

Stories from the Heart

JANICE McQUAID ON A STRAIGHT PATH

Life has been a relatively straight path for Senior School teacher, Janice McQuaid. Which is ironic, given her advice to our Grade 12 students is, "Know that very few decisions are permanent and that it's fine if the path isn't straight."

Janice grew up in Sackville and attended Sackville High, from where she graduated in 1993. She headed across town to attend SMU and graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree in 1997, majoring in Economics. It was a relatively straightforward degree and experience, although Advanced Microeconomics proved fateful as it was there she met Jeff, who would later become her husband and father of her two boys.

While Janice didn't originally have a burning desire to become a teacher, she had loved being a swimming instructor and knew she was good at teaching young people. And, she wanted to put her new degree to good use. So, her next stop along her path was Memorial University in St. John's, where she took a compressed Bachelor of Education, which meant she was done in one year rather than the traditional two.

With her new degree under her belt, she joined Jeff, who had taken on a finance role in Ottawa, and started teaching at Canterbury High School in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. There she taught Geography, History, Economics, Law, Math, and Sociology at the junior high and senior high levels. At the same time, she spent her evenings and weekends taking a one-year program at Western University — Honours Specialist in Contemporary Studies — akin to a master's degree. Her project, similar in scope to a thesis, was about the hidden curriculum within the curriculum. She was fascinated by what the education system omitted rather than included. And, it was through this program, her research, and the classroom experience that she realized she was born to be a teacher.



Janice McQuaid with her husband and sons

After a summer wedding to Jeff in Saint Mary's Cathedral Basilica in 2000, they started their family. First came Brendan, and not long after, Rylan. While they remained close to both sets of parents back home in Nova Scotia, the boys started complaining about missing their grandparents, and in 2007, nine years after they moved to Ottawa, the decision was made to move back to Nova Scotia.

As luck would have it, Janice's father-in-law was Ed McQuaid, then Director of Facilities here at Sacred Heart. He mentioned to Janice that there was a faculty position opening in the Senior School and encouraged her to apply. The rest, as they say, is history.

Janice has taught Economics, History, Sociology and Religion in both Barat and Fountain Academies over the years, and is now the Department Chair of Social Studies. She maintains an 80% role at the school, which fits her life perfectly, even if, begrudgingly, she is no longer the devoted hockey mom she was when her boys were playing competitively.

As an avid traveller herself, Janice is well-known at the school for chaperoning student trips, both near and far. And while she has had the fortune to travel with students to various locations in Europe and in Ottawa, her favourite trip is much closer to home — the Grade 8 Brigadoon Village trip in the Annapolis Valley, because she loves to watch the students tackle and succeed at challenges they didn't think they could do. It's a rewarding experience for her and for them.



Janice is also well-known for her love of a good theme or special event and is usually one of the first to jump in with enthusiasm, although, in her own words, not always talent! She brings that same spirit to her personal life, as she actively participates in local food and wine events and happily shares her latest favourites with faculty and staff who share an interest.

The community at Sacred Heart is what keeps Janice happy. As she says, there's a care for one another that pulls people together here, and she can't imagine teaching anywhere else.

As she looks forward to being part of the next trip here at school, she also hopes to start planning another big personal journey, perhaps to Asia, which is on her bucket list. In the meantime, she continues to walk along her path, content knowing it's the right one for her. And for us.



SHEILA DONAHOE '64 CHIEF TREASURE HUNTER

Sheila Donahoe '64 has become a very accomplished treasure hunter. As Sacred Heart School of Halifax's official unofficial Archivist, Sheila has worked hard over the past almost 20 years to uncover a treasure trove of historical "...memories and memorabilia..." in our Archives that honour and reflect the storied history of our School.

The Archive is not large. It's tucked away on the 4th floor of the Tower building, in one of the old dorm rooms the nuns used to live in, amidst the administrative offices and storage rooms. It's also not glamorous. In fact, it may seem a bit jumbled to the untrained eye, with its shelves of photo albums, papers, and boxes. But it is, in fact, orderly and has come a long way from the early days when Sheila took on this volunteer role.

Last year, with the help of the Advancement and Facilities Departments, the Archive got a small makeover that included a new shelving system and, most importantly, an organized catalogue of the Archive's content. That catalogue has made a world of difference, as it means that when Sheila is looking for something specific, she now knows exactly where to go. This is progress!

Sheila has been working in the Archive since 2007, after she volunteered to help Anne Hallisey '53, the former School Librarian, who continued the important work that Sr. Anne Leonard and Sr. Pauline Martin started in establishing the Archive.

For Sheila, it's a labour of love, or, as she calls it, a passion project. Asked why she has put so much into this role, Sheila responds, "Because I love this school and I believe there are so many things here that deserve to be preserved. I hope other people find them meaningful and can share in them."

She is also driven by her family history, which goes back to the earliest days of Sacred Heart, when her great-great-grandfather, Patrick Power, brought his three daughters here, two of whom

went on to become RSCJ. The family legacy at Sacred Heart has continued over the generations since then to the present day, with three of Sheila's grand-nieces and nephews currently at the School.

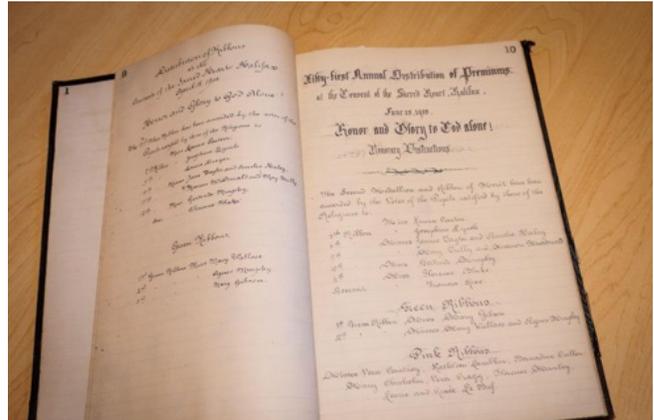
Sheila loves to see the glimpses of her family among the boxes. As she searches for her own name in one of the original registers, she recalls that the reason for the delayed start in 1951 was the polio epidemic that year. It's the kind of fascinating insight and institutional knowledge that Sheila brings to the role.

She also brings a reverential fascination for what's in the archives. She marvels at the beauty of the original handwritten registers that date from 1857 to 1984. She is fascinated by the early financial records that are markedly different from today's, considering most of the faculty were RSCJ, who were, of course, never paid. She enjoys flipping through the historic photos and is often distracted by the stories they depict. And, she adores discovering small mysteries in the artefacts she uncovers. Case in point, a beautiful silk handkerchief embroidered with Pope Leo XIII's name. Considering Pope Leo's papacy was from 1878-1903, Sheila believes the handkerchief could be from that era, but otherwise, does not know whose it was or how it came to be in our possession. She speculates that, given the handwriting on the label, it may have belonged to a nun who had been to Rome during the papacy.

The Archive is filled with all kinds of interesting nuggets like this one. Sheila hopes to keep uncovering them. And, with a recently completed course at the Council of Nova Scotia Archives, she has even more plans to formally document the Archive's riches. She is also in talks with the Council to visit our space to provide advice and assistance.

There is one other goal Sheila has for the Archive — to more widely share with our community the stories that live there, so they too can discover

these riches that give context and meaning to our incredible legacy here in Halifax. Perhaps that will be the next project she tackles. And, perhaps, there will be some other treasure hunters in our community who wish to help.



We are not the only ones thankful for Sheila's contributions. Last November, Sheila was awarded an Archdiocesan Medal of Merit from Archbishop Dunn for her many community-building contributions to the Archdiocese, Saint Mary's Cathedral Basilica, and Halifax. Congratulations, Sheila! This recognition is richly deserved.

THIS YEAR'S WINE & CHEESE PAYS A SPECIAL TRIBUTE

The annual Alums & PALs Wine & Cheese is always a cause for celebration, but this year's event was even more special. Not only was it extremely well attended — thank you everyone, for showing up despite yet another December winter storm — there was a special “Last Will” tribute to our amazing Director of Advancement & Alumni Relations, Miriam Regan '80, who has left her role after an incredible 12-year run. The Last Will was given by her close colleague and fellow alumna, Charlotte Riley '81, who wrote a stirring tribute to Miriam for all she has given to our School, including her ability to throw a wonderful party! Charlotte borrowed the very apt words of Janet Stuart to close out her remarks, “I am more and more convinced that one can never do too much, and one can scarcely do enough to express gratitude, consideration, regard, and, even in a way, affection...not gushing affection, but the affection of quiet and deep friendship and spiritual kinship, which we all have.” In this case, however, our affection for the wonderful Miriam Regan is a gushing one. She will be tremendously missed.



OUR ALUMS MAKE EXCELLENT MENTORS!

Big thanks to the many alums who came back to the HEART in the first term of this academic year to share their insights, experiences, and wisdom with Senior School students as they contemplate their own educational and career paths. This mentorship is extremely valuable and provides important context and support for our students.



If you're interested in sharing your experience, talent, or time with our students, please reach out to [Riley Goedkoop](#), our Advancement & Alumni Relations Officer. We welcome your contributions.



SACRED HEART
SCHOOL of HALIFAX

SAVE THE DATE

April 25, 2026

Big Hearts

BURSARY BENEFIT

Gala in the Garden



CLASS OF 1975 REUNION

Last August, members of the Class of 1975 celebrated their 50th reunion with a visit to the hallowed halls they once walked. They took time to revisit their old classrooms, gym, and important spaces that were foundational to their experience here at Sacred Heart. It was a special trip down memory lane that included many laughs, memories, and photographs. If you're interested in planning your own class reunion, please reach out to [Riley Goedkoop](#), our Advancement & Alumni Relations Officer; she will be happy to provide planning support.



ALUMS MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS BY SERVING ON OUR BOARD OF GOVERNORS

We are delighted to have three alumnae serving the School through their roles as Board Governors — **Jillian Coolen '95**, **Natasha Compton '95**, and **Sr. Anne Marie Conn '65**. This volunteer role is a vital way to give back to the School, and we appreciate the time and commitment Jillian, Natasha, and Anne Marie make to our community. If you have an interest in joining our Board of Governors, please submit an expression of interest to our Vice Chair and Chair of the Nominating Committee, [Vurain Tabvuma](#).

ARE YOU ONE OF THE YOUNG, OR THE REST?

Are you a hard-core runner? Then consider being part of the 2026 Sacred Heart Cabot Trail Relay team, "The Young and the Rest of Us", which is composed of Sacred Heart faculty, staff, and alums. They once again plan to tackle this legendary relay race in late May 2026. Each leg is between 12.5 and 20.5 km, and runners must be able to run a 5:35 pace. Reach out to faculty member [Shoneth Leadbetter](#) if you've got what it takes!

Tidbits



Congratulations to **Jillian D'Alessio, '03**, who was honoured recently as a Lexpert Rising Star, an award recognizing top lawyers 40 and under from all across Canada. Jillian is an insurance defence litigator at McInnes Cooper and also specializes in sport law. Jillian, a former Olympian kayaker, continues to make waves for the many ways she gives back to sport, her practice, and our community. Way to go, Jillian!



A very hearty tip of the cap to **Tallulah MacNeil '22**, who was a finalist for the prestigious 2025 Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford University. This very impressive achievement was a result of an arduous process that saw Tallulah spend hours preparing, writing, and interviewing as one of only 10 finalists in the Maritimes. While she was ultimately not selected, she was grateful for the experience and the knowledge she gained along the way. She was also thankful for **Hannah Baillie '18**, who was a finalist for this scholarship in 2023, who gave her some excellent coaching and advice. We are so impressed, but not surprised, by Tallulah's achievement and her quiet pursuit of excellence.



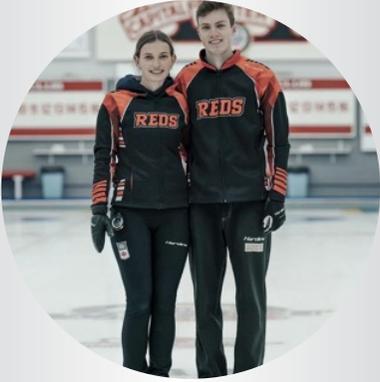
Well done to **Devin Huang '24**, who is in his second year at Queen's University in the Faculty of Health Sciences, for being placed on the Dean's Honour List-Distinction for the 2024-25 Academic Year, for being in the top 3% of his program. Another outstanding performance from Devin!



Alums **David MacDonald '16** and **Julia Foot '17** got married this past summer at White Point Beach...to each other! Big congratulations to the happy couple.



Kudos to **Meghan MacAskill '16**, who, after clerking with the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, took on a new role this past fall as a Crown Attorney at Nova Scotia Public Prosecution Service - Pictou.



Well done to alumnus **Sean Beland '22**, who, along with his partner Rebecca Watson, captured the New Brunswick Mixed Doubles Curling Provincial Championship in December. Another great victory!

Congratulations to **Katie Polley '18**, who recently started a new role as a Grid Connections Intern at Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd, UK, working within the grid team to support renewable connections across the UK electricity system. She's a busy gal. She also took on a part-time role as a coach at Hearts of Midlothian Amateur Swimming Club. She also still runs the seasonal Long Lake Adventure Company in Halifax with her sister, **Sarah Polley '16**.

Tremendous thanks to the friends of **Allison Pressé '06**, who made a group donation to the Barbara Wallace Pressé Courage et Confiance Scholarship in memory of Barbara, who passed away 20 years ago. This thoughtful gift is appreciated by the Wallace Pressé family, and of course by us; we are so grateful when our alums support their alma mater.

We're delighted to celebrate two new births in the Sacred Heart family! Congratulations to **Anna (Ferguson) Munro '13** and her husband Thomas on the birth of their baby girl, Victoria Mary Munro, and to classmate **Marianna Saunders '13** and her husband Jack on the birth of their son, James Finlay. This makes for two very happy grandmothers — **Nicole Parkhill '86** and **Maria Lang '78**.



Former Head of School, **Sr. Anne Wachter '80**, RSCJ, was delighted to host Halifax sisters **Sarah Cassidy '76** and **Catherine MacDonald '73** during their recent trip to Japan that included a tour of Anne's school, the International School of the Sacred Heart, in Tokyo, and a sushi night. Apparently, fun was had by all!



A round of applause for **Katie Clyburne '21**, who recently graduated from Mount Allison University with her Bachelor's Degree in Aviation and has moved north to Red Lake, Ontario, where she is now working for Superior Airways as a dispatcher and first officer. And thanks to Katie's parents, Jeanne & Jason, who were the first in the door at the Christmas Fair on November 22nd with delicious donations for the event!

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 Riley
Goedkoop an email!

Support your School!

We accept gifts in any amount all year long! Please consider becoming a monthly donor. Your support helps maintain our outstanding education and exceptional legacy.

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Save
the Date

ALUM DAY
MAY 29, 2026

SACRED HEART SCHOOL OF HALIFAX

5820 Spring Garden Road
Halifax, NS B3H 1X8
Phone: 902-422-4459
shsh.ca



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Welcome the World into Your Home! We are now accepting Sacred Heart Homestay Host Family applications for the 2026-2027 School Year. This amazing opportunity allows international students to live with a local family, experience Halifax and Canada, and practice their English while they attend Senior School. In return, families welcome a wonderful student into their homes and hearts. Short or long-term (4-10 months) stays are available, and families will now receive \$1,500 per month starting in the 2026-27 School Year. Please be in touch with our Director of Admissions, [Marie Reyes](#).