

Parades, winter carnivals and other festive events

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The Ottawa Valley is renowned for its musicians and festive atmosphere; a tradition that dates back to the time of logging camps. Thus, the term “shanty”, used to describe forest workers, actually comes from the word “*chanter*” (meaning to sing). The Municipality of Pontiac, and more specifically the village of Quyon, have long been perceived as the “Fun Town of the Ottawa Valley”. Today, musicians from the Valley meet during the Quyon Jam Fest. From Breckenridge to Quyon, parades, carnivals and other festive events are part of community life.

The art of celebrating....

Populated by Irish, Scottish, French and English Canadians of various religious denominations, the Eardley and Onslow Townships, which later became the Municipality of Pontiac, offered a diverse picture in terms of tradition and festivities.

The Irish heritage is especially alive. The day of the patron Saint of the Catholic Irish, St-Patrick, was celebrated with great pomp then, as it is now. This celebration in Quyon dates back to over 100 years. For many years, Gavan’s Hotel has welcomed the opportunity to invite Irish musicians for the occasion. In September, there is even a celebration to mark the “Half Way to St. Patrick’s Day”¹.

In Eardley-Luskville, a more “sombre” heritage had long been part of the parades. Present since at least the middle of the 19th Century, a group of the Orange Order organized, every July 12th, a parade commemorating the victory of Guillaume d’Orange over the Irish Catholics in 1690. According to a lady of Luskville, these parades still existed in the 1950s. On this occasion, the horses’ shoes were painted red and the Catholics (just as she) preferred staying inside their homes.

St-John the Baptist Day is also celebrated in the municipality². For example, in 1980, the citizens were invited to take part in two days of festivities in Luskville. To inaugurate the festivities, a dance at the new Community Centre is held, followed by a bonfire. The following day began with the traditional Mass, followed by an auction held on the Church Square. In the afternoon,

¹ Manon Leroux, *L’autre Outaouais* (Gatineau, Pièce sur pièce, 2012), p. 166.

² On this holiday’s origin, please consult the article by Myriam Fontaine, « [La fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste](#) », *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.

a soapbox race was organized as well as a horseshoe tournament. A bean supper was offered to the citizens, and a crowd of 500 gathered to attend a night of music and dance held in front of the log house built by Armand Ducharme, a resident of Luskville. This eventful day ended at a campfire, as tradition dictated³.

A well-established tradition in the Pontiac community, Canada Day for many marks the beginning of summer. It is difficult to know when the first celebrations were held in the municipality. However, it is very likely that they coincided with the end of the 1950s, at the time when the first celebrations on Parliament Hill were organized, which was once called “Dominion Day”, and became “Canada Day” in 1982.

Quyon being the centre of festivities held in the municipality, has a committee dedicated to organizing Canada Day and sees to the planning several months ahead. The parade, to which not only automobiles participate, but motorcycles, recreational vehicles and horses, kicks off the festivities. The parade always ends with the raising of the flag at the ferry dock. It is then followed by music and animation close to the Lions Hall, until the traditional fireworks begin at 10:00 p.m. In 2002, a regatta was also held on the 1st of July. This event was organized jointly by the Constance Bay and the Quyon branches of the Royal Canadian Legion⁴.

The Christmas parade

Christmas celebrations have been a longstanding tradition in the Municipality of Pontiac, to which businesses, community groups and citizens take part. In the 1950s, thanks to the generosity of Quyon shopkeepers, a giant Christmas tree was decorated. The children were invited to greet Santa Claus who distributed gifts and candy, while a choir sang Christmas carols⁵. A parade has been held in Quyon, at least since the 1980s⁶. In 1990, nearly 30 groups (organizations, businesses or families) participated in the Christmas Parade, including the Fire Department⁷.

Prizes are awarded to the participants in the parade. In 1994, it was organized by the Lions Club and winners in the “Non-profit organization” category were the Quyon Lionettes for their “Family is Forever” float. In the family category, Minor Chevrier won first prize for his horse-

³ « Luskville celebrates Saint-Jean-Baptiste », *The Equity*, July 2, 1980.

⁴ Michael Lloyd, « Shawville, Quyon celebrates Canada Day », *The Equity*, July 4, 2002.

⁵ « Community Christmas Tree », *The Equity*, s. d. [1952].

⁶ « Christmas Parade at Quyon », *The Equity*, December 23, 1980.

⁷ « Quyon’s Christmas Parade », *The Equity*, December 18, 1990.

drawn float “The Night before Christmas”, while the McCann Hardware Store won in the business category for “I’ll be home for Christmas”⁸.

In the year 2000, close to 100 children took part in the parade. The Quyon Family Centre won first prize for their float with children in elves costumes, hand-made by parents and volunteers⁹. Since 2004, this event has been held during the evening in order to provide a parade of lights¹⁰. Still organized by the Lions and Lionettes in the 2010s, the Santa Claus parade consists of fifteen to thirty floats. Upon arrival at the Lions Hall, participants and spectators are invited to drink a nice cup of hot chocolate to warm up, courtesy of the Lionettes.

Winter carnivals

A winter carnival has been organized in Quyon since at the least the 1950s, and in Luskville since the 1980s. In 1953, the Quyon winter carnival was held at the St-Mary’s school ice rink. A king and queen were crowned, and various competitions were held including a pairs skating competition, speed skating as well as hockey games. Step-dancing, square-dancing and singing performances were also presented by school children¹¹.

Sponsored by the Lions Club, in 1970 the Quyon winter carnival offered hockey games on the ice rink for the boys and broom-ball for the girls, followed by a supper and a dance. A queen and princess were also chosen among the young girls¹². In 1978, ten young girls competed for the title of Quyon carnival queen. Among them, Gail Gavan won first place in the “talent” category for singing. However, it’s Joanne Daley who was crowned queen for all categories of the competition¹³. Tug of war competitions, community dinners and dancing were part of these winter celebrations¹⁴.

In 1999, the Quyon winter carnival was managed by the Quyon Coop and offered a diversified three-day program, for both children and adults alike. A hockey tournament, encouraged by the Ottawa Senators’ mascot, a puppet show and a talent show (featuring more than 40 participants) were held on the premises of the Canadian Legion. The second day was devoted to toboggan races and various events in the snow. In the evening, a euchre tournament for the

⁸ Sylvia Bakker, « Santa makes last stop », *The Equity*, December 21, 1994.

⁹ Paul McGee and Heather Dickson, *The Equity*, December 13, 2000.

¹⁰ Paul McGee, « Quyon aglow in parade of lights », *The Equity*, December 15, 2004.

¹¹ « Sharon Stewart Crowned Queen at Quyon Winter Carnival », *Pontiac Advance*, March 15, 1955.

¹² « Hilda Scott crowned at Quyon Leos Carnival », *The Equity*, February 18, 1970.

¹³ « 'This whole County is a winner', says Max Keeping at Quyon », *The Equity*, March 1, 1978.

¹⁴ « Quyon Winter Carnival », *The Equity*, February 14, 1979.

adults was also organized by the Women's Institute. A friendly street hockey game was played between the Luskville and the Quyon Fire departments, as well as a volleyball game between the MRC des Collines Police department and the carnival's organizing committee¹⁵.

These events are also an opportunity to conduct fundraising campaigns. In the year 2000, the money raised during the winter carnival was used to replace the lighting at the Quyon baseball field. Activities similar to those held the previous year were offered. However, an article in the *Equity* mentions that the ice hockey tournament had gained popularity with children between the ages of 7 and 10 (girls and boys) whereas more than 12 teams competed in the street hockey competition. A craft show was also presented by the Quyon Family Centre and sleigh rides around the grounds were a real hit with the children¹⁶.

In 2003, the objective of the Quyon Sport and Recreation's Carnival was to raise funds for the maintenance of the Quyon Ensemble property¹⁷. In 2005, the organizing committee doubled its efforts to offer an original program in order to collect donations to build a new skating rink (or a skate board park for the summer) and for the purchase of a new play structure¹⁸.

In Luskville, a three-week winter carnival was organized in 1981. This edition included, among other events for women, a crochet and knitting contest, for the children – a snow sculpting competition, a 100-metre snow-shoe race event, a hockey tournament and a Valentine's Day dance. A mascot, named "Mr. Bonhomme" also attended the festivities. Five duchesses waiged a fierce battle to raise funds for the event: the one who sold the most crayons would be crowned queen¹⁹!

During the 1989 edition, the carnival was held over two weekends, a whole royal family was chosen, including a king, a queen and three children. A bingo and a billiard tournament, a lip sync contest, a skiing competition, ice hockey games and broom ball were all part of the carnival. A new mascot, Oscar, very popular with the children, livened up the festivities²⁰. The following year, a Poker Rally attracted 26 participants. They had to accomplish a trip from Luskville to Rivière-du-Loup and back by snowmobile²¹. As for the 1998 edition, in addition to

¹⁵ Paul McGee, « Quyon Carnival comeback a hit », *The Equity*.

¹⁶ Paul McGee, « Lights closer after carnival », *The Equity*, February 9, 2000.

¹⁷ Leah Miller, « Good, old fashioned fun at Quyon », *The Equity*, February 5, 2003.

¹⁸ Micheal Lloyd, *The Equity*, February 9, 2005.

¹⁹ S. Archambault, « Luskville winter carnival comes to a close », *The Equity*, February 18, 1981.

²⁰ Denise Belec, « Luskville Carnival », *Pontiac Journal*, February 15, 1989.

²¹ Denise Belec, « The Luskville carnival, a success despite the warm weather », *Pontiac Journal*, February 21, 1990.

the usual activities, it offered a lumberjack tournament, sleigh rides drawn by two Belgian horses, as well as an animator for toddlers²².

Since the 2000s, Groupe Action Jeunesse of Luskville has been the winter carnival organizer. Held in collaboration with the Municipality of Pontiac and Pontiac en Forme, the 2015 edition was much more focused on family activities. It offered skating, snow painting, sleigh rides and an ice fishing contest. A talent competition and a music concert with instruments that the young people fabricated themselves (Junkyard Symphony performance) also livened up the festivities that were held at the Luskville Community Centre²³.

For 35 years now, the Beechgrove Recreation Association, or the Beechgrove Rink Association has also been holding a day of winter activities (Fun Day) at their skating rink²⁴. For three generations, at the centre of this small community, the rink has become the place for games and friendly competition for children²⁵.

²² Sylvia Bakker, « Sunny skies for Luskville carnival », *The Equity*, February 11, 1998.

²³ Hamish McKillop, « Welcoming a winter wonderland », *The Equity*, February 4, 2015.

²⁴ Sonia Denis St-Amour and Mégane Lamothe-Bouchard, « The Pontiac carnivals », *Pontiac Journal*, March 12, 2014.

²⁵ Heather Dickson, « Kids enjoy family fun day at the Beechgrove rink », *The Equity*, February 23, 2011.