

DECEMBER 2023

Stories from the Heart



It's a pretty rare feat these days for an organization to celebrate 175 years, but that's exactly what we're doing this year as we turn back the hands of time to remember when a group of Religious of the Sacred Heart (RSCJ) arrived in Halifax to establish a small school in a residence in the heart of Halifax devoted entirely to the teachings of the school's founder, St. Madeleine Sophie Barat. And while our legacy of 175 years is remarkable, hers is extraordinary considering she started the first Sacred Heart school in France in 1801!



The mission of Sacred Heart has not changed in all of that time — an active faith in God, a deep respect for intellectual values, social action, the building of community, and personal growth. Those goals are at the heart of everything we do and are, of course, shared by over 150 Sacred Heart schools around the world.

It's been quite the journey. Throughout our 175 years as a Sacred Heart school, we have learned about and lived through some tumultuous waves of history — the Halifax Explosion, world wars, social unrest, and the reforms of Vatican II in the Catholic Church to name just a few. And, we would be remiss if we did not take lessons from these events and strive to avoid the mistakes and failures brought about by ignorance, division, or strife. Yet, we also need to embrace the courage and confidence that it took to persevere through them and celebrate how our community has, time and time again, risen to societal, economic, and cultural challenges and changes.



This year we are celebrating our anniversary year in a myriad of ways. We kicked off the year with special celebrations with faculty and staff, we've held some events with the Halifax Chamber of Commerce to bring a broader awareness of our anniversary to light, we'll be hosting a special liturgy and celebration for our community in May, we're hosting an online walk down memory lane called Memorable Moments that you can follow along with on social media or on our [website](http://www.sacredheart.ca), and we're hoping to replace the mural on the side of Jennifer's of Nova Scotia with a new one that incorporates both our past and our present. And there are a few more activities up our collective sleeves (see below)!

If you would like to join us in looking back through time, please share one of your favourite memories with us from your time at Sacred Heart. Simply email alums@shsh.ca with a description of the moment, the year, and if possible, a photograph.

Here are just a few of our Memorable Moments from the past few months.

02
NOV

In this week's Memorable Moment, we are delighted to share a touching contribution from alumna Sarah Cassidy '76. Sarah dug out this fantastic photo from her first year at Sacred Heart, taken on Prize

Day in June 1970. In this picture, she's with a handful of her classmates gathered around her favourite teacher, Mother Margaret Lahey. She remembers Mother Lahey not just as a great teacher but as a second mother. She recounted that Mother Lahey provided constant support for her students, loved shenanigans, and was an amazing cheerleader, especially for the most shy girls in the class. While time has marched forward, Mother Lahey remains a symbol of the enduring influence that educators can have on their students, contributing to both their academic and personal growth, not to mention their memories! **Thanks for sharing, Sarah.**



28
OCT

Today's Memorable Moment is another gem, this one recounted by Sr. Pauline Martin, RSCJ, who recalls the surprise 1919 visit of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII). A story as entertaining as it is vivid, she recounts how the "eligible bachelor" included a frantic stop at Sacred Heart during his cross-country visit. Although preparations and seating were rushed, they managed to

include rehearsals for his welcome and a rendition of *God Save the King*. Anticipation filled the air as the faint sounds of his approaching vehicle procession along the gravel driveway soon became audible, and he soon entered the Reception Room, now known as the Little Theatre, receiving an enthusiastic welcome. As two of the youngest students, acting as flower girls, curtsied, the Prince picked one of them up into his arms and planted a kiss on her cheek! The peace and warmth of the moment would quickly vanish, however, as a "deafening crash — like the shot of a .22 calibre gun" would jolt everyone in attendance. The Prince's aides darted to his side in a panic only to realize that it wasn't a gunshot but rather one of the "great windows on the left side of the room had dropped like a guillotine!" After the ruckus, the Prince and his entourage were quick to thank everyone, comment on "what a fine-looking lot" they were, and make a dash for the exit! Prince Charming's visit, although short and chaotic, was perhaps one of the most thrilling in our school's long history!



05
OCT

Let's take a short jump forward from the earliest beginnings of our school to 1937 for this week's Memorable Moment. Looking through the windows of the Little Theatre, we can see what looks to be a precocious group of aspiring thespians on stage for a Sacred Heart production of *Pride and Prejudice*. What incredible costumes! We doubt you'll recognize any faces, but if you do, let us know!



21
SEPT

In our first Memorable Moment, we included a very old photo of our original school in the Brookside (Dwyer) Residence where the Lord Nelson Hotel stands today. Not long after that, construction started at our permanent location just around the corner on Spring Garden Road. That school, originally called the Convent of the Sacred Heart, included a chapel which was designed by German architect turned Haligonian Henry Frederick Busch whose name graces a number of other Halifax landmarks. The nuns and the students moved into the building in 1851, and we've been here ever since!



To read more of our Memorable Moments, click [here](#)

If you have a moment or memory to share, please email it, along with a photo, to alums@shsh.ca.

175

Years

175

Donations

With Your Help

175 YEARS, 175 DONATIONS

**SACRED HEART SCHOOL OF HALIFAX
BLOOD DRIVE**

OCTOBER 20-FEBRUARY 14

In partnership with:
Canadian Blood Services

#SHSH175 #175Donations

As part of our 175th anniversary celebrations, we've partnered with Canadian Blood Services for a life-saving Blood Drive — 175 years, 175 donations. And, we need your help. Please [sign up here](#) to join our Sacred Heart team. Once you're a member, you can book your appointment at any Canadian Blood Services clinic in Canada. As the Christmas season is upon us, we can't think of a better gift than the gift of life. Making a donation is easy, safe, and meaningful. You can take a quick eligibility quiz [here](#). Make an event of it, and bring a classmate, family member, friend, or neighbour! You even get cookies when you're done.

Revealing the Beauty of God's Love in

GLASS



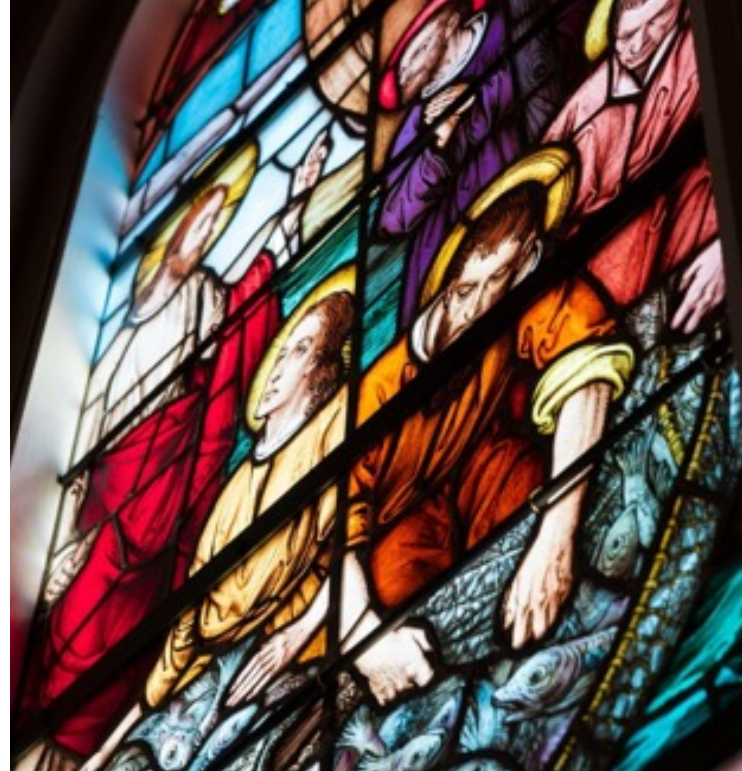
Some of our alumnae may remember the beautiful stained glass windows that once adorned our Chapel. They have had a long and eventful history, with a new chapter recently added.

The windows were originally installed at Sacred Heart in 1890 and only survived 27 years when they were almost all entirely shattered during the 1917 Halifax Explosion. Yet with the support and dedication of the community, including the newly commissioned Alumnae Association, eight years later, 16 new windows created by the Mayer Company in Germany, were installed in the Chapel. There they proudly hung for 54 years where they provided joy and inspiration for so many.

Sadly, in 1979 the original chapel had to be demolished due to its deteriorating condition. But what would become of the glorious windows? According to our records, alumna Pat Ryan Cole '59, who was on the Executive of our Alumnae Association and a member of the Parish Council at St. Agnes Church, was instrumental in working with Monsignor Richard Murphy to gift the windows to St. Agnes, which had recently suffered a devastating fire and lost their original stained glass windows.

Of our original 16 windows, 14 of them were donated to St. Agnes. They were first shipped to St. John, NB where they were redesigned to fit the smaller frames at St. Agnes. A rededication ceremony for them was held on October 30th, 1979 attended by many in the parish, including some of our current alumnae.

Yet, that's not the end of the story.



Just last year, in 2022, the 14 windows in St. Agnes were removed and restored yet again, this time to better stylistically align the tops of the windows, which were new in 1979, with the bottoms, our original windows. The design and craftsmanship of these tops were done by the artisans of Sattler's Stained Glass Studio here in Nova Scotia. At the same time as this restoration, the window openings were also repaired and restored.

The restoration project was led by Fr. Irek Bem and was financed through the generosity of St. Agnes parishioners. The results are as beautiful as they are restorative.

As Fr. Patrick Salah noted in his dedication remarks on October 29th, almost 44 years to the day they were first dedicated,

"For centuries, stained glass has been one of the sacred arts used to communicate biblical scenes, theological truths, and the lives of the saints. Our stained-glass windows are no exception. They communicate in a very profound way, the various dimensions of love...And so, brothers and sisters, as we gather in this building, surrounded by the beauty of these stained-glass windows, which reveal the far greater beauty of God's love...may we truly experience that love, so that it isn't merely an idea, but a lived experience."

We are heartened to know our windows have been so lovingly taken care of and are providing so much joy and inspiration.

SITTING STILL

Submitted by Paula Farmer ('80)

Dear Sister Lesota certainly picked the "short straw" one sunny spring morning in 1976 when the agenda of the weekly faculty meeting likely turned to "The Issue of Eighth Preparatory". What to do with this boisterous class who behaved like colts (more like gazelles really: colts run; gazelles race)? How to rein in hallway galloping and Study Hall whooping between classes? How to slow knock-knees spinning below tunic hems held in place with tape, glue, paper clips, and even staples? The solution: Department Class. The teacher: Sister Anne. The likely impetus: Prize Day.

Ah yes, Prize Day. The last day of the school year. The day before summer freedom. In just a few short weeks the entire Senior School would assemble in the Little Theatre in angelic white dresses to receive grading certificates calligraphied by Sister Dolan. A lucky few would receive prizes for improvement or medals of achievement. Hymns would be sung. Third Academic would line up beside Fourth Academic to receive the Links of Love. A ceremony. A celebration. A rite of passage.

Just one teeny, tiny issue. One threat wrinkling the smooth fabric of ceremony: the dreaded curtsy before the archbishop! How would we ever achieve the combination of grace and composure needed to survive Prize Day without embarrassing the entire Senior School?



Sr. Lesota, middle, enjoys a moment of sitting still herself with fellow teachers in 1980.

We were an interesting group of students in Eighth Prep that year. Turning 13, we were not yet fully teenagers but no longer little girls. Some of us (myself included) were subject to so many simultaneous improvements (braces, headgear, thick glasses, sensibly short hair, acne creams, fingernail toxins to discourage biting) that we should have walked the halls wearing the sign "Eventually-Elegant Young Lady Under Construction". Others were more advanced: braces off, jewelled ears recently pierced, glorious waterfalls of chestnut or blonde hair. We secretly

admired the elegantly painted nails of girls in 1st Academic. And we were fascinated by girls in 3rd Academic who carried purses. We longed to know what those purses contained. We suspected money, makeup, and cigarettes but vowed to carry chocolate and chips when it came our turn for purses to replace pencil cases.

So there we found ourselves attending Department Class on one sunny afternoon in the spring of 1976. We sat on chairs in a circle, Sister Lesota democratically seated among us. She never asked us to parade around with books on our heads. Posture was not our problem. Sitting still was. Perhaps posture would have been a problem too, but we simply could not sit still long enough for our posture to be assessed. So we were asked to sit. Just sit. Sit still. And do so elegantly: ankles crossed at a graceful angle, hands motionless in our laps, right over left, palms up.

Sun shone through the windows and we sat. Dust motes floated in and out of the shadows and still we sat. Birds sang in the back quad and yet still we sat. Time reduced us to a silent, motionless common denominator: the class clown, the joker, the long-haired beauties, the brainiac. All still. All silent. All uneasy. Eying each other. Counting the minutes. Waiting for someone to explode in laughter, at a loss for how to be still. How to hold our pose. How to translate that pose into *poise*.

Our Department Classes were short-lived, not to mention short (we only *thought* we had been still for hours but in reality, those few awkward classes rarely lasted more than fifteen minutes). But we survived Prize Day later that spring without incident. And now, almost 50 years later, we have matured into elegant and (sometimes) poised ladies. We are daughters, mothers, sisters, volunteers, and fundraisers. We care for families, organize groups, and support friends. But we are still spirited. We have the bravery to tackle angry fishermen and the stamina to serve demanding travellers. We are strong enough to lead healthcare risk management and tough enough to survive the demanding hospitality industry. And, we work in floral commemoration that requires us to go towards bereavement and mass casualty when others back away.

Sister Lesota would be proud of those moments in our busy lives when, from time to time, we sit still. Stillness may be forced on us in a doctor's waiting room or while holding a sleeping grandchild. We may sit still from sheer exhaustion after long days at work or when reading on a sleepy afternoon at the cottage. In our early 60s now, we finally value the peace and restorative power that stillness can bring. Our ankles may not be elegantly angled (too arthritic!) and our hands may not be stacked palms-upward. But sometimes while sitting still we may even hold those hands together, and allow our minds to be still and accept a higher awareness — all in another pursuit of another quiet contemplation — prayer.

Alum & PA's Wine & Cheese

SEE YOU SOON!

Alums from across the country have been asking about it and we're thrilled to confirm that our annual Alum Wine & Cheese is on! If you're in Halifax, head back to the Heart on **December 20th from 5:30-8:00 p.m.** In our 175th year, we hope to see many current and former teachers, alums, and parents from across the decades; it's a fabulous opportunity to socialize and share a glass of holiday cheer.



ANOTHER CHRISTMAS FAIR BRINGS OUT OUR COMMUNITY



No doubt you remember the Christmas Fair from years gone by. And perhaps if you had joined us on November 25th this year you would have noticed some of the activities were the same as when you were here. That's because there's nothing like the classics! Second-hand Sam, the Used Uniform Shop, the Games Room, and cookie decorating are as popular today as they were decades ago. Yet our amazing Parents' Guild has found lots of ways to freshen things up, create new activities, and raise even more money for our School! A great big thank you to them and to our many volunteers, including alumna Lesley Bleil '71, who has been volunteering at the Fair for many years! How's that for impressive? When asked why she continues to do it, she said, "Judy Brown asked me to help update the alum database, I think around 1981. Since then I have pitched in whenever asked if I was available. In all my years of attending events and helping out, I have never had anything less than a ton of fun! The School is such a happy place and I get to catch up with old friends when I come back. It really is a privilege to be asked to participate. The fair is also an opportunity for me to show off my school to friends who did not have the opportunity to attend."

SAVE THE DATE
ALUM DAY
MAY 10, 2024

Tidbits

Good luck to **Hannah Baillie '18**, who is in Lille, France to study at Sciences Pro Lille, where in her words she will "...brush up on her French skills, learn a thing or two about public and international affairs, and likely eat a few (or more than a few) croissants." We are jealous!

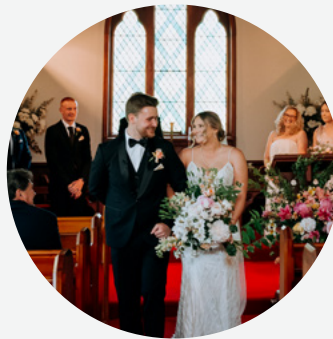
Congratulations to **Amanda (Chedrawe) Ghosn '10** who, along with her husband Jeremy, welcomed Layla Rose into the world this past summer.

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Congratulations also to **Sebastian Young '14**, on his good news as he was married earlier this year.



Hats off to alumna **Katherine Culligan** who this fall was awarded the Atlantic University Sport Student-Athlete Community Service Award in Women's Rugby for her off-the-field contributions to sport, health, and community. Read more about her impressive list of accomplishments [here](#).



Jake Marchand '14 married Tessa Newton on November 18th, 2023, in a small church near Christchurch, New Zealand surrounded by friends and family. Tessa travelled halfway around the world to work at Big Cove Camp for the summer where she fell in love with her fellow counselor, Jake. Jake then returned the favour by moving halfway around the world as well. The newlyweds, Mr. and Mrs. Marchand, have made their home in Christchurch.



A standing ovation to **Emma Hamlyn '22**, who was not only named an Acadia Academic All-Canadian for the 2022-23 season but also won the Vere Karsdale Mason Scholarship, which is an annual award provided to honour Vere Karsdale Mason, Rhodes Scholar, who graduated from Acadia in 1914 with honours in four subjects and an "A" in athletics. He fell in action in August 1916. The award honours a student who has completed their first year and who combines academic achievement with citizenship and sporting behaviour.



Well done to alumna **Lisa Alward** who recently launched her new book, *Cocktail* which CBC calls "...intimate and immersive...". Read an outline of Lisa's collection of short stories [here](#).

The Tradition Continues

It gives us no end of delight when we see generations of families at Sacred Heart. This year, we have 34 students who have either a mother or grandmother who attended Sacred Heart. If you're an alum in Halifax with school-aged children we hope you're considering your alma matter!

Please reach out to our Director of Admissions, Marie Reyes, to start a conversation.

All alums are invited to participate in the next **Busy Person's Retreat**



January 29-February 2, 2024.

There is no cost to participate. Three spiritual companions will guide retreatants over the course of the week, and the schedule is flexible. To register and for more information, please click [here](#) or contact our Campus Minister, Moira Schrader, mschrader@shsh.ca. Please register by Friday, January 5, 2024.



In support of our 175th anniversary, we invite our alums to make a symbolic donation of \$17.50 to our Annual Giving Fund. It's a meaningful way to show your support for your alma mater while acknowledging our remarkable legacy. Your gift would be accepted with gratitude. You can donate online [here](#).

We Want to Hear from You!

Share your stories, news, photos, and announcements, or pass along regards to a favourite teacher or former classmate.

Drop Miriam an email!

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