



INSTITUT
THOMAS MORE
INSTITUTE

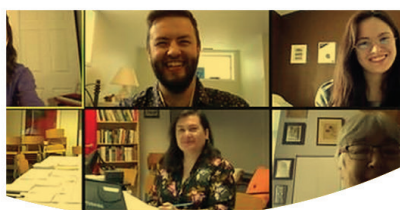
ANNUAL REPORT



Lifelong
Learning
in the Liberal
Arts



Éducation en
arts libéraux
tout au long de
la vie



2020-21



Québec



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 who are seeking a different approach to edu-

cation. 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.



Facing Challenges and Looking Forward:

THE MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR FOR THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE THOMAS MORE INSTITUTE

The 2020-21 academic year was a busy one. Facing pandemic conditions for the foreseeable future, we dedicated much of our energy to engaging our community online and helping them adapt to the new skills required for online discussion courses. Not wanting to simply rest in emergency response mode, however, we also continued our ongoing work of building a healthy future for TMI.

Under the leadership of our Executive Director, Dina Souleiman, TMI successfully moved our courses online. With the guidance of our outstanding staff, our volunteer leaders learned a new technology and adapted the TMI discussion method to this platform. Our participants appreciated the opportunity to discuss the compelling issues raised in our courses from the shelter of their homes. While we look forward to the day when we can return to our classrooms, the connections made possible by online classes will likely remain a part of the TMI experience going forward.

The success of our Seniors Outreach Program was even more impressive. Under the leadership of Jennifer MacGregor, the program was able to reach over 200 seniors and bring them together via Zoom to continue their group discussions in this new medium. This year, the sense of community this program engenders was more vital than ever.

While our courses and other programs moved onto Zoom, TMI's Board of Directors, Executive and Academic Directors, staff, and dedicated volunteers also gave their attention to building the future of the Institute. Led by Board Member Martin Baenninger, the Strategic Planning Committee forged the 2021-26 TMI Strategic Plan. The Plan offers a vision of how the Institute can move forward and face its most important challenges, such as reducing our ongoing deficit and increasing our visibility within the greater Montreal area.

Our other committees—Accreditation, Curriculum, Executive, Finance, Fundraising, Marketing, Nomination—worked energetically throughout the year. I will limit myself to mentioning the initiatives of just two newly formed committees. A Grant Committee, inaugurated in the fall of 2020 and chaired by Board Member Judy Macdonald, sought additional sources of funding through government grants and private foundations. The committee was successful this year in attaining funding for two projects. First, the Institute received money from Young Canada Works to hire an archives student to help organize and bring online TMI's impressive collection of historical documents. Second, in a joint exercise with the Seniors Outreach Program, the committee also succeeded in attaining a grant to help mentor seniors in accessing online courses. This year-long project is funded by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program.

A second initiative I would like to highlight was the work of the TMI Interview Committee. Under the leadership of Board Member Brian McDonough and with the able assistance of Academic Director Jonathan Powers and Administrative Services Coordinator Zoe Shaw, this committee organized a series of four webinars in which scholars were interviewed by TMI leaders on subjects of current interest. These events drew large online audiences and increased awareness of TMI and its activities.

I want to close my message by reinforcing what must be clear from this summary of the year's activities: backed by an excellent Executive Director and staff, the Thomas More Institute excels due to its volunteer power. This community could not thrive without the dedication of our leaders, designers, directors, and other key volunteers. Finally, I would like to thank our community for staying loyal to us throughout these challenging times. Without your dedication to curiosity and shared inquiry, and your generous donations, TMI would not be the place it is. We thank you for building a community of learners with us and we look forward to continuing to pursue curiosity as a way of life in our 77th year.

Carol Fiedler,
Chair of the Institute

OUR PROGRAMMING

ACADEMIC COURSES

As with many organisations, the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to pivot quickly in order to continue our vital programming. All our courses were offered online via Zoom, and we are pleased to announce that our community embraced this adaptation; **we had a total of 482 student registrations in the 36 courses that were offered in the Montreal, Pointe Claire, and Gatineau regions**, which included courses for credit and not for credit.

A breakdown of our registrations identifies that we had 74 new students join our community. Also, even though we had to reduce the number of students in each course (from 18 to 14 in response to being online), we still had a total term capacity of 75% for the Autumn Term and Winter Demi-Term and 90% for the Spring Term, demonstrating a vibrant student community.

Though all our courses were online, we also quickly realised that our teaching method translated exceptionally well to this new medium: delivering 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 & DIGITAL PRESENCE

After our initial summer adaptations and experimental activities to initiate our community to a new platform, Zoom, we realised that the year ahead of us would require a more strategic approach in addressing digital realities. As an organisation we recognised that we needed to adapt from being a completely analogue Institute to becoming digital. We undertook several activities that ensured a smooth transition to our online courses, in the classroom and administratively.

In the classroom, **we provided Zoom Orientation workshops to all students. For the start of each term, we provided three weeks of digital support to ensure all students were able to participate at a level they were satisfied with, and we hired two short-term employees as Zoom Instructors** for the Winter Demi-Term and Spring Term to provide additional troubleshooting support and training. Finally, towards the end of the year

and with the lessening of pandemic restrictions we also purchased video conferencing equipment that would permit us to explore hybrid learning for our community in the year to come.

Administratively, we maintained our website to keep it current with all pertinent information about courses, events, and job opportunities. We also added a new navigation menu to improve accessibility as our website content expanded. Many of our registration processes and file management shifted online to permit staff to work remotely. All communications to students were done electronically, and we provided the option to obtain course reading materials via Dropbox, also with the intention to eliminate photocopying wastage. All the above changes were embraced by the majority of our community, signalling their support in our digital efforts.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Given that our academic courses are predominantly delivered by our volunteer cohort, the training and development of these volunteers is an essential part of the Institute's mandate, which this year proved to be even more vital to ensure the smooth transition to online learning.

Most of our current volunteers have an academic profile, are retired professionals, or still teach and lecture at educational institutions in Montreal. With the vision of supporting our academic philosophy and to ensure the delivery of TMI's method of lifelong learning, we offered this year:

This year we had over 100 volunteers who devoted their time to TMI, delivering more than 15,000 hours of volunteer time in support of the Institute.

- **TWO INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOPS ON THE TMI METHOD OF DISCUSSION (AUGUST 2020 AND MAY 2021), WELCOMING 19 NEW VOLUNTEERS INTO OUR COMMUNITY,**
- **DEVELOPED AN IN-HOUSE GUIDE FOR OUR COURSE DESIGNERS ON "HOW TO CONDUCT ONLINE RESEARCH,"**
- **A LEADERS' REFRESHER WORKSHOP TITLED "ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS,"**
- **THREE LEADERS' ORIENTATION SESSIONS TO SUPPORT THE LEADERS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE TERMS,**
- **ONE-ON-ONE COACHING AND MENTORING FOR EXISTING AND NEW COURSE DESIGNERS AND LEADERS, AND**
- **TWO ZOOM INSTRUCTORS DURING THE YEAR TO ASSIST THEM IN THEIR DIGITAL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT.**

SENIORS OUTREACH PROGRAM

Since 1975, TMI has offered the **Seniors Outreach Program** which is designed to reach English-speaking seniors in the Montreal community. The program's goals are to help seniors reinforce their cognitive skills, break isolation, and forge new friendships, all the while supporting TMI's approach to lifelong learning.

This year we had many concerns about funding and whether we would be able to deliver the program due to the pandemic. These concerns were resolved as we received funding from the **Lindsay Grant Memorial Foundation**, and 10 centres and residences made the decision to participate in our program via Zoom. We applied the same adaptations that we made to our TMI courses: We provided Zoom training for both Leaders and students, adapted the registration process, and delivered reading materials.

In total we had **294 seniors registered in the program with an additional 60 volunteer Leader positions**, and exceptionally for this year we were able to offer three 9-week sessions. The program adapts TMI course design to include fewer readings and large font print. The theme this year was "Chekhovian Writing Around the World" for the fall and winter sessions and "Humour" for the spring.

As a result of this exceptional work in helping seniors with digital literacy, we are pleased to announce that funding was received for the implementation of a year-long project, **"Supporting Seniors in Residences Transition to Online Courses."** This project is funded by the **Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program**. The project will enhance the services offered by TMI's Seniors Outreach Program for the upcoming year.

The Seniors Outreach program was delivered by over 27 volunteers who devoted over 1,500 hours of their time to the community and to reach isolated seniors.

ACADEMIC, CULTURAL, AND SOCIAL EVENTS

Even with the pandemic year, TMI felt it was important to maintain our academic, cultural, and social events, as these allow the Institute to reach out to new student populations, forge new academic and partnerships, and permit our current student population to maintain a sense of community engagement within our Institute.

This year, with over 1,000 participants, the following online events were organised by our staff, volunteers, and the TMI Interview Committee:

- Capitalism, COVID-19, and a New Way Forward:
An Evening of Conversation with Julius Grey
- The American Elections: What Next?:
A Conversation with Jason Opal
- Indigenous Legacies:
A Conversation with Suzanne Methot
- Canadian Slavery and its Legacies:
A Conversation with Charmaine A. Nelson

The TMI staff and applicable committees also organised the following events:

- **Open Houses**
(12 September, 16 January, 13 March)
- **Annual Feast of Lights Celebration**
(11 December)
- **Volunteer Appreciation Celebration**
(14 May)
- **Convocation 2021** (11 June)

The Leaders for "Christian Dior, 1947 to 1957: Before and After his 'New Look'" organised a virtual tour to the McCord Museum's Christian Dior exhibit.

The Book Circle hosted author Deon Meyer during their meeting about his work.

The Leaders for "Montreal: The Imagined City Through New Eyes" hosted authors Saleema Nawaz and Alice Zorn during sessions about their books.

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 ESPECIALLY DURING THIS PANDEMIC YEAR, TMI WOULD NOT HAVE EMERGED WITH SUCCESS.

STAFF

This year our staff were exceptional as they transitioned online, adapted our technologies, worked remotely, supported our volunteers and community, answered queries, and ensured that everyone was listened to and supported as they transitioned to our online courses.

At the midpoint of the academic year, we had several employee changes—we saw the departure of Academic Director Jonathan Powers, who had been with the Institute for over five years and demonstrated a dynamic enthusiasm towards TMI's curriculum development.

Through the support of Service Canada and their Youth Employment funding we hired five great youth employees during early 2021: Garvin Brutus, Zoom Instructor; Mike Davis, Education Researcher; Morgan Gagnon, Promotions Manager; Hannah Kaya, Data Administrator; and Bradley McDermid, Fundraising Organiser. Each of these talented new employees made significant contributions to their respective roles, and we are still applying their work in our new academic year.

Finally, towards the end of the year we hired our new Manager of Academic Affairs, Joseph Vietri, to be at the helm of our Curriculum and Accreditation Committees and to support Leaders and Designers in the development of our innovative and one-of-a-kind courses.

Dina Souleiman, *Executive Director*

Joseph Vietri, *Manager of Academic Affairs*

Zoe Shaw, *Administrative Services Coordinator*

Jennifer MacGregor, *Seniors Program Coordinator*

Rebekah Bradley, *Accountant*

Bridget Anthony, *Administrative Assistant*

Katie Hautakoski, *Administrative Assistant*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our board saw the addition of a new member, Shernaz Choksi, a retired Economics teacher from Vanier College, who complements our existing board and brings a calm demeanor to all discussions. As always, the TMI Board was active and engaged in the work of the Institute. All Board members contributed to our pandemic response, and all served on our working committees, in addition to contributing in many other ways. A special thank you to the Chair of the Board, Carol Fiedler, who held several interim positions this past year with the changes in senior employee positions.

Carol Fiedler, Ph. D., *Chair*

David Dussault, B.A., *Treasurer*

Martin Baenninger, B.A., *Secretary*

Ron Domachevsky, M.B.A., Dip. Mgt., EMBA

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.

Anthony Rustin, Ph.D.

Daniel Schouela, M.A.

Shernaz Choksi, Ph.D.

Dina Souleiman, B.A. *ex officio*

Jonathan Powers, Ph.D. *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 contribute to the growth and success of TMI in its particular domain.

Curriculum,

charged with developing our annual academic program and supporting over 100 volunteer academic positions. The committee delivered 39 new course designs this year and three additional activities, supported feedback by Leaders and students, and delivered several continuing education workshops for our academic volunteers;

Accreditation,

focused on advising our credit students on their path to attaining a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts, in association with Bishop's University, or a Comprehensive Certificate on a subject of interest. This year saw the addition of five new members, each bringing an area of expertise and providing mentorship to our credit students. Also, the committee reviewed our academic policies and assisted in the TMI 2021 Convocation for our latest graduate, Alexis Iversen;

Nomination,

responsible for ensuring the continuity of our Board of Directors by identifying potential Board members who capture and cultivate the TMI spirit;

Fundraising,

charged with spearheading our annual fundraising campaign and communicating to our community about our financial needs. This year we raised over \$92,000 and updated our fundraising communication tools to clearly communicate to our donors the impact of their donations, as can be seen on our website;

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. This year saw the review of our investment strategies and the conclusion that Fondation du Grand Montréal provided the most ideal investment option for TMI;

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. This year we focused on digital promotion: using our website, social media platforms, and calling all previous TMI students to ensure a continuity from in-person to online courses. Also, with an added mandate to increase francophone participation in our community, recommendations have been identified and will be explored in the coming year;

Strategic Planning,

successfully fulfilled its mandate and delivered a TMI Strategic Plan 2021-2026 addressing the following priorities: Promotion & Visibility, Governance, Finance, Designers & Leaders, and Curriculum & Degree Students;

Interview,

carrying on the tradition of TMI's Spring Interview Series, the committee hosts webinars in which TMI volunteers interview authors, professors, or public speakers on the issues of our times. This year, the members organized four Zoom webinars, showcasing TMI's approach to shared inquiry;

Grants,

charged with researching and applying to grants in tandem with the Executive Director. This year the committee was successful in securing over \$69,000 in additional funding that was allocated over the current and coming year—supporting seniors' outreach and digital literacy, youth employment opportunities, and TMI's long-awaited digital archives project.



OUR FINANCES

	2021 \$	2020 \$
REVENUES		
GRANTS		
Ministry of Education and Higher Education	120,500	110,500
Canada Wage Subsidy	53,550	29,903
Canada Summer Help	20,001	7,867
Employment and social Development Canada - New Horizons	3,208	
Lindsay Memorial Foundation	7,500	2,807
Unrealized gain and investments	131,237	39,464
Donations	92,954	81,470
Courses and administratives fees	51,548	56,507
Other revenues	4,944	14,362
Stratford Festival	-	43,996
	485,442	386,876
EXPENSES		
Salaries and social charges	274,826	241,551
Seniors Outreach Program	13,938	7,479
Office expenses	13,137	17,716
Website and computer equipment	11,199	10,045
Classroom material and supplies	10,823	13,791
Mail charges and prospectus	10,181	7,103
Occupancy costs	10,146	9,067
Interest and bank charges	9,567	9,207
Depreciation of fixed assets	7,648	8,534
Lecturers and facilitators	7,245	12,972
Professional fees	5,347	5,882
Energy	5,302	5,611
Taxes and insurance	4,704	4,744
Publicity	4,074	15,095
Maintenance and repairs	3,303	3,869
New Horizons project	3,208	-
Telecommunications	2,424	2,798
Others	23	1,561
Stratford Festival project	-	36,603
	397,095	413,628
EXCESS/DEFICIENCY OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	88,347	(26,752)

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 Quebec Ministry of Higher Education, Employment and Social Development Canada as well as those corporations and individuals who responded in the past year to our appeals.

Benefactors (\$2,000 +)

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Debrah White
Grace Zenone

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

THOMASMORE.QC.CA