

Citizen commitment and community life in the Municipality of Pontiac

Maude-Emmanuelle Lambert

A committed municipality

As found elsewhere, the citizens' first concerns were first oriented towards communications, and particularly towards the development and maintenance of roads and streets, as shown in the minutes of the first village Council meetings that will eventually form the Municipality of Pontiac. Nevertheless, one of the oldest forms of citizens' involvement within the municipality is sports related. In the Municipality of Pontiac, and particularly in the village of Quyon, organized sports go back to the turn of the 20th Century, with the establishment of the first hockey team that was active at least since 1902.

During the 1910s, several groups of Women's Institutes are formed in Pontiac, first in Wyman (1913), followed by Beechgrove, Eardley, Breckenridge and Quyon. Very present in schools, they encouraged the teaching of basic agriculture and life skills to children, and their work was also indispensable to the agricultural fairs in the region. Created in 1919 by a group of citizens, for 80 years the C Division of the Pontiac Agricultural Society has coordinated the Quyon's Agricultural Fair. Held for the first time on September 7 and 8, 1920, the "Quyon Fair" was one of the most popular events in the Ottawa Valley.

Near the end of the 1930s, the concentrated social fabric of Quyon was the development of a rather rudimentary fire department. A major fire in the early 1950s, which destroyed a large part of the village, lead the citizens to ask for the purchase of new equipment and the creation of an additional volunteer fire brigade. Long served by firefighters from Aylmer, Eardley seemingly is equipped with a fire department only in the mid-1980s. The establishment of new residents in the Breckenridge area is what influences the construction of a new fire station in that area in 1995.

Various community support organizations emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1956, a group consisting of seven veterans set up local 231 of the Canadian Legion. A service-oriented organization, the Lions Club is created in 1967, and in 1983, its female subsidiary, the Lionettes receives its charter. Since then, these citizens groups have played a major role in organizing sports and recreational activities for the youth, in supporting various causes and groups through fundraisers and in the social and cultural life of the community (coordinating the winter carnival, parades, community suppers, dances, etc.).

The youth involvement has materialized through the Scouts movement, whose presence in the municipality dates back at least to the late 1950s. A Calf Club also existed in the 1960s, that later became the 4-H Club. Currently, two citizens groups work together with the municipality in order to offer activities for the youth, that is, to the C Kidz Can and Groupe Action Jeunesse of Lusville. The latter is the organizer of the winter carnival, an event that has been held in the municipality since the 1950s.

The socio-cultural association of Lusville has held various social and mutual support activities since at least the beginning of the 1980s. Established in 1995, the Family Centre offers a place to meet, exchange views and offers educational activities for all ages.

Community centres and libraries

The living room of one of the ladies from the Womens' Institute, a neighbour's barn, the Town Hall, even the village school and church have long been used as a community centre. It wasn't until the early 1970s that the various hamlets and villages which make up the Municipality of Pontiac today, have acquired or constructed buildings to accommodate various recreational or social activities. The model school in Onslow (known today as the Bert Kennedy Centre) was renovated by the municipality and made available (from 1976) to various groups, such as the Quyon Women's Institute and the Quyon Senior Citizens' Club. The Lions Hall (also known as the "Beach Barn") has been leased by the municipality to the Lions Club since 1972. The Lions Club provides the maintenance of the building and rents it out to the various groups who wish to hold events and recreational activities. The Canadian Legion has owned its own building on John Street since the early 1960s.

The Lusville Community Centre was inaugurated on February 9, 1980. Although this Centre today bears the name of Marcel Lavigne, the Mayor in office at the time of finalizing the project, took shape under the administration of William Burke, the first Mayor of the Municipality of Pontiac (1975-1979) who before that, was the Mayor of Quyon (1959-1975)¹. The library was inaugurated a few years later, on June 11, 1989 by Mayor Lavigne and the Pontiac MP, Robert Middlemiss². The Quyon Library, for its part, has changed location several times. It was first located in the building in front of the Saint-Mary's school (which is now being used by municipal employees), to then move temporarily to the old Convent of the Sisters of Saint-Mary's, before finally settling in the building on John Street in 1999. A community hall is also included in the new Fire station in Breckenridge since it opened in 1996.

¹ Shirley Archambault, « Lusville Leader », *The Equity*, January 3, 1980; « Lusville community centre officially opened », *The Equity*, February 9, 1980.

² Denise Belec, « Lusville inaugurates its new library », *The Equity*, June 14, 1989.

Other areas for leisure activities and socializing

The recreational parks, including the Lusville Park and the old fairgrounds where the Quyon Agricultural Fair used to be held, are at the heart of the community and sports sociability. Not only do these parks host sports and friendly competitions and sports training sessions for children, they are also often community gathering places for various cultural, social or musical events. The winter carnivals and community days are held in these parks and every year the JamFest is held on the exhibition grounds.