrinsic value, others will be selected more for their cultural significance.

Diverse media -- text, images, digital audio and video, and a variety of multimedia applications -- will be employed to create a unique, interactive, bilingual on-line resource called "English Quebec through 100 Cultural Artefacts." This website will bring together the communities that make up English Quebec, and (through artefacts and connected stories) give Canadians across the country a greater understanding of the contributions of this minority community to Canadian society.

In conjunction with this on-line resource, QAHN and its partners will publish an illustrated book and companion DVD, featuring stories, images and documentaries about English Quebec through the filter of that community’s most significant cultural artefacts. These will be distributed to public libraries across Canada.

Finally, QAHN will hold a Quebec-wide competition to encourage students to submit their own "Significant Artefacts" to a special, interactive youth section of the “100 Objects” website. Students will be invited to reflect about culture and heritage as they relate to their local communities, families, environment, and so on. Prizes will be awarded for the best entries.

Like all QAHN initiatives, Significant Objects for Telling Identity (SOFTI) is designed to assist the Network in the pursuance of its priority goals and the goals of Quebec’s English-speaking heritage community. And like other major QAHN initiatives, this one has received overwhelming support from Quebec’s English-language heritage community.

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<sup>12</sup> Communication, Quebec Writers Federation to Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, February 2012.

Charles Bury, president of the Eaton Corner Museum in the Eastern Townships, expressed his organization's enthusiasm for the project as follows:

“In a world of mass media, small and rural communities are often invisible. This is doubly true when they belong to cultural minorities – in this case even a minority within a minority. Outside Montreal, Quebec's English-speaking community is thinly spread, consisting of roughly 280,000 people living in an area larger than all the Atlantic provinces together. Local newspapers exist in only a handful of towns, and most of this area is served by the same single Quebec-wide English-language radio and television stations.

As a result, many English speakers are unable to express their cultural origins in any meaningful way. Projects like this one [SOFTI] thus contribute to community well-being as well as heritage awareness and education. They also enable people outside English Quebec to learn about this unique minority culture.

Members of heritage groups are generally middle-aged or older. The inclusion of students in the SOFTI project will give it a multi-generational aspect. This is as important in small communities as big ones, especially in a time when families are often divided and re-divided.

I am familiar with the small historical societies and other community groups all over Quebec which belong to QAHN, and I can assure you that if this project goes ahead it will be well received in every corner of the province.”<sup>13</sup>

Similar sentiments have been expressed by other heritage organizations all across Quebec. Mary Robertson, curator of the Cascapedia Museum in the Gaspé, for example, had this to say about this initiative:

“This project will give a voice to many of the stories that have enriched the lives of Anglophones. It will bring to life many of the artefacts that will highlight our identity as an English minority within a province dominated by a Francophone population. Its presentation will encourage more participation and will allow us to form partnerships within the heritage community. It will create a dialogue that will educate, entertain and give us a sense of pride [...]

As a small organization, we are faced with many of the same difficult challenges faced by English-speaking communities throughout Quebec. At most times, we feel that we are struggling to maintain our mandate with nowhere to turn. I feel that the only way that we can make a difference is by working with other groups such as QAHN which has proven its dedication to Anglophone communities by giving us a voice, recognition and support. It is of vital importance that we work together [...] so that together we have the opportunity to increase the public's appreciation of Quebec's minority Anglophone heritage.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Communication, Eaton Corner Museum to Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, November 13, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Communication, Cascapedia River Museum to Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, November 11, 2011.

**Conclusion:**

Without the Canadian government's Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013, many of the highly innovative, highly enriching, heritage projects outlined above, would, quite simply, never have gotten off the ground.

Designed and overseen by the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, with the support, input and active involvement of dozens of local and regional partner-organizations working all across Quebec, these projects have had (and have) one thing as their primary concern and goal: the preservation, enhancement and promotion of the culture and heritage of English-language communities in the province.

As QAHN stated before the Senate Committee on Official Languages in September 2010, and we repeat it here, "We all know and recognize that one's history becomes part of one's culture, and shared experiences over generations are what provide a context for us and a sense of identity."<sup>15</sup>

Projects, such as those funded through the Roadmap, and others, are absolutely essential if we as a society are to have any chance of preserving our most vulnerable minority-language communities.

***Submitted by:***

*Matthew Farfan, Executive Director  
Roderick MacLeod, Past-President  
Kevin O'Donnell, President  
Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN)  
Ottawa, April 5, 2012*

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<sup>15</sup> Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, cited in *The Vitality of Quebec's English-Speaking Communities: from Myth to Reality*, Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, 2011, 44.

## **Appendix I: QAHN Core Member Organizations (2012):**

Aylmer Heritage Association  
 Beaufort-Beaconsfield Historical Society  
 Bibliothèque et Archives nationales  
 Brome County Historical Society  
 Canadian Jewish Congress-Archives  
 Cascapedia River Museum  
 Chateaugay Valley Historical Society  
 Christ Church Rawdon  
 Comité Culturel de Austin  
 Compton County Historical Museum Society  
 Council of Anglophone of Magdalen Islanders  
 Cowansville Historical Society  
 Exporail Canadian Railway Museum  
 Fairbairn House Heritage Centre  
 Gaspesian British Heritage Village  
 Gatineau Valley Historical Society  
 Georgeville Historical Society  
 Greenwood Centre for Living History  
 Harrington Harbour Tourism Assoc.  
 Haskell Free Library and Opera House  
 Hemmingford Archives/Archives Room  
 Heritage Gaspé / Heritage Gaspésie  
 Heritage Kinnear's Mills  
 Heritage Lower St-Lawrence  
 Heritage New Carlisle  
 Heritage Maritime Canada  
 Hudson Historical Society  
 Irish Heritage Quebec  
 Irish Protestant Benevolent Society  
 Knox Church Crystal Falls Memorial Fund  
 La Société d'histoire de Sherbrooke  
 La Société d'histoire et de généalogie des pays d'en Haut  
 Lennoxville-Ascot Historical Society  
 Literary & Historical Society of Quebec / Morin Centre  
 Malvern Cemetery Company  
 Miner Heritage Farm / Ferme Héritage Miner  
 Missisquoi Historical Society  
 Morin Heights Historical Association  
 Mount Royal Cemetery Company  
 Mulgrave & Derry Historical Society  
 Musée de la Civilisation  
 Musée des beaux-arts de Sherbrooke  
 Musée McCord Museum  
 Norway Bay Historical Society  
 The Old North Church Cemetery Association  
 Park Extension Historical Society  
 Patrimoine Ascot Heritage  
 Patrimoine Huntingville-Heritage Huntingville  
 Pontiac Historical Society

Potton Heritage Association  
 Projet Patrimoine  
 Quebec Family History Society  
 Quebec Historical Corps  
 Rawdon Historical Society  
 Richmond County Historical Society  
 Sainte-Anne-du-Bout-de-L'Ile Historical Society  
 Scotch Road Cemetery Association  
 Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch UELAC  
 Société d'histoire de Pointe-Saint Charles  
 Société d'histoire Heritage Sutton  
 St. Patrick's Society of Montreal  
 Stanstead Historical Society  
 Uplands Cultural & Heritage Centre  
 Westmount Historical Association

### **Appendix II: Affiliate Member Organizations (2012):**

Atwater Library  
 Bishop's University Acquisitions  
 Bishop's University – Eastern Townships Resource Centre (ETRC)  
 Coasters Association  
 Committee for Anglophone Social Actions (CASA)  
 Douglas Community Centre  
 English-Speaking Catholic Council  
 Laurentian Club of Canada  
 Lennoxville Volunteer Firefighters Association  
 Maril Branch, QWI  
 Megantic English-Speaking Community Development  
 Milby Women's Institute  
 MRC d'Argenteuil  
 Musée de la nature et des sciences de Sherbrooke  
 North Shore Community Association  
 Price Patterson Ltd.  
 Quebec Drama Federation  
 Quebec Federation of Home and School  
 Quebec Protestant Education Research Project  
 South Shore Community Partners  
 Townshippers' Association  
 Theatre Wakefield  
 Trafalgar School for Girls  
 Walbridge Conservation Area Foundation

### **Appendix III: Individual Members (2012)**

In addition to core and affiliate member-organizations, about 260 individuals are currently members of QAHN, as of April 2012.