Community development in English-speaking communities in Québec: lessons learned from a participatory action research project

Québec ⚜⚜

Community development in English-speaking communities in Québec: lessons learned from a participatory action research project

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et des communautés

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CHSSN	Community Health and Social Services Network
CSSS	Centre de Santé et de Services sociaux
FOLS	First official language spoken
MSSS	Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux
NPI	Networking and Partnership Initiative

INTRODUCTION

This report presents a community development project carried out from 2009 to 2013 at the Institut national de santé publique in collaboration with the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), an organization devoted to improving the lives of English-speaking Quebecers. The project objectives were three-fold:

- to increase knowledge on English-speaking communities in Québec;
- to develop tools for mobilizing theses communities;
- to support English-speaking communities in implementing a community development approach.

Community portraits were completed with six English-speaking communities in different areas of Québec, representing very different socio-economic, demographic and geographic realities.

After presenting the background to the project, including an overview of the situation of English speakers in the province, we will discuss the conceptual framework for the project as well as the methodology used. We will then present the findings in three sub-sections: the six community portraits, reflections on community portraits as a participatory action research method and some lessons learned regarding community development among English-speaking communities in Québec.

This report is intended to share with a broad readership the knowledge gained through the process and to make a modest contribution to the practice of community development, specifically in the public health sector, but also in others. We recognize that a much more in-depth critical analysis could be done with the support of further research, since this project was an initial and largely unprecedented attempt to explore participatory action research with English-speaking communities in Québec, within a community development perspective, as practiced by public health professionals.

1   PROJECT BACKGROUND

In this section we describe the CHSSN and the project objectives. Then we provide a brief overview of the situation of English-speaking Quebecers, focusing on demographics, followed by some socio-economic information that provides nuance to perceptions that are commonly held in Québec regarding English speakers and the communities to which they belong.

1.1   A COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK

In 2009, the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) received funding from the CHSSN to undertake three projects as part of an initiative for developing knowledge on the English-speaking population of Québec. These projects were mutually defined and agreed upon in discussions between the CHSSN and the INSPQ. The first project focused on socio-economic characteristics and the health status of mother tongue English-speakers as compared to French speakers and Allophones (people whose mother tongue is neither French nor English nor a First Nations language). These analyses involved statistical analyses carried out in available data bases (see INSPQ 2012; Auger *et al*. 2012). The second project concerned the adaptation of health and social services for English-speakers. This involved both a literature review as well as analyses of survey data (see INSPQ 2011). The third project is the one discussed here, which focused on community development. This knowledge development initiative was the object of an agreement between the INSPQ and the CHSSN, an organization founded in 2002 in response to certain difficulties experienced by English-speaking communities in Québec, particularly in the area of access to health and social services.

The CHSSN's key objectives are to increase the vitality of English-speaking minority communities and to improve access to health and social services for these communities. It aims to support them in their efforts to develop community infrastructure and build strategic relationships and partnerships within the health and social services system in Québec to improve access to services (CHSSN 2004). This is done on the basis of a model developed at the Holland Centre in Québec City (now known as Jeffery Hale Community Partners) which has been extended throughout the province.

CHSSN projects and partnerships link community and public partners together, with the goal of strengthening networks at the local, regional and provincial levels in order to address health determinants, influence public policy and develop services. Through what is called a "Networking and Partnership Initiative" (NPI), the CHSSN has helped to create 18 regional networks throughout the province. These networks receive support from the CHSSN in many forms, including training, coaching, knowledge development and transfer, communications and more (see Appendix 1).

There are NPI regional networks in many regions of the province, as shown in the table below.

Table 1   Networking and Partnership Initiatives (regional networks)

Region	Network
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	Neighbours Regional Association of Rouyn-Noranda
Bas-Saint-Laurent	Heritage Lower Saint Lawrence
Capitale-Nationale	Jeffery Hale Community Partners
Chaudière-Appalaches	Megantic English-Speaking Community Development Corp. (MCDC)
Estrie	Townshippers' Association (Estrie and Montérégie-East regions)
Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) Magdalen Islands Network for Anglophones (MINA) Vision Gaspé Percé Now (VGPN)
Laurentians	4 Korners Family Resource Centre
Laval	The Youth and Parents AGAPE Association Inc.
Montérégie	The Assistance and Referral Centre (South Shore) Réseaux Emploi Entrepreneurship (Vaudreuil-Soulanges)
Montréal	The African Canadian Development & Prevention Network (ACDPN) East Island Network for English-Language Services (Réseau de l'est de l'île pour des services en anglais, or REISA) CCS Community Services
North Shore	Lower North Shore Coalition for Health (LNSCH) North Shore Community Association (NSCA)
Outaouais	Outaouais Health and Social Services Network (OHSSN)

These regional networks cover very different realities. Some have a very large territory while others cover just a few urban neighbourhoods. Some territories are very heterogeneous (in social, cultural or economic terms for example), while others have a high degree of historical and cultural coherence and community members are therefore more likely to share similar values, lifestyles and backgrounds. Some are urban, others rural and others remote, and some networks cover communities of all types.

Beyond their differences, the NPI regional networks share a number of principles in common, including knowledge-based action (defining actions on the basis of statistical data and other types of evidence) and partnership with public institutions and community organizations. The actions of the regional networks are expected to result in the following outcomes:

- increased adaptation and coordination of health and social services resulting in improved access in English to the range of services;

- increased partnership activities between the community networks and the public health and social services system;
- increased awareness among stakeholders that networks serve as a focal point for addressing the health and social services needs of English-speaking communities;
- increased dissemination and adoption of knowledge, strategies, innovative service delivery models and best practices addressing the health and social needs of English-speaking communities (CHSSN Investment Priorities 2009-2013).

1.2 A PROJECT ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In conducting collaborative work with the CHSSN, the goal of the community development project was to gain a better understanding of community development in English-speaking communities in Québec and to support the CHSSN network with adapted tools and training for conducting community development activities. Ultimately, this project aimed to explore how a community development approach could take into account the realities of minority groups such as English-speaking communities in Québec. In other words, what can we learn about community development by working with English-speaking communities in Québec?

There were therefore three goals to this project:

- develop knowledge of English-speaking communities in Québec (i.e., research);
- develop tools for mobilizing English-speaking communities in Québec (i.e., knowledge transfer);
- support English-speaking communities in implementing a community development approach (i.e., training and support).

All three were conducted simultaneously, as the process of developing knowledge was participatory and therefore involved the CHSSN network in the process, thus providing tools, training and support to the network members throughout. The project was formulated as community-based participatory action research and was intended to share knowledge and expertise developed at INSPQ in the area of community development, to add to that knowledge base and to support the CHSSN in applying it with communities involved in the network. An example of the INSPQ knowledge and expertise provided is the method of conducting community portraits, which are often an initial step in community development processes, notably in the Québec healthy communities network (*Réseau québécois des Villes et Villages en santé*). From the outset, the author, in dialogue with CHSSN staff, chose to do community portraits, which contain information on issues such as community history, demographic shifts, social life, the economy, incomes and employment, educational attainment, the natural and built environment, as well as health and well-being. Questions of belonging and identity, community readiness and governance were also explored in the process.

We will describe the project in greater detail below, but first, we present a brief overview of the situation of English-speaking Quebecers historically and in the present day, since a better understanding of the transformations that English-speaking groups in Québec have undergone over time can help shed light on current realities.

1.3   ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES IN QUÉBEC: AN OVERVIEW

Since the British Conquest in 1759, the English-speaking population of Québec has experienced significant demographic, political and economic changes. Until about 1945 the proportion of French to English speakers remained relatively stable. However, the French-speaking population remained quite rooted in Québec, while there was a high rate of turnover in the English-speaking population as many left for other provinces and new immigrants integrated into the English-speaking population. As a result, many English-speaking Quebecers did not have deep roots in Québec: for example, in 1971-72, 88% of the parents of French-speaking high school students were born in Québec, whereas only 44% of parents of students in the English high school system were born in Québec (Caldwell 1978). The outflow of English speakers from the province only increased through the 1970s and 1980s as political circumstances changed. Thus, from 1971 to 2001, the population with English as a mother tongue dropped by 25% and its share of Québec's population fell from 13.1% to 8.3%. Meanwhile, the French-speaking population rose slightly (from 80.7% to 82.5%) while speakers of other languages almost doubled their share of the total population (from 6.2% in 1971 to 10.3% in 2001) (Parenteau *et al* 2008).

Then, over the 1996 to 2006 period, the population with English as its first official language spoken (FOLS) grew by 68,880, while its share of the provincial population was slightly higher in 2006 than it had been in 1996. The 2001-2006 period was one of growth for most English-speaking regional populations, with only the English-speaking groups in Côte-Nord and Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine showing a decrease in size over that period. Relative to the total population, only Estrie and Laurentides experienced a drop in their share of the regional population. The regions in which the English-speaking population grew most were Nord-du-Québec, Montréal, Laval, Montérégie and the Outaouais. The graphs below show changes in the size of the English-speaking population from 1996-2006 and changes in the proportion of the English-speaking population for the same time period.
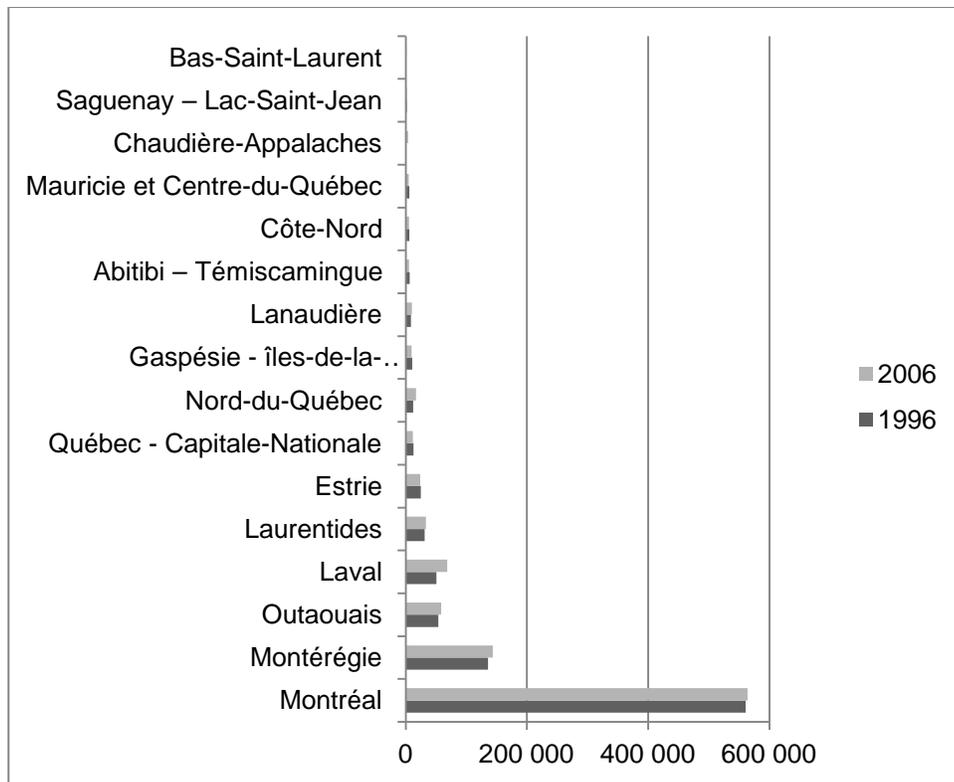
Figure 1   **Changes in the size of the English-speaking population (FOLS) by region, 1996-2006**

Source: CHSSN, Baseline Data Report 2008-2009
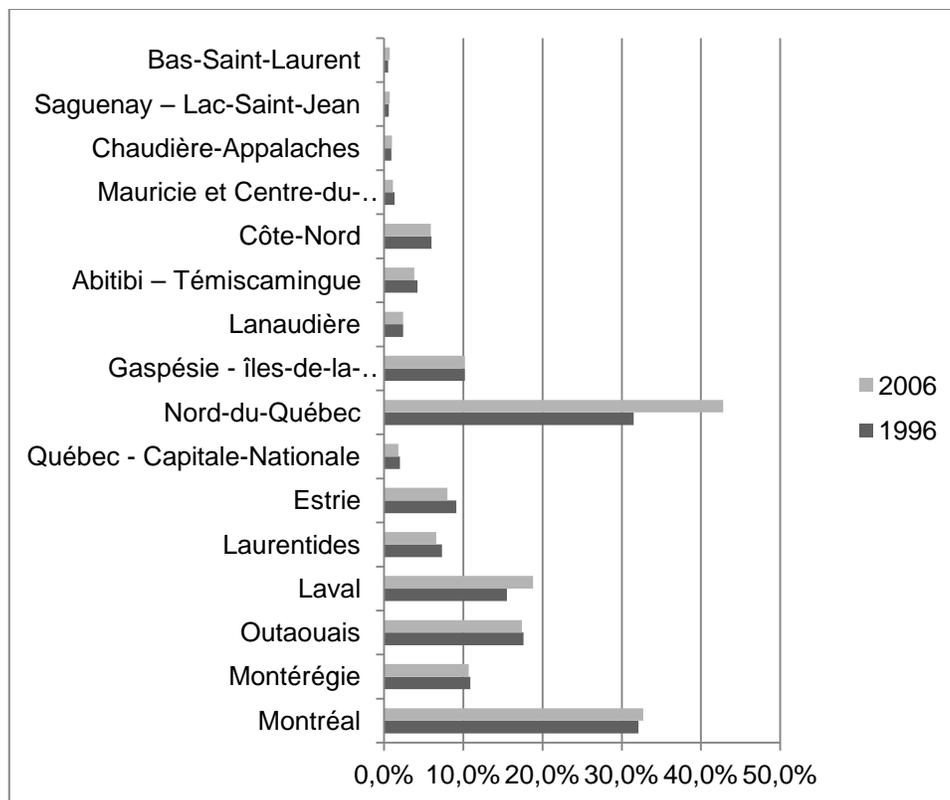
Figure 2   **Changes in the proportion of the English-speaking population (FOLS) by region, 1996-2006**

Source: CHSSN, Baseline Data Report 2008-2009

But what is an "English-speaker"? For the purposes of this project, the English-speaking population of Québec includes citizens throughout the province who choose to use the English language and who identify with the English-speaking community. This is a self-identification and expresses itself by involvement in organizations or groups serving English speakers or by responding to a public invitation to attend a community gathering, for instance. For some of those people English is their mother tongue, while for others English is the first official language they speak and their mother tongue is a language other than English or French. In areas with high levels of immigration (notably in the Montréal area), the decline of the English-speaking population has been mitigated by some of these Allophones who speak English as a second language.

These changing demographic realities present a number of challenges to English-speaking communities, such as the issues related to an aging population and to outmigration among caregivers and youth. For example, among the population that speaks English as a mother tongue, 8.3% left Québec for the rest of Canada between 1991 and 1996 and that percentage rose to 8.9% between 1996 and 2001—much higher than the rates for the total population of only 1.6% and 1.7%. Younger English speakers were the most likely to leave the province: 15.8% of those between 25 and 34 years old moved away, while fewer people age 65 and over left (Parenteau *et al.* 2008). This means that the generations that represent

the future of their communities and can take care of ageing relatives are often not around to do so. Those who stay can be overburdened with care-giving and the age structure of the community becomes skewed towards the older age groups. The impact on health and the need for services can be significant.

These issues are good indicators of demographic vitality, an important dimension of community health. Demographic vitality refers to community characteristics such as the rates of ageing and unemployment, the proportion of caregivers to seniors, population size and, in the Québec context, level of bilingualism (CHSSN 2003). Understanding demographic vitality allows health care workers, municipalities, policy makers and community residents to plan properly for services, activities and programs which will meet the needs of the community. For example, when a community has a large proportion of seniors the burden of care is greater on the care-giving generations and steps may need to be taken to address the needs of both seniors and their care-givers. Or when a community is losing its population, community services and institutional structures lose vital human capital and social networks are eroded, so planning needs to focus on strengthening the social fabric, for example by encouraging opportunities to create and reinforce ties between community members.

1.4 ADDING NUANCE TO COMMON PERCEPTIONS

Since one of the objectives of the project was to develop knowledge on English-speaking communities in Québec, a first step was to demystify these communities by gaining a more in-depth understanding of a number of them, thus demonstrating the diverse realities they experience (see Richardson *et al. forthcoming*). Some of the myths that require revision include the idea that English speakers in Québec are wealthy and well-educated and that as a community they are self-reliant and have their own institutions (Pocock & Hartwell 2010). The image of wealthy Anglo-Montréalers still pervades the imaginary of many Quebecers, despite evidence that this stereotype never represented the majority of English-speaking Quebecers and is even less representative now than ever.

First, the image of English speakers as White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant is misleading. The English-speaking community has always been diverse in its make-up, originally comprising English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish, Catholics, Jews and various Protestant denominations, among others, and that diversity has increased over time to encompass people from a broad range of origins around the world. This diversity has also implied a certain cultural fragmentation of the population, as English speakers do not necessarily share common cultural and religious origins (Caldwell 1978). Today the English-speaking community is made up of many sub-communities that are multicultural and multiracial (Maynard 2007), particularly in the Montréal area (CHSSN 2012). This reality is partly historic, as there has always been diversity in the English-speaking population, but it has also been amplified by the out-migration of many English-speaking Quebecers in recent decades (Parenteau *et al.*, 2008) as well as by the arrival of new immigrants.

In addition, the contexts in which Québec's English speakers are located vary greatly. While the majority of the population with English as a first official language lives in the greater Montréal area (about 80%) (Corbeil *et al* 2010), many English-speaking communities are located in rural or remote areas of the province. In some cases, English speakers are a very

small proportion of the local population, while in other municipalities they may represent a significant percentage or even a majority (for an interactive map see: http://www.cbc.ca/ montreal/features/livingenglish/anglophone-census-map/).

In terms of socio-economic status, historically the English-speaking population has been well-represented among Québec's economic and political elite, with English capital controlling many economic sectors and English speakers having much higher incomes *on average* than French speakers for much of Québec's history. However, social stratification among English speakers has always been much greater than the stereotypes associated with these realities suggest; one has only to examine the history of Irish ghettos in Montréal and Québec City, the struggles of Jewish textile workers in Montréal or the poverty among rural families in the Gaspé or Megantic regions to see this (Caldwell 1978). Still today, poverty is a reality for many English-speaking Quebecers and the gap can be significant between French and English populations in a given region. While clearly there are English speakers in higher income categories, low incomes and low levels of educational attainment characterize certain regions and sub-groups (CHSSN 2010) with visible minorities who speak English as their first official language being particularly disadvantaged (CHSSN 2012).

In fact, taken as a whole, a greater proportion of the English-speaking than the French-speaking population (mother tongue) lives below the low-income cut-off and is unemployed, although average incomes are higher among English speakers and they are more likely to have a university degree (INSPQ 2012). This fact speaks to a greater polarization of socio-economic indicators at both ends of the spectrum, pointing to striking disparities between social classes and regions which are concealed when only provincial averages are taken into account. In fact, socio-economic disparities are greater among English speakers than among French speakers in the greater Montréal region in particular and they are greater among men than women. Moreover, regional disparities are greater among the English-speaking than the French-speaking population (ibid.). The image of a well-educated, economically-privileged elite is therefore not representative of the group as a whole. Clearly, a more sensitive view is needed to add nuance to this picture.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this section we provide a brief overview of community development as it is approached in the field of public health. We then present some reflections on the concept of community, which is central to a community development approach.

2.1 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH

The approach to community development advocated in the field of public health aims to take action on the social determinants of health and to decrease social health inequalities (WHO 2009). Public health has its own way of approaching community development and particular reasons for viewing it as part of a public health strategy. In the 1980s public health interest turned to community because chronic diseases proved to be more complex to prevent and control than infectious diseases. It became widely recognized that chronic diseases are deeply embedded in lifestyle and community context; therefore to combat chronic disease, the community environment needed to be taken into account (Chrisman 2005). This means that individual and community health can be improved by acting at the level of the environment with the goal being to create a healthy community. The following action strategies are generally used to achieve this goal:

- community engagement (participation);
- intersectoral collaboration and partnership;
- political commitment leading to healthy public policy;
- capacity building.

This approach is predicated on one fundamental principle: empowering individuals and communities to take greater control over their health and future, with a view to reducing inequality among community members. This means building the community capacity to structure itself in ways that help to improve the quality of life of its members. Factors such as democratic life, community dynamics and social capital, amongst others, all contribute to community health and well-being (Simard 2011).

Within the public health sector, community development is both a field of action, with employees dedicated specifically to working with local communities (community organizers in particular) and a value-based approach. Community development has been defined as "… a voluntary cooperative process of mutual assistance and of building social ties between local residents and institutions, with the goal being to improve physical, social and economic living conditions" (INSPQ & MSSS, 2002: 16, our translation). It is therefore a form of collective action taken to address community issues related to living conditions and quality of life on a given territory. It takes form through the democratic participation of community members and other social actors, who define the initiatives needed to achieve the set community development priorities (Bourque 2008, in Mercier, 2009). Many other definitions exist and generally include the goals of empowerment and collective action based on local assets. For example, the United Nations defines community development as "a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community, with its active participation and fullest possible reliance upon the community's own initiative." (United Nations, 1955). These definitions start from the principle that within any community there is a

wealth of knowledge and experience which, if used in creative ways, can be channelled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals. Community development practitioners work alongside people in communities to help build relationships with key people and organizations and to identify common concerns. They create opportunities for the community to learn new skills and, by enabling people to act together, community development practitioners help to foster social inclusion and equality.

The relevance of adopting a community development approach in the context of Québec's public health institute is justified by the fact that community development is part of Québec's public health plan (MSSS 2003; 2008). In that plan, community development is identified as a strategy for implementing the "population responsibility" of health centres (Centres de santé et de services sociaux, or CSSS), that is, their mandate to respond to the needs of the populations on the territory they cover. Each health centre chooses what to focus on depending on local realities. Their mandate is to develop a good understanding and knowledge of the community, to use their expertise on community development and to encourage and support civic engagement. As such, employees (including community organizers) often play a role in acquiring an in-depth knowledge of local communities, identifying local needs and developing and maintaining partnerships between different stakeholders (community groups, organizations, municipalities, etc.) to meet those needs.

As we can see, community development is at once a mandate, a profession, a way of working with communities, a process and—it is hoped—an outcome. It involves action to address local issues and encourages the participation of local residents and groups in orienting the actions taken.

2.2　THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

The concept of "community" is central to community development, yet defining community proves complex and fraught with difficulties, the main one being that it is often used uncritically and tends to be idealized. Zygmunt Bauman points out that "Community, we feel, is always a good thing (…) community is a warm place, a cosy and comfortable place" (2001:1) He goes on to say "What that word evokes is everything we miss and what we lack to be secure, confident and trusting. In short, 'community' stands for the kind of world which is not, regrettably, available to us—but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess" (ibid: 3).

"Community" seems to trigger two tendencies: to look backward to community as a "better" and more contented time, even a "paradise lost"; and to look forward to a period in which communities will live in harmony, where there is a real sense of friendship and companionship (Stepney & Popple 2008: 7). Although neither of these views is entirely fallacious, they both idealize community and ignore some of the harsh realities that may be part of community life, such as social exclusion, parochialism, racism, sexist practices, abuse and more. As Raymond Williams has observed, "unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it [community] never seems to be used unfavorably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term" (1976, quoted in Stepney & Popple 2008: 9). This enduring power of the idea of community seems to be linked to the sense of

security and belonging it provides "in an insecure and risk ridden world where rapid globalisation and the cult of the individual are powerful influences" (ibid).

Definitions of community generally refer to a group of interconnected people bounded by shared features such as place, identity or interests. Community is considered a unit larger than families, social networks or groups but smaller than society's most complex components, such as city, state or multinational corporation. It is also seen as the location of production, socialization, participation, norms and mechanisms of social control.

For the purposes of healthy communities initiatives, community is conceptualized as "the environment where people lead their daily lives, be it their parish, their neighbourhood or their town. Considered in this light, communities are spatially defined areas that have meaning for the people who live there, but whose contours remain somewhat vague and do not necessarily correspond to official administrative boundaries" (Simard 2009 [2011]). In this context a community is also a "space" invested with a certain amount of decision-making power.

In the Québec context, when discussing the English-speaking *community* (or communities), the term refers to several different levels of social organization:

- the broader socio-linguistic group (often referred to as an official language minority community, like French speakers living outside Québec), with which people may or may not identify;
- the community of identity made up of English speakers in Québec's different regions, such as the Townships, the Gaspé Coast or the Québec City area, and;
- the many local geographically-defined communities where English speakers live and work, such as a village, town or county.

For the purposes of this project, we will specify what we mean by community in different contexts, be it a municipality, another geographical territory or a social category. In addition, we will not assume that all community members share the same realities, interests or perspectives, or that some members can speak for all others. In the case of the community portraits described below, only a portion of the English-speaking population was involved in the process and while their perspectives may well represent those of the community as a whole, this cannot be assumed to be the case.

The term "development" is equally complex, fraught with difficulties and often idealized. Its history as both idea and practice emerged in a colonial context during the post-war period as a way for poor countries to "catch up". Jocelyne Côté (2009) has provided an excellent critical review of community development and its associated concepts from the perspective of an anthropologist working in the public health system in Québec, so we will not repeat that analysis here. Although there are many problematic assumptions inherent in the term "development", it has taken on a much more empowering meaning in the work done with local communities. Examples in Canada include the Vibrant Communities initiative from the Tamarack Institute and the work of Paul Born in particular (Born 2008). Also the Community Learning Centres Initiative in Québec is very active in fostering community development by using schools as community hubs and places where English speakers can meet and

activities can be held outside school hours. The Québec Community Groups Network (QCGN) focuses largely on "community vitality" as an important approach to community development by another name. There are also some economic development groups such as Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC) that use the concept of community development in their literature. All of these initiatives are far removed from the colonial contexts in which the term entered into popular usage.

3   APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The approach adopted for this project is one of participatory action research, which we discuss below, before turning to the method used to complete community portraits of six English-speaking communities in Québec. We then present the criteria used to select those communities as well as the data collection and analysis. In the section following we present the project findings.

3.1   PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Given the project objectives, including contributing to knowledge on English-speaking communities and providing training and support to CHSSN member groups, we chose to adopt an approach inspired by participatory action research (PAR) (see Richardson *et al*. *forthcoming*). Participatory action research is often used in cases where research is intended not only to serve the goal of building new knowledge through systematic data collection, analysis and interpretation, but also to respond to real-life issues by involving those concerned in understanding the issues and identifying ways to take action to address them. This is coherent with the strategies and principles of community development, such as community participation, capacity building and empowerment. Participation, action and research may, however, each receive different weight in a given project depending on factors such as the objectives pursued and the urgency of the situation being addressed.

In general, PAR refers to "a school of approaches that share a core philosophy of inclusivity and of recognizing the value of engaging in the research process (rather than including only as subjects of the research) those who are intended to be the beneficiaries, users, and stakeholders of the research" (Cargo & Mercer 2008: 326). It combines research with education (or co-learning) and coordinated collaborative action to democratize the knowledge production process. In other words, non-academic participants are not situated on the periphery of knowledge production but instead participate in a mutually reinforcing partnership between theoretical-methodological expertise and real-world knowledge and experience. Thus PAR is intended to bridge the gap between research and action, including education, by all those involved, as part of the process (ibid).

There are different strands of action research and participatory research, which come together in PAR, each encompassing diverse goals and ideological positions. Cargo and Mercer (2008) identify three main traditions: (1) the Northern tradition, a utilization-focused *action research* developed by Kurt Lewin; (2) the emancipatory (Southern) tradition of *participatory research* developed most notably by Paulo Freire; and (3) the *self-determination* and sovereignty movement of indigenous peoples in many countries. Action research is often associated with a collaborative-management tendency that does not address issues of power. Participatory research, on the other hand, has a more politicized history, grounded explicitly in the concept of power and aiming to empower those whose voice is often not heard by placing them at the centre of knowledge production. It aims "to move people and their daily lived experiences of struggle and survival from the margins of epistemology to the center" (Hall 1992: 15). Precursors to this tradition include Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (and their work with factory workers) and Antonio Gramsci, who believed that peasants could articulate class interests if given the chance to observe their reality from their own

perspective, ideally fostering political agitation. Paulo Freire continued in this vein, using the term "conscientization" to refer to the process by which people participate in identifying and critically analyzing the social, political and economic factors underlying oppression in order to free themselves from it (Bowd *et al.*, 2009). Important contributors to PAR also include Budd Hall, Eduardo Vio Grossi and Orlando Fals Borda, who worked with adult educators and community development workers in the Global South (Hall 1992: 17).

In more recent writings on PAR, many researchers have used it to better understand and develop effective responses to health-related issues (Minkler & Wallerstein 2008; Israel *et al.*, 2013). It is viewed as a way to involve those affected by a real-life situation in building knowledge, identifying solutions and empowering them to implement those solutions, and is often combined with ethnographic inquiry.

In the project described here, the objective was first and foremost to provide valid quantitative and qualitative information on communities, with the active participation of community members. This process was intended to build the capacity of community leaders (principally the networking and partnership coordinators and the regional association staff, but also some of their partners). The information and understandings generated were then used to develop community priorities for action, which generally resulted in projects addressing one or more of the issues identified. Because the project was grounded in a population health approach, with a concern for acting on health determinants, the priorities identified tended to address health-related issues, broadly defined, as we will see below.

3.2   COMMUNITY PORTRAITS AS A PARTICIPATORY METHOD

Community portraits were the chosen means to simultaneously gather information on a limited number of English-speaking communities, to embark on a process of community development and to identify needs for tools and training among NPI groups. A typical community development process involves an initial situation that draws the attention of community members. Often an information-gathering exercise follows and may result in a community portrait (or profile). This may be purely statistical, but often includes information on the geography, history, demographic shifts, economic conditions, social life, environment and more. Such portraits are frequently the first step in building an in-depth understanding of a "community" (in Québec, usually a municipality or borough), and in engaging various stakeholders to develop a shared vision of what that community needs and what people care about, before moving to planning, action and eventually evaluation. On-going mobilization is an inherent part of the process and adaptations are continually made based on new understandings or situations. The figure below illustrates this cycle.
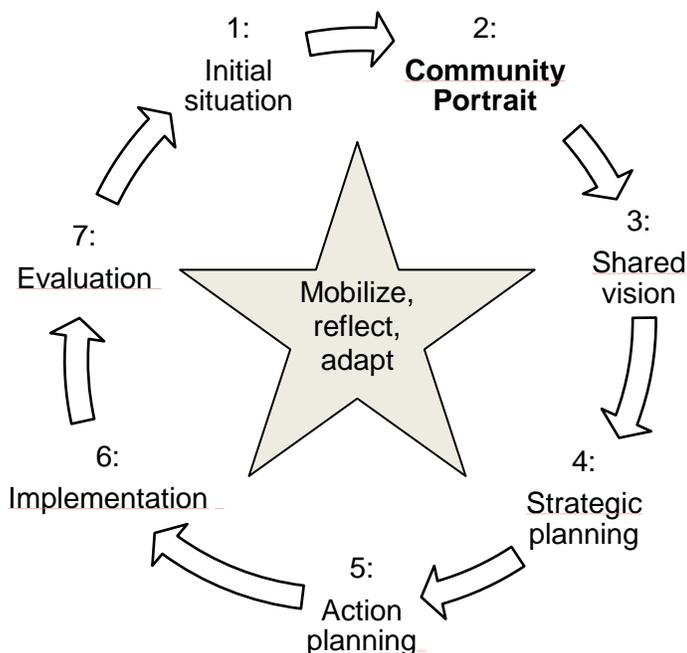
Figure 3   A typical community development process

Source: adapted from http://www.communagir.org/

Through a multi-layered process involving provincial, regional and local actors in the CHSSN network, we chose to do portraits of six communities. First, the research questions, choice of methods and work with communities were the object of discussions with staff at the CHSSN office (provincial level). The later steps of developing training and tools for the regional NPI groups were also discussed with CHSSN staff.

The regional associations and NPI coordinators also participated in the project at the stage of the community portraits, by planning the process, identifying and collaborating with other stakeholders, documenting the community, organizing a consultation and ensuring follow-up. This is the regional level of participation.

Finally, the local community participated in the process by identifying relevant information (statistics, past reports, knowledge of the community and more), by providing contacts with local stakeholders and community members, by taking part in a community consultation and by providing feedback on the portrait and the desired follow-up to it.

The figure below shows the different levels of participation in—or co-construction—of the project:

CHSSN
- Discussions, choice of methods, choice of networks for the community portraits
- Statistics from the knowledge base developed by CHSSN
- Development of training opportunities and relevant tools for the NPIs

Regional networks
- Information gathering from regional partners
- Selecting a community to work with
- Planning the community portrait process
- Ensuring follow-up and supporting action on priorities

Local community
- Information gathering, notably through a community consultation and additional interviews with local actors
- Validation of the portrait and discussion of priorities for action at a second consultation
- Developing projects based on priorities

Figure 4   Participation in the action–research project

3.3   SELECTING COMMUNITIES

The six communities were selected on the basis of several different criteria in order to represent a broad range of realities. In addition to the pre-requisite of having the necessary local interest and capacity to be involved in the project, the selection criteria aimed to represent:

- different regions of the province;
- a mix of urban, rural and remote communities;
- communities with varying proportions of English-speakers in the population;
- a mix of older (2004) and newer (2009) regional Networking and Partnership Initiatives.

The selection process therefore began with consideration of the various regions to ensure a mix of regions and of remote, rural and urban environments, as well as different proportions of English speakers. We preselected a number of regions from different categories, then approached the regional networks to determine their interest in being involved and their capacity in terms of time and resources. In dialogue with these regional networks we then identified communities that would be good candidates for a community portrait. This depended on having local contacts who could facilitate the process; on the interest of community members; and in some cases on timing and opportunities (for example, the

development of a family and seniors' policy, an expressed need for better knowledge of a community, etc.)

At the end of this process, the six communities selected for developing a participatory community portrait were Sutton (a village in the historic Eastern Townships in the Montérégie administrative region), Saint-Léonard (a borough in East Montréal), Laval (a large city just north of Montréal), New Carlisle (a small town on the Gaspé Coast), Sept-Îles (a town on the North Shore of the Saint Lawrence) and the municipality of Bonne-Espérance (on the Lower North Shore of the Saint Lawrence). In all, five administrative regions were represented, covering a broad range of realities, as shown below.

Table 2   Communities selected for the community portrait process

Community	Region	Context	% of population with English as mother tongue	Regional NPI network
Bonne-Espérance	Côte-Nord	Remote village	95%	Older: 2004
Sept-Îles	Côte-Nord	Remote town	3%	Newer: 2009
New Carlisle	Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	Rural village	63%	Older: 2004
Sutton	Montérégie-est	Rural village	31%	Older: 2004
Laval	Laval	Urban	7%	Newer: 2009
Saint-Léonard	Montréal	Urban	7%	Older: 2004

3.4   THE PROCESS AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The process for completing the community portraits was inspired by various approaches used by groups active in community development, notably in the healthy communities movement, among municipalities, by public health boards and by some community development consultants. Although there is no one prescribed method, there are several steps generally taken to complete such portraits.

For each community the first step in the process was to engage local stakeholders in the process, pooling existing information and resources. To do this, the project leader (Mary Richardson) met directly with various community leaders (for example, people involved in community organizations), usually accompanied by the director of the collaborating regional association and the coordinator of the regional NPI network. By doing so, the team was able to benefit from its knowledge of the community and to ensure that the approach was as inclusive as possible and took into account local realities and social dynamics. Field notes were taken of these conversations and any meeting notes or emails were also kept to document the process.

Then for each of the targeted communities, a community consultation was organized by local organizations (usually led by the regional NPI coordinator) to which all members of the English-speaking community, however they may define themselves, were invited. At these consultations, various themes were discussed by community members, including social and community life, economic conditions, education, the environment and health and well-being. The information was then analyzed by theme, focusing in each case on the community's strengths, the challenges it faces and its vision for the future. A community portrait document was then drafted by the research team, bringing together the information from the consultation with relevant statistics, historical information and results from any past reports. Local stakeholders had the opportunity to read the portrait and make suggestions to improve it before it was finalized.

At a second gathering held within about one year in each of the communities, the portraits and their main findings were presented back to community members who then identified priorities for action (discussed below). Participants in this process were invited to be involved in working on any of the identified priorities according to their interest, time and level of enthusiasm; for example, they could form a committee to identify and implement actions for a given priority. The process was therefore designed to foster mobilization and community engagement throughout.

Finally, in order to document the perspectives of the regional NPI coordinators and the regional association directors regarding the process, we held two group discussions with them, asking: what they got out of the process; what actions they were planning for the future; how they saw the portrait being used; what observations they had about doing community development work in a minority situation; and what tools and training they would like to have. This information was used in the findings on participatory action research presented below.

3.5   ANALYSIS

There are three levels to the data analysis below. First, an analysis of each case study was carried out, providing detailed information on the community. This level is intended to provide an overview of the diversity of English-speaking communities in Québec by featuring six different communities. Second, is an analysis of the process of doing a community portrait, including the method used, the mobilization of the community, the way the process was used to leverage community assets and more. Third, some lessons learned are presented about themes such as: favourable conditions for and obstacles to community development; the specificities of community development in a minority context (in this case an official language minority community); the challenges such communities face; and ways in which the approach needs to be tailored to their realities.

The lessons learned about community development and about English-speaking communities are not necessarily approached as best practices. As Margaret J. Wheatley and Deborah Frieze (2011) have argued, rather than take successful projects or programs and extract "best practices" so that they can be scaled up (which often does not really work) practitioners need to think instead about "scaling across". This means "releasing knowledge, practices, and resources and allowing them to circulate freely so that others may adapt them

to their local environment" (ibid). Scaling up relies on replication, standardization, promotion and compliance and it assumes that what works in one place can be parachuted or transplanted into another. What these authors have found more effective is when teams from one organization travel to another and through that experience see themselves clearly, strengthen their relationships and renew their creativity. They bring ideas home and develop them in their own unique way.

4 FINDINGS

In line with the three levels of analysis carried out for the project and described above, findings are presented in three sections below. First, an overview of the six community portraits provides a sense of the diversity of these communities. Second, some reflections on community portraits as participatory action research are presented. Finally, some lessons are explored regarding community development with minority groups, in this case, English-speaking communities in Québec.

4.1 SIX ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES: PORTRAITS OF DIVERSITY

An overview of the six communities selected for this project provides a glimpse into the diversity of English-speaking communities in Québec. Although a large proportion of English-speaking Quebecers lives in Montréal, the realities of the metropolis are insufficient to portray the broad range of conditions experienced by English-speaking communities. These are only six possible contexts in which English-speaking Quebecers live; portraits of other communities would no doubt reveal many more specific histories, geographies and living conditions. The table below presents a brief summary of the differences between these six communities.

Table 3   Overview of the six communities

	Bonne-Espérance	Sept-Îles	New Carlisle	Sutton	Laval	St-Léonard
Total population 2006	834	25,514	1,370	3,805	368,709	71,730
% English mother tongue	95%	3%	63%	31%	7%	7%
% knows both French + English	14%	25%	40%	69%	55%	56%
Demographic trends	Out-migration ageing population	In-flux for employment	Out-migration, ageing population	In-flux but % of local ES in decline	Increasing ESP, young population, very ethnically diverse	Italians moving away + influx of French speakers of Arab origin

Source: Statistics Canada Census data, 2006 and key informant interviews for demographic trends.

The map below shows the geographic locations of these communities in the province of Québec.
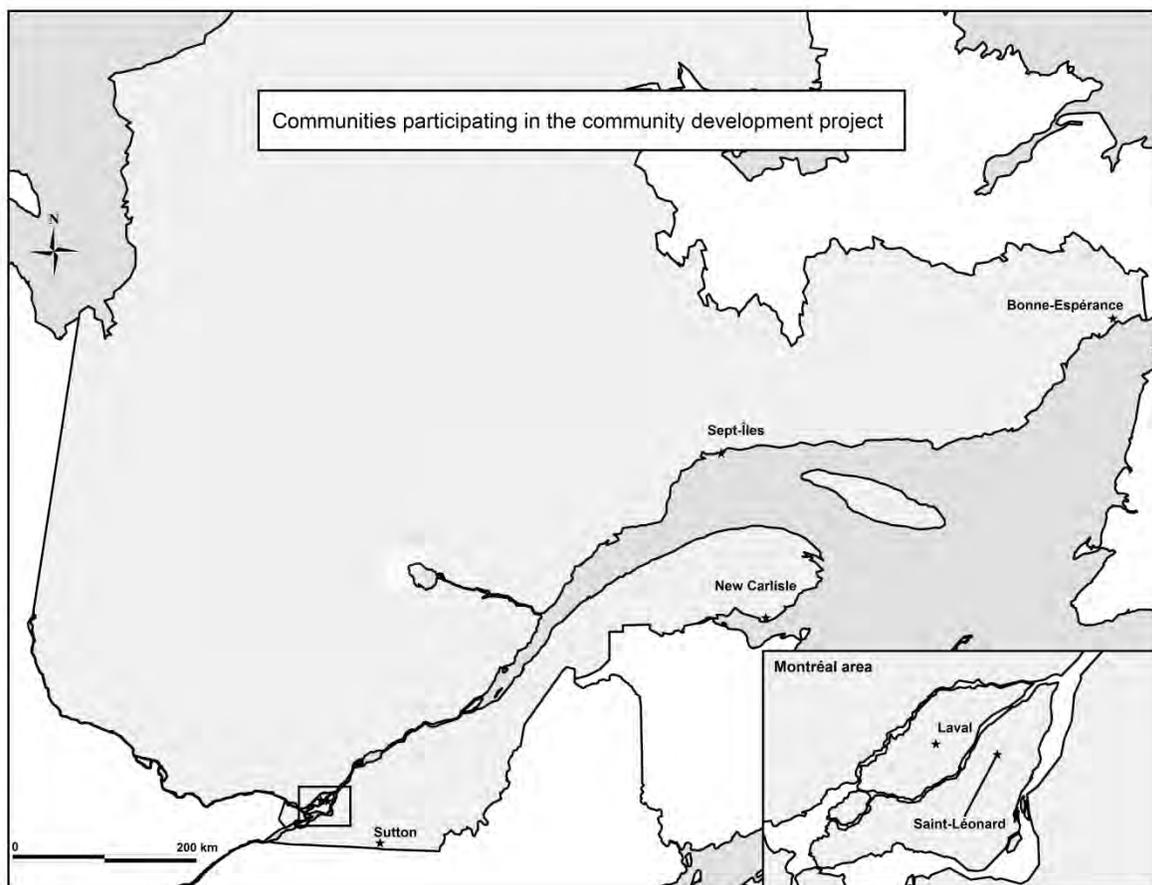
Figure 5   The locations of the six communities involved in the project (map 1)

The community portraits are presented below roughly from east to west and from remote to rural, then urban environments. Complete versions of the portraits are available on-line at www.chssn.org. The summaries presented below contain some direct excerpts from those portraits and provide a brief overview.

4.1.1   Bonne-Espérance: three remote villages near the Labrador border

Bonne-Espérance is a municipality on the Lower North Shore of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence in the Côte-Nord administrative region. It is located just west of the Labrador border. The Lower North Shore consists of fifteen villages grouped together into five municipalities, plus two First Nations communities (Pakua Shipi and Unamen Shipu), all of which lie beyond the road linking the region to the rest of the province.

The Lower North Shore
There are 15 villages and 2 indian reserves
with a total population of 5,607.

Municipalities and Indian reserves	Population
Municipality of Blanc-Sablon	1,201
Municipality of Bonne-Espérance	852
Municipality of Saint-Augustin	626
Municipality of Gros-Mécatina	573
Municipality of Côte-Nord-du-Golfe-Saint-Laurent	1,183
Indian reserves (Pakua Shipi, Unamen Shipi)	1,172

Source : Statistics Canada, Census Canada 2001

Municipality of Blanc-Sablon : Blanc-Sablon, Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon, Brador
Municipality of Bonne-Espérance : Middle Bay, St-Paul's River, Old Fort
Municipality of Gros-Mécatina : La Tabatière, Mutton Bay
Municipality of St-Augustin : St-Augustin
Municipality of Côte-Nord-du-Golfe-Saint-Laurent : Tête-à-la-Baleine, Aylmer Sound, Harrington Harbour, Chevery, La Romaine, Kégaska

Figure 6   Lower North Shore (map 2)

Source: Coasters Association

These communities stretch over 550 kilometres of coastline. The Lower North Shore is considered remote because there is no road access to some of it, specifically, from the rest of Québec to the east of Natashquan, with the exception of a road between Blanc Sablon and Old Fort, as well as a few small sections linking two villages together. Most communities are therefore accessible only by plane, by boat during the summer or by snowmobile in the winter, weather permitting. It is a region of rugged terrain and harsh climate, not unlike that of Newfoundland and Labrador. It boasts a magnificent landscape rich in wildlife and natural resources.

The municipality of Bonne-Espérance is made up of three villages: Old Fort Bay, St. Paul's River and Middle Bay. All three communities are accessible via Route 138 from Blanc-Sablon to the east but have no road access to the west. The village of Old Fort Bay is the most westerly community and has a population of 347. St. Paul's River is located between the communities of Old Fort Bay and Middle Bay and has a population of 468. Middle Bay is the most easterly village and has a population of 32 permanent residents.

Bonne-Espérance has a long and rich history that is unique in many ways to the region of the Lower North Shore. Its population is made up mostly of English speakers descended from a blend of Jersey Islanders, British, Newfoundlanders and Inuit. Various fishermen have been

fishing, whaling and sealing in the waters off the Labrador Coast since well before the arrival of Jacques Cartier in 1534. First Nations, Vikings, Bretons, Basque and later French, English and Channel Islanders were all drawn to the region by the abundance of wildlife and forests. These natural resources have provided a livelihood to generations of residents. The history, culture and economy of Bonne-Espérance have been closely connected to marine resources, and changes in their management have had a major impact on people's living conditions. The people now face a drastic decrease in access to these resources combined with a drop in prices, leading many to abandon fishing as their main activity.

As the economic base has shifted, so to have the lifestyle and social organization of the villages. Whereas historically families lived separated from each other and moved to islands in the summer and into bays and up river for the winter, they now are settled in villages around basic services and no longer move to the islands in the summer. In addition, the importance of government programs and services in the local economy, as well as in political dynamics, has increased significantly. With the decline in the fishery and a series of government-decreed moratoria on key fishing activities, the region's economy has undergone many transformations. As a result, many people seek employment elsewhere, either on a full-time basis or seasonally. Some continue to earn a living off the fishery, but the conditions under which they do so have changed significantly in recent decades.

In 2011 the municipality of Bonne-Espérance had a population of 736, which had declined gradually over the years. The reasons for this outmigration include the attraction of economic opportunities outside the region and the province and the fact that many residents do not speak French and therefore have difficulty finding good jobs in Québec. In Bonne-Espérance less than 14% of the population knows both official languages. This can be explained in large part by the geographical and cultural proximity of Newfoundland and Labrador, where English is the prevailing language, and the fact that communications are easier with that province than with the rest of Québec.

Community members expressed their perspectives on Bonne-Espérance at two community consultations held in May 2011. The strengths they identified in the area of social and community life are largely related to the small size of the population and the Coast culture. Residents feel a strong sense of belonging, feel safe, have strong family and community bonds and are proud of the Coast culture, including its musical and crafts traditions and the strong family and community bonds. The small size of the community and its remoteness, however, are also the source of some challenges. Residents feel that there is a lack of activities for seniors and youth, there are not enough volunteers, transportation is difficult and many adults must leave the community to work. Many of the community's assets and challenges have the same source: isolation, small community size and homogeneous, close-knit communities. To build a stronger social and community life, participants suggested that villages work more closely together and that people be encouraged to engage in community life as participants in activities, as volunteers, or as workers in services to the population (such as home care, a day centre, or day care). Creating opportunities for people to be active and involved in things they enjoy and care about was identified as an important goal.

In the area of education, Bonne-Espérance has had some significant successes with youth in recent years. The rates of young people finishing a high school diploma have increased and

the presence of a new Community Learning Centre has made the school a hub for community activities. In the population as a whole, however, educational levels remain relatively low. The main challenge is to encourage young people to take advantage of locally available educational opportunities, such as training in trades, and to mitigate the financial, social, family and personal impacts of having to live far from home to pursue post-secondary studies. Some ideas for the future include on-line courses, more support for learning French and for choosing a career, as well as courses in arts and culture.

English speakers, 25-44 years

- None
- DES
- DEP
- University

7%
4%
41%
48%

English speakers, 45-64 years

- None
- DES
- DEP
- University

4%
4%
36%
56%
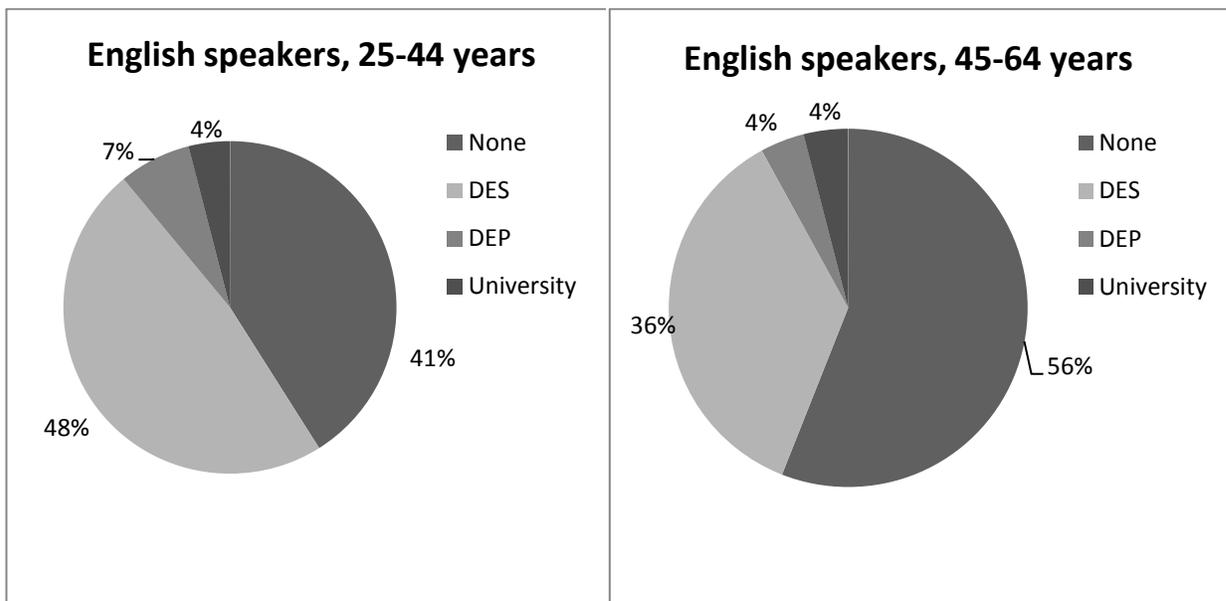
Figure 7   Educational attainment in Bonne Espérance, different age groups

Source: Statistics Canada 2006, data produced by Institut national de santé publique.
DES: high school certificate
DEP: trades certificate

The economic assets in Bonne-Espérance include the fish plants, the road access to Blanc-Sablon and the fact that people are resourceful. There is potential for tourism and projects that showcase the natural beauty and abundant natural resources of the Lower North Shore. The challenges are mainly related to the lack of sufficient employment opportunities locally, which mean that many people are unemployed or leave the community for work, often for long periods of time. The cost of living, while low for some items, can also be higher for groceries, gas and transportation. Residents' vision for the future includes the development of tourism and of an industry based on renewable natural resources of the Coast (wild berries, non-timber forest products and more). In addition, people would like to see more services such as daycares and restaurants.

The natural environmental assets of Bonne-Espérance include a high quality environment and range of natural resources. The challenges of that environment however are the cold climate and the flies in the summer months, making it harder to enjoy the outdoors. For the future, participants at the consultation expressed an interest in developing walking and hiking trails and they also wanted to see more recycling and composting. There are also some assets related to the built environment, such as the road to Blanc-Sablon and the boardwalk

in St. Paul's River. There are some efforts needed to maintain and improve the built environment: ensuring access to public buildings for people with limited mobility, maintaining and improving the museum and maintaining the boardwalk. Many of the suggestions for the future involved maintaining and improving these infrastructures, in addition to maintaining the churches and cemetery.

On the theme of health and well-being, assets again include the natural environment while challenges are mainly related to services available. A seniors' day centre and more home care hours are considered a need for senior residents. Support for families with children who have special needs is also viewed as insufficient, particularly considering the isolation and low population density in the region, making it hard to find others facing similar difficulties in the same community. Suggestions for the future focus on encouraging healthy active lifestyles for seniors and for the population as a whole.

4.1.2   Sept-Îles, or "Seven Islands" to a small English-speaking population

Sept-Îles is located on the north shore of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence to the north-east of Tadoussac, about 230 kilometres east of Baie-Comeau. The town lies between the Sainte-Marguerite and Moisie Rivers, on the shore of a deep-water bay protected by seven islands, hence its name. The bay constitutes a 45 km^2 natural harbour. Sept-Îles is located in close proximity to two Innu communities: Uashat and Maliotenam. Although the town itself is urban with a population of 25,686 in 2011, the region as a whole has very low population density.

Although different groups have inhabited the territory that is now Sept-Îles for many centuries—Innu, Norwegian, French, English and more—the establishment of an urban centre is relatively recent.

In the early twentieth century, Clarke City, as it was known at the time, grew up around the pulp and paper industry. It became the regional economic center with a train, the first hydro-electric dam in the region, a port, a boat-building factory, a wood processing plant, a hospital and more. Towards the middle of the 20th century, however, mineral extraction and shipping—most notably of iron ore—became a major economic driver and led to a rapid increase in the population and in the economy. In spite of periods of economic decline due in part to a fall in iron ore prices in the early 1980s for example, mineral extraction, processing and shipping remains a significant part of the economy today.

The English-speaking community of Sept-Îles was established in this context. Many English speakers moved to the region for employment in the mining sector and some have settled permanently in Seven Islands, as it is often called. Other English speakers have moved from the more remote area of the Lower North Shore to be near family, jobs and services. Still others immigrated from Europe and use English more comfortably than French for day-to-day activities. In addition, some First Nations—the Naskapi—speak English as their first official language. Still, only 3.4% of the total population in Sept-Îles speaks English as its first official language (CHSSN, 2008-2009).

Community perspectives were gathered at a consultation held in September 2011. Various community assets and challenges were identified, as were perspectives for the future. The

strengths and challenges related to community life in Sept-Îles were both connected to the small size of the English-speaking community in Sept-Îles. In spite of small numbers there are several organizations that provide a sense of a social life, be they churches, schools or seniors groups. While the small size makes the community feel safe and friendly, it also limits its visibility. High levels of bilingualism also have both positive and negative effects: people are proud to live in a bilingual community and appreciate the fact that bilingualism helps them integrate into the broader Sept-Îles community, yet the unity among English speakers may be somewhat diminished by the fact that people can easily participate in activities in French. Some of the suggestions for the future address this, by increasing the availability of books and entertainment in English and creating stronger connections among groups.

As concerns education, the English schools in Sept-Îles are a significant asset to the community, as is the adult education centre. Given the small numbers of English speakers, however, support services for students with difficulties are a challenge and teachers have to play many different roles in the lives of their students. Education beyond high school, including vocational training and apprenticeship programs, is limited in English, and English speakers do not seem to pursue these avenues in as large proportions as do French speakers. Those interested in pursuing post-secondary education have few choices in Sept-Îles and many therefore leave the community to study elsewhere. Still, a larger proportion of English speakers than French speakers has a university degree, which is an asset to the community.
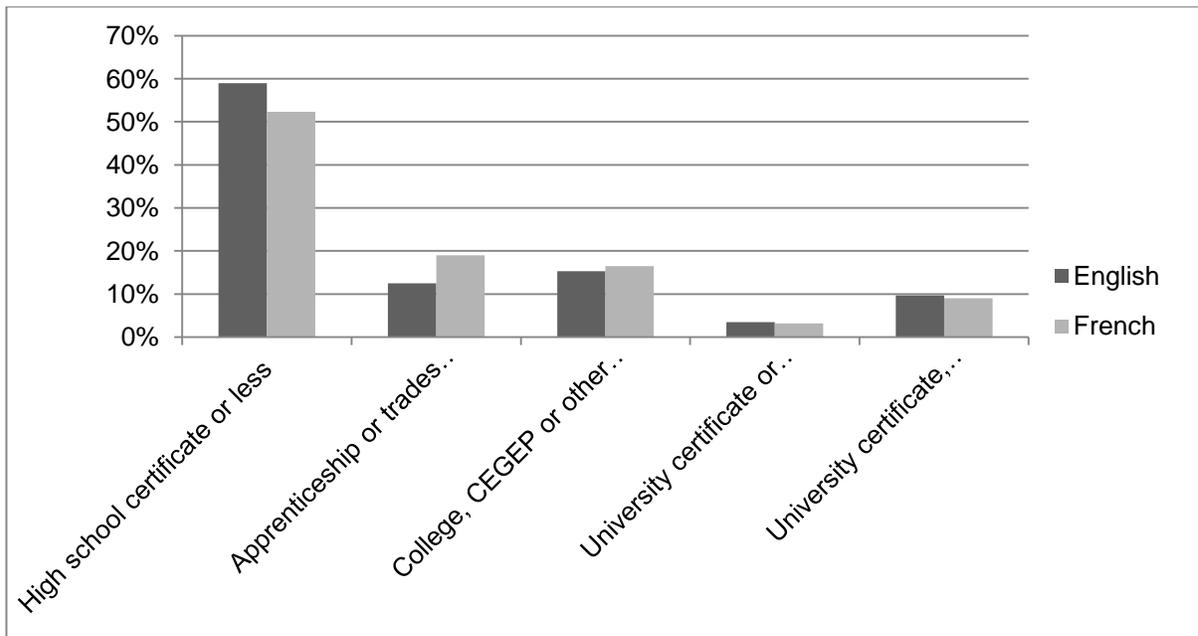

Figure 8   Educational attainment in Sept-Îles, by first official language spoken

Source: CHSSN 2010. Socio-Economic Profiles of Québec's English-Speaking Communities

The abundance of natural resources in the region and the worldwide demand for these resources is part of an economic context that is favourable to Sept-Îles. There are a good number of jobs, there is a high demand for labour and the standard of living is good. This "boom" can also present challenges: housing and infrastructures may lag behind demand and the availability of workers may also be insufficient. In addition, attracting people to Sept-Îles can be difficult since it is not well known outside the region and is often seen to be a mining town. Socially, this type of economic environment can create its share of problems, such as high levels of debt, stress and family difficulties, in spite of the relatively high wages that workers enjoy. The economic future of the community may include development in a range of sectors, such as mining, tourism, food and agriculture, and higher education. Participants also envisioned more and better transportation options, an important factor considering the distance from many other areas of the province.

The natural environmental assets of Sept-Îles include a good amount of green space—including the beach area—good air and water quality and access to natural environments for hunting, fishing and berry picking. Coastal erosion is a concern expressed by participants, as it is having a negative impact on the natural environment in areas in and around Sept-Îles. The built environment also has assets in the form of the waterfront boardwalk and park and recreational facilities. Many of the environmental assets could, however, be threatened by the expansion of the mining sector and of the town, as industries, housing, roads and other infrastructures are built to accommodate the new companies and their workers. Participants made two very simple suggestions for improving the environment in Sept-Îles: a composting program and better snow removal on the sidewalks in winter to encourage people to walk more.

Health and well-being is affected by a wide range of factors and participants at the community consultation felt that their community has some important assets, such as green space, opportunities for physical activity and clean air and water. They also identified some assets related to social and community life that provide opportunities for social interaction, community engagement and a sense of connectedness and belonging. These include the 50+ Club, churches and schools. Having accessible health and social services is also an important factor in health and well-being and here too, the English-speaking community of Sept-Îles has various assets in spite of its small numbers, for example the recently hired customer service agent at the hospital, the Maison Richelieu and community organizations that can provide services in English. The challenges named at the consultation included environmental contamination related to industrial activities in the region and concerns for the health and well-being of seniors, who make up a significant proportion of the English-speaking population. To this end, a wellness centre for seniors was envisioned as part of the future for the community. Participants at the consultation also imagined Sept-Îles as a major health centre for the whole North Shore.

4.1.3   New Carlisle: a historic community on the Baie-des-Chaleurs

New Carlisle is located in the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine administrative region and is part of the Bonaventure regional county municipality. It is on the most southerly point of the Gaspé Coast in the Baie-des-Chaleurs, between Bonventure and Paspébiac. New Carlisle is located in a rural region with a mix of open fields and forests surrounding it and the vast

Baie-des-Chaleurs to the south, with New Brunswick beyond. At the time of the 2006 census, there were 1,370 people living in New Carlisle (Statistics Canada 2007).

Long before Europeans arrived on the north-east coast of the Americas, the Mi'kmaq people occupied the region. In the century following Jacques Cartier's 1534 visit, many seasonal fishing stations were set up and the region remained largely a seasonal fishing destination for European fishermen until the 1700s. Between 1755 and 1760, over a thousand Acadians also settled in the Baie-des-Chaleurs, after the *Grand Dérangement* or great expulsion of the Acadians by the British in 1755 (during which they were forcibly removed from the maritime provinces of Canada and those who did not die on the way were relocated in the Thirteen Colonies, France or other British colonies). Many settled at the mouth of the Restigouche River and later along the coast of the Baie-des-Chaleurs. Around the same time, English speakers began to migrate to the Gaspé Coast: British merchants, Irish immigrants, workers from the Channel Islands, then Loyalists who came seeking refuge following the American Declaration of Independence. In 1783-1784, between 40,000 and 50,000 Loyalists fled to Canada, almost five hundred of whom arrived on the Gaspé Coast. A large number settled in "Little Paspébiac" later renamed Carlisle and then New Carlisle.

At the turn of the 19th century, the total population of the peninsula stood at approximately 3,000 and the area was one of the country's most economically dynamic regions with farming, shipbuilding, fishing and forestry. New Carlisle became the administrative centre of Gaspésia, as well as a town with dynamic business and industrial sectors. Tourism was also an important source of revenue from the mid-19th century, as many visitors came to fish salmon, take sea baths and enjoy the salt air. This apparent prosperity, however, was largely founded on a highly stratified society with stark class divisions and great disparities in living conditions. Over the years the town has lost some of the business headquarters and government offices that once gave it such prominence. Still, the town remains in many ways the backbone of the institutional structure of English speakers on the Gaspé Coast, with the Eastern Shores School Board, the Committee for Anglophone Social Action and SPEC newspaper, among other organizations.

In the mid-1800s, the region's English-speaking community represented 50% of the total population of the region. Since the 1930s, however, the proportion of English speakers has steadily declined: by 1961 it had decreased to approximately 30% of the total population and today about 10% speak English as their first official language (16% on the territory of the Baie-des-Chaleurs). In the town of New Carlisle itself, however, about two-thirds of the population speaks English as its mother tongue and about one-third of the population speaks French.
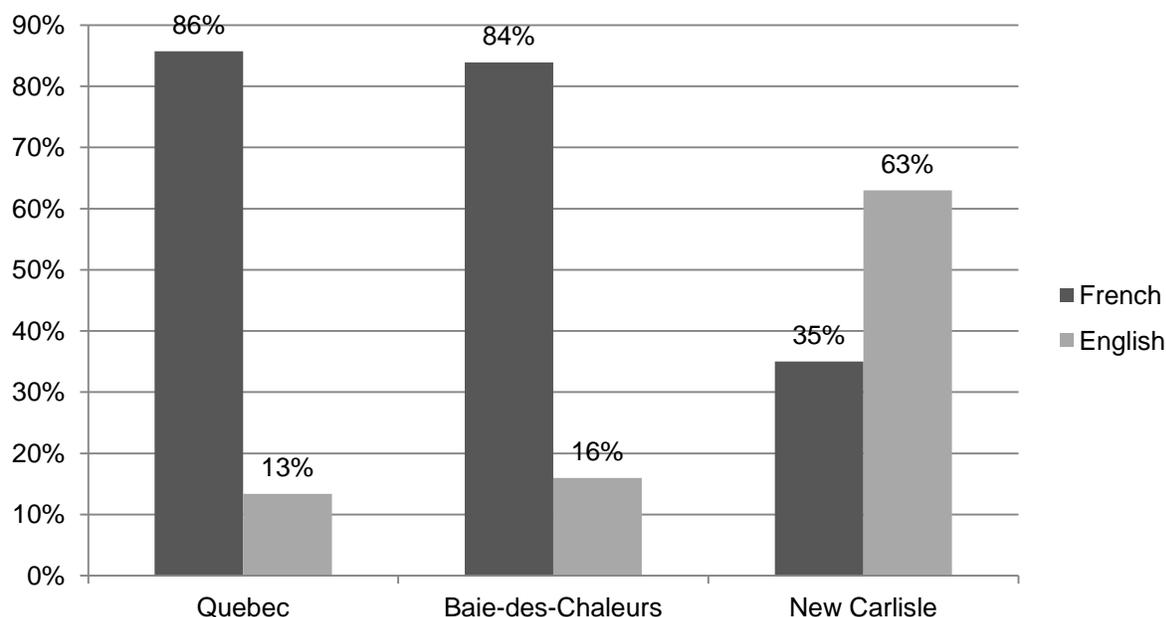
**Figure 9   Proportion of the population with English or French as their mother
tongue, for different territories**

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada, Community Profile: Municipality of New Carlisle

The English-speaking community on the Gaspé Coast is aging overall at a faster rate than
the French-speaking majority. There are 1,850 English-speaking seniors over the age of 65
in the area, making up 21.6% of the English-speaking population. There are significantly
more individuals in their senior years compared to the French-speaking population and to the
province. In fact English speakers in the Gaspé region are 26% more likely than French
speakers to be over 65. The English-speaking population also has fewer individuals in the
age range of 40 to 64 resulting in a lower number of natural (family-based) caregivers. This
results in a weakened social support network and more vulnerable seniors.

Perspectives on New Carlisle were expressed by community members at the consultation
held in July 2011. New Carlislers are proud of their heritage and of the fact that they live in a
bilingual community. They value the fact that it is a small town, where people feel a strong
sense of community and can raise their children in a safe and positive environment.
However, the small size of the community also makes it difficult to have enough facilities and
activities for young people. In looking toward the future, participants at the consultation
focused on activities they would like to see developed for young people such as a teen
"hang-out" space and the Community Learning Centre as a place to continue activities during
the summer.

In the Baie-des-Chaleurs territory in which New Carlisle is situated, English speakers are
52% more likely than French speakers to be in a lone-parent family, 93% more likely to be
living with relatives and 25% more likely to be living alone (CHSSN 2010). Persons living with
non-relatives, persons living alone or persons in lone-parent families are most likely to be
living below the low-income cut-off. This points to the need for social and community support.

New Carlisle has many assets in the area of education: local English language schools, small class sizes, good teachers, a French immersion program, educational support via Family Ties (a community organization), an English-language adult education centre and a Community Learning Centre which provides a broad range of activities at the school outside school hours. The challenges identified include limited services and support for special needs children and a lack of training for teachers' assistants. Statistics also show low levels of educational attainment. While English Quebecers as a whole are more likely to have a university degree than are French speakers (24.6% compared to 15.3%), English speakers in the Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine region are not as well-educated as the regional French-speaking majority, which itself is below provincial and national averages. These trends remain true in the Baie-des-Chaleurs and in New Carlisle as well. One of the consequences of low educational attainment is that persons with lower levels also tend to be less able to speak French, as well as to read and write in French. In a province whose official language is French, this can mean being excluded from certain types of jobs and other opportunities and may lead to greater social isolation, as contacts are more difficult with people from outside one's language group.

French speakers, 25-44

English speakers, 25-44

French speakers, 45-64


English speakers, 45-64
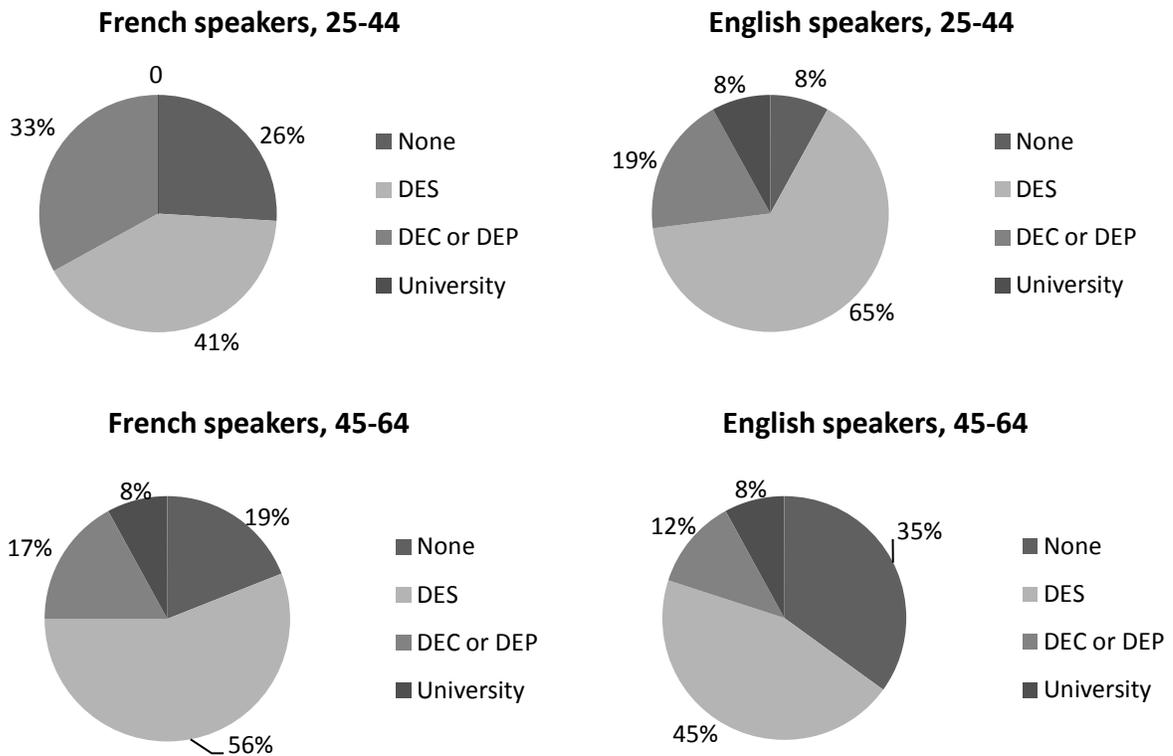
Figure 10 **Educational attainment in New Carlisle, by age group and first official language spoken**

Source: Statistics Canada 2006, data produced by Institut national de santé publique.
DES: high school certificate
DEP: trades certificate

At the community consultation, participants proposed creating a culture of education; ensuring that youth become bilingual through the school system; increasing the availability of psycho-educators, career counsellors and guidance counsellors; encouraging trades; increasing extra-curricular activities and more. The suggestions cover the full range of age groups, community groups and educational institutions, focusing on how they can contribute to on-going opportunities for people of all ages, skills and interests.

In the area of economic conditions, participants at the community consultation felt that New Carlisle had several assets: good levels of bilingualism among residents, the adult education centre and government incentives to return to the area. Some also believe that the cost of living is lower and that jobs are available, at least in some fields. There are, however, many challenges: many residents remain unemployed or on social assistance and there are many barriers to getting back into the labour market. Many jobs in the region are seasonal and therefore do not offer job stability or security. The number of businesses in New Carlisle is considered low and participants felt that there was a lack of support for local businesses, making it hard to succeed. In addition, the English-speaking population seems hesitant to take out loans or apply for grants, which is related to a historic lack of use by this group of government institutions. The community's vision for the future focuses mainly on attracting tourism by featuring the town's heritage and natural environment, as well as by making the already attractive main street even more so.

In the region, English speakers are much more likely than French speakers to be unemployed and slightly more likely to be out of the labour force; and for both language groups the rates are much higher than the provincial average (CHSSN 2010). In the Baie-des-Chaleurs health region English speakers are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as are French speakers. In the community of New Carlisle, the situation is similar; English speakers are also more likely to be unemployed than French speakers. Accordingly, incomes tend to be lower in the region than in the province overall. In the Baie-des-Chaleurs health region, a higher proportion of English speakers have incomes below $10,000, compared to French speakers (30.8% compared to 25.2%) and a lower proportion has incomes over $50,000 (only 6.6% compared to 10.1% among French speakers). These figures suggest higher rates of poverty among English speakers in the region and among Gaspesians generally as compared to the rest of Québec.

New Carlisle's natural and built environment was also explored in the community portrait. On the one hand, the natural environment in New Carlisle is considered to be an important aspect of people's quality of life, with the green, the beach, hiking and ski trails and other areas that can be enjoyed by residents. On the other hand, people feel that the built environment could be improved, notably signage and roads.

Health and well-being in New Carlisle is a topic of concern for residents. While there are some outdoor spaces and organizations that offer opportunities to be physically active and socially engaged, fostering healthy lifestyles remains a challenge. Unhealthy eating habits, lack of physical activity and smoking, for example, continue to have a negative impact on the health and well-being of many residents, although rates of chronic disease are lower than in Québec as a whole and life expectancy is higher. Data comparing English and French speakers shows that a significantly lower proportion of English speakers eats five fruits or

vegetables a day and a higher proportion is overweight, obese or smokes (Dubé & Parent 2007). New Carlislers want to encourage healthy lifestyles and attract more health professionals to the area, including alternative practitioners. People also would like to have more information in English on the resources available and on medical problems.

4.1.4   Sutton: a shifting English-speaking population in the Eastern Townships

Sutton is a rural municipality located in the populous Montérégie administrative region and is part of the Brome-Missisquoi regional county municipality (MRC). It is in the most southerly area of Québec, near the border with Vermont in the United States. Sutton is part of the historical Eastern Townships, a large region which includes the Estrie administrative region and parts of Montérégie, Centre-du-Québec and Chaudière-Appalaches.

Sutton is located in a rural region featuring rolling hills, farmland, forest and rivers. The surrounding area boasts a downhill ski station, hiking and bicycle trails, vineyards and other tourist attractions. It is located about 110 kilometres from Montréal to the west, 84 kilometres from Sherbrooke to the east and 12 kilometres from the Vermont border to the south. Unlike many rural areas and villages in Québec, the population of Sutton has increased steadily in recent decades, going from 3,084 in 1991 to 3,906 in 2011. Its attractiveness as a place not only for weekenders, skiers and tourists, but also for city-dwellers in search of a quieter rural lifestyle is largely responsible for the increase in population.

Like much of the rest of the Townships, Sutton was originally occupied by First Nations groups, specifically Abenaki. In the 1780s, however, United Empire Loyalists settled in the area, followed later on by French speakers looking for land as the Saint Lawrence Valley became more densely occupied. British and other European immigrants also came in search of better living conditions, land and opportunity.

By the twentieth century, Sutton was a small but bustling town with manufacturing, retail, resource extraction, farming and other economic activities. The railroad supported much of this development. The ski hill has also been an economic driver since the 1960s when it was opened and it has oriented much of the local development, including real estate. Changes to agriculture have also influenced development, as agricultural mechanization made the hill farms harder to work (as machinery was difficult to use on slopes) and many farms were sold. Some of these were bought by people looking for a vacation home or a place to retire, shifting the population towards older, more affluent residents. Today, the English-speaking population in Sutton, like many other communities in the Townships, tends to be older and has declined relative to the French-speaking population. Today, about one-third of the population has English as its mother tongue while about two-thirds is French-speaking.

In order to gather the perspectives of community members regarding Sutton, a community consultation was held in November 2011. Sutton is seen by residents to be a safe and vibrant community with many different community groups and activities. Residents of different backgrounds are said to live well together, although some tensions between newer and more long-time residents are perceived as the community has grown quickly with many newcomers settling in the area. The main challenges facing Sutton are related to these changes: there is a need for moderate and low-priced housing and traffic on Main Street is a

cause for concern, particularly as it affects pedestrian safety. Participants at the consultation suggested an alternate route to the mountain to decrease traffic in the village centre, as well as more opportunities to meet with other community members.

The school in Sutton is considered very good and quite unique since it houses both the English and French schools under one roof, placing children in interaction with peers from the other language group. However day care services, particularly in English, are limited. Drop-out rates are considered high, particularly among boys. There seems to be a polarization between the relatively high number of residents with university degrees and the high numbers who have no certificate at all or a high school certificate at most. When we look at the situation for different language and age groups, the group most likely to have a university degree is French speakers between 45 and 64 years of age (35%); English speakers in the same age group are next most likely (at 27%), while English speakers aged 25-44 are the least likely to have a university degree (at 13%). They are also the most likely to have no certificate or a high school certificate at most (fully two-thirds). The younger generation of English speakers therefore has lower levels of educational attainment compared to both older generations and to French speakers.

English speakers, 25-44

13% / 19% / 21% / 47%

None / DES / DEP / University

French speakers, 25-44

20% / 17% / 19% / 44%

None / DES / DEP / University

English speakers, 45-64

27% / 22% / 15% / 36%

None / DES / DEP / University

French speakers, 45-64

35% / 12% / 29% / 24%

None / DES / DEP / University
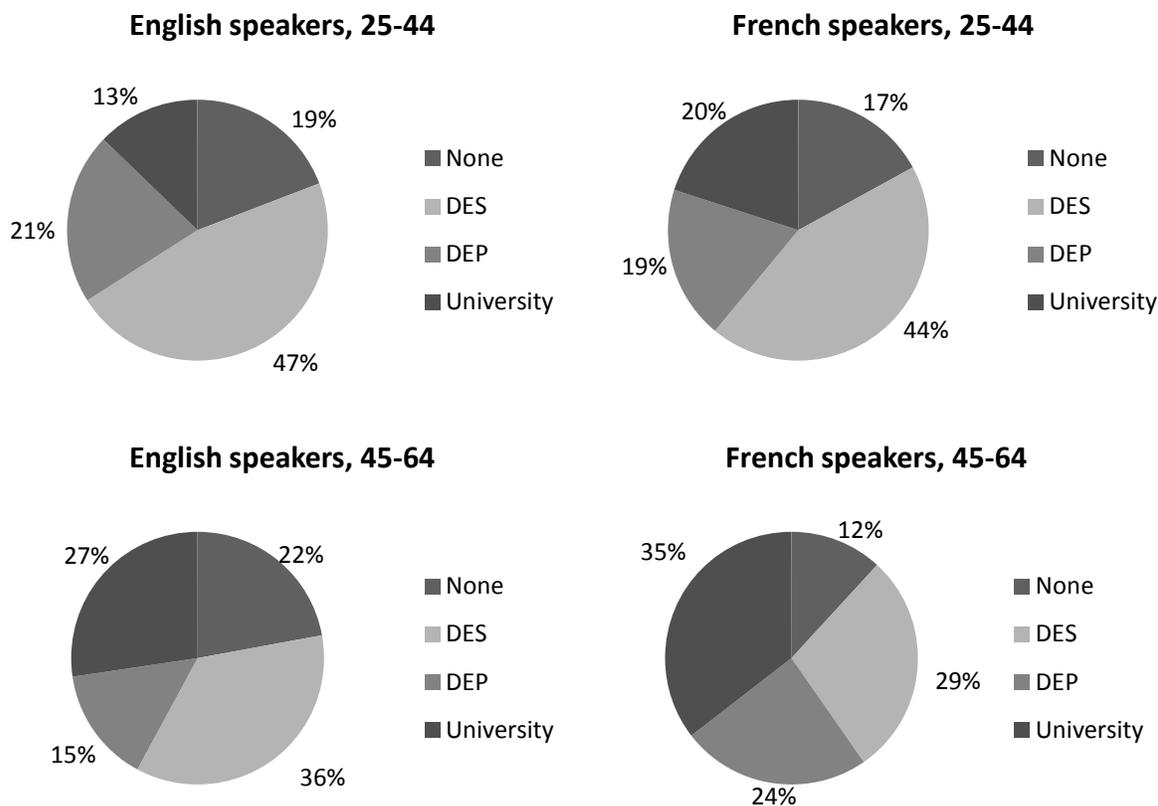
Figure 11   Educational attainment for Sutton, by language group (FOLS)

Source: Statistics Canada 2006, data produced by Institut national de santé publique.
DES: high school certificate
DEP: trades certificate

Concerning economic conditions, the strength of Sutton's economy is largely due to the services offered to tourists, vacationers and part-time residents. However, this sector is also the source of some of the community's challenges, such as low-paying, part-time and seasonal jobs, the lack of affordable housing and hidden poverty. The participants' perspectives for the future therefore include more affordable housing, more stores that provide basic everyday necessities and employment opportunities with better salaries and conditions.

The participants at the community consultation considered Sutton's environment to be very beautiful with protected areas, farms and natural spaces. While being in a quiet countryside, it has easy access to urban centres such as Montréal. The biggest challenge is balancing the increasing development of the area with concerns about conservation, environmental protection and quality of life. Another concern is improving "walkability" in order to encourage physical activity and pedestrian safety for all age groups. In the future, participants at the consultation expressed an interest in more bicycle and hiking trails and better affordable housing options. A dark sky policy and a sustainable development plan for Mount Sutton were two suggestions made for maintaining the environmental assets of the area.

In the area of health and well-being, Sutton residents feel they have access to high quality health care services in English most of time, including homecare services, community services and groups for people fighting addictions. However, while the Sherbrooke Hospital seems to have staff who can speak English, this is less true in Cowansville and Granby. There also is said to be a shortage of volunteer caregivers. Illegal marijuana production in the area is a cross-cutting issue as it affects the economy, educational attainment, social and community life and health and well-being.

4.1.5   Laval: a young, diverse and growing English-speaking population

The city of Laval is situated on an island just north of Montréal. Laval is the third most populated city in the province, with 401,553 residents in 2011. Between 1996 and 2011, it experienced a 21.5% population increase, making it one of the fastest growing cities in the last 15 years, yet 29% of the territory remains agricultural land. A growing proportion of the population has English as its mother tongue (7% in 2006), while 66 % have French as a mother tongue and 26% are Allophone (Statistics Canada 2006). Many Allophones speak English as their official language, making English speakers a significant group in Laval. In fact, between 1996 and 2001, the English-speaking population of Laval grew by 35% and then between 2001 and 2006 by 28% (Agence de la santé et des services sociaux 2010). In 2006, 38% of these English speakers were immigrants. The English-speaking population in Laval is comparatively young: there are proportionally fewer persons in the older age cohorts and a higher proportion of children under the age of 15 compared to the overall population of Québec (CHSSN 2009). In addition, Laval has a slightly higher birth rate than the rest of the province (Institut de la statistique 2009).

To gather the perspectives of English-speaking residents of Laval and to mobilize them to become involved in community development processes, two forums were held in November 2011. Over 250 people were present at the forums to share their perspectives and ideas on eight themes, as presented below.

Table 4   Focus group discussions held at the forums

Theme	Number of groups	Number of participants
Health and social services	6	86
Youth health	3	36
Mental health	3	27
Seniors	3	40
Social and community life	2	20
Education	4	35
Environment	2	11
Economy	(Combined with economy)	

Concerning access to health and social services, participants identified several strengths such as the effort that health and social services staff put into speaking English; some general services such as the 811 phone number are bilingual; many services exist in the community for seniors and youth, although they are not always in English; schools are an asset to the community; and the mental health trajectory has facilitated the understanding of the system and how to access it. The issue for the English-speaking population is the need to receive services in English, because a lack of such services can have impacts on certain groups, particularly more vulnerable ones such as seniors, special needs individuals and their families, people with lower incomes and youth. English speakers find themselves having to settle for French services even though communication may not be ideal. They must travel to Montréal for services in English without always having the capacity to do so and waiting lists are long when the need for services often cannot wait. Many others turn to private services without having the financial means to do so. Those who do feel they are unjustly paying for two separate health care systems.

Another challenge associated with the issue of lack of services in English is that people feel health care professionals and staff are not sensitized to the need to provide services in English. Health care users may feel shame, embarrassment and guilt at not being able to communicate in French. A third challenge is the lack of access to bilingual information. Seniors lack information on prevention and health promotion, their prescriptions may be unclear because they are written in French and they do not always know what services and activities are being offered in the community. Youth too feel they do not have access to prevention and health promotion information. A last challenge is the retention of health care professionals. Due to heavy workloads and 'red tape' associated with their professional orders, they may choose to look for employment outside Québec.

With respect to social and community life, strengths include the fact that some activities exist for youth and that there are English day camps. The main challenge is a lack of activities and spaces to socialize. According to participants, youth end up leaving the city as they lack a

sense of belonging; individuals with nowhere to go feel isolated and may lack opportunities for physical activity, which is not supportive of physical and mental health.

In terms of education, several strengths were identified: the quality of education is considered good; close-knit relationships between teachers and students allows for proper follow-up of youth; public schools are considered as good as the private schools; parents are seen to be engaged in the academic success of their children; there is good collaboration between parents, teachers and school administrators; schools have good programs and activities; there are good adult education and professional training programs; and quality partnerships exist between the schools and other stakeholders such as the city and Laval businesses. All of these points contribute to an overall sense of community. One challenge is the lack of specialized services for youth which may delay the early detection and diagnosis of intellectual and mental health issues. Another challenge is that the level of French taught in schools is not considered to enable students to be perfectly bilingual, thereby giving them less access to good jobs and post-secondary education in Laval. They may, as a result, end up leaving Laval. A final challenge concerns the difficulty in accessing information on education. Parents primarily find it difficult to accompany their children in making choices for post-secondary education. Statistics show that English-speakers in Laval are slightly more likely to show high educational attainment and equally likely to show low educational attainment as their Francophone counterparts; however, rates vary significantly between neighbourhoods (CHSSN 2009).

In the economy and environment themes, strengths identified by participants are that Laval is a dynamic city and has experienced positive development in recent years; it has a large pool of young people and there is good potential for employment; Laval has become more accessible due to highway 25 and a new subway station that improves transportation links with Montréal and this helps businesses thrive; and there is much potential for people to set up businesses in Laval. Participants are of the opinion, however, that English speakers are not entirely included in these economic opportunities. English speakers have a harder time than French speakers finding employment which may lead to an outward migration to find employment opportunities elsewhere. In 2006, Laval English speakers had an unemployment rate of 6.8%, which is substantially higher than that of French speakers in their region (5.2%), but lower than that of English speakers across Québec (8.8%). In addition, compared to French speakers in the region, English speakers were more likely to have lower incomes and less likely to be in higher income categories. They were more likely to be living in households below the low income cut-off level (CHSSN 2010).

Strengths concerning the natural and built environment were the parks for children and efforts towards recycling and composting. The overarching issue identified was the balance between environmental protection and demographic growth. The challenge of population growth and the loss of agricultural land and green space have led to land deterioration, surface water and other types of pollution and increased road traffic. A second challenge is related to "walkability" as it has become inconvenient not to own a vehicle in Laval. The rate of obesity in Laval quadrupled for men and doubled for women between 1987 and 2005 (INSPQ 2006).

4.1.6   St-Léonard: a Montréal borough with a strong Italian community

St. Léonard is a borough located within the city of Montréal in the North-East sector of the city. In 2011, the population of St. Léonard stood at 75,707 inhabitants, a 5.5% increase in population since 2006. It is Montréal's twelfth most populated borough (out of nineteen) and covers a territory of 13.5 square kilometers (Ville de Montréal 2009).

St. Léonard has a unique history. Whereas it started out as a small rural French town, it has grown exponentially over the years to accommodate a bustling Italian community. Between 1948 and 1971, roughly 457,000 Italians immigrated to Canada, an average of 19,800 Italians per year. In 1967, the introduction of the Canadian immigration "point system" had the effect of decreasing the number of Italians (and other Europeans) coming to Canada. This system emphasized educational and occupational skills as selection criteria for admitting immigrants and tended to exclude Italians. Despite the sharp decline in Italian immigration after 1972, the Italian community remains the largest ethnic group in Montréal after French and English and the fourth in Canada after English, French and Chinese. Many of the Italians who immigrated to Québec prior to the adoption of language legislation learned to speak English, although many now speak French as well.

At the beginning of the 1960s, 6.5% of the population of St. Léonard was of Italian origin; today, Italians represent 42% of the population. Immigrants account for a significant portion of St. Léonard's residents and recent immigrants make up 8% of the population. Although the majority of the population has either French or Italian as their mother tongue, 35% of recent immigrants speak Arabic and 22% speak Spanish.
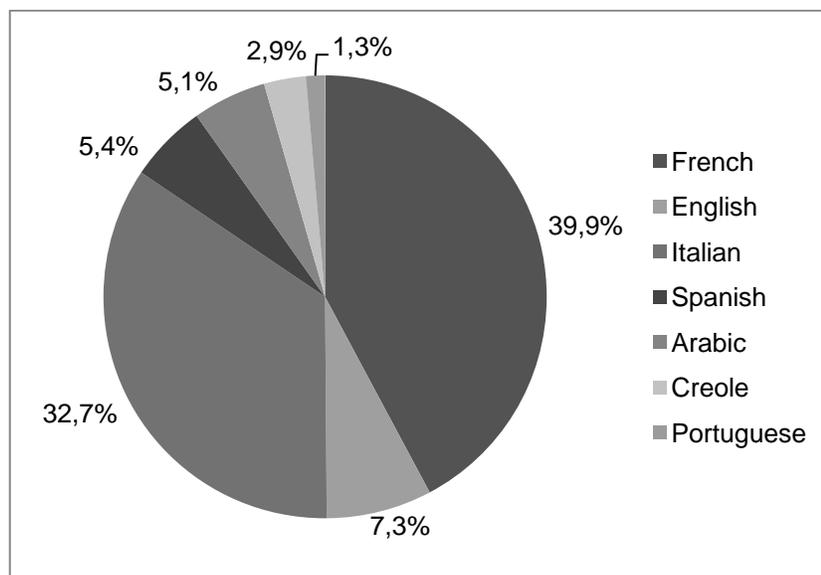

Figure 12   Mother tongue, St. Léonard, 2001 census data

Source: City of Montréal, 2004. Profil socio-économique:
arrondissement de Saint-Léonard

In order to gather community perspectives on St. Léonard, a consultation was held in May 2012. The participants represented local schools, private businesses, residents, community workers, the public health sector, the local paper and politicians. They were primarily people who are part of local organizations and are knowledgeable of the community and its needs.

With respect to social and community life, strengths identified by participants include the welcoming and accepting attitude in the community, many of whom were once newcomers themselves, as well as the many opportunities for networking at cafés, seniors groups, churches and through community organizations. There are also various sports and leisure activities and the community has a strong philanthropic tradition. Challenges however include the difficulties adapting to a multicultural community, particularly for schools and community organizations and the issue of poverty. There is also said to be lack of activities for youth and places for them to socialize. Women and youth also seem to have fewer venues for networking. They are more isolated or have to go to the city center for activities and entertainment. Hopes for the future include more resources for youth in order to maintain and improve community vitality as well as more efforts on the part of community organizations to include multicultural groups.

Concerning education, strengths identified by participants at the consultation include the involvement of parents in their children's education, high-quality school facilities and good partnerships between the schools and other organizations. Challenges mentioned were difficulties such as bullying and racism. Participants expressed concern that Italian students have been used to being the majority throughout their school lives and have not been exposed to or learned to accept different cultures. They may experience culture shock when they go out into the broader world and are exposed to a different socio-cultural environment. Hopes for the future include more involvement on the part of the school board and school staff to deal with issues of bullying and racism as well as more prevention and health promotion. English speakers in the St. Léonard et St. Michel territory are more likely than French speakers to have higher levels of educational attainment.

Concerning health and well-being, strengths identified include the general healthy living habits encouraged in St. Léonard, the Network clinics and the Community Learning Center which offers programs and activities to the English-speaking community. Challenges mentioned were a lack of adapted community programs for the multicultural community, the general lack of health and social service information in English, the lack of mental health services in English and lastly, the inaccessibility of the senior's day center due to long bus rides. Hopes for the future include innovative approaches to working with cultural communities, more translated health and social service documents, more partnerships in order to improve access to health and social services and finally, more forums and community activities that allow the community to learn about what is available to them and to share ideas. Statistics show that seniors make up 19% of the population in St. Léonard and their numbers have increased by 22% in the last five years. Of these seniors 63% are immigrants and 65% did not finish high school. Many seniors in St. Léonard speak neither French nor English. However seniors in St. Léonard are less likely to live alone than are seniors in Montréal (25.6% compared to 36.8%) (Ville de Montréal).

Lastly, in the theme of the environment, assets include the fact that schools participate in environmental activities and education. Also mentioned were St. Léonard's many green spaces, community gardens, aesthetically pleasing buildings and the success in recycling. Challenges mentioned were insufficient green spaces (or a desire for more), deteriorating roads, overflowing public garbage cans and bike paths that need improvement. Some also felt that urban development is causing architecture to become more "city-like". "Walkability" was seen as an issue since there are not crosswalks at every street corner. Hopes for the future include making green spaces more available by transforming paved areas into grass or gardens and improving bike paths from the North to the South part of St. Léonard.

4.1.7   Cross-case observations

The six communities presented above underline the differing realities and issues faced by English speakers in the province. While some of the rural and remote localities are historic English-speaking communities—mainly of Anglo-Saxon origin—the urban communities in the Montréal region are composed of a significant proportion of recent and earlier immigrants whose mother tongue is not English. The challenges identified by community members therefore vary greatly and some of them may well be shared by their French-speaking neighbours. Bonne-Espérance and New Carlisle share a concern for outmigration (temporary and permanent), particularly of their youth, and seek ways to bring them back to the region to strengthen the social fabric and contribute to community vitality. The expense and difficulty of transportation from the Lower North Shore is an added challenge for Bonne-Espérance. These two communities are also mobilized to improve levels of educational attainment and both have a Community Learning Centre that is making the school a vital part of the social and cultural life of the whole community. They both face economic challenges as rates of unemployment and social assistance are high and job opportunities are lacking. Sept-Îles and Laval, by contrast, are both economically dynamic and have good rates of employment, although English speakers do not always fare as well as their French-speaking counterparts.

Language dynamics differ from one community to another as well, but all of them share a concern for ensuring that young people become as bilingual as possible so that they can benefit from educational and economic opportunities and be well equipped to stay in Québec. Indeed, in some communities this was identified as the number one concern. On the other hand, in communities where young people do tend to be bilingual, such as Sept-Îles and St. Léonard, people's sense of belonging to an English-speaking community can be weak and mobilizing them to engage in activities that benefit that community can prove difficult. The ethnic and cultural diversity of the urban communities can also have this effect, creating an environment in which people identify more with their ethno-cultural community than with an official language group. Schools can be a vehicle for creating that sense of shared culture; however not all English speakers can and do send their children to English language schools, in some cases precisely because they want their children to be fluent in French.

Another common issue was providing for the evolving needs of seniors. With the notable exception of Laval, these communities all have a large proportion of seniors among the English-speaking population and often services in English are insufficient to provide for their

needs. Projects to address these needs include day centres, wellness centres, recreational and social activities, 50+ clubs, intergenerational events and more.

In the smaller communities, social and community life was seen to be both enhanced and undermined by the small community size; this can make for a close-knit community that is warm and welcoming, but it also limits the resources available and the social outlets. In larger communities, there are often many more resources and social outlets because of the number of services, clubs and activities available, often for specific clienteles. Educational opportunities for English speakers vary greatly: since youth on the Gaspé Coast, the North Shore and the Lower North Shore have few post-secondary options available in their region, many of them have to live far from home to pursue their education. Although distance learning is available, it was rarely, if ever, mentioned at the community consultations. Of course, in urban centres or regions closer to them such as the Townships, people do not have to move far away to pursue their education.

These observations are based on the six communities selected for community portraits and can provide only a partial view of the many realities experienced by English-speaking communities in Québec. More examples would add detail and nuance to this impressionistic overview.

4.2 COMMUNITY PORTRAITS AS A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH METHOD

The second set of findings for this research project focuses on participatory action research; specifically what forms participation and action took in the project. Here, "participation" refers to the active involvement of various stakeholders in completing the community portraits, while "action" refers to concrete community development initiatives taken by community members based on the issues identified in the process. Since community development strategies generally include intersectoral collaboration and partnership, healthy public policy and capacity building, we will discuss how these strategies apply to English-speaking communities. In community development processes, however, these strategies necessarily take shape differently depending on the history, the social, economic and political dynamics and the actors involved. In addition, local needs can vary significantly, as can the strategic interests of local and regional organizations (Richardson 2012). Participation therefore took on many different forms in this project as we strove for relevance by remaining flexible and adapting the method to the needs of the community.

4.2.1 Forms of participation

As explained in the *Methodology* section above, the CHSSN staff, NPI coordinators and staff of the regional sponsoring organizations were involved in selecting communities and in facilitating the work with them. Then, in each of the six communities, meetings were held between the researchers and various local stakeholders to inform them of the project and identify shared goals and interests. Typically these included municipal employees, health and social service employees (including community organizers employed by CSSS), school or school board representatives, people involved in community organizations (e.g., youth clubs, religious institutions, 50+ Clubs) and employment and economic development organizations. Some of these groups work specifically with English speakers while others work with both

French and English speakers. In urban communities meetings were set up with all stakeholders at once (often well in advance) and a formal presentation was made, whereas in rural and remote communities many of these meetings were held one-on-one and were fairly spontaneous. In one rural community a community development table (a cross-sectoral committee with representatives of various different organizations) made it possible to meet with mostly Francophone organizations. Then, additional members of the English-speaking community were met with individually. These meetings provided an opportunity to make the most of existing information such as past reports, statistics, surveys and other work completed by local and regional organizations. **At this stage, participation mainly involved community organizations, public institutions and other groups. It was intended to achieve buy-in, to raise awareness of the English-speaking community (for those organizations that work mainly with French speakers) and to include their knowledge, understanding and objectives in the process.**

Another level of participation was by English-speaking community members who attended the consultation (town hall meeting or forum) where they shared their perspectives on their community. The participants, however, varied from one place to another; for example, in one of the urban communities the people who were invited to participate in the community consultation were mainly representatives of organizations and not only "average citizens." This was considered to be the most efficient way to get information for the community portrait while consolidating NPI partnerships and providing a venue for different community leaders to share their perspectives.

In the other urban setting, significant resources were invested in getting the participation of as many "ordinary community members" (as opposed to community leaders) as possible. The reason for these differing objectives can be explained partly by the fact that the regional NPI network was quite new and the city's English-speaking population is relatively disparate and has little sense of forming a real "community." Although many average citizens attended the forums, some of them were in fact community leaders, representatives of organizations or people with specific issues or agendas (such as getting better services in English for a handicapped child or an elder, or defending English speakers' rights to specific services).

In two of the smaller rural communities the participants were mainly people already active and involved in the community and they tended to be middle-class; people living in poverty or otherwise socially excluded were less likely to participate. This is mostly an anecdotal impression, since we gathered socio-demographic information in only one community. In all cases, no doubt participation was limited by people's availability, but this was particularly evident in a remote community where many adults work outside the region on a seasonal basis and were therefore unavailable. *At this stage, the community consultations were intended to elicit participation by community members in identifying strengths, challenges and future perspectives for their community, but also to mobilize and engage them in becoming involved in actions to achieve priorities they could set collectively. Their involvement was therefore as research informants, but eventually as full participants in the community development process.*

Another form of participation that was considered desirable was the involvement of the NPI coordinators, the sponsoring association and other stakeholders in analyzing the data and

drafting the community portrait document. In the literature on both community development and participatory action research this is part of the co-learning potential of such projects and can build the knowledge and capacity of researchers, employees of local organizations and community members. In this case, however, authorship by a credible, well-reputed organization (the Institut national de santé publique du Québec) was viewed by the NPI coordinators as an important asset. They felt that it gave them credibility and supported their partnerships with health institutions, municipalities and other organizations. This priority, combined with the challenges of working together at a distance and the time constraints on community organizations, made in-depth involvement at this stage by people other than the research team virtually impossible. As a result*, the portraits were written entirely by INSPQ authors, with some input from the community.*

4.2.2   Benefits to communities

In discussions held with the NPI coordinators and regional association directors involved in this project, they identified five main ways in which they benefited from the process. First was that **new partnerships were created and existing ones were strengthened**. Participating actively in the process of drawing a community portrait afforded an opportunity for the regional organization representing English speakers to collaborate with their municipality and other community stakeholders, some of whom they may have had little previous contact with. This type of project made their partnerships more concrete, since it gave them something to work on. For example, in one urban community, the portrait will be used to form a cross-sector issue table with both the English and French school boards in order to implement new education programs.

Furthermore, it **put the NPI coordinators in touch with community members that they did not previously know** and who could help with projects in the future. For example, a remote community is planning a community conversation on vitality where they will use the portrait as a tool to facilitate discussions. In other communities the consultations provided an opportunity to identify and recruit new volunteers. In another rural community, the regional NPI network was not previously connected to community members and the consultation provided an opportunity to identify and collaborate with some local community leaders. In one of the urban settings English speakers have little sense of belonging to an English-speaking community, or places to meet each other, and the consultation provided that space to meet face-to-face.

Next, as mentioned above, the community portrait was perceived to give the NPI networks (and by extension the English-speaking community) **greater credibility**. The NPI coordinators viewed the portrait as validation by a recognized, independent institute of the work they are doing. In addition, the participation of a mayor, town councillor, health sector director, or other public figures also gave the network and the process credibility. This gives rise to the question "in the eyes of whom?" In terms of funding, partnerships and the success of community-based projects the opinion of public institutions is the most important, because in the Québec context, they are often the ones to provide project funding. But perceptions of credibility among community organizations and community members are also considered important in terms of mobilizing the community and ensuring collaboration.

In addition, those involved in the NPI were able to acquire **new skills and knowledge**, specifically a method for doing a community portrait and techniques for gathering information, which could then be used in other municipalities they cover. Indeed, some NPI networks plan to replicate the process in communities on their territory that they feel could benefit from a similar project, or that they would like to understand better. In these cases, the first community portrait serves as a template for others to come. The portrait also provided some of the social history for understanding the current situation and helped identify segments of the population that were not being reached (for example marginalized or socially excluded groups or certain age groups).

Other stakeholders, some of whom are more closely associated with the Francophone community, also gained **new understandings**. These include participants in community development committees, the municipality, community organizations and various government institutions who saw it as a source of new knowledge on a segment of the population that they may not have known very well, making it an excellent learning opportunity for them. The process gave them a better understanding of the English-speaking population in their region, their needs and realities so they are better able to orient their actions.

4.2.3   Actions being taken

Participatory action research necessarily involves action, although what form that takes depends greatly on the context. In this project, we have identified various types of action that have resulted so far from the community portrait process.

The first set of actions involves **mobilizing the English-speaking population and recruiting volunteers, as well as developing new projects**. In all six communities, the regional NPI network has presented (or plans to present) the portrait findings back to community members and discuss next steps. They also have identified sub-groups to work with (e.g., young mothers, teachers, library staff). For example, in one community they are establishing a seniors' day centre and have hired a music teacher for youth in the community, since access to arts and culture was considered lacking. In another community, people wanted greater access to entertainment in English so a comedy group has been brought in and other entertainment in English is being planned. At this stage, working closely with community members on small "doable" projects that may eventually lead to others seems to be a key strategy.

The second group of actions involves **working with institutional partners on policy and program development, or participating in cross-sector issue tables**, for example. The NPI networks and regional associations are presenting the findings to their regional health partners to raise awareness of health and social issues in the English-speaking population. In one of the urban settings a close collaboration with the CSSS is likely, over time, to result in changes to some policies at the health centre. In several cases (in the rural and remote communities) the findings from the community portrait have contributed to the development of a municipal development plan, a family policy or a seniors' policy (or all of the above). In the case of devitalized municipalities, for example on the Lower North Shore, they are developing a plan for devitalized municipalities and are connecting with other institutions to develop collaborations.

The information gathered through the process of drawing a community portrait will also be used to **apply to government bodies for project funding**. Not only did the process help identify needs and ways to meet them, but in some cases it provided arguments for applying for funds from agencies with which they had no previous contact.

The community portrait will also be used as a **tool to provide information and to raise awareness with the public** more generally, for example, by posting it on websites. In most of the communities, the document will be printed and distributed to partners and other organizations. All the portraits are being made available on the CHSSN website (www.chssn.org) and on a blog created by the project leader to provide information and updates on the work being accomplished (http://qccommunitydevelopment.wordpress.com/).

Another set of outcomes concerns the **development of tools and training for all of the NPI coordinators**. Topics include methods for doing a community portrait, participatory evaluation, research techniques and more.

Finally, another area for action is **continuing to develop a knowledge base by gathering information on different aspects of the community**. As mentioned above, portraits of other municipalities in the region are being planned, resources permitting. In some cases, the regional NPI coordinator wants to do smaller consultations with specific sub-groups of the population, such as youth, middle-aged people or young mothers. In addition, in the process of completing these portraits several issues that are poorly understood came to the attention of the NPI coordinators and they could be of interest for research. Simply tracking the changes that occur as a result of the process is an important aspect of on-going participatory action research. This aspect, regrettably, was not systematically documented, but could be in future work.

4.3   LESSONS ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES IN QUÉBEC

A third set of findings concerns some lessons learned about community development in the context of a minority community, in this case, English-speaking communities in the predominantly French-speaking society of Québec. We have identified ten main lessons and will provide some brief explanations based on the six community portraits completed.

4.3.1   Community means different things to different people

As noted in the *Conceptual Framework* above, "community" is polysemantic and often used for reasons that can be as much political or emotional as they are intellectual. Therefore, community refers to different constructs depending on the context. In Bonne-Espérance on the Lower North Shore, what we have referred to as the community is actually three villages, each of which has its own identity. People have a strong sense of belonging to their village-community, but they also identify strongly with the Coast culture and are proud to be from the Lower North Shore.

In New Carlisle, the community refers to the municipality. Residents identify with their village and to some extent with French speakers from the same area. However, the regional

association, Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA), has identified sense of belonging among English speakers as a problem: they do not feel the same pride and attachment as French speakers do to the Gaspé Coast and, faced with these factors combined with economic realities and linguistic limitations (being able to work in French), many young people leave to study and work outside the region and often outside the province.

In Sept-Îles there is a very small English-speaking population (about 3%) with few places where all community members can gather. With the exception of people from the Lower North Shore who tend not to speak French fluently, English speakers are well-integrated into the Francophone community because of high levels of bilingualism. Many of the unilingual individuals are seniors from the Lower North Shore and they have strong connections through shared activities and interests. The school also provides a place where English speakers can meet each other, although many parents are Francophones or First Nations.

In Sutton, English and French speakers are also quite closely connected; however certain segments of the population feel excluded from the village they grew up in because of social, economic and demographic shifts. English speakers tend to identify with the Townships as a historic and cultural area and this past is valued by English and French speakers alike. The "community" generally refers to all members regardless of language, but the need for specific services in English nonetheless creates a sense of solidarity among English speakers, as it does elsewhere.

In Laval, there seems to be little sense of an English-speaking "community", but there certainly is an English-speaking "population" searching for a greater sense of community cohesion. People's identity seems more tied to their ethno-cultural community of origin (for example Jewish, Greek or Italian) than to their official language group. The community group Agape is trying to bring this population of people—who happen to speak English better than French, often in addition to other languages —together around common issues of concern.

In St-Léonard the "community" refers to a borough of Montréal, one historically founded, developed and inhabited mainly by Italian immigrants. People do not necessarily identify as an "English-speaking" community, but rather as people of Italian (or other) origin who use English in their day-to-day life and very often are trilingual. Their attachment is likely more to their ethno-cultural community of origin and also to their neighbourhood.

In summary, a community is not always geographic, but may be a linguistic or cultural community of belonging, or a community of interest. And that community may be spread over a certain territory, giving it some geographic basis. The degree to which people identify with a geographic community or a community of belonging may vary greatly, as may the degree to which they feel part of the majority (in this case, French-speaking) community. Each case is slightly different and attention to these particularities is an important task when working with different "communities".

4.3.2 Being a minority means different things in different contexts

The sense of being a minority likewise varies across communities. While English speakers compose a minority of the provincial population, in some municipalities they are a majority. For example, in Bonne-Espérance, nearly 100% of the population is English speaking and this is true of many other villages on the Lower North Shore; the feeling of being a minority is related both to being largely unilingual English speakers in a French-speaking province, but also to being from a remote region which has historically been on the margins economically and politically. In New Carlisle as well, English speakers compose a majority, although they are a minority in the region. In Sutton, for example, English speakers have become a minority over time, yet the fact that many people are bilingual and services are fairly easy to obtain in English reduces their sense of marginalization. Sept-Îles presents a different case with its small English-speaking population and relatively recent history. In Laval and St. Léonard many residents are minorities on several levels: as English speakers, as members of an ethnic, religious or cultural minority group, as visible minorities or others. In addition many residents speak both French and English, often in addition to their mother tongue.

4.3.3 Territory has a different meaning for minority groups

While majority communities may identify easily with their municipality, CSSS territory, regional county municipality (MRC) or other territorial community, these divisions do not always have meaning for English speakers, for example because the entities governing them (municipal council, board of directors) are not felt to represent their population. There can be many reasons for this lack of connection: English speakers do not always reside in relatively homogeneous territorial communities; they may be spread out across larger territories that are not represented by any governing body; they may be a very small proportion of the population and have little voice; or they may identify with a historic community or neighbourhood that is only a small segment of the municipality. For public health this means that CSSS territories do not always correspond to a coherent community with which one can interact for community development purposes. It also means that social, cultural, ethnic and linguistic identities, as well as different social networks and dynamics must be taken into consideration in community development actions.

Paule Simard (2009 [2011]) aptly points this out with regard to the healthy communities movement:

> "For individuals, the municipality as a political entity is not always very meaningful, especially in large urban areas. A community is more often the environment where people lead their daily lives, be it their parish, their neighbourhood or their town. Considered in this light, communities are spatially defined areas that have meaning for the people who live there, but whose contours remain somewhat vague and do not necessarily correspond to official administrative boundaries.
>
> It is important to remember that every individual belongs to a number of different communities, whether they are geography or affinity-based, and these communities all interweave and overlap."

4.3.4 English-speaking communities in Québec are diverse

As the six community portraits demonstrate, English-speaking communities in Québec are diverse from many points of view. They are diverse in origin (Channel Islanders, Loyalists, Italians, Jews, Greeks, South Asians, Africans and more). They are linguistically diverse: some speak English as a mother tongue, others as an official language for communications outside their group, some speak English at home and some speak many languages. Their sense of belonging and identity are likewise diverse, some identifying as English speakers, some as Anglophones, some as Italian Canadians, some as Coasters, etc. They are also diverse in their geographic realities (remote, isolated, rural, small town, larger remote town, urban neighbourhood, suburban city) and economic conditions. This obvious fact can be forgotten when outmoded myths of English Quebecers (as White Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the most stereotypical case) prevail. It also is important to underline the fact that in many cases, similarities in lifestyle, history, socio-economic conditions and more create bonds between English and French speakers from the same region (Gaspesians, Coasters, Townshippers, etc.).

4.3.5 Despite this diversity, community hubs are often similar

Although English-speaking communities are diverse in all these ways, community life centres on many of the same institutions: schools, churches, community learning centres, clubs (Legion, Lion's Club, Women's institute, etc.) and community organizations. Outside Montréal, large institutions serving English speakers are fewer in number and these smaller, local entities are therefore vital to community life for English speakers. While this is undoubtedly also the case for French speakers, when the English-speaking population is very small the church and the school may be the only meeting places for them.

4.3.6 Community organizations are central in community development

For community organizers and other health and social service workers, it is important to keep in mind that the municipality may not be the best contact point or structure for implementing community development, nor is the CSSS. Local community organizations that represent English speakers seem to be the natural and logical contact point for community development initiatives; then partnerships and connections can be built with municipalities and other organizations such as the Centre local de développement (CLD) or the Conférence Régionale des Élus (CRÉ). Municipalities and CSSS need to create ties to these organizations in working with the English-speaking community if they do not have those connections at the outset.

4.3.7 English speakers in Québec have different health and social service needs than the French-speaking majority

To varying degrees depending on the local context, English speakers in Québec have different health and social service needs than the French-speaking majority. When rates of out-migration, ageing, income and education are different than the French-speaking majority, as is often the case, the health and social service needs are not the same. In addition, English speakers may not be used to using Francophone services so greater outreach is required to contact them.

Some outdated myths again can prevent adequate responses to these needs from being developed. Statistics show that the historic gains and advantages of English-speaking Quebecers have eroded over recent years while French speakers have made progress (for example in life expectancy, income, or educational attainment) (Lussier 2012).

4.3.8   Socio-economic disparities are greater among English than French speakers

Recent research (INSPQ 2012) has shown that in general, across the province, the income gap among English speakers is greater than among French speakers and the gap is widest among men in Montréal. English speakers have higher average incomes than French speakers, but wealth is not equitably distributed. In fact, a greater proportion of English speakers than French speakers lives under the low-income cut-off and the gap is widening. English speakers outside major urban centres often have poor socio-economic conditions, but the gap between the rich and the poor is smaller than in cities. One can imagine that social connections within communities can be a challenge when there are large socio-economic disparities, in addition to diverse social, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. Community development initiatives therefore face specific obstacles related to this potential lack of cohesion among "English speakers".

4.3.9   Community development strategies must be adapted to these realities

Community development strategies generally include community engagement and participation, intersectoral collaboration, healthy public policy and capacity building. **Participation** can be a challenge because of the greater proportion of seniors among the English-speaking population, higher rates of youth out-migration and a corresponding lack of volunteers. This has been documented in other reports, such as Nathalie Kischuk's work (2010) in the Townships. It cannot be assumed that a large percentage of the population can be mobilized, nor that the English-speaking population is similar to the French-speaking population.

In addition, the time necessary to stimulate mobilization is an on-going challenge for many groups involved in community development. Even community consultations requiring little commitment can be taxing when people feel they have already given their point of view in many other forms (surveys, questionnaires, focus groups and more). Similar observations regarding the challenges of maintaining commitment and clear intent have been made in a Community Search Conference project carried out in the Eastern Townships (de Guerre *et al.* 2011).

In terms of **intersectoral collaboration**, English-speaking organizations may collaborate well between sectors but the challenge is connecting English-speaking to majority Francophone institutions and organizations. Collaboration between the community sector and public sector organizations may be difficult, simply because they sometimes do not know each other well. In some cases, political positions may hamper partnerships, for example if Francophone institutions are ideologically opposed to providing services in English, or if English speakers are seen as privileged or self-sufficient (Blumel & Ravensbergen 2011).

Designing **healthy public policy** can be difficult when the English-speaking community is not well-connected to government structures (be they municipal, regional or provincial), but when that connection is there and the community is small it can be remarkable easy. The difference is striking between small towns where English speakers have historically been a part of the municipal structure and larger cities or towns where English speakers are a very small percentage of the population. In the former, often there are councillors who are English speaking and the municipality is accessible, people know each other. In the latter, a lot of awareness raising needs to be done and it takes time and resources to build connections.

Capacity building is an integral part of community development and the portrait process was a good opportunity for groups to get to know a community better and for the community to identify issues of concern and plan for future actions. Certainly it is important that any community portrait be done with local groups and individuals for capacity building to happen. It is also worth pointing out that knowledge is transferred not only from researchers and "experts" to local community members or employees of organizations, but also, importantly, in the other direction. Clearly, community or "field" knowledge is as important as academic or statistical knowledge and brings both in-depth and everyday understandings about the community in dialogue with other types of data. In this project the capacity and knowledge of all those involved was enhanced.

4.3.10   Capacity building must benefit a broader community of practice

Ideally, capacity building should benefit a broader community of practice, not just the individual communities involved in doing a portrait. Although specific communities benefited from the process of doing a community portrait, the intention was that the lessons learned and tools developed would benefit the whole CHSSN network. Several means were used to do this: a blog called Québec community development, a document on how to do a community portrait, documents on research techniques and training sessions. This is an on-going objective and one that requires opportunities and innovative approaches to share knowledge among disparate groups working on similar themes.

4.3.11   Summary

Various strategies have been developed by the CHSSN network to contend with the complexities of community development work in such diverse contexts. The community portrait process also adopted similar strategies. A first lesson is that communities must be allowed to define their own priorities based on local needs and concerns. While this may sound banal, health and social services are not generally managed in this way and it may require a shift in organizational culture for communities and their partners to develop mechanisms for setting priorities from the ground up. This is important because community mobilization and public participation are unlikely to take place unless community members feel invested in the actions being planned, many of which may require volunteer hours.

A second lesson is that in acting on local concerns, even when they may seem of questionable interest (for instance, because they seem too minor or not directly related to health and well-being), sometimes much larger issues are indirectly addressed, such as obesity, mental health problems or social exclusion. For example, a community may choose

as its priority to improve a local park, but in doing so may create a place where community members meet informally, thus encouraging social connections; children and youth may be more physically active; a small business located near the park may become more viable; young mothers may set a date for their children to play together, and more. Moreover, smaller projects are easier to get off the ground and can result in more immediate and visible success than larger ones, giving momentum to community development initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The project that is the object of this report was part of an initiative for developing knowledge on the English-speaking population of Québec. It concerns community development, as practiced in the public health sector in Québec, aiming to act on health determinants and to reduce social health inequalities by empowering individuals and communities through strategies such as collaboration and partnership, intersectoral action and community engagement. A participatory action research approach was adopted in order to simultaneously generate relevant knowledge and understandings about English-speaking communities in Québec and to provide tools and training to a province-wide network of "networking and partnership initiatives". Ultimately, this project aimed to explore how a community development approach could take into account the realities of minority groups such as English-speaking communities in Québec. In other words, what can we learn about community development by working with English-speaking communities in Québec?

Six communities in different areas of the province, representing very different socio-economic, demographic and geographic realities, were selected to take part in this project. Community portraits were completed with each of these communities and priorities for action were identified by local community members. In addition, these portraits provide a detailed, field-level description of a small number of communities, illustrating the diversity of English-speaking communities in Québec. This view can help to add nuance to some commonly-held perceptions of English-speaking Quebecers, for example that they are of British origin, that they are wealthy and well-educated and that as a community they are self-reliant and have their own institutions. While this may be true of some of the province's English speakers, it does not adequately represent the many sub-communities that are multicultural and multiracial, particularly in the Montréal area. As many English-speaking Quebecers have migrated out of the province in recent decades and new immigrants have arrived in Québec (some of whom speak English), this diversity has only increased over time. In socio-economic terms, realities also vary greatly by region and historically, as there is both wealth and poverty among English speakers; indeed, socio-economic disparities are greater among English speakers than among French speakers, particularly in the greater Montréal region.

The project was conceived as a participatory action research process, with participation taking several different forms over time. In initiating the process of doing community portraits, the CHSSN staff, NPI coordinators and staff of the regional sponsoring organizations were involved in selecting communities and in facilitating the work with them. In each of the selected communities, meetings were held between the researchers and various local stakeholders to inform them of the project, to identify shared goals and interests and to pool existing information. These stakeholders included people from various sectors: the municipality, health and social services, education, community organizations and economic development organizations. Other relevant community members were also included at this stage.

Participation also involved community members attending a community consultation where they discussed different facets of their community: its strengths and challenges and their vision for the future. The community portrait was later presented back to the community and priorities for action were identified. In this way, community members could also play an active

role in implementing some of the ideas that emerged through collective conversation. The degree to which this takes place remains to be seen; however, it was clear throughout the process that it was difficult to reach the whole community, as people who are more marginalized (often because of socio-economic status) tended to be less involved. Means other than community consultations would better serve the objective of including community members who are unlikely to attend such an event and speak in public.

In the academic literature on participatory action research, participation also is intended to involve community members and other stakeholders in collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data. Due to the challenges of working at a distance, with six communities simultaneously, as well as the limited time available to employees of community organizations, these steps were completed mainly by the research team. In this sense, an "ideal" level of participation, as defined in the academic literature, was difficult to achieve.

Still, even if the process was not as participatory as one might wish it to be, the benefits are very positive. The NPI coordinators and regional association directors were able to create new partnerships and strengthen existing ones and the project gave them something concrete to collaborate on. In addition, the process of doing a community portrait gave communities an opportunity meet face-to-face and put the NPI coordinators in touch with community members that they did not previously know. The community portrait was also perceived to give the NPI networks (and by extension the English-speaking community) greater credibility, making it easier to develop partnerships, apply for funding and mobilize community members. In addition, NPI employees were able to acquire new skills and knowledge (specifically a method for doing a community portrait and techniques for gathering information), which could then be used in other municipalities in their region. Likewise, participants in local committees, the municipality, community organizations and various government institutions gained a better understanding of the English-speaking population in their region.

The community portraits completed for the project provide six examples of diversity. Each of these communities is different from the others. Bonne-Espérance on the Lower North Shore of the Saint Lawrence is a remote community with a range of challenges related to its distance from the rest of the province, few employment and educational opportunities and a mostly unilingual population. Sept-Îles is also remote, but is a much larger town with a range of services and easier access to the rest of the province. The challenges for the 3% of the population that is English-speaking are related mainly to post-secondary educational opportunities, creating a sense of community among English speakers and ensuring services for unilingual seniors.

Two of the communities are considered rural: New Carlisle on the Gaspé Coast and Sutton in the historical Eastern Townships. Both have significant proportions of English speakers who descend largely from Loyalists and other settlers. While New Carlisle is far from major urban centres and faces challenges in economic and educational opportunities, Sutton is close to Montréal and has a relatively high standard of living, although there are pockets of poverty that affect English speakers.

The last two communities are urban: Saint-Léonard in the east end of Montréal and the city of Laval. Again, although both are in the Montréal area, these two communities are very

different. Saint-Léonard has historically been a largely Italian community with strong institutional structures and a strong sense of community. Many of the English speakers know French and often a third language as well. This neighbourhood is undergoing many changes as new populations move in and the community make-up is shifting. Laval has a growing, and very diverse, English-speaking population with many young people. Creating a sense of belonging among English speakers as well as creating places for them to meet remains a challenge. Ensuring access to services in English is a concern for community members as is the inclusion of English speakers in the many economic opportunities of this dynamic city.

These six communities underline the differing realities and issues faced by English speakers in the province. While some of the rural and remote localities are historic English-speaking communities—mainly of Anglo-Saxon origin—the urban communities in the Montréal region are composed of a significant proportion of recent and earlier immigrants whose mother tongue is not English. The challenges identified by community members therefore vary greatly and some of them may well be shared by their French-speaking neighbours.

English speakers in Bonne-Espérance and New Carlisle share a concern for outmigration (temporary and permanent)—particularly of their youth—and seek ways to bring them back to the region to strengthen the social fabric and contribute to community vitality. Since youth on the Gaspé Coast, the North Shore and the Lower North Shore have few post-secondary options available in their region, many of them have to live far from home to pursue their education and some settle permanently outside the region where they grew up. This is not the case for young people in the Montréal area and is also less true in the Townships.

Language dynamics differ from one community to another as well, but all of them share a concern for ensuring that young people become as bilingual as possible so that they can benefit from educational and economic opportunities and be well equipped to stay in Québec. In communities where young people do tend to be bilingual, such as Sept-Îles and St. Léonard, people's sense of belonging to an English-speaking community can be weak and mobilizing them to engage in activities that benefit that community can prove difficult. The ethnic and cultural diversity of the urban communities can also have this effect, creating an environment in which people identify more with their ethno-cultural community than with an official language group. Schools can be a vehicle for creating that sense of shared culture; however not all English speakers can and do send their children to English language schools, in some cases precisely because they want their children to be fluent in French.

Another common issue was providing for the evolving needs of seniors. With the notable exception of Laval, these communities all have a large proportion of seniors among the English-speaking population and often services in English are insufficient to provide for their needs.

Several lessons concerning community development initiatives can be drawn from this project. The first is that "community" means different things to different people. It can be a geographically-based definition that refers to a municipality, a village, a town or a historically-constituted territory. It can also refer to a linguistic or cultural community of identity. The degree to which people identify with a geographic community or a community of belonging may vary greatly, as may the degree to which they feel part of the majority (in this case, French-speaking) community. Communities are all too often conceptualized as

homogeneous units that are not stratified by gender, class or ethnicity, whereas social stratification is a reality that must be taken into consideration in community development work. Likewise, it is also important to bear in mind that communities do not exist in isolation from broader social, political and economic forces.

The sense of being a minority also means different things depending on context. While the groups in this project were all English-speaking "minorities", in some cases they constituted a majority of the local population. In remote locations, the sense of being a minority may be as much related to being on the margins geographically, economically and politically as it is to being a member of a linguistic minority. In multicultural contexts, the sense of being a minority may be more related to one's ethnic, religious or cultural group, one's skin colour or one's ability to communicate in French or English. Territory also has a different meaning for minority groups, since majority institutions and their geographic divisions (such as CSSS territories, MRCs or municipalities) may not mesh very well with the lived boundaries of English-speaking or other minority communities.

As the six community portraits demonstrate, English-speaking communities in Québec are diverse from many points of view: in their origins, in terms of their mother tongue, in their sense of belonging and identity, their geographic realities and their economic conditions. In some cases, they may have as much or more in common with their French-speaking neighbours than with English-speakers from outside their region. However, in many contexts the hubs of the community remain schools, churches, community learning centres, clubs and community organizations. Indeed, local community organizations that represent English speakers seem to be the natural and logical contact point for community development initiatives (rather than municipalities or health and social service centres, for instance).

It is important to keep in mind the specific situation of English speakers. For instance, because rates of out-migration, ageing, income and education are often different for English speakers than for French speakers, their health and social service needs are not the same. In addition, socio-economic disparities are greater among English speakers in Québec than among French speakers; in other words they are more likely to be both at the higher and the lower ends of the spectrum and a greater proportion of English speakers than French speakers lives under the low-income cut-off. Community development initiatives therefore face specific obstacles related to this potential lack of cohesion among "English speakers". Community development strategies must adapt to the challenges that the demographic and socio-economic realities of English-speaking communities present to participation, intersectoral collaboration and capacity building.

In this participatory action research project with English-speaking communities in Québec, the lessons learned argue for an adapted and sensitive approach to community development based on detailed work with communities. Researchers interested in this approach could achieve this by conducting community-based research that sheds light on the complexity of community as well as the diversity that often exists within communities, while paying attention to the broader social, political and economic influences that shape local conditions. In this way, they can contribute to a better understanding of the nuances of specific communities while helping to assess community needs, assets, and ways to empower individuals and the communities of which they are a part.

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