

A Proactive Approach: Essential for the Development of Reception, Referral, Counselling and Support Services



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Secteur de la formation professionnelle et technique et de la formation continue

SARCA

STATE OF RECEPTION, REFERRAL,
COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

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State of Reception, Referral,
Counselling and Support Services

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Foreword

The action research report published here is one of a series of reports that present new initiatives tested by school boards as part of the renewal of reception, referral, counselling and support services for adults. The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) is delighted with this new form of collaboration with the school boards, and with the ensuing contribution to the development of renewed services for adults. In particular, it appreciates the fact that these school boards were willing to involve practitioners in a research activity with which they were not necessarily familiar, and admires the level of commitment and professionalism shown by the practitioners during the research process.

The action research projects were presented, accepted and then implemented in 2004, and ended in late February 2005. During the projects, the MELS provided "light technical" supervision to ensure that the results generated were potentially of interest to all school boards. Each action research project was distinctive to the community in which it was carried out. It addressed a problem faced by that community, and was carried out by players from that community, all of whom had their own practical experience, expertise and cultures. Had the results been presented without sufficient information on the processes used to obtain them, they would not have been useful to readers from other school boards.

Production of the final report was a difficult and time-consuming task for the teams and their authors. Several different stages, during which the MELS made numerous technical and linguistic suggestions, were required to produce the end result, which is presented in this document. The MELS is most grateful to everyone involved in this fastidious and demanding task, and the value and quality of their work will be apparent to anyone who reads the report.

Although all the reports have very similar tables of contents to facilitate comparison, the style and spirit of each individual team is nevertheless apparent, constituting a further point of interest in these documents.

Enjoy!

Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport
Direction de l'éducation des adultes et de l'action communautaire

Preface

To understand the meaning and scope of reception, referral, counselling and support services for the future, they must be considered in the larger perspective of the policy on the expression of the demand for education and training. It will be difficult to reach citizens who are not enrolled in adult education if we do not first understand the important “invisible” factors that come into play long before reception and referral services, such as those to be implemented in 2006. Too many cultural, economic and social obstacles, and not only at the institutional level, make it difficult for these men and women to make the voluntary decision to return to school.

In order to eventually reach the point where they consider the possibility of returning to school, adults, living in their own environments, have to first of all answer, for themselves, two questions, one as difficult as the other. First: “Will returning to school help improve my living conditions and those of the people closest to me?” And, if they are able to answer the first question positively, they would be faced with a second question: “Will I be capable of succeeding? And if I fail, what will my friends and family say?”

There are several obstacles that often prevent adults from answering these two questions. Some of these are addressed in this action research project. For example, people often claim that they have succeeded in life without having to go back to school. There are few if any examples in the adult’s immediate environment, in the community, for example, of others who returned to school and succeeded. Their perception of conditions in the local job market does not provide motivation for them to prepare to become a part of it. Their first experience with school was traumatic, etc.

Establishing relationships of trust; changing the image of adult education; getting a foot in the door and sharing the first examples of success; establishing relationships with partners in the job market, local authorities, those involved in the social economy, social services and the people in charge of education in both the youth and adult sectors; changing the mindsets of educators, improving the image of adult education centres in the local media and in the local oral culture; introducing a variety of programs so that the centres become “normal” and “positive” places of learning for the entire local adult population—all of these actions were undertaken, but not completed, in the twenty weeks allotted to the action research project.

This action research project shows that action must first be taken at the broader and more basic level of the expression of the demand for education and training. Then reception, referral, counselling and support services, whose role is essential, can take effective action, subject to inter-institutional efforts and the always slow transformation of the local culture, cultural attitudes and the social conditions for participation in organized education or training. The action research project also shows that, in this regard, the community animation approach, which has been used extensively in this region, is entirely appropriate.

In other words, an effective expression of the demand for basic education is inevitably the result of negotiations and the always difficult integration of the external requirements imposed by the institutions (“You need to have successfully completed Secondary III, IV or V”), and the personal expectations of each individual. If these are not taken into account, there may be nothing to motivate adults to return to school. This mediation begins long before the adult comes knocking at the door of the adult education centre or, conversely, before the centre approaches the adult. If, before such contact, the adult is not in a position and does not have the immediate support to take action that is still perceived as exceptional in view of current practices in the community, reception, referral, counselling and support services will succeed only with difficulty, if at all.

The strength of this action research project is that it demonstrates the importance of paving the way for reception, referral, counselling and support services in the community in which they will be implemented, so that they can play the required role and produce the expected results.

Paul Bélanger

Director

Centre interdisciplinaire de recherche sur l'éducation permanente

Université du Québec à Montréal



Presentation

This action research project was made possible by the cooperation of different partners, in collaboration with the adult general education team in the educational services department of the Commission scolaire de L'Amiante (which in July 2005 became the Commission scolaire des Appalaches). The main partners involved in the project were the Centre d'éducation des adultes L'Escale, the Centre communautaire J.N. Plante de la région de Disraeli and the Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli (CERD), which contributed a variety of financial, material and human resources.

Our school board's team was made up of the following people from the Service de la formation professionnelle, de l'éducation des adultes et des services aux entreprises of the Commission scolaire des Appalaches:

- **Jean-Yves Desjardins, director**, was responsible for coordination, recruitment, budget management, scheduling and the action research management protocol.
- **Catherine Coutel, education consultant**, was responsible for fieldwork and for writing this document. She answered to the director of educational services and was familiar with the area and the appropriate intervention techniques.
- **Manon Roy, education consultant** at reception and referral and distance education, took care of all specific requests, gave information sessions and provided the necessary services to the target groups.
- **Karina Bernier and Mélanie Proulx, office personnel**, provided the technical support necessary for the presentation and publication of this document.

The members of our follow-up committee also made significant contributions:

- **Carole Mercier, rural development consultant**, Société de développement économique de la région de Thetford (CLD)
- **Charles Rouleau, socioeconomic assistance officer, team leader/specialist**, Centre local d'emploi de Thetford Mines, Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale
- **Isabelle Laplante, assistant director**, Centre d'éducation des adultes l'Escale of the Commission scolaire des Appalaches
- **Nancy Cameron, educational and vocational information and guidance counsellor**, Carrefour jeunesse-emploi de Frontenac

- **Anita B. Lemieux, president, and Isabelle Roberge, coordinator, Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli**

Finally, we would like to offer our sincere thanks to all those involved for their direct or indirect support throughout the action research project.

Introduction

This report is divided into six parts. Part 1 presents the subject of the action research project in accordance with the government policy and action plan for adult education and continuing education and training, as well as the goal of renewing reception, referral, counselling and support services. Part 2 describes the context of the project with respect to the targeted objectives. Then, we explain how we planned the project and, in Part 4, discuss the procedure, the effects of the project, the adjustments made and, finally, its impact. Part 5 presents an analysis of the results of various interviews conducted throughout the project. And, lastly, Part 6 contains recommendations concerning the difficulties encountered and actions that could facilitate the implementation of a proactive approach in similar contexts. The conclusion reviews the highlights of the document, identifies the limitations of the action research project and establishes the potential for transferring these elements and applications to other communities and clientele.

Chapter 1



Subject of the Action Research Project

For thousands of Quebeckers, reception, referral, counselling and support services (SARCA) are a gateway to new horizons. In fact, they may be an important entry point to the “knowledge-based society” that holds such hope for the future.

The government policy and action plan on adult education and continuing education and training, adopted in 2002, propose renewing reception, referral, counselling and support services and creating the conditions needed for their renewal. Measures are taken to ensure that the recognition of the right to lifelong learning finds its expression in the implementation of the conditions needed to exercise that right.

Taking its mission seriously, the Commission scolaire des Appalaches provides quality educational services for young people and adults in its region, while fostering the development of self-sufficiency and responsibility. The school board's objectives also include promoting participation in the development, implementation and follow-up of individual and group projects and fostering cooperation with the different partners involved in social, economic, cultural and sport development in the region. In keeping with these commitments, the Commission scolaire des Appalaches decided to carry out an action research project with a view to renewing its reception, referral, counselling and support services.

The same objective is set out in the discussion and policy document entitled *Toward a Renewal of Reception, Referral, Counselling & Support Services in School Boards*, which provides an overview of what reception, referral, counselling and support services can be and describes each of their components. More specific objectives are to:

- guide the renewal of reception, referral, counselling and support services within each school board to make them consistent with the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* and the Action Plan
- establish a conceptual basis common to all school boards
- determine the components of these services and propose approaches that promote accessibility to lifelong learning
- facilitate the harmonization of MELS practices with those of school boards and their governmental and non-governmental partners

The same document defines a proactive approach as follows:

- SARCA are a strategic link between their milieu and continuing education and training services. Some of their functions may only be properly executed if permanent links are established with this milieu (for example, for information, referral and monitoring support). The SARCA environment puts service providers in an ideal position to make contact with the Policy's target groups and encourage expression of their demand for learning.
- SARCA help adults gain highly significant and relevant knowledge transferable to various life situations and conditions conducive to increasing autonomy. These services are rarely publicized or promoted; continuing education and training services are the focus of most centres' promotion. However, given the nature of their functions, SARCA make a significant contribution to the expression of the demand for learning. This contribution will be enhanced when these services become more visible and active to people, organizations, associations, businesses and institutions.
- In conclusion, SARCA cannot exist without concerted action, partnership and coordination between resources both within and outside school boards and with organizations working with the target population. SARCA operating out of school boards and education and training centres are in contact with a variety of partners: the closest partnerships inside the school board are with schools and other centres and the closest external ones are with local employment centres (CLE). Furthermore, adult education centres establish partnerships with CLSCs and community organizations, while vocational training centres have more specific relationships with businesses and Carrefour jeunesse-emploi centres.

Given its long tradition of community involvement, sound relations with regional partners and concerted action, the Commission scolaire des Appalaches proposed that the MELS develop decentralized reception, referral, counselling and support services in a difficult sector, by using a partnership-based approach.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF COLLABORATION IN THE APPALACHES REGION

Our adult education sector has a long tradition of community animation. Since the 1980s, several resources and activities have allowed us to establish relations with individuals, social groups, municipal groups, etc. In addition, the region has a history of interorganizational cooperation. There are therefore many forums and opportunities for discussion among the main organizations, including the local employment centre, the local development centre, the local CLSC and the municipalities. This tradition enabled us to act more quickly and easily in the pilot project. We were already well-known and had already established relationships of trust.

For many years, we have been targeting educational interventions in the Beaulac-Garthby, Disraeli, Disraeli - Paroisse, Stratford and Saint-Joseph-de-Coleraine sector, a sector that has been statistically identified as disadvantaged. As shown in the socioeconomic indicators by school,¹ indicators for municipalities with elementary or secondary schools are worrisome with respect to low-income cutoff, mothers without a secondary school diploma and parents not in the work force, as well as alarming decile ranks.

We have long had difficulty penetrating this sector. Despite the fact that the Centre d'éducation des adultes l'Escale has a point of service in Disraeli, it is difficult to convince people with educational needs to take the necessary steps. We therefore had to go where the statistics were indicative of such needs and offer the services expected by this disadvantaged population. We were not the only ones to observe the need for action. Several community organizations joined forces to set up a community centre, the Centre communautaire J.N. Plante de Disraeli, in order to get closer to the population.

Thus, we support the vision set out by the MELS in its policy on the renewal of reception, referral, counselling and support services: "reception, referral, counselling and support services make a significant contribution to the expression of the demand for learning. This increases when the services become more visible and active to people, organizations, associations, businesses and institutions."² We therefore focused on this area in our action research project.

1. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, Statistiques sur l'éducation. Indice de milieu socio-économique par école et Indice du seuil de faible revenu par école, Données 2003-2004 [on-line: http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/stat/Indice_defav/index_ind_def.htm.]

2. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction de la formation générale des adultes, *Toward a Renewal of Reception, Referral, Counselling & Support Services in School Boards. Discussion and Policy Document* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2004), p. 37.

Chapter 2



Context of the Action Research Project on Reception, Referral, Counselling and Support Services

Target intervention

We chose to present a project on proactive services because we believed that adopting such an approach in reception, referral, counselling and support services would make it possible to anticipate the needs of people who are not in the work force, who have little schooling, or who are looking for work or likely to lose their jobs, by relying on community partners or by using community animation activities to get closer to people with needs. For the purposes of this action research project, we decided to focus on a specific sector in our territory which, as we mentioned earlier, we have long had difficulty penetrating.

Our aim was to increase our presence in the Beaulac-Garthby, Disraeli, Disraeli - Paroisse, Stratford and Saint-Joseph-de-Coleraine sector by becoming active in social, community and municipal affairs, as well as in businesses, in order to develop and consolidate general education and vocational training activities. This involved reaching new partnership agreements to ensure a regular and significant presence in the Centre communautaire J.N. Plante de la région de Disraeli, with the collaboration of the Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli (CERD), and participating in activities organized by social and municipal partners. Through these partnerships, we essentially wanted to develop reception, referral and counselling services and explore community services in more depth, as proposed in the MELS discussion and policy document: "RRCS (now called SARCA) services also respond to requests from groups, associations or organizations by using the same approach as with individuals."¹

Part of this research would also involve certain businesses, with which we would organize activities focused primarily on counselling workers with insufficient schooling and unqualified job applicants. The goal of the action research project was to offer adults activities to help them "to acquire in-depth knowledge of themselves, their resources and their limits, appropriate information concerning their environment, a better capacity to define their objectives and aspirations; to decide their learning plan and actions required to achieve it; to receive the help they need to succeed in their actions."²

We proposed actions based on the development of partnerships.

The actions we considered can be described as follows:

- a) Establishing a research protocol with partners with whom we were already working

¹ · Toward a Renewal of Reception, Referral, Counselling & Support Services in School Boards, p. 18.

² · Toward a Renewal of Reception, Referral, Counselling & Support Services in School Boards, p. 20.

- i) In this protocol, we wanted to establish mechanisms for referring people with “educational” deficits to the appropriate services, determine what services we could offer and how we could provide follow-up services for the people we referred.
 - ii) We believed that the targeted partners were in the best position in the community to support the action research project, assess its short-term results and anticipate observations in the medium term.
 - iii) We needed to establish contacts in local employment centres serving small municipalities and with which we were not already working (Saint-Gérard, Stratford, Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens).
- b) Organizing a point of service for reception, referral, counselling and support services outside the centre, in the Centre communautaire J.N. Plante de la région de Disraeli¹
- i) This point of service would be a place to welcome people with “educational” deficits in cooperation with partners at the community centre, or people referred by the community centre. We could then establish a relationship of trust and organize different activities: an analysis of their situation, an exploration of possible education plans and the delivery of counselling and guidance services if they decided to return to school.
 - ii) Being located outside the education centre and in a community setting would allow us to reach a clientele with needs, but who were either unaware of them or leery of the traditional image of schools. The support of partners and the establishment of personalized and friendly relations would enable us to get beyond people’s initial resistance and explain the reality of adult education centres.
- c) Organizing reception, referral, counselling and support services during partners’ regular activities in small municipalities²
- i) These activities would provide immediate information about possible reception, referral, counselling and support services in these municipalities and make it possible to establish relationships of trust and, if necessary, to make appointments with people interested in exploring educational and counselling projects in their community in order to guide them in their initial steps.
 - ii) The same partnership-based grassroots approach would apply here, since action would be taken near potential clients’ comfort zone.

¹ · The following organizations are active in the Centre communautaire J.N. Plante de la région de Disraeli, and we have already explored or established relationships with some of them: the Carrefour jeunesse-emploi de Frontenac, ACEF, Le Berceau, a family organization, a food bank and an Internet café.

² · This year, we explored various possibilities of collaborating with the Centre d’action bénévole Concert-Action de Beaulac-Garthby, the libraries in Saint-Julien, Saint-Jacques-le-Majeur and Saint-Fortunat, and a city councillor in Stratford.

- d) Forming partnerships, as far as possible, with one or more businesses experiencing a cyclical labour shortage
- e) Establishing these types of partnerships was intended to raise awareness among interested businesses that appropriate educational services could help them find workers to deal with their cyclical labour shortages. The following are characteristics of the organization of ad hoc reception, referral, counselling and support activities in these businesses:¹
 - i) The activities would be for workers with insufficient schooling and those likely to lose their jobs for that reason, or for applicants deemed unemployable by the company. They would lead to the organization of reception activities in the company, in which we would establish relationships with these people in order to encourage them to explore educational plans and determine the appropriate counselling and guidance services to help them take the next steps.
 - ii) The challenge was to obtain the collaboration of businesses so that we could work directly on the premises. We could then show workers with insufficient training and potential applicants that the business was participating actively in the operation and that it would take their training into account.

The type of action research we proposed, and our choice of community, would make it possible to apply our conclusions to similar areas of Québec, i.e. areas with low to medium population density, with low socioeconomic indicators and small and medium-size businesses experiencing a labour shortage.

¹ . Promising preliminary contacts were established with the company Shermag and the union representing workers there. However, recent labour relations difficulties forced us to reconsider our choice.

Chapter 3



Planning the Action Research Project

3.1 Experimental design

We proposed that the following players participate in carrying out the action research project:

- The coordinator of educational services at the Commission scolaire des Appalaches (Secteur de la formation professionnelle et de l'éducation des adultes), who would be responsible for coordination, recruitment, budget management and scheduling, as well as the action research management protocol
- A follow-up committee, which would ensure the methodological rigour of the project and would be made up of people from:
 - a) educational services at the Commission scolaire des Appalaches (Secteur de la formation professionnelle et de l'éducation des adultes)
 - b) the Centre d'éducation des adultes l'Escale
 - c) the Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli
 - d) the Carrefour jeunesse-emploi de Frontenac
 - e) the Centre local d'emploi de Thetford Mines, Emploi-Québec
 - f) the Société de développement économique de la région de Thetford (CLD)

From the time the research was approved by the MELS until the tabling of the final report, we decided to hold monthly or more frequent meetings, as needed, with a group of partners who were not directly affected by the action research project. The committee members would, among other things, define the problem in the community with respect to the school board's mandate and their own. The committee played a decision-making role in terms of the process, but only one person in educational services at the school board acted as liaison with the MELS for the purposes of gathering and transmitting information. The committee needed to be able to make any necessary corrections during the action research project. The committee members were also responsible for fuelling discussion based on personal experience and on the orientations, i.e. the facilitating factors, constraints and realities, of their respective organizations.

- A professional would be responsible for fieldwork. This person, who answered to the coordinator of educational services, would preferably be a guidance counsellor familiar with the community and the appropriate intervention techniques.
- An educational organization technician would be responsible for statistical research and the administrative follow-up of people who enrolled in a program of study as a result of the action research project.

Once the help of these players had been enlisted, the first major question was raised: “What was participants’ experience with the action research project?” In other words, in what ways did they find the project helpful or limiting?

3.2 Proposed guidelines

This part of the follow-up committee’s task was to target potential avenues for action and to identify people who could serve as references and whom we could contact. These actions would make it possible to assess the results of the research in the target communities and to identify possible partnerships for the medium and long term. The approach adopted and the duration of the field test made it impossible to measure actual effects in the medium term. This would have been possible, under certain conditions, in an empirical approach. But we firmly believed that the experience and diversity of the members of the follow-up committee would enable us to accurately anticipate the potential results of the research in the medium and long terms (see sections 4.5 and 5.3).

This raised a second major question: “How was the action research project evaluated, during and at the end of its implementation, by a follow-up committee made up of various experienced practitioners representing several key organizations in the region?”

Some committee members also had to help the educational organization technician develop two descriptive profiles of clientele in the target region enrolled in general education in the past five years. The first of these profiles was to be developed before the beginning of the action research project in the sector in question, the second, at the end. A statistical analysis would enable us to establish a historical profile of participation in educational activities in the target community. We could then determine the short-term effects of our actions.

We also needed to establish a procedure for following up on interventions at the Centre communautaire J.N. Plante de la région de Disraeli, as well as in the different target companies, organizations and municipalities. We had to organize follow-up of reception, referral, counselling and support activities in order to observe the actions taken, the organizations and people affected, the perceived advantages and disadvantages, actual or potential results, etc.

In addition, when action was actually taken, a follow-up of the steps (enrollments or intended enrollments) taken by those who had received reception, referral, counselling and support services outside the centre would have to be done in order to identify their progress, their reactions, their degree of satisfaction with the services received, the obstacles they encountered, etc. The aim of this measure was to make it possible to assess reactions during and subsequent to action taken as part of the research project.

Educational services staff would also define the comparative analysis process, which would be improved upon by the follow-up committee. We would then compare the descriptive profiles and the results of the statistical analysis and the follow-up of steps taken in order to assess the

observations of the project results on the problem defined initially. In addition, the same educational services staff would participate in the preparation of the final document based on MELS guidelines. The follow-up committee would be responsible for critiquing the process and the final document, and for drawing conclusions from the action research project.

In conclusion, we needed to make recommendations and proposals concerning possible follow-up actions to be taken by the Commission scolaire des Appalaches, partners and other Québec school boards in communities similar to the one targeted by the action research project. These recommendations would, of course, state the results of the project, as well as achievements and mistakes made with respect to the partnerships, action taken, constraints identified, possible solutions and applied solutions.

Our action research project was to extend over a period of 18 weeks, eight of which would be devoted to carrying out an analysis and producing the final report, slated to be submitted to the Direction de la formation générale des adultes (DFGA) on February 25, 2005.

Chapter 4



Process and Reflective Analysis Suggesting Avenues for Action

4.1 Chances of success: Making choices

The process described here essentially involves animation and the establishment of partnerships. Proposed actions appear in boxes in the text. These actions are intended mainly for those working in reception, referral, counselling and support services, in the hope that they will help them establish a personal proactive approach.

According to Jean-Yves Desjardins, director, Services de la formation professionnelle, de l'éducation des adultes et des services aux entreprises of the Commission scolaire des Appalaches (formerly the Commission scolaire de L'Amiante), the choice of fieldworker should be based on the following principles. First, the type of person selected for this task is extremely important in order to achieve the objectives of the action research project. Next, it is crucial that strict criteria be identified and applied. Finally, it would be far better to post a competition for the position than to choose the wrong person by default.

The goal of the action research project was not the only factor to consider: we needed to take into account the context, the history of our relationships with the people and organizations in the target community and the people with whom we wanted to establish partnerships. For example, we wanted a person with both solid academic training and research experience with strong interpersonal skills. The latter criterion was viewed as the most important. In terms of the history of our relationships with the community and the people in it, we deemed that we could adequately inform the person once he or she was in position; this choice, while not an essential criterion, enabled us to interview applicants from outside our school board and the region.

In addition to these criteria, we were also concerned with “continuity,” since this type of intervention is part of the institution's intrinsic values. In addition, the announcement that reception, referral, counselling and support services would eventually be implemented in every school board was an opportunity for us to take the lead and adopt this means of intervention, which had already proved effective in our community.

We therefore needed to recruit a person with whom we would feel comfortable in the medium term and who would want to invest in a job requiring considerable flexibility, imagination, tact and personal commitment. The results obtained confirm our vision, our choice and the validity of our criteria, as well as our selection process.

4.2 Presentation: “Action Research in Reception, Referral, Counselling and Support Services: A Real Challenge”

My name is Catherine Coutel. I wrote this document following fieldwork I conducted as part of this action research project on a proactive approach in reception, referral, counselling and support services. The title of the project, “Action Research in Reception, Referral, Counselling and Support Services: A Real Challenge,” reflects my deepest feelings and I will try to describe the major steps in the project and to share a few guidelines for the current or future efforts of people who work in reception, referral, counselling and support services.

The project was definitely a challenge, not only because of the number and diversity of the partners involved, but also because of the nature of the project itself. Considering how our actions could enable us to anticipate the needs of people who are not in the work force and who are isolated required, among other things, simultaneous reflection on the very nature and essence of poverty.¹ In addition, the process, largely based on community animation, needed to address different areas. We will see that the scope of the research project also became clear during discussions with the different partners.

Time was the first limiting factor in the project: insufficient time was a source of pressure and had an accelerating effect on the formulation and implementation process. However, in a few weeks, it became obvious that it would be impossible to obtain convincing results concerning the long-term effects of establishing partnerships.

The exploratory and participatory approach adopted precluded the use of an experimental design (pre- and post-tests). Nevertheless, the experimental approach allowed for relatively close collaboration between fieldworkers and those working in the institutions. This explains why this report is not really an empirical research report, in that it considers the participants, the proposed principles, the conditions implemented to promote innovation and the discussion processes established as the first results of the action research project. Remember that the second major question of the project is aimed at experienced practitioners: “How was the action research project evaluated, during and at the end of its implementation, by a follow-up committee made up of various experienced practitioners representing several key organizations in the region?”

¹ For more on this very important point, see section 4.12.

4.3 Newly arrived

I was hired as an education consultant by the vocational training and adult educational services department at Commission scolaire des Appalaches in mid-August 2004. My immediate supervisor was Jean-Yves Desjardins, director of the department. My mandate was to do fieldwork on the use of a proactive approach in order to answer the following question: “To what extent does a proactive approach in reception and referral services outside the education centre result in an increase in the demand for education and training in the target groups?” In other words, is there a concomitant or simultaneous relationship between our interventions and the number of enrollments in learning activities?

This is the third major question of the action research project. I would like to remind you that the first two major questions were: “What was participants’ experience with the action research project? In other words, what did they find helpful and what did they find limiting in the project?” and “How was the action research project evaluated, during and at the end of its implementation, by a follow-up committee made up of various experienced practitioners representing several key organizations in the region?”

At first I had only a limited knowledge of the territory I was to cover and its population. In addition, no one in the municipalities targeted by the project and none of the main players in the MRC des Appalaches knew me and, given my mandate, I had to establish partnerships with the key players in each community.

The first thing I did, on August 16, 2004, was to read the document that the school board had tabled on the government policy and action plan to renew reception, referral, counselling and support services.

At first I was surprised by the size of the sector I was about to visit—eight municipalities—and by the short duration of the project. It was to include 18 weeks of fieldwork and eight weeks devoted to analysis and the production of the final report. At the time, I thought I was crazy to have taken on such a mandate, but the first few lines of the document comforted me: “Our adult education sector has a long tradition of community animation. Since the 1980s, several resources and activities have allowed us to establish relations with individuals, social groups, municipal groups, etc. In addition, the region has a history of interorganizational cooperation.” I told myself that that would help, and that there must already be partnerships in place that I could use. Moreover, since an educational organization technician was supposed to be in charge of the statistical aspect of the project, I would be receiving various statistical profiles that would give me a clearer vision of the population and sectors I was to visit.

However, my requests to the educational organization department revealed that the data available were, unfortunately, insignificant with respect to the task at hand. It was therefore impossible to produce the desired profiles based on these data. I had to obtain the information

myself; and that is how I began looking for significant and valid data to begin my work in the field.

Thus, my first weeks were spent analyzing various statistical data that could give me a clearer idea of the population of each municipality with respect to the social status and schooling of its inhabitants.

4.4 Development of tools and data analysis

As my supervisor so eloquently puts it, “I locked her up in an office for two weeks.” And it’s true. I took on the role of statistician: what torture! Based on an analysis of the mandate I was given and my need to get a clear picture of the situation, I decided to focus on different types of statistics. Those I used came from the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, Statistics Canada and various documents provided by our partners at the MRC des Appalaches. Also, since I needed to produce a profile for each municipality, I had to be able to analyze the aggregate data to produce more specific profiles. This is what I was able to glean from different sources. Note that some of the municipalities, while they are part of the territory covered by the Commission scolaire des Appalaches, are not part of the MRC, so they are not served by the Centre de santé et de services sociaux de la région de Thetford Mines or the local employment centre. Remember, too, that getting these statistics was essential. With these statistical profiles, I would be able to get a clearer picture of the population and the sectors in question.

Data on the Targeted Sectors From Statistics Canada’s 2001 Census

All the statistics appearing in the tables are from Statistics Canada

Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens

According to the 2001 census, Statistics Canada sets the total population of Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens at 210, compared with 206 in 1996, an increase of 1.9%. The percentage of the population aged 15 or over is 90.5%, and represented 195 people in 2001. The median age is 49.2. The cohort of individuals aged 45 to 54 is the largest, representing 55 people. According to the 2001 community profile, 100% of the population between the ages of 20 and 34 do not have a high school graduation certificate. The rate is 66.7% for those aged 35 to 44, and 55.6% for those aged 45 to 64. The highest level of schooling achieved is in the 35 to 44 age group: 33.3% of these individuals either have a high school graduation certificate or some postsecondary education. No one in any cohort holds a trades certificate or diploma.¹

¹ · Canada, Statistics Canada, *2001 Community Profiles* [on-line: www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/CP01/Index.cfm?Lang=E.]

Table 1: Highest Level of Schooling Achieved, Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens

	Total population aged 20 to 34	Total population aged 35 to 44	Total population aged 45 to 64
% of the population with less than a high school graduation certificate	100.0%	66.7%	55.6%
% of the population with a high school graduation certificate and/or some postsecondary	0.0%	33.3%	27.8%
% of the population with a trades certificate or diploma	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
% of the population with a college certificate or diploma	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
% of the population with a university certificate, diploma or degree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

According to the demographic statistics, the total population aged 15 to 24 represents 25 individuals, 15 (60.0%) of whom are in school. Statistics Canada points out that the proportion of individuals aged 15 to 19 who said that they had not attended school the year preceding the census rose from 18% in 1996 to 23% in 2001.

Saint-Fortunat

According to the 2001 census, Statistics Canada sets the total population of Saint-Fortunat at 316, compared with 275 in 1996, an increase of 14.9%. The median age is 36. The percentage of the population aged 15 or over is 77.8%, and represented 245 people in 2001. The cohort of individuals aged 25 to 44 is the largest, representing 100 people. According to the 2001 community profile, the population aged 45 to 64 has the highest percentage (30.0%) of individuals who do not hold a high school graduation certificate. The rate is 21.4% for those aged 35 to 44 and 13.3% for those aged 20 to 34. The cohort aged 45 to 64 has the highest percentage of individuals who hold a university certificate, diploma or degree (20.0%).¹

¹ · 2001 Community Profiles.

Table 2: Highest Level of Schooling Achieved, Saint-Fortunat

	Total population aged 20 to 34	Total population aged 35 to 44	Total population aged 45 to 64
% of the population with less than a high school graduation certificate	13.3%	21.4%	30.0%
% of the population with a high school graduation certificate and/or some postsecondary	33.3%	35.7%	30.0%
% of the population with a trades certificate or diploma	20.0%	21.4%	15.0%
% of the population with a college certificate or diploma	33.3%	14.3%	10.0%
% of the population with a university certificate, diploma or degree	13.3%	14.3%	20.0%

According to the demographic statistics, the total population aged 15 to 24 represents 45 individuals, 55.5% of whom are in school. Thus, 44.5% of those aged 15 to 24 are not in school. According to Statistics Canada data, if we compare the population aged 15 to 19 who attend school full-time with the population by age for the same cohort, we discover that none of them attend school. Statistics Canada points out that the proportion of individuals aged 15 to 19 who said that they had not attended school the year preceding the census rose from 18% in 1996 to 23% in 2001.

Saint-Joseph-de-Coleraine

According to the 2001 census, Statistics Canada sets the total population of Saint-Joseph-de-Coleraine at 1642, compared with 1735 in 1996, a decrease of 5.4%. The percentage of the population aged 15 and over is 86.9%, and represented 1425 people in 2001. The median age is 43.9. The cohort of individuals aged 25 to 44 is the largest, representing 410 people. According to the 2001 community profile, the population aged 45 to 64 has the highest percentage (49.0%) of individuals who do not hold a high school graduation certificate. The rate is 35.0% for those aged 35 to 44 and 21.0% for those aged 20 to 34. The cohort aged 20 to 34 has the highest percentage of individuals who hold a university certificate, diploma or degree (9.7%).¹

¹ · 2001 Community Profiles.

Table 3: Highest Level of Schooling Achieved, Saint-Joseph-de-Coleraine

	Total population aged 20 to 34	Total population aged 35 to 44	Total population aged 45 to 64
% of the population with less than a high school graduation certificate	21.0%	35.0%	49.0%
% of the population with a high school graduation certificate and/or some postsecondary	12.9%	27.5%	18.6%
% of the population with a trades certificate or diploma	32.3%	22.5%	14.7%
% of the population with a college certificate or diploma	24.2%	15.0%	10.8%
% of the population with a university certificate, diploma or degree	9.7%	5.0%	5.9%

According to the demographic statistics, the total population aged 15 to 24 represents 230 individuals, 120 (52.17%) of whom are in school. Thus, 47.83% of those aged 15 to 24 are not in school. Statistics Canada points out that the proportion of individuals aged 15 to 19 who said that they had not attended school the year preceding the census rose from 18% in 1996 to 23% in 2001.

Disraeli

According to the 2001 census, Statistics Canada sets the total population of Disraeli at 2635, compared with 2657 in 1996, a decrease of 0.8%. The percentage of the population aged 15 or over is 84.4%, and represented 2225 people in 2001. The cohort of individuals aged 25 to 44 is the largest, representing 625 people. According to the 2001 community profile, the population aged 45 to 64 has the highest percentage (40.3%) of individuals who do not hold a high school graduation certificate. The rate is 27.2% for those aged 35 to 44 and 18.2% for those aged 20 to 34. The cohort aged 45 to 64 has the highest percentage of individuals who hold a university certificate, diploma or degree (16.3%).¹

¹. 2001 Community Profiles.

Table 4: Highest Level of Schooling Achieved, Disraeli

	Total population aged 20 to 34	Total population aged 35 to 44	Total population aged 45 to 64
% of the population with less than a high school graduation certificate	18.2%	27.2%	40.3%
% of the population with a high school graduation certificate and/or some postsecondary	29.9%	25.9%	22.5%
% of the population with a trades certificate or diploma	15.6%	18.5%	12.4%
% of the population with a college certificate or diploma	24.7%	16.0%	7.0%
% of the population with a university certificate, diploma or degree	11.7%	12.3%	16.3%

According to the demographic statistics, the total population aged 15 to 24 represents 365 individuals, 235 (64.38%) of whom are in school. Thus, 35.62% of those aged 15 to 24 are not in school. Statistics Canada points out that the proportion of individuals aged 15 to 19 who said that they had not attended school the year preceding the census rose from 18% in 1996 to 23% in 2001.

Beaulac-Garthby

According to the 2001 census, Statistics Canada sets the total population of Beaulac-Garthby at 816, compared with 796 in 1996, an increase of 2.5%. The percentage of the population aged 15 or over is 85.4%, and represented 705 people in 2001. The median age is 47.2. The cohort of individuals aged 25 to 44 is the largest, representing 155 people. According to the 2001 community profile, the population aged 35 to 44 has the highest percentage (48.1%) of individuals who do not hold a high school graduation certificate. The rate is 44.1% for those aged 45 to 64 and 34.8% for those aged 20 to 34. The cohort aged 20 to 34 has the highest percentage of individuals who hold a university certificate, diploma or degree (8.7%).¹

¹. 2001 Community Profiles.

Table 5: Highest Level of Schooling Achieved, Beaulac-Garthby

	Total population aged 20 to 34	Total population aged 35 to 44	Total population aged 45 to 64
% of the population with less than a high school graduation certificate	34.8%	48.1%	44.1%
% of the population with a high school graduation certificate and/or some postsecondary	13.0%	22.2%	23.7%
% of the population with a trades certificate or diploma	39.1%	18.5%	18.6%
% of the population with a college certificate or diploma	8.7%	7.4%	8.5%
% of the population with a university certificate, diploma or degree	8.7%	0.0%	6.8%

According to the demographic statistics, the total population aged 15 to 24 represents 80 individuals, 31.25% of whom are in school. Thus, 68.75% of those aged 15 to 24 are not in school. According to Statistics Canada, if we compare the population aged 15 to 19 who attend school full-time with the population by age for the same cohort, we discover that 33.33% of them attend school full-time. Statistics Canada points out that the proportion of individuals aged 15 to 19 who said that they had not attended school the year preceding the census rose from 18% in 1996 to 23% in 2001.

Stratford

According to the 2001 census, Statistics Canada sets the total population of Stratford at 873, compared with 786 in 1996, an increase of 11.1%. The median age is 46.8. The percentage of the population aged 15 or over is 85.1%, and represented 740 people in 2001. The cohort of individuals aged 25 to 44 is the largest, representing 190 people. According to the 2001 community profile, the population aged 45 to 64 has the highest percentage (47.3%) of individuals who do not hold a high school graduation certificate. The rate is 34.8% for those aged 35 to 44 and 11.1% for those aged 20 to 34. The cohort aged 45 to 64 has the highest percentage of individuals who hold a university certificate, diploma or degree (12.7%).¹

¹. 2001 Community Profiles.

Table 6: Highest Level of Schooling Achieved, Stratford

	Total population aged 20 to 34	Total population aged 35 to 44	Total population aged 45 to 64
% of the population with less than a high school graduation certificate	11.1%	34.8%	47.3%
% of the population with a high school graduation certificate and/or some postsecondary	18.5%	39.1%	25.5%
% of the population with a trades certificate or diploma	33.3%	17.4%	10.9%
% of the population with a college certificate or diploma	25.9%	13.0%	3.6%
% of the population with a university certificate, diploma or degree	7.4%	0.0%	12.7%

According to the demographic statistics, the total population aged 15 to 24 represents 90 individuals, 30 (33.3%) of whom are in school. Thus, 66.67% of those aged 15 to 24 are not in school. According to Statistics Canada data, if we compare the population aged 15 to 19 who attend school full-time with the population by age for the same cohort, we discover that 36.36% of them attend school. Statistics Canada points out that the proportion of individuals aged 15 to 19 who said that they had not attended school the year preceding the census rose from 18% in 1996 to 23% in 2001.

Disraeli - Paroisse

According to the 2001 census, Statistics Canada sets the total population of Disraeli – Paroisse at 1009, compared with 1069 in 1996, a decrease of 5.6%. The median age is 42.8. The percentage of the population aged 15 or over is 84.2%, and represented 850 people in 2001. The cohort of individuals aged 25 to 44 is the largest, representing 255 people. According to the 2001 community profile, the population aged 45 to 64 has the highest percentage (53.2%) of individuals who do not hold a high school graduation certificate. The rate is 42.9% for those aged 35 to 44 and 26.1% for those aged 20 to 34. The cohort aged 20 to 34 has the highest percentage of individuals who hold a university certificate, diploma or degree (8.7%).¹

¹. 2001 Community Profiles.

Table 7: Highest Level of Schooling Achieved, Disraeli - Paroisse

	Total population aged 20 to 34	Total population aged 35 to 44	Total population aged 45 to 64
% of the population with less than a high school graduation certificate	26.1%	42.9%	53.2%
% of the population with a high school graduation certificate and/or some postsecondary	17.4%	28.6%	26.0%
% of the population with a trades certificate or diploma	13.0%	20.0%	5.2%
% of the population with a college certificate or diploma	30.4%	5.7%	7.8%
% of the population with a university certificate, diploma or degree	8.7%	0.0%	6.5%

According to the demographic statistics, the total population aged 15 to 24 represents 150 individuals, 100 (66.6%) of whom are in school. Thus, 33.4% of those aged 15 to 24 are not in school. According to Statistics Canada data, if we compare the population aged 15 to 19 who attend school full-time with the population by age for the same cohort, we discover that 100% of them attend school. Statistics Canada points out that the proportion of individuals aged 15 to 19 who said that they had not attended school the year preceding the census rose from 18% in 1996 to 23% in 2001.

Education Statistics, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

The following is the list of indicators of socioeconomic status and low-income cutoff indicators for our school board by school for 2003-2004.¹

Indicator of socioeconomic status by school, 2003-2004:

The indicator of socioeconomic status is calculated by grouping together all buildings belonging to a school. **Two variables are used to construct the indicator: the proportion of mothers who do not hold a diploma (2/3 weighting) and the proportion of families in which neither parent works full-time (1/3 weighting).** The lists also contain the decile rank of each school. The higher the indicator and decile rank, the lower the socioeconomic status.

Low-income cutoff indicator by school, 2003-2004:

The low-income cutoff indicator is calculated by grouping together all buildings belonging to a school. **One variable is used to construct the indicator: the proportion of families that declare income equal to or less than the low-income cutoff established by**

¹. Last update of these data: July 2004 [on-line: http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/stat/Indice_defav/index_ind_def.htm.]

Statistics Canada for their territory of residence. The lists also contain the decile rank of each school. **The higher the indicator and decile rank, the lower the socioeconomic status.**

Deprivation indicators by school 2003-2004						DRSI April 15, 2004
Thetford Mines	Commission scolaire des Appalaches					
	Elementary schools					
Municipality	School	Low- income cutoff indicator	Decile rank (low- income cutoff)	Indicator of socioeconomic status	Decile rank (socioeconomic status)	Number of students (30/09/2003)
Beaulac- Garthby	École Saint- Nom-de-Jésus	25.46	8	28.06	10	73
Stratford	École Dominique- Savio	26.06	8	29.28	10	49
Disraeli	École Sainte- Luce	24.91	8	27.39	10	300
Saint- Joseph-de- Coleraine	École Sainte- Bernadette	21.93	7	17.70	6	104
Saint- Ferdinand	École Notre- Dame	20.86	7	16.75	6	130
Thetford Mines	École Saint- Louis	10.96	2	14.78	5	291
Thetford Mines	École du Tournesol	12.82	4	11.72	3	265
Thetford Mines	École de l'Étincelle	13.41	4	12.17	4	285
Thetford Mines	École Saint- Noël	11.15	3	14.58	5	224
Thetford Mines	École du Plein-Soleil	17.67	6	13.39	4	159
Thetford Mines	École Saint- Gabriel	20.91	7	15.54	5	153
Thetford Mines	École du Perce-Neige	13.76	4	16.06	6	80

Thetford Mines and Adstock	École institutionnelle de l'Arc-en-Ciel et de la Source	11.47	3	14.63	5	128
Saint-Pierre-de-Broughton	École de la Pierre-Douce	13.89	4	16.07	6	60
East-Broughton	École Paul VI	7.29	1	22.67	8	202
Adstock	École aux Quatre-Vents	7.58	1	22.66	8	72
Thetford Mines	Commission scolaire des Appalaches					
	Secondary schools					
Municipality	School	Low-income cutoff indicator	Decile rank (low-income cutoff)	Indicator of socioeconomic status	Decile rank (socioeconomic status)	Number of students (30/09/2003)
Disraeli	Polyvalente de Disraeli	23.72	8	24.87	9	474
Black Lake	Polyvalente de Black Lake	13.91	3	15.60	5	449
Thetford Mines	Polyvalente de Thetford Mines	12.71	2	15.58	4	1 560

Compiling statistics can be an arduous task, but it is necessary when you are working in small municipalities. In small communities, if you're talking about Peter, you're not talking about Paul. The sense of belonging can be very strong.

Since the analysis of these data was far from positive, I had to establish a process that would include considerable information, awareness-raising and even training.

I also had to construct a tool I could use to present my mandate, that is, to carry out an action research project based on the establishment of partnerships. I therefore produced a summary of the reference document provided by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, entitled *Lifelong Learning*, including the project presented by the Commission scolaire des Appalaches.

4.5 Follow-up committee made up of various representatives

I made contact with partners in the preliminary stages of the project, to invite them to join the action research follow-up committee. Remember that this committee was very important. Among other things, its role was to define the problems in the community with respect to the school board's mandate and the respective mandates of its members. It would make decisions concerning the process and had to be able to make adjustments as needed during the course of the action research project. The committee members were also responsible for fuelling discussion based on their personal experience, as well as on the orientations, that is, the facilitating factors, constraints and realities, of their respective organizations. They received a summary of the document entitled *Toward a Renewal of Reception, Referral, Counselling & Support Services*, as well as a copy of the action research plan. Some had to get authorization to spend time on the project, which was very important if they were to participate fully. The educational services department was always represented by the same people, which was clearly an added value for the continuity of discussions. To form the follow-up committee, my supervisor had selected people from various groups, including community leaders and government agency employees. This was decided early on, to foster on the one hand the sharing of experience and knowledge and, on the other, the emergence of different points of view, in order to allow for certain observations and to take the established partnerships into account. The follow-up committee was set up and helped us define the different problems in the communities in question with respect to the school board's mandate, and participated in the search for possible actions. Various documents were distributed to committee members concerning our various observations.

4.6 First steps

With tools in hand, I left the office, my home base, to set up in my first target community. My supervisor had reached an agreement with a community centre, the Centre communautaire J.N. Plante de la région de Disraeli, with the collaboration of the CERD (the Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli), concerning access to an office in their building. This foot in the door, as it were, would make it possible to form new partnerships, which would in turn foster the regular and significant presence of our services in the centre. Thus, we decentralized part of our reception and referral services.

My first steps were to establish contact with a main player in each municipality in order to find what would become my reference people. In this situation, a reference person was anyone well known and recognized in the community and who had a clear, accurate and reasonable idea of the situation and the individuals involved. It needed to be a person with credibility, who would have a definite impact on the population. Not yet having a designated reference person, I made an initial contact with municipal services and explained the purpose of my call and my research project. My choice to enter into contact with these services was deliberate since, in small towns,

municipal services are often the hub of the community and have considerable information about the town's citizens.

Proposed action: Form an external team

After studying the sector in question, the project manager should, as soon as possible, create an external team made up of significant people from each sector of the territory in question. This special team should be made up of individuals with different competencies, who may be totally unaware of the characteristics and constraints of an action research project. The team should be set up for a limited time, and will not necessarily have a “physical” presence, since members will generally be dispersed geographically in their services of origin or in their localities. Finally, the team members will not necessarily know each other at the outset.

Although the team members may know nothing about the project, they will have regular contact and will probably be closely involved with the target clientele. In this sense, it is clear that, at the outset, members will feel a stronger sense of belonging to their service or community. This could result in conflict at first if their role in the project clashes with the interests of the group they represent. One way of preventing this type of situation is to provide their immediate supervisors with all the necessary information and to convince them of the importance of their contribution.

4.7 Making contact and finding reference people

After making contact with municipal services, my goal was to identify the people who best represented the community and to recruit them as reference people in each sector. I therefore had to find people with a very good knowledge of their community and of its problems in order to establish contacts that would allow me to gain adequate access to the population, taking the different mindsets into account. My goal was to get the main players to accept the creation of an opening that would enable us to achieve our objectives with respect to the establishment or consolidation of future partnerships.

This step was crucial, since it was the last one that would give me access to the community. As my supervisor put it: “You have to be careful not to get burned! If you get burned, you burn the community, and for a long time. Negative information travels fast and tends to linger.” It is true that mistakes are usually more likely to be noticed. So focusing on our achievements would be very important.

Proposed action: A positive way of approaching people in the sector and players who could become involved would be to:

- *inform each person of the issues at stake, as well as the relevance and importance of their participation in work force development in their community; show that you understand each party's priorities; try to foster win-win scenarios*
- *be clear and precise about your role; clarify the goal of the intervention and define the research project's schedule*
- *clearly present the request and the aim of the project and your interventions*
- *demonstrate how your results tie in to the resources requested (in terms of means and duration)*
- *announce how information about the use of the resources allotted and the results will be disseminated*
- *offer to keep them apprised of the project's progress and to provide useful information*
- *think in terms of competencies, and not in terms of people or participants: this will enable you to better target the reference people you will need, especially in the case of essential resources. It will also make it easier to explain why you need certain people on board*
- *formulate requests in such a way as to put partners and their superiors in a position to do you a favour as opposed to the other way around. Ask for each participant's point of view, ideas, expertise and reactions*

The following process should be carried out beforehand:

- *Do a preliminary analysis of the information to be shared concerning your goal (the impact you want your information to have): who needs to know what and in what terms? Does your information concern the entire target group? This is important, because people who do not have the necessary information can send contradictory messages. How many people will your information go through? Remember that the shorter the line of communication, the faster the communication and the less risk of distortion.*
- *Make a list of relevant information to be shared: Does it meet the expectations or needs of your target audience? Is it consistent with your goal?*

Indeed, effectiveness lies in the appropriate balance between formal and informal. If the information you are providing is not adapted to the various players concerned or solicited, they may forget you as soon as you leave the room, or make up their own information.

Some representatives were ill at ease discussing the most disadvantaged members of the community and the discrimination surrounding them; on some occasions, I noted an out-and-out denial of the problem.

I held more than 35 meetings with various players in every municipality. I contacted them several times during the action research project. At first, the aim was to establish contact and to

set up meetings. Later, the aim was to maintain the relationship and consolidate partnerships, discover the need and demand for education and training, and prepare to meet that need.

4.8 Infiltrating the social fabric through partnership and community animation

I began infiltrating the social fabric with the mandate to answer the following question: **“To what extent does a proactive approach in reception and referral services outside the education centre result in an increase in the demand for education and training in the target groups?”** Note that the question had to be **reformulated in empirical terms**, since popular culture generally associates research with empirical terminology: “What are the results?” But it is very important to remember that our major question is worded as follows: “To what extent does a proactive approach in reception and referral services outside the education centre result in an increase in the demand for education and training in the target groups?”

All the meetings and efforts were directly related to the proactive approach in reception, referral, counselling and support services promoted by the Ministère:

However, given the nature of their functions, SARCA make a significant contribution to the expression of the demand for learning. This increases when the services become more visible and active to people, organizations, associations, businesses and institutions. The Action Plan calls for the implementation of community work, which will contribute to this visibility.¹

I found my first reference people early on. At each individual meeting, I presented the summary I had prepared and explained in detail the reason for my presence in the sector. I also gave the person the statistical document pertaining to his or her municipality. Many players said things like: “I don’t want to participate in your project because I’m already overworked as it is. It’s always the same people who get involved in the community. I’ve got enough to do and can’t take on any more.” This is a reality in the vast majority of localities: it is often the same people who invest their time in the community and it becomes exhausting at some point.

Proposed action

You need a shared purpose and common objectives whose achievement will enable the different parties involved to perceive at least some personal value. During the presentation, your objectives should be perceived as providing personal motivation for each player. At that point, it is up to the person in charge of fieldwork to promote the opportunity.

¹. *Toward a Renewal of Reception, Referral, Counselling & Support Services in School Boards*, p. 37.

Seeing this, I adopted a “What can I do for you?” approach rather than positioning myself to get their help. In doing so, I noticed that people were truly surprised at my offer, and even a little skeptical. But it reassured them and created a first opening. After the first contact, I suggested they read the documents I gave them and scheduled another meeting to discuss the project further. The second meeting was scheduled soon after the first since I believe you must strike while the iron is hot. Also, my deadlines were pretty tight. In the meantime, I was available to answer any questions that might arise.

At the second meeting I was often surprised. Expecting to meet with one or two people, I was sometimes welcomed by a group of ten or twelve. There might be a group representing young people, representatives of a community group, another representing seniors, etc. Some came as observers, but others were there to express their resentment toward different authorities, such as health and social services, the local employment centre, the school board—almost every organization. I could see that they had been frustrated and bitter for many years. In talking to them, I noticed that there was a particular period that appeared to be responsible for this state of dissatisfaction: the period during which services were centralized to the main MRC centre, i.e. Thetford Mines. What a surprise! I expected a welcome consistent with the school board's long tradition of community animation. What I got was quite the opposite! It's not that they resented the school board, but that I was working for a government service. In addition, I came from the central city, the one that got all the advantages at the expense of the smaller municipalities. Right then, I felt that my credibility would have to be based on my ability to do something or, at least, to act as a spokesperson for them. My attitude was to be open and listen to what they had to say. Although I could not be held responsible for the situation, I had to accept and hear their tirade. I told myself that, after all, it was part of the job of mediator.

After that, I regained control of the meeting by asking whether they were ready to work with me, assuring them that I would do everything in my power to support them in their needs and expectations.

Proposed action: Communicate and assign responsibility

Before choosing a way of proceeding, remember that getting a number of players with sometimes different visions to rally around the same objective means selecting a structure that allows for compromise while remaining reasonable in order to achieve the set goals.

I observed during my time on the project that personal logic deeply underlies people's ways of thinking and acting. This logic could hinder the development, understanding and acceptance of other models. Such changes, which affect people's roles and values, could result in misunderstandings, concerns and resistance among the different players (groups, services or people). Not taking this dimension into account and underestimating the repercussions, being content to simplistically redefine the rules, roles and procedures could result in failure to achieve the set goal.

Communication (insofar as it is precise, concrete and adapted) defines the issues at stake, and the ultimate goals and objectives of the project. It encourages the different players to take a stand and eliminates the shirking of responsibilities. From this point of view, communication implies responsibility. Of course, it cannot guarantee participation or help predict the behaviour of the players concerned. But even if a person does not immediately get on board, there is a good chance that he or she will question the purpose and consequences of his or her attitude (perhaps even unconsciously) and, by doing so, is already no longer an indifferent player. Also, the different players, participants and eventual users will be as sensitive to the content of the communication as to the manner in which it is presented and promoted. Most often, they will tend to adopt specific behaviours faced with the messages they are hearing. Often, their behaviour will represent the response to what they hear or perceive from the person transmitting the information.

Thus, the role of coordinator requires being able to function with a portion of insecurity and ambiguity and to manage to think differently in order to find new reference points.

At this point, it became clear that expectations with respect to the project and, in particular, the targeted results, raised certain questions and a need for reassurance among those consulted. These questions were temporal in nature: the duration of the mandate seemed too short given the scope of the problems to be taken into account. They also felt insecure about the continuity of actions that could be taken.

This insecurity might, for example, be expressed as follows: "We are prepared to invest in the research project, but it's really too short to expect any real results. You know, the people targeted by the project are the most disadvantaged members of society. The first challenge is to contact them. They often aren't even aware of the seriousness of their situation and they're isolated. Even if we can reach them, can you imagine the impact and the negative effects of raising their hopes of some sort of solution and then telling them: *Well, the project's over.* They've seen these kinds of projects before. How do you think we can get them to invest in other projects in the near future?"

At that point, I asked my coordinator to contact the people who needed reassurance. I could personally ensure the continuity of actions in the project. So Mr. Desjardins met with the various groups and assured them of our desire to pursue any action resulting from the fieldwork that could help their community. This had the desired effect, since the various external players continued to lower their guard and began to trust us. There is an expression that is often used in small communities. People say: “You’ve gotta walk the talk.” If you understand this, you understand everything!

In addition, several participants strongly emphasized the need to arrive at concrete proposals that would be carried out beyond the end of the project and to establish adequate measures to deal with problems in the communities in question. One participant told us: “I am participating because I hope to be able to see a change in things, in collaboration with the others. Every day, we deal with a lot of disadvantaged people: young single mothers, young adults, young families and people with no families. We would like the help we give to lead to self-sufficiency; that’s our goal, but there aren’t enough support measures and the services are far away. We often provide financial and one-time help. The problem is that they come in for help with a pressing need, but they don’t invest in projects that could help them become self-sufficient and get out of where they are. They left the so-called *regular* system years ago. Do you think that we can set them up to be self-sufficient in a few weeks? It’s a clientele that must be dealt with with some flexibility and we especially need to adapt our actions to their level. This means that we need services nearby. Many organizations and services have been centralized in Thetford Mines and are waiting for people to come in and make requests. Well, if you want to really help these people, you have to go get them where they are or, at least, near where they are. These are people who have learned to mistrust, so you need to earn their trust before you can get them to consider participating. The worst part is that, when we ask for the funds needed to implement projects to help these people, we are told: *There haven’t been enough requests in your municipality, so we can’t provide the funds you are asking for.* But when we ask the same project approval officers if disadvantaged people request educational services on their own, the answer is: *No, or very rarely.* So the conclusion is: not enough requests from disadvantaged people, no project approval, no solution. And the cycle of poverty continues. That is why, in this project, I don’t want to merely participate in discussions. I want to finally figure out real solutions. We can’t come and invest in meetings with the feeling that we can’t talk about the necessary measures. We’ve talked enough. When will we finally get what we need: the cooperation of players and the establishment of real and effective measures that will help us stop losing our young people? We need to break the cycle of poverty and its negative impact by implementing adequate projects and programs, not by setting up temporary measures to get precarious and ephemeral results.”

Proposed action: Be open

Since major changes would be made to roles and ways of doing things, a proactive approach could elicit negative reactions at one level or another. Yet it is entirely possible to reduce such resistance, even if it does not appear possible to avoid it altogether. But measures need to be taken early on in the project.

A few basic rules could help:

Be open: Don't underestimate potential players. A decision to become proactive in the sector without prior consultation or information and without allowing potential players to express themselves could paint your actions as a lack of recognition of their value, and your presence as imposed. Do not hesitate to ask people about their resistance and fears, recognizing them as justified.

Earn credibility: A lack of credibility on the part of the fieldworker will amplify insecurity at a stage at which reassurance is important. This could constitute a new source of opposition.

Adapt: If the time or means appear inadequate for becoming familiar with the changes, no one will want to participate. You must act quickly to answer any questions in this respect.

I had just understood the crux of their expectations: "We've talked enough. When will we finally get what we need: the cooperation of players and the establishment of real and effective measures that will help us stop losing our young people?" My goals were becoming clearer and establishing partnerships was truly an essential element that would allow for a synergy of the driving forces in these communities. Thus, if I wanted to successfully carry out my mandate, I had to begin by trying to bring these essential players together at the same table, something that appeared to have never been done but which everyone seemed to want. If I was unable to rally these partners, my chances of succeeding would be practically nil, since that is the first thing they expected of me. I had to remember: "I am participating because I hope to be able to see a change in things, in collaboration with the others."

So I began looking for the people I would eventually have to bring together. I questioned several key players in order to draw up a list of essential partners. These key players were often those who demanded more than the others, but I considered that their behaviours, often negative, showed a certain form of commitment.

It was by demonstrating true good will that I began receiving requests for support, training, information, etc. I had my first opening and I was accepted in the community, along with all my observations, most of them negative.

After these meetings, I immediately sent the information to my supervisor and to educational services, more particularly to those working in reception and referral. This method was also consistent with the first theme of the MELS document entitled *Toward a Renewal of Reception, Referral, Counselling & Support Services in School Boards*:

- Promoting the expression of the demand for learning means taking into account the expression of the adult's immediate need, his or her situation, his or her living conditions and his or her prior learning.

Mr. Desjardins also took charge of transmitting the information and negotiating the requests with the different people at pedagogical services and the various school board departments. We held a team meeting to establish the actions to be taken.

Proposed action

When implementing such a project, the person in charge of the service, your coordinator for example, cannot remain neutral. That is why it is important to send information beforehand, in order to raise awareness of the issues at stake among all team members and to emphasize the importance of their contribution. An additional project could sometimes be seen as "penalizing" the service. Indeed, the participation of one or more members of the service in the project could be experienced as a constraint, since established operations and the work planned will be modified as a result of pressing demands. A negative perception of the issues at stake could lead to negative behaviours on the part of the educational services team. And, in the event of a work overload or conflict of priorities, priority could be given to current activities at the expense of the project under way. All of this explains why it is essential that an agreement be reached on the priorities of the project and those of the service.

All staff members involved participated fully in the process and the action, and our service was able to respond promptly to all requests.

4.9 Requests and interventions

It is essential to answer requests as quickly as possible, however different they might be, since your credibility will also be based on your ability to do something in response to the expectations expressed early on, even if they involve merely acting as spokesperson for the people you meet.

The requests received led us to develop the following services:

Promotion

- Distribution of leaflets for promotion and referral purposes
- Customer information
- Referral as needed
- Advertising in the local newspaper and information about programs of study offered

- Establishment of collaborative measures with other municipalities for referring requests for education or training
- Strengthening of partnerships with government services and assurance of active participation in eventual requests for services
- Interventions in different target groups

Specific requests and actions

Group participating in a life skills project—Community gardens project

- Request: Inform a group of young adults participating in a life skills project about adult education services in order to encourage them to return to school.
- Action: Information session organized by our service and given directly to members of the group in an office in their municipality

Carrefour jeunesse-emploi de Frontenac

- Request: Inform the group of young participants about adult education services in order to encourage them to return to school.
- Action: Information session organized by our service and given directly to solidarité-jeunesse groups

Various community organizations in the municipalities in question

- Request: Need for information about programs of study offered in and around the municipalities in question. Possible action with respect to the difficulty of obtaining a sufficient number of participants
- Actions:
 - Collection of all the information by professionals in our service and possible adjustment of the necessary number of enrollments
 - Research on institutions near the municipality that could offer programs of study
 - Research on existing programs of study and those which could be developed
 - Active participation in each municipality with a view to consolidating partnership ties between the sectors in order to more easily obtain the necessary number of enrollments
 - Receipt of requests for education and training and exchanges between the municipalities in order to establish a list of concrete possibilities
 - Establishment of a list of programs of study and transmission of the information
 - Advertising on programs of study and our services in a local newspaper

Centre de santé et de services sociaux de la région de Thetford Mines

- Request: Need for information about our services and about reception, referral, counselling and support services for their different clienteles and with a view to strengthening current and future partnerships

- Actions:
 - Organization of a meeting in the short term with the director of services
 - Mutual agreements on essential interventions for the different groups served by the CLSC
 - Collection of all the information by professionals in our service
 - Development of advertising for each target clientele
 - Partnership and mutual follow-up
 - Active participation of two key players in the Table locale de Disraeli (see section 4.11)

Disraeli and Saint-Joseph-de-Coleraine: LAB Chrysotile and Usine Shermag – Disraeli adjustment committees

- Request: Need for support and information about programs of study and services offered to mine workers and people who have lost their jobs
- Actions:
 - Collection of all the information by professionals in our service
 - Communication with the adjustment committee
 - Preparation and intervention in the groups
 - Research on courses and teachers available

Various social groups

- Request: Support in the development of conferences designed for a group of about 80 seniors
- Actions:
 - Collection of all the information by professionals in our service
 - Research and contact with organizations and professionals that could provide lecture services
 - Transmission of information and needs between the different parties
 - Organization and presentation of conferences

Disintoxication and rehabilitation organization: Centre Toxico-Gîte SM

- Request: Inform people in rehabilitation about adult education services in order to encourage them to return to school.
- Actions:
 - Collection of all the information by professionals in our service
 - Communication with the people in charge at the centre
 - Reflection on actions that could be taken to meet the group's needs
 - Offer of services
 - Information session organized by our service and given directly to the group as needed
 - Organization of individual meetings
 - Follow-up

All responses to the various requests were directly related to the guidelines in the MELS document:

Adult education policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of the level of basic education in the population • Expression of the demand for learning • Focus on certain target populations
Development of a culture of lifelong learning¹
School boards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer and organize services • Offer services to the community • Ensure success
Educational mission

Principles: Proposed actions
Education and training assumes strategic importance not only at work but also in community and personal life; SARCA must be open to all these dimensions by offering a structured intervention that responds to the variety of adult interests and promotes involvement in society. ²

4.10 Mediation and alliances in response to needs

While receiving these requests, I continued to establish partnerships and conduct research. In pursuing my objectives, I asked my key players to verify the statistical documents, which were far from positive, in order to see whether they truly reflected the situation in the community. Most recognized the observations as accurate, except a few representatives, who were sometimes ill at ease discussing the most disadvantaged individuals and the discrimination they face; in some instances, I noted total denial of the problem. These same people believed that the statistics must contain significant errors, because what they demonstrated was impossible. “Our seniors are doing very well. They have several activities and are very happy in our municipality.” “And what about the young people?” “They, too, are doing very well. They have a skating track and a skateboard park.” “That’s good, but how do disadvantaged individuals participate if they don’t have skates or a skateboard? It must be a rough slide.” Oops! I had just touched a nerve and, finally, we could talk more frankly. Of course, such comments can be made only once you have a good idea of who you are talking to.

1. *Toward a Renewal of Reception, Referral, Counselling & Support Services in School Boards*, p. 7.

2. *Toward a Renewal of Reception, Referral, Counselling & Support Services in School Boards*, p. 16.

Proposed action: Negotiate

If you disagree with your partners, or if they disagree with each other, you should negotiate to find win-win solutions. Negotiating means finding a realistic compromise in the case of a disagreement. If I negotiate, it is because I need the other party's power to act and because individual interests have very little place in my objectives. Since the objectives should be shared, individual objectives could be contradictory.

It is necessary to adopt an adequate procedure.

Mediation to establish a partnership can be broken down into three stages: consultation, confrontation and conciliation.

Consultation makes it possible to understand each other. This is the adjustment and start-up period, which sets the tone for the mediation. First, you must make an effort to be recognized as a valid player.

This makes it possible to:

- 1. expose each person's situation*
- 2. transmit information*
- 3. ask for explanations*
- 4. understand the other person's "sensitive points" by listening and observing*
- 5. establish a relationship of trust*
- 6. clearly define the issues at stake*

Confrontation makes it possible to present arguments. This is the period in which you look for areas of agreement and disagreement and determine the elements of mediation. You could examine negotiable and non-negotiable items and defend your point of view. This makes it possible to:

- 1. create a debate*
- 2. argue and defend your position*
- 3. reformulate the other person's comments*
- 4. compare ideas*
- 5. express your respective objectives and compare them*

Conciliation makes it possible to come to a realistic agreement. This is the resolution period, in which you could reach an agreement and envisage realistic compromises based on each person's interests. This win-win situation makes it possible to:

- 1. summarize the comments exchanged*
- 2. propose joint solutions*
- 3. strip points of their emotional content*
- 4. find a middle ground*
- 5. find a win-win solution*

You must especially be sure that you can meet your commitments. This is the condition for a win-win situation and makes it possible to remain credible for the next time. However, you must always be prepared to renegotiate. A constructive partnership is a partnership in which everyone has his or her place. The partners are looking for a common solution and not adversaries. Thus, in animation and partnership, the win-win situation is a realistic and acceptable option.

At times I faced another problem: difficulty understanding the services, or their duplication. This is because some activities developed and subsidized by different organizations necessarily include training. We were therefore perceived, in our mandate, much more as competitors than a recognized government institution with the mission of training and educating the population. The fear of organizations with such a perception is the possibility of losing part or all of their hard-won subsidy. I had to help create the perception of our services as complementary, i.e. that each of us had our own mandates. This is a common misconception. There is much to be done in this respect to change the membership mindset which, in the end, adds to the clientele's problems. Not being able to perceive the individual as a whole hinders our ability to effectively meet his or her needs. We all have our strengths, and our limitations.

By perceiving and anticipating the individual's many needs in interaction with his or her community, I observed that each service is at some point called upon in accordance with its own specialty and mandate. For example, based on an educational need, we could assume that the client would also need support for other personal or environmental problems. Therefore, education is no longer the sole issue; it is accompanied by health, social services, income security and employment issues, for example. It is surprising that, after discussion, each service could arrive at the same conclusion but that, most often, we continue to work in a vacuum rather than communicate. My supervisor's words come back to me: "I dream of a day when all partners will work together toward a common goal in order to adequately meet clients' needs and come up with real solutions." Faced with all of these discussions, observations, demands and analyses, I thought to myself: "We should create a multisectorial table of partners that would include all of these players and could get things moving. Change, innovation, a proactive approach! Different expertise united in a palette of competencies working together toward a common goal would be a powerful alliance. I'm going to try that." Thus, I started creating just such a table.

4.11 Setting up a table of partners

Faced with all of these observations, and in order to be able to meet the various needs of the population, I suggested the creation of a table of the different partners we had at the time: the Société de développement économique de la région de Thetford Mines, the Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli (CERD), the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, the Centre local d'emploi de Thetford Mines, Emploi-Québec, Carrefour jeunesse-emploi, the Ministère de

la Santé et des Services sociaux and the municipality of Disraeli. The aim of the exercise was presented as follows: *Concertation and partnership between the main players with a view to identifying the most urgent problems and needs in order to identify possible solutions and concrete actions to be taken.*

At this point, I used the mechanism for interorganizational cooperation between the Commission scolaire des Appalaches and the other partners in the region. Of the latter, I invited the local employment centre, the Centre de santé et de services sociaux de la région de Thetford Mines, the Société de développement économique de la région de Thetford Mines (CLD) and the organization that had welcomed me, the Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli (CERD). After asking these partners: "In your opinion, who should participate in this table?" I invited the municipality of Disraeli, the Maison des Jeunes du Lac Aylmer, the Carrefour jeunesse-emploi de Frontenac and the Comité du Pacte rural: Politique familiale to participate.

I set up a first meeting with all these players and informed them of all the steps I had taken with the various municipalities, as well as the observations I had made. I asked them their opinion on the profiles. After our first meeting, we made the following observations concerning the problems identified and the actions proposed:

Problems in the municipality of Disraeli and surrounding municipalities

- a. Serious socioeconomic problems
- b. Job precarity due to the instability and closing of companies
- c. Weaknesses in the development of competencies and entrepreneurship in the population
- d. Isolation of part of the population
- e. Increased poverty
- f. The gap between the municipalities and the town of Thetford Mines, which has existed for a number of years
- g. Lack of cooperation among the principal players
- h. Difficulty getting the political authorities to recognize the problems
- i. Aging of the population and exodus of young people
- j. Concentration of disadvantaged individuals in the municipalities
- k. Limited visibility of services
- l. Academic failure and failure to graduate of a large percentage of young people in disadvantaged communities

Proposed actions

- Develop measures to encourage people to improve their self-sufficiency and competencies and provide the necessary support. Foster their implementation through direct and indirect strategies.
- Identify all potential partners and approach them.

- Establish local actions and promotion and prevention activities, on a small scale at first and with an increasing scope (ripple effect).
- Break down barriers between the players by establishing relationships of trust.
- Identify credible people who can mobilize the target clientele.
- Create a political action committee which could, through regional politicians with whom we have established partnerships, get these problems recognized and taken in hand for social development purposes (use of political channels).
- Decentralize services: create services near users.
- Identify the key people in the municipality in order to organize and mobilize the MRC.
- Hold annual meetings: assign shared projects in each organization in order to create partnerships and innovate by taking common action.
- Appoint a representative for each town and each municipality.
- Reach the people involved by establishing their:
 - geographical location
 - level of personal development
 - demand for services

At the end of the first meeting, all of the partners agreed that the local table should be maintained, and therefore that it was essential that the partners create solid ties amongst themselves. It was a success, a big success, for both partners and municipalities, which were requesting such ties in their respective communities.

Proposed action: Establish a partnership and create a multidisciplinary and multisectorial team

At first, bringing the players together in such a project would mean getting people and resources usually devoted to other activities to mobilize around a common goal for a predetermined period of time. My goal was to partner with players who would contribute their expertise to the work I was doing. Since it was really a matter of carrying out the research project to the best of my abilities and within a limited time frame, the ability to coordinate and elicit the cooperation of people with different expertise was key to the success of my research into a proactive approach.

But leading a multidisciplinary team is a delicate task. Since I was the fieldworker, the participants in the table, who remained attached to their service of origin, were not my subordinates. Some of them were even my “superiors.” In addition, I was on contract, so the project had a beginning and an end: at the end of the project, it had been agreed and I was to pass the torch on to someone else. So my power to bring these people together was of a limited duration. Also, the specialists and professionals, everyone who was involved in my research and who was working with me, had different expertise, each with his or her own language, issues and perception of the research project. Finally, I had to transform a sum of expertise into a team that did not exist when I arrived in the sector.

If the team was to function properly, each team member would have to accept the others' duties and roles. It would be important that the personal characteristics of the members help build a coherent, motivated and united team. Thus, it would be better to have someone with slightly less expertise but with a high level of motivation than someone with a lot of expertise who was not interested in the project or unwilling to give up some of his or her personal interests. The person in charge of the group should therefore ask himself or herself the following questions before the first meeting:

- 1. Does the team have all of the required expertise?*
- 2. Do the team members appear to be reliable?*
- 3. Do the personal characteristics of each team member make for the creation of a coherent, effective team?*
- 4. Is there a "plan b" if key participants fall short?*
- 5. Do the team members trust each other? If not, should I replace some of them?*

To analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the team, it would be useful to remember that similarities often result in conflict or obstacles in a project, while synergy is more often based on complementary differences. It often happens that the more similar team members are, the less they are able to work well together.

Thus, each participant brings his or her logic, expertise and perception to the team to build something new based on these differences. That is why it is important, at the outset, to create a sense of belonging that will result in cooperation among the members. Establishing a team spirit is essential in order to foster the commitment and participation of individuals throughout the project.

To foster the establishment of a sense of belonging, each team member should be made aware of three elements:

- 1. A common project*
- 2. Common rules*
- 3. Clearly assigned duties and roles recognized by the team*

Participating in a table of partners opens up new horizons for the different players. In such a project, the fieldworker should confront participants' expertise, i.e. the standards, rules, perceptions and constraints of their mandates, with his or her own. Participants' expertise in the project will therefore be doubly confronted: with the tasks and with the project. Thus:

- 1. The project will encourage participants to improve their standards and take into account the specific goals and constraints of the project with respect to their knowledge of the community, etc.*
- 2. They will explore new possibilities and propose innovative solutions.*
- 3. They will no longer be simply individuals applying their own expertise and having proved themselves, but individuals who use their expertise to solve problems by providing valid answers for the team working on the project.*

The exercise is therefore a whole rather than a sum of its parts. It will quickly become obvious that the tasks to be carried out are often very dependent on one another. Participants in such a project should bring their expertise to the table and cooperate with other team members. The project's success will largely depend on each member's ability to establish constructive relationships and to communicate effectively with partners. The project will force them to confront their knowledge with conditions in the community.

Thus, leading a team outside the institution in large part involves assigning responsibilities to the partners on the basis of the expertise of each key player and the roles he or she agrees to play throughout the project. The effective distribution of duties between the field supervisor and the resource people will therefore be based on participants' expertise and will clearly determine the role each person wishes to play. Thus, the project is not a simple accumulation of independent tasks, but a set of very interdependent activities contributing to a common goal. If not, it will not be possible to function properly: participants will simply be reinventing an "informal" type of functioning.

Thus, the role of the field supervisor is to lead the group and then to get the team members to play a role in the group.

In addition, working well as partners does not mean establishing "good relations," in the sense that problems are avoided in order to preserve the team atmosphere. On the contrary: one of the major goals is to create a climate of cooperation for the establishment of interactions with the other participants in order to bring conflicts to the surface and to negotiate real solutions.

Finally, in a partnership situation, it is essential that participants focus on disagreements rather than try to cover them up. Trying to understand the different opinions makes it possible to identify the origin of the conflict. Thus, dealing with the problem by making adjustments on either side enables each party to express his or her opinion, even if it contradicts that of the other participants. This also implies avoiding accusations that could elicit a defensive reaction or counterattack, but also giving one's opinion on the proposed solutions in order to eliminate those that would not work and to solve the disagreement by looking for win-win solutions. Such adjustments make it possible to get beyond explanations that are restricted to people and interpersonal relations. Verbalizing the causes of the conflicts will make it possible to downplay the emotional aspects of the situations experienced and to take a step back in order to deal with them. To deal with conflicts using reasonable accommodation, participants discuss the objectives and the issues at stake, as well as the rules of the game and the means and methods to be used. At the same time, they avoid the disagreement itself, which would only add fuel to the fire and would become an obstacle to the frame of mind needed to achieve the goal, i.e. the cooperation of all players.

The Table is now set up and is called the: **Table de concertation multisectorielle du secteur sud de la MRC des Appalaches**. Since its creation, the various partners have expressed a firm desire to work together using a proactive approach, an attitude that was largely missing from the equation before that time.

We are also convinced that this achievement, which is a result of our community animation and the various partnerships we were able to establish, will be very constructive in the different communities involved in our action research project. We believe that this table of partners and our joint efforts will make it easier to reach the target clientele and to determine their education and training needs. Finally, we believe we can, in our interventions in the field and in collaboration with our partners, encourage these clientele to take steps to return to school.

In our opinion, the **Table de concertation multisectorielle du secteur sud de la MRC des Appalaches** is consistent with the MELS guidelines set out in the action plan and various other documents:

TAKING ACTION

Taking up the basic education challenge means taking action to:

- Elicit the demand for education and training
- Adapt the service offer based on the needs and situations of adults, communities and groups with specific difficulties
- Consolidate and broaden the partnership and work in synergy and complementarity
- Support adults in their learning path
- Reinforce prevention and reduce the dropout rate¹

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RECEPTION, REFERRAL, COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Functions

Referral

- Intended to suggest people, resources or organizations that could help the adult in his or her process
- Adults should be referred more often to community resources

¹. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Action Plan for Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RECEPTION, REFERRAL, COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Functions

Partnership

A regional action research project

- Definition and field-testing of collaborative models that facilitate adults' progress, meet adults' needs and are user-friendly for partners

This achievement, recognized by the members of our follow-up committee and by all partners at the Table de concertation multisectorielle du secteur sud de la MRC des Appalaches, once again shows that our actions in the field were appropriate and especially beneficial for our partners and the people in the sectors covered by our service. (See the testimonies in the appendix entitled "Follow-up to the report.")

In the action research project, we believe we carried out our mandate with respect to the priorities established by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport in its action plan:

The action plan for adult education and continuing education and training is guided by three principles:

- Knowledge is an important factor in personal growth, economic development, social cohesion and democracy.
- Adults in Québec must have access to training and be given the opportunity to express their training needs.
- The state is responsible for adult education and continuing education and training; individuals, businesses and organizations must also be prepared to participate voluntarily and responsibly.

There are specific aims, and actions are based on a similar theme:

- stimulate a demand for training
- inform, counsel and support the adult learner
- offer services adapted to the adult's particular situation
- work together with partners¹

Thus, today, through our actions and with the help of our various partners, we are happy to say that we have achieved our overall objectives and that we can begin to answer our initial question: **"To what extent does a proactive approach in reception and referral services outside the education centre result in an increase in the demand for education and**

¹. *Action Plan for Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*, p. 1.

training in the target groups?” Indeed, following our actions, we observed a 7% increase in enrollments in adult education courses at our centre in Disraeli.

We carried out our mandate using a proactive approach and community animation to stimulate a demand for information, education and training and to adequately meet that demand by anticipating the population's needs.

A PROACTIVE APPROACH

- Increase the school board's presence in a new sector of the territory by becoming part of the social, economic and municipal fabric.
- Set up new information tools on the services available with the help of community organizations and leaders.¹

We were able to conduct an exciting and constructive dialogue. Most participants also said that the project had been a particularly enriching experience (see the appendix entitled “Follow-up to the report”). Those working with the most disadvantaged members of the community have experience in different areas (health, family, education), and these experiences served as a springboard for the identification and development of potential actions. Dialogue was facilitated by the fact that many of these people were members of associations and were accustomed to debating these issues. Institutional and municipal representatives were particularly concerned by the problem of poverty and its consequences, which made it possible to establish a more constructive and undoubtedly easier dialogue. These actions and this dialogue were consistent with the MELS policy:

- The target population for reception, referral, counselling and support services is all those requiring basic education, but the services should pay special attention to certain groups and adapt their interventions to the characteristics of these groups.

We observed that, when the main players are made aware of the issues at stake and called upon to collaborate on common actions and goals, each one tries to make an impact and emphasizes the problems and the different aspects of a situation and, in so doing, strengthens ties with other players. These players say they enjoyed collaborating on the elimination of obstacles instead of working in isolation: politicians, administrators and government employees on the one hand, and associations of organizations on the other. “We realize that each of us has information that can be useful to the others but, most of the time, we work alone in our organizations and try to raise awareness of needs, without support. If we could present our requests together, we might have more impact and be able to get positive answers more quickly in order to be able to meet the population's urgent needs.”

¹. Emploi-Québec, Chaudière-Appalaches, *Le marché du travail en Chaudière Appalaches: Des personnes à rejoindre, une diversité de secteurs d'activité économique* (Emploi-Québec, 2004), p. 8.

Those who work closely with the clientele targeted by the action research project participated and contributed significantly to the result of discussions held in the work groups concerned as well as those that took place during the project. As we see it, this enabled the participants, including the members of the follow-up committee and those of the Table de concertation multisectorielle du secteur sud de la MRC des Appalaches, not only to fuel discussion about content, but also to continue discussions in their own organization, where they promoted our services.

Proposed actions

Understand the proactive approach and community animation

This means understanding interpersonal relationships. The key element is to identify the different potential players, that is, those who will be playing a role in your mandate and therefore influencing both the project and its result. Analyzing your integration into the communities and into the reception structure is important in order to understand the type of issues the field supervisor will be facing. Getting all the players concerned by our actions together as much as possible will foster the successful implementation of the project. It is essential, since the quality of such a project depends first and foremost on consideration not only of the expectations and needs of those in the community, but also the means available to the people concerned.

It is also a realistic response, since the expertise necessary to set up the project, especially in disadvantaged sectors, is too complex to belong to a single person. Thus, when using a proactive approach, it is essential to begin by identifying the different players who will be the most helpful and who could serve as reference people.

If you need to set up an organization based on a proactive approach, the following ideas could prove useful:

- *There is no ideal model. The choice of a proactive approach requires constructing your own model and defining the structure best adapted to the issues at stake and the goal to be achieved.*
- *The success of a proactive approach also depends on the good will of the director and supervisor.*
- *The framework and its references will be questioned and nothing can be done without adopting new work methods.*
- *In order to implement what you have on paper, you need to evaluate the people chosen, their expertise, and how they think and act. Thus, they can understand the project and learn new ways of working together.*

Also, there can be no project without a client. In this action research project, the target clients were those who were the farthest from the educational services; in such a context, the client is difficult to identify. Thus, a project manager who is content to merely carry out the desired solution would be out of touch with reality. In the specific case of this action research project, the potential and future users of the services often have difficulty

concretely formulating their needs.

A proactive approach is therefore often an approach in which the person's needs are defined in the process of interacting with him or her, or with those who are already working with him or her.

It is by helping the person express his or her real needs and define his or her goals, and by having him or her react on a regular basis to proposals that the field supervisor can best adjust his or her community animation project.

Encourage communication

The team of partners is the main means of communication between the client and the other people involved and the field supervisor. It is therefore important to encourage the transmission of information that is as objective as possible. You need to formulate open questions in order to ensure that those involved express their points of view as frankly as possible. The goal is to use the verbal exchange to gather or transmit information. The result of the discussion is evaluated on the basis of the quantity, quality, interest, usefulness and reliability of the information exchanged. These discussions can limit the withdrawal of the different players by enabling them to remain near their home base, and ensure that the information is used.

Preparations for the interviews begin long before the date of the meeting. You should be aware of the topic and the goal and carefully prepare the interview in order to facilitate your interventions in future meetings. Defining your objective means determining what you want to accomplish. All this will enable you to set the tone for a clear and precise relationship in which you feel comfortable.

Different roles for the field supervisor

The goal is to get from your "paper" project to a successful achievement of your initial goals in the field. To do so, you must play a number of roles. The following are some of the roles I was required to play:

- Statistician, in order to learn about the territory I was to cover*
- Communicator, first to set clear goals, then to negotiate between my project goals and those of the people who would participate in their achievement, as well as with the services for which they worked*
- Organizer, to inventory the resources available and adjust them to the tasks to be performed and the goals to be achieved, as well as to any human, technical or organizational constraints. For the project to be a success, the field supervisor should also play other roles*
- Manager, to plan and integrate the qualitative aspects of the project with a rigorous respect of deadlines*

- *Leader, to generate contradictory debates, in particular at meetings, and to analyze problems in-depth, without hesitating to stand up to a third party on occasion*
- *Leader again, to propose a way of thinking that would help identify opportunities and problems without fear of throwing off the players' game before talking solutions*
- *Mediator, to verbalize the real problems and remind players of the goals and constraints without losing sight of the human dimension*

Since you have no official authority, to be able to play these roles successfully, your challenge will be to influence the players using means other than formal authority, bearing in mind that those who can influence the project can do so powerfully. If their interests do not coincide with those of the project, these people may refuse to act, argue interminably, consider the project a secondary issue, etc., which will definitely have a negative effect on the quality of your achievements and on deadlines. To move the project forward, you must get the key people identified as essential to the successful achievement of the set goals interested in the project and assign them some responsibility.

4.12 Social exclusion and isolation: Documents supporting our observations

As we mentioned in section 4.2, our action research project required that we examine the very essence of poverty. In this section, we focus on the fact that, to carry out the process described in our interventions, those involved must be made aware of the phenomena of social exclusion and isolation as they relate to the demand for education and training. The appendix to this document entitled "Follow-up to the report," demonstrates the promising and continuous application of what we learned as a result of our research.

4.12.1 Various problems and justification of reception, referral, counselling and support services

What we observed and validated with our reference people

Problems observed

- Slowdown of various sectors
- Aging of the population
- Isolation and exclusion of disadvantaged individuals
- Exodus of young people
- Denial of problems
- Very disadvantaged community
- Increase in the dropout rate
- Family and psychosocial problems
- Difficulty understanding the services, or their duplication
- Competition and lack of collaboration between the key players

Here we must consider the question of the connections between various types of educational and employment handicaps and the other causes of social exclusion and isolation. Various studies have revealed elements that complement our action research project, adding to our knowledge of social exclusion, particularly with respect to academic delay and its repercussions throughout the person's lifetime.¹ The following are the results of our observations and the various studies and data for our sector.

4.12.2 The risk of social and educational exclusion

Children's vulnerability to unfavourable socioeconomic circumstances is an established fact.² Socioeconomic situation is one of the principal determinants of cognitive development, upon which academic success and, in large part, success in life and the desire to engage in lifelong learning, are based.³ Thus, high expectations on the part of parents and constant encouragement from a teacher could help children overcome the worst effects of poverty and social disadvantage.⁴

How does this apply to disadvantaged communities? The following data on the communities involved in the action research project could help explain the difficulty of encouraging the adults in question to improve their knowledge.

Socioeconomic data, profile of the community and families

École Polyvalente de Disraeli: Serves the following municipalities: Disraeli, Saint-Joseph-de-Coleraine, Beaulac-Garthby, Saint-Fortunat, Saint-Gérard, Saint-Jacques-Le-Majeur, Saint-Julien, Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens, Sainte-Praxède and Stratford—in large part, the municipalities targeted by our action research project. École Polyvalente de Disraeli is located in a socioeconomically disadvantaged semi-urban area, like the four elementary schools that provide its students.^{5,6}

1. M. Rutter, "Psychosocial Resilience and Protective Mechanisms," in J. Rolf et al. (eds.), *Risk and Protective Factors in the Development of Psychopathology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

2. "Psychosocial Resilience and Protective Mechanisms."

3. "Psychosocial Resilience and Protective Mechanisms."

4. "Psychosocial Resilience and Protective Mechanisms."

5. Data provided by the Ministère de l'Éducation, April 10, 2000.

6. *Specific problems, areas of vulnerability:* Identified by 92% of students and the 54 staff members who responded to the QES survey in 2002-2003 as areas of vulnerability.

- 44% of students' mothers do not hold a secondary school diploma
- 36.1% of parents do not hold a secondary school diploma
- In 33.6% of cases, students' mothers do not hold a secondary school diploma and their fathers are not in the work force
- 28% of families are single-parent families
- In 14% of cases, neither parent works full-time
- 27.4% of parents live below the poverty line

It appears that poverty results in social exclusion. Low income in itself is not as important as the inferior situation of the individual with respect to others with higher incomes. Social exclusion and isolation affect both those who start off disadvantaged and those who become marginalized later on, the individual in both cases being unable to participate fully in society.

It is important to remember that exclusion is defined by the standards in effect at a given time, especially with respect to consumption. Thus, lack of access to goods such as telephones or vehicles or, in the case of children, clothing and toys, results in the classification as excluded people who would not have been twenty years ago.

One participant told us: "The reality in our community is that we are far from the large centres. We have no public transportation system. The distance between Disraeli and Thetford Mines, where services have been centralized, is minimal for a person who has an adequate income and a vehicle, but how does a person living under the poverty line without means of transportation get there? For disadvantaged individuals, the idea of having to go get services out of town adds to the problem. Thus, the urgent need for help becomes a nightmare and leads to more problems. It's like saying: *You need help to get back on your feet, so you're going to have to get by with nothing, because what you need is out of town. Dead end, turn around and go back.*"

A partner told us: "There's something I don't understand. Instead of imposing results, maybe we should start with the basics. For example, they promise us funds for daycare places, provided we have trained staff. How can you get training if you can't afford to leave the house? You have no services nearby for training. But we're given a time limit to find the resources; otherwise we lose the right to any funds. Are we going to send our children to home daycares run by people who themselves have psychosocial and family problems? The DPJ (Le Directeur de la protection de la jeunesse) is sending us more and more children. Where's the logic in that? Give us the means and the resources to train staff members before demanding results and guarantees."

Thus, we observe that lack of access to education and training has an extremely negative impact and disastrous repercussions. How, in 2005, with the aging population and the declining

birth rate, can we accept the loss or stagnation of possibilities for personal development through access to educational services such as reception, referral, counselling and support?

The consequences of the declining birth rate and the aging population have been established as worse in our sector, as confirmed by the following data:

- The following five MRCs are facing a declining population: **L'Amiante (-3.9%)**, Les Etchemins (-3.3%), L'Islet (-2.2%), Montmagny (-1.6%) and Lotbinière (-0.3 %).¹
- By 2011, the Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ) predicts demographic growth of 2.2% in the Chaudière-Appalaches region, while other MRCs in the region, in particular L'Amiante, Montmagny and L'Islet, will see their population decrease.²
- It is obvious that the socioeconomic players in the region must take into account the reality of the aging population in order to make the necessary adjustments, including encouraging people to pursue their studies and implementing continuing education and training and effective and coherent recruitment policies.³
- The Chaudière-Appalaches region registered demographic growth of 0.8% between 1996 and 2001, a level below that for Québec as a whole (1.4%). However, the following five MRCs are experiencing a decline in population: **L'Amiante (-3.9%)**, Les Etchemins (-3.3%), L'Islet (-2.2%), Montmagny (-1.6%) and Lotbinière (-0.3%).⁴
- **Median age of the population—record highs:** Between 1996 and 2001, the median age in the Chaudière-Appalaches region increased by three years, going from 35.9 to 38.9. This is a sign that the population is aging. **Five MRCs in the Chaudière-Appalaches region have a median age of 40 or more: L'Amiante (43.6)**, Montmagny (41.6), L'Islet (41.5), Les Etchemins (40.7) and Bellechasse (40.4).⁵
- More than 25% of the region's population is between the ages of 45 and 64. The **Appalaches (29.7%)**, Montmagny (28%) and L'Islet (27%) MRCs, as well as the Desjardins borough of the town of Lévis (27.8%), have a higher proportion than the regional average. These territories also have a large proportion of inhabitants in the 65 and over age group.⁶

1. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière Appalaches*, p. 8.

2. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière Appalaches*, p. 8.

3. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière Appalaches*, p. 9.

4. Emploi-Québec, Chaudière-Appalaches, *Information sur le marché du travail – La population et le statut familial, Recensement 2001 – Communiqué no. 1*, p. 2.

5. *Information sur le marché du travail*, p. 4.

6. *Information sur le marché du travail*, p. 5.

According to these data, we observe that we represent the MRC with the most negative results in the entire Chaudière-Appalaches region. And the situation is even more desperate in the small municipalities where we conducted our action research.

In addition, long-term unemployment, accompanied by poverty, poor health and loss of self-confidence result in exclusion.¹ Today, exclusion is marked by a lack of “aptitudes.”² Individuals excluded from society do not have access to the material, cultural and affective resources they need to acquire aptitudes. Obviously, these aptitudes are related to development and academic success, but extend also to the broader areas of health and participation in society.³ One characteristic of these aptitudes is their importance in constructing the adult’s identity.⁴ Aptitudes that provide access to employment and determine employability are determining factors in a person’s identity:

- Although certain people are considered closer to the job market, it appears that many of them need support with respect to aptitudes related to performance at work, productivity and stress management in the face of employer requirements. It has also been observed that right now, employers most often want people with the appropriate attitudes.⁵

But the context also has an effect, which must be taken into account and which also helps explain the development of social exclusion and isolation.⁶

Because of developments in the job market, personal characteristics such as a low level of schooling, which in the past were not a serious obstacle to employment, today lead to marginalized or peripheral jobs and, consequently, to exclusion:

- Of those receiving employment assistance benefits without employment constraints: 75% have been on social assistance for four years or more, which can lead to greater difficulties and the need for more long-term interventions for their return to work.⁷

Up until the mid-1970s, the large number of people who, in industrialized societies, left school without qualifications were recruited for the vast number of semiskilled or unskilled jobs that existed at the time. This type of job is becoming rarer, and employers are requiring increasingly

1. “Psychosocial Resilience and Protective Mechanisms.”

2. Emploi-Québec, Chaudière-Appalaches, *Plan d'action régional 2004-2005* (Emploi-Québec, 2004).

3. Judith LeGallais, *Le décrochage scolaire: facteurs sous-jacents* (Québec: Le Centre d'Apprentissage du Québec, 1992).

4. É. Royer et al., “Fonctionnement familial et compétence sociale des élèves en difficulté de comportement à l'école secondaire,” *Revue des sciences de l'éducation*, XXVI, 1 (2000).

5. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière-Appalaches*, p. 18.

6. Francyne Pelletier, “La misère de l'éducation: L'école n'est pas la seule coupable,” *La Presse*, Montréal (February 8, 1992).

7. *Plan d'action régional 2004-2005*, p. 12.

higher levels of competency and qualifications, pushing those without them into precarious jobs or the unemployment line:

- Recruitment difficulties: Results indicate that the lack of competencies among applicants is the major cause of recruitment difficulties. This cause is mentioned for 65.9% of vacant positions.¹
- The competencies at the root of recruitment difficulties: The major concern is that of personal qualities, which account for 59.6% of responses. Competencies such as interpersonal relationships, basic competencies and the category “other” also account for high proportions. “Other” refers to the following competencies: ability to learn and perform quickly; work-related competencies (precision, consistency, effectiveness, good results); dexterity; physical strength; versatility; successful completion of a course in the region and leadership. In terms of schooling, employers in the MRC des Appalaches require at least a Secondary V diploma for 63.6% of job offers.²

As a result, employment problems due to insufficient schooling push many young women into early pregnancy:

- Other studies address the values and expectations of women with young children on employment assistance. They wish to reenter the work force gradually and they need transition activities, since they often have insufficient work experience.³

After such a bumpy start, when these people find a job, it is usually at the bottom of the ladder, often precarious, and rarely offers training options. That is why targeting and concrete actions cannot have a durable effect unless the various players involved have the means and the partnerships necessary to break the cycle of poverty and exclusion. Disadvantaged individuals and their children are far behind and may never catch up and get a chance to achieve the standard of living of the more advantaged.⁴

The problem is that many disadvantaged individuals with a low level of schooling still think they can find work “like in the old days.” These people are not aware of the changes in the job market. They participate minimally in society and are not in tune with the requirements and changes related to the knowledge-based society:

- The low level of schooling of the unemployed increases their risk of long-term unemployment and exclusion from the job market. Their integration into the job market

1. Emploi-Québec, Direction générale de la Chaudière-Appalaches, *Enquête sur les caractéristiques de la demande de main-d'oeuvre de la MRC des Appalaches* (Emploi-Québec, 2000), p. 6.

2. *Enquête sur les caractéristiques de la demande de main-d'oeuvre de la MRC des Appalaches*, p. 6 and 9.

3. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière-Appalaches*, p. 15.

4. “Fonctionnement familial et compétence sociale des élèves en difficulté de comportement à l'école secondaire.”

will be greatly facilitated by early detection and by the offer of flexible and adapted measures (training, job preparation), in collaboration with specialized external resources.¹

This could explain their passiveness and failure to recognize their more than precarious situation. An adolescent participating in a guidance process will receive no support in a career choice from a parent outside the work force who is unaware of current employment and training requirements:

- For some, vocational choices are unrealistic, which can be explained by a lack of knowledge of job market possibilities. Also, they have little information about the resources in the community that could help them with their personal and vocational future. Nevertheless, integration into the job market appears to be easier for young men than young women; however, the opposite is true when it comes to keeping a job.²

That is also why we still hear: “Listen, I don’t see why my kid needs to go to school. I dropped out of school at 14 and I found work!” In the most disadvantaged communities, teachers observe that, because of their lack of education, parents are not interested in their children’s schooling and do not provide them with enough support.³ This is often accompanied by a lack of ambition for their children.

- Emploi-Québec Chaudière-Appalaches must bear in mind that 3299 (75%) of all beneficiaries without employment constraints accumulate four or more years of employment assistance. This situation represents a significant withdrawal from the job market and could result in more or less major obstacles concerning their return to work.⁴

The long-term unemployment or precarious employment of parents not only limits family income,⁵ but it also constitutes a model which, in some families, could result in a failure to recognize the importance of academic and vocational success. It has long been established that a disadvantaged childhood adversely affects later academic results. A number of studies indicate that parents’ ambition for their children is an important factor in their academic development.⁶

1. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière-Appalaches*, p. 11.

2. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière-Appalaches*, p. 20.

3. J.-M. Bouchard and J.-C. Kalubi, “Les difficultés de communication entre intervenants et parents d’enfants vivant avec des incapacités,” *Éducation et francophonie*, 31, 1 [on-line: <http://www.acelf.ca/revue>].

4. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière-Appalaches*, p. 14.

5. Le conseil national du bien-être social (CNBES), *Le coût de la pauvreté* (Winter 2001-2002).

6. *Le coût de la pauvreté*.

Many disadvantaged parents do not understand the importance of schooling for their children's future, or simply refuse to face reality, since it would cause psychological suffering. Admitting to a stranger that one is poor is easier than talking about it with one's own children. Therefore, a young person looking for his or her parents' support and approval of his or her decision to pursue his or her studies will, most often, see his or her choice invalidated. "What hurt me as an educator was when a young 21-year-old man told me he had taken a year and a half to finish two Secondary V courses. It took that much time because he was being discriminated against in his own family. He would be the first to obtain a secondary school diploma, which was perceived practically as a betrayal of his family, rather than an achievement and an opportunity to ensure better living conditions for the future. The young man said he needed to take the time to gain his family's acceptance of his decision to pursue his studies. It's unbelievable, but it's a reality you come across when you work in the most disadvantaged communities. Now imagine the first steps in the field, raising awareness by making educators available. The first solution is to get close to people by offering services nearby."

Obviously, exclusion is also seen in areas other than employment, for example criminal activity and a lack of social and political participation, which must also be taken into account:

- Some young people have problems when it comes to behaviours expected by employers. Among other things, they have difficulty with authority (boss, foreperson) and attitudes deemed unacceptable in the workplace, such as a lack of punctuality. Sometimes there are also problems with drug and alcohol abuse.¹

4.12.3 The cycle of social and educational exclusion and job precarity

Children and young adults, as members of a family, suffer from the social exclusion of their parents. The limits this places on their development are the cause of their own exclusion, as it was for their parents.² According to what we learned from our various partners, the sequence can be summarized as follows:

- poor academic results
- dropping out of school without qualifications
- difficulty entering the job market, including jobs that do not require specialized training
- precarious employment and unemployment
- early pregnancy
- problems with police
- alcoholism

1. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière-Appalaches*, p. 20.

2. "Psychosocial Resilience and Protective Mechanisms."

- criminal record
- physical and, especially, mental health problems

Each of these phenomena is an indicator of early social exclusion.¹ The process is ongoing, in the sense that one phenomenon leads to another and, to some extent, it is cyclical in its effects, in that the child or young person will often follow in his or her parents' footsteps:

- As the author of the study so aptly reminds us, these figures should not overshadow the human beings they represent, since people living in poverty often suffer humiliation, prejudice, discrimination and abuse. It is also a known fact that poverty is a source of stress and anxiety; it isolates people and, too often, has an impact on physical and mental health. Finally, poverty itself is one of the first obstacles to breaking the cycle of poverty.²

From birth, children are subjected to the positive and negative aspects of the services made available, including, at first, health and preschool education services, then academic services and, in adolescence, teaching, youth and vocational guidance services. As adults, the range of services extends to all state institutions: social, employment, housing, health and legal services. These institutions and the accessibility of their services are the source of all of the individual's opportunities to develop aptitudes, as well as all of the obstacles he or she can encounter:

- Some young people demonstrate a lack of motivation and perseverance when it comes to making an effort to find work or return to school. Many are not interested in school and have a negative perception of the job market. Despite their youth, they have experienced enough failures to believe that there is absolutely no point in taking steps. When they request services, it is important that such services be provided rapidly, otherwise, they as quickly lose interest.³

The perception of certain educators should also be taken into account and adjusted in order to adequately meet the needs and motivations of those requesting services: "Some people want to better themselves and others want to take advantage of the system. You can see it in their faces."

Yet, as Emploi-Québec points out: "Many women have little schooling, but often find getting an education difficult. Some women have deep-rooted family values; giving them a look at the job market without turning them off requires a certain amount of finesse."⁴

1. "Psychosocial Resilience and Protective Mechanisms."

2. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière-Appalaches*, p. 13.

3. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière-Appalaches*, p. 20.

4. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière-Appalaches*, p. 19.

How can we, as service providers, claim we can see a person's intentions at first glance? That would be like a doctor diagnosing cancer by looking at the patient. There is a total disregard of the symptoms or possible treatments. The person is condemned out of hand! This is also where partnerships with the different players are most important and demonstrate the need for reception, referral, counselling and support services. Thus, we quickly come to the conclusion that, by working with the adult, we have a direct influence on the cycle of poverty and the changes that must take place in order to break, as it were, a family tradition:

- Young single mothers often have little schooling and their vocational choices are for the most part limited. Like older single mothers, they face problems related to poverty, a lack of daycare services and transportation, the absence of moral support, conjugal violence and little positive work experience. These young mothers need encouragement and sustained support if they are to ensure a better future for themselves. A wide variety of long-term activities should be offered, along with help acquiring self-knowledge and developing self-esteem. In addition, in order to stimulate diversity in their vocational choices, they need to have a better understanding of the job market and an opportunity to participate in observation practicums in different workplaces.¹

Also, many educators told us that there is a form of discrimination between disadvantaged individuals, sometimes resulting in ghettoization. One told us: "There are parts of town where people don't go. All there is there is trouble." Local attitudes come into play. An educator told us: "There are people who will never agree to attend an information session at the community centre because they are convinced that the centre is only for disadvantaged individuals. They believe that if they do, they will be labelled." People labelled as stupid or other things easily become victims of prejudice and this leads to a certain marginalization. For example, one educator told us: "I've seen people who want to enroll in training who changed their mind after finding out who was on the list. They tell me: *If he or she is going to be there, I'm not.* People are even labelled according to where they live. If you come from a certain place, you have no business here, and it's been that way a long time." This rivalry has been around for many years. That is why it is important to take people's mindsets into account in order to be able to infiltrate the social fabric of the different communities.

Longitudinal studies have shown that, as people acquire more schooling, the gap widens between those with and without an education; some progress more quickly, while others stay behind:²

1. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière-Appalaches*, p. 20.

2. D. Pilling, *Escape From Disadvantage* (London: The Falmer Press, 1990).

- The low level of schooling of much of the work force is also a definite hindrance to corporate development and growth. All sectors combined, the percentage of workers without a secondary school diploma stands at 23.5%.¹

The result is the social exclusion of some and the full participation of others. This also involves access to a certain status in terms of occupation, income, family life, housing, health, and social and political participation in the community. The social exclusion process could be considered a reduction, or even the elimination, of the probability of gaining access to different statuses, from an early age, in disadvantaged communities.²

Longitudinal data demonstrate the impact of persistent poverty in different communities on a series of manifestations of social exclusion in adulthood, i.e. a lack of qualifications, low income, early pregnancy and depression.³

As we saw earlier, some geographical areas have higher than average concentrations of risks associated with difficult conditions, poverty and a low level of schooling. Several studies have shown that early intervention among children and families benefiting from specific support programs permanently reduces the risk of social exclusion. The later the intervention, the more effort it takes to reduce the level of risk, which is already firmly established. The result of this is poverty and repetition of the same cycle.⁴ To make a difference, we need to break the cycle of poverty through interventions carried out by various community services such as reception, referral, counselling and support services outside the centre, which is related to the fourth theme of the MELS reference document:

Ultimate goals

- To accompany the person in the expression of his or her demand for education or training
- To contribute to the person's development and self-sufficiency
- To equip the person to gain more control over his or her living conditions and to be able to change them as a result of lifelong learning

If we want adults to adequately raise and support their children, we must provide them with the necessary information. Disadvantaged individuals also need professional social and educational support. Professional support is most effective when it is informal and reflects the social community of the person in question as much as possible. One partner told us: "Why do you

1. *Plan d'action régional 2004-2005*, p. 13.

2. "Psychosocial Resilience and Protective Mechanisms."

3. *Le coût de la pauvreté*.

4. L.J. Schweinhart, H.V. Barnes and D.P. Weikart, *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27*, Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, no. 10 (1993).

think your interventions work? Mainly because your educator is in the community and is visible to the population, in other words, she is accessible and involved.”

Our actions were based on the Ministère’s guidelines:

FOUNDATIONS AND POSITION	
Principles: Intentions	
6.	Promoting the expression of the demand for education or training involves taking into account the expression of the adult’s immediate needs, context, living conditions and prior knowledge.
	Roles and responsibilities of reception, referral, counselling and support services
	Duties
PARTNERSHIP	
	Inherent in the mandate of reception, referral, counselling and support services
	Within centres and within the school board
	Outside centres and the school board to foster a harmonized approach with partners
	To be open to the community where the adults live

Our choice of community animation in the different communities was therefore both effective and appropriate.

4.13 Importance of the continuity of reception, referral, counselling and support services

The most common factor in this dynamic is the crucial role of the family, which creates both the conditions for later social exclusion and the means by which they can be avoided.¹ The vast majority of families, regardless of the type of problems with which the parents are faced, provide the protection and stimulation children and young adults need to develop.

Thus, the more support we provide, and the more contact there is between the family and educational services, the better the chances of creating positive relationships in the development process, thereby strengthening positive effects and an interest in lifelong learning.² Then, it is never too late to act. The importance in terms of aptitudes is that, in the life of each

1. M. Rutter, “Developmental Psychopathology as a Research Perspective,” in D. Magnusson and P. Casaer (eds.), *Longitudinal Research on Individual Development. Present Status and Future Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

2. Antoine Baby, “La réussite scolaire et la collaboration entre l’école et la famille,” *Bulletin du CRIRES (Centre de recherche et d’intervention sur la réussite scolaire)*, 1, 1 (March 1993).

individual, there are several periods of change and adaptation in which we can take action by offering reception, referral, counselling and support services.

Finally, the learning process is not limited to childhood; it can continue throughout an adult's lifetime. The risk is inherent in the existence of obstacles to obtaining the necessary means. The elimination of these obstacles is essential to break the cycle of social exclusion. Actions should therefore be targeted for all ages and all stages of development,¹ hence the importance of maintaining and renewing reception, referral, counselling and support services.

¹. *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27.*

Chapter 5



Results

5.1 Concomitant observation of an increase in enrollments

As we mentioned earlier, we cannot provide results such as we might have obtained if we had used an experimental approach (pre- and post-tests with a control group and random distribution of subjects). The empirical approach was not our first choice. However, we were able to begin answering the third major question of our action research project: “To what extent does a proactive approach in reception and referral services outside the centre result in an increase in the demand for education and training in the target groups?” Our interventions in the field led to an increase in enrollments at our centre in Disraeli; indeed, after identifying target individuals and groups and organizing information sessions, reception and referral services quickly began taking new enrollments. According to the data compiled by the Centre d’éducation des adultes de Disraeli, individuals from our target groups represented approximately 7% of new enrollments. The successive aspect of these two events (our interventions and the new enrollments) can be interpreted in different ways. Strictly speaking, we cannot prove the existence of a causal relationship between the two events, in particular because of the absence of certain conditions which would have made it possible to do so, such as the use of a control group and the random distribution of subjects. Nevertheless, we believe that these new enrollments were a result of our interventions. Of course, that is our subjective interpretation of reality, and many others are possible. We can, however, say that there is a concomitant or simultaneous relationship between the two events.

We held more than 35 meetings with various players in all the municipalities. All the individuals and groups we met with received information about adult education services or were directed as needed to other organizations that could meet their needs.

We were unable to work with the targeted company, Shermag, as planned since, throughout the action research project, it was dealing with a general strike and the return to work of only half its workers. But we did participate in two adjustment committees for workers at LAB Chrysotile and the Shermag plant. Fifteen workers at Shermag are now taking adult education Secondary V updating courses at our centre.

We established and consolidated more than 28 partnerships with organizations and important players in the sector covered by our action research project:

- Groupe Les Amis du 3e Âge
- Centre d’entraide de la région de Disraeli (CERD)
- “Des outils pour bien manger” community kitchens
- Community gardens for young people with difficulties
- “Femmes d’ici,” a women’s group in Disraeli
- Centre d’action bénévole Concert’Action, Beaulac-Garthby
- Carrefour jeunesse-emploi de Frontenac

- Société de développement économique de la région de Thetford (CLD)
- Centre local d'emploi de Victoriaville
- Centre local d'emploi de Thetford Mines, Emploi-Québec
- Centre de santé et de services sociaux de la région de Thetford
- Shermag adjustment committee, Disraeli
- Groupe Gestion concertée des ressources humaines
- Maison des Jeunes du Lac Aylmer
- Ville de Disraeli and Disraeli – Paroisse
- Municipalité de Saint-Fortunat
- Municipalité de Saint-Gérard
- Cercle des fermières de Saint-Gérard
- Âge d'or de Saint-Gérard
- Municipalité Saint-Jacques-Le-Majeur
- Municipalité de Saint-Joseph-de-Coleraine
- Municipalité de Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens
- Municipalité de Stratford
- Comité du Pacte rural de Disraeli
- Centre de la petite enfance Parc-en-ciel
- Sûreté du Québec, poste de la MRC des Appalaches
- Centre Toxic-Gîte SM de Beaulac-Garthby

We also encouraged the partners involved in the sectors to form a local table. Today, this group of partners is known as the **Table de concertation multisectorielle du secteur sud de la MRC des Appalaches**. As you can see in the appendix to this document, written in the fall of 2005, the Table's actions are still in full swing.

5.2 Main elements perceived as facilitating the development and implementation of a proactive approach in our action research project

This section provides answers to the first half of the first question of the project: "What did participants find helpful in the project?"

- The reference document entitled *Toward a Renewal of Reception, Referral, Counselling & Support Services in School Boards: Discussion and Policy Document*
- The plan of the process and the schedule of activities
- The meetings, efforts and support of the adult education team
- The support of the administration
- The training, support and commitment of the follow-up team
- The extensive participation of reference people in each sector
- The openness and availability of the players involved
- The commitment and support of partners
- A proactive research project directly related to the problems and needs in the community, the government policy and plan of action on adult education and continuing

education and training, and the objective of renewing reception, referral, counselling and support services

- Mobilization in the community as a result of our actions
- Open and clear discussions among the people involved
- Respect for each player's strengths and limitations
- The acceptance of time constraints resulting in a certain amount of pressure

5.2.1 Main difficulties encountered during the development, implementation and evaluation of our action research project

This section provides answers to the second half of the first major question of our project: "What did participants find limiting in the project?"

- The lack of sufficient time to do the research, which was a major limitation and added pressure to the process
- The number and diversity of players to recruit from the different municipalities involved
- The isolation and mistrust of certain individuals
- The lack of time to develop more specific activities
- The denial in certain sectors
- The diversity and scope of the problems (these problems have existed for a long time and they are getting worse because of a lack of concrete actions and solutions)
- The lack of collaboration between the groups most concerned
- The lack of means and time to develop and apply truly effective measures
- The lack of equipment in several institutions
- The scope of expectations of the different sectors with respect to our time and budget constraints
- The lack of communication
- The mistrust people have of government players
- The rapidity with which action had to be taken (about eight weeks in the field)

5.3 Evaluation of the action research project by the follow-up committee

This section provides answers to the second major question of the action research project: "How was the action research project evaluated, during and at the end of its implementation, by a follow-up committee made up of various experienced practitioners representing several key organizations in the region?"

Reception, referral, counselling and support services

Members of the action research follow-up committee

- Société de développement économique de la région de Thetford (CLD), represented by Carole Mercier, rural development consultant
- Carrefour jeunesse-emploi de Frontenac, represented by Nancy Cameron, educational and vocational information and guidance counsellor
- Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, Centre local d'emploi de Thetford Mines, Emploi-Québec, represented by Charles Rouleau, socioeconomic assistance officer, team leader/specialist
- Centre d'éducation des adultes l'Escale, Commission scolaire de L'Amiante (now the Commission scolaire des Appalaches) represented by Isabelle Laplante, assistant director
- Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli, represented by Anita B. Lemieux, president, and Isabelle Roberge, coordinator

EVALUATIONS

Société de développement économique de la région de Thetford Mines (CLD)

At first, when I was approached to join the follow-up committee, the fears I expressed were that there would be no follow-up and that we would be mobilizing the community and its people for nothing and without waiting to see the impact which, in a case like this, becomes apparent in the medium and long terms. The project was very interesting and would bring the community together. It was presented clearly and, throughout, Catherine Coutel focused on cooperation and answered our questions.

I think I had the influence I wanted to have on the research project. My ideas and proposals were really taken into account and respected. This attitude also encouraged me to participate in the project.

It is important to emphasize the fact that the project requires financial, material and especially human resources (significant individuals with whom people can establish a relationship of trust) and that it must be looked at in the long term. The more you deal with excluded or isolated individuals or individuals with serious difficulties, the more time you need to see changes happen.

Now that the project is coming to a close, my expectations concerning the report are that it be sent to the educators concerned, but especially to the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and within the Commission scolaire des Appalaches, so that they understand that, through this action research project, our community mobilized, and that we are awaiting follow-up.

Carole Mercier

Rural development consultant

MRC des Appalaches

Société de développement économique de la région de Thetford (CLD)

Centre d'éducation des adultes l'Escale

When I was asked to join the committee, I accepted right away because it was one of the first committees I participated in as part of my new duties.

After the first meeting, I questioned the point of my presence, since I had been told I would be there to organize the facilities and find personnel for any new activities related to reception, referral, counselling and support services.

After sharing my concerns with Jean-Yves Desjardins, the director of educational services, I had a better understanding of the committee's mandate. Throughout the meetings, I observed that the input of each player was considered.

The results of the research project appear to be clear, complete and very appropriate. My expectations are that the government find the money to implement concrete and permanent measures based on the results of the research project.

*Isabelle Laplante
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Carrefour jeunesse-emploi de Frontenac, Point de service de Disraeli

When I was asked to join the reception, referral, counselling and support services follow-up committee, I wondered what the point would be. After a few discussions with education consultant Catherine Coutel, I realized that the expectations of reception, referral, counselling and support services were similar to mine: to identify the needs in the region, contact the clientele and encourage them to take action. Bringing together different players in the Disraeli region could only be beneficial for the region and the clientele. I was interested in the idea of targeting new problems, finding solutions and learning more about the population. Although I had worked for four years in Disraeli, little information was available. During the project, I felt that my experience and knowledge were important.

Throughout the research project, Ms. Coutel was able to integrate the community, which fostered and facilitated discussions with clientele. The number and quality of meetings held make the results all the more valid. The results obtained are and will be, in my opinion, very useful tools in helping the clientele in the region. Of course, the constant presence of an education consultant specializing in reception, referral, counselling and support services would ensure the implementation of solutions and would enable the population to establish a relationship of trust. This would help encourage them to take action.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate Ms. Coutel for her energy and the quality of her work throughout the project. I am certain that the results obtained, as well as the report, will foster the development of new reception, referral, counselling and support services.

Nancy Cameron

Educational and vocational information and guidance counsellor

Carrefour jeunesse-emploi de Frontenac, Point de service de Disraeli

Centre local d'emploi de Thetford Mines, Emploi-Québec

When I was asked to join the follow-up committee, my first reaction was to question the contribution I could make. I did not see that I could do anything worthwhile. However, the composition of the group was interesting, and the possibility of talking to them, stimulating. I saw the opportunity to update and share my recent experiences.

Overall, the project was well presented and participants' questions were answered. I also felt that further information would become available over time. Participants' ideas and opinions were welcomed. The direction the research would take was well established, and that was good. For Emploi-Québec, which was not the project leader, I could play a collaborative role, which was also good. Members' open-mindedness and the appropriateness of their comments helped us share our experiences and probably helped us achieve the results we did.

The rapid creation of a multisectorial table is a short-term achievement of the project. The future will tell whether it will survive the difficulties of its mandate. Analysis of the research clearly identified a need, actions should be taken in the medium term, and many participants appear to be driven by the desire to take action, so the future should be positive for the territory of Disraeli and the surrounding area.

I expect that the document will be presented to the people in charge. That adequate representations will be made in order to ensure rapid follow-up. That the consultation and partnerships between current players continue and that any individual or group wishing to join the process be welcomed. There will never be too many players in this change game.

Charles Rouleau

Socioeconomic assistance officer, Team leader/specialist

Centre local d'emploi de Thetford Mines

Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale

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Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli

We enthusiastically agreed to join the action research follow-up committee. We thought it was important to share our own observations, which could contribute to the research project, since we are faced on a daily basis with the real needs of the target clientele.

Our contribution was considered throughout the process and we are very satisfied with the results. All of the data in the report will be important tools that will help the Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli (CERD) improve its interventions and confirm conditions in the sector served by our organization.

The consultation of the various bodies in the territory helped put the problems experienced into perspective and, we hope, will help rally all players in the sector in the development of joint projects aimed at the improvement of social, educational and economic conditions.

Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli

Anita B. Lemieux, president

Isabelle Roberge, coordinator

Chapter 6



Recommendations and Proposed Actions

The following proposed actions could help achieve the goals presented in the preceding chapters. They were formulated in an attempt to find answers to the problems raised by our action research project and in the course of the consultations held by the DFGA. They are intended for those in charge of adult education, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (DFGA), the school boards and all the partners involved. Suggestions and recommendations for the youth sector and other government ministries and organizations are also made with a view to fuelling discussion between the different partners on the prevention of educational and social exclusion.

The following recommendations are addressed in more detail below:

- **A proactive approach: Essential for reception, referral, counselling and support services**
- **Improvement of the reception, referral, counselling and support services action plan through the inclusion of a section on the prevention of educational and social exclusion**
- **The leadership role to be played by school boards in reception, referral, counselling and support services**
- **A broader definition of reception, referral, counselling and support services**
- **Long-term support for actions taken**
- **Collaboration with the youth sector**
- **Campaigns to raise awareness among adults, government ministries and organizations**
- **The creation of the appropriate conditions and support for research in the field**
- **A proactive approach: Especially useful in sparsely populated regions**

6.1 A proactive approach: Essential for reception, referral, counselling and support services

When we look at the government policy on adult education and continuing education and training, it is clear that school boards must make the necessary effort to reach the target populations. To this end, we believe a proactive approach is essential. With such an approach, we believe that we can establish contacts with people, organizations and associations that can reach these target populations. For further information, read the foreword of this document, which, in our opinion, very clearly explains this recommendation.

6.2 Improvement of the reception, referral, counselling and support services action plan through the inclusion of a section on the prevention of educational and social exclusion

The action plan for the renewal of reception, referral, counselling and support services should be pursued, with the addition of a section on the prevention of educational and social exclusion, while fostering collaboration between players in the education sector and potential partners. The educational services department in our school board would very much like to see the MELS continue to support the action plan for reception, referral, counselling and support services in collaboration with the groups and partners involved in adult education in order to ensure a follow-up to the research project. We helped identify the existence of a crucial problem concerning the prevention of social and, especially, educational exclusion. This section should be integrated into MELS orientations since it would help define the role of partners and the actions to be taken, in isolation or collaboration. The different research reports on a proactive approach could serve as references in the pursuit of the action plan.

6.3 The leadership role to be played by school boards in reception, referral, counselling and support services

It is important to take a stand in terms of the prevention of risks associated with educational exclusion and to share this position and the targeted objectives with partners in the education sector and with the other government ministries and organizations concerned. The adult education sector should define and make known its roles and priorities with respect to reception, referral, counselling and support services. It should also find partners and cooperate with them in defining actions in the areas affected by the renewal of these services.

A government orientation should also give adult education departments a leadership role in preventing educational exclusion in their communities. School board reception, referral, counselling and support services could play a role in mobilization and animation in their locality or region, provided they are supplied with the necessary resources. In the same vein, community animation should be promoted in these services.

6.4 A broader definition of reception, referral, counselling and support services

The DFGA would play an important role by strongly recommending and supporting the implementation of these services. In order to foster more effective actions, we believe that it is essential that the definition of reception, referral, counselling and support services be broadened and that cooperation be clearly promoted.

For example, adults enrolled in adult general education whose children are enrolled in preschool or Elementary Cycle One might be especially interested in parenting skills courses. Parents with social adjustment difficulties might appreciate life skills education, with a section on family relations, or perhaps community or cultural education. All of these activities are means of establishing a culture of lifelong learning and we firmly believe that they could lead to other types of qualifying and non-qualifying training.

School boards could meet the particular needs of parents and adults from the target groups and encourage them to engage in continuing education and training, as recommended in the policy.

Reception, referral, counselling and support services can also involve awareness and promotion activities designed to provide training and ensure the maintenance of lifelong learning skills. This message could and should be conveyed by partners that are significant to the targeted adults, and collaboration could help achieve this objective while emphasizing the importance of adult education and training in the adult's community, aimed at maintaining, developing and upgrading competencies.

6.5 Long-term support for actions taken

With respect to the observations made during our action research project, establishing concrete measures to counter educational and social exclusion is important, even urgent, in particular in sparsely populated and disadvantaged communities. Adult education services require stable and long-term financing which is not based on the current financing method, which is too dependent on FTEs. To be effective, this type of action should be implemented in the long term. The MELS and its government partners should therefore support reception, referral, counselling and support services in school boards by providing the necessary means. Adult education services could then broaden their scope of action and adapt their program offerings to the real needs of the population.

6.6 Collaboration with the youth sector

Collaboration should be encouraged between adult education and the different partners that work with disadvantaged clientele in order to define complementary and coherent preventive actions based on each partner's mission. The DFGA should join forces with other MELS departments and other ministries and organizations.

Faced with the different problems observed, the youth and adult sectors could join forces and share their resources in order to design and organize courses for parents.

6.7 Campaigns to raise awareness among adults, government ministries and organizations

The situation of disadvantaged individuals is still poorly understood and is the subject of much prejudice. In general, people believe that it is an attitude problem and are unaware that it can affect, in particular, those who have not had access to adequate and adapted services.¹ It is essential to raise awareness of this issue in the different ministries since this might open the way for fruitful and effective collaborations. It might be appropriate to raise public awareness of the needs of young children, parents and adults in terms of lifelong learning in order to advertise means of improving one's knowledge and developing aptitudes and competencies, such as access to reception, referral, counselling and support services. These actions could be taken at the provincial, regional and local levels.

Innovative adult education projects, in particular those that involve various partners, could be a source of inspiration in defining means of intervention with other ministries and organizations. The idea is to set up means of promoting them and raising awareness.

6.8 The creation of the appropriate conditions and support for research in the field

Based on the state of action research projects on a proactive approach, actions to prevent educational and social exclusion that could help us understand the causes of current problems and find solutions should be determined. It is essential, among other things, to be aware of the perception of education and training in the community. Similarly, several topics should be studied in depth: family and academic paths that lead to academic failure, the reasons for exclusion, the most effective measures, parents' influence on their children's learning, ways of improving the participation of isolated individuals in adapted programs, intervention strategies and models that could best help disadvantaged and often marginalized individuals in their role as parents, and even evaluation, financing and organization methods for prevention activities: all of these elements are worth looking into.

The MELS could, through reception, referral, counselling and support services, determine priorities and participate in joint projects with other ministries or organizations, such as those that serve families, by financing projects with partners and soliciting the collaboration of the players involved.

Adults could have access to all of the information on the prevention of educational and social exclusion using more effective methods. The MELS could play an important support role in the different sectors and with the most disadvantaged individuals by supporting the development of

¹. *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27.*

new content, facilitating access to organizations' expertise and offering the services of its specialists. In the current context of limited financial and human resources, it would be a good idea to rely on the complementary and coherent nature of the services and projects and to promote innovative practices and projects. We therefore strongly recommend carrying out targeted action research to pursue this avenue.

6.9 A proactive approach: Especially useful in sparsely populated regions

The reality in our sparsely populated region, and in all similar regions of Québec, is that the people with the most needs are often those who are most isolated. Even community services are difficult to access, since there is no public transportation, and these people tend to hide behind their isolation and progressively cut all social and community contact. We have often observed this phenomenon. That is why we recommend that a proactive approach be used in school boards located in regions similar to ours in order to foster access to education and training for these target populations.



Conclusion

The implementation of our action research project on a proactive approach in a series of community animation activities carried out in various municipalities in our sector provided those involved with opportunities for discussion and learning at both the social and professional levels.

However, for such a project to succeed in other communities, human, cultural, financial and material resources are necessary. One prerequisite is the development of a regional culture of partnership and collaboration. Similarly, it is important to respect certain conditions, such as agreeing to modify certain practices in the services and ensuring the continued presence of a professional in the sector. Finally, the appropriateness and value of the project should be more or less recognized by potential partners and the main players in the target community so that they can participate at their level.

Based on the statistics we collated and presented in section 4.4 of this document, we can say that the educational exclusion and lack of education we observed in the municipalities covered by our action research project are worrisome. This led us to review our concept of access to educational or training services and to work toward the development of preventive approaches and the establishment of concrete measures. It is therefore important to consider every facet of the problem, i.e. the forms of educational and social exclusion in a given community; the perceptions of education, training and learning in school and outside the institutions, at home and at work; the motivation to learn and adults' thoughts on the subject. It is also important to act in early childhood and to continue providing services in order to prevent the cycle of exclusion, already well established in our sector. We must also take into account several factors and the different players involved.¹

Adult general education is an essential condition for the advancement of Québec society. In 2005, those who do not have a basic education, i.e. a secondary school diploma, are at a disadvantage: they have difficulty learning, innovating and adapting, three essential skills in our society. In addition, as we have seen, they have difficulty developing their full potential and participating in economic, social, cultural, political and democratic life. Failing to make changes or to do anything would not only widen the gap between the social classes and penalize the most disadvantaged, but it would also deprive the community of their participation and contribution. Their exclusion from occupational and community activities also results in an increase in social costs. In turn, their children risk experiencing exclusion and the same conditions.²

The establishment of reception, referral, counselling and support services and future actions should be aimed at the most disadvantaged individuals. The renewal of reception, referral,

1. *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27.*

2. *Le coût de la pauvreté.*

counselling and support services should be part of a broader social project aimed at fighting poverty and improving the living conditions of those who are most affected by poverty, unemployment, academic failure and illiteracy and, especially, ensuring that the concern for the prevention of educational exclusion is shared by all ministries and organizations affected by the problem.

In implementing reception, referral, counselling and support services, it is important to define the role that each player wishes to and must play, to support preventive measures implemented in our action research project and intensify efforts and collaboration with all partners involved, such as our multisectorial table. The context requires that we be innovative.¹ Of course, in the current conditions of limited human and budget resources, it is difficult to integrate new plans of action in our department and our school board. However, preventive and corrective actions and approaches, such as a proactive approach, should, in our opinion, be implemented in order to avoid having a large number of Quebecers marginalized and, especially, to ensure that they have all the tools they need to act on their environment, develop and participate actively in the knowledge-based society. This would be an investment from which everyone would benefit.

That is why we sincerely hope to obtain the means necessary to implement reception, referral, counselling and support services. As our partners in the evaluation of the action research plan put it:

“Now that the project is coming to a close, my expectations concerning the report are that it be sent to the educators concerned, but especially to the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and within the Commission scolaire des Appalaches, so that they understand that, through this action research project, our community mobilized, and that we are awaiting follow-up.”²

“I expect that the document will be presented to the people in charge. That adequate representation will be made in order to ensure rapid follow-up. That the consultation and partnerships between current players continue and that any individual or group wishing to join the process is welcomed. There will never be too many players in this change game.”³

With these actions, we are consistent with the guidelines set by the Québec government in its policy on adult education and continuing education and training. We cannot fail to agree with these guidelines, and hope that they are realized through support for a proactive approach in reception, referral, counselling and support services.

1. *Le marché du travail en Chaudière-Appalaches.*

2. Carole Mercier, rural development consultant for the MRC des Appalaches, Société de développement économique de la région de Thetford Mines (CLD).

3. Charles Rouleau, socioeconomic assistance officer, team leader/specialist, Centre local d'emploi de Thetford Mines.

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Summary



I Subject of the Action Research Project

With a long tradition of community animation and very good relations with regional partners, and working in collaboration, the Commission scolaire des Appalaches proposed that the MELS develop decentralized reception, referral, counselling and support services in a difficult sector, using a partnership-based approach.

We chose to present a project on proactive services because we believed that adopting such an approach in reception, referral, counselling and support services would make it possible to anticipate the needs of people who are not in the work force, who have little schooling, or who are looking for work or likely to lose their jobs, by relying on partners in the community or by using community animation activities to get closer to people with needs. For the purposes of this action research project, we decided to focus on a specific sector in our territory, which has elementary and secondary schools with indicators that are worrisome with respect to low-income cutoff, mothers without a secondary school diploma and parents not in the work force, as well as alarming decile ranks.

Thus, we support the vision set out by the MELS in its policy on the renewal of reception, referral, counselling and support services: “reception, referral, counselling and support services make a significant contribution to the expression of the demand for learning. This increases when the services become more visible and active to people, organizations, associations, businesses and institutions.”¹ We therefore focused on this area in our action research project.

II Context

We have long had difficulty penetrating the south sector of the MRC des Appalaches. Despite the fact that the Centre d'éducation des adultes l'Escale has a point of service in Disraeli, it is difficult to convince people with educational needs to take the necessary steps. We therefore had to go where the statistics reveal such needs and offer the services expected by this disadvantaged population.

Our aim was to increase our presence in the sector by becoming active in social, community and municipal areas, as well as in businesses, in order to develop and consolidate general

¹. *Toward a Renewal of Reception, Referral, Counselling & Support Services in School Boards*, p. 37.

education and vocational training activities. This involved reaching new partnership agreements to ensure a regular and significant presence in the different municipalities targeted by the action research project.

The type of action research we proposed, and our choice of community, would make it possible to apply our conclusions to similar areas of Québec, i.e. areas with low to medium population density, with low socioeconomic indicators and small and medium-size businesses experiencing a labour shortage.

III Planning

From the time the research was approved by the MELS until the tabling of the final report, we had decided to hold monthly or more frequent meetings, as needed, with a group of partners who were not directly affected by the action research project. The members of the committee would, among other things, define the problem in the community with respect to the school board's mandate and their own. The committee played a decision-making role in terms of the process. One part of the follow-up committee's task was to target potential avenues for action and to identify people who could serve as references and whom we could contact. These actions would make it possible to assess the results of the research in the target communities and to identify possible partnerships for the medium and long term. The approach adopted and the duration of the field test made it impossible to measure actual effects in the medium term. This would have been possible, under certain conditions, in an empirical approach. But we firmly believed that the experience and diversity of the members of the follow-up committee would enable us to accurately anticipate the potential results of the research in the medium and long term.

Some members of the committee also had to help the educational organization technician develop two descriptive profiles of clientele in the target region enrolled in general education in the past five years. The first of these profiles was to be developed before the beginning of the action research project in the sector in question, the second, at the end. A statistical analysis would enable us to establish a historical profile of participation in educational activities in the target community. We could then determine the short-term effects of our actions.

We also needed to establish a procedure for following up on interventions at the community centre, as well as in the different target companies, organizations and municipalities. We had to organize follow-up of reception, referral, counselling and support activities in order to observe the actions taken, the organizations and people affected, the advantages and disadvantages perceived, actual or potential results, etc.

Educational services staff would also define the comparative analysis process, which would be improved upon by the follow-up committee. We would then compare the descriptive profiles and

the results of the statistical analysis and the follow-up of steps taken in order to assess the observations of the results of the project on the initially defined problem.

In conclusion, we needed to make recommendations and proposals concerning possible follow-up actions to be taken by the Commission scolaire des Appalaches, partners and other Québec school boards in communities similar to the one targeted by the action research project. Our action research project was to extend over a period of 18 weeks, eight of which would be devoted to analysis and the production of the final report, slated to be submitted to the DFGA on February 25, 2005.

IV Process

My first weeks were spent analyzing various statistical data that could give me a clearer idea of the population of each municipality with respect to the social status and schooling of inhabitants. Since the analysis of these data was far from positive, I had to establish a process that would include considerable information, awareness-raising and even training. I also had to construct a tool I could use to present my mandate, that is, to carry out an action research project based on the establishment of partnerships.

I made contact with partners in the preliminary stages of the project, to invite them to join the action research follow-up committee. Remember that this committee was very important. It helped us to define the problems in the community with respect to the school board's mandate and participate in identifying possible actions.

With tools in hand, I left the office, my home base, to set up in my first target community. Thus, we decentralized part of our reception and referral services. My first steps were to establish contact with a main player in each municipality in order to find what would be my reference people. I held more than 35 meetings with various players in every municipality, which enabled me to find my first reference people.

I adopted a “What can I do for you?” approach rather than positioning myself to get their help. Several participants strongly emphasized the need to arrive at concrete proposals that would be carried out beyond the end of the project and to establish adequate measures to deal with problems in the communities in question. My goals were becoming clearer and establishing partnerships was truly an essential element that would allow for a synergy of the driving forces in these communities. Thus, if I wanted to successfully carry out my mandate, I had to begin by trying to bring these essential players together at the same table, something that appeared to have never been done but which everyone seemed to want.

So I began looking for the people I would eventually have to bring together. It was by demonstrating true good will that I began receiving requests for support, training, information, etc. After these meetings, I immediately sent the information to my supervisor and to

educational services, more particularly to those working in reception and referral. It is essential to answer requests as quickly as possible, however different they might be, since your credibility will also be based on your ability to do something in response to the expectations expressed early on, even if they involve merely acting as spokesperson for the people you meet. While receiving these requests, I continued to establish partnerships and conduct research.

By perceiving and anticipating the individual's many needs in interaction with his or her community, I observed that each service is at some point called upon in accordance with its own specialty and mandate. Faced with all of these observations, and in order to be able to meet the various needs of the population, I suggested the creation of a table of the different partners we had at the time.

V Results

As we mentioned earlier, we cannot provide results such as we might have obtained if we had used an experimental approach (pre- and post-tests with a control group and random distribution of subjects). The empirical approach was not our first choice. According to the data compiled by the Centre d'éducation des adultes de Disraeli, individuals from our target groups represented approximately 7% of new enrollments.

We held more than 35 meetings with various players in all the municipalities. All the individuals and groups we met with received information about adult education services or were directed as needed to other organizations that could meet their needs.

We participated in two adjustment committees for workers at LAB Chrysotile and the Shermag plant. Fifteen workers at Shermag are now taking adult education Secondary V updating courses at our centre.

We established and consolidated more than 28 partnerships with organizations and important players in the sector covered by our action research project. We also encouraged the partners involved in the sectors to form a local table. Today, this group of partners is known as the **Table de concertation multisectorielle du secteur sud de la MRC des Appalaches**. As you can see in the appendix to this document, written in the fall of 2005, the Table's actions are still in full swing.

VI Recommendations

- A proactive approach: Essential for reception, referral, counselling and support services

- Improvement of the reception, referral, counselling and support services action plan through the inclusion of a section on the prevention of educational and social exclusion
- The leadership role to be played by school boards in reception, referral, counselling and support services
- A broader definition of reception, referral, counselling and support services
- Long-term support for actions taken
- Collaboration with the youth sector
- Campaigns to raise awareness among adults, government ministries and organizations
- The creation of the appropriate conditions and support for research in the field
- A proactive approach: Especially useful in sparsely populated regions

VII Ethical considerations

For such a project to succeed in other communities, human, cultural, financial and material resources are necessary. One prerequisite is the development of a regional culture of partnership and collaboration. Similarly, it is important to respect certain conditions, such as agreeing to modify certain practices in the services and ensuring the continued presence of a professional in the sector. Finally, the appropriateness and value of the project should be more or less recognized by potential partners and the main players in the target community so that they can participate at their level.

The educational exclusion and lack of education we observed in the municipalities targeted by our action research project are worrisome. It is therefore important to consider every facet of the problem, i.e. the forms of educational and social exclusion in a given community; the perceptions of education, training and learning in school and outside the institutions, at home and at work; the motivation to learn and adults' thoughts on the subject. It is also important to act in early childhood and to continue providing services in order to prevent the cycle of exclusion, already well established in our sector. We must also take into account several factors and the different players involved.

In implementing reception, referral, counselling and support services, it is important to define the role that each player wishes to and must play, to support preventive measures implemented in our action research project and to intensify efforts and collaboration with all partners involved, such as our multisectorial table. All this should be done with respect for the different mindsets and a high level of confidentiality, in other words, with a strict adherence to professional ethics.



Appendix

Follow-up to the report

After tabling the report on our action research project, we pursued our actions in the territory, since Jean-Yves Desjardins wanted to respect our commitments to our partners. Thus, I continued my work in the field until June 2005 and began again in September. This appendix contains a number of indicators and results of the work done between March and September this year.

The following are indicators and results of activities that took place in recent months:

- Meetings and actions of the Table de concertation multisectorielle du secteur sud de la MRC des Appalaches continued. We now have new players, including:
 - the administration of the École polyvalente de Disraeli
 - a representative of Pacte rural de la municipalité de Saint-Fortunat

Different representatives are also participating in meetings with a view to developing specific actions. In addition, faced with the amount of work that needs to be done in order to deal with the problems, we decided to invite the mayors of the different municipalities to an information session. The purpose of the session was to provide all the information we had about each municipality and to obtain the support and commitment of the municipal authorities in our future projects. Along with two other educators, I participated in the development of a PowerPoint document for all these players. Following the presentation, we obtained the support and recognition of the Table de concertation from the representatives of each of the seven municipalities covered by the action research project. Right now, a resolution is being signed by each municipality.

The new official members of the Table are:

- Josette Vaillancourt, mayor of Saint-Joseph-de-Coleraine
 - Jean Binette, mayor of Beaulac-Garthby
 - André Gosselin, mayor of Disraeli – Paroisse
 - Gérald Mckenzie, mayor of Sainte-Praxède
 - Yvon Jolicoeur, mayor of Disraeli
 - Steven Laprise, mayor of Saint-Jacques-Le-Majeur
 - Réjean Fortier, mayor of Saint-Fortunat
- After the Comptoir familial de la région de Thetford was made aware, through our efforts, of existing problems, donations were made to organizations in the Disraeli sector:
 - La Maison des Jeunes de Disraeli
 - La Fondation Jeunesse de Disraeli

- L'École primaire de la municipalité de Beaulac for the purchase of milk
- As a result of our efforts, the Centre de santé et de services sociaux de la région de Thetford commented that:
 - *the adult education department took on a leadership role in uniting partners and, under the circumstances, it was the best organization to head the collaboration*
 - *the analysis of educational, social and economic conditions enabled us to take more effective action: there is now a momentum, the Centre de santé et de services sociaux, with the help of its partners, will take action, in particular with young people and their families*

Thanks to the awareness campaign and the information provided to certain authorities, projects were developed and are being carried out in the sector in question:

- A healthy, well-balanced cooking project for young single mothers. This project is being carried out in collaboration with the Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli (CERD), the Centre de santé et de services sociaux de la région de Thetford and the Commission scolaire des Appalaches.
- A "healthy schools" project was developed by the Centre de santé et de services sociaux de la région de Thetford for the Disraeli elementary school.
- In its action plan, the administration of Polyvalente de Disraeli decided to focus its actions on families. This idea is a result of the participation of the administration of the Polyvalente in the Table de concertation.
- For almost two years now, the school board has been looking for a way to implement a new project (Réseaux III) in the Disraeli sector. Despite its efforts, the clientele was practically impossible to reach. Faced with this problem, they asked us to serve as a point of reference and collaboration in order to create an opening. Thanks to our efforts, the Réseaux III project was implemented in Disraeli and activities have begun with a group of 16 people enrolled in a life skills program.
- The mayor of one of our municipalities offered to provide the administration of a Disraeli school with a subsidy for each student from his municipality in order to reduce registration costs for children in his sector. The principal said he had never seen anything like it before and was quite surprised.
- One of the mayors is committed to creating an opening at the Conférence Régionale des Élus (CRÉ) for the Table de concertation and to submitting requests for the necessary funds.

- Our services gave information sessions for Solidarité jeunesse groups in collaboration with the Carrefour jeunesse-emploi.
- According to Emploi-Québec, the PowerPoint presentation enabled them to share with their staff members observations concerning the rate of poverty and its consequences. These data were presented summarily, and a more exhaustive presentation is planned for a team meeting. The administration of Emploi-Québec is aware that it might have to invest in activities to solve this problem if requests are made.
- According to the Centre d'entraide de la région de Disraeli (CERD), so far, our efforts and those of the Table de concertation have made it possible, among other things, to update statistics concerning the level of schooling, unemployment, poverty, etc. These data will make it possible to better identify the problems and to develop and implement adequate actions. The CERD also believes that the creation of the Table de concertation is an important initiative for the future of the community.
- This is what the Carrefour jeunesse-emploi thinks of our efforts:
 - That they have fostered a better understanding of the organizations, the services they offer and their target clientele.
 - That they led to better collaboration between the different partners, especially in discovering or confirming that the problems in the region are the same for everyone. It is easier to organize events and activities in which all partners are present.
 - We are more familiar with the other organizations, so it is easier to refer clientele or to talk about the services they offer. It is undoubtedly the same for the others with respect to our services and clientele. In addition, when a new project is implemented, we are made aware of it more quickly than in the past. We therefore have more leeway in identifying which of our clients could be eligible.
 - The compilation of statistics is an excellent tool for supporting our actions and proving the usefulness of certain projects or for designing others to help solve certain problems.
 - Our meetings are a good opportunity to exchange with partners we had difficulty meeting with in the past.

The indicators and results of our interventions in recent months lead us to believe that a proactive approach would be useful for adult general education activities and activities in the youth sector and those of partner organizations mentioned throughout this report and in the appendix. Faced with these observations, we consider that a proactive approach to reception, referral, counselling and support services is essential and should be considered a prerequisite to other interventions. A proactive approach is crucial in reaching the target clienteles, since it enables us to integrate into the community and establish contact with potential partners. We

also believe that there is a close relationship with the community animation targets in the government policy on adult education and continuing education and training. Thus, we hope that this measure will be implemented as quickly as possible in order to enable us to carry out our mission more effectively and to achieve the targets set in the policy.



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