

# Lower North Shore Youth Employability Forum



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Priscilla Fequet Griffin  
Project Coordinator

## SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The 2011 Lower North Shore Youth Employability Forum was coordinated to provide the youth on the Lower North Shore with a two day intensive training on employability skills and provide them a forum to discuss with our Council of Mayors and leading community organizations and institutions the labour force market on the Lower North Shore.

The projected outcome of the forum was to expand youth's awareness of the shortages in labour in certain skilled trades sectors of employment and to improve opportunities for youth living in smaller, rural communities where jobs and employment services are more difficult to find. Thus, the skills developed during the two day forum will allow youth to further develop their capacity to enter into the labour force and raise awareness around labour opportunities on the Lower North Shore.

The project was carried out from January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011. A Steering Committee was formed of nine (9) resource people, with representation from the three (3) Community Learning Centers on the Lower North Shore (Chevery, La Tabatiere & St. Paul's River), the Community Economic Development and Employability Committee, Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi Duplessis, Commission Scolaire du Littoral, Centre Local de Développement de la Basse Côte Nord, Qu'Anglo Communications & Consulting and the Coasters Association to provide support and guidance in the planning stages leading up to the forum; along with facilitating workshops during the two day event.

A two day Forum was held on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 at St. Paul's School, with Netagamiou School (Chevery) connecting via video conference for several workshops. A total of twenty seven (27) youth from Secondary IV and V participated and took part in expressing their views and recommendations on topics related to their future on the Lower North Shore. The two day event was an immense success.

Also, representatives (14 in total) from the CSSSBCN, CLD, Community Learning Centers, Community Economic Development and Employability Committee, Commission Scolaire du Littoral, Caisse Populaire Blanc Sablon, Quebec Labrador Foundation, Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi Duplessis, Qu'Anglo Communications & Consulting and the Coasters Association attended offering their support, and / or resource assistance. The forum was a collaborative effort from all parts, coming together to empower the youth and to promote future carers on the Lower North Shore. A total of fifty one (51) participants attended.

This forum was funded by Service Canada, financial support and/or services in kind were also established with the Caisse Populaire de Blanc Sablon, Health Canada and Commission Scolaire du Littoral.

***Project Management:***

Several meetings were held with the Executive Director, Cornella Maurice and Kim Buffitt, HSSNPI Agent (team leader) and James Buckle the Finance Officer to discuss project objectives, expected results and the budget. Meetings were held on a weekly basis with the Executive Director to ensure that the project proceeded as planned. A schedule of activities was finalized, and a fact sheet was developed to inform the population and partners on the youth forum.

All material pertaining to the present project and all data from the 2009/2010 job fair was gathered and reviewed. Set-up office was carried out along with the creation of binders consisting of pertinent information (ie: projects, programs, studies, reports, etc...) and a database of the material gathered was developed.

***Collaboration with partners and resource people:***

Partners were contacted to ensure their participation on the steering committee and/or the training sessions. The *Free the Children* organization was contacted concerning their participation in the Forum; however, due to a busy schedule they are unable to participate at this time, however a package was received and given to the youth at the forum.

The committee that was formed held meetings once a week to ensure that all aspects of the project were being followed. (*Minutes are on file at the office*). Workshops were determined and carried out, however, due to an important presenter not attending at the last minute, volunteers and Coasters Association staff stepped in to help insure that the event was a success.

There was an on-going collaboration with the principals along the Lower North Shore to decide which of the schools would be hooking up with the remainder of the students by Video conference. However, only Netagamiou School, (Chevery) was able to participate in several workshops on March 23<sup>rd</sup> via video conference. MGR Scheffer School decided not to participate due to exams. Two students from each of the following schools; Mecatina School, Netagamiou School and St. Augustine School, participated in person and all of St. Paul's' school secondary IV and V students participated in the event.

In order to keep everyone informed on the progress of the project a monthly report was developed and forwarded to board members and partners. (*On-file at the office*)

***Improving access and opportunities for youth:***

Other programs and possible projects were researched; information was shared with the youth. Information on the Skills Link program was gathered and the development of the project is in progress and will be submitted during the month April.

***Bring youth across the Lower North Shore together:***

An invitation and relevant material, such as: evaluation sheets, agenda, fact sheet, schedule of activities, work plan, program, guests list, workshop information, list of participants/partners and packages for the youth was developed. Information has been forwarded to all schools, partners, Mayors, Coasters Association's board members and participants.

It has been decided that a memory stick with all information (ie: workshops, power points, etc...) be forwarded to all the Secondary IV and V students (105) across the Lower North Shore, thus ensure that all students are aware of possible future employment in the region.

**Project Objectives were to;**

- Expand youth's awareness of the shortages in labour in certain skilled trades sectors of employment;
- Improve opportunities for youth living in smaller, rural communities where jobs and employment services are more difficult to find;
- Bring youth across the Lower North Shore together to discuss and learn about employability opportunities on the Lower North Shore;
- Training carried out in regards to the labour market and employability skills;
- Improved access to information, programs and services regarding employability on the Lower North Shore;
- Improved opportunities for youth living in smaller, rural communities where jobs and employment services are more difficult to find;

**The following workshops took place with the assistants of many partners:**

- Each student present a profile of themselves to help them identify a future career on the Lower North Shore (*Coasters Association*)
- How well do you know the Lower North Shore? (*Coasters Association & Qu'Anglo Communications*)
- Desjardin Careers/Finances (*Caisse Populaire de Blanc Sablon*)
- Entrepreneurship (*CEDEC*)
- Success stories - 3 entrepreneurs shared their information (*Coasters Association*)
- Economic Development opportunities on the LNS (*CLD*)
- Presentation on the MRC, (*Préfet/ Warden*)
- Opportunities in the environmental sector (*QLF*)
- Web skills, resources, & social media (*Qu'Anglo Communications*)
- Job hunting skills (*Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi Duplessis*)
- Labour Market in the Health and Social Services Field (*CSSSBCN*)
- Labour Market and Post Secondary programs (*CSL*)
- Presentation to the Mayors – The youth presenting their vision and what they see as the needs of the Lower North Shore to the Council of Mayor's (*MRC*).

The two day event was an immense success of engaging youth covering many topics. The forum was a collaborative effort from all parts, coming together to empower the youth and to encourage participation within the Lower North Shore at large. The participation in each workshop was very fruitful and the youth were allowed to elaborate on their topics and voiced their concerns to the mayors and/or representatives.

Four of the five municipalities participated in the forum, the mayors were very receptive to the youth views and thanked the students for their insight and promised to work hard to

make the necessary changes needed for the Lower North Shore prosper (more jobs) and hopefully entice them all to come back to the lower North Shore to live once they have completed their education.

Considering that this was the first Youth Employability Forum the Coasters Association had taken on, it was an initiative to be achieved through trial and error. The first day of the forum got off to a trying start, due to the fact that one of the presenters didn't show up and things had to be juggled in order to achieve the objectives of the day; however, the day came together when volunteers stepped in to assist on a moments notice. This approach was successful and we were able to complete the forum in the allotted timeframe.

## Questionnaire Results

Sixty-two (62) out of one hundred and five (105) secondary IV and V students completed the following questionnaire, it was designed to understand the needs and the opinions of the youth regarding employment in the region and if they see themselves on the Lower North Shore in the future.

<b>Employ-ability and Training</b>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>			<i>Strongly agree</i>	
I will be able to find work in my chosen field / career while staying in my region	9	13	26	11	3
I can access employment services in my region	6	11	22	11	12
There are experienced professionals locally that I can talk to about my career path	7	11	14	16	14
It is possible to get experience and work my way up in a local company	8	19	18	15	2
There are better career opportunities elsewhere	2	1	14	14	31
I am aware of future careers that will allow me to work on the Lower North Shore	3	10	19	24	6

<b>Education</b>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>			<i>Strongly agree</i>	
I feel that a post secondary education is important to my future	1	2	5	22	32
I can get the education I want in the region through options such as distance-education or local institutions	12	12	25	9	4
When English-speakers enroll in French-language educational programs, allowances are made for the language barrier	7	6	36	13	
There are professional mentoring programs available locally to students	6	16	29	8	1



There are technical and vocational training programs accessible to me in the region	9	16	23	9	5
Both languages (French/English) are needed to have success career on the LNS	5	15	19	14	11
Leaving the Lower North Shore at an early age to continue my education is a concern	14	15	18	12	3

<b>Leadership</b>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>				<i>Strongly agree</i>
I have opportunities to participate in leadership programs	3	12	28	13	6
I am encouraged to take on leadership roles (at home, at school, or in the community)	4	11	21	21	5
I feel welcome to participate in community organizations	3	7	21	20	11
I have the opportunity to voice my opinion and to be heard	3	13	14	21	11
There are opportunities to participate in programs that will give me new confidence and skills	4	11	17	22	8

<b>Ties to community</b>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>				<i>Strongly agree</i>
I feel that I am an important part of my community	6	10	21	17	8
I feel proud of my cultural and heritage	3	2	16	23	18
I feel invested in my community	4	10	32	11	5
I feel there will be a future for me on the Lower North Shore	11	16	15	14	6
My community allows me the opportunity to do the things I enjoy most	5	6	19	21	11

## Your Thoughts

What are some specific things that your community could do to encourage you to remain in your region, or return to your region, over the long-term?

### Comments:

- Get a road to bring in more people, so there can be a greater variety of jobs, without the road connection, people won't and can't stay on the LNS
- At this time I have no idea

- Have an arena and I will come back forever
- Nothing really, my career is no where to be found here
- My career will probably be everywhere around the world, I have to follow my career
- If they could offer better wages
- Have more selection of careers on the Lower North Shore
- More accessible job opportunities
- Ways to travel cheaper
- A bridge across St. Augustine River
- Pay minimum wage
- Completion of Route 138
- Have more career choices, the ones that are here now, don't interest me
- Build the bridge across St. Augustine River and complete Route 138, so we can drive back and forth, instead of paying so much for airline tickets
- More activities, more school clubs for the schools
- Having a road and bridge connection will open up more activities
- There really isn't anything, because the career I want to go into has job opportunities on the coast to work
- More Jobs
- More infrastructures
- I am free in my region
- I enjoy living in my region
- Nothing, I want it to stay the same
- Nothing, I already want to come back and live on the Coast
- Better jobs

## Evaluation process:

An evaluation sheet was also done with all participants (ie: students, presenters and partners) following the forum and areas follows;

Fifteen (15) of the twenty-seven (27) youth evaluated the forum and the results are:

Please Rate the Forum	Poor (1)			Excellent (5)	
	0	0	3	12	0
<b>Content</b>	0	0	3	12	0
<b>Structure / Format</b>	0	0	3	11	1
<b>Quality of Facilitation</b>	0	0	6	8	1
<b>Chance to Express My Views and to be Heard</b>	0	0	5	5	5
<b>General Satisfaction</b>	0	0	4	8	3

### Did the forum respond to your expectations?

Yes - 14      No - 1

### Please explain your choices:

- I found it to be a great learning and informative experience.
- The cancellation of a few key speakers affected the schedule and quality of presentations. While the people who filled in did a wonderful job, having the featured professional present to conduct the workshop would have been best.
- I learn about jobs, skills and opportunities on the Coast.
- It was easy to understand and well presented.
- I think that this forum allowed us to broaden our views towards the working fields.
- I felt that there was a lot of content but there was too much repetition and the gym was cold the first day.
- It brought students from across the Lower North Shore together for a very important event.
- My choices did not change; I still do not want to return to the Coast to live. Why? Because of my career, I have to go where it is; it won't allow me to stay in one place.
- Clearly a lot of thought was put into the forum by the organization.
- The topics were diverse, and it was great to have the Mayors participate.
- The physical set-up could have been better (in a room with windows), the screen should have been closer and the lights could have been turned down during presentations so the screen could have been easier to see.

### **Which part (s) did you find most beneficial?**

- When the youth present to the mayors
- Also when the youth were asked to present their entrepreneurship ideas, thus allowing them to be creative, and used what they had learned
- The business owning section
- Finding out what's available on the Coast
- Everything was beneficial
- Participating with other students
- Learning about the several jobs on the Coast
- Learnt that there are a lot more job opportunities on the Coast that I didn't know about.
- It made me more interested in coming back to the Coast
- When we talked with the mayors
- Finding out about the businesses and the jobs that are wanted on the Coast
- I enjoyed it all
- The group activities
- Learning about the skills, opportunities and options that we have as youth
- I enjoyed the information on how to start a small business/sole ownership and real life stories from Mr. Maynard & company.
- I felt that separating the groups by village was beneficial, it made me realize the things that our village can have

### **Which part (s) did you find least beneficial?**

- Everything was beneficial
- How long some presentations were, so I lost a bit of interest
- The repetition, (Ex...it was said too much about how being bilingual was important)
- Learning about starting a business
- Some speakers didn't apply to my interest
- Learning about jobs did not interest me because I have applied to college
- I found each one to provide something beneficial.
- There was no part that was wasted time

### **Do you now have a broader understanding of the issues faced by youth in the region?**

Yes -15      No - 0

- I feel that I learnt more about what the youth must go through
- I know what everyone feels like
- I got a lot of information about the biggest obstacles that the youth in the region face
- I think that the MRC didn't really respond enough about how they are planning to help the youth

- I now know that there are a lot of jobs available on the coast
- I now know that many youth noticed things about the coast that I did not notice
- Youth on the LNS have considerable obstacles to overcome as compared to other students
- Limited transportation, opportunities, and the loss of workforce all compound to struggle to keep the youth on the LNS
- I realized that many of our resources are profitable
- It helped me understand my community better

## Steering Committee/Partner Evaluation/Recommendations

The *Steering Committee Members/Partners* evaluated the project on an on-going basis for learning purposes, during and after the project, in order to establish a positive model for future projects. Partners were involved at different levels. They will ensure that the objectives are being carried out and the activities are proceeding as planned. Each evaluation will provide the opportunity to re-adjust the forum in the future when it is carried out again. This will provide an opportunity to plan properly for future initiatives.

The following are the results of an evaluation;

- More direction could have been provided initially in terms of determining what was going to be covered in the presentations/workshops done by different organizations/groups. In the end though it seemed like everything worked out quite well.
- Maybe next year it could be set up so that there is one main presentation, then some workshops at different tables. Students would rotate between tables – this would allow students to get up and move around more often, and might allow them to be more engaged in the workshops since the groups would be smaller and they would be able to interact with the presenter.
- It might also work to allow each organization to have some sort of table or booth that students could go to during breaks if they want to ask questions or pick up some information from the group.
- Having the entrepreneurs come in and speak to the students about their personal experiences was a great idea and really got the students thinking about various ways to be employed or to start your own business. I personally learned the most from speaking to the students when they broke into groups by region – I found this very interesting, and some of the students clearly put a lot of thought into the benefits and the challenges of their hometown.
- All the information was great, but perhaps too much information was presented? I think the presentations could have been a bit shorter in order for students to remain engaged and to get the most out of it.
- Generally this event went very well; the variety in presenters and workshop topics was great.
- It would have been good if more students could have been involved from all the schools.
- The room was not the best location for the event. It would have been better if it could have been held in a room with windows. The acoustics weren't great in the gym and might have been better in a smaller room.

- The screen where presentations were being projected seemed quite far away from almost everyone. I'm not sure that the students at the back were able to see much of what was being presented.
- One topic could have been chosen, for example, if it was leadership or business development, etc., then all activities could have centered around the one topic, the youth would have more focus, instead of dealing with so many different topics.

## CONCLUSION

Over the years, the Coasters Association has worked on many projects and programs geared toward the youth, and have long recognized that the youth represent the future of the communities on the Lower North Shore. The youth on the Lower North Shore is well aware that there are many challenges to be met if they choose to live on the Lower North Shore. One of the major challenges is creating an environment that will entice young people to remain in their communities, as well as providing them with the opportunity to gain the experience and skills needed to enhance their employability while developing a sense of belonging and commitment within their community. As the leaders of tomorrow, they are critical in building sustainable communities.

Ties to community are strong all along the coast. Given the relative isolation of the fourteen communities, the presence of large extended families, and the progression of friendships beginning in the early school years, it is natural that most coasters feel very strong bonds and identity with their town as well as the Lower North Shore as an area. As often the case now, it is no longer individuals and students who are leaving the coast for school, but whole families migrating to find employment.

In terms of vocational training, carpentry, heavy equipment and nurses aid courses are now being offered in select communities. The youth believe that the people, who decide to live in the region, do so because of a passion for their post or for their surroundings, not because of training opportunities. Given the lack of training, professional experience and difficulties in upgrading their work or professional experience, often impedes their ability to learn throughout their career.

In 2009/2010 the Coasters Association organized and held a job fair for all Secondary IV and V students on the territory. The Job Fair proved to be an extremely successful initiative and was proposed to be carried out every two (2) years to increase knowledge throughout the territory on possible careers for the youth of the Lower North Shore. As a follow-up to the job fair the Coasters Association received funds from *Service Canada*, under the Youth Employment Strategy, to host a Youth Employability Forum.

In terms of what encourages youth to stay, the culture or lifestyles of the coast is one of freedom and of a slower pace. It is family and community focus, culture, and heritage that are largely responsible for drawing people back. Our isolation promotes a strong sense of culture and heritage and belonging on the coast, but at the same time it prevents diversity; hence why many leave to experience other ways of life if only for a short time. In many ways, exposure to other cultures is a necessity. It is a way to understand the world, our similarities, and our differences. It often encourages us to appreciate the beauty of what we have here on the coast.

The skills obtained at the Forum will hopefully enable the youth to further develop their capacity to enter into the labour force and raise awareness around possible labour opportunities on the Lower North Shore.



This project was carried out in collaboration of the following partners; Commission Scolaire du Littoral, Centre de Sante et des Services Sociaux de la Basse Cote Nord, Community Economic Development and Employability Committee, Local Development Center, Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi, Quebec Labrador Foundation, Caisse Populaire Desjardins, Community Learning Centers in St. Paul's River, Chevery and La Tabatiere, the Council of Mayors (MRC) and Qu'anglo Communications.