Action Research Report

Community Animation as a Tool for Building Awareness of Lifelong Learning

2008 - 2009

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

SARCA
STATE OF RECEPTION, REFERRAL, COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Québec

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Direction de l'éducation
des adultes et de l'action
communautaire

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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 scientific" 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 scientific 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

Chapter 1

Research Topic:
Applying an Outreach Approach

The present action research, undertaken by the Eastern Townships School Board throughout 2004 and early 2005, explores the impact of a proactive and innovative outreach approach on the expression of demand for access to lifelong learning resources and support services. The research sought to explore the relationship between such an approach and the expression of demand for SARCA services and learning opportunities by potential adult clients.

Chapter 2

Context

In recent decades, the level of awareness and knowledge of adult training and support services has declined significantly within the English-language communities of the Eastern Townships School Board territory. To this reality is added evidence provided by Emploi Québec statistics indicating that there are a large number of anglophones over the age of 45 who have not completed a basic education. A further 23 percent of the 20-34 age group have also not completed a first diploma (SSD or DVS). If we are to develop effective SARCA services, we must increase adults' awareness of SARCA as a source of information, services and referrals. Many existing and potential SARCA services remain largely unheard of within the general population of the school board territory; these services include recognition of prior learning, keeping a record of learning (*bilan des acquis*) and even basic guidance counselling.

2.1   Social and Geographical Factors

The English-speaking population of the Eastern Townships tends to be scattered in pockets that occasionally comprise the majority of a given municipality but is more often a minority within a vastly larger francophone majority. Some of the findings of this project indicate that this minority status correlates with success or failure in identifying prospective clients. Communities outside of significant pockets of anglophones or of sizeable urban areas (i.e. Cowansville and Sherbrooke) face significant barriers to accessing adult education, training opportunities and related services. While financial and transportation issues pose substantial challenges, lack of information is a notable barrier and is detrimental to **any** expression of demand. Lack of awareness of a given service virtually guarantees that there will be no demand or request for the service.

Target municipalities for the project were located within four RCMs (regional county municipalities) in Québec, namely the RCMs of Brome-Missisquoi, Memphremagog, Le Haut-St-François and La Haute-Yamaska. The municipalities specifically targeted by the present action research were Bedford, Waterloo, Cookshire, Bury, Sawyerville and Stanstead.

In no case did the target municipalities comprise a complete RCM. Consequently, data based on RCM or federal electoral districts are not valid. For this reason, we have extrapolated data from the 2001 Canadian census by municipality. Also provided is an overview of the educational and economic realities of anglophones in the Eastern Townships, drawn from the work of Bill Floch and Jan Warnke of the Official Languages Support Programs Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage.

The anglophone population of the Eastern Townships faces many challenges, as demonstrated by the data and information provided in the following pages. Highlights include the following:

- Educational attainment in the target municipalities, with few exceptions, is well below the provincial average.

- The average annual income is several thousand dollars below the Québec average.

- The median annual income is several thousand dollars below the Québec median.

- There is a disproportionately large elderly population and a declining youth population (reflecting the "missing middle" population of working age).

2.2   Target Population of the Action Research

The target population of the project included:

a) those with low levels of educational attainment living in rural areas and remotely located from available services; and

b) community-minded individuals with an interest in improving the level of educational attainment and, ultimately, the economic health of the community in which they reside.

Action research efforts were concentrated primarily on those municipalities specified above. However, it is anticipated that SARCA services, once implemented and available, will target all English-speaking adults lacking a basic education within the territory of the Eastern Townships School Board, with a particular emphasis on outlying areas traditionally under-represented within educational services.

2.3   Demographic Information

The Evolving Demographic Context of the Anglophone Communities in the Eastern Townships
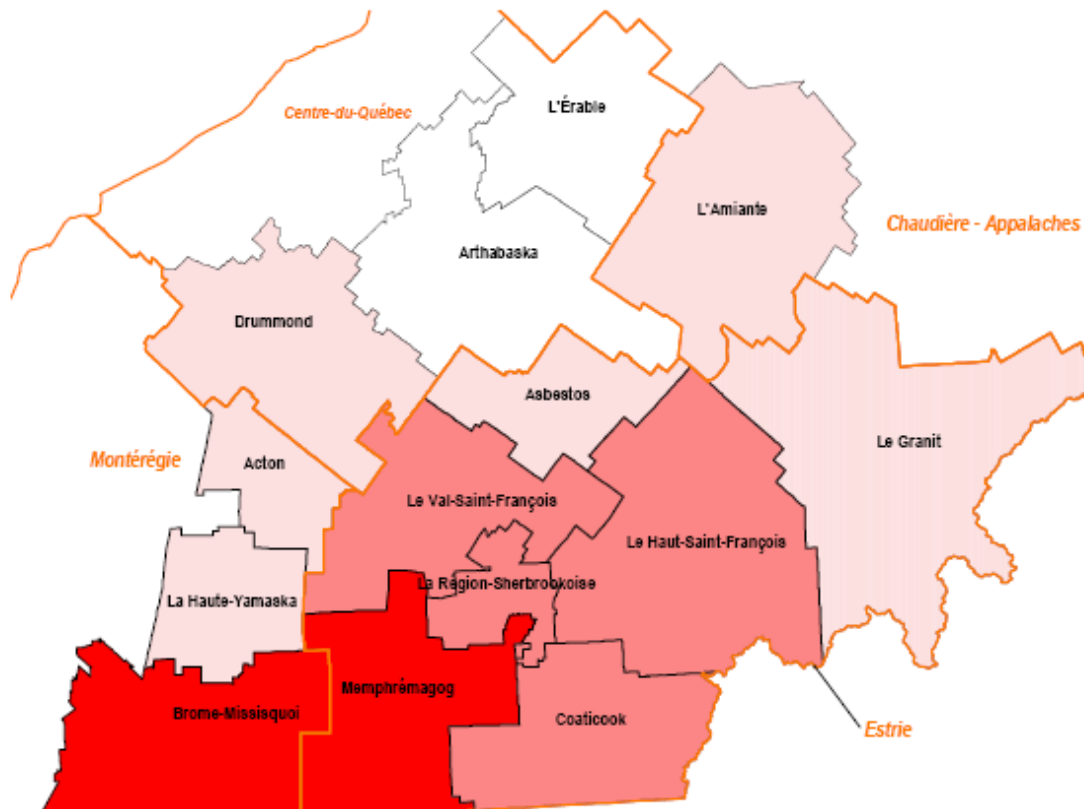
William Floch & Jan Warnke
Official Languages Support Programs Branch
Department of Canadian Heritage
Lennoxville, Quebec, March 12, 2004

Eastern Townships Region – Highlights

- The anglophone community declined from 43 050 in 1996 down to 40 308 in 2001, while the francophone community increased from 576 985 to 590 038 over the same period, thereby reducing the anglophone proportion from 6.9% to 6.4%.

- The proportion of people in the anglophone community over age 65 continues to be high (18.4% in 2001), which is 50% greater than the proportion of seniors within the francophone community (12.3%).

Increase/Decrease in Age Groups, 1996-2001

Increase/Decrease in Absolute Numbers
by Age Cohort
Eastern Townships Anglophones, 1996-2001
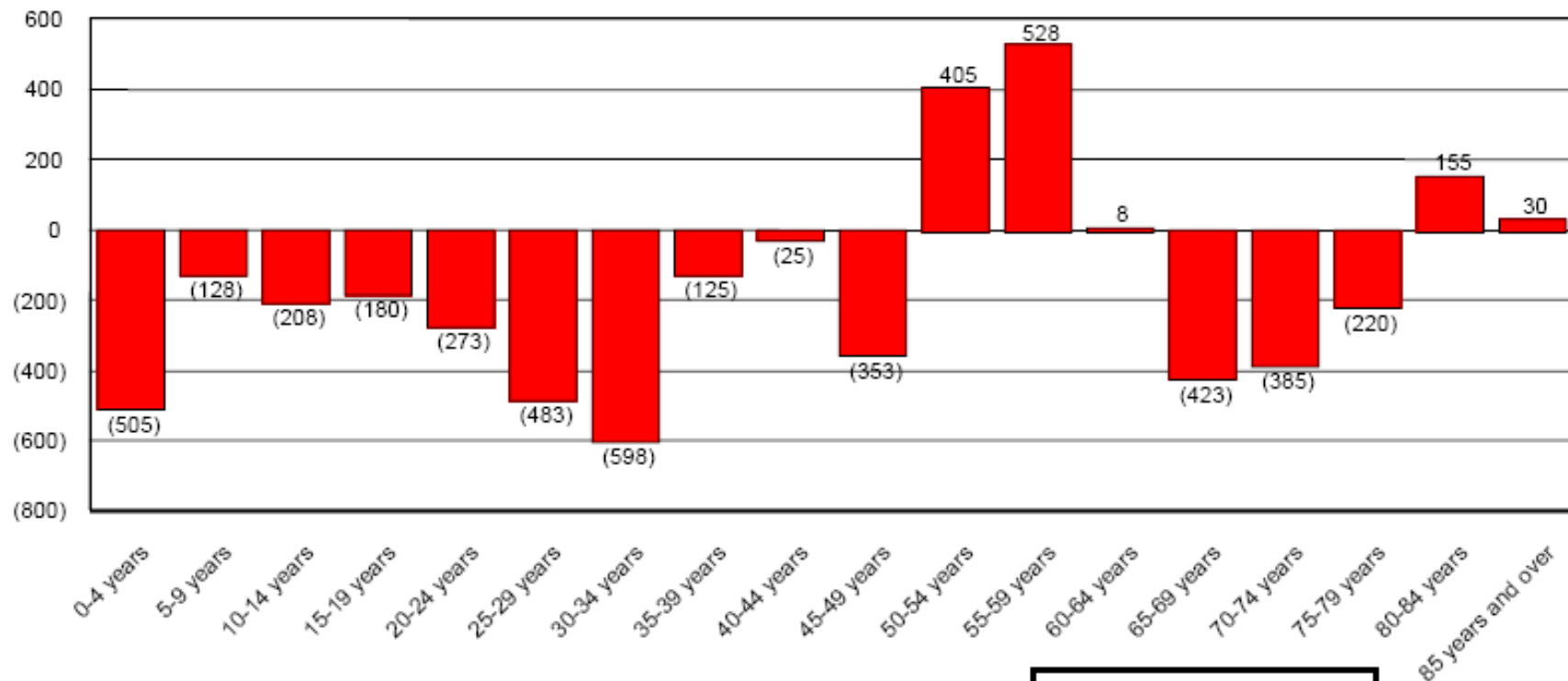
For 1996-2001, the absolute size of Eastern Townships Anglophones declined by 2,743

Source: Official Languages Support Programs Branch, Canadian Heritage, February 2004, based on 2001 Census of Canada, 20% sample.

First Official Language Spoken (FOLS) is a derived variable based on the responses to Census of Canada questions on knowledge of official languages, mother tongue and home language.

Low Levels of Education (%) in Anglophone Communities by Census Division Relative to the Average Eastern Townships, Canada 2001

Administrative Region
Relative geographic index
- very low (less than 0.80)
- low (0.80 to 0.95)
- similar (0.95 to 1.05)
- high (1.05 to 1.20)
- very high (1.20 or more)
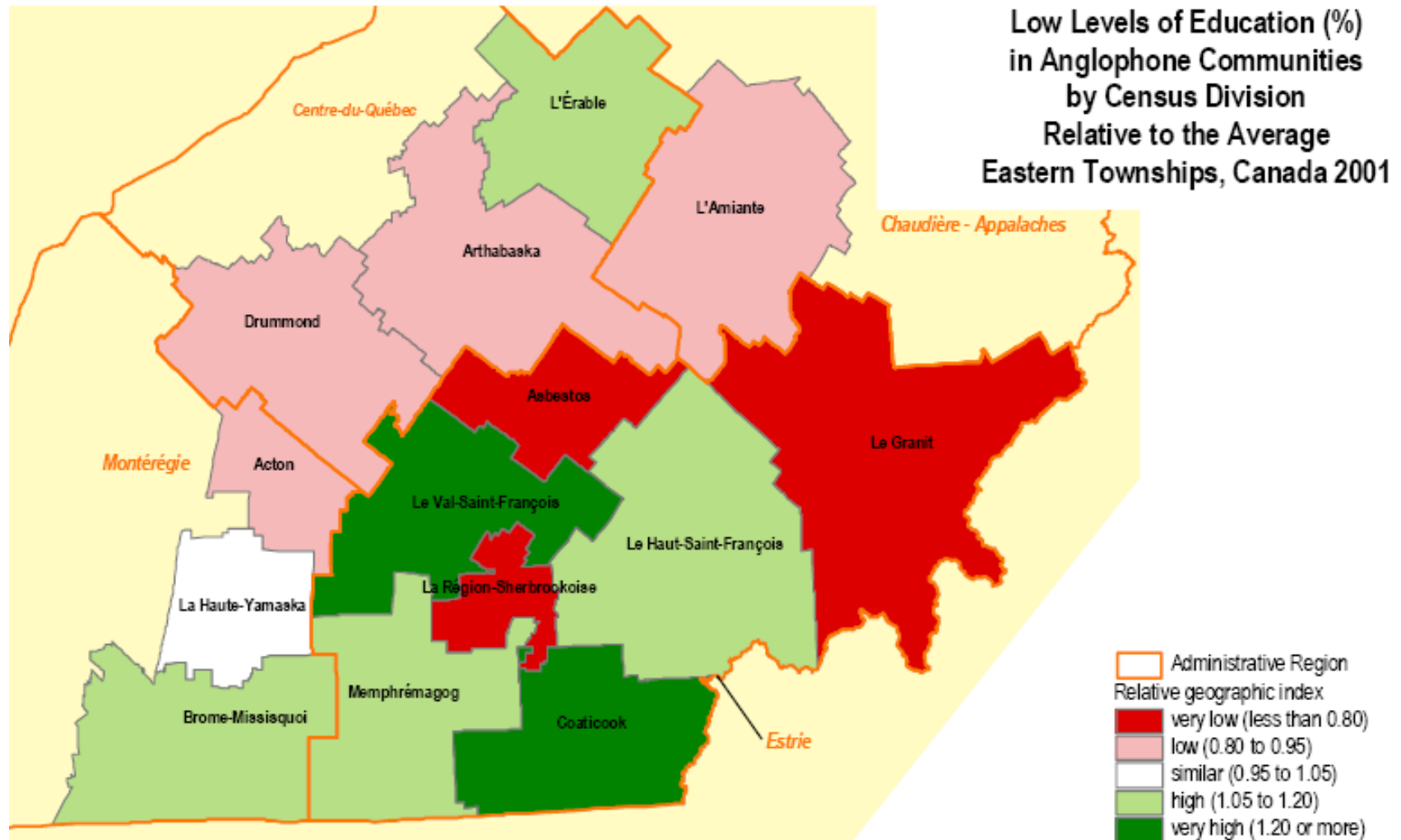
Note
The language definition used is First Official Language Spoken with dual responses distributed equally.
The relative geographic index compares a value for a local community to that of the population in a larger area.
Communities with a low level of education are those with a large proportion of individuals without a secondary diploma

Produced by: William Floch and Jan Warnke, PCH, March 2004.
Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, 20% sample.
Map: 24CD01_Scholarity_LowRGI_CDtoET_ce

Challenges ahead…

- Continued demographic decline… the aging population suggests that this trend will continue unless counter-balanced by net migration.

- Younger cohorts (15-24 and 25-44) show socioeconomic weaknesses (employment, education) relative to their older counterparts and relative to their francophone neighbours.

- Women face challenges in terms of access to the labour market and in bearing the "burden of care."

Educational Attainment by Municipality Compared to Province

Bedford

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	21.50%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	13.33%	15.51%

Canton de Bedford

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	26.70%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	6.67%	15.51%

Dunham

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	13.40%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	30.00%	15.51%

Stanbridge East

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	20.70%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	41.67%	15.51%

Venise-en-Québec

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	27.30%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	27.27%	15.51%

Clarenceville

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	31.80%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	9.09%	15.51%

Waterloo

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	38.30%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	22.45%	15.51%

South Stukely

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	23.50%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	7.14%	15.51%

Eastman

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	11.10%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	10.00%	15.51%

East Angus

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	25.40%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	12.50%	15.51%

Stanstead-Est

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	30.80%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	18.18%	15.51%

Stanstead

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	32.30%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	34.15%	15.51%

Stanstead Township

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	15.80%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	6.67%	15.51%

Bury

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	20.50%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	12.50%	15.51%

Cookshire

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	22%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	10%	15.51%

Sawyervile

% 20-34 with less than high school		Provincial
	19%	17.30%
% 15-19 not in school		Provincial
	8%	15.51%

Community Animation as a Tool for Building Awareness of Lifelong Learning

Priority Clientele: Ages 15 to 34

	*Anglos < high school 15-19 not attending school		* Anglos 20-34 < high school		Total Possible Priority Clients 15-34
West	46		124	**West**	170
East	53		139	**East**	192
	* Not including Sutton & Knowlton			**Total**	**362**

Bedford			**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	**West**	**Subtotal**
	Total pop.	2570	**20**		**25**
			Anglos 15-19 not attending		
	Anglophone pop.	525	**school**		
	% Anglophone	20.43%	**4**		

Canton de Bedford			**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	West	Subtotal
	Total pop.	795	**5**		7
			Anglos 15-19 not attending		
	Anglophone pop.	210	**school**		
	% Anglophone	26.42%	**1**		

Dunham			**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	West	Subtotal
	Total pop.	3190	**15**		28
			Anglos 15 to 19 not attending		
	Anglophone pop.	720	**school**		
	% Anglophone	22.57%	**14**		

Stanbridge East			**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	West	Subtotal
	Total pop.	910	**16**		30
			Anglos 15-19 not attending		
	Anglophone pop.	500	**school**		
	% Anglophone	54.95%	**14**		

Venise-en-Québec			**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	West	Subtotal
	Total pop.	1240	**5**		7
			Anglos 15-19 not attending		
	Anglophone pop.	140	**school**		
	% Anglophone	11.29%	**2**		

Clarenceville			**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	West	Subtotal
	Total pop.	1070	**13**		14
			Anglos 15-19 not attending		
	Anglophone pop.	385	**school**		
	% Anglophone	35.98%	**2**		

Waterloo			**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	West	Subtotal
	Total pop.	3860	**38**		47
			Anglos 15-19 not attending		
	Anglophone pop.	605	**school**		
	% Anglophone	15.67%	**9**		

South Stukely			**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	West	Subtotal
	Total pop.	965	**10**		11
			Anglos 15-19 not attending		
	Anglophone pop.	240	**school**		
	% Anglophone	24.87%	**1**		

Eastman		**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	West	Subtotal
Total pop.	780	**1**		1
		Anglos 15-19 not attending school		
Anglophone pop.	65			
% Anglophone	8.33%	**0**		
East Angus		**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	East	Subtotal
Total pop.	3400	**5**		6
		Anglos 15-19 not attending school		
Anglophone pop.	120			
% Anglophone	3.53%	**1**		
Stanstead-Est		**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	East	Subtotal
Total pop.	660	**12**		18
		Anglos 15-19 not attending school		
Anglophone pop.	390			
% Anglophone	59.09%	**6**		
Stanstead		**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	East	Subtotal
Total pop.	2955	**84**		121
		Anglos 15-19 not attending school		
Anglophone pop.	1550			
% Anglophone	52.45%	**37**		
Stanstead Township		**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	East	Subtotal
Total pop.	1055	**7**		9
		Anglos 15-19 not attending school		
Anglophone pop.	465			
% Anglophone	44.08%	**2**		
Bury		**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	East	Subtotal
Total pop.	1125	**15**		19
		Anglos 15-19 not attending school		
Anglophone pop.	425			
% Anglophone	37.78%	**4**		
Cookshire		**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	East	Subtotal
Total pop.	1545	**4**		5
		Anglos 15-19 not attending school		
Anglophone pop.	100			
% Anglophone	6.47%	**1**		
Sawyervile		**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	East	Subtotal
Total pop.	795	**13**		15
		Anglos 15-19 not attending school		
Anglophone pop.	400			
% Anglophone	50.31%	**3**		
Knowlton		**Anglos 20-34 < high school**	**Not Part of Target Areas for Project**	
Total pop.	5295	**75**	**Subtotal**	
		Anglos 15-19 not attending school		
Anglophone pop.	2875		102	
% Anglophone	54.30%	**27**		

Sutton		Anglos 20-34 < high school	Not Part of Target Areas for Project
Total pop.	1560	**28**	Sutton
		Anglos 15-19 not attending school	
Anglophone pop.	725		**Subtotal**
% Anglophone	46.47%	**7**	35

Sutton Township		Anglos 20-34 < High School	Not Part of Target Areas for Project
Total pop.	1890	**15**	Sutton Township
		Anglos 15-19 not attending school	
Anglophone pop.	705		**Subtotal**
% Anglophone	37.30%	**24**	39

NB: Discrepancies in totals & subtotals is due to rounding off of numbers.

Earnings and Median Incomes by Municipality Compared to Province

Average earnings	Bedford **$23 919**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Bedford **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Canton de Bedford **$24 712**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Canton de Bedford **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Dunham **$25 824**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Dunham **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Stanbridge East **$25 311**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Stanbridge East **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Venise-en-Québec **$24 847**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Venise-en-Québec **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Waterloo **$24 078**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Waterloo **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Stukely-Sud **$18 425**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Stukely-Sud **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Eastman **$24 687**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Eastman **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	East Angus **$25 130**	Québec **$29385**	**Median total income**	East Angus **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Stanstead-Est **$17 820**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Stanstead-Est **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Stanstead **$21 399**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Stanstead **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Canton de Stanstead **$26 235**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Canton de Stanstead **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Bury **$22 144**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Bury **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**
Average earnings	Cookshire **$22 657**	Québec **$29 385**	**Median total income**	Cookshire **$17 286**	Québec **$20 665**

	Sawyerville	Québec		Sawyerville	Québec
Average earnings	$16 955	$29 385	**Median total income**	$17 286	$20 665
Not Part of Target Areas for Project[1]					
Average earnings	Lac-Brome $30 614	Québec $29 385	**Median total income**	Lac-Brome $17 286	Québec $20 665
Average earnings	Sutton $19 357	Québec $29 385	**Median total income**	Sutton $17 286	Québec $20 665
Average earnings	Canton de Sutton $27 841	Québec $29 385	**Median total income**	Canton de Sutton $21 904	Québec $20 665

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[1]   Data on Sutton and Knowlton (Lac Brome) are included for comparison purposes when we look at results of efforts to identify SARCA clients.

Stanstead: An Example

According to the 1996 census by Statistics Canada, 31.8% of the English-speaking population and 25% of the French-speaking community in Stanstead were receiving some form of financial support from the government. Residents of Stanstead generally have a low level of educational attainment, with 51% below a Grade 9 level (Secondary III). The annual average revenue per family is roughly $5 000 below the average of the rest of the RCMs, Estrie and Québec. Approximately 6 out of 10 residents have an annual income below $20 000. Secondary, professional training and post-secondary opportunities are located approximately 60 kilometres away. Anglophone secondary students from the Stanstead area spend an average of four hours per day in a school bus to attend the English-language regional high school. Adult students who wish to complete their secondary studies at the nearest adult education centre and lacking alternative transportation may spend closer to five hours per day on a school bus. The dropout rate within Stanstead is extremely high and very few local families can afford the tuition fees of the private high school located within the community. There is no inter-city public transportation serving Stanstead, which further limits access to educational services. Perhaps because of historical difficulty with access, education beyond the elementary level does not tend to be valued within the community.

2.4 Importance and relevance of the project at the local or provincial level

In the years since funding for popular education and community animation to school boards ceased, adult education and vocational centres have been perceived by the public as no more than dispensers of academic and vocational programs. The population generally seems unaware of the centres and of the services offered. Furthermore, school board mergers in the latter part of the 1990s seem to have reduced a sense of community ownership of, and identity with, a given school board. As was suggested by the data collected during the action research project in the Eastern Townships, one-third of survey respondents at local community events did not know the name or location of the English-language school board that serves them.

As indicated by the above, the action research undertook to examine the pertinence of a proactive community animation approach to the SARCA goal of fostering a culture of lifelong learning, and more specifically, sought to explore how diverse and innovative community animation approaches might support the expression of demand for training or SARCA services by potential clients.

The findings of this project, including suggestions for innovative outreach tools, are potentially applicable to other school boards and may therefore contribute to a pan-Québec culture of lifelong learning. This both reflects and supports the stated goals of Québec's *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* (MEQ, 2002).

2.5 Originality

The originality of the present action research is threefold:

i) **The use of non-traditional approaches and the creation of innovative tools to reach the target clientele of adults lacking a basic education**: Several non-traditional tools were developed and field-tested during this action research. These included tabling at local community events where educational-type displays are unheard of, the development of links with social service organizations that are sources of potential client referrals, and the production of a DVD music video on life choices, using local resources and talents. These are non-traditional in the sense that traditional efforts have been restricted primarily to the distribution of written materials.

ii) **The emphasis on soliciting and engaging community and moral leaders**: Because news and information seem to travel very rapidly within the English-speaking community in the outlying regions via the grapevine, and since each community has informal leaders possessing significant powers of moral suasion, emphasis was placed on identifying and seeking the involvement of appropriate community and moral leaders. These leaders included owners of corner stores (often the only store in town), community volunteers (e.g. literacy tutors, youth club volunteers and parent committee participants), and occasionally individuals in formal leadership roles (e.g. the mayor or municipal councillor). The expectation was that these community leaders would be in an ideal position to refer potential clients to SARCA services, disseminate information and encourage the expression of demand within their respective communities.

iii) **The establishment of a solid foundation for a sustainable network of SARCA, adult, and vocational education advocates (Friends-of-SARCA Network)**: In addition to identifying and seeking moral leaders, the action research also solicited people who were willing to participate in a sustainable network of community-minded individuals interested in improving the levels of educational attainment and, ultimately, the economic health of their community. These individuals were invited to become part of an informal network with the adult education sector of the school board to exchange relevant information about community needs and service offerings. Adult and vocational education centres would provide information on both upcoming and existing services, while community leaders could provide direct input about their respective communities and the educational needs of the target clientele. This information would pertain to labour market opportunities and related training needs as well as to the often overlooked aspect of of how educational services are perceived by the community and the impact of those perceptions on the expression of demand.

2.6   Level of Knowledge and Past Accomplishments

Although the Eastern Townships School Board has not had the resources to be consistently involved in community animation and outreach-type efforts, there have been a variety of relevant projects over the years and a rich history of community engagement in both the western and eastern ends of the Board. For example, three of the communities targeted by the present action research have had literacy or employability projects delivered locally in the two to three years prior to the action research, in which the school board adult education sector played a significant role. However, services and course delivery have not been continuous and therefore have not provided the sustained level of community presence necessary to build solid community partnerships. Experience over the decades has shown that it takes three to five years of sustained effort to build widespread awareness of available adult education services.

2.6.1   Western sector (within the Monteregie administrative region)

In the past, the school board had a network of volunteer adult education representatives in the western end (territory of the former District of Bedford School Board) of the current school board territory. These individuals were well known in their communities and were effective front-line representatives for the school board. A strong rapport existed between these individuals and adult education staff. At that time, the school board was funded for popular education and community animation. Popular education courses as well as French second language courses were offered in ten local communities, thus creating a strong awareness of adult education services. Often these volunteer representatives were popular education teachers who allowed the school board to publish their contact information, thus facilitating access to a person with whom the potential client felt at ease. Over time, these volunteers became very knowledgeable about services available to the community. Formal meetings were held twice a year to keep these individuals up-to-date on developments in adult education. Telephone contact between volunteers and adult education staff was frequent.

It appears that the English-speaking population and its social constructs have changed considerably since the era of the volunteer representative network (from the1980s through to the early 1990s). Today there does not appear to be the same willingness on the part of community volunteers to engage with the school board, and it would probably take several years to regain the confidence of the population and rebuild a network.

2.6.2   Eastern section (including the administrative region of Estrie)

The eastern end of the territory (originally part of the Eastern Townships School Board) also has a rich history of accomplishment in community animation and community partnerships. For example, the Townshippers' Association, an extremely important English-language organization in the Eastern Townships, was initiated through community animation conducted by adult education staff, with its inaugural meeting taking place in the auditorium of the regional high school in 1979. This organization continues to boast several thousand members. Among the

many activities of this organization are heritage preservation efforts, community research, government lobbying, identification of specific needs of the English-speaking population for health and social services and building bridges with the francophone majority. One of the most recent accomplishments of the Association is the publication of a community resource guide and the establishment of community resource centres in Lennoxville and Cowansville, where its two offices are located. Literacy in Action (the reading council) was also initiated through community animation efforts by the school board several decades ago. Literacy in Action offers tutoring for English-speaking adults lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as a variety of family literacy programs and workshops.

A laudable partnership has been developed in the eastern end of the School Board (administrative region 05) between Emploi-Québec (EQ) and the adult education centre. This partnership is called Job Links. The EQ regional office contracts with the school board to provide front-line career and educational planning services as well as employability support for job seekers; this service exemplifies many of the key elements of SARCA and could serve as a model in the context of the government's lifelong learning policy. Unfortunately, EQ has been systematically reducing funding each year despite the fact that Job Links serves over three hundred English-speaking clients per year.

2.7 Links With the General Framework of Reception, Referral, Counselling and Support Services in the School Boards

In the document entitled *Reception, Referral, Counselling and Support Services in School Boards: General Framework* (MELS, January 2006), Chapter 4, Section 1 specifically spells out the proactive approach of SARCA, which is among the general responsibilities of school boards and concerns the relationship between the services and the community. Much of the content of the action research project corresponds directly to the framework's orientation to proactivity, and, indeed, took place before the latest version of the framework was released.

2.8 Definition of a proactive approach

The framework defines a proactive approach as follows:

> A proactive approach is a type of "active watch" of the state of lifelong learning
> in the community and is characterized by:
> * familiarity with the adults in the community;
> * a concern for educational issues in the community and their evolution over
>   time;

- a series of deliberate actions designed to promote services and render them more accessible so as to facilitate the expression of the demand, particularly among adults who do not have a secondary school diploma (p. 27).

2.9   Characteristics and other considerations

According to the Framework, traditional promotional methods fail to reach most target populations.

> *Other methods need to be found to inform these groups of school board services, including reception, referral, counseling and support services, and to present them in such a way that the target audiences know who they are... For example, messages could make reference to adults' life situations, make connections between what they are going through in life or at work and adapt the language to different types of personalities or cultural traits.* (Ibid.)

According to the General framework, a relationship with a community requires

> *...familiarity with the community in question, its players and organizations, and the geographical distribution of the different population groups in the territory. This makes it possible to make a well-informed choice of target populations, to concentrate on these populations and to identify the players in the community who can help reach them.* (p. 28)

Furthermore, the framework refers to the importance of direct interaction with adults who constitute potential clients:

> *By directly questioning adults... services can become more familiar with their situation and their perception or prejudices with regard to the institution and its services, and to provide first-hand information about the services available, in which case they can tailor the information to the needs expressed by the adults in question.* (Ibid.)

Chapter 3

Project Planning

Overseeing the implementation of the Outreach Action Research Project was the SARCA committee comprising the four centre directors, the project coordinator and the research team. The project coordinator functioned as both coordinator and community animator-researcher. There were two community animator-researchers, each of whom focused efforts on the targeted municipalities within two RCMs.

3.1   Research Plan and Schedule

The plan involved the following steps:

- **Identify communities** according to specific and agreed-upon criteria in conjunction with the SARCA committee of the school board. The target areas were selected as close to the beginning of the project as possible.

- **Adopt an approach to community animation**: The procedures adopted for the outreach format of community animation were as follows:
  - Ensure a tabling presence at multi-day community events during the summer months.
  - Hold extensive meetings with community and service organizations and interviews with community leaders who were considered to be good candidates for the Friends-of-SARCA network throughout the late summer and into the fall and winter. These individuals were to be identified strictly through a networking approach of referrals from community members. Each individual interviewed would also be asked for referrals to other appropriate individuals. These referrals would be subsequently contacted and followed up by community animators (networking).

- **Develop tools necessary to collect data and conduct research** (database, interview protocol/questions and ethical consent form). The primary tools were sets of questions to be used with potential clients and advocates for the network.

- **Implement tools**. From August 2004 to February 2005, the community animators-researchers would implement tools in a variety of settings. In addition to having table displays and surveying passers-by at community events, animators-researchers were to hold meetings with numerous individuals, organization representatives and groups.

- **Design and deploy publicity and tools to raise awareness**, such as posters (for table displays and promotion of the SARCA campaign), brochures and a DVD music video.

- **Collect and record data**. Throughout the project, the data were to be carefully recorded and entered into the database, which would then serve as material for ongoing reflection and adjustment in approach as well as for writing the final report.

While planning and scheduling are important in organizing the research process, in the present case several steps could (and did) take place simultaneously. For example, decisions about the approach to community animation were made at the same time as the tools were being developed. Likewise, the tools needed to be adjusted as their validity was confirmed or refuted. For example, certain survey questions needed to be changed: some were reformulated to seek more complete information from respondents, while others were omitted entirely, depending upon the individual being interviewed.

3.2   Competencies or Human Resources Required

In our experience, community animators must be familiar with the milieu and have excellent interpersonal and communication skills as well as group animation skills. Listening skills as well as sensitivity to the reality of the individual client are key factors. The ability to adapt and be flexible is another important competency for any individual engaged in community animation. Good organizational and writing skills are also important. As well, the project coordinator position requires well-developed computer skills, especially in the areas of word processing, spreadsheets and databases.

3.3   Partnerships to Establish

Such an outreach effort would not be possible without contact with and the collaboration of community organizations. Several community organizations were contacted and solicited to increase the project's visibility within the community. Links were either created or re-established with no fewer than 52 groups and community service organizations, including a few within the school board itself. In nearly all cases, the group or one of its representatives was made aware of the lifelong learning policy and the action research project being conducted. It is important to note that the elementary schools of the school board have a strong presence within each of their communities and were thus essential partners in the success of the outreach. Support from the school board office (e.g. information about the SARCA project provided in the quarterly newsletter, posting of the DVD on the school board website) was also a facilitating factor.

Chapter 4

Project Process and Evolution

What follows are the specific details of the process undertaken during the project by the two community animators conducting the action research. Although presented in a linear fashion, this process was very dynamic and cyclical in nature, with much overlap among the objectives in terms of both time and substance. Information meetings and interviews were held throughout the project and reflected the dynamic nature of network building. Project planning was initiated in early June 2004 and the initial draft of the report written in February 2005. Throughout the project, the SARCA Committee of the school board, consisting of the four adult education and vocational centre directors, was consulted regularly, both during formal meetings and through informal communication such as e-mail. In addition to addressing administrative questions, the meetings were used to obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the approach taken by the animators.

4.1   Select target communities

After consultation with the School Board SARCA Committee, the following criteria were established for the selection of target communities for the action-research:

a. The presence of an English-language elementary school in the community: This would indicate the existence of a significant English-speaking population within the community who may identify with their local school. School staff, including principals, teachers, and school secretaries, are often very knowledgeable about the local community. Elementary schools also offer an accessible site for activities that may transpire as part of the SARCA project or subsequent SARCA-related events.

b. The presence of a significant population with low levels of educational attainment and/or literacy within the community: This reflects a key project objective, namely to focus on individuals with low levels of basic educational attainment, who are recognized as a priority clientele in Québec's *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* (MEQ 2002). Statistical significance was determined on the basis of pre-existing statistical studies. In the case of the Eastern Townships, the action research team planned to use Jan Warnke's postal code study, Statistics Canada data and the Townshippers' Association data on education & socioeconomic standing.

c. Experience of literacy outreach activities delivered by the adult education sector within the two previous years. It was assumed that such prior experience and already established relationships would provide the research team with key contacts and more effective access to the community.

In essence, the target communities were chosen on the basis of project goals, the history of recent adult education intervention, and demographics.

4.2   Design and prepare data collection tools

Once the target communities were selected, the team began by planning and trying to identify the type of information that would be received and how best to record it. Hypotheses were formulated about what the expected results might suggest, and tools were developed to obtain relevant information and facilitate a process of continual feedback from respondents. Multiple tools for data collection were foreseen from the beginning of the project. Among these tools were:

- **A database** of all the pertinent project data collected throughout the action research, which would serve as a basis for the final report: The database also included a range of comments noted by the community animators in their individual **journals**. These comments were categorized in the database according to whether they pertained to planning, observation, assumption, conclusion or recommendation, which also facilitated the writing of the final report.

- **A table survey** consisting of a short, one-page survey to be used at community events and activities (i.e. wherever the project might have a table or kiosk): The purpose of the survey was to gather basic data about adults' perceptions and knowledge of local lifelong learning opportunities and to invite further contact with local adults, specifically potential clients or advocates for the Friends-of-SARCA network. Questions on the table survey included the following: Where do you get your information about community events? About educational services? What are the main reasons you would not return to school? Knowledge about adult education? Do you know where the adult education centre serving your community is located?
  As a rule, the survey should be self-administered and would be used with both potential clients and the community at large. In using the survey, it was quickly realized that individuals were much more inclined to respond to the questions when the community animator offered to write their answers, especially in the case of individuals perceived to be potential clients.

- **Detailed questionnaires/surveys**: A "Potential Client Survey" (PCS) and an "Organization, Business and Community Survey" (OBC) were also developed for use with potential clients of learning services or with organizations, businesses, community leaders or other potential partners. These surveys, more open-ended in nature, were also used to gather data about perceptions and knowledge of local learning opportunities. Detailed information was solicited, especially through the PCS survey, on individuals' previous attempts to access adult education services and the specific barriers they encountered. The purpose was to determine what would have facilitated their access to SARCA services. Opinions on how to better meet the needs of the target clientele were also sought, as well as referrals to potential clients and key moral leaders in the community who could act as advocates. It is worth noting that though much time was devoted to developing questionnaires in anticipation of certain types of data, it was found that even greater flexibility and

more open-ended questions were required. To this end, each of the community animators adapted and developed non-standard ways of using these surveys. Results from the paper surveys were transferred to the database.

- **Frontline Responders' Forms** for use by receptionists at the adult education centres to record requests for information or services by telephone or walk-in contacts: The data recorded on the paper version would be transferred to the database. There was significant discussion about how best to measure requests, and logistical challenges continued to arise throughout the course of implementation. The initial idea was to have all four centres (two adult education and two vocational centres) record information. A decision was made early on to direct the clients primarily to the adult education centres in order to limit potential confusion. However, since one of the adult education centres only had the services of a receptionist in the morning, it was was subsequently decided that only one of the four centres (New Horizons Adult Education Centre in Sherbrooke, Québec) would record data. Furthermore, this particular centre had developed and implemented a data collection tool the preceding year and had thus acquired some expertise with recording such information. In the interest of time, the format of the previous tool was retained and a routine was established for collecting the information and entering it into the database. The other centre would attempt to track referral sources for SARCA-related requests, within their staffing limitations. Unfortunately, the lack of a full-time receptionist meant that the frontline data instrument was not consistently used, rendering the data gathered more or less meaningless.

- **A Network Directory** foreseen at the beginning of the project: This was intended to serve as a web-accessible database of contacts in various communities and would incorporate repertoires and directories already in existence. This initial idea was abandoned early on in the project (June 2004) when it became clear that it was unnecessary and overly labour-intensive, given the time constraints of the project.

4.3   Design information-processing and awareness-raising tools

Part of the task of the animators was not only to identify tools and instruments needed for communication and publicity, but also to tailor those tools to the types of clients and the environments in which they might be employed. Given this, the awareness-raising and related information-processing tools were designed with the following considerations in mind:

- **Standardization**: Whether giving information or soliciting input, we recognized the need to have standardized formats for use by both community animators. Regardless of whether tools were designed individually or as a team, all tools were to be agreed upon before being deployed.

- **Ethical and methodological guidelines** were developed to ensure that the data collection process was ethical and standardized, and to assure participants of the

confidentiality of their responses. During this phase of development, much discussion and thought were devoted to ethical concerns and the question of whether research participants would sign waivers, particularly in individual interviews. Group interviews would have a built-in and more automatic system of checks and balances, as participants would see what was being written on the flip chart to record discussion. The methodological approach consisted of collecting information, feedback and community animator reactions (experience) at each stage. Information about the action research project and SARCA was to be provided, and data would be collected, along with personal reflections and the reactions of potential advocates. In fact, one of the priorities of the action research was to solicit individual reflections and feelings, and this on an ongoing basis. For example, a respondent might provide additional feedback two weeks after a first meeting; this feedback would need to be incorporated along with that obtained from direct initial contact or a formal questionnaire.

- Prior to implementation, researchers discussed their assumptions about how people might react to being asked for input and contact information. The main concern was that people might not appreciate being solicited for input. It was agreed that the animators should remain positive in the face of any negative reactions – the project was to be understood as an integral part of our commitment to provide better services for the community.

- **An interview protocol** was designed to facilitate the meetings and the process of recording data from interviews with organizations, businesses, community leaders and potential partners. Meetings with such individuals and representatives would take place throughout the project but intensify towards the end, as there would be an increasing number of referrals. Individual interviewees were asked to sign an ethical consent form (see Appendix 5).

- **A group animation protocol and presentation outline** was developed to enable animators to better solicit input from groups. This included thought-provoking questions to encourage people to think about education (the answers to which were to be recorded on a flipchart), a presentation of SARCA services, and the distribution of a "Directed Group Survey" (DGS), based on the detailed survey/questionnaire, to be completed by individuals within the group. The questions were the same as those in the OBC Survey. The specific presentation outline was as follows: Present the conclusions of the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* (MEQ 2002); give a brief explanation of demographic trends; seek initial feedback from group through thought-provoking questions, and record answers on the flipchart; then provide further information about the context of the Eastern Townships in terms of the merger of school boards, educational attainment statistics, and SARCA; finally, have group participants complete the DGS. Because groups could be comprised of either community organizations or potential clients, the animators quickly realized that the key to successfully encouraging potential clients to reflect on educational opportunities was to emphasize the value of their input and

thereby empower them to take control of their educational choices (i.e. they would come to realize that options were being offered to them rather than forced upon them).

- **Field-testing** of tools is a crucial step in order to determine if the structures function effectively. Once our group animation protocol had been drafted, one particular community organization allowed us to field-test our group presentation and questions with their executive committee, which proved to be very useful. The field-test indicated that the brief amount of time available and the information provided should be devoted primarily to
  - a brief description of the *Government Policy*
  - engaging participants in responding to the DGS (Directed Group Survey - a variation of the OBC, that is, the Organizations, Businesses and Clients Survey), and
  - discussing the idea of a network of "friends" of adult education to obtain input that is critical to the success of the project.

- Thus, following initial use of the questions during group discussions and through the OBC and PSC surveys, questions were refined and further developed. Although we were getting essentially the same type of information from each of these tools, each one had its own benefits and drawbacks. Using a range of tools allows different types of richness and depth of data to emerge. A conscious decision was made to leave questions for the table survey as open-ended as possible, although it was recognized that this would make data entry more challenging.

- Categorization of data would be done following each community event at which we had a table. That being said, it was decided that, whenever possible, a directed approach should be used to administer the tools, which would increase our chances of obtaining quality data. Such an approach would allow animators to pursue interesting answers and seek further details if needed.

- **SARCA awareness-rasing tool kit**: the idea of this tool kit was to be able to inform individuals and groups (whether potential clients, organizations, businesses, community leaders or potential partners) about the SARCA action research project, the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*, and available services. In addition to the general brochure and related publicity (see Objective 5), a specific training kit to be used with advocates of the Friends-of-SARCA network was also planned but not developed. The training kit was to include an overview of the Government Policy, a synopsis of adult education services currently available and those in development, and details of pertinent services provided by other players in the system (e.g. Emploi Québec). These training materials would be revised to reflect the advocates' interest and motivation(s) for becoming involved.

4.4   Deploy frontline data collection instruments

Community Animators

The first phase of outreach was to improve visibility within the community, which we assumed could be accomplished through the presence of community animators and information tables at several grassroots community events (four multi-day agricultural fairs and a one-day community celebration sponsored by the Townshippers' Association) with brief surveys and brochures about educational services available to adults, including SARCA services. These five events were very time-consuming, but were attended by literally tens of thousands of people during August and September 2004. These were the Bedford, Cookshire, Ayers Cliff and Brome agricultural fairs and Townshippers' Day (held in Magog).

At table displays, it is important to have a "hook" (e.g. free candy or apples) to draw the public in, particularly in settings where educational services are not normally promoted (i.e. agricultural fairs). Those who attended the fair, although interested in the information offered, had not expected to find it there.

At the first community event (an agricultural fair), it was observed that many of the attendees seemed to be particularly unkempt (dirty clothing, unshaven, and so forth). Generally, many people appeared to be low-income earners; it is noteworthy that many of the vendors appeared not to be making sales and, when asked, confirmed that the event was not a commercial success for them. The volunteer selling raffle tickets for a local hospital foundation (traditionally a very well-supported foundation in the region), commented that he had the impression that many of the people at the fair could not afford the $5.00 ticket. The animator manning the table quickly realized that respondents were often unable to fill out the one-page survey without assistance. Not infrequently, the meaning of questions had to be explained before the respondent could answer. Consequently, the approach was modified so that the animator would read the questions aloud, explain if necessary, and write down the answers in the words of the respondent. This approach was adopted as standard operating procedure for all subsequent community events.

The community animators agreed that the characteristics of participants at the annual Townshippers' Day seemed to differ significantly from those of the population observed at the four regional fairs where the table surveys were conducted. In general, participants at the Townshippers' Day appeared to be more aware of educational opportunities and generally more affluent.

Adult and Vocational Centres

During the week of January 17, the frontline staff were consulted and trained on the use of the responder's sheet to record requests for service. Due to staffing challenges, however, it was decided that only one centre would attempt to consistently use the form, while the other centre would endeavour to record and track referrals as much as possible. It was not clear to the team

whether the workload and volume of activity in any adult education centre would permit frontline responders to track information about each telephone call or walk-in request for information. There was some discussion about the feasibility of using the instrument beyond the end-date of the project as a means of tracking walk-in, telephone and e-mail inquiries, since such data could potentially be very useful.

4.5   Deploy outreach and publicity campaign

In addition to increasing visibility through tabling presence at community events, a more formal communications outreach strategy was devised and implemented. Compilation and analysis of data from the table and PCS surveys, particularly regarding the main information sources, helped to guide decisions about how to maximize the impact of publicity instruments within the allocated budget. For example, the table surveys clearly indicated that the Sherbrooke daily newspaper, *The Record*, was the main source of news for the English-speaking community throughout the Eastern Townships School Board territory.

- Development of a communications plan and related instruments: It was agreed that the campaign could include print and digital components. The assistance of the Vocational Studies' Desktop Publishing class at the Cowansville Vocational Education Centre was sought.

- Early on, it was agreed that the Adult Education Centres (AECs) would be the main point of contact for all publicity efforts, the rationale being to avoid confusion and streamline the data collection process. Furthermore, many services would actually be referred out of the AECs.

- A few suggestions for components of the communications plan were received through the tabling and meetings with organizations. For example, at the meeting with the Townshippers' Association Board of Directors, a director suggested that we should adopt a model of telephone contacts (a telephone chain) to keep advocates informed, such as the one used by the Bedford Chamber of Commerce. A respondent to the table survey at Brome Fair also proposed a model for keeping community members informed about adult education. His suggestion was to recruit individuals (advocates?) who would be prepared to receive e-mail notifications and forward them to e-mail contacts in a personal address book.

- The SARCA Committee agreed to engage a professional communications firm or consultant. Input from all four centres would be very important and likewise, input from "advocates" would also be sought, on the assumption that they would know their communities and be able to gauge what might work well or not. The main strategy recommended by the communications consultant was to produce an original DVD that explains SARCA. Original music and testimonials by former clients add to the appeal of the DVD. Since the beginning of the project, we have searched for a name to identify SARCA in public information and publicity campaigns. The amateur

posters and brochures used early on in the project simply employed the acronym SARCA, as no other alternative came to mind. The phrase "Plan to Learn... to Learn a Living" was coined later in the fall and the subsequent brochure and press releases referred to SARCA as the "Plan to Learn" program or initiative.

- Publicity and Public Information Campaign Plan and Implementation:

  – To support the information being distributed to community organizations and leaders, a communications strategy using the catch phrase "Get a Life!" was developed to target the 18 to 30-year-old age group. This strategy involved the creating the music DVD highlighting the benefits of adult education and the supportive role of SARCA; it also involved placing advertisements in the media outlets identified by survey respondents as primary sources of information about community and educational services. Individuals who borrowed the DVD (available through partner businesses and organizations in the target communities) became eligible to win an iPod.

  – The DVD was made available free of charge in a variety of video and convenience stores. Stores were provided with a document explaining the services requested of them. The document explained that there would be no charge to the clients who borrowed the DVD nor would the store charge the school board for this service. In return, the school board would provide the stores with free publicity in newspapers. As well, the document explained that the store would be provided with a pre-printed pad to record borrowers' contact information; this information was considered critical, as these people would be potential SARCA clients and would subsequently be contacted and offered the service. A total of 14 stores were recruited, with five located in the east and nine in the west; their names and locations were included in the newspaper advertisements and on the publicity posters.

  – We decided to produce a small poster (8.5 x 11 in.), because many locations do not have sufficient space for the large poster (18 x 22 in.) used in the DVD stores. The small posters were circulated in about 20 locations, including post offices and convenience stores.

  – Arrangements were concluded to install a dedicated 1-800 number to be used in advertising and to be answered by staff in a specific way. Because the east end of the territory is in the 819 area and the west end in the 450 area, we were able to contract for a service that would recognize the caller's location and forward the call to the appropriate centre.

  – A professional-looking brochure containing information about SARCA and descriptions of each of the adult education and vocational education centres was designed and produced. This would have been very useful earlier in the project for the tabling at community events instead of the rough, less professional-looking one produced by the project team.

- DVDs, brochures and information specifically targeting the initially identified municipalities were distributed through as many channels as possible. The brochure was mostly distributed to the video and convenience stores, but also to locations that tend to serve potential clients (e.g. Le Regroupement E.M.E. that assists disadvantaged young mothers).

- A press release was sent out and appeared in the fourth week of the campaign, thus adding an extra week of intense publicity.

- The publicity blitz lasted from January 17 to February 25, 2005.

- Three locations outside of the target communities were chosen as distribution points for the DVD. It was assumed that the population of Bury would borrow the DVD from East Angus (even though it was available at the convenience store in Bury), as this is their commercial centre (although this turned out not to be the case). Promotional DVDs were also made available to the communities of Sutton and Knowlton in order to compare results from areas in which community actions took place with those in which no community animation was undertaken.

- Starting the week of January 17 and on a regular basis (approximately once a week) thereafter, the animator visited the stores to pick up the contact sheets filled out by people who borrowed the DVD. Only the sheets for those who had already returned the DVD were collected, as these individuals are eligible to win the DVD. The sheets of those who borrowed the DVD but have not returned it were left at the store; they will only be collected on the last day of the contest, thereby affording them the maximum opportunity to qualify for the iPod drawing.

- The press release has been published by five media outlets: *The Record*, *The Stanstead Journal*, *The Haut-St.-François*, *The Avenir des Rivières* and *Le Guide. Le Coup d'Œil in Napierville* (which covers the Clarenceville area) will not publish it in English except as a paid advertisement.

4.6   Identify organizations, leaders, partners and a sample of potential clients

Through the information gathered at the community events, individual community leaders and organizations were contacted and potential network advocates were identified throughout the target areas. In this way, we were able to seek opportunities to deliver presentations to groups and work towards our ultimate goal of reaching both potential clients and advocates for our Friends-of-SARCA network.

4.7   Contact, sensitize and meet with community leaders and partners

Once the appropriate information-gathering tools were developed (a basic survey, a detailed questionnaire for groups and community leaders, posters, pamphlets, and a DVD), interviews and meetings began. All respondents were encouraged to contact community animators-researchers with additional input or feedback should further comments occur to them following the meetings. All formal interviewees were also asked whether the interview and information provided was useful to them. Meetings with community groups and individuals continued throughout the fall and winter, and at each meeting further referrals were solicited.

- **Initial contact with community leaders and potential partners** was made by telephone or e-mail in order to provide a brief explanation of the project and to request a meeting. The target contacts included organizations, businesses, community leaders and any individual potential partner.

- With their agreement, the community animator met with individual contacts from organizations, businesses, community leaders and potential partners to conduct an interview and complete the OBC Survey.

- In communities where there had been previous, concrete engagements in recent years (e.g. Stanstead vs. Haut St. Francois), community leaders and partners seemed to be more open to learning about the government policy on adult education. Where the presence of adult services had previously been limited, there seemed to be far more scepticism and reluctance about making any commitment to the network. One contact, when asked if the information had been useful to him, replied, "Ask me in five years."

- As observed by both animators, community leaders displayed a high level of interest in obtaining information about available services. The government policy was perceived positively, but the over-arching concern about the long-term commitment of resources remains.

- Many of the staff working in video and convenience stores appear to be part-time, and individuals who were very positive about the project in the first week of deployment of the DVDs were, in some cases, never seen again during subsequent (weekly) visits. This underlines the fact that it takes a long time to "penetrate" and be able to "actively watch" a community effectively.

In an interview with a potential advocate (February 22, 2005), the individual suggested that part of the challenge in reaching our clientele might lie in the difficulty of overcoming issues of pride and shame; people may not want to be perceived as trying to improve themselves and "be better" than their neighbours. In other words, people need to be assured of confidentially, so that others in their community do not know that they think they need to "improve" or "better" themselves. The interviewee suggested that people are very timid about "showing their cards" and thereby risking community ridicule. She specifically suggested placing pamphlets in locations where people could pick them up discretely, without anyone else observing what they

were doing. This echoes the experience of one of the community animators in Stanstead and may explain part of the results of the DVD outreach endeavour: no one wants others to know that they are considering returning to school, nor do they wish to subject themselves to ridicule before they have really made up their minds and committed themselves to a plan of action. This highlights the importance of having community leaders as advocates within the Friends-of-SARCA network, given their incredible potential for positive influence when it comes to educational choices and validation of those choices by the community.

4.8   Recruit lifelong learning advocates

Given the critical role played by community leaders, especially moral or informal leaders, one of the goals of the action research was to develop a relationship with these leaders that would motivate them to become part of the Friends of SARCA network of advocates. The first task was to distinguish the role of partner from that of advocate and then to explain the structure of the proposed network of advocates. Criteria for distinguishing advocates from partners were developed. Advocates, those who would be part of the Friends-of-SARCA network, simply participate in their role as community members, and any information they share or glean from being part of the network is theirs to use and share as they wish. There are no contractual obligations and they would simply be invited to a few network meetings each year. Partners, for whom involvement intersects with a pre-existing role and their mission (for example, an employee of Emploi Québec), may be involved in more formal collaborations with the school board, such as referring clients, developing projects and so forth.

During the period from the end of November to February 19, awareness-raising activities with groups and individuals proceeded well and a considerable number of organizations were added to the list of contacts in the database. Many individuals (advocates and potential advocates) were also added to the database.

Throughout the action research, community animators attempted to determine the motivational factors prompting the involvement of advocates and partners. An interest in and a sense of belonging to a particular community seemed to be a key motivational factor. Recognition also seems to be important. In distributing DVDs to video and convenience stores, it became clear that personnel working there were good candidates to become advocates, not only because of their knowledge of the community, but because they were often also members of the community. Formal network meetings were planned for later in the spring to solicit further information from the interested community leaders and to provide them with more information about SARCA and available services.

At the conclusion of the action research project, the Friends-of-SARCA network was in its nascent form and comprised 57 confirmed participants and 47 additional community leaders who had expressed some interest.

4.9   Receive and deliver services to new clients

Because part of the research aimed to explore the relationship between an outreach approach and the expression of demand, welcoming new potential clients into adult education centres and offering services was assumed to be a possibility. Much thought and discussion was devoted to this aspect, as not all SARCA services were yet available. The staff currently in place would have to handle any requests for immediate delivery of service.

A meeting with the Director General of the school board (January 4, 2005) underlined the fact that it is essential to inform all internal stakeholders of the project and also the upcoming implementation of SARCA services. These stakeholders include elementary school principals and (critically important) school secretaries, who are often contacted by the community when questions about educational services arise.

4.10   Prepare and submit final report

- The decision was made not to base conclusions on RCM data, as the RCM territories did not coincide with the target areas and because there was considerable disparity between communities within an RCM.

- The timing of this project was unfortunate, as critically important stages of the project arose at inopportune periods of the school calendar (e.g. during the summer period and the Christmas holidays).

- The animators who designed and implemented the project were overly ambitious, given the limited time available to work on the project. Given the original scale of outreach anticipated, additional human resources were needed.

Chapter 5

Results

According to the present action research, diverse community animation undertaken in strategic locations (ie. outlying regions) indicates a positive expression of demand for SARCA and/or training services on the part of potential clients; more importantly, it suggests a means of engaging community leaders and organizational partners to facilitate contact and furnish information to potential adult clients.

5.1   Findings

Fifty-two organizations were contacted and were open to collaborating with the adult education sector on future projects. By the end of the action research timeframe, 57 Friends-of-SACRA membershad confirmed their interest in being involved with the network as potential advocates. The community is not well informed about educational opportunities and unsure about where to seek out information; they can identify where they see it most (i.e. newspapers and posters), but are not always certain of where to obtain it when there is no advertising. Word-of-mouth was identified as a main source of information by 27.6% of the table respondents. Findings indicate that 57% of the respondents were not even aware of the location of their school board's main offices. Training on this point was carried out in informal meetings, but more formal training workshops are required in the near future if the network concept is to be sustainable. In addition, only 18 of the 55 requests to borrow the DVD were generated by newspaper ads and posters alone. Of the 55 individuals who borrowed the DVD and were thereby identified as potential clients, only three actually contacted centres with requests for services. Target communities like Waterloo (with an anglophone population of less than 15.67%) and Bedford (with an anglophone population of 20.43%) generated no requests at the video stores. In Waterloo, where we had little success identifying network participants, we did not receive a single request from any source. On the other hand, Bedford, where we had considerable success in networking activities, generated more requests than any of the other municipalities.

A total of 366 individuals were contacted and took part in the various activities of the action research as follows:

	Total Number of Persons Contacted Through Action Research Outreach Activities
55	Viewed DVD musical video "Get a Life" with the song *Choices*
36	Part of group animation session
49	Individual information session
228	Table survey
9	PCS survey
12	OBC survey
7	Other (nature of contact not recorded)
3	Calls for service
50	Group contacts (individuals who represent a group or organization)
174	For whom we have complete mailing addresses and telephone numbers
47	Potential "friends" (expressed interest or seemed to be positive but not yet followed up)
57	"Friends" (confirmed interest in being involved)
55	Potential clients (called or viewed DVD)
15	DVD distributors (video and convenience stores)
152	August - total new contacts (through tabling, group presentations, individual meetings)
95	September - total new contacts (through tabling, group presentations, individual meetings)
2	October - total new contacts (through tabling, group presentations, individual meetings)
12	November - total new contacts (through tabling, group presentations, individual meetings)
3	December - total new contacts (through tabling, group presentations, individual meetings)
23	January - total new contacts (through tabling, group presentations, individual meetings)
64	February - total new contacts (through tabling, group presentations, individual meetings)
12	First contact date not recorded - new contacts (through tabling, group presentations, individual meetings)
9	Both potential client and "friend"
12	Potential clients who viewed DVD – referred by Bedford Tools for Life participants
57%	Percentage of respondents who did not know the location of the school board office

	Requests at DVD Distributors Generated by Newspapers and Posters – (i.e. NOT referred by a "friend")
0	Dépanneur Chez Ben – Dunham
3	4 Saisons Dépanneur- Stanbridge East
0	Dépanneur Bedford
0	Video Plus Venise en Québec
0	Dépanneur Stukely-Sud
0	Centre de Provisions Eastman
0	Servideo Waterloo
0	Dépanneur Clarenceville
0	Vidéo Flash – East Angus
0	Club Vidéo Plus - Cookshire
2	Marché de Bury
3	Marché Tradition Sawyerville
2	Vidéo Frontière – Stanstead
2	Video Sutton
6	Knowlton Video
18	**Total requests apparently generated by newspapers and posters only**

NB: A few individuals participated in more than one intervention or filled more than one role (e.g. "Friend" and potential client).

5.2   Reflections on Data

- Sustainability would seem to constitute an important factor in developing and maintaining relationships both with partner organizations and community leaders – periodic and irregular presence in the community does not build credibility or establish trust.

- Sustainability depends on planning and investment of resources.

- It would seem that the most potent generator of requests is when a potential client also happens to be involved in some upgrading activity. For example, as a result of one such client, we were able to hold a group presentation and discussion with adults involved in the Tools for Life employability project. This group generated 12 of the 55 requests to borrow the DVD, more requests than generated by any other

single group. The authors of the report agree that the group's success seems to be due to three interrelated factors:

- Their experience as participants in an employability project led them to identify positively with SARCA.

- They recognized that they would need SARCA once they completed the employability project.

- They were motivated by the possibility of winning an iPod.

- The contention of the researchers, based on the variety of input received, is that it takes a great deal of time (far more time than the present action research could allow) to develop and maintain contacts and build credibility within the community. It takes a sustained presence within a community for the school board adult education sector to build up credibility and only once this is established will the expression of demand increase.

- It is the contention of the authors that community leaders with an interest in the delivery of educational or social services are an excellent source for network membership and tend to know people in the community who might be in need of SARCA services. Such community leaders tend to be well respected, and their considerable influence within their communities may augment the expression of demand for services.

- The community leaders contacted over the course of this action research have been universally interested and generally positive about the fact that there is movement on this front. However, not all are convinced that new services will actually be made available; some notable scepticism exists. For example, one interviewee, when asked if the meeting/interview was of use to him, replied "Ask me in five years," implying that only the future would prove whether any action had transpired.

- These moral leaders seem to be in a good position to provide insights into community needs and thus enable adult education service providers to design services in response to those needs.

- The community animators observed that store owners who agreed to distribute the DVD were motivated more by the desire to render a service that they saw as beneficial to the community than by the desire for free publicity. In small communities, convenience store owners and staff have a tremendous amount of contact with their community and thus make ideal advocates.

- Most of the requests that resulted strictly from newspaper ads, news releases or posters came from municipalities such as Knowlton, Sutton, Stanbridge and Stanstead, where the majority of the population is anglophone. It seems plausible that a significant correlation exists, even though no specific cause-effect relationship can be determined at this time. Many of the table survey respondents mentioned that a neighbour, aunt, or friend would call them if there was something of interest in *The Record* (the English-language daily newspaper covering the Eastern Townships).

- From the interviews and meetings with potential partner organization, it became obvious that those whose mission is to render service to citizens of low socio-economic status perceive SARCA as potentially very beneficial for their clients. It is clearly worth investing the time to meet with these organizations on a regular basis. Since some of their members or staff may become permanent Friends-of-SARCA members, these organizations represent an important resource in the effort to implement a culture of lifelong learning.

- We did not have time to engage extensively with employers. There are only a few companies with a high enough proportion of anglophone employees to motivate them to work with the school board. Corporate emphasis tends to be on the bottom line and on productivity, and administrators remain to be convinced of the benefits of SARCA services for their employees. Indeed, previous attempts to implement a workplace literacy program in one of the few companies with a predominantly English-speaking work force failed, due mainly to the reluctance of management to invest the effort.

- Our observations suggest that the 18-30 year-old population is very difficult to reach. Even with the DVD available, the number of people who borrowed it was limited. The DVD will be most useful as a tool for our Friends-of-SARCA membersto lend to potential clients. The 1-877 number was not tremendously effective; although it might prove to be so after several months, during the three weeks of publicity, very few calls were received.

- According to our interpretation, the difficulty we experienced in reaching the target clientele may well revolve around issues of embarrassment or shame at needing training or skills upgrading. One interviewee suggested that potential clients needed to be assured of anonymity in order to avoid the risk of being ridiculed or teased by peers for seeking educational support services.

- There is an obvious thirst for more information. Many of those interviewed (both potential clients and potential advocates) stated that they found the meetings and information useful. Most indicated that they would be interested in participating in an informal network to keep abreast of changing programs and services and in turn to provide the adult education sector with information about their community. Both authors received many comments and reactions at events and during individual meetings that led them to believe that both the meetings and the information provided were perceived as useful.

- To facilitate information flow, it is essential to identify one individual within an adult education centre to act as the point of contact with the community and be responsible for network coordination. Consistency also helps to build community awareness.

- Given these observations, it is our conclusion that networking is vital to building community awareness of services and increasing the expression of demand for

these services, and ultimately to achieving higher levels of educational attainment and establishing a culture of lifelong learning.

Chapter 6

Recommendations

6.1   Continue using the community animation approach

- Traditional publicity (newspaper ads, posters, and press releases) seems to generate very few requests for educational or SARCA services. By comparison, the efforts of the Friends-of-SARCA network correlates with a much higher rate of response (37 of the 55 requests).

- Non-threatening and informative presentations on SARCA services to groups who are already engaged in goal-setting and improving their employability skills is fruitful, not only because they themselves are near-term potential clients, but also because their personal contacts are likely to include other potential clients.

- In the opinion of the authors, word-of-mouth seems to be a powerful means of reaching potential clientele in more rural areas. Given the high percentage of table respondents who indicated word-of-mouth as a main source of information, the authors feel that regular presence in the community and the development and use of a network would be an effective way to keep accurate and pertinent information circulating in the community.

6.2   Focus on building formal and informal relations with community leaders, particularly with those interested in the delivery of educational or social services

- Specific professional training materials and activities for the advocates within the Friends-of-SARCA network are needed. These should include a workshop explaining how the community at large can improve access to and use of adult education services, along with clear, accessible documentation.

- If there is to be a substantial increase in the expression of demand through the advocates, the Friends of SARCA network must be maintained and informed on a regular basis and there needs to be a long-term commitment to maintaining a strong presence in the different communities.

- A means of recognizing and continuously renewing advocate and partner involvement in the process needs to be established. This could take the form of an evening devoted to spotlighting and honouring commitment to SARCA, or the publication of success stories, for example, the story of an advocate who was able to link a particular client with a needed service.

6.3   Focus on developing collaborative and significant relationships with partner organizations whose missions tend to be compatible with those of SARCA

- Unlike community leaders who may choose to be advocates or not, partner organizations offer tremendous potential for collaboration and partnership, as their values and vision often coincide with those of the school board. Such groups and community organizations are logical allies in efforts to promote and develop a culture of lifelong learning.

6.4   Create innovative tools and approaches

- Additional tools need to be developed to determine where clients learned about the services. Anecdotally, we know that several guidance-counselling clients requested services as a result of brochures collected at community events or referrals through our network of community leaders. However, due to staffing constraints, we lacked thorough, across-the-board mechanisms to track and determine where clients learned of the available services.

6.5   Ensure sustainability

6.6   Emphasize building community awareness

- Future success appears to rest on raising community awareness of lifelong learning services. Without awareness, expression of demand for services is unlikely.

- Ideally, building awareness through community partnerships should be sustained to the point that each community is empowered to have a voice in the development and delivery of educational services available to them.

Chapter 7

Ethical Considerations

An ethical consent form (see Appendix 5) was developed, which all in-depth interviewees were requested to read and sign so as to be aware of the purpose of the research and where their input would be valuable. Participants were informed that they could request a copy of the final report.

One final comment about ethical considerations pertains to feedback and reflections about the school board and some of its initiatives. It was deemed important to relay these comments directly to the school board, and a formal presentation to the Pedagogical Committee has been scheduled.

Chapter 8

Summary

The project findings clearly indicate that it takes time and commitment to establish a community presence and build awareness among community leaders and potential clients of educational services. The community animation approach has been very well received and seems to be successful. The experience gained through the present research indicates that information dissemination by word-of-mouth has the potential to bear substantial fruit in terms of expression of demand, provided that the outreach effort is sustained so that community leaders are kept well informed and receive meaningful input on a regular basis.
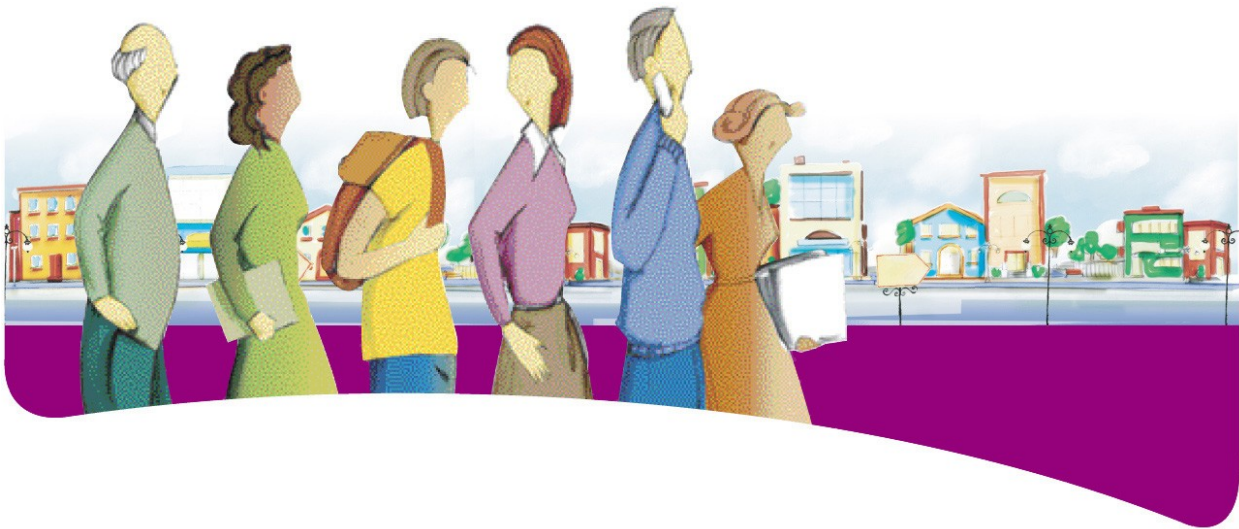
Appendices

Appendix 1: Organizations Contacted

Table Organizations
Access Program - Social Services Knowlton
Avante Women's Centre
Bedford Depanneur
Butler Elementary School
Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi
CEDEC (Eastern Townships)
Centre d' Action Bénévole
Centre de Provision Eastman
Centre Locale de Developpement Memphremagog
Chamber of Commerce – TBL (Brome Lake)
Citizen Advocacy Mansonville
CJE East Angus
CJE Memphremagog
Clarenceville Dépanneur
Club Vidéo Plus Cookshire
Comité Santé-Éducation de Stanstead
Compton County Agricultural Society
Cowansville Academy for Lifelong Learning Students
Cowansville Vocational Centre
Dépanneur 4 Saisons Stanbridge East
Depanneur South Stukely
Dunham Depanneur
Emploi à la carte
ETSB
Justice Alternatiive et Mèdiation
Knowlton Video
Lennoxville & District Women's Centre
Lennoxville Vocational Education Centre

Table Organizations
Literacy in Action
Maison des Jeune Le Trait d'Union
Maison des Jeunes Le Boum
Marché de Bury
Marché Tradition Sawyerville
Masey-Vanier High School
Mental Health Estrie
New Horizons Governing Board
Regroupement E.M.E.
Richmond Regional High School
Stanbride East Town Council
Stanstead Youth Club
Sunnyside Elementary Governing Board
Sutton Video
Tools for Life (Bedford)
Townshippers' Assoc.
Vidéo Flash East Angus
Vidéo Frontière Stanstead
Video Plus Venise-en-Québec
Ville de Stanstead
Waterloo Elementary School
Waterloo Literacy Group
Waterloo Servideo
Yamaska Literacy Council

Appendix 2: Questions on Surveys

No.	Questions	Table Survey	OBC Survey	PCS Survey	DGS	Group Anim	Notes
1	Which municipality do you live in?	1	1	1	1		
2	List your three main sources of community event information.	1	1	1	1		Three blanks on the form.
3	List your three main sources of information about educational services.	1	1	1	1		Three blanks on the form.
4	What are the three main reason(s) you or someone you know would not return to school?	1	1	1	1	1	Check boxes on form. Maximum of four can be chosen. There will be check boxes beside each choice plus a second text box for comments related to selection "Other".
5	Do you know where the English-language adult education centre is for your community?	1	1	1	1		Write in name of town on form
6	Do you know where the English-language vocational education centre is for your community?	1	1	1	1		Write in name of town on form
7	Do you know where the Eastern Townships School Board Head Office is?	1	1	1	1		Write in name of town on form
8	May we contact you for further information?	1	1	1	1		Yes/No. If yes, we collect additional data for contact table.
9	Do you know that mentoring support / counselling is available for adults returning to adult ed centres?		1	1	1		(Yes/No plus remarks and discussion, animators observations)

No.	Questions	Table Survey	OBC Survey	PCS Survey	DGS	Group Anim	Notes
10	Do you know that there is recognition of prior learning (ie. Skills gained for life experience) to gain high school credits to complete their high school certificate?		1	1	1		(Yes/No plus remarks and discussion, animators observations) (all except table)
11	Do you know that adults returning to vocational training may be eligible for loans and bursaries from the provincial government?(OBC & PCS)		1	1	1		(Yes/No plus remarks and discussion, animators observations) (all except table)
12	What has your experience been with accessing adult education services? What was good/bad? What would make getting information / services better/easier?			1			Open-ended in PCS interview. This question builds on question 4, but makes room for positive responses.
13	What do you think of that (network of friends) idea?		1	1		1	Open-ended but animators will solicit information from interviewees or groups.
14	Do you have some specific advice on how to do that effectively?		1	1		1	Open-ended but animators will solicit information from interviewees or groups.
15	If you were to be part of such a network, would you be prepared to meet with this network two times a year? Receive mailings? Put up posters?						Key discussion points in eventual advocate workshops.
16	If you were to be part of such a network, what other things might you be willing to do?						Key discussion points in eventual advocate workshops.

No.	Questions	Table Survey	OBC Survey	PCS Survey	DGS	Group Anim	Notes
17	What other thoughts about adult education do you want us to take back to the school board?		1	1			Not formerly part of anything except OBC & PCS, but if comes up we will record it.
18	Was this a useful meeting for you		1	1	1		Feedback and evaluation of the process being followed.
19	Can you refer us to other people or organizations that we should contact?		1				
20	What do you think is the best way to publicize the SARCA services?		1				
	Number of questions	8	17	16	12	3	

Appendix 3: Tools Used

Instrument	Purpose	Target Population	Format	Follow-up / Remarks
1. Network Directory Grid – part of database	List contacts	Organizations and businesses, community leaders and potential partners	Access	An internal tool for identifying and logging contacts
2. Personal diaries – logged into database	- Personal record-keeping to record ad hoc occurrences, team reflections…	The team	Description Date Source – Nominative data Experiential data	All stages of the project May or may not need to be in the database
3. OBC Survey Open-ended survey Organizations and businesses, community leaders and potential partners.	Gather data about perceptions and knowledge of local lifelong learning opportunities	Organizations and businesses, community leaders and potential partners.	Interview protocol **used with individuals who are interviewed**	More at beginning but all through project
4. DGS Survey Self-administered paper survey	Gather data about perceptions and knowledge of local lifelong ;earning opportunities in group settings	Organizations and businesses, community leaders and potential partners	Self-administered paper survey **used in conjunction with group presentations**	
5. PCS Survey Open-ended survey for potential clients who are willing to be interviewed	Gather data about perceptions and knowledge of local lifelong; earning opportunities	Potential clients	Paper survey used by R&B to be transferred to database – **Interview protocol**	
6. Tool kit about SARCA	Provide information about the SARCA project, government policy, etc.	Potential clients and organizations and businesses, community leaders and potential partners	3-sided (one page) brochure and a bookmark?	Part 1 is a verbal description of the reason for the contact. Part 2 is an interview. Part 3 is additional information and and a brochure

Community Animation as a Tool for Building Awareness of Lifelong Learning

Instrument	Purpose	Target Population	Format	Follow-up / Remarks
7. Table survey	Gather brief data about perceptions and knowledge of local lifelong learning opportunities and to invite further contact	Potential clients and community at large	For use at **community events, activities, etc.**	May we contact you for further information (lead to one of the two open-ended surveys and/or interview protocol)
8. Tool for frontline responders	Record requests for service	Telephone and walk-ins	Paper to tx to database Name Language of request Reason for contact How do you know about us Date	Has to be fast and easy to use – essential data. Get input from frontline responders as to categories, especially for "Reasons for call"
9. Publicity				Posters, brochures, news release and DVD

Appendix 4: Frontline Responders' Form

Melody		Nancy L.		Marilyn		Nancy B.		Louise	
Jessie		Lynn		Joan		Qita			

1. Name:_____ Telephone: _____Town:

   _____

   E-mail: _____ (If applicable)

(We must get this information from ALL callers!) ⇧

1. Clarify that the caller understands the service being offered.

   - Answer phone with *Plan to Learn, How may we help you?*

   - Are you looking for assistance in making a plan to return to studies?

   - We can help you to review what studies you already have completed, to make decisions about what you wish to accomplish, including career choice, and to get the information you need to achieve your goals.

2. Yes, I want this service: ☐   No, I do not want this service: ☐
   Record nature of request:

Referred to:

_____

3. Where did you hear about this service?

Video Store or Dépanneur ☐   Newspaper Ad ☐   Newspaper Article ☐   Poster ☐

Name of Newspaper: _____ Other Source_____

I was referred by: (Name) _____

4. Explain that they will be contacted to meet with the counselor as soon as possible.

5. Remarks:

Appendix 5: Ethical Consent Form

About This Research Project

01. **Project Title**: Community Animation as a Tool to Build Awareness of Lifelong Learning: Specifically Reception, Referral, Counselling and Support Services.

02. **Objectives of the Research**:
The goal of this action research will be to put in place, using a community animation methodology, tools to inform the Anglophone population of the services offered by Reception, Referral, Counselling and Support Services and to develop mechanisms to increase the number of clients, using Reception, Referral, Counselling and Support Services. Our main focus will be those individuals lacking a basic education. As well, we will conceive and elaborate suitable tools to facilitate data collection and analysis in order to better serve our clients.

03. **Financial Support**:
The Ministry of Education and the Eastern Townships School Board are financing this action research project in an effort to gain valuable insights into effective ways to contribute to the creation in Québec of a culture of lifelong learning.

04. Anticipated benefits from the Project:
The main benefit flowing from this project will be an increased awareness of the government intention to create a culture of lifelong learning in the province of Québec.

05. Possible drawbacks of the Research:
There could be delay between the time that services are announced and their availability to the public.

06. Persons Doing the Research:
Nancy Beattie: 819-566-0250 or 819-566-2422 ; beattien@etsb.qc.ca
Gerald Bleser: 450-538-1825; gbleser@sympatico.ca

Description of Participant Activities

07. Participants may participate by filling out a survey, attending an information session, taking part in a workshop or, in the late stages of the project, becoming part of a voluntary network of community members interested in assisting in the promotion of adult education activities.

08. Normally, activities will be scheduled at the convenience of the participant. In the case of a group-based event, the project animators will consult targeted participants to arrive at the most convenient time and place for the event.
Most activities will require a maximum of 30 to 60 minutes of participant time. Workshops will be scheduled for a period of about 3 hours.

09. Data will be collected in the form of survey responses or interview notes or flip chart notes from workshops and information sessions.

10. No confidential information will be required in order to participate in this action research. Names and addresses of participants, if volunteered, will be used only for purposes of contacting that individual and will not be shared outside of the project.
No person is required to participate in this project including present or potential students.

12. All participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Individuals and groups will be requested to participate based on their willingness to do so. The only prerequisite to participation by an is a willingness to help involve his/her community in creating a culture of lifelong learning.

Disposition of Data

13. Data will be stored in a database accessible only to project personnel. Conclusions based on data will be published but no individual comments or action will be attributed.

14. All participants as well as the public in general may request a copy of the final report on this project. The mode of delivery will be the most convenient for the person requesting it, either by mail or email.

Signatures

_____   _____
                Participant   Project Staff

Date : _____