

## **Where did the soccer fields in front of the Meredith Centre in Chelsea Quebec come from?**

The three soccer fields in front of the Meredith Centre are the result of the vision of the Chelsea Foundation (Fondation Chelsea) and the successful community fundraising initiative which it led to the acquisition of 18.5 acres of land in the Centre Village for the purpose of community recreation.

**In May of 1998**, a dozen Chelsea residents concerned about the lack of recreational infrastructure in their growing community established the Chelsea Foundation. The Foundation's founders (see Appendix A), consisting of equal numbers of Francophones and Anglophones, were all parents of school aged children who were active in recreational activities (hockey, soccer, baseball, basketball, xc skiing) for which Chelsea had either no infrastructure (e.g. indoor hockey) or very limited infrastructure (soccer fields).

The founders put forward a vision for a community recreation centre that would address the infrastructure needs and reduce travel to other communities for these activities and would become the heart of the growing community. The initial vision included in its first phase an indoor ice rink and fitness centre and 3 soccer fields. Subsequent phases were to include a gymnasium and indoor pool.

Dugald Stewart, President of Soccer Chelsea, identified the number of fields that were needed to meet community demand and three landscape architects from Chelsea (Jim Douglas, Marc Monette and Marc Lalonde) developed a site plan including calculation of the amount of land needed (soccer fields, community centre and parking) before approaching Mrs. Meredith. During the initial year Chelsea architect Alan Hopkins also produced detailed building plans for the proposed future community recreation and cultural centre.

**In January of 1999** the Board of Directors of the Foundation obtained charitable status from Revenue Canada and began discussions with Mrs. Elizabeth Meredith about the combined purchase/donation of 18.5 acres of land which she owned immediately to the east of the Chelsea Elementary School. The 18.5 acres was considered the minimum required to meet the

community's long term recreation needs. Mrs. Meredith's property was selected over two others (Hendrick Farm and current Chelsea Creek development) because of its adjacency to the existing Municipal soccer and baseball fields.

**In January of 2000**, following months of discussions with the Meredith family, the Foundation reached an agreement with Mrs. Meredith for:

- the immediate transfer to the Foundation of approximately 3.5 acres of land which included a wetland to the east of the current Meredith Centre and the land needed to build an access road to the future recreational centre (now known as chemin Cecil); and
- the lease, for 5 years, of an additional 15 acres of land (current site of Meredith Centre, 3 soccer fields and adjacent parking lots) at an annual fee of \$2000.

As part of this agreement the Foundation agreed to:

- incur a debt to Mrs. Meredith for the fair market value of the land for the road and wetland which Mrs Meredith simultaneously agreed to forgive;
- pay approximately \$23,000 to the Municipality for the 10% developer tax for recreation and green space on 60 acres of Mrs Meredith's land (current quartier Meredith).
- Build the access road to Municipal standards.

Once the Foundation had completed the construction of the road the agreement with Mrs. Meredith stipulated that the lease would be terminated and she would:

- Sell the Foundation 4 acres of land for the sum of \$60,000
- Transfer an additional 11 acres of land to the Foundation in exchange for a tax receipt for a charitable donation for the fair market value of the land.

**In November 2000** the Chelsea Foundation, Mrs Meredith and the Municipality of Chelsea signed a tri-partite agreement whereby the

Municipality agreed to build 2 regulation sized soccer fields on the lands the Foundation was leasing from Mrs. Meredith. The Municipality also agreed to the annual upkeep and maintenance of the fields.

**In December of 2000**, on the eve of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Chelsea, the Chelsea Foundation launched the **New Pioneers Campaign**. The aim of the campaign was to raise \$125,000 through contributions of \$1000 each per family to raise the money the Foundation needed to complete its obligations to Mrs. Meredith and secure the land transfer of the remaining 15 acres. The campaign was a huge success with a total of \$150,000 raised within a year. Soccer Chelsea was instrumental in achieving this goal as there was a very large soccer constituency from which to raise the money.

**In September of 2003** the Foundation, having paid the Municipality the parks and recreation tax on 60 acres of Meredith lands and completed the building of the access road, paid Mrs. Meredith \$60,000 for 4 acres of land and issued her a charitable tax receipt for \$440,000 for the donation of an additional 11 acres which she legally transferred to the Foundation for the purposes of community recreation.

Under a separate agreement between the Foundation, Soccer Chelsea and the Municipality, the Municipality had at this point built one soccer field and agreed to build a second one and an accompanying parking lot.

The rest is as they say “history”.

Submitted by Marc Allain, Summer 2021

Edited by Alanna Keenan, Winter 2022

## Appendix A

### Members of the Fondation Chelsea Foundation Board (1998)

Founding President: Marc Allain

Founding VPs, Enrico Valente and Dwight Cross (Baseball Chelsea). Dugald Stewart (Soccer Chelsea president) subsequently replaced Enrico Valente as VP

Treasurer : Claude Lupien. Jim Kyte replaced Claude Lupien as Treasurer

Secretary: Serge Larouche). and

The other founding board members were: Georges Bertrand, Darlene Faasen, Sylvain Fleury, Pierre Gravel, Chris Hinsperger, David Meredith, Josée Morissette, Denis Pelletier.