

COMMUNITY NetLink

NEWS FOR THE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK



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Being “Friendly & Helpful”

at the North Shore Community Association

“Basically, we bring people together,” explains Jody Lessard, Executive Director of the North Shore Community Association (NSCA). “A lot of our work is what we call ‘community cohesion activities’. Since we were founded in 2000, we’ve been bringing little pockets of community together into one regional community and organization.”

Lessard has a deep understanding of many of these “little pockets” having

grown up in St. Augustine on the Lower North Shore, coming to Sept-Îles as a teenager to finish high school, then settling in Baie-Comeau. She’s been deeply involved with the NSCA for more than twenty years.

The NSCA is a non-profit regional organization “dedicated to serving, representing, and instilling pride in the English-speaking community of Quebec’s North Shore.” There are four centres

of population where NSCA is active — Baie-Comeau, Sept-Îles, Port-Cartier and Fermont. NSCA says it “represents the interests of the English-speaking people from Tadoussac to Havre-St.Pierre, including Fermont and Schefferville.” It’s been an active part of the CHSSN NPI Network since 2008.

Lessard first connected to NSCA as a volunteer member of the Board in 2002, becoming the association’s Coordinator in

North Shore Community Association

continued...

2003 and then Executive Director in 2004. Over the years, NSCA has grown to a staff of nine based in offices in Baie-Comeau and Sept-Îles.

Lessard credits dependable support from Heritage Canada and Health Canada for the organization's ability to gather and serve its community, as well as a deepening relationship with local authorities, especially the CISSS de la Côte-Nord. Access to health-related services in English remains a top priority for NSCA.

"Our approach to the public health leadership in our region has always been friendly," she says. "We don't demand services. Instead, we say, 'Hey! We're here too. We need help. How can we help you help us?'"

It's taken time and patience as well as a friendly approach. Lessard says the response from the CISSS originally was "polite but minimal. But we've built a track record and now there are more opportunities."

"It's been small steps to get where we are, but now it sometimes feels like we're sprinting to keep up," Lessard laughs.

"Our new challenges are multi-sectoral," explains Lessard. "To do a really good job responding to needs in mental health or early childhood development, for example, means we have to understand our community even better and work with a wider circle of provincial and community partners."

Beyond the North Shore, Lessard has had a deep impact on her colleagues across the NPI Network.

"Jody is an important leader in our network," says Russ Kueber, Director of Programs at CHSSN. "NSCA's success linking its local CISSS with the community's needs is really a model for others and Jody's been outstanding at quiet, informal mentoring for other Executive Directors across the province."

Lessard seems surprised but pleased by the praise.

"That's flattering to hear," she responds and you can imagine her blushing from her tone of voice. "But I guess it's who I am. I have a passion for helping out — it's just natural for me." 



Jody Lessard,
Executive Director, NSCA

(L to R) Brigitte Wellens, Executive Director, VEQ, Eric Girard, Minister of Finance, Minister Responsible for Relations with English-Speaking Quebecers, Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director, CHSSN.



CHSSN Presents Community's Priorities to Eric Girard

Very quickly after as he was named Minister Responsible for Relations with English-Speaking Quebecers by Premier François Legault, Eric Girard made good on his announced intention to meet with representatives of the English-speaking community to learn more about community needs and priorities.

CHSSN had the privilege of meeting with the Minister twice this winter, first with regional English-community organizations and then a subsequent meeting with other provincial organizations including QCGN, ELAN and Y4Y.

"He was very engaged in the conversation," said Jennifer Johnson, CHSSN Executive Director. "His Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers has established a very solid evidence base for him to make decisions about how to support English-speaking Quebec. And we believe that the Minister responsible for our communities also being the Minister of Finance could have an important impact on the availability of resources."

Johnson reported that the Minister brought his top political attaché and his most senior public servants to the consultations.

"Exposure to that level of decision-making in the government is an important asset for the community," concluded Johnson. "For us, our stated priorities were clear: mental health services in English, early childhood development programming, patient navigator programming, and Seniors' Wellness Centres."

CHSSN will continue to look for opportunities to represent its communities effectively. 

PHAC Mental Health Resources Make a Big Impact in the Gaspé

Vision Gaspé-Percé
Now used Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) mental health funds for a variety of much needed wellness activities within the region this past year.

These activities focused on mental wellbeing and breaking down isolation. They included a Bell “Let’s Talk” speaker who was well received at a well attended event. Community members shared that the presentation was inspiring and heart-warming, shining a necessary light on the stigma of mental health.

Another event called “Staying Sassy” was also organized, inspired

by International Women’s Day and focused on women’s wellness. It featured various activities like an esthetician for mini-makeovers, a photo booth, a refreshments station and an information table. Staying Sassy was a huge success in the community drawing at least 40 participants with a strong request to make this an annual occurrence. 



Participants at "Staying Sassy"



Working to End Violence

in English-speaking Families

Accroc, a Quebec-wide organization that works to reduce conjugal violence, contacted CHSSN two years ago seeking to expand its work to English-speaking men in the Laurentians region.

Accroc wanted to adapt the program of virtual accountability groups for men who are perpetrators of domestic violence and/or family violence but needed knowledgeable local partners to accomplish this.

Accroc worked with its NPI organization in the Laurentians, 4Korners, to pilot a first English-language offering of their program entitled “Living Without Violence.” It was so successful that Accroc, 4Korners and a provincial organization called À Coeur d’homme approached CHSSN to expand these virtual

accountability groups to three more regions of Quebec.

“Frankly, we were a bit concerned about uptake,” said Anne-Marie Cech, Program Manager for Early Childhood, Youth and Families at CHSSN. “It’s not easy to admit that anger and violence are problems in your family, especially if you’re the perpetrator of that violence. Added to that was a concern that, post-COVID, men might not be interested in even more meetings or services online.”

But the results have been encouraging. 4Korners has been joined by Jeffery Hale Community Partners in Quebec City, MWCN in Montérégie Ouest, and Connexions in Outaouais and all reported strong interest by men in their regions. The turnkey project developed by Accroc and 4Korners and applied in these new areas includes sharing of expertise, intervention tools and intervention videos, all adapted to the English-speaking clientele. The project also provides clinical support for

the interveners and logistical support for setting up the virtual groups.

“These NPIs had no trouble finding men who wanted to participate,” reported Cech. “Obviously, the format and the content of ‘Living Without Violence’ respond to needs in English-speaking communities across the province.”

Cech observed that the strong response to this kind of programming in English may be explained in part by research undertaken in 2022 by CHSSN that showed higher levels of family-related violence experienced as children among English-speaking men compared to their French-speaking counterparts.

“We’re committed to expanding even further in 2023–2024,” said Cech. “The positive impact of this adaptation of French-language programming is recognized beyond our own networks and is now being actively researched by the Pôle d’expertise et de recherche en santé et bien-être des hommes of the CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale.” [N](#)



Training on the Many Different Forms of Elder Abuse

CHSSN's Program Manager for Seniors, Erica Botner, has been collaborating with Louise Buzit, PsC., M.A.(Com.), *Coordonnatrice nationale spécialisée dans la lutte à la maltraitance envers les personnes âgées d'expression anglaise et de communautés culturelles*, to offer Elder Abuse workshops in English to staff, volunteers and seniors across the province.

"What I really appreciated about the elder abuse training from the CHSSN was the inclusive language and real-life examples," said Aria Brunetti, Generations Program Assistant at The Yellow Door. "Erica and Louise drew from their experience working in the field to illustrate the many different forms elder abuse can take. I found the workshop very informative and Erica and Louise answered questions from the seniors with nuance and care."

The training is called "Towards a Culture of Respect" and can be offered in person in the Montreal area or online. For more information, contact CHSSN. 

FCAAP

Complaints:

One of the most powerful ways to improve access

"We're trying to help people understand that making a complaint about the inadequate availability or quality of services you receive from the public health and social services network is important," says Russ Kueber, Director of Programs at CHSSN. "The formal complaints process is one of the most powerful ways to improve access to the best care possible — and that's as much for francophones as anglophones."

In Quebec, a client or patient in the public system who wants to make a formal complaint is supported by a network of Centres d'assistance et d'accompagnement aux plaintes. These centres work together through a province-wide federation known as FCAAP.

FCAAP FOCUSES ON THREE AREAS OF ACTIVITY:

- Helping users of the health and social services network to know their rights and learn how to uphold them;
- Recognizing abuse in the health and social services network in its many forms and fighting it by supporting a complaint;
- Working with residents and their loved ones to ensure respect for clients' rights in private seniors' residences.

"Launching a formal complaint in any of these areas can be an intimidating process," observes Kueber. "The FCAAP centres help people filling out the complaint forms but also accompanies them through the entire process when required."

Over five years ago, FCAAP approached CHSSN for assistance in creating effective communications tools to promote its services to English-speaking Quebecers, starting with an English language version of its website. This year, the partnership deepened with the production of an English language information video by FCAAP that was launched at CHSSN's "Building Together" conference in January.

"It's a great awareness tool," says Kueber, "and it received a lot of media attention. It also underlined how important it is for people in our communities to speak up when services are inadequate or when they see evidence of abuse or unprofessionalism in the public system." 

The FCAAP video is available online at <https://fcaap.ca/en/the-caap/>

Rich Discussions & New Partnerships on Mental Health

The Montreal Community Forum on Mental Health, #empower, was a CHSSN event held on March 3, 2023, to advance collaborative practices in mental health and wellness in community-based settings. Over 100 participants from 65 different organizations engaged in rich discussions that showcased lived experiences, research, and diverse voices. Connections were created and new partnerships were enabled through networking and sharing.

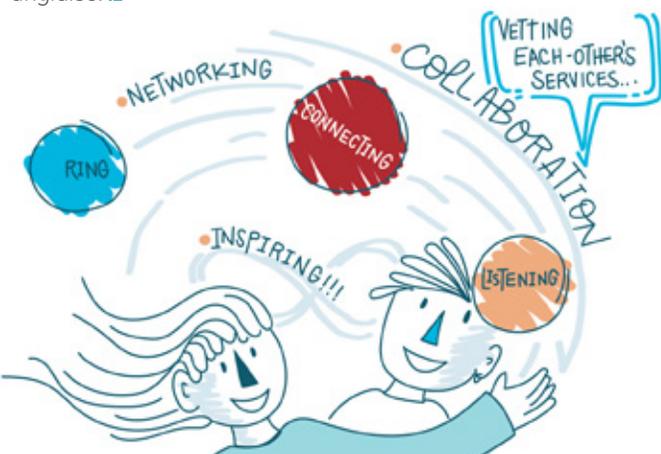
A wide range of themes were covered by experts and in panel discussions that allowed participants to learn and to begin exploring collaboration opportunities on shared interests.

Feedback received to date has made it clear that networking opportunities like the forum are crucial when it comes to laying the foundation for change within systems and communities.

NEXT STEPS FOR CHSSN:

1. Sponsor a Mental Health Mapping Project and Toolkit to collectively build an inventory of mental health resources;
2. Maintain momentum by planning future networking opportunities including forums, workshops, and dissemination of relevant and timely information;
3. Organize learning opportunities through interactive webinars which, according to participants, should include:
 - Structuring organizations to support employee wellbeing;
 - Making sense of intersectionality, how it can help us to connect with ourselves, our colleagues and the people our organizations serve;
 - Evidence-based prevention and early intervention strategies across the lifespan.

CHSSN looks forward to the energy and innovation that is bound to emerge from these new partnerships. Funding for the event was provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the *Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise*. 



The Montreal Community Forum on Mental Health, #empower

Standing Senate Committee Investigates English-speaking Concerns



On May 1st CHSSN, along with representatives from Connexions Resource Centre, ACDPN and VISION, met with the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages.

It was an opportunity to share with members of the committee our communities' challenges and priorities related to receiving health and social services in the English-language.

"It was a great opportunity for representatives of the English-speaking community to be heard," said Danielle Lanyi, Executive Director of Connexions. "We shared our realities and our needs



and we felt that our contribution to the work of the Standing Committee was appreciated."

Many topics were discussed including the socio-economic challenges facing the English-speaking community in Quebec as well as the difficulty our health system has attracting and retaining bilingual professionals. Concerns for vulnerable populations such as visible minorities, seniors, and those suffering from mental illness were also raised with the Senators. [N](#)

Above Right (L to R) Danielle Lanyi from Connexions, Jennifer Johnson from CHSSN, Tania Callender from ACDPN (Jessica Synnott from VISION participated on-line). **Left** Jennifer Johnson giving testimony to the Committee

\$29.3M

over five years for CHSSN-related programming

Five More Years to Build on Success

CHSSN was pleased to be informed by Health Canada that it has accepted the organization's application for renewal of its five-year funding plan within the framework of the Government of Canada's Action Plan for Official Languages.

"We're really excited to build on all the progress we have made with Health Canada support," said Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director at CHSSN. "We have a strong plan to extend the benefits of the three pillars of our work on access to health and social services in English—the NPI network, Adaptation of services in partnership with the public health system, and Knowledge Development."

The federal Minister of Health has provided \$29.3 million dollars over five years for CHSSN-related programming. [N](#)

“On January 18th and 19th, 2023, CHSSN held its “Building Together” conference in Quebec City, funded by Health Canada.

A Community of Practice for Adaptation of Services in English

“Building Together is the primary gathering of our Adaptation program’s community of practice,” explained Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN. “It focuses on our partnered efforts with Quebec’s public health and social services system to expand and enhance access for English-speaking Quebecers across the province.” As its names suggests, the Adaptation program at CHSSN aims to support Quebec’s health and social services system to improve their offer of services in English at the local level, primarily by adapting existing services available to francophones to the needs and realities of an English-speaking clientele.

“Building Together” showcases how collaboration and partnership between the health system and local community networks can help ensure equitable access to services for the English-speaking community. The conference inspires transfer of ideas and best practices between regions.

“The topics shared at this conference showed significant advancement in strategies for improving access to services in English,” said Ron Creary, President of CHSSN’s Board of Directors. “The Adaptation program has been an important vehicle for bringing the community and the public system together and forging a long-term alliance to improve service access.”



With its series of presentations, panels, and workshops, the two-day conference was designed to allow public sector and community partners to learn about challenges and innovative solutions being investigated, developed, and applied in Official Language Minority Communities in Quebec and across Canada.

“We had a wonderful presentation by francophone communities from outside Quebec on the work they do to reduce barriers to health and social services in their provinces,” recalled Johnson. “They’re especially innovative and effective at developing health care professionals for their public systems and creating awareness and a sense of social responsibility among public health leaders.”

Dr. Joanne Pocock, long-term research consultant with CHSSN, presented her latest analysis of elements of 2021 census data of particular interest to

English-speaking Quebecers. Compared to 2016, for example, the newest data shows growth in the English-speaking community (from 13.8% to 14.9% of the population of Quebec) as well as an age structure that is trending younger than among francophone Quebecers.

Jan Warnke, a PhD student in geography at Université Laval and a decades-long researcher of minority language communities in Canada, presented results of his innovative Health Canada supported project to use geodata platforms to improve mental health services to English-speakers in the Quebec City region. [N](#)

(Photo) Valérie Fontaine, Directrice des affaires intergouvernementales et internationales au Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, Ron Creary, President of CHSSN, Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN and Daniel Desharnais, Sous-ministre associé à la Direction générale de la coordination réseau et ministérielle et des affaires institutionnelles

Troubling Research on Language of Care

For many participants, the professional highlight of the conference was Dr. Peter Tanuseputro's startling statistics on the profound impact of "language discordant" treatment in the health care system of Ontario.

Tanuseputro is an Associate Professor in the palliative care division of the Department of Medicine at the University of Ottawa and a researcher with the Institut du Savoir at Montfort Hospital. He and his colleagues have documented the impact on seniors of long-term care in a language that a patient struggles to understand.

"His research shows clear evidence that health outcomes for patients can be significantly and negatively impacted by the language of service in long term care centres," explained Jennifer Johnson, CHSSN Executive Director.

Using population-level, routinely-collected health data, Tanuseputro demonstrated how researchers can examine health status, health care delivery, and health outcomes for linguistic minorities who receive care in a language in which they are not fluent — what he calls, language discordant care.

"There are important differences in health services delivery, health, and health outcomes for linguistic minorities," he said in his talk. "There are impacts on health outcomes based on language facility. The strongest signals in disparities in health outcomes occur in linguistic minorities receiving language discordant care."

"Everyone knows anecdotally or by personal experience that it's difficult to receive health care in a second language," said Johnson, "but to see this kind of hard evidence illustrating almost extreme negative outcomes for vulnerable seniors in the Ontario health care system was, I think, a bit shocking for many conference participants."

Tanuseputro's innovative but troubling research will be a spur to CHSSN and its NPIs along with their public partners to enhance knowledge about vulnerable populations like English-speaking seniors in long-term care facilities. ■

Robson & Stitch: an Inspiring Duo for Greater Accessibility

"Everybody adored James Robson's presentation from his work as a patient navigator in Gaspé," said Johnson, "especially his service dog, Stitch."

The Gaspesian version of the Patient Navigator idea is supported by CASA and allows Robson to extend and deepen partnerships with front-line health professionals, the CISSS du Bas-Saint-Laurent, and the Hôpital Régional de Rimouski as well as community-based services.

His primary focus, however, is on English-speaking individuals in the region, offering a variety of accessible information resources (many developed with support from the Adaptation program of CHSSN), assistance with finding, accessing, and planning appointments with health and social service professionals and programs and aftercare, accompaniment services, and help with travel outside the region.

"James's talk was a real inspiration," remembered Johnson. "The positive impact he is having on vulnerable patients and the clear appreciation of his work by local CISSS partners encouraged everyone to go back home and do more to improve access for vulnerable and linguistically-isolated populations." ■



(L to R)

Steve Guimond,
Patient Navigator
in Quebec City, with
James Robson, Patient
Navigator in Gaspé,
and his service
dog, Stitch.

An Unprecedented Investment in Official Languages in Canada

(L to R) Adrienne Winrow, Executive Director of Y4Y Quebec, the Honorable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN and Brigitte Wellens, President of RDN



On April 26th, 2023, the Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, unveiled the new five-year Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028: “Protection – Promotion – Collaboration.” The Plan includes investments totalling more than \$4.1 billion over the next five years, the largest amount ever provided by a government in the area of official languages.

“I am proud to unveil the new Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028, a plan that reflects the priorities and the vision of Canadians consulted over the past year,” said Petitpas Taylor. “These historic investments will allow us to establish the conditions to ensure real equality of our two official languages in Canada and vibrant and thriving communities.” [N](#)

New Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028 includes investments totalling more than

\$4.1B

over the next five years.

Regional Access Plans Approved by Cabinet After Much Delay

The Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) is very pleased that the Regional Access Plans that govern the availability of health and social services in English at each CISSS/CIUSSS were approved by Cabinet on Wednesday May 31st, 2023, just before the implementation of Bill 15 on June 1st.

“The approval process for these programs has indeed been too long but we now look forward to the plans being made public to ensure that they have not been modified from what each of the Regional Access Committees approved and submitted” said the Executive Director of CHSSN, Jennifer Johnson.

Regional Access Plans are essential for determining which services in public health institutions are available in English and how individuals can access those services.

“Since the passing of Bill 96, the community has been assured by public statements of Minister Girard and the Premier that Bill 96 would not affect our ability to access English language health services,” said Johnson. “I believe that passing these access plans without modifications would be an excellent step in assuring this access.”



The adoption of the Access Program is very welcome as the long-awaited final step in a complex process towards ensuring that our community has access to health and social services in English. I look forward to ongoing collaboration with our regional institution for the successful implementation of the Access Program.”

DANIELLE LANYI,
Executive Director of the Connexions Resource Centre.



The community sector is ready to collaborate with regional Institutions to implement the Access Plans. They are essential to linguistic community vitality.”

FATIHA GUEMIRI,
Executive Director of the East Island Network for English Language Service (REISA).



The Access Plans are essential in ensuring ongoing access to health and social services in English in our region. They allow us to work together to identify service areas that require a knowledge of English and to create collaborative initiatives that increase the offer of English-language services.

JESSICA SYNNOTT,
Executive Director, Vision Gaspé Percé Now.



COMMUNITY HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK

RÉSEAU COMMUNAUTAIRE DE SANTÉ ET DE SERVICES SOCIAUX

Networking and Partnership Initiative Initiative de réseautage et de partenariat (NPI)

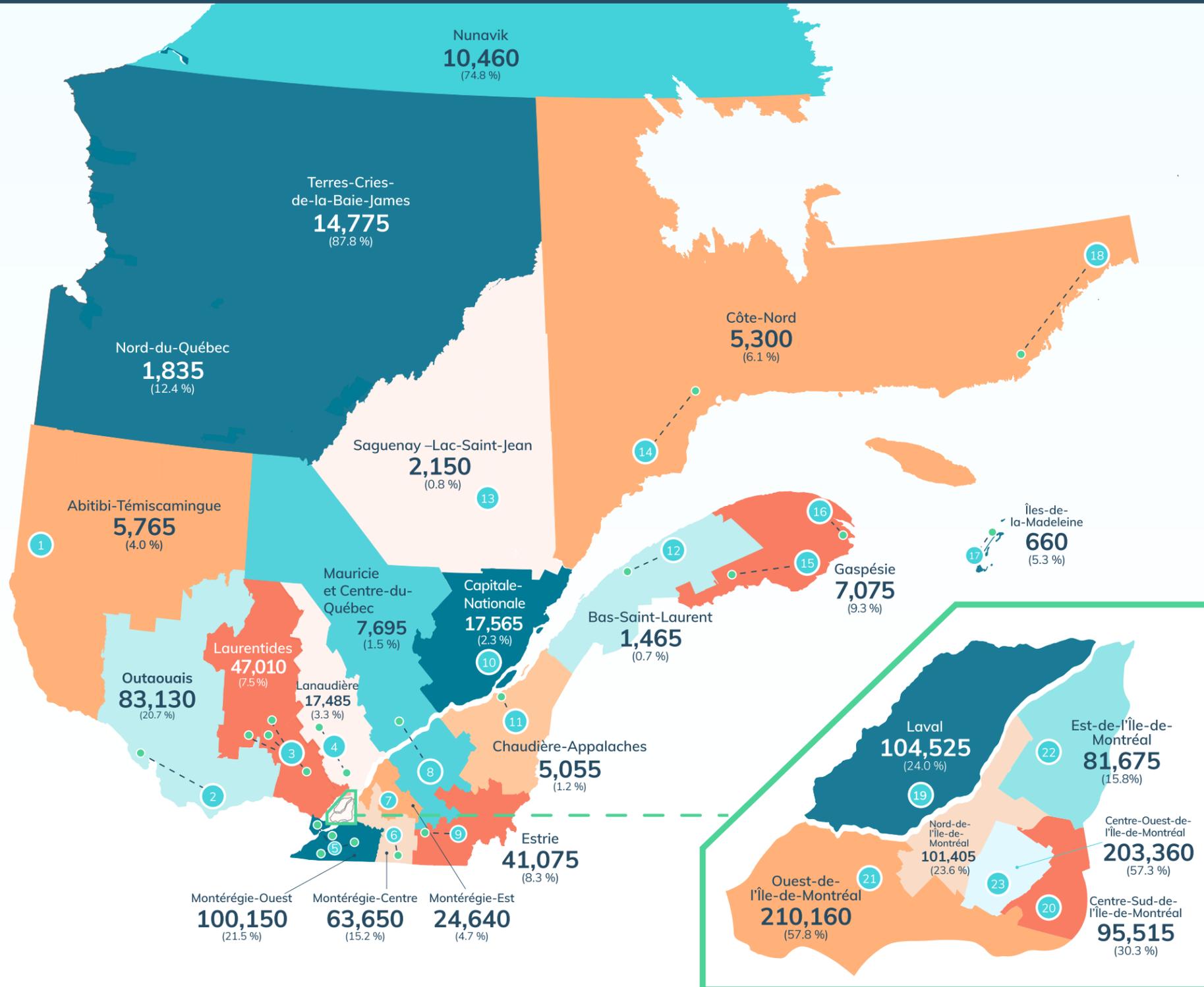
Quebec's English-Speaking Communities
Les communautés d'expression anglaise du Québec

English-Speaking population in Quebec
Population d'expression anglaise du Québec

1,253,580

2021 Census of Canada
Recensement du Canada, 2021

14.9%
of Quebec
du Québec



The CHSSN NPI Network Le réseau NPI du CHSSN

● Head Office
● Satellite

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|--|--|
| <p>1 Abitibi-Témiscamingue
Neighbours Regional Association</p> <p>2 Outaouais
Connexions Resource Centre</p> <p>3 Laurentides
4Korners</p> <p>4 Lanaudière
English Community Organization of Lanaudière (ECOL)</p> <p>5 Montérégie-Ouest
Montérégie West Community Network (MWCN)</p> <p>6 Montérégie-Centre
Assistance and Referral Centre (ARC)</p> <p>7 Montérégie-Est
Monteregie East Partnership for the English-Speaking Community (MEPEC)</p> <p>8 Mauricie et Centre-du-Québec
Centre for Access to Services in English (CASE)</p> <p>9 Estrie
Townshippers' Association</p> <p>10 Capitale-Nationale
Jeffery Hale Community Partners (JHCP)</p> <p>11 Chaudière-Appalaches
Megantic English-speaking Community Development Corp. (MCDC)</p> <p>12 Bas-Saint-Laurent
Heritage Lower Saint Lawrence</p> | <p>13 Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean
English Community Organization of Saguenay - Lac-Saint-Jean (ECO-02)</p> <p>14 Côte-Nord
North Shore Community Association (NSCA)</p> <p>15 Gaspésie
Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA)</p> <p>16 Gaspésie
Vision Gaspé-Percé Now (VGPN)</p> <p>17 Îles-de-la-Madeleine
Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders (CAMI)</p> <p>18 Côte-Nord
Coasters Association</p> <p>19 Laval
AGAPE - The Youth & Parents AGAPE Association Inc.</p> <p>20 Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal
BGC Dawson - Anglo Family Council (AFC)</p> <p>21 Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal
African Canadian Development & Prevention Network (ACDPN)</p> <p>22 Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal
East Island Network for English-Language Services (REISA)</p> <p>23 Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal
Eva Marsden Centre for Social Justice and Aging</p> |
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