

NCSA on the Podium with Gold!

When they launched their new project to offer patients the services of a liaison agent at the Sept-Îles hospital with **Sharon Shecanapish-Tardif** as the first agent, the leaders of the North Shore Community Association (NSCA) were confident it was going to be a success.

“Sharon is perfect for the role of interpretation and accompaniment for Naskapi and English-speaking patients and their families,” says **Jody Lessard**, Executive Director of NCSA. “We knew it was a great practice – we knew it right away!”

Now that confidence in the service has been seconded by Accreditation Canada, the national not-for-profit standards and accreditation agency that “work(s) with health care organizations to help them improve quality, safety, and efficiency so they can offer you the best possible care and service” according to its website.

Accreditation Canada has just deemed four CHSSN NPI initiatives as “commendable practices” and will now post them on its website for consultation by health professionals and community advocates across

Canada and around the world in a searchable data base at <https://accreditation.ca>. The four initiatives were Jeffery Hale Community Partners’ SNACS and *Guichet unique* projects, CHSSN’s Community Health Education Program, as well as NCSA’s interpretation and accompaniment agent.

“I was thrilled with the result of this effort to transfer knowledge from NPIs to the rest of the country,” says **Mylène Kosseim**, the consultant who worked with CHSSN on this project. Mylène is a trained health professional and expert and advocate in health and social services performance evaluation and knowledge translation based in Ottawa. She has worked with CHSSN networks for more than two years.

“I was aware of great things happening with the NPIs,” says Mylène. “We think they deserve recognition, of course, but we also want to emphasize with all our local partners that building impact assessment into their work makes it that much more effective and powerful as a source of evidence for

service improvement and advocacy.”

All projects and practices submitted to Accreditation Canada go through a peer review process that is recognized by all major health care systems and institutions in Canada as the gold standard for evaluating quality of care.

“It’s a major accomplishment by these NPIs,” says Mylène. “Less than a third of all submissions are evaluated as sufficiently innovative and robust to be designated as ‘commendable practices’. When NPIs come to a CISSS or CIUSSS table with this recognition it will boost their credibility even higher.”

In Sept-Îles, those discussions with the health system haven’t taken place yet, but Jody says the reaction has been very positive with the volunteer leadership of the community.

“When the Chair of our Board, **Debbie Laurie**, got the news it was just after the Summer Olympics,” remembers Jody. “She said, ‘This is a pure gold medal for us!’ We’re all a bit surprised but very proud of this national recognition for a really successful local project.”

The Chronicles of Gloria

“No question,” says **Jim Carter**, CHSSN’s policy and program advisor, “**Gloria Ménard** is part of the founders’ group of CHSSN. She built NetLink into a visible expression of what it means to be a network. It’s

not just the thirteen years’ worth of twice annual publications about our work which have informed us and tied us together that made NetLink so important for us, but the direct communication and relationships

she created across Quebec.”

“Gloria has been an amazing mirror for our community,” agrees **Jennifer Johnson**, Executive Director of CHSSN. “She allows us to see

The Chronicles cont'd...

ourselves from another perspective and that's been invaluable for me as the lead staff person and for our organization as a whole."

After thirteen years of researching, writing, and publishing CHSSN NetLink, Gloria is stepping aside from the task. She says it's been a labour of love and an inspiration.

"All I do is talk to angels!" she says with a laugh. "It's nothing but a pleasure working with CHSSN people – they take on so much, especially given their small numbers in so many parts of the province. And they have made a great difference in people's lives - they're really inspiring."

Gloria has a long-lasting involvement reporting on health and social services for English-speaking Quebecers. Along with NetLink, she produced the Red Feather Forum, a quarterly bulletin with a particular focus on Montreal health and social services institutions that she's written and edited since 1986 and that she says shares the same philosophy as NetLink on how communications can become a vehicle for the creation and reinforcement of a network of community activism. These publications, however, are just one small element in a varied and impressive life of professional involvement in community based activism.

Born in Montreal, Gloria's first ancestor in Quebec "crossed the Atlantic with Montcalm 'to fight the

English,'" as she reported in a recent profile in a Montreal newspaper. She grew up in the Maritimes and studied chemistry and physics at university. But life in a lab was not for her and she quickly combined her science background with a talent for writing, working for many years for Alcan before launching her own communications firm.

Well-known and appreciated by CHSSN members and networks for her knowledge and insight into health and social services in Quebec, she is equally renowned for her environmental activism in Montreal. As a writer and broadcaster but also through her hands-on involvement in municipal politics, she became a founding member of Friends of the Mountain/ *Les amis de la montagne*, a powerful player in the struggle for responsible development in downtown Montreal and a critical force to protect Mount Royal's green spaces and historic architecture. The protection of Mount Royal remains a passionate concern of hers as do the communities she came to know through NetLink and the work of CHSSN that helps bind them together.

When she reflects on the path of CHSSN since its founding she points to the "fantastic diplomacy" that she sees at the heart of its success.

"They're always a step ahead, able to respond to any obstacle calmly and with alternatives that make sense to decision makers as well as to community members," Gloria says. "They can show how an idea

works at the local and provincial level."

She expresses some concern, however about where things are headed after the adoption of Bill 10.

"It's staggering, the rate of disappearance of community linked people in the institutions," she says. "We've lost wonderfully talented people in the administration of establishments critical for us. The participation of the community is largely gone too. The foundations and owner corporations that remain are all helter-skelter."

But her confidence in CHSSN's ability to respond to changing times has not flagged, thanks largely to the strategic ability of key leaders like Jim Carter.

"He can see forty-five moves down the road," she marvels. "It says an awful lot about that organization that they have managed federal, provincial, and local bureaucracies so well and built their amazing networks in times of such change and unrelenting pressure on English-speaking communities and institutions."

The admiration is reciprocal for Jim.

"She is truly our chronicler," he says, "recording all our diverse activity and making people feel they're part of a common effort even when they're not in direct partnership on a project. It's a real gift and we've been fortunate to have her with us for the first thirteen years of this journey."

New Digs and New Opportunities in Deux-Montagnes

"Of course, change is always hard," says **Lisa Agombar**, Executive Director of the 4 Korners Family Resource Center in Deux-

Montagnes, looking around her new offices, "but it's good!"

Driven primarily by financial pressures on her organization's

budget as it tries to serve English speaking communities across five MRC territories, from the Ottawa River all the way Mont-Tremblant,

New Digs cont'd...

4 Korners' Executive Director approached the town of Deux-Montagnes to see if the municipality could help. The response was positive and affirming.

"They invited us to use space in the town's community centre for free for our office and for meeting rooms," says Lisa, "Of course, that validates our mandate to serve English-speaking residents of Deux-Montagne, but the municipality's support also recognizes our regional responsibility through the Laurentians English-speaking Advisory Network (LESAN) and our two satellite offices in Ste-Agathe-des-Monts and Lachute."

4 Korners focuses on family life in Deux-Montagnes and the Laurentians, working to connect young families, seniors and others to services and programming that can support and enrich English-speaking residents' quality of life. It sponsors recreational activities like Tai Chi,

yoga, and scrapbooking as well as programming for families, especially those with young children, that is designed to overcome isolation and reduce vulnerability.

The new, more affordable home base in the Centre Communautaire de Deux-Montagnes allows these efforts to continue and gives 4 Korners a dependable springboard to drive programming across the Laurentians.

For example, a new initiative this year in Ste-Agathe called "Kids, Let's Talk" will adapt a successful program from another MRC designed to help parents with early language stimulation for children under five years of age. 4 Korners has a mandate to bring this kind of programming to isolated communities within its territory.

"Our big project now," says Lisa, "is a continuation and expansion of our partnership with nursing and dental students from John Abbott College to bring preventive health care and health information to towns

where such services are rare or non-existent for English-speaking residents."

Last March and April, 4 Korners and its John Abbott partners held half-day sessions in Deux-Montagnes, Kanasatake, Ste-Agathe, Lachute, Grenville, Gore, Arundel, and Morin Heights. The plan for 2016-2017 is to expand to at least two more communities and to hold health and wellness sessions in these 10 communities annually.

"Community reaction to this project was very good – this is hot now in the Laurentians!" says Lisa. "We've always had great response when we bring health information to local communities, as we continue to do with our CHEP information sessions in Lachute. This extends our reach and connects with many more people."

"We're still looking for some things in the moving boxes," she laughs, "but I'm feeling good about our new home."

Youth in Need of Attention

The Government of Quebec has been actively developing a new youth policy for the province designed to guide decision-making and public investment until the year 2030 in its programming for young people.

The first indications in early 2016 were encouraging that the English-speaking community and the specific needs of Anglophone youth would be better recognized than they were in previous youth policy statements. CHSSN and some of its partners have been tracking this issue closely for a number of years given its importance for the future of our local communities.

As a result of this openness by the government and the clear expression of continuing interest by the English-speaking community, CHSSN and two networks - Townshippers Association and CASA - launched a focused effort to articulate the needs of youth in our community in concrete terms.

Three priority areas were identified (mental health, school perseverance, and employment) and strategies to address them were proposed.

The response to this representation was positive and CHSSN has been working with its partners in

the community and with the Youth Secretariat of the Government of Quebec to design a pilot project for English-speaking youth for potential implementation in 2017.

It's a cliché (but no less true for being one) that our future rests with our young people. Our communities face notable challenges in convincing our youth to live happily and prosperously in this province, especially in its regions.

Watch for developments on this front

– we're hoping for good news.

Gaspé's English-speaking and First Nation's Communities Collaborate on Mental Health

The event is the first of its kind in the Gaspésie and eastern Quebec. The Mental Health and Addictions Forum in Chandler on November 3, 2016, is billed as “one day of true and honest exchanges about stigmas, barriers, and solutions.”

Thanks to the energy of long-time community activist **Cynthia Dow**, the event unites local partners - CASA, Vision Gaspé-Percé Now, and the CISSS de la Gaspésie – with CHSSN and with First Nation's collaborators in a collective effort “for the well-being of the First Nation and English-speaking communities of the Gaspésie.”

“Over the past year, we created a Mental Health and Addictions Task Force with representation from the aboriginal and English-speaking communities,” says Cynthia. “We found that there are a lot of shared issues, especially concerning access to services, but also in terms of awareness and attitudes to mental health.”

Gesgapegiag Health and

Community Services is ensuring that a First Nation's perspective is integrated into the day. Organizers are hoping that the model of a full day of presentations and “world café” style discussions among participants from the community and from the health care system will have the same positive impact as a similar event in 2006 that led to the development of the local NPI.

“People are often shocked to learn that the number of people who face mental health and addiction challenges is so high,” says Cynthia. “Several studies have shown that at least 50% of Canadians face a mental health issue at some point in their lives. Right now, the resources that are available to people struggling with a mental health or addiction problem are very inadequate for the needs that we know exist here.”

As an example, she compares the twelve beds available for residential addiction services for the 200,000 people living in the

Gaspésie and Eastern Quebec with almost as many beds for similar cases in neighboring northern New Brunswick with a population of just 35,000. Compounding the inadequacy is the fact that the dozen beds in Quebec are all in institutions that are not staffed to help patients in English.

“We hope to kick start positive change by creating a conversation between health care providers and people in the aboriginal and English-speaking communities,” says Cynthia. “We've had lots of encouragement from local partners as well as AMI-Quebec and CHSSN and a very good response from the public health system. As a first step, we need to understand what's happening in our communities right now, but we also want to begin imagining solutions.”

For more information on the event and its impact, check in on the [Vision Gaspé-Percé Now Facebook page](#) for news and updates.

members and their neighbours face.”

There are about 1,500 English-speaking farmers in Quebec living in all regions of the province. About one third of them are members of the QFA and all 1,500 receive the organization's monthly newspaper, *The Advocate*. The QFA is a member association of CHSSN (www.quebecfarmers.org).

“Our former Executive Director, Ivan Hale, sits on the board of directors

of Help Age Canada,” explains Dougal. “He saw the opportunity to partner with them to bring Help Age's RISE campaign to English-speaking farmers in Quebec.”

RISE stands for “Reach Isolated Seniors Everywhere”, a national campaign against social isolation. Help Age says that “over a million Canadian seniors report they are lonely and don't participate frequently in any social activity.

Social isolation can lead to a wide range of health and emotional

The QFA cont'd...

problems that can eventually force a person to the emergency room. This problem exists everywhere in Canada ... and will only increase unless more is done to address these issues.” See <http://helpagecanada.ca/where-we-work/canada/> for details about RISE.

The QFA is the only formal partner that represents official language

The Power of the Law

It's not surprising that an organization dedicated to making the law accessible to ordinary citizens would have several “Plain Language Specialists” on staff.

“It's a bit of an odd title,” laughs **Sarah Dougherty**, Plain Language Specialist with Éducaloi, “but it really describes what we do – we try to explain the law in plain language so that ordinary citizens understand the legal system and how to access it.”

Sarah and Éducaloi have been connected to CHSSN and its network partners for several years and Sarah had presented at CHSSN gatherings a number of times. **Sharleen Sullivan**, Executive Director of Neighbours in Rouyn-Noranda remembers these presentations well.

“When I heard Sarah, I said to myself, ‘Hey, there's a big gap in our knowledge here,’” says Sharleen. “At the same time, I felt I needed to challenge Éducaloi to do more in the regions of Quebec.”

Sarah accepted the challenge and using the CHSSN community mobilization model developed a pilot project that took the CHSSN

minority groups in the campaign and is using *The Advocate* to raise awareness about the issue and to encourage Canadians to reach out and connect with an older person.

November 6 is the end of daylight savings time this year and as we turn back our clocks, the QFA and Help Age Canada are inviting us to participate in “a day of national recognition and action,” reaching out and breaking the

– Éducaloi relationship “to the next level.” With money from Justice Canada's commitment to the Road Map for Official Languages, a pilot project was developed with 4 Korners, Neighbours, and CASA.

The participating groups agreed to undertake five specific actions with the support of Éducaloi that are designed to connect English-speaking citizens to better knowledge of and access to Quebec's legal system. These five actions include developing a bank of local lawyers and notaries able to provide services in English, going into local schools to make teachers and students aware of the resources available from Éducaloi for young people, and integrating very basic referral services to the legal system into their own programming.

Éducaloi used a variety of means to support these efforts including the provision of documentation, staff training, educational materials, and video conferencing for community-based legal workshop sessions.

“We learned a lot!” says Sharleen. “The video conferencing was especially popular here in Rouyn-Noranda. The workshops we held

isolation of older Canadians in our neighborhoods.

“We're relying on the goodwill of members of the farming community,” says Dougal. “Our colleagues at the Quebec farmers union, the UPA, often observe that the volunteer spirit is strong among English speaking farmers. We want to direct some of that volunteer energy where it can make a real difference in people's lives.”

drew 25-30 people each time and there was a broad range of ages and specific interests.”

The program will continue this year with Éducaloi adding three more community organizations to this burgeoning network – MCDC in Chaudière-Appalaches, Heritage Lower St. Lawrence, and the North Shore Community Organization.

“This is really exciting for us,” says Sarah. “We can reach people through this kind of community partnership that we could never touch otherwise. The CHSSN community mobilization model works well and CHSSN and local organization staff have been extremely generous with their expertise and insight into how to get things done.”

“Empowering!” adds Sharleen. “If I had to describe the impact of this pilot project on our organization and our community in just one word, it would be ‘empowering.’ People who participated aren't afraid now. They know the basics – their rights, their obligations, where to turn for more information online or for local professional help. Our communities need this.”

Refreshing the Road Map

The Government of Canada is “on the last lap” of an extensive process of consultation and analysis as it prepares to draw a renewed Road Map for Official Languages. Already, a number of CHSSN partners have contributed to the review process. CHSSN leadership says all indications are encouraging for ongoing strong commitment to supporting community vitality.

“This is a critical time, however, for all programming that is supported by funding provided by the Road Map,” says **Jennifer Johnson**, Executive Director of CHSSN. “This review and renewal touches many departments – Canadian Heritage and Health Canada are the most important for us and for our members. The community has to step up and take advantage of any opportunity to participate in the consultative process and provide evidence that the results merit the investment.”

Health Canada, for example, recently launched an online survey to enrich its understanding of the impact of the dollars that have flowed to Official Languages Minority Communities in support of health and social services related efforts to enhance vitality.

Health Canada’s investigation and evaluation will continue until the end of 2016. The mid-term evaluation of the current Road Map investments in health has been published and it’s very positive – so that’s encouraging to CHSSN.

The Wheels on the Bus

What’s the best way to bring a scattered, rural English-speaking population together?

For the new Montérégie West Community Network (MWCN), you hire a bus, fill it full of enthusiastic community members from one town, and go and visit the neighbours.

That’s one strategy that volunteer president **Pauline Wiedow** and the other leaders of the MWCN have adopted to put people from Chateaugay in contact with people in Huntingdon and to start to build positive energy and closer links among English-speaking residents across the region.

The destination was the Open House Day at the Huntingdon Adult Education and Community Centre (HA ECC) of the New Frontiers School Board on May 19th.

“It was such a great success!” says Pauline. “People couldn’t believe it—the welcome, the tour of the high tech greenhouse, the seedlings and plants for sale, and the wonderful lunch made by the students.”

HA ECC has an excellent professional horticulture vocational program that was showcased at the Open House but programming for special needs students at the Centre as well as kiosks from area

community organizations like the Howick Family Health Co-op were also featured.

“It was a fun event that helped us all see the benefits of closer ties,” says Pauline as her organization transitions from the Chateaugay English Community Network to the more broadly based MWCN. “The bus was packed even fuller coming home, with tomato plants and flats of annuals at everyone’s feet.”

MWCN has planned more “shuttle diplomacy” to build links across Montérégie West with a “Valley Tour” at the end of September. These new, cross-regional visits are designed to let neighbours meet but also pack in some fun and good food as well. The organization will continue its support of a range of community based events and programs including walking groups, reading programs for kids, fund-raising dinners, and publication of its comprehensive listing of local events for the English-speaking community called “Community Matters”.

“It’s all about bringing people together and showing the power volunteers have to make a difference,” says Pauline, herself a recipient of the the Lieutenant Governor’s Seniors Medal in 2015 for her many years of dedication and service to the community.

Researchers Lunch and Learn about CHSSN-CROP

The CHSSN-CROP Community Vitality Survey is the richest source of information available on the current state of the English-speaking community of Quebec. Building on the results of the first province-wide, telephone-based questionnaire undertaken in 2000, the survey was redone in 2005, 2010, and 2015.

The Survey crosses all sectors and is described by researchers as robust – that is, it’s based on a very representative sample of people across all regions of the province and has been enhanced with research strategies like fixed panels of respondents across surveys and focus groups in regions where a representative polling sample is not created by random selection of interviewees.

CHSSN has encouraged as wide a use as possible of these results by its own members and NPIs and its value for service development and advocacy is well known in the CHSSN family. But there are many sectors of community interest covered by the survey and CHSSN has been partnering to make the data better known and used.

QUESCREN, the Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network, is the most recent collaborator in promoting the use of the CHSSN-CROP Community Vitality Survey.

QUESCREN is a joint initiative of the Canadian Institute for

Research on Linguistic Minorities and Concordia University’s School of Community and Public Affairs. It describes itself as “a dynamic alliance of researchers, community members and institutions dedicated to developing research capacity related to Quebec’s English-speaking communities.”

Not surprisingly, Lorraine O’Donnell, QUESCREN’s Coordinator-Researcher and Affiliate Assistant Professor at Concordia, recognized the importance of the Vitality Survey for university-based researchers and suggested a collaboration.

“We help support community vitality by developing research capacity,” says Lorraine, “and the CHSSN-CROP survey gets into the nuts and bolts of things researchers need to know about how the community is doing. We were happy to reach out to the members of our network and put them in contact with the survey and some of the people behind it.”

Joanne Pocock has been the principal researcher developing and interpreting the CHSSN-CROP Community Vitality Survey over the years. She suggested a “Lunch and Learn” event as a first step.

“We know they work and they’re easy to set up,” says Joanne. “It allows us to raise awareness of this rich, robust data set. I’m

also able to do a bit of what I’d call ‘training’ in how to access and use the data, including its strengths and limitations. We’ve tried to make the Survey as user-friendly as possible, not just for people in the community but for researchers as well.”

“Based on the participation and reaction, I’m convinced that this kind of event breaks down the barriers that can exist between community activists and researchers,” says Lorraine. “We are not as aware as we should be how our networks overlap. At the very least people are getting a sense of who they can call if they want to collaborate more.”

“I think the research community may be particularly interested in our willingness to work together to shape the questionnaire that we develop for each version of the Survey,” says Joanne. “There are many issues that we track in every iteration of the Survey, but we can include specific issues or developments that are timely or of interest to our networks – for example we included a question on Bill 10 in 2015. So if it’s important to understanding our community better, we’re open to collaboration.”

Learn more about QUESCREN at www.quescren.ca and access all the CHSSN-CROP Community Vitality Survey results in the documentation centre at www.chssn.org.

The CHSSN Board of Directors

CHSSN is governed by a Board of Directors that is representative of our network of community based organizations and institutions.

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Paula Celani is the newest member of the Board of CHSSN. Paula has a lifetime career of involvement with special needs children and adults as well as extensive experience mentoring and coaching. She comes to our Board from the English Speaking Catholic Council.

Founded in 1981, the English Speaking Catholic Council is a lay, charitable, non-profit organization which serves as the voice of the English Catholic community of Greater Montreal and beyond. The ESCC seeks to be an effective and collaborative leader for the English-speaking Catholic community.

<http://www.catholiccouncil.ca/>

The **Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN)** is a network of community resources, associations, and public institutions dedicated to the development of health and social services for English-speaking communities in Quebec.

CHSSN's objectives are to:

- Foster projects and initiatives, through partnership and network building, to promote access to English-language health and social services, and support community vitality;
- Create new knowledge and provide information on English-language communities and their needs;
- Promote, evaluate and disseminate

successful models of organization of services;

- Promote informed public policy supporting the vitality of English-speaking communities;
- Support conferences and other forms of consultation on health and social services for English-speaking communities.

For more information on CHSSN visit the website or contact us at:

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Legal deposit: National Library of Canada: ISSN 1709-2175 Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec

Publication of this newsletter has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada.