A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE

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15 A Meeting of the People
School Boards and Protestant Communities in Quebec, 1801–1998
Roderick MacLeod and Mary Anne Poutanen

A Meeting of the People

School Boards and Protestant Communities in Quebec, 1801–1998

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AND
MARY ANNE POUTANEN

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For

Andrés Javier MacLeod-Cerrolaza

and

Daniel Christopher Palacios

Products of Quebec Protestant Schooling

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In 1998, following the passage of Bill 180, which abolished confessional school boards in the province of Quebec, Eardley P. Dowling, the chair of the Foundation for the Advancement of Protestant Education in Canada, met with members of the Department of History at McGill University to explore the possibility of establishing a research group that would focus on the history of Quebec Protestant schooling. Although the Protestant system of education had existed in Quebec for nearly 200 years, it had received little scholarly attention. As a result of this and subsequent meetings, the Quebec Protestant Education Research Project (QPERP) was created. It set out to locate, evaluate, and chronicle the historical documents of the Protestant school boards and to research and write a comprehensive history of Protestant education in Quebec based on these sources. This book, *A Meeting of the People: School Boards and Protestant Communities in Quebec, 1801–1998*, is in part the outcome of what became an ideal collaboration between the members of the foundation, QPERP, and McGill's Department of History.

From our perspective, this partnership has produced both surprising and anticipated by-products. It has brought the public into the university sphere and introduced academia to the public. It has encouraged students and historians to consult school-board documents and communities to value their school boards as archival sources. In keeping with the aims of QPERP, a workshop, "Historical Sources in the School Board Archives," was held in June 2000 at McGill University. Staff of the English school boards and a number of public archives throughout Quebec, as well as representatives of Quebec historical societies

attended. We have established formal links with research groups at McGill and Laval universities and others across the province, as well as with the wider community through the recently established Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN).

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Chronology of Key Events Pertaining to Protestant Education in Quebec

Year	Event	Significance
1789	Dorchester Commission	• Calls for a free elementary school in each village and a free secondary school in each county • Calls for a secular college for English and French
1791	Constitutional Act	• Upper and Lower Canada established, each with a legislative assembly
1801	Act for the Establishment of Free Schools in this Province	• Creates the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning
1816	Royal Grammar schools open in Montreal and Quebec	• Royal Institution schools with more advanced curriculum
1818	Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning (RIAL) incorporated	• Royal Institution has board of trustees and secretary to deal with petitions for schools

1818	Anglican parishes established	• Anglican ministers serve as local administrators for Royal Institution schools
1824	4 George IV, cap. 31 Fabrique Act	• Provides for Catholic parochial schools • Parishes, with bishop's approval, may establish schools using up to one-quarter of the annual parish income • Schools under the authority of priests and church wardens • Local councils or "Fabriques" hold property for schools
1829	9 George IV, cap. 46 Syndics' Act	• Places Assembly in control of education • Communities elect five trustees or "syndics" to receive grants, to build and maintain schools, and to hire teachers
1832	2 William IV, cap. 26	• Renewal of Syndics' Act • Communities whose schools were operated by the Royal Institution were obliged to decide whether they wished to continue doing so
1837–38	Rebellions in Lower Canada	• Martial law, ruled by Special Council • Lord Durham made governor general with mandate to study causes of the rebellions
1838	Durham Report (Arthur Buller prepares section on education)	• Program to encourage British values throughout Lower Canada by establishing system of common schools • Religious education to make use of a book of biblical extracts

		• Recommends banning clergy from inspecting and supervising schools; a municipally based system with a superintendent suggested • Recommends banning politics in schools, imposing school taxes, improving recruitment and pay of teachers
1840	Union of the Canadas	• Unites Lower and Upper Canada • Legislative Assembly replaces Special Council
1841	4 & 5 Victoria, cap. 18 Common School Act (for the united province of Canada)	• Creates a non-sectarian system paid for by government grants (via district councils) and local fees • Establishes a superintendent of education to supervise education budget and to oversee all schools • Creates a Department of Education (run by the supt) with two branches: Upper Canada and Lower Canada • Allows school municipalities (parishes or townships) to elect five to seven commissioners to open and run schools • Creates a board of examiners in cities, with Catholic and Protestant sections • Provides for a right of dissent through an amendment (Article XI) that is promoted by both sides
1843	High School of Montreal founded	• Absorbs Royal Grammar School in Montreal and becomes first Protestant secondary school
1844	Institut Canadien founded in Montreal	• Liberal voice of French Canada

1845	8 Victoria, cap. 41 Education Act for Canada East	• Places control of school revenue in hands of school commissioners rather than with municipal governments • Allows no compulsory taxation, but voluntary contributions possible • Allows schools operated by religious communities to be regulated by school boards
1846	9 Victoria, cap. 27 Lower Canada School Act	• Makes local taxation compulsory; school commissioners must undertake evaluations • Creates Protestant and Catholic school boards in Quebec City and Montreal; appointed by municipal government and given grants in lieu of taxes
1849	12 Victoria, cap. 200	• Allows clergy to be elected to school boards
1849	Guerre des Éteignoirs	• Marks violent opposition to school taxation, felt across Quebec
1851	14 Victoria, cap. 97 The Inspector's Act	• Provides for Normal Schools and for twenty-three inspectors to visit schools to check their books
1853	Sicotte Commission	• Calls for more central control of education
1856	19–20 Victoria, cap.54	• Establishes Council of Public Instruction to work with the Supt to set teaching standards • Regulates Normal Schools • Oversees selection of books, maps, etc. for schools • Creates *Journal de l'instruction publique / of education*

1857	Normal Schools open	• First formal Protestant teacher training
1859	Council of Public Instruction established	• Eleven Catholic, four Protestant members
1864	Quebec conference to discuss Confederation	• Protestants demand their own superintendent of education, and control of their own schools and tax money
1864	Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers formed	• Advocacy group for the interests of Protestant teachers
1867	Article 93 of the British North America Act amended	• Entrenches in the Constitution the rights of minorities (Protestants in Quebec, Catholics in Ontario) to a separate system of education
1867	Ministry of Public Instruction created	• Office of superintendent replaced by government minister
1869	32 Victoria, cap. 16	• Expansion of Council of Public Instruction to twenty-one members in two committees (seventeen Catholic members and seven Protestant members) • Grants for education in cities to be divided according to confessional breakdown of taxpayers • Property owners taxed according to four categories: Catholics, Protestants, neutrals, exempt persons
1875	Ministry of Public Instruction abolished	• Ministry replaced by a department with two committees • Protestant Committee governs what is essentially a separate Protestant school system

1888	51–52 Victoria, cap. 2	• Establishes powers of various boards, confessional committees, taxation, etc.
1902	Adams Report	• Funded by William Christopher Macdonald • Recommends consolidation of rural Protestant schools
1903	3 Edward VII, cap. 16	• Acknowledges that in matters of education, Jews to be considered Protestant and their taxes to be directed towards Protestant boards
1905	Kingsey Consolidated School built	• First consolidated school
1907	Macdonald College opens	• School for Teachers in rural setting allows thousands to obtain certification
1919	Spanish influenza	• Devastating epidemic, spurs drive for medical attention via schools
1924	3 Edward VII, cap. 16 declared unconstitutional	• Equation of Protestants and Jews for school purposes does not guarantee a Protestant form of education to Protestants
1925	Montreal Central Board established	• Association of Montreal Island school boards for mutual financial assistance
1930	Jewish School Commission established in Montreal	• Commissioners elected, who make a contract with Montreal Protestant school board to accommodate Jewish children • Commissioners resign a year later
1937	Hepburn Commission	• Recommends comprehensive reforms to Protestant school board structure and administration

1939	Royal visit	• Many Protestant children visit Montreal to see the King and Queen
1943	7 George VI, cap. 13	• Requires compulsory attendance at school for 6- to 14-year-olds
1944	8 George VI, cap. 14	• Allows government to distribute free books • Allows collective bargaining to be negotiated between teachers and school boards
1944	Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations formed	• Federation of local parents' associations, forming an advocacy group for educational concerns
1944	Central boards formed	• Federations of small local boards, much as occurred in Montreal 1925
1945	Outremont school crisis begins	• Outremont board will not renew contract to accommodate Jewish children
1951	Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (PSBGM) formed	• Replaces Montreal Protestant Central Board
1952	Royal visit	• Many Protestant children visit Montreal to see Princess Elizabeth
1961	"Quiet Revolution" begins	• Systematic overhaul of public institutions, much greater state control • Royal Commission on Education established (Msgr Alphonse Parent is chair)
1962	Committee for Neutral Schools	• Group of parents and educators, mostly Protestant, advocating the abolition of confessional school boards

1963	First volume of Parent Report published	• Recommends a government ministry to be in charge of all education administration • Recommends creation of pre-university academic or vocational schools
1964	Bill 69	• Abolishes Council of Public Instruction, office of Superintendent, confessional committees • Creates Ministry of Education out of former Dept of Public Instruction and Dept of Youth • Creates Superior Council of Education; Protestant and Catholic committees have authority over curriculum • Gives teachers the right to strike through new Labour Code • Requires attendance to age sixteen
1964	Operation 55 implemented	• Creates regional school boards to administer secondary education and other services • Provides local boards with representation, delegates responsibilities
1965	Reform of PSBGM	• Five seats on PSBGM reserved for Jews • City of Montreal school commissioners remain unelected
1966	Second volume of Parent Report published	• Advocates reorganization of school boards • Recommends a single regional school commission (no confessional status) to regulate all education

		• Recommends that local parents' committees should be responsible for deciding school's linguistic and confessional character • Advocates a Council of School Development to liaise between government and school commissions
1967	Expo 67 in Montreal	• Many school children visit Montreal's international exhibition, Man and His World
1968	Pagé Commission (Joseph Pagé as chair)	• Suggests replacing Montreal Island's forty-two school boards with thirteen regional boards organized along linguistic lines
1968	St Leonard crisis	• Local Catholic board ends schools' bilingual programs • Anglophone community rallies to support linguistic rights • Impetus for Gendron Commission on status of French in Quebec
1969	Bill 62 (defeated)	• Organizes Montreal Island into eleven school districts, each Catholic, Protestant, or non-denominational • Each board to be made up of six elected and two appointed officials
1969	Bill 63 (defeated)	• Assures parents' right to choose their children's language of instruction
1970	October Crisis	• Imposition of War Measures Act to counter perceived terrorist threat
1971	Bill 27	• Reorganizes school boards outside Montreal: 1100 boards reduced to 200

		• Extends right to vote to general electorate • Gives school committees legal status
1972	Bill 27 takes effect	• Large sector boards replace local school boards
1972	Bill 71	• Confirms confessional basis of education in Montreal • Reduces the number of school boards on the Island of Montreal to eight, of which two were Protestant: Lakeshore and PSBGM • Opens seats on board to election by general population • Creates an island council made up of representatives from eight boards
1973	Bill 71 takes effect	• Local school boards on the Island of Montreal abolished • First board-wide elections to PSBGM
1974	Bill 22	• Makes French the official language of Quebec • Stipulates that people whose mother tongue is not English must pass a language proficiency test to enroll in English schools
1977	Bill 101	• Restricts access to English-language instruction to those whose parents have gone to school in English, in Quebec
1984	Bill 3 (ruled unconstitutional)	• Would have replaced confessional boards with linguistic ones • Montreal and Quebec would have retained confessional boards within 1967 boundaries

1986	Bill 107 (dropped)	• Would have created linguistic boards everywhere but Montreal and Quebec, which were to retain confessional boards
1996	Estates-general on education makes its report	• Recommends seeking constitutional amendment to implement linguistic boards
1997	Article 93 of BNA Act amended	• Quebec legislature and Canadian parliament approve
1997	Bill 180	• Abolishes confessional boards in favour of English and French boards • Creates a governing board for each school to replace school committees and to make decisions regarding school's curriculum and confessional status
1998	Bill 180 implemented	• First elections to new linguistic school boards • Governing boards elected
1999	Proulx Report	• Recommends that school boards not offer specific religious instruction

Abbreviations

ANQ-Q	Archives nationales du Québec à Québec, Ste Foy
CQSBA	Central Quebec School Board Archives, Sillery
CSBA	Cree School Board Archives, Mistissini
EMSBA	English Montreal School Board Archives, Montreal
ESSBA	Eastern Shores School Board Archives, New Carlisle and Gaspé
ETSBA	Eastern Townships School Board Archives, Magog and Richmond
KSBA	Kativik School Board Archives, Montreal
LBPSBA	Lester B. Pearson School Board Archives, Beaconsfield
MUA	McGill University Archives, Montreal
NFSBA	New Frontiers School Board Archives, Chateauguay
QFHSA	Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations
RSBA	Riverside School Board Archives, Longueuil
SWLSBA	Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board Archives, Laval, Lachute, and Ste Agathe
WQSBA	Western Quebec School Board Archives, Aylmer

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A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE

We believe that the survival of a community's language and culture is dependent on its power to make policy and to exercise administrative control over its education institutions ... the Minister of Education has recently indicated that he is considering the abolition of elected school boards and their replacement by regional or territorial administrative structures ... this would result in the elimination of effective control by the English-speaking community of its elementary and secondary school systems ... elected school boards are an essential part of the democratic process and the educational structure ... we categorically reject and will oppose with all means at our disposal attempts by the Government of Québec to impose unified regional or territorial administrative structures.

Protestant School Municipality of Pontiac, 21 April 1982

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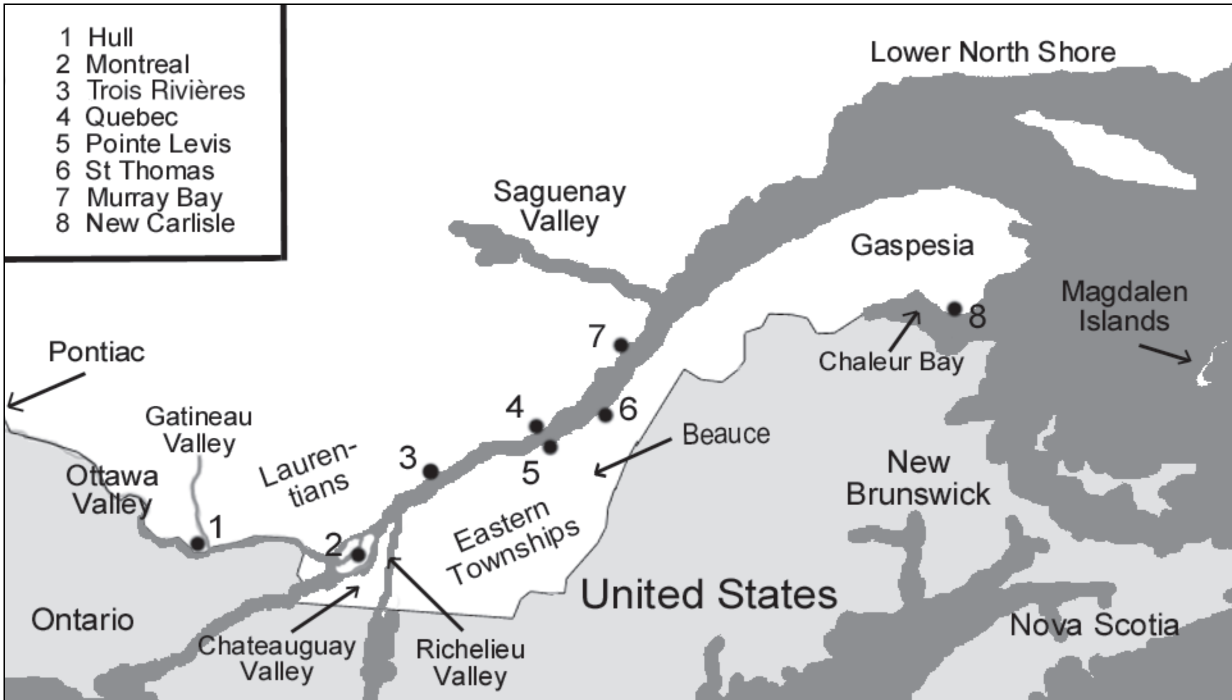
Introduction
Searching for Community

> The secretary is instructed to dispose of all documents, apart from those of historical value i.e. Minute Books etc. that are over 5 years old. Adopted unaminously [sic].
>
> The Pontiac Protestant School Board, 1972.[1]

The records of Quebec's Protestant school system are kept in places like the basement of St Mary's Elementary School in Longueuil, across the river from Montreal. This archive contains the material generated by dozens of distinct communities across this large region, some dating back to the middle of the nineteenth century. In stark contrast to the public archives in Quebec City, where government records are fastidiously organized and easily accessible, documents here are stored in cardboard boxes. Some of them lie on metal shelves but others are simply stacked in a corner. In these cartons are the jumble of papers, books and registers, letters, and the occasional photograph and school blueprint, that is the legacy of Protestant communities and their schools on the South Shore and in the Richelieu Valley. The array of minutes alone maps the history of school boards: the reams of computer-generated pages from the South Shore Protestant Regional School Board, which administered all Protestant schooling in the region from 1992 to 1998; the bound, typewritten pages of the St Lawrence Protestant School



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Board and the South Central Protestant School Board, themselves amalgamations of smaller boards created in 1972; the volumes of leather-bound tomes that constitute the records of the boards of major towns such as Longueuil, St Lambert, Greenfield Park, and McMasterville, which formed in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries and operated with varying degrees of autonomy until they were legislated out of existence in 1972; and the notebooks from the older dissentient boards, which served the tiny Protestant communities of L'Acadie, St Valentin, Candiac, and others that have long since disappeared. Each page in all these cartons records the actions of men (and, in later years, women) who met at regular intervals over the last century and a half to run the Protestant school or schools under their particular jurisdiction.

The history of these school boards is the history of the communities they represented. Public schooling in Quebec is now determined by a Ministry of Education, with school boards – themselves typically large and impersonal – serving essentially as an administrative mechanism for educational services, so it is difficult to conceive that the business of running schools once lay at the heart of a community. For most of the last century and a half, sitting on a school board was a means of ensuring that one's own children received the best possible education and that one's own community enjoyed the best possible school facilities. School commissioners and trustees were (in most places) elected and so were responsible to their constituents. They were the neighbours, even the family, of those whose taxes paid for the system, and the minutes they took were kept so that these ratepayers (not, as it would be today, the auditors) could see how their money was being spent. School boards were vital community institutions – indeed, in some isolated places they were the only real forum for public discussion. As such, they were particularly crucial for the survival of Protestant communities, which often existed in the midst of a Catholic majority who dominated other forms of local government. Moreover, Protestant schooling was a specific creation of Protestant communities themselves. Catholic education was often the product of church and teaching orders, but

Map 1 Southern Quebec: key places and regions
Although only a small portion of the province, southern Quebec is a vast area stretching some 100 km from the Pontiac to the tip of the Gaspé peninsula. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Protestants had settled in virtually every part of this territory and after a few decades had established a presence on the Lower North Shore, the Magdalen Islands, and the Saguenay Valley.

Protestant schooling (except in the cities) typically came from the grassroots, born of a popular desire for literacy. Many Protestant communities had schools even before they had churches, and their schools, unlike churches, served the entire population, not merely one congregation. When an early community gathered to discuss educational matters, the event was known as a "meeting of the people."

Although the history of Protestant education in Quebec is for the most part a history of schooling in English, the "community" has never been defined by its Englishness. It is at once more specific and much broader than this. The changing nature of the term "Protestant," and by extension of Protestant communities themselves, is one of the problematic issues at the heart of this book. In the nineteenth century, the language of instruction was secondary to the values that characterized a form of education. In some circles such values were those of one denomination; in others they represented a wide spectrum of characteristics, including Britishness, intellectual liberty, scientific curiosity, and even freedom from what was often perceived as papal tyranny. The division of public schooling into Protestant and Catholic systems dates from a time when there was no question of including other groups in the reckoning, but Protestant education had the advantage of being broad enough in its scope, and flexible enough in its approach, to accommodate most of those who could not, or would not, attend Catholic schools. (This is not to suggest that this process did not involve a great deal of effort on the part of those included.) As such, it has been the lot – and, arguably, the nature – of the Protestant system to absorb people with other than British or Northern European backgrounds. It has educated Jews, Orthodox Christians, native peoples, and even many Catholics. This accommodation has at times proved difficult and the older Anglo-Protestant population has not always been happy with the presence of outsiders, but the experience has forced school officials, parents, and pupils to deal with their own perceptions of difference and to sensitize themselves to racism and anti-Semitism. In practice, the addition of outsiders proved critical to Protestant survival in the second half of the twentieth century. Similarly, the education of French-speaking Protestants and the desire of English-speaking Protestants to be educated in French point to another area where the boundaries of what constitutes Protestant education have been stretched.

The flexibility and adaptability of Protestant schooling meant a renewal, even a reinvention, of those "characteristic" values for every generation, a process that served to keep the institution vibrant. The abolition of confessional school boards in 1998 put an end to this process – a loss that, to many, seems of no great consequence in a Quebec where most people see the battle lines drawn between French and En-

glish, rather than Protestant and Catholic. The placing of English-speaking Catholics alongside English-speaking Protestants and other anglophones has allowed all these groups to enjoy a common institution with the objective of maintaining an English-language education system. What has been lost, however, is an approach to schooling that was fundamentally about values, as opposed to language. Catholics, too, can no longer enjoy this approach – at least in theory. In practice, since the majority of Quebec francophones are Catholic, the nature of the curriculum in formerly Catholic schools has changed very little, for reasons that will be made clear by the end of this book. For Protestants, and those who would subscribe to "Protestant" values (however they may be defined), such continuity is rare and nowhere is access to such values guaranteed in the way it was prior to 1998. Many within the Protestant community see the constitutional amendment that allowed for the imposition of linguistic boards as the abrogation of a right – the right to a Protestant form of education – that had been enshrined since Confederation.

One often-overlooked feature of Quebec's Protestant population, and consequently of its schools, is how widely dispersed it was (and, to a lesser extent, still is) across the province. The Protestant schools of Montreal are well-known, thanks to the dominating force that was the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal and, to a slightly lesser extent, to the school boards of Montreal's West Island, an area that has been a bastion of English Quebec for several decades. The Protestant presence on Montreal's South Shore and in Laval was nearly as strong during this same period, though the rapid population rise in these areas since World War II has distracted attention from their long histories as important, if dispersed, centres of Protestantism. The historic significance of the Eastern Townships and its schools has been celebrated and promoted by local historical groups for many years, and the same is true on a smaller scale for the Ottawa valley (the Outaouais), the Chateauguay valley, and the Gaspé peninsula. Less well known is the Protestant community in Quebec City, which has nevertheless enjoyed a rich history. A study of school boards reveals a (perhaps) surprising Protestant presence in such places as the Saguenay valley, the Beauce, Northwestern Quebec, the Magdalen Islands, and at various points along the St Lawrence River. The non-Protestant element within the Protestant school system has been concentrated in Montreal, and more recently in the Greater Montreal area, but this should not detract from the important Jewish communities in Sherbrooke, Ste Agathe, and the tiny community of Ste Sophie in the Laurentians. For their part, French Protestants have had a rich history in the region south and east of Montreal, and are still particularly strong numerically there. And while

the Cree and Inuit, whose education is strongly Protestant, are served mainly by the Cree and Kativik school boards respectively, other boards in the south have occasionally accommodated native children.

This study focuses on the intricate relationships between Protestant school boards and the communities they served. It is based on the idea that local schools reflected the values and interests of the parents whose children attended the schools and of the members of the school boards who managed them. Any discrepancies between those values and interests created conflicts that invariably had to be resolved between the parties. This study also considers the school board as the arbitrator between the demands of the state and those of the community. For this reason, commissioners and trustees were in the unenviable position of trying to meet the needs of a number of competing interests – those of the Protestant Committee, the Ministry of Education, teachers, and parents – while keeping in mind their purpose of providing an education to the community's children. They also had to do this in periods of economic recessions and depressions, during world wars and epidemics, and as the Protestant population shifted from the countryside to urban centres – all factors that placed enormous pressure on local resources. As definitions of what constituted a good education evolved, local communities and their school boards had to adjust to meet current realities. Ultimately, this study addresses the nature of communities (both in the local and the cultural sense) rather than the larger changes in education. By considering the school board as both a window onto communities and a vehicle through which communities expressed their educational needs, we aim to provide a fresh perspective on the way educational policy was played out at the local level and on how notions of culture and ethnicity changed over the course of two centuries.

To study communities is to explore the nature of relationships and to give nuance to the operations of institutions. An awareness of the relationship between school boards, teachers, and parents is crucial to an understanding of how these different parties accepted, resisted, and influenced administrative changes to education. Thus, our analysis moves away from a social-control model, which has dominated the literature on schooling in Quebec, to one that reveals and explores local dynamics. Until recently, Quebec scholars of education overemphasized the role played by the state in the province's system of schooling, resulting in research periodized by legislative change and characterized by a reliance on government-generated sources. Preoccupied as they were with the development of the bureaucratic state, scholars did not challenge

this top-down or social-control model, which presupposes that schooling was imposed on an unwilling population. In his influential work on Quebec education, Louis-Philippe Audet presents the history of schooling from the perspective of state initiatives and the resulting administrative structures, his sources being the superintendents' and inspectors' reports, the minutes of the Council of Public Instruction, the *Journal of Public Instruction*, debates of the House of Assembly, and commissioned reports on the status of education. Consequently, his reading of schooling tends to reflect the negative view that government officials had towards the local community: parents lacked interest in their children's education, teachers were unqualified, and school commissioners were inept and uneducated themselves or more interested in balancing their books than in providing education.[2] The local contribution to schooling is disregarded. Audet's view has been a dominant force in the Quebec historiography and has influenced a generation of historians, who have continued to focus on the development of a public system of education without paying close attention to what was taking place at the local level.

Historians have also ignored Protestant schooling in Quebec – so much so that no comprehensive history of it exists. Nathan Mair's *Protestant Education in Quebec* (1981) focuses on provincial legislation, curricula, and the Protestant view of moral and religious education, which he presents chronologically and periodizes according to the most significant changes in education laws, beginning with the formation of the Quebec education system and ending on the eve of Bill 101. A concise overview can be found in *Whither Protestant Education?*, written by Harry Kuntz and Calvin C. Potter for the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHSA), which concentrates on the legal and human rights aspects of changes to the educational laws up to the late 1980s. Like Mair's work, it is highly topical and argues for the continuation of a Protestant school system in the face of impending reforms to the curriculum and school-board structure. Neither deals at any great length with the Protestant community per se – let alone Protestant communities. A number of works dealing with anglophones in Quebec have emerged since the rise of Quebec nationalism in the late 1960s and early seventies, but most pay little attention to Protestants as a group or to Protestantism as a set of values with ramifications for schooling. In Ronald Rudin's *The Forgotten Quebeckers* Protestants emerge as a somewhat reactionary force impeding the creation of English-language school boards, which are conceived as potentially vital for Quebec anglophones.[3] Other work has looked at aspects of Protestant education without necessarily standing back to take in the full picture.[4]

The 1980s marked a departure from perceiving the history of education as essentially a legislative process to a consideration of the perspective of social relations. Influenced by French structuralists and their view that education systems were a means to reproduce social relations, Nadia Fahmy-Eid and Micheline Dumont focused their research on the types of strategies the dominant classes used to indoctrinate school systems with their ideologies. They did not explore popular resistance to those strategies or the role played by local communities in determining the form and content of education in their schools.[5]

Jean-Pierre Charland ("L'Histoire de l'éducation au Québec: regard sur la production récente") challenges Quebec historians to refocus their research on community reactions to public education, an approach that, in his opinion, is exemplified by historians of Ontario education. However, the centrality of community in their studies notwithstanding, Ontario scholars continue to be predisposed towards a social-control model. In her pioneer work on education, *The School Promoters* (1977), Alison Prentice contends that a system of schooling was imposed on an unwilling and apathetic population who resisted state education. In a subsequent publication co-authored with Susan Houston, Prentice asserts that the establishment of a state system of education did not usher in an era of popular education but, rather, school promoters were faced with "a giant job of salesmanship" to get a reluctant population on board.[6] With fewer alternatives open to them, communities were enticed by government funds to establish state schools; parents were dragged into a system they did not value. Similarly, Bruce Curtis argues in *Building the Educational State* (1988) that a bourgeois system of education was imposed on a population that had only two options, either to accept it or to resist it – without considering that parents may have influenced and supported some aspects of the school system while resisting those with which they disagreed. In contrast, R.D. Gidney, D.A. Lawr, and W.P.J. Millar show that Ontario communities influenced education policy by resisting the efforts of state officials to enact policies they did not favour, thus forcing bureaucrats to modify their decisions. Indigenous values and interests prevailed at the local schoolhouse despite the formal education policies of the state. Officials learned that they needed to court school trustees to ensure the success of their policies.[7]

More recently, Quebec historians of education have directed their attention to community. On the one hand, they have posed new questions about schooling; and on the other, they have consulted a range of historical sources – traditional and new – to explore the interactions between the community and the state and between members of the

community. A case in point is Andrée Dufour's fresh approach to the origins of public education in Quebec. After examining the interactions between the state and rural communities, she concludes that the local population was strongly implicated in education.[8] To understand the contributions made by both the state and rural communities to provide children with an education, Dufour asserts that historians must study the relationship between these two entities. Even so, she is critical of school commissioners, whom she identifies as local elites elected by their communities to manage their schools. We learn little about these elected representatives other than the stereotypical image posited by Quebec historians that they were inept, uneducated, and occasionally corrupt. Moreover, Dufour treats Protestants and their communities as undifferentiated from Catholics, which is surprising given the divergent traditions upon which their schools were based. By contrast, in *L'entreprise éducative au Québec* (2000), Jean-Pierre Charland focuses on the differences and similarities between Catholics and Protestants with respect to their vision and practice of education. Although he does not challenge the social-control model directly, Charland analyses the nature of the relationship between communities and their school commissioners. He underscores the democratic nature (at least in theory) of school-board elections. Using minute books, Charland details commissioners' responsibilities, how they were elected, who they were, and how they dealt with criticism from their constituencies. But, like Dufour, he does not explore a subset of complex interactions between the school board, teachers, and parents. Similarly, Robert Gagnon's history of Montreal's Catholic school board (1996), while it shows the growing democratization of teaching and the link between the social demands of education and the workings of the school commission, does not pay attention to the relationships between students, teachers, and parents.

Two authors especially stress the importance of social relations in the history of schooling. The first is J.I. Little, whose works highlight the role of the community in local schooling. The innovative *Crofters and Habitants* (1991), for example, examines the Scottish and French-Canadian populations of Winslow, in the Eastern Townships, noting how these two ethnic communities initiated and supported local education. They instituted creative measures – a shorter school year and school closures – to keep their schools operating in the face of persistent and inadequate school taxes and fees and the government's mulish refusal to adequately finance education.[9] The other author is Wendy Nelson ("'Rage against the Dying of the Light': Interpreting the Guerre des Éteignoirs"), whose treatment of the guerre des éteignoirs shows, perhaps for the first time, why the local population of St Grégoire protested the

growing burden of school taxes, and dispels any misconception that it was an anti-intellectual outburst. She concludes that the local elite objected out of self interest; it did not want to support a public system of education in which its own children did not participate. The habitants feared the loss of local control over schooling in the face of the growing influence and power of the village elite.

School-board records are central to this study. We consulted minutes of school-board meetings, petitions, correspondence,[10] teachers' journals, commissioners' and trustees' reports, inspectors' comments, and school censuses, in addition to newspapers, regional and community histories, superintendents' reports, and petitions and letters that were sent to the superintendent of education in Quebec City. The nature and quality of the collections vary among the archives of the nine English and two native school boards in Quebec. Not all records have been preserved, some are missing and presumed destroyed, some have not yet been sorted and classified. Many useful school-related documents are to be found in the archives of historical societies and in other public institutions. For example, the school records of Shawville and other parts of Clarendon township, an area that falls under the jurisdiction of the Western Quebec School Board, are not located in the school-board archive but in the local Pontiac Archive in Campbell's Bay.

We consulted the secretary's minutes of school-board meetings in all of the English school-board archives, but targeted certain communities that represent a cross-section of the social and economic conditions characteristic of each region. We looked at urban centres such as Montreal and Sherbrooke; rural districts such as Lochaber, Stanstead, and Hemmingford; small rural towns such as Aylmer, Coaticook, and Ormstown; company towns such as Bourlamaque, Thetford Mines, and McMasterville; suburban communities such as Beaconsfield, Longueuil, Outremont, and St Eustache; and enduring centres of Anglo-Protestant culture such as Shawville and New Carlisle. One of the challenges was to find minute books that have survived from the earliest days. Minute books of the oldest schools boards are more likely to have gaps in the series or do not survive from the time the board began to operate – as is the case for the Protestant Board of School Commissioners for the City of Montreal, which first met in 1846 but for which there are no minutes before 1865. The minute books of the Hemmingford School Board, which exist for 1842 to 1972, are an exception. The most recent minutes of the regional school boards are also less helpful. As school boards consolidated and eventually came to manage large regions, the minutes became more standardized, general, and le-

galistic. Consequently, they are not very descriptive, and the style tends to be somewhat cryptic to those not already familiar with the topics discussed.

Minute books also vary widely in quality and in the issues discussed. Each secretary naturally had a particular style of note-taking and some recorded more detail than others. Such minutes are, of course, especially rich, although it cannot be assumed that those boards that generated shorter minutes (or those periods when a board might employ a less prolific secretary) were less busy or had less complex issues to deal with. Even apart from this sort of variation, some minute books are unusually full of information on certain topics that other books barely mention. For example, the minutes of the Longueuil and St Lambert boards on the South Shore contain surprising amounts of detail about war and patriotism, an issue that receives almost no treatment in many minute books, even though it must have affected everyone in the community. Again, it does not follow that if a minute book does not mention an issue it held no importance for the community or even for the board. Silences may reflect the reticence of school commissioners to record discussions on certain topics, either because of their delicacy or because such topics were seen as falling under the jurisdiction of another institution. A case in point concerns the pupils who were directly affected by the death of a father, brother, or uncle during the two world wars. While boards identified ex-students who were killed in action, none discusses the grief of any of the students who attended their schools. Such an omission suggests that, in contrast to today's practice of hiring grief counsellors, bereavement was dealt with by the family and possibly the congregation and clergyman. Minute books, therefore, must be complemented by other historical documents. We do not claim that a history of schooling – whether Protestant or Catholic – can be written only from school-board records.

Despite these limitations, minute books greatly help us to understand the trustees and commissioners and their positions in their communities, as well as some of the difficulties they encountered in fulfilling their mandate. School boards were responsible for building and maintaining schools; providing books and equipment; setting the school tax (known as the mill rate and based on a property evaluation) and school fees; collecting school taxes; hiring teachers and support staff; determining how and when to discipline pupils; promoting Protestant culture in the school (especially when the number of non-Protestant children attending their schools began to rise); and solving conflicts between pupils, parents, and teachers. These records reflect a variety of discourses with respect to attitudes about class, gender, and ethnicity. They also provide a crucial window onto community relations and relations with the state. They allow

us to link the health of the local economy (which was influenced by economies of greater scale, be they regional, national, or international) with the resources available to fund local education. Any economic downswings could wreak havoc with boards' financial resources and adversely affect the schools under their care. Striking differences between school boards reflected their rural and urban geography along with economic transformations related to industrialization, urbanization, deindustrialization, and depopulation.

This book attempts to cover nearly two centuries in the history of Quebec, spanning critical social, economic, political, and demographic transformations. To a large extent, it is also a history of Protestants in the province, from the early days of their settlement through economic supremacy to numerical decline as a result of cultural diversity and the rise of Quebec nationalism. In much of this, the story of Protestants is also the story of anglophones, with the curious but significant difference that the Protestant community includes a small number of francophones and excludes large numbers of English-speaking Catholics. This is not to say that the focus is only on Protestants or even on those people whose children came to be accommodated by Protestant school boards. At various times, Protestant education has appeared not so much as the school system of a religious minority but as that of the mainstream – what many places call "public" education. Certainly, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the sort of school system advocated by most Protestants was hardly different from the nondenominational, even secular vision promoted by liberal reformers, and Catholic opposition to such a system stemmed from a fear more of liberalism than of Protestantism. From the 1840s on, Quebec's Catholic elite appropriated the notion of French-Canadian survival and recast it as essentially Catholic despite a strong tradition of liberalism, even anti-clericalism, among the French-Canadian population. The promotion of Catholic values by this elite, rather than Protestant demands for specifically Protestant institutions, lay behind the eventual establishment of confessional schooling. For Protestants, the ambiguity regarding whether Protestant values were those of a specific cultural group or somehow universal has been a characteristic feature of public education ever since.

This ambiguity forms a subtext to the first chapters in this book, which deal with the period leading up to the establishment of confessional schooling (which was in place in Montreal by 1846 but not completely in the rest of the province until the 1870s). During this period it is often difficult to separate the drive for public schooling from the ex-

perience of Protestant families trying to secure an education for their children. Accordingly, chapter 1 sketches the early settlement by Protestants in Quebec and the various strategies they used to establish schools. These strategies ranged from opening makeshift schools taught by local women to accepting government assistance, offered as of 1801 by the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning, and as of 1829 by the Lower Canada Assembly. This funding was interrupted because of political turmoil in the late 1830s, but resumed with the Union of the Canadas. The program of reform implemented in 1841 was characterized by a belief in non-denominational institutions and effective local government. Chapter 2 considers the attempts by Protestant communities to implement non-denominational education within the political framework established by the Education Acts of 1841, 1845, and 1846. Although the framework persisted, with some retooling (in many cases into the 1960s), the spirit of mutual suspicion in many ethnically mixed communities made a separation along confessional lines seem all but inevitable. Chapter 3 examines the experience of Protestant communities who found themselves a minority within the local Catholic population and who opted to make use of the Education Acts' "dissentient clause" to form a separate school board. With the increasing isolation of rural Protestants, such recourse became frequent by the late nineteenth century, although many communities learned to join forces with other minority Protestants and create new, geographically extensive structures to administer these isolated schools. At Confederation, all Protestants, regardless of where they might live, were guaranteed the right to a separate form of education from that of the Catholic majority, thanks to the provisions of section 93 of the British North America (BNA) Act.

In contrast to the rest of the province, Montreal and Quebec City were given special status in 1846: separate Catholic and Protestant boards were legislated into existence, and their members were appointed, not elected. This meant that, unlike their rural counterparts, urban communities had only limited influence on the running of the school system. Commissioners were not directly responsible to their constituents; they also came from a social elite that, given the urban context and the nature of industrial capitalism, was even further removed from the average parent or ratepayer than was the case in rural areas. Chapter 4 describes the nature of the Protestant board, its limitations as an effective administrative unit, and the attempts by urban residents to advance their own interests despite these limitations.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with specifically rural problems, from the earliest days of public schooling into the first half of the twentieth century. Chapter 5 considers the relationships between school boards, teachers,

and parents at the level of the one-room schoolhouse. The problems these groups encountered have been variously described by historians of education, but rarely from the perspective of community. It also describes the advent of school consolidation, a project that met with limited success, particularly given the changing needs of isolated Protestants. The efforts to provide secondary grades ("model" and "academy," later "intermediate" and "high school") are outlined in chapter 6, which also considers how building multigraded schools in central places affected local Protestant demographics, as well as social and gender relations within the teaching staff. This centralizing tendency led to increasing efficiency but also forced the closure of most small schools, often against the wishes of local people. More and more children spent more and more time on buses travelling long distances to school.

Chapters 7 through 9 are concerned with themes of special significance to Protestantism in Quebec. Chapter 7 considers Quebec's Jews as "honorary Protestants," which they were in practice from the time substantial numbers of Jewish immigrants began to send their children to Protestant schools, and in theory between 1903 and 1924 when Jews and Protestants were equated "for educational purposes." Relations between several Jewish communities across the province and the local Protestant school boards are explored. Chapter 8 discusses the importance of patriotism in Protestant schools, especially at times of war, and its impact on the shifting sense of Protestant – even Canadian – identity. The introduction of cadet corps, rifle ranges, and drills, along with attempts by student groups to aid the war effort by raising funds or sending packages overseas, helped create a patriotic, even militaristic atmosphere that was also distinctly Protestant. Concern for idle youth during the Depression and especially during the war led to the development of programs to keep children busy in appropriately gendered activities. It also led to the rise of social work as a profession – one that found a key place within the school. Chapter 9 considers school boards as the vehicles for implementing various social measures, from vaccinations to the relief of poverty to psychological counselling, and considers schools as the venues for such measures. Of particular importance in this regard is the role of volunteer organizations – typically Protestant and run by women: the Women's Institute, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, and especially the Home and School movement, which in recent decades has had an enormous impact as an advocate for parents at government levels.

The book's final chapters deal with the impact of the Quiet Revolution and its aftermath on Protestant communities. The Parent Commission, which studied the state of public education in the early 1960s and

made a series of recommendations for radical change, paid careful attention to the many successes of the Protestant school system. One of these was the concept of central boards, a Protestant innovation of the 1940s to counter the problems of too many small isolated school boards. The commission proposed a universal system of regional boards to administer secondary schooling and various other aspects of education. This innovation was followed in the early 1970s with the consolidation of all local Protestant boards (with two exceptions) into a handful of huge "sector" boards with big bureaucracies and extensive jurisdictions. Protestants initially embraced these new central bodies, only to find that the absence of local control had a devastating effect on the autonomy of rural communities, as argued in chapter 10. The Parent Commission was also impressed by the range of facilities and services offered in Protestant schools, from central libraries to gyms to science labs, all of which seemed ideally suited to modern society. Chapter 11 traces the physical history of Protestant schools and their characteristic features, and shows how these features were incorporated into the huge new schools of the 1960s and 70s – not always with happy results. Even in the "Protestant heartland" – the Island of Montreal as well as off-island suburban regions – larger boards were a mixed blessing. Chapter 12 shows how tensions arose between local communities and central authorities over what constituted the needs of families and their children and how these needs could be squared with administrative budgets and transportation costs. This chapter also outlines the dramatic rise in the Protestant school population in the Montreal area from the time of World War II on. This created headaches for administrators and challenges for local people, who saw their communities change almost overnight from quasi-rural to virtually urban environments. For the city of Montreal itself, the reforms of the early 70s did seem to bring one significant improvement: the long-awaited democratization of the school board.

Chapters 13 and 14 treat two issues that were, and to an extent still are, central to the Protestant experience: multiculturalism and the French language. Building on the discussion of "outsiders" in Protestant schools from earlier chapters, the issue here is the efforts by school boards and by parents' groups, such as Home and School associations, to welcome immigrant families into the fold. These efforts were not purely altruistic; it became clear by the 1970s that the "Protestant" school population was shrinking, and that a steady influx of outsiders was necessary to keep numbers steady. This process resulted in a further broadening of the definition of what constituted a Protestant education; it also led to the development of an almost entirely secular curriculum and school day. As the "Protestant" school population

grew more diverse, anglophones became more conscious of the importance of being able to function in French, soon to be the province's official language. Various strategies, chief among which was French immersion, were used to produce a generation of bilingual students from Protestant schools.

The rise of Quebec nationalism in the 1970s presented a challenge to Protestant boards that struck at their heart: by limiting the rights of immigrants to attend school in English, the "language laws" threatened to drive a wedge between the traditional Protestant community and immigrants, an alliance now several generations old. Furthermore, by promoting the replacement of Protestant and Catholic boards with boards that were either French or English, the Parti Québécois government sought to undermine the autonomy of Protestant school boards – particularly the PSBGM, which had become one of the province's few effective English-language institutions, and one that was prepared on occasion to defy the government's language policy. Arguably, Protestant boards, and the constitutional guarantees that enabled them to exist, also represented an educational tradition that went back to the early nineteenth century: a form of schooling that was liberal in outlook, practical in approach, and non-denominational in content. Many feared that, under linguistic boards, such a system would no longer exist.

Chapter 15 deals with a subject that may seem tangential, though it echoes many of the themes and concerns of preceding chapters: the education of native peoples. Two groups are the focus of study: the Cree and the Inuit, each of which had close ties with Protestantism and Protestant institutions before establishing their own (technically non-confessional) school boards in the late 1970s. The tensions in the relationships between central authorities and local communities and the problems of administering a school system over a great distance (in these cases, over vast distances) are curiously familiar given the history of isolated Protestant communities over the course of the twentieth century. This study of native school systems is, admittedly, only a preliminary one. More work should (and undoubtedly will) be done by Cree and Inuit scholars to give this aspect of the history of schooling its due. No work on the Protestant community in all its diversity, however, could fail to take into consideration the considerable challenges faced by these northern communities.

The conclusion of this book discusses the implications of Bill 180, the legislation implemented in 1998 that finally ended confessional schooling and opened the door to a host of new problems for school administrators, not the least of which has been the issue of religion in the classroom.

A word about terminology. This book is about Protestant school boards – as well as their ancestors and, to a small extent, their successors – which is to say, school boards designated as serving and being supported by the Protestant community. Schools run by Protestant boards were only "Protestant" to the degree that they were under the jurisdiction of these boards. Architecture and culture notwithstanding, at the end of the day schools are only buildings, which can be filled with Protestants, Catholics, Jews, or people of any other definable category. For convenience we refer to "Protestant schools" even though what we mean is "schools run by Protestant boards." We have also universally adopted the term "Catholic" rather than "Roman Catholic," partly out of convenience but partly because there is little possibility of confusion in Quebec. Much more care should be taken with the term "Protestant" in Quebec, where Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Nonconformists – people who have gone to war against each other in other countries – are lumped together in the popular Catholic imagination. Even greater confusion can arise from the term "English," which in Quebec can mean "everyone who is not French-speaking," but in Britain means "someone from England" (and not Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, the Isle of Man, etc.). Particularly in discussing the nineteenth-century experience, we have been careful to use "English" only when intending the latter meaning. Everything depends on context: in Quebec, a person of Irish ancestry can be an "English Catholic," whereas in Britain the term is used to distinguish a practitioner of Catholicism in England from one in Ireland. If the issue is one of language, we have opted to say that a person or population is "English-speaking" or to use that unique Quebec idiom "anglophone."