



Mae Sot Education Project

Newsletter

Spring, 2024

<https://maesoteducation.ca>

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

MSEP is marking 20 years of partnership with the migrant education community in Mae Sot!

Join us in celebrating this milestone at our Thai-Burmese Benefit Dinner on April 6th at the Old Lennoxville Golf Club

This year, our team of “chefs” will be joined by Mi Sorn, one of our Burmese friends who has prepared delicious dishes for us in the past. We are sad to leave our Oasis Church venue which has accommodated our dinners with such generosity ever since 2011. We want to thank all the members for years of support. Looking ahead, we are happy to have found another very accessible and accommodating locale and we look forward to welcoming everyone there and are planning special ways to celebrate our 20 years. Tickets will be available during March and early April from members of the MSEP Project Committee. Don't wait too long to get yours. We usually run out!

As in past years, we are also running a raffle – with 40 prizes(!). Raffle tickets will be available from PC members in March and early April – and at the dinner itself where the draw will take place. See next page for the prize list.



Market Day, by Maung Maung Timm 2023

The Mae Sot Education Project

invites you to join us for a
Gourmet Thai-Burmese Benefit Dinner
in celebration of our 20th anniversary

With music, raffle drawing & talk by a volunteer

Saturday April 6th, 6:30 p.m.

A New Venue – The Lennoxville Golf Club
19 Rue du Golf, Lennoxville

Tickets: \$65

A tax receipt for charitable donation will be given
for \$40.

**Meanwhile...two students prepare to go to Thailand
and another reflect on his experience**



photos that might be useful in language learning activities – and discuss communication strategies with trainer Susan Renaud.

Students Florence Côté (left) and Maika Beland (right) are busy preparing to spend the summer in Mae Sot assisting our school friends there by giving migrant students a chance to practice their English while learning other content. The preparation is intense – like having another course to add to their already busy academic schedules. Here they sort through some National Geographic



Reflections Six months later...

By Charles Chevrier, 2023 Volunteer

You find yourself truly when emancipated from the social environment you were brought into – away from a chaotic life. Following a hazy six-month period since my return from Mae Sot, I have yet to understand the full scope of how impactful and transformative the experience was for me—but my understanding grows as time slips away.

Arriving in Thailand, as the aircraft was descending, I looked around, and my vision was entirely painted with an urban landscape. Meeting hundreds of people, exploring bustling Bangkok, endless travelling, adapting to the climate, arriving in Mae Sot, planning the first lessons—this was my tumultuous reality for the first two weeks.

The subsequent month and a half revolved around adapting to these new changes and overcoming challenges. The changes were exhaustive: the educational culture, the food (which I miss dearly), the climate, the languages, and so much more. During this phase, crucial skills I possessed slowly developed further; these included leadership, organizational skills, independence, and confidence. These skills still help me in my endeavors back home.

The final three weeks was the shortest phase, but also definitely the best. I felt like I was home, and I was forming close friendships with many locals, students, and with some members of the international community. My routine was solid, and I felt at my best. Sadly, this phase did not last long, and after three months, with Champlain beginning again back home, I found myself pulled out of this life. I was torn between my Thailand life and my life in



Canada. Catching up on the work I was missing while in Thailand felt like a reminder that what awaited me back home was a life of chaos, stress, and productivity. I had missed three weeks of school; forgot about the time to process everything, it was time to get to work on my studies. For months I felt like my trip did not have any closure, and to some degree that's still how I feel.

It's hard for me to assess the concrete long-term impacts that this experience has brought to me. What I do know is that my perspective on the world completely shifted. I've always known

that being born in Canada gave me privilege, but after last summer, I am now able to realize concretely and definitively just how much privilege I possess—and it's a lot. Volunteering alongside NGOs also gave me a good idea of how much more work needs to be done to help solve injustices. This fact influenced me to take interest in legal representation for NGOs. I've wanted to study law and become a lawyer for a while, but now I have a purpose—I've taken more and more interest in offering legal services to NGOs after my studies. Lastly, being isolated from my usual social life made me reflect on myself, and I feel that I've grown a lot since on a personal level. I see myself, my relationships, and my purpose a lot more clearly now.

While coming back home was a difficult process, I know that nothing will ever be able to take back what this journey has done for me, and I hope to never forget any of it. To those who in any way impacted this journey, I will never forget you.

MSEP IS HOLDING ITS ANNUAL RAFFLE - with 40 great prizes!

Draw: April 6th (at our Thai-Burmese Dinner)

Tickets: \$5 each / \$4 for students or 3 for \$10

(Available from Project Committee Members and Volunteers)

Note: Raffle tickets will also be available at a sale table to accompany the Bishops/Champlain WUSC Committee dodgeball tournament in support of the campus Student Refugee Program on Friday, March 15, from 7:00- 9:30 pm in the Mitchell Gym at the Bishop's Sport Centre (\$10 suggested donation). Everyone is welcome to come and get involved. There will be snacks, drinks and a WUSC raffle as well.



- 1) A Gift certificate for lunch for two from *Manoir Hovey*
- 2) A piece of beautiful pottery by *Lucy Doheny*
- 3) \$75 gift certificate from *Épicerie LeBaron* in North Hatley
- 4-5) Two gift certificates for dinner (Wed.-Fri. evenings) from *Restaurant Le Shalimar*
- 6) A family pass (2 adults and 2 children) for *Visite sous Terre Capelton Mines* (\$65 value)
- 7) \$50 gift certificate from *Sushi Crepe Resto*
- 8-11) Four gift certificates for \$50 from *Magasin Mackey*
- 12-13) Two \$30 gift certificates for the *Ferme Sanders* North Hatley farmers market stand
- 14-17) Four \$25 gift certificates from the *Golden Lion Pub & Brewery*
- 18) \$25 gift certificate from *Clarke et fils, Ltee*

- 19) \$25 gift certificate from *Casa 'Wippi'*
- 20) \$25 gift certificate from *Pharmacie Jean Coutu Lennoxville*
- 21-22) Two \$25 gift certificates from *Provigo (Maxi) – Lennoxville*
- 23-24) Two \$25 gift certificates from *Marché Beaulieu*
- 25-27) Three 20- gift certificates from *Bekkah's Bakery*
- 28) \$25 gift certificate from *Boutique Encore*
- 29-30) Two \$25 gift Certificates from *Microbrasserie Le Siboire*
- 31) \$20 gift certificate from the *Black Cat Book Store*
- 32-33) Two \$20 gift certificates from *Restaurant Rima*
- 34-36) Three \$20 gift certificates from *Familiprix Lennoxville*
- 37) \$20 gift certificate from *Auberge La Chocolatiere*
- 38-39) Two gift certificates for the "Small Tea" (\$15 value) at *Uplands Cultural and Heritage Centre*
- 40) A surprise gift from MSEP's stock of Thai goods.

We wish to express our deepest thanks to all who have donated raffle prizes.

Updates from our Partners

Pyo Khinn Learning Centre is adding grade 7... and teaching science and art



Thanks to support from European donors, BHSOH Learning Centre will have a new campus this year – a big change from sheet metal or thatched roofs and awnings.

The old....



and the new



Other schools with which we work are busy renovating this winter. Parami Learning Centre hopes to refurbish its dormitory for boarding students in the coming months. With MSEP help, Hsa Mu Htaw has undertaken much needed repairs to its facility. An old broken door becomes a new door.... While such small measures may seem extraneous to children's learning, they are critical in maintaining a warm and welcoming environment.



And the war in Myanmar goes on

At all the migrant learning centres in Mae Sot, enrollments are up. Although there are signs that the army in Myanmar is losing ground, people continue to flee military rule and civil war. Recently, the government instituted conscription for all young men and women. Thus many of those fleeing are young. Some are highly educated and hope to find better lives outside their country. MSEP has received requests from some of these youth for volunteer positions with our project. While we cannot accommodate these requests, we feel for these young people. Readers interested in encouraging our own government to offer pathways to safety for some of them might consider writing to Minister of Foreign Affairs Canada, Mélanie Joly or the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Marc Miller.



<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-68261709>

Migrant Students' dreams...

not so different from those of students here in Canada

A group of students who have been zooming with us for the last two years recently shared some of their feelings about learning and their hopes for the future. Here are some excerpts from their writing.

better. On the other hand, in the future I want to be a doctor. I have this dream since my childhood. I am very interest about that because when I look back in my people they can't live in their village and most people injure so I am pity them. When my future plan is fulfil I will come back to my country and I would like to help them and cure their injuries either health problems. But now I am a still student so I will try my best in my studies. This is about my story and future plan a

lot of knowledge. I also sorry that sometimes I can't join the zoom meeting class because of connection problem. I want to tell you what I want to do after graduation and my goals. When I finish the high school I will join the Youth Connect and find a job. My dream is that I want to become a professional gamer. Every time I spend studying with the teacher is precious to me.



I have lots of dreams in my life. I want to become a doctor. From my childhood, I wanted to help people. I wanted to make people laugh. I am going to try the best until to my goal.

...ing us, time flies really fast. It's almost the time to say goodbye to this school. Since I have been living in Thailand, Thai language is also important for me. The main benefit of being a student in this school are proficiency of both Thai and English language. However, I am good at Thai. Even if I have graduated from this school, I will keep learning not only Thai but also English. Plus, in the near future, I would like to open a medical clinic. Along the progress of learning at BHSOH school, I have a lot of memories. Even I have graduated from this school, I think these will stay remain in my heart.

first, I will stay in Thailand for three or four years. Then, I will return to Myanmar and want to teach children out there in return. I am going to use the knowledge I got from you to teach them. If there is any chance to see you again in the future, I prefer to grab that chance and would like to meet you in person. Until then, I am going to miss you. I wish you all the best.

I have a goal that is to become an honest businessman after graduate in game programming. And then I want to support my country revolution also my family. I have two hobbies I really love to perform both. To play boxing and mobile game these are my hobbies I like to do.

For the first, I am trying hard on my study and than I play workout daily to handle my physical and study to adjust. I must study on math, science, social and english. Especially english is the necessary to learn. I draw time table for daily study, but that is not easy to perform. I try my best but I am not ready to go university due to the fact that I am not ready now. Whatever I believe in never give up. I will follow the way that lead you to achieve.

After I have finished school, I have a plan to become a designer. So, I would like to take fashion and designer course. I believe that it is my livelihood. And my mother allow me to do so. When the time I become a fashion designer, I decide to make earning in Thailand. With incomes I get from that specialty, I want to support my family. That is my story and future plan. Thank you for your knowledge from her.

Firstly, I want to thank Tr. Lee. I enjoyed every minute of your lecture (teaching) as well as your marvellous sense of humor. You are always very kind, patient, helpful and truly care about your students (us). During your zoom classes, I have learned how to write essay and spoken English. It helps a lot for my future plan and self confidence. Since last year, I attended to B.H.S.O.H school. Along the progress of learning, I enjoy learning together with my classmates and have fun together with them. In the near future, I want to speak English well. Besides I want to be an artist because my hobby is drawing and I would like to make creative arts using my skills. However, I lose my interest somehow and it is hard for me to overcome that condition. At that moment, I can not draw anything. No matter what, I want to see you again

Now I am living in the dormitory of B.H.S.O.H school and I am studying for G-12. I will join to Minmahaw and am going to take GED exam. After that, I will go to Chiang Mai University and study nursing to become a nurse. This is because I want to contribute and help the community with knowledge and skills that I have got along the way. I love to nurture and take care sick people go back to normal health. If they felt something uncomfortable, I would find out the ways to make them feel better. So, I have a desire to improve myself and more like a specialist to treat patients.

Firstly, I would like to tell you about my academic year at BHSOH school. BHSOH school can be also called our benefactor school. Because of its help to get my educational opportunities and my future goals. It gives me many opportunities to continue my education. In the years, I first came to this school, I had to study a zoom class for a long time because of covid-19. In Myanmar, due to the political instability and covid-19, almost every young person is losing their educational opportunities and goals. So that I think I am lucky. The reason I came to BHSOH school is to continue my education. Furthermore, while learning for education at BHSOH school, I have improved a lot in terms of lessons, knowledge and communication. Moreover, in

you and I'm very thankful to the organizers and the teachers who implement this zooming program for migrant students. As for the migrant students, this opportunity is very unique and rare. No school has extra zoom class studies during an academic year. I feel blessed ever since I have known this school and had an opportunity to join zooming class. I'm deeply thank you from the bottom of my heart. Let me tell about emotion of a migrant student life. I want to be a graduated person, I'm very enthusiastic on learning which are the resources for achieving my goals. It might be difficult to reach the complementment what I am willing and desire for. Being a migrant student is not easy and very competitive to get an internationally recognized high school certificate and only few can go to university. There are few organizations which provide for those students. So, most of migrant students usually end their education in Grade-12 and apply for the jobs. The reason they do not

I want to tell you about my goal. After I've graduated I have a goal to continue. It is to be a designer. I am interested about sewing and designing. These are things I love to do. First, I will learn skill to be come a designer. In addition, I would study design patterns. I want to pursue business career with the specialty of a designer. These are my goals and future plans. Thank you for reading my letter. I hope to see you soon.

I have a plan for my future. So, I want to tell a little bit for it. After school, I will join Youth Connect Program. That program is for vocational train. I am interested in hospitality and management. This training only lasts nine months. Six months for training and three months for apprenticeship and work.

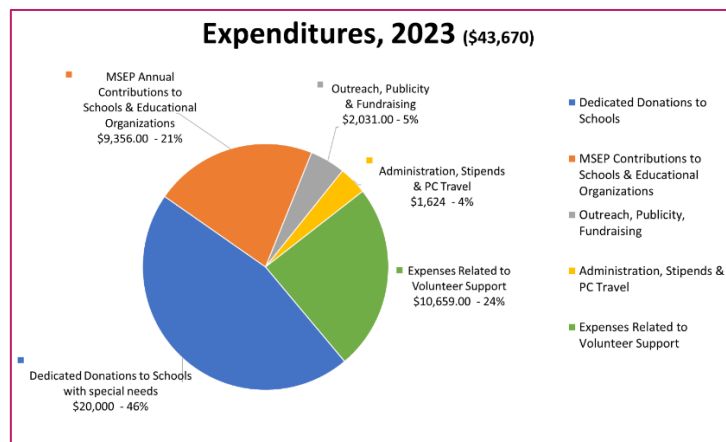
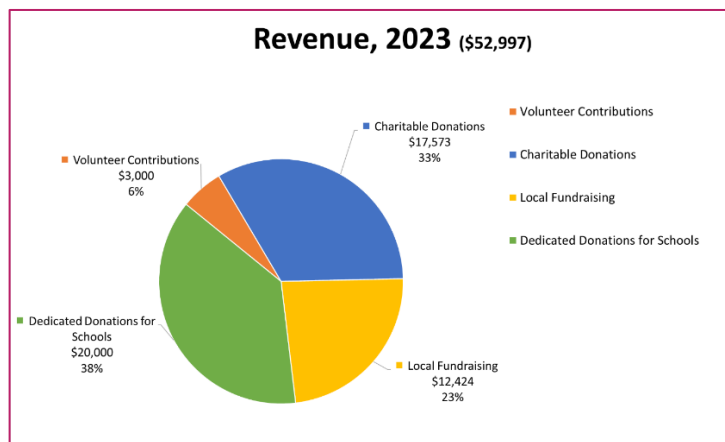
Who we are and what we do

The Mae Sot Education Project (MSEP) is a community project based in the Lennoxville borough of 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 the Bishop's University and Champlain College – Lennoxville campus to go to Mae Sot for three to 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 20 years, MSEP has delivered well over \$200,000 in funding assistance (excluding two substantial grants given through specific donations) and as of June 2023, has sent 67 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: Charles Chevrier (2023 volunteer), Felix Duplessis-Marcotte (2016 volunteer), Judy Keenan, Loic Arguin-Mercier (2017 volunteer), Graham Moodie, Mary Purkey, Angie Petitclerc, Garry Retzleff, Calila Tardif (2016 volunteer) and Sara Watson (2022 volunteer).

Financial Matters

The pie charts here show that once again, we have received the entirety of our support from our community – either in the form of direct donations or in the form of enthusiastic responses to our fundraising efforts. In 2022, our Holiday Raffle gave a great boost to our fundraising, and as many of you know, this project has continued into 2023. As noted last year at this time, there has been a big change in our ability to send volunteers to Mae Sot for extended periods and perhaps most critically, the cost of sending a volunteer for three months is now as great as it was for sending one for six months prior to Covid – roughly \$5,000. Flights to and accommodation in Thailand have become more expensive. In spite of this change, we have been assured by our migrant education partners that our contributions and especially the enthusiastic young people we send to connect with their youth matter a great deal.



Donors and Supporters during 2023

We wish to thank *everyone* who has helped to make our project a success. Donations take many forms. Financial donations, donations of time and energy, raffle prizes, sponsorships, in-kind donations of all sorts have all been deeply appreciated. In addition to those people and organizations noted below are so many others who have faithfully and generously supported our fundraisers.

Thank you all!

Karen Allatt	Gordon Craig	Meryle & Rodger	John Oldland
Stephen & Barbara Allatt Foundation	Gerald Cutting	Heatherington, gifts in loving memory of Ronald Evans and Allan Suito	Stephen & Kathy Stafford
Stephen Allatt	Melanie Cutting		Mary Sweeny
Loic Arguin-Mercier	Marie Dagenais	Lin Jensen	Syndicat des Enseignants du Cegep Champlain
Pamela Bertram	Adrian Downey	Julien Lacombe	Beverly Taber
Carinne Bevan	Pat Draper	Danielle Leblanc-Cyr	Janet Cowen Weber
Champlain Regional College Lennoxville	Global Excel Management Inc.	Marie McLean	David Webster
	Ahmad Hamdan	Daniel Miller	

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 the Bishop’s Foundation and send your cheque to our project address: Box 67, Champlain College – Lennoxville, 2580 College St, Sherbrooke, QC J1M 2K3. **Be sure to include the name of the Foundation and MSEP on your cheque.**