

# NEWSLETTER

## LEA ROBACK FOUNDATION



No. 2, July 2010



*I've always stood alongside my fellow workers. I never tried to escape from the rank and file. I wanted to be able to say "we" and for it to mean "we."*

Lea Roback

Lea Roback lived her life inspired by great ideals centering on women's rights, social justice and world peace. She always believed in education as an instrument of emancipation and freedom. On November 3, 1993, for her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, Lea's friends and fellow activists gave her a birthday gift: a foundation dedicated to helping economically disadvantaged women pursue or resume their studies.

Major partners of the Lea Roback Foundation: the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN); the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ); the Sœurs de Saint-Joseph; the Fondation Solstice, as well as a foundation and religious congregation that wish to remain anonymous.

Partners of the Foundation: the Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec – FIQ; the Fédération nationale des enseignants et des enseignantes du Québec (FNEEQ–CSN); the Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire (CSQ); the Œuvres Régis-Vernet; the Sœurs de Saint-Joseph de Saint-Vallier; the Syndicat des conseillères et conseillers de la CSQ; Ms. Suzanne Bélanger; Ms. Lucille Panet-Raymond, as well as a religious congregation that wishes to remain anonymous.

## *Foundation Newsflashes*

### ***Redesign of our Web site*** [www.fondationlearoback.org](http://www.fondationlearoback.org)

The redesign of our Web site is under way. There is now a separate French home page and a separate English home page, which will make the information more accessible. It will also now be possible to donate on line, through the foundation CanadaHelps.org.

### ***Finally, the film about Lea Roback on DVD***

Sophie Bissonnette's film about Lea Roback, "A Vision in the Darkness", is now available on DVD. Made in 1991, the film was awarded the Prix Cinéma, Office des communications sociales in 1992, the Prix Séquences Martini in 1991 and was given an Honourable Mention at the Golden Gate Awards in San Francisco, in 1992.

### ***The 2010 Scholarships***

This year, 900 letters and scholarship application forms were sent out to various community organizations and women's groups. The Foundation received 60 eligible scholarship applications and granted a record number of 19 scholarships. The final list of the scholarship recipients is not yet available; we are still waiting for enrolment confirmations from a few of the recipients.

### ***The 2009-2010 fund raising campaign***



Marie-France Bazzo was the Foundation's spokesperson for the 2009-2010 fundraising campaign.

Once again, the fundraising campaign was a resounding success and enabled us to collect a total of \$20,800 for 2009.

We wish to once again thank all the people, Unions and institutions who made a donation to our fundraising campaign.

### ***A Quebec City street named to honour a friend of the Foundation***

A street in the Lebourgneuf district of Quebec City will now bear the name of Hélène-Pedneault. The decision was made last March.

## *Our 2009 scholarship recipients*

### ***We once again congratulate:***

#### **Chantale Proulx, 42 years old, from Drummondville**

From AFÉAS to community kitchens, from food banks to tenants committees, Chantale has always been involved in community action. She is currently active in the Fédération des associations de familles monoparentales et recomposées du Québec. As her four children have now become autonomous young adults, she can now focus her attention on her own needs.

After discovering industrial design at the Partance women's employment centre, Chantale decided to pursue her studies to earn a vocational diploma (DEP) in industrial design at the Centre de formation Paul-Rousseau in Drummondville.

#### **Martine Théberge, 44 years old, from Saint-Hyacinthe**

A single-parent mother and grandmother, Martine is active in the Maisons d'aide et d'hébergement pour femmes victimes de violence.

After working in a wide variety of jobs that never enabled her to achieve reasonable economic security, Martine now wishes to earn a D.C.S. in social studies at the CEGEP de Saint-Hyacinthe, so that she can acquire the skills to help her land a steady job and improve her situation.

#### **Mélissa Bélisle, 18 years old, from Mont-Laurier**

Her dedication to the struggle against violence against women began when she was 14 years old, in the course of her extracurricular activities; she has been active since then in Élan, the Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel in Mont-Laurier.

Firm in her convictions that every individual deserves respect, her community involvement has taken many forms. She recently enrolled in the CEGEP de Saint-Jérôme to pursue her studies to earn a D.C.S. in social work.

#### **Sylvie Malenfant, 47 years old, from Joliette**

A mother of a 9 year old boy, Sylvie is a member of several committees at the Maison Pauline-Bonin, as a resident-participant. In 2005, she decided to return to school to earn her high school diploma and now she can say: mission accomplished.

Very motivated and determined to work with children who have undergone sexual or physical abuse, or who have learning or behavioural disorders, she is enrolled today in the CEGEP régional de Lanaudière, in Joliette, to earn a D.C.S. in special education.

#### **Yvette Medzogo Mbogo, 41 years old, from Montreal**

A native of Cameroon, Yvette is a permanent resident; her three children stayed in Africa with members of her family. In 2009, she participated in a homework help program at the Maison l'Aurore, in addition to doing volunteer work at various cultural events in Montreal. From 2001 to 2008, she helped create an organization to help street children in her native country.

Yvette has enrolled in the early childhood education program at the CEGEP du Vieux-Montréal, with the goal of earning an Attestation of Collegial Studies. She chose this intensive program so as to promptly earn the qualifications she would need to earn a living and provide support to her children, while continuing her volunteer work with groups like Auberge Shalom.

#### **Sarah Côté, 28 years old, from Montreal**

A single-parent mother of two young children, Sarah has helped tutor young girls in one of the centres run by Batshaw Youth and Family Centres and she took charge of organizing a hot meal program for some 15 parents and children under the auspices of À deux mains / Head & Hands.

Sarah is currently enrolled in the bachelor of applied human sciences program at Concordia University. She hopes to work with youth with special needs or young addicts, but she is also interested in journalism and writing.

### **Marie-Lune Martineau, 34 years old, from Stornoway, in the Eastern Townships**

A mother of three school age children, Marie-Lune has been active for many years in various women's groups in the Lac-Mégantic region, including the Maison de la famille and the Centre des femmes.

Marie-Lune has enrolled in the bachelor of social service program at the Université de Sherbrooke. This diploma will enable her to develop a new set of skills which, added to her experience as a volunteer in the community, will improve her chances of landing a steady job, with a good salary that corresponds to her many talents.

### **Marisol Vera Munoz, 41 years old, from Montreal**

A native of Chile and mother of a 10 year old girl, Marisol has been a permanent resident in Canada since 2006. As of her arrival, she got involved in the volunteer program at the Centre des femmes in Montreal, and then in a program to raise awareness about the prevention of conjugal violence in the Latin American community, amongst other activities, and not counting a lot of volunteer work she did with various organizations in Chile, prior to her emigration.

Committed to helping others make their dreams come true, Marisol is pursuing her studies towards a bachelor of social service at the Université de Montréal.

### **Nzeba Ntumba, 35 years old, from Montreal**

A native of the Congo, Nzeba is now a permanent resident and became a volunteer community activist in 2006 in the Réseau de communication pour la prévention des actes criminels.

Wishing to continue her work in helping recently arrived immigrants to Canada and in providing accurate information about cultural diversity, she is now doing a certificate in immigration and interethnic relations at UQÀM.

### **Jadatah Robertson, 21 years old, from Roxboro**

During high school, Jadatah volunteered in a wide assortment of groups. For example, she participated in a homework help program at the Tyndale St-George Community Centre, in the Little Burgundy neighbourhood, close to downtown Montreal.

Jadatah is pursuing here studies in printing and digital layout at the Centre de technologie Rosemount.

### **Jenny McPherson-Bacon, 24 years old, from Bécancour**

Originally from the Innu community of Pessamit, on the Québec North Shore, Jenny has been involved as a volunteer in organizing activities and providing food services at the centre d'éducation des adultes Saint-Laurent, in Sainte-Marie-de-Blandford, near Bécancour, where she was going to school.

Jenny has enrolled in an intensive program to earn a D.C.S. in special education at the College Lafèche, in Trois-Rivières. She wants to become an educator for youth with special needs.

### **Mélanie de Lagrave, 32 years old, from Saint-Jérôme**

A mother of four children of whom three are living with her, Mélanie has done volunteer work at Trève pour elle, a group that helps women who have been victims of violence, as well as at Suicide-Action and Maison d'Ariane.

Putting her own house in order after going through a difficult period, Mélanie now wants to learn new skills to help in her work assisting women and children who have been victims of violence. Her current goal is to finish high school as part of the general adult training program given by the regional school commission in the Marchand building, in Saint-Jérôme.

### **Jennifer Dupuis, 24 years old, from Montreal**

A mother of a 5 year old boy, Jennifer does volunteer work with 12 to 17 year olds (Air Cadets), women with special needs at the Chez Doris support centre and with a senior citizen through The Yellow Door / La porte jaune community organization.

She is currently working on a bachelor of social work degree at McGill University, because she feels that resources are sorely lacking for the number of people who need help; her own personal experience has also shown her to what extent a social worker can have a positive influence upon a young person's life and that of their community.

### **Stéphanie Sylvain, 20 years old, from Montreal**

Active in environmental causes, Stéphanie is also involved in a group helping disabled students in her College.

She studies multimedia techniques in College Maisonneuve and hopes one day to create web sites and less violent video games.

## *An eminent friend of the Foundation Passed away in 2008, H el ene Pedneault is with us still*

H el ene Pedneault passed away on December 1, 2008. Born in Jonqui ere on April 1, 1952, this larger-than-life Quebecker, indivisibly a woman of words and a woman of action, an ind ependantiste, journalist and writer, an environmentalist and feminist, is with us still, her commitment and her example soar above her passing.

H el ene Pedneault was a woman of principle ... who knew no bounds. She was a troublemaker, exuberant, committed and whose indignation flowed through her veins, the potential of rebellion, the power of the word. The causes that she held dear were many and fundamental; her battles were determined and genuine. Posthumously named *Patriot of the Year* in 2009, by the Soci et e Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montr eal, her name remains indelibly weaved into the *Vie en rose* and the Coalition Eau Secours.

Every single day, situations would arise that would drive her to grab her pen or the closest microphone to denounce, convince, or rouse the people around her. We have now been robbed of her fury and indignation, of her momentous passion, her mordant sense of humour and her penetrating analyses.

One of the very early Ind ependantistes, in her "Lettre d'amour au Qu ebec"; her pen dripped in emotion, she wrote: "Love is what makes me want you to be free. Every single lover the world over says this to themselves. I want you to be a poet, a world traveller, a creator, unlike any other, with arms wide open and words that soar. Prove to me that a country about to be born is not required to adopt the erstwhile reflexes of a country that centuries have fraught and scarred. You and I, we will invent, I promise. As yet unseen. Unparalleled. Lovers all."

The feminist that she was, the bard who wrote "Les chroniques d elinquantes" in *La vie en rose* and "Bread and roses, to change the world [...] So that we may rest, bread and roses", that became a theme song of the women's movement, couldn't surrender, notwithstanding the silence that death imposed upon her, her feminist commitment that was so very vital and unwavering; she just keeps on going.

It is through such a lens that we should understand her gesture of making the Lea Roback Foundation her universal legatee. By associating her name with the Foundation, created to honour a pioneering trade unionist and feminist that she loved and admired, and that, each year, grants scholarships to socially and economically disadvantaged women who are active in their community, she is giving a concrete form to words that she had previously penned:

**"Education is more than a right, it's a duty."**



## *A Tribute to H el ene Pedneault* *An exceptional benefit evening*

**AMOURS ET AUTRES SOULÈVEMENTS**, an unforgettable evening for the 275 people in attendance, was held at the Lion d'Or last March 9 to pay tribute to H el ene Pedneault, a well-known writer and polemicist, who passed away in December 2008 and bequeathed her worldly belongings to the Lea Roback Foundation. This most worthy commemorative and funding gesture helped collect some \$8,000.



In a production staged by Alice Ronfard, a dozen stage artists and vocalists performed and presented at no cost numerous delectable texts written by H el ene and sang a few of her favourite songs. An assortment of poetic, political, feminist and defiant numbers were performed, with background music by Philippe Noireaut, majestically and eloquently came to life with poignant renditions performed by Emmanuel Bilodeau, Sophie Cadieux,  velyne de la Cheneli re, Sophie Faucher, Andr ee Lachapelle, Sylvie De Morais, Mani Soleymanlou and Yves Souti eres.

The voices and songs of Ren e Claude, Monique Fauteux, Marie-Claire S guin and Sylvie Tremblay were likewise moving and inspiring. A warm expression of our deepest thanks to all these artists.



The foundation is especially grateful for the collaboration of Nicole Boudreau, a dear friend of H  l  ne, who was a member of the organizing committee for the evening, as well as the generous contribution of Ariane   mond, the creative force behind the evening and host of the event, who was also a member of the organizing committee.

Several amongst us will surely recall for a very long time an excerpt from a text written by H  l  ne Ped-neault for the World March of Women in 2000, and that was dedicated to Lea Roback:

“We’re not going back, never.  
We’re uncompromising, unwavering, immortal and from this day  
forward irrepressible.  
Our revolution is irreversible.  
You can take that to the bank.”





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