

# CONNECTIONS

**QUIS Newsletter**



## BELLEVILLE DIWALI CELEBRATION - A BIG SUCCESS!

Belleville held its very first Diwali event and it was a resounding success! In the past several years there has been a growing population of Indian newcomers to Belleville and the surrounding area. This is mostly due to the expanding international student population at Loyalist College and the many efforts the Bay of Quinte region has made to attract newcomers.

We caught up with one of the key organizers of the festival, and QUIS client, Hardik Patel. Hardik's dream was to create an event that would bridge the gap between local residents and Indian nationals who want to settle in our community. At the same time, the Belleville Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committee had been discussing the idea of a Diwali event to help Indian nationals feel more at home in the community. The EDI connected with Hardik and another international student graduate, Anjani Surelia, and the idea took off from there. Loyalist College was also central to assisting with providing volunteers and other support for the event.

The event was held on October 17, 2021, but there are usually 5 days of celebration for Diwali and the actual date of Diwali this year was November 4th. The main idea behind Diwali in India is to provide light to our lives in order to win the war over darkness that we may experience. With the community slowly recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, there couldn't have been a better time for a celebration of light. Hardik says that even though there are many different aspects of Diwali that are celebrated, the holiday is given priority in India because all Indians take part in the celebration. Like the Canadian Christmas, Indians take the time during Diwali to meet friends and family, gather together, eat great food, dance, and play traditional music. As the celebration is all about lighting up darkness, evening events usually include fireworks.

At the Belleville event, there was a fantastic feeling of joy and festivity which drew around 250 to 300 people. Hardik said he was particularly moved and inspired by the fact that when he looked out into the crowd, he saw many people of diverse backgrounds celebrating, smiling and dancing together. For Hardik, it was especially rewarding to see his dream of togetherness and understanding unfolding at the event.

Next year, the organizing committee want to go bigger and better with delicious Indian food, a bigger venue and maybe even fireworks! And coming very soon, we may see a special Indian food festival in the Belleville area. Stay tuned!

### IN THIS ISSUE...

- COVID-19 Updates
- Annual General Meeting
- IRCC Updates
- Upcoming Events
- QLIP updates
- Celebrating the holidays
- Community Spotlight

[A note about copyrights:](#)  
All of the images and photos used in this newsletter have been accessed for free through Canva.com, a copyrighted software. Unless otherwise stated, permissions to use these images have been granted through Canva.

May this season fill your home  
with light, love, and abundance



THE  
FESTIVAL  
OF  
*Lights*



**CELEBRATING DIWALI  
NOVEMBER 2021**

# COVID-19 : NEWS & UPDATES

## **INFORMATION ABOUT VACCINE CLINICS, REOPENING PLANS, ONGOING HEALTH & SAFETY MEASURES**

### **PROOF OF VACCINATION STATUS**

Beginning September 22, 2021 some public places started to require proof of vaccinations in order to enter the building including restaurants, community centres, gyms & fitness centres, arenas and most municipal buildings. Any form of transportation managed by the government also now requires proof of vaccination including public transit (buses), airlines, and VIA Rail trains.

You can download your vaccination certificate on the Government of Ontario website at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/get-proof/>. As of October 2021, an enhanced certificate with a QR code is also available to download. ***Both types of vaccination certificates remain valid as proof.***

### **VACCINE CLINICS STILL AVAILABLE**

Currently, all individuals aged 12 and over are eligible for their first or second COVID-19 vaccination. Accessing vaccines is NOT dependent on your immigration status - it is available to everyone in Ontario. Contact Hastings & Prince Edward Public Health at 613-966-5500 if you do not have a provincial health card and want to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. There are also walk-in clinics available in various locations that do not require an appointment. Visit their website for dates and times of current walk-in clinics scheduled in your area - [hpepublichealth.ca/vaccine-booking/](https://hpepublichealth.ca/vaccine-booking/)

### **REOPENING PLANS & UPDATES**

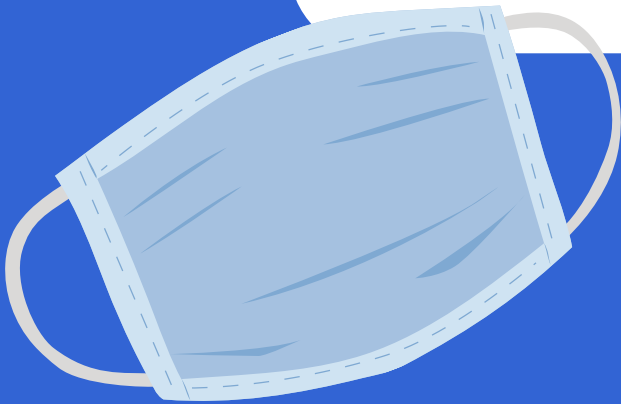
Much of the province of Ontario along with businesses, schools, restaurants and community spaces have reopened to the public with restrictions and guidelines in place to prevent outbreaks of COVID-19. Ontario is currently in Stage 3 of its official reopening plan and all residents are still encouraged to be cautious, continue social distancing, wear masks inside with large groups, and keep washing your hands. Please continue to follow guidelines and safety protocols in place at various locations. Please remember to be patient and understanding as we continue to work through a public health emergency.

**\*\*Note\*\*** Office appointments at QUIS are being scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday for settlement services only. If you need to see a settlement worker in person, you will need book your appointment in advance and wear a mask the entire time you are in the office. There will also be a quick COVID-19 screening upon your arrival.

# Stay Safe & Healthy



Keep up the good work!  
Thank you for doing  
your part to  
#stopthespread



Information on COVID-19, vaccinations, hand hygiene & other safety measures available in 200+ languages including Arabic, Hindi, Gujarati, Spanish, Tagalog, Farsi, Dari, Punjabi  
Visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-communication-resources>

# **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

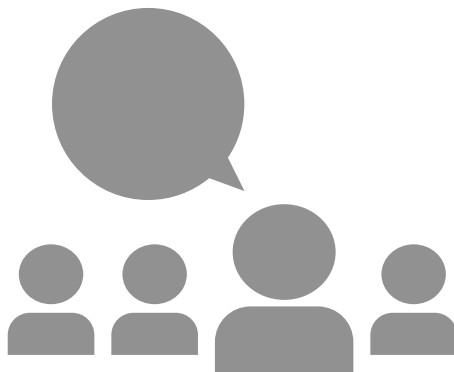
*QUIS held its AGM virtually again this year on October 27, 2021*

On October 27th, the QUIS Board of Directors held its 34th Annual General Meeting via Zoom. Paul Osborne, President of the Board, delivered the annual report which noted and celebrated QUIS' 35 years of providing settlement services in the Quinte region. The report included highlights of QUIS from its founding in 1986 by Susan Walker and a group of dedicated volunteers to the sudden and challenging pivot to remote services during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Member of Parliament for the Bay of Quinte Riding, Ryan Williams, brought greetings from the federal government and expressed his gratitude for the work QUIS does in welcoming newcomers to the Quinte area. He noted that he wants to support an increase in immigration to the region and see newcomers achieving better job outcomes by filling much-needed positions with local employers. MP Williams said that he looks forward to working with QUIS in the future.

From October 2020 to October 2021, QUIS provided services to 436 unique clients, 56% of whom learned about QUIS through their family and friends. The three largest client groups served were Permanent Residents, International Students, and Canadian Citizens. The top ten languages spoken by this past year's clients are English, Tagalog, Hindi, Arabic, Punjabi, Spanish, Gujarati, French, Malayalam, and Italian. The top fifteen countries of origin were India, Canada, the Philippines, Syria, the USA, Jamaica, Mexico, the UK, Brazil, Afghanistan, Colombia, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Turkey.

The QUIS team would like to thank everyone who attended the Annual General Meeting and especially to MP Ryan Williams for making time to attend while the new Parliament is still forming. The QUIS Board of Directors would also like to thank Aptie Sookoo, who has retired from the Board after twelve years of service. The Board expresses their sincere gratitude to Aptie for his contributions, and welcomes new Board member, Sergeant Jeremy Ashley of the Belleville Police.



# THANK YOU

*for your generosity!*

TD CANADA TRUST - BELLEVILLE  
QUINTE FIRST CREDIT UNION - BELLEVILLE



Photo Credit: Meghan Beatty

In October 2021, Quinte Immigration Services received a \$10,000.00 donation from the Belleville branches of TD Canada Trust.

The QUIS team would like to say an enormous thank-you to Nicholas O'Reilly, the North Front branch manager, as well as the employees who selected us for this incredibly generous donation and their support for the work we do in the community.



Photo Credit: Paul Osbourne

Once again this year, Quinte First Credit Union has generously donated towards the annual holiday event at QUIS.

As a long standing donor, the QUIS team wants to send a big thank you for the continued support of the credit union!



# IRCC UPDATES

## *News Releases & Information from Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada*

### **PROCESSING DELAYS CONTINUE**

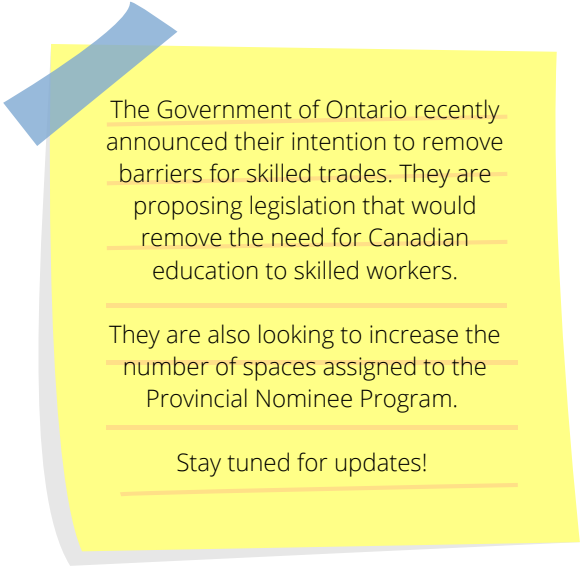
CIC News website recently posted an article outlining the application backlog at IRCC and reported that there are currently 1.8 million pending applications at various phases of processing. There are roughly 548,000 permanent residence applications in all immigration classes and roughly 468,000 citizenship applications. You can read the full article here - [www.cicnews.com/2021/11/canada-has-a-backlog-of-nearly-1-8-million-immigration-applications-1119651.html#gs.hsrvuv](http://www.cicnews.com/2021/11/canada-has-a-backlog-of-nearly-1-8-million-immigration-applications-1119651.html#gs.hsrvuv)

### **NEW TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS COMING INTO EFFECT**

The Omicron variant of COVID-19 has caused the Canadian government to put into place new travel restrictions to prevent the spread of this new variant. Air travelers will once again need to show negative test results to arrive in certain countries and re-enter Canada. To ensure that you have the right information ahead of any upcoming travel plans, please visit <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid>

### **CANADA ADDING NEW VACCINATIONS TO APPROVED LIST FOR TRAVELERS**

Effective November 30, Canada has expanded the list of approved vaccinations for those looking to enter the country. The expanded list now includes Sinopharm, Sinovac and COVAXIN. To read the full media release, follow this link - [www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/11/government-of-canada-announces-adjustments-to-canadas-border-measures.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/11/government-of-canada-announces-adjustments-to-canadas-border-measures.html)



The Government of Ontario recently announced their intention to remove barriers for skilled trades. They are proposing legislation that would remove the need for Canadian education to skilled workers.

They are also looking to increase the number of spaces assigned to the Provincial Nominee Program.

Stay tuned for updates!

# **LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP**

## *Information & Updates on recent activities of the QLIP*

The Quinte Local Immigration Partnership (QLIP) has had a busy year so far! The QLIP is a partnership of over 72 members and is made up of regional employers, non-profit organizations, Municipal, Provincial and Federal governments, educational institutions, health care and legal services providers who work together to support and address the needs of newcomers in our community with issues such as employment, diversity and equity, social welfare and health. The QLIP meets approximately once every two months to discuss partner members' projects and programs related to these types of issues.

More than 9 new partners have joined since 2020 and QLIP continues to invite new members to the table. Some of the ongoing projects since the spring of 2021 have included a QLIP Anti-racism subcommittee that is geared towards working on specific anti-racism projects in the community to create awareness, action and solutions. The sub-committee is currently looking at several funding options to initiate an Anti-racism survey for the community.

QLIP has supported the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) Regional Immigration Pilot lead by the Cities of Belleville and Quinte West over the two-year period of the project. Lead coordinators from the OINP presented information about the project at a recent QLIP meeting in September 2021. The project is coming to a close at the end of December, but has been very successful supporting the permanent immigration of over 75 newcomers to the region!

QLIP is also proud to be a member of the Belleville Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee supporting excellent events such as the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation event held on September 30th in Belleville and the exciting new Diwali Festival held on October 17th for the first time in Belleville.

Working collaboratively with its member agencies, QLIP will continue to look at issues of growing concern in 2022 such as health, housing and employment for newcomers in our community.



# UPCOMING EVENTS & INFO SESSIONS



## DECEMBER 2021

- **Santa Gift Pick Up:**

December 1-3 and December 6-10. Registration in advance is required. Pick up at the office by appointment only.

- **IRCC Information Session:**

December 15 12-1 pm via Zoom; participants who register will receive a link via email to attend the session

- **Office Holiday Schedule:**

Quinte Immigration Services will be closed over the following days - December 23 at noon (12pm) until December 28. Closed December 30 at noon (12pm) until January 3. The office will be open to remote services on December 28 and 29.



## JANUARY 2022

- **Small Business Supports Information Session**
- **Community Letter Exchange**
- **Meditation Group**



## FEBRUARY 2022

- **Quinte Humane Society Information Session**
- **Sewing Circle**



*Email Meghan to register for  
info sessions & workshops at  
[ceotis@quinteimmigration.ca](mailto:ceotis@quinteimmigration.ca)*

# REMEMBRANCE DAY IN CANADA

Remembrance Day is observed across North America and in many Commonwealth countries around the world on November 11. It is a memorial day that began in 1919 following the end of World War I to honour military members who have died in battle or otherwise in the line of duty.

The 11th of November was chosen because the fighting in World War I stopped at 'the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month' in 1918. Today, members of peacekeeping missions, war time nurses & doctors, and humanitarian agencies are also recognized in ceremonies.

In the lead up to Remembrance Day, people buy artificial poppies that they pin on their clothing. The poppy is a symbol of Remembrance Day based on the poem *In Flanders Fields*, written by John McCrae who was a medical officer during the First World War and lived in Guelph, Ontario.

On November 11th, people gather at war memorials (cenotaphs) for Remembrance Day services. Sombre music is played, wreaths are laid, prayers are read, as is John McCrae's poem. At 11 o'clock, two minutes' silence is observed. In Ontario, Remembrance Day is not a statutory holiday, although many businesses are closed on that day. Schools have activities related to Remembrance Day leading up to the day, and may have their own ceremonies on the 11th of November.

Learn more about Remembrance Day and the history of the poppy by visiting the website for the Royal Canadian Legion at [www.legion.ca/remembrance](http://www.legion.ca/remembrance).

*In Flanders fields, the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row...*

*Excerpt from "In Flanders field" by John McCrae*

# EDTI PROGRAM RETURNS

*New federal funding allows employment program to return to QUIS*

**Economic Development Through Immigration (EDTI)** has officially returned and is looking to connect with employers and newcomers looking for employment in Hastings & Prince Edward County! If you want to know about working in the area, this program might be for you! EDTI is an employment program run through QUIS for newcomers to the local region.

The goal of the program is to help newcomers find jobs and employers that match their skills and experience. We assess your skills and share information about employers from the region. We can also provide you with helpful referrals like local employment counsellors or other employment programs.

We look forward to accompanying you throughout the whole employment process! Contact [infowork@quinteimmigration.ca](mailto:infowork@quinteimmigration.ca) for more information.

Did you know that we have a job board that has listings of job search websites  
from the region?

Have a look!

<https://www.quinteimmigration.ca/edti-program/>

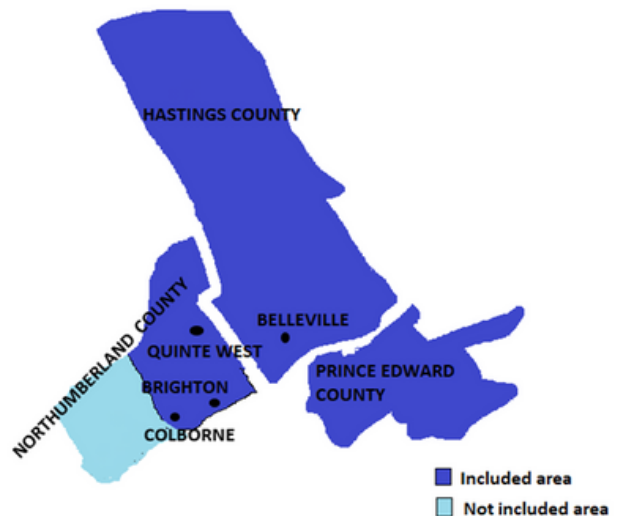


Photo Credit: Gean James



## **COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT**

### ***A WELL KNOWN LOCAL AGENCY GETS OUR SPOTLIGHT THIS ISSUE***

***Are you interested in volunteering and making a difference within your community?*** Volunteer and Information Hastings and Prince Edward County (formerly VIQ) have endless opportunities available. If you're a newcomer to Canada, VIQ highly encourages that you consider volunteering within your community. This opportunity allows newcomers to network, gain experience, and get more comfortable within their new community. This community organization is located at 199 North Front Street Unit #121 in Belleville Ontario.

VIQ was founded in 1966 by Ruth Burrows and since then, the agency has been working hard to connect the public with helpful information, resources, and unique volunteer experiences. Currently, the agency covers the areas of Prince Edward and Hastings County. VIQ has strong community connections with over 275 agencies in the area, giving them the ability to provide various volunteer experiences in different fields of interest. If you're interested in volunteering or want to receive more information, please visit the VIQ website [www.viq.ca](http://www.viq.ca) or call 613-969-8862.

***Did You Know?*** VIQ also acts as the host agency for the 211 database in Hastings & Prince Edward regions. The 211 database acts as a local resource for community and social services that users can access for general inquiries or specific information. When you call 211, you will get a live answer from a trained person who will assess your needs for service. Topics include everything from food services to transportation to social assistance to senior services and all things in between! This telephone and online database is available across Ontario. Anyone looking for community resources can dial 211 directly or toll free at 1-877-761-9076. You can also find it online at <https://data.viq.ca/>.

### **Upcoming Volunteer and Information Quinte Events:**

**January 26, 2022** - VIQ will be hosting a virtual Non-Profit Board Excellence Training through Clearview Training and Consulting.

**For the spring of 2022** - VIQ is looking forward to celebrating National Volunteer Week from April 24th-30th, 2022. They are planning to host their Annual Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast, a week of recognitions events and awareness

**May of 2022** - VIQ will be hosting their largest fundraiser, Dancing with the Stars Quinte



# SANTA GIFTS EVENT 2021

For over twenty years, QUIS has held our Annual Children's Holiday Party every December, providing a shared holiday meal for everyone and gifts for all children in attendance. When COVID-19 made such events impossible, QUIS staff were determined to deliver holiday cheer while staying socially distanced. Thus, the Santa Pick-ups event was created to continue distributing gifts even if the usual party wasn't possible.

This year, as large gatherings are still risky, we will be continuing the Santa Pick-ups event. **Children ages 0 to 12 will receive a gift bag with a colouring book, colouring supplies, treats, and an age-appropriate gift. There is no cost to register.**

Parents can register their children by emailing [ceotis@quinteimmigration.ca](mailto:ceotis@quinteimmigration.ca). Please include the number of children, ages, and genders when registering, AND select a gift pick-up date and time between 8am and 4pm from Dec. 1st-3rd and Dec. 6th-10th. Gifts are only available for those who register. Please mask up and follow safety protocols when visiting the office.

## WHO IS SANTA CLAUS ANYWAY?



The man commonly known as Santa Claus can go by many names – he is also called Father Christmas, Saint Nicholas and Kris Kringle. Many people around the world know the image of a jolly man who delivers presents to good boys and girls on Christmas Eve.

The origins of Santa Claus go back to the third century, to the real St. Nicholas. It is said that Nicholas gave away all his money and travelled around helping the poor and sick. It is believed he lived near modern day Turkey. Over time, he became known as the patron saint of children and remains one of the most popular saints.

St. Nicholas was especially admired by the Dutch. It was Dutch immigrants that brought this tradition to North America. St. Nicholas' feast day is celebrated in Europe on December 6th. The name Santa Claus even comes from the Dutch "Sinter Klaas", which is a short form of Sint Nikolaas.

The 1823 poem "A Visit From St. Nicholas" by Clement Clarke Moore further popularized Santa Claus in the North American imagination. In 1841, thousands of children visited a shop in Philadelphia, USA to see a life-sized Santa Claus model. Eventually, stores started having their own versions of Santa Claus, whom children could visit and explain what gifts they wanted for Christmas.

Since then, there have been countless stories, movies and other depictions of Santa Claus. He is one of the best known and best loved characters of all time.

Information sourced from: <https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/santa-claus>





# BUT, IT'S TRADITION!

## *A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON HOW CELEBRATIONS CHANGE OVER TIME*

*Submitted by Dawn*

I absolutely love traditions. Be spontaneous at other times but when it comes to special events or holidays I find great comfort in knowing what to expect. So, what a surprise that I feel my name should be "*Dawn the Destroyer of Family Traditions*". Let me explain.

My military parents loved traditions and never more so than over the Christmas holidays. All of the family would be under my parents' roof so that Christmas Day could run to schedule. We all had smart new clothes to wear and always received a game. After breakfast was finished, washing up done and everyone ready we would sit in a circle in the front room and watch each person unwrap a gift, in turn. I have precious memories of the meal times along with hours of playing games and cards. Over the years, as the family members grew in number, we still returned back to the family home for the holidays. Bodies slept crammed wherever space could be found.

So, how and why did I destroy such a well-founded tradition? Quite simply, I got married and had children of my own. My husband and I agreed that we should spend alternate Christmas Days between my family and his. My family were disappointed but accepted the change - what else could they do?

Now fast-forward to 2006, when my husband, sons and I arrived in Canada. But what would Christmas Day be like? I approached the conversation with some worry, concerned that my sons would feel the loss of that family time. Quite the opposite. In fact, my world was rocked. They all longed for a quiet, laid back day with no time lines set, no need to sit for hours at a table eating or playing games. *WHAT?*

And so, a new tradition was born. We get up super early, rip open gifts (always having to include new PJs and DVDs) and spend the day watching movies with each other in our new Christmas PJs. (*Do you know how long the extended version of Lord of the Rings is?!*)

Will this tradition change? Of course! It already has. My "boys" are now grown up; the eldest lives with his wife in Australia. Life is constantly changing and we need to move with it or we sink. Traditions are fabulous, until they become too binding or unbending. I have learnt to love and appreciate what I have and to not force my own preferences on others. Joy comes from unconditional love not traditions. Wherever you are, whoever you are with, I wish you joy for this season of tradition making, or breaking.



# HOLIDAY EVENTS

LOCAL EVENTS & CELEBRATIONS IN THE REGION

## CITY OF BELLEVILLE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

November 19 to January 2 at Jane Forrester Park to Foster Avenue South and ending at Herchimer Avenue.  
Travel by vehicle or walk the route!

## QUINTE WEST HOLIDAY MARKET

Centennial Park Pop Ups - December 3-5; Dec 10-12;  
Dec 17-19. Visit the website for market hours -  
[quintewest.ca/tourism-events/city-events/2021-holiday-activities/quinte-west-pop-ups/](https://quintewest.ca/tourism-events/city-events/2021-holiday-activities/quinte-west-pop-ups/)

## CHRISTMAS AT MACAULAY HOUSE

House tours, caroling, story time, cider & hot chocolate  
December 11 & 12 from 12pm to 4pm  
Free admission - 35 Church Street, Picton

## FREE HOT MEAL PICK UP

Festive hot meals are available through the Community Health Centre in both Belleville & Quinte West. Order by December 15. Vegetarian option also available.

For more information and to register, call Heather McColman at 613-962-0000 x210

*Remember to bring your mask & proof of vaccination for all indoor events and maintain social distancing when necessary.*

