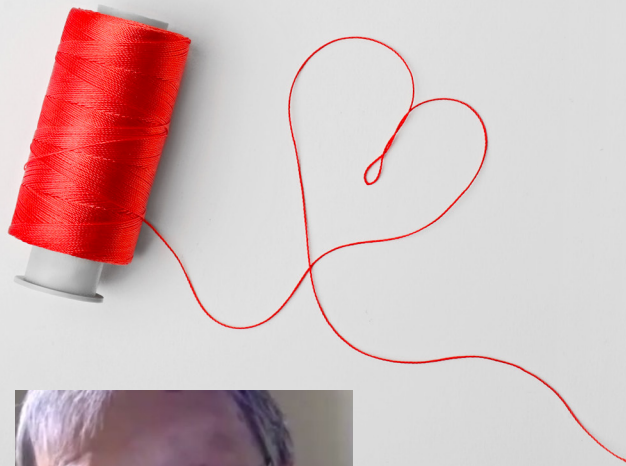


Stories from the Heart



THE THREADS OF LIFE

Sr. Theresa Chu, RSCJ



Imagine if you will, a spool of thread. It is a large spool, and interestingly it's multi-coloured. As the thread starts to unspool, you can see that it's going to go on for a very long time; in this instance for more than 97 years. That's because this spool, or ball as she calls it, is Sr. Theresa Chu's life.

It starts to unspool in China, where she was born, and it slowly unwinds as Sr. Chu's fascinating life unfolds as she moves from China to places like South Korea, the Philippines, Chicago, and Canada. It passes through her early life, her religious and academic studies, her time as an educator, and ultimately her move to Nova Scotia.

Many of you will know Sr. Chu or at least know of her — she's a little famous around these parts! Currently living at Caritas Residence, our Campus Minister Moira Schrader spoke to her recently as part of the School's Employee Retreat Day. Thanks to Sr. Chu's remarkably sharp memory and story-telling ability, [this video](#) is a joy to watch.



FACULTY PROFILE

Heather Leal

Schools have always been a big part of Heather (MacDonald) Leal's life. As a very curious child, Heather realized early on she loved the classroom and especially the learning that happened there. She also discovered at an early age that she loved to teach. It's not surprising; her mother and great-grandmother were teachers and Heather feels like it's in her bones.

That curiosity and her love of learning and teaching has led her on quite a journey — from her small home in Lime Hill, Cape Breton near Dundee to many corners of the world. It's also what brought her to Sacred Heart.

In 1993, Heather left Cape Breton to attend Acadia University where she received her undergraduate degree in English and Spanish. She then moved to London, Ontario in 1997 to attend Western University where she completed her Bachelor of Education Degree. Knowing teaching positions were hard to come by in Nova Scotia, she packed up her belongings and moved to London, England to join friends who were already teaching there.

It was an interesting two-year adventure; or as Dickens said "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Teaching in a tough East-End neighbourhood, Heather was daunted by the older students and chose to start her career at the Elementary School level where at least the children weren't bigger than she was! While there were some rewarding moments during those early years of her career, it was definitely challenging, and for a time she questioned her career choice. The backpacker's lifestyle, however, made it all worthwhile — she was able to use her central London location to travel the world.



Heather then moved to Australia for a short stint where she worked in another school, although this time in before and after-school care. She then responded to a want ad and moved to Vancouver to start a new teaching position in a private school, not yet built, with a Headmaster who had recently come from Halifax Grammar School (it's a small world after all.) Heather spent the next three years on a career adventure of sorts: teaching, building the curriculum, designing spaces, constructing a library — she was involved in almost every aspect of building the school from the ground up. But after three years she got that itch that so many Maritimers get — the need to go home. And that's exactly what she did, via a cross-Canada driving adventure with her mother as co-pilot.

A last-minute hire at Sacred Heart in 2004, Heather spent the next seven years teaching girls English, History, Social Studies, and Sociology. During her early days here, Fountain Academy was being built and Heather felt an immediate kinship with the Principal and the teachers who were experiencing what she had been through in Vancouver. When the Dean of Students position came open, she applied for it and was successful. It meant a 60/40 split between teaching and administration. And while she loved the teaching and the mentoring side of the equation, she didn't love the discipline and the constant putting out of fires. She realized her heart was in the classroom and that in particular, she loved teaching boys. So she moved back to a full-time teaching position and hasn't looked back.

Heather has settled into a comfortable routine teaching English, Social Studies, and Sociology in both Fountain and Barat. She loves that Sacred Heart gives her the freedom to develop curriculum that keeps curiosity alive for both her students and herself. That curiosity also extends to the Excelsior Club which she co-founded with one of her students in 2009 and now enthusiastically leads. The Excelsior Club, simply put, is a space for nerds; a moniker Heather has proudly claimed for herself. A sci-fi lover, Dungeons and Dragons gamer, and all-around geek, Heather quickly discovered that this Club was a great opportunity for boys, especially in early Junior High, to have a safe space, an outlet to explore their interests, and a place to "...find their people."

When Heather isn't teaching or mentoring, she's plotting her next travel adventure. This summer she's heading to Paris with her family, which includes husband Branden (also a teacher), stepdaughter Hazel (Grade 6); and stepson Bobby (Grade 8). She's anxious to pass along her wanderlust and that thirst for knowledge she's had since she was a child. Undoubtedly it will be an exciting trip. But, she's also just as excited about heading home to Cape Breton for some peace and quiet, a hike through the mountains, and a visit with her family who are still in their generations-old home in Lime Hill. It is a place that is in her heart, a land she belongs to, and one she will ultimately return to when her Sacred Heart adventure ends.

ALUM DAY!
SAVE THE DATE
(May 6, 2022)
SACRED HEART SCHOOL OF HALIFAX

Alum Day

We're excited that our annual Alum Day is back for an in-person experience. If you're going to be in Halifax, make plans to join us on **May 6th** for our Afternoon Tea and our Old Boys and Old Girls games — this year we are thinking of changing up the girls' game from basketball to volleyball, and we think this may be the ticket to success for the Old Girls! Old girls — please sign-up for your preference using [this Google Doc](#). The games will be followed by a reception for alums and PAL's. Stay tuned for more details.

Dr. Bannerjee Presentation

Unconscious Bias and Microaggressions

If you haven't already, please be sure to register for what's guaranteed to be an informative and important presentation from fellow alum Dr. Rohini Bannerjee '93, Associate Vice President, Diversity Excellence, St. Mary's University. On April 7th at 7:30pm Dr. Bannerjee will present "Unconscious Bias and Microaggressions" exclusively to Sacred Heart alums. This will be a virtual presentation so regardless of where you are in the world you can join in. Dr. Bannerjee, who is passionate about diversity and inclusion, will help participants understand how we all have unconscious bias and engage in microaggressions. With this acknowledgment, we can work to mitigate our bias and self-regulate our responses to others to create more inclusive spaces and mindsets, fostering a sense of belonging for all. Please RSVP and we will follow up with a Zoom link and recording of the evening.

Isn't It A Small World?

Alumna Veronica Vermeulen Smit '09 who works on her family's dairy farm — Vermeuland Farms — in Milford, Nova Scotia recently welcomed Laurens, a University of Wageningen, NL Dairy Nutrition Masters student to their farm. Laurens is doing an internship with an animal nutritionist who formulates diets for the cows on the dairy farm. The interesting connection is that Laurens is a Master's student of alumna Kelly Nichols '09, and they are working closely on a project that looks at the effect of amino acids in the feed on nitrogen utilization. With increasing fertilizer costs and environmental considerations, reducing synthetic nitrogen is a top priority in agriculture. Veronica and Kelly were Sacred Heart classmates and have stayed in touch. We love seeing this kind of collaboration between alums not to mention such important research with far-reaching implications for the climate and food chain.





Reunions

If you graduated 10, 15, 20 or more years ago and are looking to celebrate your class reunion, please contact Miriam Regan '80 for assistance in planning your special event.

Above: Class of '76 reunion



Big Hearts

SACRED HEART
SCHOOL of HALIFAX

BURSARY BENEFIT

BLUE SKIES 2022

Big Hearts Bursary Benefit

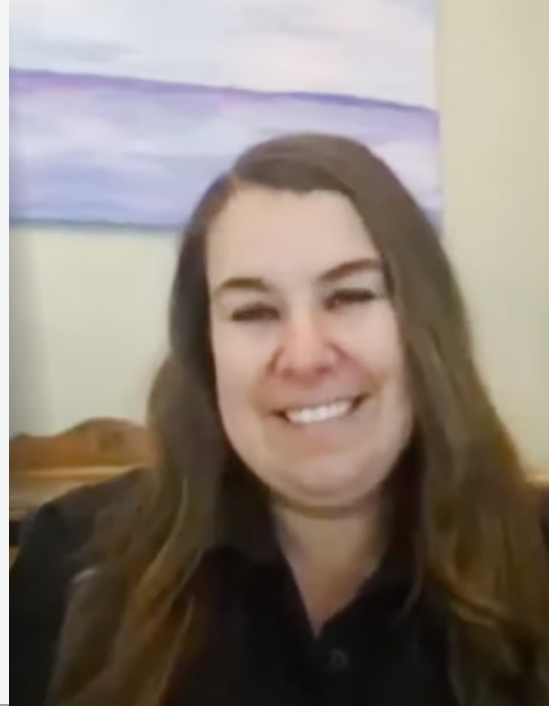
If you will be in Halifax, please consider joining us for the signature fundraising event of the year — the Big Hearts Bursary Benefit — which is being held this year in person for the first time since 2019. We have a new name and a new location, but what remains the same is our goal to raise as much as we can to support our Bursary Fund. It's going to be a great evening to reconnect with old friends, enjoy a meal together, and dance the night away to the incredible sounds of Big Fish! Tickets can be purchased [here](#). And don't forget that if you can't attend the event, the online auction will be open to our entire community regardless of where you are. Prepare to bid often!

If you can't make it to the Big Hearts Bursary Benefit, you can still support our Bursary Fund by purchasing tickets for our online 50-50 Raffle. Half the pot is up for grabs in this oh-so-simple fundraiser. Buy your tickets [here](#).



Tidbits

Congratulations to **Jenna Jamieson '04**, who late last year won a Purolator True North Small Business Grant Award for her business, Jamieson's General Store. Jenna started her store in Tatamagouche during the pandemic as a way to ensure her community could continue to get locally sourced groceries and goods.



Congratulations to **Alexandra Baillie '16** who is now studying for her Doctor of Optometry (OD) degree at the New England College of Optometry.

Shout out to **Emma Simpson '17** who is now working with KPMG Canada as a Staff Accountant.

Hats off to **Amelia Machum '17** who has started a new role as Finance and Admin Coordinator at Time and Space Media in Halifax.



Big thanks to **Sam Wile '14** and alumnus Colin Smith who have come back to the Heart to help coach the Jr. Fountain Basketball team which made it to the Tier 1 playoffs.



Well done to **Meghan MacAskill '16**, who is working towards her law degree at the University of Ottawa, on her new position as Criminal Defence Intern at Davies McMahon LLP.

Kudos to **Elizabeth Dempsey '13** who has taken on a new position as Immigration Specialist at Irving Shipbuilding.

With Sympathy

We extend our sympathies to the friends and families of the following alums who have recently passed away: **Georgia (Wootten) Jordan '50, Anne Carew Hallisey '53, Colette Flinn Perey '57, Sr. Mildred Peterkin, RSCJ, Cecilia Shortall-Decker '74, Anne Marie O'Beirne Ryan '76.**

Share your stories, news, photos, and announcements, or pass along regards to a favourite teacher or former classmate. **Drop Miriam an email!**

If you would like to support your School,
please donate here.

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