

Media Release

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Subject: CDSBEO Book Launch

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CATHOLIC DISTRICT
SCHOOL BOARD OF
EASTERN ONTARIO



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CDSBEO Launches ‘Beacons of Faith’ - The Story of our Catholic Schools

Kemptville - The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario has unveiled a 450-page book entitled *‘Beacons of Faith’* – featuring the stories of the past and present Catholic schools throughout Eastern Ontario. A special *‘Beacons of Faith’* Book Launch and Blessing was held today (September 23, 2004) at the Board’s Kemptville Office with *Father Shawn Hughes* blessing copies of new book.

The attractive hardcover book highlights the Board’s rich Catholic educational heritage. It chronicles the beginnings of each of the Board’s Catholic school communities, from the formation of Upper Canada’s first two English Catholic schools - Iona Academy in St. Raphael’s (1816) and St. John School in Perth (1818) - to the evolution of our present-day schools and school system. It is the story of the people, the buildings and the accomplishments of each of these Catholic schools communities through to their current-day programs.

‘Tell The Story’

This extensive project was initiated by the Catholic Education Coalition – a group of Catholic educational partners dedicated to strengthening the link between home, school and parish. The goal was to *‘tell the story’* of our Catholic schools with the belief that, *‘You don’t know who you are, until you know where you came from’*.

Volunteers Offer Photographs, Stories and Memorabilia

In the fall of 2002, the Coalition’s History Committee set the groundwork for the project by determining what materials might be available for each school’s story. A team of School Story Coordinators was formed in the summer of 2003 to initiate the writing process in each community and to act as a liaison with principals. Volunteers were recruited at schools and parishes in order to gather photographs, stories, memorabilia and artwork for the book.

By Christmas, 2003, the first draft of the school stories had been submitted and reviewed. Meanwhile, the Committee was writing the history of earlier school boards across the region, highlighting their role on the provincial and local scene, from the early 1800’s until today. After a Board-wide contest to find the book’s title, the History Committee settled upon *‘Beacons of Faith’ – The Story of Our Schools*. The final revision process took several more months before the book was finally ready for the printers during the summer of 2004 – remarkably, just one year after the main thrust of the project began. The book is an exciting collection of special stories, photos, historical research and memories, along with a special section on each school’s patron saints and namesakes.

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Celebrating the Legacy

During the book launch event, CDSBEO Director of Education *Ann Perron* thanked members of the school communities and former students, teachers, principals and staff who contributed their time and energy to the tremendous undertaking. Ms. Perron stated, "This book celebrates the legacy of those who, by their dedication to Catholic education, have been '*Beacons of Faith*'. My hope is this new book will be celebrated throughout our Board at local book launches and events at our schools, where everyone who was involved with writing the story and promoting Catholic Education can be thanked for bringing life to this year's Board theme – '*Being the Body of Christ as Communities of Hope*'. Everyone who contributed to this book certainly has given us hope with the accomplishment we see before us today."

Speakers at the ceremony also included *Marilies Rettig*, President of the local Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, *Anne Noseworthy*, Education Officer with the Ministry of Education's Ottawa Region Office, CDSBEO Chair *Ron Eamer* and Vice Chair *Nancy Kirby*. Mr. Eamer presented representatives from Iona Academy School in St. Raphaels and St. John Elementary School in Perth with symbolic first copies of '*Beacons of Faith*'. Mr. Eamer said *Bishop Alexander Macdonell*, Upper Canada's first Roman Catholic Bishop, would be proud of the legacy of the early Catholic schools that the Bishop helped establish. Mr. Eamer said the new book was a wonderful illustration of the other Catholic school communities that followed throughout Eastern Ontario.

Many Powerful Stories

Former CDSBEO Director *Greg McNally*, who helped guide the project to fruition, said there were many powerful stories in the book to remind us of where we have been and what we must do to guarantee the future of Catholic education. Mr. McNally stated, "The story is one of connections and people – some almost 200 years old. It is the story of Sisters being sent by the Bishops to start early schools by running classes in the rectories. Then schools naturally grew from the parishes - often amid turmoil. But they continued to grow because someone wanted a school where their children could be educated in their Catholic faith. Someone would provide land and with the help of a priest, a parent, some donated labour and fundraising, a school was established." He added that '*Beacons of Faith*' is a testament to the founders and builders of our Catholic schools. It is dedicated to all those who have shared in the vision and life of Catholic education throughout the Board's eight counties in Eastern Ontario during the past 200 years.

Copies of '*Beacons of Faith*' will be presented to each school in the Board, with local school events planned to honour and thank those who worked on the project. The book is available at a cost of \$25 at the CDSBEO Board office at 2755 Highway 43, Kemptville. Book order forms will be available at schools throughout the Board, and copies can be shipped at no charge to your local Catholic school for pick up. The book can also be couriered to other locations within Ontario for an additional \$7.00 delivery charge.

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Photos available upon request.*