

# Media veteran Suzanne Desautels is the new voice of the EMSB podcast

For years, Suzanne Desautels was a beloved Montreal television personality. Now she is back in our living rooms as a podcast host.

SUSAN SCHWARTZ, MONTREAL GAZETTE ([HTTPS://MONTREALGAZETTE.COM/AUTHOR/SUSANSCHWARTZ](https://montrealgazette.com/author/susanschwartz)) Updated: August 17, 2019



Suzanne Desautels at her home with the equipment she uses to make podcasts for the English Montreal School Board: her iPhone, a microphone, headphones and little else. ALLEN MCINNIS / MONTREAL GAZETTE

For years, Suzanne Desautels was a beloved Montreal television personality. She did the weather during newscasts on CTV Montreal and hosted shows including Travel, Travel — and viewers adored her for her ability, her enthusiasm and how personable she was on the air.

She left television in 1997, in part because she wanted to be there when her three daughters got home from school; the 3:30 p.m. to midnight shifts she'd worked when they were small made that impossible. "Now I wanted to be home when they got off the school bus," she said.

Desautels returned to the airwaves in 1999, in radio — first as part of the morning-show team on Q92 and then on CJAD, where she did the weather, co-hosted a talk show and hosted a travel show. That gig ended in late 2015. As last week's [abrupt firing and replacement](https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/virgin-radio-hires-cousin-vinny-for-morning-show-replacing-freeway-and-natasha) (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/virgin-radio-hires-cousin-vinny-for-morning-show-replacing-freeway-and-natasha>), of popular Virgin Radio hosts Natasha and Freeway demonstrates, little is guaranteed in commercial radio.

But here's the thing: It has been more than 20 years since she appeared on television, people still recognize Desautels and approach her on the street as if they knew her. "It's amazing to me how people still think of me from TV," she said.

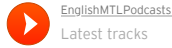
And now the veteran media personality is back — as the new host the [English Montreal School Board](https://www.emsb.qc.ca/) (<https://www.emsb.qc.ca/>) podcast.

"When she goes into a school, the adults are in awe," said Michael Cohen, communications and marketing specialist for the board and the person who developed the idea for the podcast and recruited Desautels. "They want pictures with her and they want to ask about her career."

The podcast began last fall with longtime radio personality Barry Morgan, also recruited by Cohen, as host. Morgan was hired this year by the Integrated Health & Social Services University Network for West-Central Montreal in a communications and media relations capacity; one of his responsibilities is a [podcast](https://www.ciusswestcentral.ca/podcast/). (<https://www.ciusswestcentral.ca/podcast/>)

Desautels has honed her interviewing skills in more than 35 years of talking to — and listening to — subjects from all walks of life. Her goal with the podcast is to get her subjects "to tell you the story: They're the story, not me," she said.

"I do my homework, find about the people I am talking to and get ready. I am just curious. They say something that sparks my interest and I follow from there."



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Topics she has addressed include a production of The Little Mermaid involving about 200 students at Bancroft Elementary School, physical fitness, and the naming of Marisa Mineiro, principal of Michelangelo International Elementary School in Rivière-des-Prairies, as one of Canada's outstanding principals.

When Desautels asked one of the students playing Ariel to sing something from the show, "this voice came out of this little body and it just blew my mind," she recalled in an interview. "I'm getting goose bumps just thinking of it."

A podcast usually runs about 10 minutes, "and I like to do it as a conversation," Desautels said. "It's just us, like we are having a cup of coffee or a drink That's my approach: There are no mistakes."

She records the interviews using the voice memo feature of her iPhone, having plugged a multi-directional microphone into the phone and a headset into the microphone to ensure that the voices of her subjects register clearly.

"It's amazing. I am a walking studio," she said. "I'm completely portable."

Following her interviews, Desautels shares the file with Daniel Smajovits, a social media specialist for the EMSB, and it is edited before being posted on the board's website.

"We're trying to make it sound more like a radio show," said Cohen, who sees the podcast as "an opportunity to have our own radio show. We produce and we control the subject matter."

For now, he does the assigning, but input from Desautels will increase. Next Tuesday at a meeting of school principals, she will be formally introduced, and the hope is that ideas for future podcasts will come from them, Cohen said.

Her interactions with teachers have made her that much more hopeful for the future, Desautels said. "Just talking to the teachers and finding out where they are taking these children has been an amazing eye-opener for me. The support the kids get is just astounding: They are so advanced. I look at the kids I'm talking to and ask 'How old are you?'"

Learning about the role of the board has been another eye-opener, she said. "When you have the support of a school board, that ensures your children are getting the best possible education."

Said Cohen: "The government is planning to bring forward [legislation to abolish us \(https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/anglo-groups-unite-to-defend-english-language-school-boards-in-quebec\)](https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/anglo-groups-unite-to-defend-english-language-school-boards-in-quebec). We are trying to lead and hope other boards will follow us to show why school boards are relevant and important."

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sschwartz@postmedia.com (mailto:sschwartz@postmedia.com)

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