



INSTITUT

THOMAS MORE

INSTITUTE

2019-2020



Lifelong
Learning
in the Liberal
Arts

Éducation en
arts libéraux
tout au long de
la vie



ANNUAL REPORT



Québec 



UNIVERSITÉ
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OUR MANDATE

Founded in 1945, The Thomas More Institute (TMI) is a secular, liberal arts academic institution that offers adults of all ages opportunities to explore a wide variety of topics in university-level discussion courses.

TMI is dedicated to the principle that learning is a lifelong process and that people learn best from each other by listening, questioning and discussing in an environment where all perspectives are welcome.

Our outreach programs and special education events are designed to nurture curiosity, learning and social engagement, particularly for those who may feel socially isolated or for those seeking a different approach to

education. TMI's varied courses and activities are offered with the belief that intelligent inquiry and critical reflection are central to community and well-being.

Students who seek an alternative method of education have the opportunity to earn a Comprehensive Certificate from TMI or a Bachelor of Arts degree through TMI's affiliation with Bishop's University. Whether taking courses for credit or for pleasure, participants develop a stronger sense of community belonging, a new or renewed passion for lifelong learning and an understanding of other perspectives.



A Message from the **CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The 2019-20 academic year brought significant challenges to the Thomas More Institute, as well as proof of our considerable resilience. Even before Covid-19 hit in mid-March, we had been continuing our work of further developing the Institute to respond to the interests and concerns of our community in the 21st century. In 2018, the Board of Directors made a decision to reinvigorate TMI by hiring full-time Executive and Academic Directors. Both Dina Souleiman and Jonathan Powers have worked together with our strong community of volunteers to stabilize our finances, professionalize our office staff and outreach, and reinforce our academic programs and offerings. This decision, while clearly essential for TMI's future, has come at a cost: we have been running a significant deficit for several years now.

The TMI Board of Directors, together with our Executive Director, is working hard to respond to this situation. We are in the process of creating a Strategic Plan for the Institute. Our Finance Committee, under the leadership of Dina Souleiman, has put in place a Financial Action Plan, and our Fundraising Committee is revamping our efforts to increase donations. TMI's Marketing Committee and a new Grants Committee are also working on plans to improve our financial situation.

Our Academic programming, led by Jonathan Powers and the Curriculum Committee, has continued its impressive work to support TMI's leaders and designers, to increase the variety and appeal of our offerings, and to forge new alliances with other Montreal cultural institutions.

In March, when the pandemic hit, the Institute mobilized quickly to have volunteers and staff in place for a swift response. After having been forced to cancel the final two weeks of classes for our Winter Term, and all of our courses for the Spring Term, TMI paused and reflected, and then pivoted, offering a number of free online activities: "TMI Connects," a weekly meeting bringing together TMIers and others to discuss issues of the day on Zoom; "The TMI Book Circle," a very popular monthly literary discussion; and a six-week course on Shakespeare. Additionally, TMI remained in touch with its community through its website, which was continually updated, and on social media. By all accounts, the Institute proved exceptionally flexible and resilient in the face of serious challenges.

The Executive Committee, the Board itself, and all of our supporting Committees quickly transferred their meetings to the Zoom platform. We are currently offering a full slate of courses via Zoom this fall, and registration as of this writing is already at 86%. To make sure our course leaders and students feel comfortable with the new technology, we have hosted several workshops to allow them to get used to participating on this virtual platform.

The Seniors Outreach Program, led by Jennifer MacGregor, deserves special mention. After running yet another successful year of programming to fifteen senior residences and community centres on the topic of "Food, Glorious Food: A Feast for the Mind," the program suffered two major setbacks: the loss of its central source of funding and the pandemic. Seniors program coordinator Jennifer MacGregor has generously agreed to donate her time this coming year to make possible the continuation of this program that is so important to so many seniors. She began planning in the spring to offer the program this coming year via Zoom, allowing seniors a safe way to engage in lively discussion and, as much as possible, to enjoy an important source of socialization.

This leads me to a final and crucial message: we owe a debt of gratitude to our key volunteers, our dedicated Directors and office staff, and our students for stepping up in the midst of a pandemic to keep the Institute alive and well. Without the hard work of all, we would not be able to offer our courses this term. As it is, we are proud to be able to reunite our community in our virtual classrooms. We could not have done it without the trust our community puts in us and without their dedication to curiosity and shared inquiry which undergirds our enterprise. I thank all of you for your support and look forward to continuing our adventure together in the Institute's 76th year. Be safe and be well in these uncertain times!

Carol Fiedler,
Chair of the Institute

OUR PROGRAMMING

ACADEMIC COURSES

Even though the Covid-19 pandemic forced us to close the institute towards the end of our winter term, we are still proud to say that over the 2019-20 Academic Year we had 255 students active in our programs, with a total of 403 registrations, in the 36 courses that were slated to be offered in Montreal, Pointe Claire and Gatineau. These courses were designed by our course designers in the fields of the liberal arts, which included credit and non-credit courses.

The uniqueness of the institute is that these courses are delivered in **a discussion group where students are invited to participate collaboratively in a process of shared inquiry and reflection.** At the centre of this process are carefully chosen readings representing different perspectives on the questions each group of participants has come together to explore. Participants engage in dialogue with each other, focusing on readings that typically represent a mix of historical materials, recent multidisciplinary scholarship, and literary explorations on a given theme.

VIRTUAL LEARNING

Since the pandemic forced the shutdown of our activities in March, we were forced to reflect on how we could adapt to meet the needs of our participants. Our spring period saw us launch several virtual projects that permitted our community to explore online learning, while breaking the isolation imposed by the lockdown. Combined, these successful projects **resulted in over 100 registrations: TMI Connects, a weekly thematic discussion group; The Book Circle, a literary discussion group that reviewed prominent authors; and our previously slated course, “Shakespeare in the Spring.”**

VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Given that the academic courses are predominantly delivered by our volunteer population, the training and development of these volunteers is an essential part of the institute’s mandate. The majority of our volunteers have an academic profile, most are retired professionals, and some still teach and lecture in Montreal educational institutions. With the vision of supporting our academic philosophy and to ensure the leaders and designers deliver the Thomas More method of lifelong learning, we offered this year:

An annual training and orientation for new course leaders.

A collaboration with the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts through their Educational Department

An in-house continuing education training on course design.

A professional development project with YES Montreal

A brainstorming session with our in-house designers and collaborative partners.

Two virtual townhall meetings, addressing the transition to online learning.

One-on-one coaching and mentoring for existing and new course leaders and designers.

For this year we had over 100 volunteers who devoted their time to TMI, delivering more than 13,000 hours of volunteer time in support of the institute.



SENIORS OUTREACH PROGRAM

Since 1975, TMI has offered the Seniors Outreach program. It is designed to reach isolated English-speaking seniors in the Montreal community. This year saw the unfortunate loss of the program funding; however, due to the dedication of our coordinator, who volunteered her time, the program was able to continue; The program is an adapted TMI course (shorter readings, larger print material etc.) with a specific theme, that is discussed over the fall and winter periods. The program operates out of 15 points of service, senior residences and drop-in centres. Over 200 seniors participated in the program, helping them to reinforce cognitive skills, to break isolation, and to assist them in forging new friendships, all the while supporting TMI's approach to lifelong learning in the community.

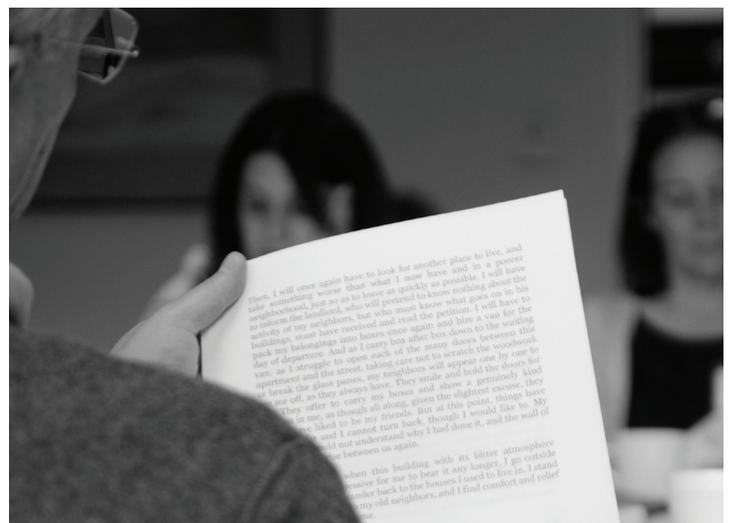
This year's theme of discussion was "Food, Glorious Food: A Feast for the Mind"; participants explored the importance of food in different cultures, the issue of food security across nations, and the impact of technology and climate change on our food habits.

The program was delivered by over 26 volunteers who devoted over 3,000 hours of their time to the community and to reach isolated seniors.

ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL EVENTS

TMI also places an emphasis on academic and cultural events, as these allow the institute to reach out to new student populations and to forge new academic and community partnerships. For this year the following events were organized by TMI:

- **Annual TMI Open House**
- **The Liberal Arts Fair:** a collaboration with educational institutions in Montreal (Concordia, McGill, UQAM, Brébeuf, Dawson, Marianopolis);
- **The Liberal Arts Colloquium** with Concordia and Bishop's University;
- **Cultural activity: The Stratford Festival (Cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic)**



OUR TEAM

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL OUR DYNAMIC VOLUNTEERS, STAFF AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO TMI! WITHOUT THEIR COUNTLESS HOURS, TMI WOULD NOT BE THE INSTITUTE THAT IT IS TODAY.



STAFF

We hired several new people this year, after having conducted very competitive searches. We were fortunate to have two wonderful Summer-Grant workers, Jacob Roe and Bryony Hoare, who assisted us last summer in our promotional activities and the reorganization of our library, respectively. Our wonderful accountant for over 20 years, David Faulkner, retired; we hired Rebekah Bradley to take his place, and she has done so admirably. Lastly, our Administrative Services Coordinator, Kelsey Keenan, also left this year; in her place, we hired Zoe Shaw. Zoe has proved to be a communication and technology wizard, and has been pivotal in implementing our online strategies, so essential given the changed world we find ourselves in.

Dina Souleiman, *Executive Director*
Jonathan Powers, *Academic Director*
Bridget Anthony, *Administrative Assistant*
Zoe Shaw, *Administrative Services Coordinator*
Katie Hautakoski, *Office Assistant*
Rebekah Bradley, *Accountant*
Jennifer MacGregor, *Seniors Coordinator*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our board saw the departure of two long time members, Jim Cullen and Greg Peace, who are missed and who made invaluable contributions to TMI. We added three new members to the Board, each with their own expertise: David Dussault (Finance), Judy Macdonald (Marketing) and Tony Rustin (Fundraising). In the last few years, our Board has become an even more active and engaged group, with all members serving on TMI's working committees and contributing in numerous other ways.

Len Richman, M.A., *Vice-Chair*
Martin Baenninger, B.A., *Secretary*
Ron Domachevsky, M.B.A., Dip. Mgt., EMBA
David Dussault, B.A.
Carol Fiedler, Ph.D., *Chair*
Anne Fitzpatrick, Ph.D.
Clare Hallward, B.A.
Christine Jamieson, Ph.D.
Judy MacDonald, B.A., B.Ed., M.Ed.
Brian McDonough, B.A., B.C.L., M.A.
Jonathan Powers, Ph.D. *ex officio*
Anthony Rustin, Ph.D.
Daniel Schouela, M.A.
Dina Souleiman, B.A. *ex officio*

TMI COMMITTEES

The work at TMI would not be possible if it were not for the dedication and vision provided by our numerous committees and their chairpersons. Each TMI committee is mandated to address and develop a response to the growth and success of TMI. Here is a list of our committees and a snapshot of what they do:

Curriculum:

charged with developing our annual academic program and supporting our 100-volunteer academic positions. The committee delivered 36 new course designs this year.

Accreditation:

focused on advising our credit students on their path to attaining a liberal arts degree, in association with Bishops' University, or a Comprehensive Certificate on a subject of interest.

Nomination:

responsible for ensuring the continuity of our Board of Directors by identifying members who capture and cultivate the TMI spirit to join the Board.

Fundraising:

charged with spearheading our annual fundraising campaign, communicating to our community about our financial needs. This year we raised over \$ 84,000.

Finance:

responsible for developing, reviewing, and overseeing a financial action plan that will address TMI's financial deficit to ensure the long-term viability of TMI.

Art:

charged with curating TMI's unique Art Collection. In this its inaugural year, it successfully formulated a TMI Art Policy, for the long-term management and care of our art pieces.

Marketing:

focused on promoting TMI in the Montreal community, and developing a marketing plan to raise awareness about the Institute and re-engage previous participants.

Strategic Planning: mandated to identify and formulate a Strategic Plan for the Institute from 2021-2026.

75th Celebration:

an ad-hoc committee which planned TMI's 75th celebratory event at the Ritz Carlton (unfortunately cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic).

Spring Series:

an ad-hoc committee which planned a series of interviews of four scholars on the theme, "Curiosity and the Further Question: A Celebration of TMI's 75th Anniversary" (unfortunately cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic).



OUR FINANCES

	2020 \$	2019 \$
REVENUES		
GRANTS		
Ministry of Education and Higher Education	110,500	110,500
Canada Wage Subsidy	29,903	-
Canada Summer Help	7,867	-
Lindsay Memorial Foundation	2,807	14,170
Donations	81,470	84,259
Courses and administratives fees	56,507	71,418
Stratford Festival	43,996	41,038
Unrealized gain and investments	39,464	26,343
Other revenues	14,362	-
Warren Allmand Project	-	12,410
	<u>386,876</u>	<u>360,138</u>

EXPENSES		
Salaries and social charges	241,551	230,998
Stratford Festival project	36,603	34,731
Office expenses	17,716	20,034
Publicity	15,095	17,658
Classroom material and supplies	13,791	15,172
lecturers and facilitators	12,972	11,843
Website and computer equipment	10,045	7,364
Interest and bank charges	9,207	10,917
Occupancy costs	9,067	7,609
Depreciation of fixed assets	8,534	9,463
Lindsay Memorial Foundation Project	7,479	8,913
Mail charges and prospectus	7,103	7,354
Professional fees	5,882	16,773
Energy	5,611	5,517
Taxes and insurance	4,744	4,491
Maintenance and repairs	3,869	5,533
Telecommunications	2,798	2,719
Others	1,561	3,757
Warren Allmand Project	-	12,410
	<u>413,628</u>	<u>433,246</u>
DEFICIENCY OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	<u>(26,752)</u>	<u>(73,108)</u>

OUR FUNDERS & DONORS

TMI is a registered charity mandated to provide imaginative, rigorous, convivial, lifelong learning opportunities to adults. Contributions may be made online at www.thomasmore.qc.ca, by mail, or by telephone using a credit card. Charitable donation receipts will be issued.

We gratefully acknowledge the ongoing support of the *Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur du Québec* as well as those corporations and individuals who responded in the past year to our appeals.

Benefactors (\$2,000 +)

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Carol Fiedler
Fish Family Foundation
George and Sylvia
Aikins Foundation
Clare Hallward
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Teresa Tropea
Dominic Varvaro
Françoise Vien
Ursula Voss
Debrah White

Every donation is a concrete gesture of
support for better listening, more dialogue, and sharper curiosity.



GET INVOLVED

There are many ways to support TMI. Please reach out to our team to discuss the best way you can get involved.

**DONATE
MONEY**

**BECOME A
DISCUSSION
LEADER**

**DESIGN A
COURSE**

**ACTIVITIES
& EVENTS**

**TMI
COMMITTEES**

Visit our website for more information

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