

Wakefield fair trade queen celebrates ethical consumerism milestones

By Trevor Greenway

Twenty-three years ago, Anne Winship drank the best cup of coffee she ever had in her life — a coffee that would change her life forever.

It was a steaming, hot cup of Bean Fair Coffee — one of the first 10 certified fair trade businesses in Canada, and she loved it so much that she wanted to sell it.

"I thought it was something that I believed in and that I could do as an at-home business," said Bean Fair Coffee owner Winship.

The Wakefield mom had just given birth to her son Angus and was looking for something to pay the bills but not exhaust her. She took over Bean Fair from a crew of Ottawa coffee gals and started selling it locally, part-time. It wasn't long before Wakefield woke up and smelled the coffee.

"It was challenging back then because I knew what fair trade was, but hardly anyone did back then," added Winship. "I was in Wakefield, so that was a good start. People here are aware of the bigger picture in the world, so that helped. Wakefield has been my biggest sales point, consistently."

Bean Fair turns a whopping 25 this year — 23 of those years under Winship's steady command. The business may not be on top of TSE, but that was never the idea. Winship's vision for Bean Fair Coffee was "small is beautiful." Although she may never reach millions in sales every year, she said she is aware of the difference her business has made in other parts of the world.

Winship purchases her certified organic beans from countries plagued with socio-economic issues — Peru,

Guatemala, Nicaragua and Bolivia — places with "no social safety nets." Winship visited one of the cooperatives she supports in Bolivia almost a decade ago and saw first-hand the difference Hills coffee aficionados are making.

"[World coffee bean producers] get a stable price per pound for coffee and they also get a social payment too, so they can hire teachers, get new trucks, improve their infrastructure," explained Winship.

"That's the main point — that you are helping people by what you are buying. It's not charity. You get an excellent product and the producers get a stable living."

Almost a decade into her Bean Fair business, Winship decided to extend her vision and helped La Pêche become the first certified Fair Trade Town in Quebec. It was another way for Winship and committee members Dougal Rattray, Alise Marlane and Chantal Plamondon to move the fair trade ball forward — and the support kept coming. She had representation from the former St. Andrew's Church minister Gisele Gilfillan, support from Wakefield Commerce members Roberta Bouchard and Plamondon, as well as political support from then Wakefield councillor Lynne Berthiaume. Everyone believed in the idea and it began to flower.

Since that Fair Trade Town sign went up on at the Wakefield Spring along Valley Drive 15 years ago, Wakefield has fully embraced its status. There is fair-trade chocolate, soccer balls, bananas, sugar, molasses, rice and more. Several Wakefield restos also jumped on board, with the Wakefield Mill, Nikosi, Rutherford's Bistro and Pipolinka Bakery all using fair

trade products in their dishes.

"They are all products that have sketchy backgrounds with labour. With chocolate, there is child slavery; bananas traditionally come with terrible working conditions with pesticides," explained Winship. "All the fair trade products and coffee too, they are grown in an environmental way. My coffee is also certified organic, but all the fair trade products have an environmental component too."

Winship is throwing a 15th-anniversary bash at the Wakefield Market's opening weekend, May 14, and will also be celebrating 25 years of Bean Fair Coffee the same day. She's inviting locals to come down and celebrate the difference they've all made together over the last two-and-a-half decades. The party gets underway at 10 a.m.

For more information about fair trade products in Wakefield, visit fairtradevillage.ca/. More details about Bean Fair coffee can be found at BeanFair.ca.



Then La Pêche mayor Robert Bussière, then Wakefield Coun. Lynne Berthiaume, Bean Fair owner Anne Winship, her son Angus, and Fair Trade Committee members Alise Marlane and Jay Sinha pose with the Fair Trade Town sign installed 15 years ago when Wakefield became the first Quebec town to receive official Fair Trade status. Low Down file photo



Anne Winship toured a co-operative in Bolivia that she supports through her Bean Fair Coffee company in Wakefield. Low Down file photo



CONVOCATION ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE ANNUELLE

JEUDI, LE 2 JUIN 2022 DÈS 9 H 30

Les membres sont invités à participer à l'assemblée générale annuelle de la FADOQ - Région Outaouais qui se tiendra au secrétariat régional à Gatineau le 2 juin 2022. Pour des raisons de sécurité sanitaire, les places sont limitées. L'inscription est obligatoire.

RSVP par courriel avant le 21 mai 2022 en précisant votre numéro de membre et vos coordonnées : joanne.lemay@fadoqoutaouais.qc.ca.

Deux (2) postes d'administrateurs membres du secrétariat régional sont ouverts. Si vous désirez présenter votre candidature, veuillez SVP communiquer avec la directrice générale, Mme Anne Desforges : (819) 777-5774 anne.desforges.dg@fadoqoutaouais.qc.ca.

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