

**From peace education  
to counter terrorism**

**Leçon de résilience  
et de courage**

**Opening Ecolint's  
doors wider**





**CONTACTS**

**EMAIL & TELEPHONE**

<b>Foundation</b>	<a href="mailto:administration@ecolint.ch">administration@ecolint.ch</a>	+41 (0)22 787 24 00
<b>Development Office</b>	<a href="mailto:supporting-ecolint@ecolint.ch">supporting-ecolint@ecolint.ch</a>	+41 (0)22 787 26 19
<b>Alumni Office</b>	<a href="mailto:alumni@ecolint.ch">alumni@ecolint.ch</a>	+41 (0)22 787 25 55
<b>Admissions</b>	<a href="mailto:admissions@ecolint.ch">admissions@ecolint.ch</a>	+41 (0)22 787 26 30
<b>La Grande Boissière</b>	<a href="mailto:reception.lgb@ecolint.ch">reception.lgb@ecolint.ch</a>	+41 (0)22 787 24 00
<b>La Châtaigneraie</b>	<a href="mailto:reception.cha@ecolint.ch">reception.cha@ecolint.ch</a>	+41 (0)22 960 91 11
<b>Campus des Nations</b>	<a href="mailto:reception.nat@ecolint.ch">reception.nat@ecolint.ch</a>	+41 (0)22 770 47 00

**WEB**

**Alumni:** [alumni.ecolint.ch](http://alumni.ecolint.ch)      **School website:** [www.ecolint.ch](http://www.ecolint.ch)  
**Centre des arts:** [www.ecolint-cda.ch](http://www.ecolint-cda.ch)      **Institute:** [www.ecolint-institute.ch](http://www.ecolint-institute.ch)

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 +41 (0)22 787 26 19

**IMPRESSUM**

**Editor-in-Chief:** Elizabeth Caumont (Head of Alumni Relations)

**Managing Editor:** Ninon Duran (Alumni Community Manager)

**Editorial Team:** Tania Gentet Ganose (Campus des Nations Marketing Communications Campus Partner), Catherine Mériqay (Marketing Communications Coordinator & La Grande Boissière Campus Partner), Francis Poncioni (Graphic Designer), Alejandro Rodriguez-Giovo (Emeritus Foundation Archivist), Thais Ruegg (La Châtaigneraie Marketing Communications Campus Partner)

Ecole Internationale de Genève, 62, route de Chêne, CH-1208 Geneva

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# A WORD FROM THE DG

Dear members of the Ecolint community,

You will find in the stories and reporting in this issue of Echo magazine examples of Ecolint doing three things that have driven us forward for nearly one hundred years.

First is being an inclusive school, second is being student centered and third is striving to be better than our previous best.

The more deeply reflective and honest we are and the more we reach out to and listen to all voices at Ecolint, we are discovering a wide gap between those who have been historically included at Ecolint and those whose presence has been rare and whose voices have been relatively silent.

We have some wonderful examples of Ecolint being a haven for the vulnerable, whether it is providing education, food and shelter to Jewish refugees during World War II to our pioneering work in serving children who require intense learning support to bring their full potential to the world.

We are proud of this work. And we share these stories of success with humility because we know we can do much better at being inclusive in all the many ways that can be imagined such that every child, parent or staff member feels safe and welcome.

What I love most about Ecolint and what drew me to it like iron to a magnet are three expressions, the first is from our Charter and the last two are from our vision for international education:

1. "The equal value of all human beings..."
2. "We exist for the sake of our students..."
3. "...to do better than its previous best."

I hope that it is as true for you as it is for me that these represent a secular Ecolint trinity where one cannot exist with any meaning or strength without the other two.

In my mind, and now I share with you so they might occupy your mind too, are these expressions in the form of three questions I ask myself and others:



Does doing or making decision x or thinking y or being z...

value all human beings equally?

serve the needs of students?

Make Ecolint better?

We know we live in a world that falls short of treating each human being with equal value so working on having this be the lived experience of everyone at Ecolint has to be an intentional endeavor where we are always alert to when we are not meeting that standard ourselves.

We know that the needs of students are changing as rapidly as the world we live in and we must change our provision and their experience accordingly by prioritizing the quality and time we dedicate to developing relationships with them.

We know that doing this will make Ecolint better for everyone from teachers and support staff to parents and alumni.

And finally, we know that this all represents the best kind of challenge in life. A challenge that is larger than ourselves and that can only be accomplished by recognizing our interdependence with each other. We can learn a lesson from the Covid-19 pandemic. We are all in this together. And we can challenge ourselves further and follow the lead of our students and take on this challenge with courage and joyfulness.

Sincerely,

**David Hawley**  
*Director General*

# NEWS AND VIEWS

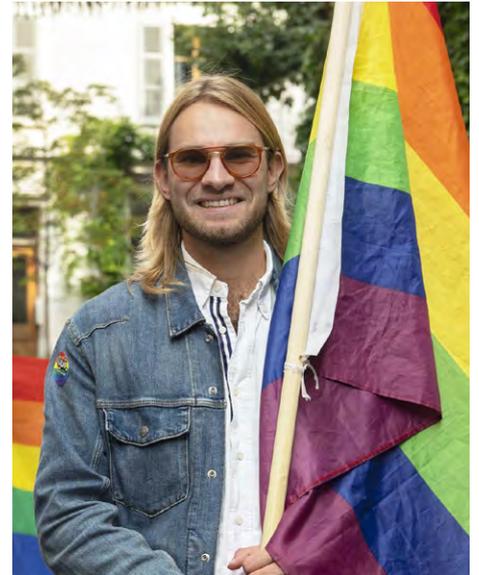
## ALUMNUS CHARLES LARSON WINS THE PRIX MICHEL NANÇOZ

Is it possible that Sisyphus, the mythical figure condemned to an eternity of futile labour, is, in fact, happy? In September 2021, Charles Larson (La Chât, 2013) delivered an impassioned plea on the topic during the annual Michel Nançoz oratorical contest. The competition is organised every year for the young lawyers of the Geneva Bar Association.

Charles believes that there are aspects of modern society – with its relentless “*métro, boulot, dodo*” grind and injustices – that can feel Sisyphean, but we must nevertheless strive for our own pursuit of happiness. Throughout his oration, Charles made several allusions to the same sex marriage movement and the struggle to obtain equal rights for members of the LGBTQ+ community. His plea, along with his quick-witted responses to questions from an illustrious jury, earned Charles the top honour: *meilleur plaideur*.

While preparing for the chance to be crowned the most eloquent and compelling litigator before a crowd of 800 lawyers, Charles also turned his plea for redefining marriage in Switzerland into action. He volunteered as an activist for the “Comité national Mariage civil pour toutes et tous” (the “National Same Sex Marriage Committee”) and channelled his gift for persuasion into digital marketing and event-planning for the local Geneva chapter of the committee. The campaign’s legal and grassroots efforts paid off when nearly two-thirds of Swiss voters backed the introduction of same sex marriage in a referendum held in September 2021.

While Charles had been confident that the movement had the support of the public, he was nonetheless “overjoyed” to see “the federal map swathed in green.” Behind this historical moment for LGBTQ+ rights and social justice, one cannot be surprised to find an Ecolintian on the front lines fighting for equality.



Credit: Bettina Jacot-Descombes

## LITTLE AMAL INSPIRES CAMPUS DES NATIONS STUDENTS TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD

As she drifts over the cobblestones of the Place des Nations, the fountains of which have gone silent to mark this momentous occasion, some forty Campus des Nations Primary children cheer a roaring welcome to Little Amal. This 3.5 metre-tall puppet has just arrived in Geneva, the city of peace, after travelling over 8000 km across Turkey and much of Europe to raise awareness of the plight of refugee children. Bearing messages of peace and compassion in various languages, the children welcomed her as one of their own. “We have students from across the world and dozens of languages represented in our school,” explains Campus des Nations Primary Principal Christelle Lonez, “so for our students, there is no such thing as a ‘foreigner’.”

Campus des Nations Primary School offers the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP), whose mission is



to encourage young students to become internationally-minded individuals who recognise their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet. Little Amal’s arrival in Geneva enabled students to witness first-hand how important that pedagogical aim is. They were able to connect the messages of the campaign with their Units of Inquiry on influential people and activism as well as their studies of migration and sharing the planet.

“Thanks to Little Amal, our Year 4 and 5 students were able to put a very human face on the global challenges which they are learning about in class,” concludes Christelle Lonez, “and she has also shown them that being open-minded, caring, reflective and principled is essential in shaping the future world they want to build: one of peace, tolerance and acceptance of others.”

## TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF INSPIRING EDUCATORS

Ecolint alumni – regardless of their decade, campus or background – easily come together as a chorus to sing the praises of the school's teaching staff and the quality of the learning experience in and outside the classroom. Our student-centred, cross-disciplinary and resolutely international pedagogy was groundbreaking early in Ecolint's history and has gone on to influence thousands of other institutions, notably through the IB programme. Our identity as an educational pioneer is still thriving today: Ecolint's scale, resources and diversity within the pedagogical team enable us to innovate continuously and adapt curricula to reflect the evolving needs of our student body.

How can we continue to share this rich expertise with educators around the globe? One way is by training the next generation of teachers. Over 12 years ago, the Ecolint Institute of Learning and Teaching created an Initial Teacher Training Programme (ITTP) at the postgraduate level through a collaborative partnership with Durham University in the UK. The course includes both academic and professional modules, including observation and teaching placements on all three of Ecolint's campuses. According to one ITTP alumnus, Jonathan Siener, the programme taught him to "stay in the moment with [his] students and make sure they are a part of the dialogue" rather than aiming, above all, to finish the lesson exactly as he had planned it. This sentiment of building a co-constructive learning atmosphere, a *marque de fabrique* of Ecolint, should resonate with our alumni community.

One of the objectives of the ITTP programme is to promote equity and diversity within international education. In support of this goal, Ecolint plans to offer scholarships to trainees who hail from underrepresented countries starting next school year (2022-2023). After successfully completing the ITTP, the scholars would be offered an initial work placement at Ecolint (lasting up to 18 months) before venturing out into the world.

We have already begun to attract meaningful partnerships in this endeavour to make the ITTP more accessible and more representative of the global population. In November 2021, the Foundation of the Universidad de Congreso in Mendoza, Argentina reached out to Ecolint to sponsor five Argentine scholars over the next five years – monumental support totalling almost a half a million Swiss Francs.

At Ecolint we believe that we can leverage the ITTP programme as a powerful vector for sharing the school's model of peace education adapted to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## IN BRIEF

In September, La Châtaigneraie welcomed a new Secondary School principal, Soraya Sayed Hassen. Upon joining Ecolint, Soraya reflected on the points of connection between her background and the school's history and identity, saying:

*"My trajectory as an educator has taken me to a number of countries, including Mauritius, my home country, Australia and India, but this is my first time in Switzerland. I am particularly pleased to be joining a Foundation that has students from all over the world, as my personal journey has been one composed of multiple languages and cultures."*

Welcome, Soraya!



## BUILDING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

The Ecole Internationale de Genève is a not-for-profit foundation, and our day-to-day costs are covered by tuition fees. The school relies on financial support from our community and partners to help achieve development projects.

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**With your support, we can make a difference for current and future generations of Ecolint students.**

Contact **Brian Wahlen**, Head of Major Partnership, at [brian.wahlen@ecolint.ch](mailto:brian.wahlen@ecolint.ch) or +41 (0)22 787 26 19

Visit us at [supporting.ecolint.ch](https://supporting.ecolint.ch)

# MISSION (PRESQUE) IMPOSSIBLE

**Vous pensiez que les nombreux devoirs effectués pendant votre scolarité étaient perdus à tout jamais ? Pour certains rédigés un peu trop rapidement, il en est peut-être mieux ainsi, mais qu'en est-il de ceux que vous avez perfectionnés pendant de longues heures ?**

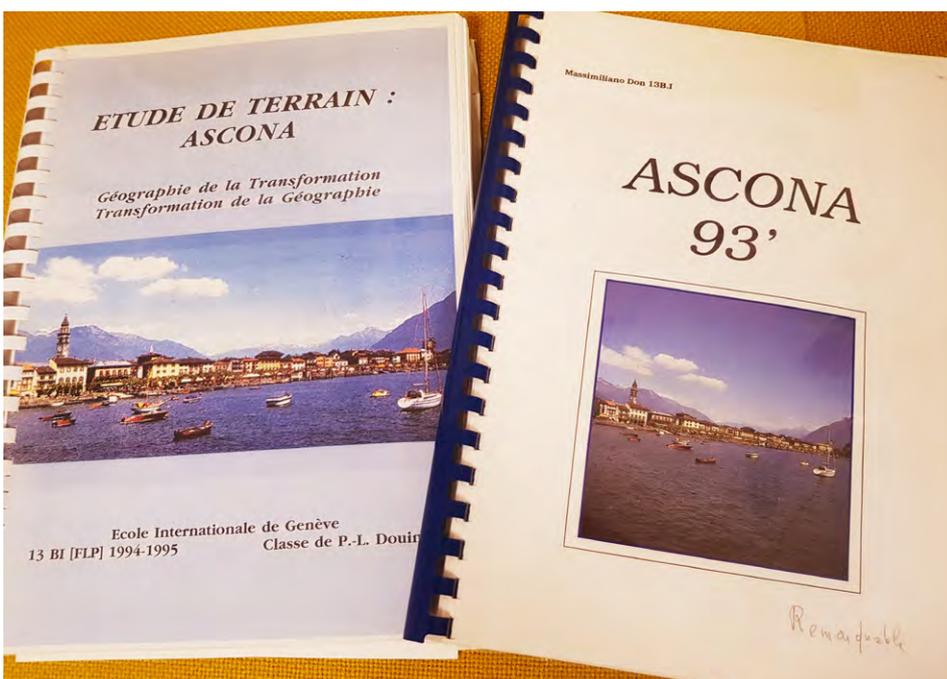
Vos travaux : sans doute, vous les imaginez au mieux prenant la poussière dans des placards, ou au pire étant recyclés et vivant une nouvelle vie en recevant les créations de nouveaux élèves. Et bien non, certains professeurs les ont gardés précieusement pendant de longues années ! C'est le cas de Mr Douin, professeur de géographie et de théorie de la connaissance jusqu'en 1996 sur le campus de La Grande Boissière. En juin 2021, le Bureau des alumni a eu le plaisir de recevoir un appel de M. Douin, qui mettait de l'ordre dans ses affaires et souhaitait retourner certains travaux « remarquables » à leurs auteurs. Malheureusement, nous n'avions pas le contact de certains de ces anciens élèves. Grâce au pouvoir des réseaux sociaux, nous avons pu retrouver une ancienne élève qui a eu le plaisir de recevoir un devoir rédigé il y a plus de 30 ans ! Cette anecdote était également l'occasion de partager des nouvelles d'un ancien professeur qui a marqué la vie de beaucoup d'anciens élèves. Suite à notre message sur Facebook nous avons reçu de nombreux messages de personnes souhaitant recontacter M. Douin.

The banner features the Ecolint logo on the left and the alumni logo on the right. The main text reads 'Join us on Ecolint Connect!' and 'Our new online alumni platform'. Below this, there are four colored boxes with the following text: 'SECURE private social network & messaging system', 'SOCIAL group chats by campus or location', 'NOSTALGIC yearbooks, photo albums & videos', and 'MEANINGFUL make personal and professional connections'.

Pour certains, la recherche fut plus facile. Ainsi, pour Gilles Grassioulet (LGB, 1995), il nous a suffi de traverser le campus pour aller au Centre des arts, où il travaille en tant que Head of Art and Design. Il a pu relire l'étude de terrain à Ascona effectuée avec sept autres élèves en 1995 pour leur Baccalauréat International. Il se souvient de ce voyage de classe de trois nuits et feuillette avec plaisir cette étude de 135 pages. Gilles retrouve dans les photos qu'il avait prises un début de réflexion sur la place de l'art dans la place publique, thème sur lequel il a beaucoup travaillé en tant qu'artiste. Il

reconnaît que lui et ses camarades avaient pris ce travail à cœur, et que M. Douin leur avait laissé beaucoup d'autonomie. Il est encore en contact avec certains de ses co-auteurs, et le Bureau des alumni va faire réaliser des copies de ce travail pour les leur retourner. Notre enquête n'est pas finie, car il nous reste un dernier devoir à réunir avec son auteur, celui de Massimiliano Don (LGB, 1993). Si vous êtes en relation avec lui, n'hésitez pas à lui demander de nous contacter à [alumni@ecolint.ch](mailto:alumni@ecolint.ch).

Cette belle aventure humaine nous permet de souligner l'importance de mettre vos données à jour sur Ecolint Connect ([connect.ecolint.ch](http://connect.ecolint.ch)), car – sait-on jamais – un ancien professeur cherchera peut-être à vous retourner un devoir !



# FROM PEACE EDUCATION TO COUNTER TERRORISM: HUMERA KHAN (LGB, 1992)

**To speak to Humera Khan is to realise that you are in the presence of the living, breathing embodiment of Ecolint's mission. This La Grande Boissière alumna from the class of 1992 not only exudes intellect, humility and tolerance, but she has forged a career in preventing, countering and mitigating extremist violence.**

When asked if her time at Ecolint was academically difficult, she chortles, "Not really!", in a humble and approachable manner. What stands out for Humera about her school days at LGB is the extra-curricular activities that allowed her to experiment with various forms of social and environmental justice. She and her classmates were the first to form a human rights club and they worked with campus administrators to install the first recycling bins in LGB classrooms. "We also had to empty the bins," she underlines with a warm chuckle, as if to boost her street credibility.

After a long and successful academic journey at MIT, where she earned an impressive four degrees, Humera went on to work as a strategy analyst and consultant for government clients in Washington, D.C. Then, in 2010, she founded Muflehun, a think tank that designs "contextualized solutions to complex social challenges" with the aim of increasing social resilience.

Currently, Humera and her team are building a Community Resilience Early Warning System (CREWS) to help prevent domestic terrorism and targeted violence in the United States. It is a technology-based approach to preventing community vulnerability to "white power" movements.

Humera finds that the response and efforts to curtail the rise of this kind of violent extremism have been problematic. She explains that "they have always focused on the individual, but there are also environmental and societal risk factors." Current counter-terrorism resources are also focused on law-enforcement and policing of individuals, and not on building the community resilience necessary to resisting the rhetoric of violent extremism.

This hateful rhetoric, according to Khan, preys upon individuals who are searching



for a sense of belonging and their place in the world: "There are very few people who join extremist groups because of their ideology. In fact, they know that something is missing, and it just becomes a question of who grabs them."

CREWS is a data-driven analytic system designed to help state and local governments anticipate emerging extremist hot spots, instead of depending only on law enforcement to deter attacks. What guides Humera and her organisation is the idea that we all have a responsibility toward the world to help solve complex social problems: "Our world is too entangled to think that human security is only a law enforcement problem."

In practice, Humera's philosophy towards preventing extremism means funnelling

local and federal resources towards education, social services and mental health support. By funding these areas, resilience can be embedded within entire communities.

She recognises, however, that there are plenty of challenges, including "the ethics of using artificial intelligence in this space, the need to avoid repeating the injustice and abuse in the current counter-terrorism space and the inconsistency of political will to address the problem."

In order to tackle these issues with wisdom, determination and humanity, Humera will no doubt draw upon the education for peace that she received at Ecolint. We are sincerely proud of such inspiring leaders within our alumni community.

# UNE BIBLIOTHÈQUE EN FORÊT : LE SENTIER DES LIVRES À LA GRANDE BOISSIÈRE

**Comment faire pour encourager les plus jeunes à lire, lire et lire encore, partout et tout le temps ? C'est le défi que s'est lancé Marie-Pierre Preece, alias MP, alors responsable de la bibliothèque de l'Ecole primaire de La Grande Boissière. Fin 2020, elle l'a relevé avec beaucoup d'imagination et non sans poésie.**

Sachant que les élèves se rendent régulièrement dans la magnifique forêt du campus, MP, aujourd'hui à la retraite, a eu l'idée d'y associer la lecture afin d'ajouter un but à la promenade. Avec l'aide des Services techniques, elle a fait installer, tout au long du sentier qui serpente dans le cordon boisé, dix-sept pupitres présentant les pages d'un livre.

Ainsi, la forêt est devenue une annexe de la bibliothèque, avec les frondaisons pour plafond, des souches pour fauteuils, une moquette de feuilles et de brindilles, l'odeur des sous-bois au lieu de celle, si caractéristique, du papier. « Cette lecture en plein air associe l'aspect ludique à l'aspect pédagogique », explique MP.

Les livres sont sélectionnés avec soin et changés tous les quinze jours par Stéphanie et Morgane, les bibliothécaires actuelles. Le choix est mûrement réfléchi : il faut que le livre suscite la réflexion en lien avec le programme scolaire, avec la saison ou encore avec le calendrier. Il faut qu'il alterne le français et l'anglais. Il faut, enfin, qu'il soit accessible à tous les âges du primaire.



*Le rond se fond parfois dans l'environnement*



*La joie de courir de page en page !*

Accompagnés de leur enseignant, les élèves peuvent ainsi cheminer de page en page, se balader dans un récit, butiner les illustrations. Le tout au contact d'une nature dont les bienfaits en matière de bien-être et d'apprentissage ne sont plus à démontrer. Florence, qui travaille avec des élèves de 5-6 ans, témoigne : « Cette promenade dans un livre est une fabuleuse activité pédagogique : interagir avec la nature capte l'intérêt des élèves et leur donne une sensation de liberté et d'autonomie. Tout en gambadant dans la forêt, ils cherchent la page suivante et partent à la découverte de la trame du récit. »

Stimulés par le grand air et par des expériences sensorielles, les élèves sont ensuite plus aptes à se concentrer lorsqu'ils rejoignent leur salle de classe. Et ils en redemandent : les bibliothécaires voient des élèves demander à emprunter le livre qu'ils ont découvert en forêt.

Quant aux enseignants, ils profitent eux aussi d'un moment d'échange privilégié

avec leurs élèves dans un environnement qui rompt avec la traditionnelle salle de classe.

Le Sentier des livres est accessible aux parents et aux collaborateurs. Quel que soit l'âge des promeneurs-lecteurs, parions que peu d'entre eux restent insensibles à cette



*Un écrin de verdure pour salle de lecture*

(dé)marche. En effet, un livre pour la jeunesse laisse rarement indifférent, car nous partageons tous un point commun : celui d'avoir été, un jour, un enfant.

# RHYTHM AND RISK-TAKING AT LA CHÂTAIGNERAIE

In mid-November 2021, just as Geneva and its surroundings started becoming grey and dreary, Ollie Tunmer, former cast member of the hit show STOMP, set foot into La Châtaigneraie's Theatre Department to lead workshops on body percussion – the art of striking the body to produce various types of sounds – for secondary students and choir members.

Ollie Tunmer, a qualified secondary music teacher and director of The Beat Goes On, seeks to engage students with body percussion, not only to explore the body as a percussive instrument, but also to

use it as a platform to explore wellbeing, collaborative learning, creativity, and risk-taking with a growth mindset.

At La Châtaigneraie, he encouraged students to create their own rhythms, to combine them with the pieces they performed as a choir, and to perform in front of others, in an effort to foster a context in which taking a risk leads to growth. Students learned first-hand that trying new things in a safe environment can lead to all sorts of wonderful and creative surprises. "Some mistakes can turn into a fun mistake and the fun mistake becomes

what you intended to do," says Ollie, with regard to rhythm creation. An important life lesson for young international students who aspire to do great things.

Tunmer's visit is one of several initiatives taken by La Châtaigneraie's Theatre Department to engage students in a time when many social and creative activities are limited because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## DES NOUVELLES DE L'ORCHESTRE DE FEMMES AFGHANES

Elles avaient fait la couverture d'*echo Magazine* à l'occasion de leur fabuleux concert au Centre des arts en 2017. Les courageuses et talentueuses jeunes femmes de l'Afghan Women's Orchestra «Zohra» nous avaient offert la magie de leurs sonorités envoûtantes, dans un envol de couleurs chatoyantes et d'instruments magnifiques.

Les récents événements qui ont bouleversé leur pays nous rappellent à quel point la paix et la liberté sont fragiles. Nous avons eu malgré tout le soulagement d'apprendre que les élèves de l'école de musique de Kaboul, ANIM, dont font partie les musiciennes de l'orchestre, ont pu quitter l'Afghanistan sains et saufs.

L'Ecolint est honorée d'avoir pu accueillir Zohra et souhaite ardemment que leurs instruments puissent à nouveau résonner librement.

*The Afghan Women's Orchestra "Zohra"*



# LEÇON DE RÉSILIENCE ET DE COURAGE AVEC THIBAUT TRANCART (NATIONS, 2011)

**Nous avons eu la chance de discuter avec Thibault Trancart qui, malgré sa cécité, a toujours refusé de se limiter et embrasse les défis sans hésitation.**



Lorsque Thibault Trancart intègre le Campus des Nations en 2006, c'est avec l'objectif précis d'apprendre l'anglais pour pouvoir intégrer une université Nord-Américaine. Car c'est également l'année où Thibault devient aveugle. Le jeune homme luttait depuis ses deux ans avec un double cancer de la rétine et, après 9 ans de traitements successifs, il vainc enfin la maladie au prix de sa vue.

Conscients que l'accueil des personnes en situation de handicap est beaucoup plus adapté dans les universités de l'autre côté de l'Atlantique, ses parents le placent à Nations pour qu'il soit accompagné, qu'il obtienne un Baccalauréat International et apprenne l'anglais. Thibault résume le challenge dans le Yearbook de 2011 : «A ce moment-là, je ne parlais pas un mot d'anglais (...) j'ai dû aussi apprendre le braille, à utiliser un ordinateur avec assistance vocale pour les classes et à me déplacer sur le campus.» Avec le soutien de tous, rien n'arrête Thibault, qui surmonte brillamment ces difficultés et obtient son Bac International en 2011.

Une réussite qui en dit long sur sa détermination et sa volonté de suivre un parcours académique normal. BI en poche, il s'envole pour Montréal et rejoint la prestigieuse université de McGill, où il deviendra le premier aveugle diplômé de la Desautel Faculty of Management. Il récupère son diplôme avec sa chienne guide Fiona, vêtue d'une toge pour l'occasion.

De retour à Genève, se pose la question de la suite. Thibault a toujours skié en amateur, et lorsqu'un ami lui lance après une bonne descente, «Et si on préparait les jeux paralympiques ?», il décide de faire de cette blague un projet et se lance dans la compétition internationale. Et même s'il n'est pas allé jusqu'aux Jeux paralympiques, c'est une réussite pour Thibault; le seul échec «c'est celui d'abandonner parce que les autres le disent.» C'est donc



Photo: Blind Trust Ski Team -  
Thibault Trancart et Mano Pauli

serenement qu'il prend la décision de raccrocher les skis de compétition en 2020. Cette force qui lui permet de tout envisager et de ne pas s'arrêter à des considérations aussi triviales que «je n'ai jamais fait de ski en compétition» est quelque chose qu'il a appris à l'Ecolint : «Sans l'Ecolint, je ne me serais jamais lancé dans l'aventure du ski. Il y a une vraie mentalité 'nord-américaine' à l'Ecolint qui t'autorise à rêver.»

Après avoir goûté aux circuits de compétition internationaux, Thibault se frotte au monde de l'entreprise. Après un stage chez Procter & Gamble, il intègre la multinationale en tant que Responsable de Marque en 2020. Mais Thibault reste très impliqué pour faire changer la perception de la société sur le handicap en Suisse. En effet, à son retour en Suisse en 2015, alors plein d'ambition, le jeune homme se heurte à un mur dans ses premières recherches d'emploi : «Un aveugle, ça peut faire quoi ?». Le ski et le soutien de sa famille l'aident à reprendre confiance en lui.

En tant que membre du comité de l'association «Trust To Achieve» (TTA), sa mission est de remédier au manque d'intégration des personnes aveugles/malvoyantes dans le monde professionnel. Un objectif très personnel pour changer la perception du handicap qu'il poursuit également avec son entreprise «No Blink», via laquelle il propose ses services de conférencier pour partager son expérience et inspirer les autres. Un projet ambitieux, mais qui vaut la peine d'être mené pour, ensemble, faire tomber les barrières

sociales liées à la cécité. Comme il le dit pour clore sa citation de Yearbook : «I came, I did not see, you helped me, we won!»

#### **Trust to Achieve, une aventure qui a commencé à l'Ecolint :**

En janvier 2017, Thibault fait une intervention sur le campus de La Grande Boissière pour parler de son parcours. Le soir, deux élèves racontent à leurs parents ce qu'ils ont entendu. Le père, Amaury Marchandise, qui travaille chez Procter & Gamble, invite Thibault à faire une intervention pour ses équipes. A cette époque, Thibault poursuivait ses ambitions de skieur professionnel et décroche ensuite un stage à temps partiel chez P&G. En parallèle, Amaury lance TTA en 2019, conscient que le changement doit venir d'abord du monde de l'entreprise, et Thibault rejoint le comité en 2020. Quand il met fin à sa carrière sportive, Thibault recontacte P&G dans l'espoir de trouver un stage à plein temps, mais on lui propose plutôt une position permanente ! Avec TTA, ils effectuent un travail de fond pour sensibiliser les employeurs à l'accueil des personnes aveugles et malvoyantes et ainsi changer les mentalités, et coachent les équipes – l'objectif étant de détruire «ce mur» social auquel les VIPs (Blind and Visually Impaired Persons) doivent souvent faire face.

# REFUGEES OF ECOLINT

The term “refugee” was coined to describe French Huguenots fleeing religious persecution and immigrating to Switzerland in the XVI Century. We wanted to share the stories of three alumnae who fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and found a haven in Ecolint.



**Mona Halaby (LGB, 1971)** was born in Egypt in 1950 to a Syrian father and a Palestinian mother. Her mother, Zakia, a Christian Palestinian, lost her home in 1948 during the Nakba (Palestinian Catastrophe), in the wake of the Israeli Declaration of Independence. She fled to Alexandria and started her family there. However, in 1961, when Nasser started a nationalisation programme, Mona and her family became political refugees. Following a job offer for her father, the family left for Geneva and Mona had to leave everything behind. She still feels pangs of guilt over the opportunities she had in rebuilding her life and not having to live the hardships of life in a refugee camp. The adjustment to Switzerland was difficult: coming from the Middle East where people are “buoyant,” the quietness of the Swiss came as a shock. But Ecolint soon became a shelter: “I never felt out of place at Ecolint. Anybody could fit in. I was in the first batch of students in the pilot program of the International Baccalaureate, and it was the best experience ever.”

After studying in Geneva, Mona followed her husband to Berkeley and, as she was raising their three sons, she became fascinated with how children learn. Coming from a family of educators – her grandfather taught in a very progressive school in Jerusalem – education was in her DNA. It was natural that she became a primary school teacher, specialising in nonviolent conflict resolution with children. This is what brought her back to Palestine in 2008, when she joined the Ramallah Friends School to work with children suffering from anxiety and PTSD linked to the military occupation of the West Bank. Mona kept a journal to describe the captivating beauty of her homeland and the difficulty of the occupation. This journal, coupled with the interviews she did with her mother in 2003, led her to write a book, *In My Mother's Footsteps: A Palestinian Refugee Returns Home*. For Mona, her book is not only a personal and familial story but takes on a deeper meaning in the current context: “No matter what brought you to leave your country with the unwanted status of refugee, I stand with you in solidarity.”

### Excerpt from her book

*“To describe the loss of her homeland in 1948, my Palestinian mother once told me, ‘Everything I knew to be true, everyone I held close to my heart, was gone.’ Refugees are like seeds that scatter in the wind, and land in different soils that become their reluctant homes.”*



**Juliette Triozon (LGB, 1971)** warns us: “My mother’s life is like *Gone with the Wind*,” and indeed it is an epic story that deserved to be told in a book. This is exactly what Juliette did after her mother passed away: she wrote: *Waltzing with the Dragons: The true story of a mother and daughter in war-torn Vietnam*.

Her mother, Ly, was the daughter of one of the last Tonkin Mandarins, a title for a bureaucrat, was sent to live with a French couple after refusing an arranged marriage. She had a short-lived marriage to a French officer who died in action. Then came the Japanese occupation during World War II: Ly was the prisoner of a Japanese colonel before escaping and finally going back to Saigon. There, she fell madly in love with a married French surgeon and Mai-Tâm (Juliette) was the result of this affair in 1952. The doctor went back to France, promising to come back, but never did.

Juliette grew up in Saigon and, like many mixed-race children, felt neither Vietnamese nor French. Her mother married again to a French man, Mr Triozon, but never forgot her first love. When the situation in Vietnam

became too dangerous, Juliette was sent to a farm in France in 1967, at the age of 15. Her parents joined her in 1968 and they went directly to Geneva. This uprooting – leaving her Vietnamese family and all that she had ever known for a new country and new culture – was a terrible shock. Juliette still remembers her first day of school at Ecolint: “I was wearing a long pleated skirt with my long hair. Everybody was staring at me! This was 1968, so all the girls had short pixie hair, mini skirts and make-up!”. After the initial consternation, Juliette found her place at Ecolint and admits that everybody was nice to her. She discovered theatre at Ecolint, started to play chess and found out that she was very good at organising parties. This skill was particularly appreciated by her schoolmates, and it was actually at one legendary party that she met her future husband, an American. They moved to the USA and had two children. She is now re-married to a Scot and lives in the south of France.

Writing the book has been an emotional journey, but also very therapeutic, as the relationship between mother and daughter was strained. Juliette discovered that Mr Triozon was not her biological father only while at Ecolint.

#### **Excerpt from her book**

*“I don’t like endings and for me saying good-bye is like closing a chapter in my life and I am aware that with it comes pain. My grandma told me: “Look at your life ahead, be and do!” I am about to leave almost fifteen years of ‘myself’; the little girl I was, she is going to stay behind with my cousins, my friends, my family, my Patoudoux. I am splitting myself from her, the little Mai-Tâm. I am taking only one big suitcase and all my memories. I have a photo album with everyone’s photographs. Moments are frozen and my childhood is in there. Soon, in France, I will no longer be Mai-Tâm but Juliette.”*



**Farifteh Robb, née Hafezi (LGB, 1968)** is Iranian but was born in Geneva when her father was working at the World Health Organisation. In 1955, her parents enrolled her and her sister at Ecolint rather than at the local Swiss elementary school, where they would have been the only two foreign children. Ecolint in the 1950s was truly “a unique place.” Farifteh recalls the Typing class for pupils who did not do Latin, and the shame of dropping and breaking Ecolint’s very first electric iron in Domestic Science! More importantly, she learned to respect all cultures and religions at Ecolint, a lifelong skill that would greatly help her navigate her own beliefs and faith.

In a very personal book, *In the Shadow of the Shahs*, Farifteh describes what it was like to relocate to Tehran, as a teenager, in 1965. Iran was “home” for her parents but an entirely new place for her. This uprooting and rerooting, a strange form of reverse culture shock, is a feeling that will undoubtedly resonate with many Ecolint alumni. After a BA in English Studies from Tehran’s National University, she pursued a PhD in 19th Century English Literature at the University of Nottingham. In the UK,

Farifteh also pursued her inner exploration of faith, leading to her conversion to Christianity in Tehran just before the Islamic Revolution. Upon her return, Farifteh had been working as a lecturer at the National University of Iran, but her employment was terminated as part of the purge of the new Islamic regime after the Shah was overthrown in 1978.

After a mock trial for “poorly grading an English essay,” Farifteh understood that she had to leave. Her father was considered an ally of the Shah, a very serious accusation. Upon hearing that nurses were actively sought in England, she decided to apply for nurse training in London. Following many attempts, her exit permit papers were finally signed and she was allowed to go to England to visit her aunt in London. She started her life over again in the UK, training to be a nurse at the age of 30, and eventually settled in Scotland with her husband and four children. Her sister is still in Iran, but was arrested a few months ago. The family did not hear from her for a very long time. Following her release no reason for the arrest was ever given.

#### **Excerpt from her book**

*“I was aware of having acquired a double identity, the product of two worlds – a European one which encouraged independence, and the Persian one of subservience to authority. This double identity became rooted in my psyche, but I did wish I hadn’t been forced into the mould of a half-baked farangi. I longed to be able to slot neatly and inconspicuously into a single culture. In time I would become an apologetic European in Iran and an apologetic foreigner in Europe.”*

# OPENING ECOLINT'S DOORS WIDER: THE SECOND PHASE OF THE ECOLINT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

In 1929, the Rockefeller and Forstall families helped orchestrate the very first iteration of the Ecolint Scholarship Programme when they funded the studies of fifteen scholars from countries such as Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Albania and Bulgaria. Since then, the school has, on multiple occasions, provided a haven for young refugees who have overcome incredible hardships with exceptional perseverance, grace and wisdom.

For these students, their acceptance to Ecolint is an auspicious first step towards realising their dreams, but it is not a golden ticket. The realities of the distance from family, their significant academic gaps and their heavier than average mental and emotional loads represent challenges they must, once again, navigate. Thankfully, the international nature of the school and its expertise in crafting tailored academic programmes are a major boon for their integration. Ecolint's five most recent scholars, who joined our two Geneva campuses in 2019 thanks to a partnership with the *Hospice général de Genève*, embody the magic and success of Ecolint's model of student-centred education that is informed by cultural context. Below, in their own words, four of the students describe what the scholarship has meant to them:

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*"The scholarship has taken my life to another level. My stress and anxiety related to the process of learning have gone, and instead I am more curious, have questions to ask and have learning support from the teachers. I have also become more self-confident, feel good both in body and spirit, and live my life much more positively. These scholarships embody the best way of giving a chance to people like me to find their destiny".*  
**A.S. (LGB, 2021)**

*"This scholarship reopened doors that I saw closing. As a new student, I felt welcomed by everyone there; not once did I feel insecure or stressed about going to school, because I knew the people I was surrounded by were there to make my learning environment even more positive. All of this has ultimately allowed me to come to school with a smile on my face, ready to start my learning. To put it simply, this school supports and pushes me to be the best version of myself".*  
**L.P. (LGB, 2020)**

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*"Getting a scholarship to attend Ecolint was an amazing opportunity for me. The teachers were the extra special part of the experience. They really were very supportive and made me feel that, in them, I had people who truly wanted to see me become successful. As I am now awaiting my responses from universities in Geneva, I know that my chances of being accepted would have been much slimmer had I not benefited from the opportunity of attending Ecolint."*  
**A.G. (LGB, 2021)**

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*"After finishing my studies as a scholar, I began to work as an apprentice with the Development and Alumni Relations Department of Ecolint. What I like most about working here is the fact that everyone is amazing, friendly, supportive and positive. It just makes me feel comfortable! This is my first job, so everything I am learning is new to me. What is important is that I learn from any mistakes I make and try to make the best of them. That way, I am ready for any difficulties I might face in the future."*  
**S.A. (Nations, 2020 and current Development and Alumni Relations apprentice)**

The integration of our scholars is of paramount importance to our teaching and para-pedagogical teams. This topic is one of the main points of discussion of the Ecolint Scholarship Planning Committee, which started to convene more frequently in the autumn of 2021 to plan for a potential expansion of the Programme in 2023.

The Committee is chaired by Alexandra Conchard, Assistant Principal of the Secondary School at La Châtaigneraie. It is composed of twelve highly involved teachers, three engaged administrative staff members and one very motivated board member. Alexandra says that "working on this project with another 16 members of the Foundation has been inspiring. Meeting with and hearing from current and former scholars from Ecolint and other international schools definitely shaped our conversations."

The Committee discussed new ideas and initiatives on several fronts, such as deepening our support of parents of scholars, and establishing partnerships within the canton of Vaud in the hope of bringing scholars to La Châtaigneraie (thus making the Programme truly Foundation-wide). After many hours of "fruitful debates," according to Ms. Conchard, the Committee is now ready to draft and present a new proposal for the Programme's framework that will ensure a success story for all our future scholars.

If you would like to support the work of the Committee and the expansion of the Scholarship Programme, you can make a contribution via the [Supporting Ecolint website](#) or the [Ecolint American Foundation](#) donation form.

# OUR DEBT TO ARTHUR SWEETSER

**Voltaire proclaimed, in his first foray into dramatic playwriting: “On doit des égards aux vivants ; on ne doit aux morts que la vérité.” In a nutshell, *la vérité* is that Ecolint owes to Arthur Sweetser, more than to anyone else, its conception, its birth and its survival. But how many alumni know anything much about him — or have even heard of him?**

When Arthur Sweetser died in 1968, no school-wide, high-profile ceremony was held in his honour (I know this for a fact, as I was an Ecolint student at the time). And yet, by any standards, Sweetser is an eminent historic figure, and a noble one at that. We owe him both respect and the truth — and, for good measure, enormous gratitude.

Scrupulous, professional historians can come across as exceedingly irritating individuals, for whereas the lay reader or listener wants simple, clear-cut explanations of historical phenomena, a meticulous scholar will make your head spin with so many details, complexities, paradoxes, subplots, “ifs” and “buts” that a straightforward understanding of why and how anything happened seems hopelessly beyond your reach. Even the precise processes whereby, say, the International Baccalaureate was set up can seem tiresomely drawn-out and convoluted, when our romantic aspirations would be best satisfied by the decisive initiative and leadership of colourful and enlightened champions. Our own Robert J. Leach comes closest to fulfilling this expectation as far as the IB is concerned, but to peruse a detailed account of what its creation actually entailed over so many years requires considerable stamina, if not a degree of masochism.

The key role of Arthur Sweetser in the genesis and sustenance of Ecolint is, by contrast, refreshingly easy to ascertain. Following the horrors of World War I, he was, of course, motivated by the same “education for peace” idealism as his fellow founders, two educators (Adolphe Ferrière and Paul Meyhoffer) and a fellow parent (Ludwig Rajchman). His unique contribution to this fine marriage of noble minds was the dynamism, practical know-how and indefatigable persistence that made it possible for Ecolint actually to exist and stay afloat, despite its many economic trials and tribulations.

Sweetser, born in 1888 into a middle-class Bostonian family, made it into the prestigious and meritocratic Boston Latin School

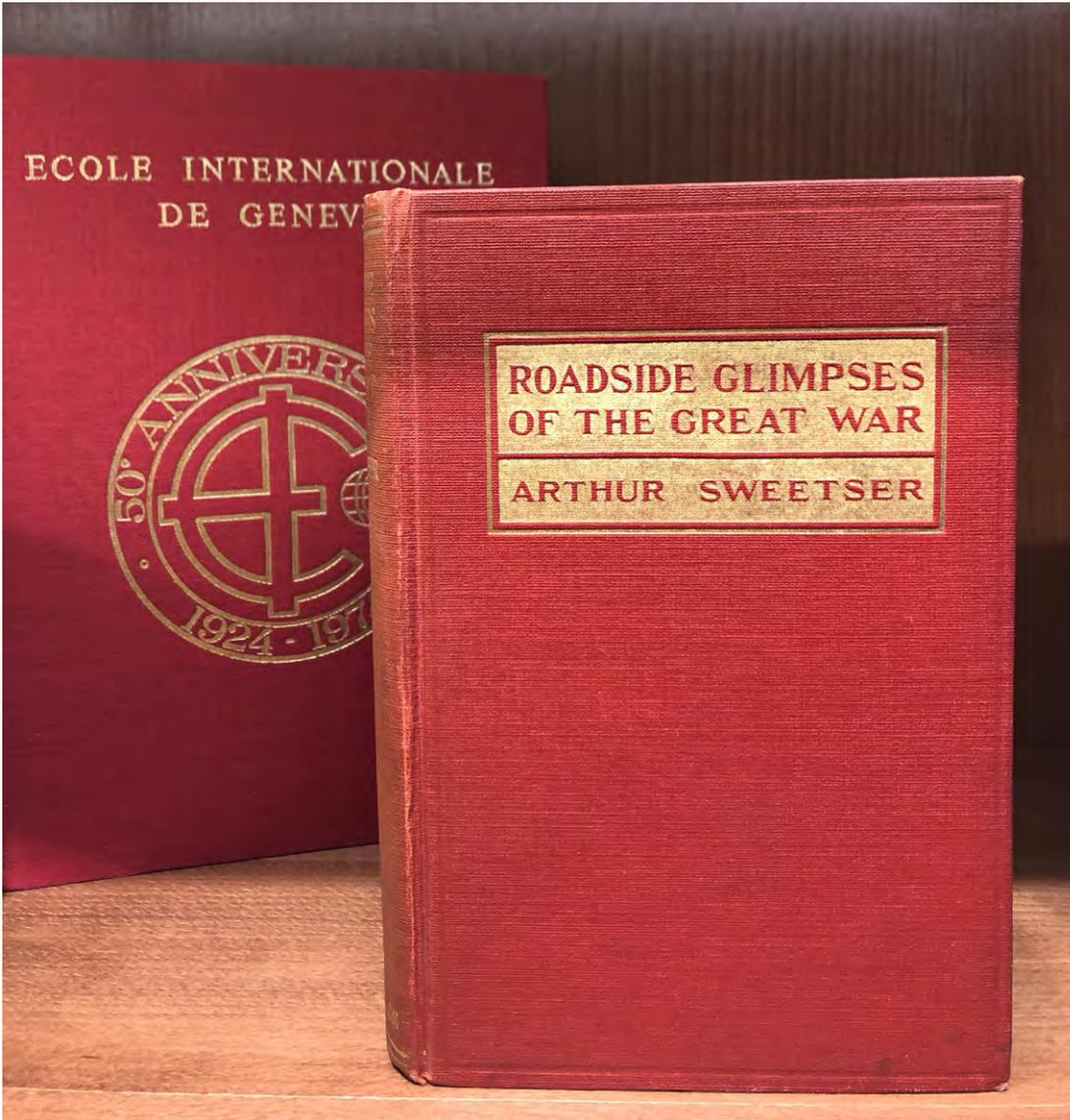
(the US’s oldest, founded in 1635) on his own steam. He subsequently attended Harvard (where he edited *The Harvard Crimson*, the university’s student newspaper, thus partly financing his studies), graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1911. The passion for journalism he thereby developed, together with worldwide travels following his graduation, contributed crucially to shaping his internationalist outlook and his professional life.

Convinced that his neutral citizenship would grant him immunity (the US entered the fray only in 1917), from the very outset of the First World War Sweetser covered the conflict as a daredevil correspondent, perilously but persistently weaving his way along the bloody battlefield on a bicycle (if you can believe it), despite repeatedly getting arrested by both the German and French troops. Suffice it to say that he witnessed at first hand much of that conflict’s awfulness and absurdity, and recorded the experience in a vivid, gripping account published by Macmillan in 1916 under the title of *Roadside Glimpses of the Great War*. A first edition of the book is on display in the Salle Stereva, the Foundation Archives’ presentation room in La Grande Boissière.

What Sweetser saw of World War I consolidated his determination that armed confrontation should never again be employed to resolve conflicts between nations. He became an ardent advocate of the League of



Nations, pushing for its creation in a series of articles in the *New York Evening Post*, and helped to foster the organization’s birth at the Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920), where he was a member of the American Peace Commission appointed by US president Woodrow Wilson. Wilson was the League’s midwife, and decisive in insisting that it should be headquartered in Geneva. After earning Wilson’s trust, Sweetser eventually became, in his role as Director of the League of Nations’ Information Section, the highest ranking American in the new organization’s Secretariat. Sweetser was arguably the United States’ unofficial ambassador — unofficial because, greatly to President



in Ecolint: A Portrait of the International School of Geneva (1999). During World War II, not only did enrolments dwindle dramatically, but – to make matters worse – the school had to sustain the education and expenses of many of its boarders, who had lost contact with their parents, and for whom no fees were being paid. In addition, true to its core values, the school welcomed impecunious refugees. In the years following the end of the war, Ecolint was confronted with accumulated debts it could not pay, and would have collapsed under their burden had Sweetser not come to the rescue once again, a quarter of a century after ensuring the viability of the school's birth. It was only thanks to his "stubborn efforts", as Knight puts it, that a financial agreement with the State of Geneva was reached, ensuring the school's survival and future prosperity.

As if the time and talent that Sweetser devoted to Ecolint on a pro bono basis (even long after his own children had graduated) were not enough,

Wilson's frustration, the Senate never ratified the US's formal membership.

As if his work in the League of Nations did not keep him busy enough, Sweetser had a bee in his bonnet about implementing a groundbreaking concept in education: an international school. It is a measure of Ecolint's success and influence that pairing the words "international" and "school" has become such a cliché throughout the world – what school today does not lay claim to internationalist aspirations? In 1924, however, the concept was startlingly novel and utopian. He teamed up with three other front-line visionaries (the above-mentioned Ferrière, Meyhoffer and Rajchman), but it was Sweetser's hands-on financial and diplomatic skills that gave material substance to the project. In the words of

Othman Hamayed and Conan De Wilde in their *Ecolint – A History of the International School of Geneva* (2014):

"He acted as the school's volunteer treasurer and financial wizard for over 20 years. He sent out barrages of letters, and his connections to the Rockefeller family through the Harvard tennis team, as well as his connections to the wealthy of Chicago through his wife's family, provided Ecolint with its seed capital. The same sources also helped finance the school's expansion to its new site at La Grande Boissière."

Sweetser's skill in cultivating Geneva's authorities and obtaining from them their crucial support at various critical junctures is also highlighted by Michael Knight

he also contributed many thousands of francs and dollars to the school out of his own pocket (although both francs and dollars were worth much more at the time than they are today, and he was not a wealthy man). Far from seeking credit for these discreet donations, his correspondence in our Archives reveals that he sought to play down the extent of his generosity.

The following vignette by the great Ecolint director Marie-Thérèse Maurette, who was at the helm of the school for 20 years (1929-1949) and who enjoyed a long, warm and fruitful professional rapport with Sweetser, provides a vivid insight into his appearance and personality:

*"(...) C'était un grand Bostonien, blond cendré, un peu massif, aux yeux gris-bleu, au regard clair et direct. Il se dégageait de lui une impression d'activité intense. Il était toujours en train de préparer quelque chose dans ce monde nouveau sur lequel il voulait agir ; agir pour la compréhension des hommes entre eux : agir pour la paix."*

This article's compact overview of Sweetser must perforce prioritize his involvement with Ecolint (concerning which a full-scale monograph could provide many more details). It cannot do justice to his subsequent achievements, such as his passionate and productive participation from 1945 onwards in the nascent United Nations (he eventually became the first head of the United Nations Information Office in Washington D.C.), his presidency of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and his role in founding Ecolint's sister school, New York's United Nations International School (UNIS) in 1947. The fact that 36.6 linear feet (some 11 metres) of his collected papers (22,350 items), including his correspondence with more statesmen and historical figures than can reasonably be listed here, are preserved in the US Library of Congress, attests to Sweetser's irrepressible, creative and beneficial dynamism.

From an Ecolintian point of view, how could we sum up Arthur Sweetser? This article began with a quotation by Voltaire; let us conclude it, even more powerfully, with Shakespeare (who unfailingly found the right words for every human emotion): "More is thy due than more than all can pay."<sup>1</sup>

**Alejandro Rodríguez-Giovo**  
**Emeritus Foundation Archivist**



<sup>1</sup> Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 4, line 24

# YOU MAY HAVE MISSED...

## New Alumni website: Ecolint Connect

We launched the new Ecolint Alumni website in December 2021. Ecolint Connect makes it easier to find alumni in your area, exchange memories with former classmates and make meaningful connections. If you were a member of the previous website, you should have received an activation email. If not, go to [connect.ecolint.ch](https://connect.ecolint.ch) to register.

Join the many alumni and former teachers who have already activated their accounts!

## Alumni Voices

We have recently launched "Alumni Voices," a podcast series celebrating all the ways in which our former students bring Ecolint's values to life. Tune in for 20-minute episodes during which current students interview alumni from all over the world. <https://bit.ly/3ImvQr7>

## Notable Alumni Series

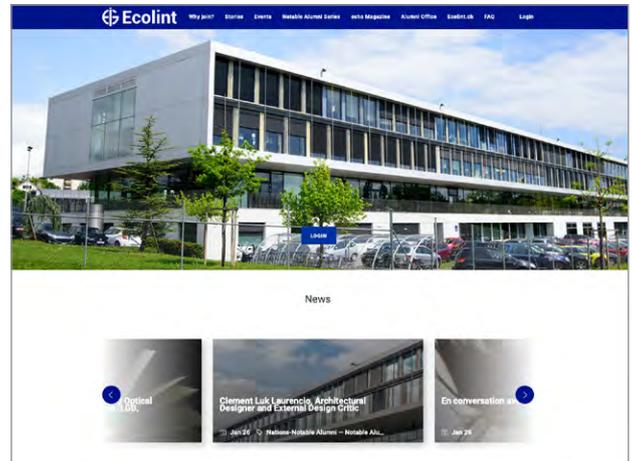
Ecolint's Notable Alumni are global citizens using their education to create a just and joyful tomorrow. They are innovative, they fight for justice, they strive to make the world a better place, and they foster diversity. In short, they embody the values of Ecolint, in their professional or personal lives.

Our goal is to celebrate 100 alumni by 2024 in honour of Ecolint's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. <https://bit.ly/3liuPQP>

## A novel from beloved Ecolint teacher Burt Melnick

Dr Burt Melnick recently published a novel, *More Quietly No Doubt Than Many*. It is set in Geneva and Boston, and its young heroine is an Ecolint graduate. A variation on the classic girl-meets-boy story, it opens on 2 September 1998, the day of the Swissair Flight 111 accident.

<https://bit.ly/2ZBSxQv>



## SOCIAL MEDIA

<b>Ecolint on Facebook</b>	<a href="https://facebook.com/ecolint">facebook.com/ecolint</a>
<b>Ecolint on LinkedIn</b>	<a href="https://sl.ecolint.ch/linkedinpage">sl.ecolint.ch/linkedinpage</a>
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<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:alumni@ecolint.ch">alumni@ecolint.ch</a>
<b>Telephone:</b>	+41 (0)22 787 25 55
<b>Web:</b>	<a href="https://connect.ecolint.ch">connect.ecolint.ch</a> (Alumni can update their own details on the website.)