



Mae Sot Education Project

Newsletter

Late Summer 2022

<https://maesot.ubishops.ca>

For more information, contact us at maesoteducationproject@gmail.com

MSEP's Benefit Thai-Burmese Dinner is back!

The Mae Sot Education Project

Gourmet Thai-Burmese Benefit Dinner

With music, raffle drawing & talk by a volunteer (zoomed in from Mae Sot, we hope)

Friday, September 16th, 6:30 p.m.

Oasis Christian Centre
219 Queen Street, Lennoxville

Tickets are available from Project Committee members for \$65
A tax receipt for charitable donation will be given for \$40.



Market Day, early morning by Maung Maung Tinn, 2021

Note: This year, our Burmese dishes will be prepared by our Mon Burmese friend Tala Rod and his mother. We can promise authenticity with confidence!

Also, tickets for our raffle are available from Project Committee members (\$5.00 or 3 for \$10.00), and you don't have to be at the drawing to win one of the 10 plus prizes – which include dining at Manoir Hovey and the Shalimar, gift certificates from Clarkes, Provigo, Rima and other local businesses, pottery by Lucy Doheny, a family pass to Capelton Mines and, and more!

Volunteer News – and Misadventures



The Volunteer Experience that Wasn't and One that Will Be

The sad news we have to share this year is that our first volunteer to go to Mae Sot in June, Rosemary Tamang, became quite ill and had to be hospitalized and then return to Canada after only a few days there. She was assisted by our friends, Tala and Paul (pictured here with her as she boarded the bus to Mae Sot) and by school friends all along the way. The experience was distressing for all, and especially for Rosemary. However, we were amazed and comforted by the lengths our friends went to to support and assist her, in both Mae Sot and Bangkok. One school partner even sent one of their staff to stay with her when she was hospitalized in Mae Sot and then in Bangkok. Others helped arrange transportation for her. While it was an experience we hope will never be repeated, we feel grateful and relieved to know that we can count on friends. Rosemary did have a chance to visit schools and meet partners in her brief time there. Her enthusiasm was manifest, and she was prepared to embrace the experience – sadly not to be fulfilled.



Meanwhile, our second volunteer, Sara Watson, who will leave for Mae Sot at the end of August, is building stamina for her time in Mae Sot by planting trees in western Canada this summer. “It is with a spirit of adventure that I am looking forward to transitioning from a summer of tree planting in Northwestern Canada to a new and exciting time in Mae Sot. Tree planting gave me the joys and hardship of remote Canadian bush and time to work a physical job outdoors. As much as it was fulfilling, I am now excited for the cultural exchange and the challenge and growth I will experience abroad.”

Donated Computers – Still Waiting to be Sent!

Our second misadventure relates to the computers we solicited in our spring newsletter. The solicitation was a great success. Former volunteer Caroline Chabot-Chartier (2008) came forward with a donor prepared to send 10 refurbished computers to our partners. We received the computers, through Caroline’s efforts, and prepared to send six with our volunteer. She packed them into her luggage, but not having read the Air France fine print, little did we know that the airline would not allow so much lithium to travel with her (in either checked or unchecked luggage). So it is that the computers are back in Lennoxville, as we look into options for shipping them to Thailand. Story to be continued..... P.S. One wonderful side effect of this little project was having Caroline (pictured here with Rosemary and computers) reconnect with us.



MSEP Featured in the Bishop's Alumni Magazine

Read about the impact of the projects on some of our volunteers over the years. Here is the address: <https://alumni.ubishops.ca/wp-content/uploads/BU-Magazine-No.-57-Spring-2022-with-links-MOD-July-5.pdf>

Different Kinds of Volunteer Engagement

During the spring this year, MSEP engaged a bright and shining young Bishop’s MA grad, IT expert and friend, Ahmad Hamden, to redo the Burmese Migrant Workers Education Committee (BMWEC) website. The project involved hours of collaboration and work on Ahmad’s part, and the work continues as small changes are made. However, we feel that this project is an important way of supporting a partner organization – and volunteering without traveling. We invite you to take a look and at the same time learn about the work of this important education CBO in Mae Sot:



<https://bmwec.org/>.



As well, throughout the spring and summer, we have continued to offer weekly “Zooming in English” online meetings with BHSOH students. Lee Sullivan, expert ESL teacher here in Sherbrooke, has kindly donated her time – and has come to love her students, we can happily add.

BHSOH Zooming-in-English Students

News and Developments from Mae Sot - Schools are open!



Getting ready ...



Together in person for the first time in 2 years!



Parami Students silkscreen school T shirts...



BHSOH students repair a roof.



and do morning exercises.



Pyo Khinn children have a new playground.

And now...classes begin...



BHSOH students learn about environmental problems.

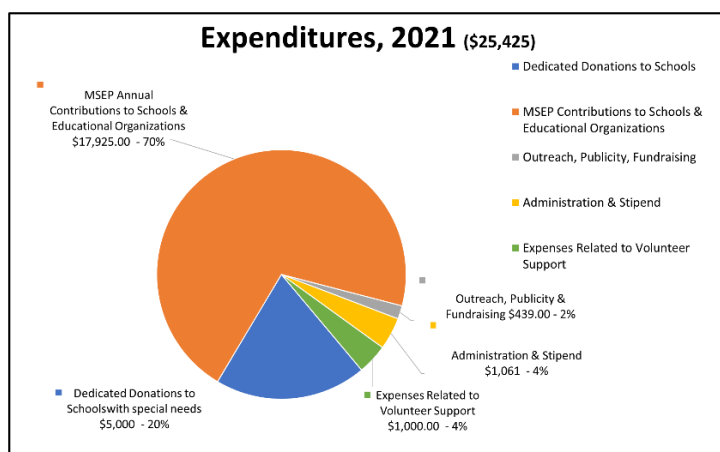
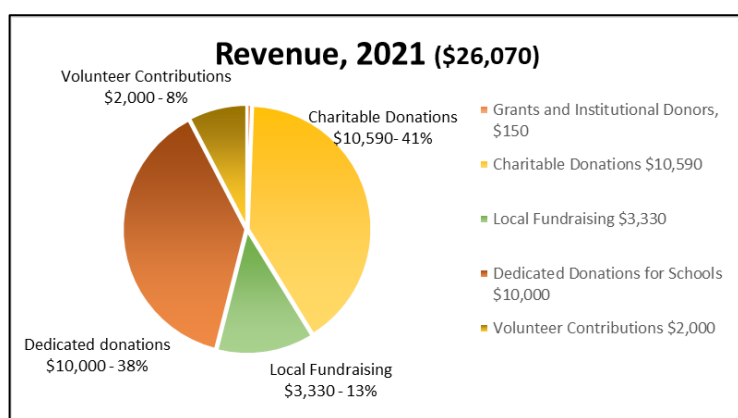
Students at Pyo Khinn enjoy their new classroom.



A Financial Update – and our very strange 2021 Report

The pie charts below convey how lopsided our activities were in 2021 given that volunteers could not travel. The good news is that we were able to make some substantial contributions to our partners through a difficult time without falling behind financially in spite of the challenge of not being able to hold our usual fundraising events. It is really because of our generous community that this is possible. With our volunteer activities recommencing in 2022, we expect the charts for this year to look quite different.

One development of note in 2021: for the first time, MSEP asked volunteers to contribute financially to the project. The amount of the contribution was set originally at \$2500, roughly half of the actual cost of sending a volunteer (disregarding the need to raise funds for donations to schools). That amount is currently up for discussion by the Project Committee and may be lowered this year in order to encourage participation. Of course, that means that more of the burden of raising funds will fall to the Project Committee and volunteers collectively. Another development is that Mary Sweeny, a Sherbrooke accountant, has taken on the task of keeping track of our accounts. Mary takes over from Dania Paradis-Bouffard, a member of our Project Committee who has managed the accounting for the last two years. We are very grateful to Dania for her work *and* to Mary for taking on this task. Please let us know if you have any questions about our finances.



Who we are and what we do

The *Mae Sot Education Project (MSEP)* is a community project based on the campus of Bishop's University and Champlain College – Lennoxville in Sherbrooke, Quebec. Since 2004, we have provided assistance to six schools for migrant and refugee youth from Burma/Myanmar whose access to education depends on support from the international community. In recent years we have also worked with other schools. Each year we select a group of young people from our campus to go to Mae Sot for six months. While there, they provide practical assistance to teachers and enrichment activities for children in the schools. They learn about the situation of displacement experienced by the Burmese people in Thailand as well as about the challenges for the Thai community in coping with a large population of refugees and migrants. Finally, they share their experience with Canadians. Over the last 16 years, MSEP has delivered over \$161,000 in funding assistance (excluding two substantial grants given through specific donations) and as of June 2019, has sent 64 volunteers to assist the migrant education community in Mae Sot.

The Project Committee is made up of members of the community, former faculty from Bishop's and Champlain, and former youth volunteers with the project. Currently, members are: Felix Duplessis-Marcotte (2016 volunteer), Judy Keenan, Loic Mercier Arguin (2017 volunteer), Graham Moodie, Dania Paradis-Bouffard (2017 volunteer), Mary Purkey, Garry Retzleff, and Calila Tardif (2016 volunteer).

Contributions to the project are always welcome, and tax receipts are issued. To make a donation electronically, you may do so through the Bishop's University Foundation on our web site at: <https://maesot.ubishops.ca/donate-now/>. Remember to indicate that your donation is for the *Mae Sot Education Project*. *Or*, donate by cheque through *either* the Bishop's Foundation or the Champlain College Foundation at our project address: Box 67, Champlain College – Lennoxville, 2580 College St, Sherbrooke, QC J1M 2K3. **Be sure to include both the name of the Foundation and MSEP on your cheque.**