

Netagamiou Community Learning Centre: A case study based on action
research for Education for Sustainable Development in Rural
Communities.

Ana Osborne

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In the Department

of

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ABSTRACT

Netagamiou Community Learning Centre: A case study based on action research for Education for Sustainable Development in Rural Communities.

Ana Osborne

Through the case study of the establishment of a Community Learning Centre (CLC) in a remote, rural Anglophone community in Quebec, this thesis proposes a positive example for education for sustainable development for those wishing to explore the implementation of a similar project. The thesis design evolved towards a hybrid framework of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to recognize, leverage and build upon existing knowledge, resources and capacities both locally and through videoconferencing afforded by the local school obtaining a CLC status. The first three years of the CLC implementation are then evaluated through a formal process embedded in the CLC framework. The findings are grouped under three categories: school community partnerships, access to educational and lifelong learning opportunities, and student engagement, success and well being. The researcher is a native of the CLC community under study who returned back to her birth community after an absence of twenty years. The two research questions about the impacts of the development and implementation of a Community Learning Centre and collaborative learning and inquiry are supported and illustrated by the findings. The third research question concerns the impact of the familiarity of the researcher with the community of the research site. This is illustrated through the story of a personal journey and deemed to be positive, taking into consideration the clear statement of researcher biases and careful examinations and corrections of these biases through appreciative inquiry, cultivating collaboration and recognizing capacity.

Acknowledgements

What does it mean to live and learn in a rural community? How can rural communities not only survive, but they thrive and sustain their place in a rapidly changing global economy? How can rural community members preserve their indigenous knowledge and develop new knowledge that can be applied in a meaningful way to the sustainable development of the community? How can the leaders of yesterday work collaboratively hand in hand with the leaders of today and tomorrow? What does it mean to be a Community Learning Centre? What does a Community Learning Centre look like? Regardless of the answers to these questions, a rural community and a community learning centre cannot be developed, implemented or sustained without the significant commitment of many partners working together toward a common vision: to enable our school and community to develop the capacity to secure a successful, sustainable future in our region.

Partnerships are highly valued at the Netagamiou CLC and an essential component of creating a successful Community Learning Centre and a successful community. The Netagamiou CLC partnership network relationship is characterized by respect, collaboration, reciprocity, as well as many other shared values and goals, with an understanding that by working together we can achieve much more than we can alone. Netagamiou CLC partnerships, programs and services developed are grounded in shared core beliefs and values and reflect the CLC's purpose, to ensure that we reach our collectively desired results. The Netagamiou CLC partnership network has a revolving door that's ALWAYS open. The level of engagement of each partner varies according to many things, including the partner's capacity, the fit of an initiative with the partner's mandate, the benefits for the partner, as well as the needs of the school/community.

I would like to acknowledge and express my most sincere appreciation to the Commission scolaire du Littoral, the Netagamiou School Principal, students, teachers, staff, parents, the governing board, Chevery community members and the many, many partners and supporters who have offered assistance, encouragement, their time and talents in an effort to support the success of the youth and this community as a vibrant, thriving, healthy place to live. I thank, with profound gratefulness my thesis advisor who had faith and unlimited patience in my progress. Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to my family for their support and encouragement through this learning journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.....	ix
List of Tables.....	x
List of Acronyms	xi
Chapter 1: The Theory Behind the Practice	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem	1
1.2 Quebec Community Learning Centres	2
1.3 Why rural/remote communities?	4
1.4 Field Site Description: Chevery - Why this remote community?	7
1.5 Literature Review	12
Role of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) In Rural Communities.....	12
Spaces of Learning for Rural Communities	14
Rights and Responsibilities for Creating a Learning Society	15
The Role of Collaborative Learning.....	15
Embracing Diversity	16
Learner Centered Education	17
Reflective Practice	18
Chapter 2: The Research Design and Methodology	20
2.1 Research Questions and On Going Data Collection.....	20
On Going Data Collection.....	21
2.2 Lessons Learned from the Research Design and Methodology.....	24
2.3 Action Research Methodology	26
2.4 Partnership and Collaborative Based Action Research	33
2.5 Appreciative Inquiry	34
2.6 Achieving Resonance and Triangulation.....	38
2.7 Role of Researcher Familiarity with Setting, Assumptions, Characteristics and Biases.....	40
2.8 Participant/Observer Continuum	41
2.9 Data Analysis: Constant Comparative Analysis.....	43
2.10 Evolution of the Research Design: From Monumental to Manageable.....	44

Chapter 3: My Personal Journey to Chevery	46
3.1 Planning My Thesis Project.....	46
3.2 Introduction to the Netagamiou CLC Community	51
Arrival at field site.....	51
3.3 Lessons from Guideposts and Stumbling Blocks	58
Chapter 4: The Story of Netagamiou CLC: A Catalyst for Positive Change	62
4.1 Netagamiou CLC Research and Development	62
4.2 Catalyst of Positive Change.....	63
4.3 A Brief History of the Development and Implementation of the Netagamiou CLC from 2007 to 2010	69
January - June 2007	69
2007-200	71
2008-2009.....	72
2009-2010.....	72
4.4 CLC Evaluation.....	73
Key CLC Evaluation Questions.....	74
Process and Outcome Evaluation	75
Data Sources and Methodology	76
General CLC Areas/Initiatives to be Evaluated.....	78
Evaluation Framework Timeline	78
4.5 Analysis of the CLC Findings	79
4.5.1 Development of School-Community Partnerships	79
Improved Planning, Coordination, and Management of Available Resources.....	80
We Need to be Informed in Order to Be Better Prepared for the Future.....	82
4.5.2 Access to Educational and Lifelong Learning Opportunities	84
Increased Access to Diverse Lifelong Learning/Leisure Experiences	84
Videoconferencing – A Window on the World.....	85
Health Education and Promotion Services	86

Parent Education and Support	88
Employability and Life Skills Development	91
Culture and Heritage Promotion and Learning.....	93
Citizen and Stakeholder Leadership Development.....	97
Literacy Based Education.....	99
4.5.3 Student Engagement, Success and Well being	103
Awareness of/Positive Attitude Towards Diverse Lifelong Learning/ Leisure.....	103
Access To and Engagement in Diverse Lifelong Learning/Leisure Experiences	104
Awareness and Use of Health Education and Promotion Services	104
Parent Involvement in Children’s Education and School Environment	105
Family Support for Child Development	106
Development of Entrepreneurship Skills and Knowledge.....	106
Awareness of, Engagement in Culture Based Activities and Pride in Culture.....	107
Citizen and Stakeholder Leadership Through School and Community Engagement.....	107
Student Definitions/Descriptions of Student Success.....	108
Impact of the CLC on Students	110
What the CLC Bring to Students and the Community	112
Chapter 5: Researcher Role and Recommendations	114
Supplemental Analysis and Conclusions by the Researcher in her Role as the CLC Development Agent	114
5.1 Other Outcomes.....	115
Support offered to Teachers and Adult Education Services.....	116
People impacted through CLC related initiatives.....	116
Resources, Infrastructures, Equipment Developed/Improved.....	117
Financial Results	117
Service Hours Offered/Week	118
Services Improved/Developed	118
Jobs Created	119
5.2 Recommendations for Sustainable Development of the Netagamiou CLC	119
Philosophical/Psychological Resources	120
Human Resources.....	120
Material Resources	122
Technological Resources.....	123
Policy/Political Resources.....	123
Financial Resources.....	124
5.2 Global Recommendations for the CLC.....	126
Collective Ownership and Capacity Building	127
Communication	129

Responsiveness.....	131
Recommendations From Students.....	132
Support to other CLCs and Communities	132
Curriculum Support and Community Based Learning.....	133
Parent and Community Understanding of the CLC Approach.....	133
Literacy Program	134
5.4 Limitations.....	135
5.5 Conclusion.....	136
References	141

List of Figures

- Figure 1 Bamenda Model of Action Research Source: Hughes et al. (2004)
- Figure 2 Figure 2 : Hybrid of Hughes et al. (2004) model including components of CLC Development (Smith, 2006a)
- Figure 3 Figure 3 : Hybrid of Hughes et al. (2004) action research model with CLC (Smith, 2006a) and Appreciative Inquiry (Reed, 2007) components

List of Tables

Table 1 Netagamiou Municipal/School Library Statistics 2009-2010

List of Acronyms

AI: Appreciative Inquiry
AiR: Artist in Residence
CARS: Communities Achieving Responsive Services
CEDEC: Community Economic Development and Employability Committee
CHSSN: Community Health and Social Services Network
CL: Collaborative Learning
CLC: Community Learning Centre
CLD: Centre local de développement
ESD: Education for Sustainable Development
CSL: Commission scolaire du Littoral
FACTS: Festival of the Arts, Conference and Trade Show
IP: Internet Provider
ISDN: Integrated Services Digital Network
LEAP: Local Employability Access Program
LEARN: Leading English Education And Resource Network
LNS: Lower North Shore
MELS: Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports
OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
POP: Personal Orientation Program
PRT: Provincial Resource Team
QAAL: Quebec Association for Adult Learning
QLF: Quebec Labrador Foundation
RAC: Recognition of Acquired Competencies
SADC: Sociétés d'aide au développement des collectivités
TTTM: Tell Them From Me
UNESCO: United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VCN: Videoconference

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CHAPTER 1: THE THEORY BEHIND THE PRACTICE

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to contribute to knowledge and better understanding of education for sustainable development in rural communities through the example of an action-research project: the development of the Netagamiou Community Learning Centre. It explores the spaces of learning that exist within and for rural communities. A paradigm shift and creative solutions are desperately required that reflect and respect the learning realities and capacities of adults in remote, rural communities.

Rural communities are being systematically depopulated as young and old leave to seek education and employment in urban areas. In turn, this phenomenon is contributing to the decreased capacity of these communities to survive. Quebec Anglophone communities are now being recognized as areas that require development to sustain the viability of the communities and the well being of those living there (Nouvet & Madloff, 2002; CHSSN, 2005; UNESCO, 2005). This is particularly true for remote, English speaking minority communities of Quebec and even more so for the geographically isolated communities of the Lower North Shore. Chevery, with a population of around 350 people, where I was born and raised, is the focus of this study.

The complexities of the adult learning experience in these rural communities are recognized but not explicitly identified or documented from the perspective of the adults living there. Adults living in rural communities are continually negotiating perceived and actual constraints in a search for adequate, accommodating and appropriate learning opportunities. There is a pressing need to critically analyze the traditional concept of

adult learning spaces and methodologies and to conduct research that involves adults as equal partners in knowledge creation, dialogue, and decision-making process rather than becoming the recipients of “expert” diagnosis and recommendations.

This study was planned to provide the community of the action-research site of Chevery with an opportunity and resources necessary to address the role of education for sustainable development. The role of collaborative learning theories in the development of a Community Learning Centre (CLC) is examined as well as the resulting impact of the CLC as a program and service delivery hub. This research project may serve as a model for other communities.

1.2 Quebec Community Learning Centres

There are twenty-three (23) Community Learning Centres within the English Language School Boards of Quebec. The development of Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in English speaking communities across Quebec is part of the Strategic Plan of the *Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport* (MELS), the Youth Action Strategy of the Quebec Government, and the Canada-Québec Entente. A Community Learning Centre “is a formal partnership of one or more schools/centres, public or private agencies and community groups, working together for the benefit of students, families and community” (Smith, 2006b, p.1). Funding has been provided to set up and run the CLC project with the support of a CLC Provincial Resource Team (PRT), as well as a vast network of partners and supporters. The goal of the Quebec Community Learning Centres is to enable a school and community to develop the capacity to secure a

successful future in a given region. This is accomplished by creating schools that are “hubs”, which promote lifelong learning (youth and adults) and community development. The following four primary objectives of the Quebec CLC network offer both means and a desired end result. As outlined in the Quebec CLC framework, the community learning center network seeks to deliver educational and support services in a seamless and integrated fashion. This is accomplished by various agencies pooling resources and sharing responsibility of service delivery. Symbiotic relationships are nurtured between the school and the community and the role and the importance of the school and its services to communities are rejuvenated (Smith, 2006b).

At the start, it is important to underline that “the CLC Framework is not a blueprint but an open-ended guide”. This open-ended guide was designed to be comprehensive but practical; to dovetail, working with existing policy and practice; be reciprocal, responding to the needs of *all* partners; be advisory, not prescriptive and last but certainly not least be collaborative, building a sustainable future by working together.

The Quebec CLC framework is built on five (5) steps to sustainable success: Explore, Initiate, Plan, Implement and Evaluate. The five steps have offered a straightforward yet flexible procedure to be undertaken by school and community partners wishing to create a CLC that will promote student success and community development. Although the steps are presented as sequential, they can be addressed in order as well as interchangeably, moving back and forth through the sub-steps of each major step according to the readiness of each individual CLC. Nevertheless, regardless of order, all five steps are integral to the CLC development process.

The expectations and benefits of the CLCs were grounded in supporting both lifelong learning and community development, anticipating improvements in student learning; an enhanced family engagement with students and schools; support for the more effective functioning of schools and an increased community vitality (Smith, 2006b). This study will explore the level of success in achieving these expectations.

In their winter 2007 newsletter, the Quebec Association for Adult Learning (QAAL) argued that,

CLC's embody a unique type of educational approach that embraces a number of beliefs. Chief among these are that:

- *Education is a lifelong process;*
- *Everyone in the community – individuals, businesses, public and private agencies – should share the responsibility of educating and providing services to all members of the community;*
- *People – citizens – have a right and a responsibility to be involved in determining community needs, identifying community resources, and linking those needs and resources to improve their community.*

Strengthening community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. When schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone all day, every day, evenings and weekends everyone in the community can benefit.

1.3 Why rural/remote communities?

Born and raised in a rural community, I have a great respect for the role of rural communities in the fabric of any civil society. The rural communities that I have encountered offer a quality of life that is not often acknowledged by non-rural residents. They are typically quiet, safe, have very low pollution and crime rates, and generally a slower pace of life. The small geographic size and resulting proximity to the school, businesses and other community landmarks allow youth and adults to easily walk here

and there. Rural communities are often close knit places where everyone knows everyone, where citizens are actively engaged in the development of their community and there is a high sense of attachment to place and people. Parents can allow their children to move freely about the community without fearing for their safety. There is comfort in knowing that the community wide social/family network offers a safety net, which allows children to be free of threats typically associated with urban centers. The small number of students in school means that children are more than a number in the system, the small student to teacher ratio allows for an individualized learning environment. Multi level classrooms foster a sense of place in the world as students learn side by side with younger and older peers. In general, the familiarity between generations and lack of anonymity create a deep sense of connection to the past, present and future, an appreciation of heritage and a desire to protect and preserve it for future generations. Rural communities are places where people generally live with a great awareness and appreciation of nature and the interdependence between humans and the environment. There is no one-hour commute on crowded public transportation systems or bumper-to-bumper highways. The rhythm of school, community and work life is adjusted according to the local happenings i.e. community celebrations, weddings and funerals. In short, rural communities offer a legitimate and valuable alternative to the urban and suburban experience.

The concern for the state of rural communities around the globe and the lives of people living in them is not new. Understandably, considerable attention is given to rural communities in developing countries. UNESCO reports that, "In spite of rapid urbanization, three billion or 60 per cent of the people in developing countries, and half of the people of the world, still live in rural areas... Three quarters of the world's poor,

those earning less than a dollar a day, the majority of these female, live in rural areas. Non-attendance in school, early dropout of students, adult illiteracy and gender inequality in education are disproportionately high in rural areas, as is poverty. Urban-rural disparities in educational investment and in the quality of teaching and learning are widespread and need to be redressed. Educational activities have to be linked to the specific needs of the rural community for skills and capacities to seize economic opportunities, improve livelihood and enhance the quality of life. A multi-sectoral educational approach involving all ages and formal, non-formal and informal education is necessary” (UNESCOa, 2006).

Some rural communities in countries such as Canada can be described as “developing communities” and although the context is different, these rural communities face significant challenges in achieving sustainable development. Given the wealth and prosperity of Canada, it is conceivable that Canada’s rural communities and the people living in them should enjoy and have access to the same opportunities for development that Canadians living in urban communities enjoy. It is also conceivable that rural communities should be recognized for their contributions to the larger Canadian and global community. Alasia & Magnusson (2005) state “An OECD rural community is a community with a population density less than 150 people per square kilometer” (p.7). Bollman (1999) further suggests, “Rural Canada appears disadvantaged. Among OECD countries, Canada has the biggest urban-rural gap in share of the workforce (aged 25 to 44) with university or college graduation” (p.8).

1.4 Field Site Description: Chevery-Why this remote community?

As a result of being born and raised in this remote community, I am very familiar with the field site of this study: Chevery. Simply put, I have a deep sense of personal attachment to this community and the others in the region. This renewed professional interest in my native community occurred at a point in my personal life where I wanted to introduce my own children to their heritage, extended family and community network so they would have the same quality of life that I had experienced as a child and, because I felt I had the skills, knowledge, desire, and drive to hopefully make a positive contribution to the community's sustainable development.

There are a number of historical and current strengths associated with the research field site that indicate the implementation of an education based research project would likely build capacity and strengthen sustainable development in the local and surrounding area. There is a strong history of grassroots initiatives and a propensity for innovation and creativity that emerges as a result of necessity. There is also strong anecdotal evidence of a desire for adult education geared towards training or retraining that would meet needs of local development opportunities. The community is small in size and population, has an abundance of natural resources (water, forestry, wildlife, berries unique to the region, etc), low pollution, and low crime rates. Despite occasional in fighting, in times of need, members of the community will rally together to resolve a crisis or come to the aid of others. There is high freedom (i.e. flexibility of work schedule, children are free to play in the community without common urban threats such

as child abduction, etc.) and minimal transportation problems within the community (can walk, bicycle, ski, etc. to work).

The cost of living is variable depending on the item being assessed. Family and community support systems are high creating low costs for child and elder care. However, the costs of living associated with access to medical services, educational services, food, and material goods from outside the community (gas, cars, clothing, household appliances, etc) are significantly high due to costs of transporting the goods to the area. Commercial inshore fishing is currently the primary industry and source of income around which all other sources of income revolve. Other sources of employment are based in education, health care, municipal and community services. The remaining sources of employment originate from skilled labour that includes but is not limited to fields such as: caregiving (seniors and children), baking, cooking, seamstress, home cleaning services, carpenter, and electrician.

There are numerous educational resources that could be further developed to positively contribute to community sustainable development, maintaining the economic, cultural and social viability of this community and region versus the migration of youth and young adults/families to urban areas, which in turn contribute to urban sprawl and urban overcrowding. Most households have access to personal computers, Internet, and other potential educational technology (TV, VCR, DVD, Radio, etc.). Other local resources that could contribute to the development of sustainable economic opportunities include: environment (monitoring inshore ecosystems, climate change), wind energy, tourism (Eco Tourism), exploratory diversification of fishing industry through second and third transformation of products, expansion of health care services i.e. (nursing home,

health promotion and health education programs), development of community recreation and leisure services that promote social, family, and individual health, well being, community cohesion, and cultural identity. The development of knowledge based technologies and learning/employment opportunities, as well as promoting research on developing educational models for rural sustainable development could help increase recognition of the social and human capital of rural communities and their potential role in contributing to the regional, national and global economy. Finally, and most importantly, the development of a regional learning center and library in the community could significantly support all other areas of development discussed. This is the promise of the CLC model.

According to personal experience and a review of the literature, the primary reasons for the prevalence of exodus in rural communities are a lack of appropriate and adequate educational resources and employment opportunities in addition to a lack of knowledge about which resources exist and how to access them from a distance. Youth and adults leave to pursue post secondary education and do not return due to poor employment opportunities within the community. Some do not pursue college or university, or quit and return to the community because they are unfamiliar, uncomfortable with, and/or unable to navigate urban settings. The result is a community and region that is slowly being depleted of valuable human resources and a region that is becoming increasingly marginalized (Looker, 2001).

There are a number of concomitant factors that may further jeopardize the community's sustainability. The community in question is dependent on air and ferry transport during the spring, summer and early fall, and air and snowmobile transport

during the winter months. There is no highway or road connecting to neighboring communities or urban centers. There is limited inter-regional/intra-provincial transportation impacting access to adequate and appropriate health, food, education, etc. The community is situated in a northern climate, which can be very harsh at times, especially during winter and is even more vulnerable during the autumn “freeze-up” and spring “thaw” as it becomes cut off from primary inter-regional transportation sources (boat, ferry, or snowmobile) leaving air transport as the only remaining, but exorbitantly expensive transportation source. The primarily English speaking (unilingual) community is perceived to be culturally and linguistically marginalized (Anglophone minority in the Francophone majority of Quebec) a number of individuals experience difficulty accessing and utilizing the available, primarily French resources offered in Quebec. The community is also economically marginalized as a result of being a rural setting primarily dependent on a declining fishing industry and seasonal employment. Access to affordable, nutritious food is limited (delivered to the community by ferry or air once per week, fruit and vegetables are often weeks old, expensive, and provide a very limited selection. The short summer season impacts the viability of harvesting agricultural and other natural resources locally. The population is aging rapidly and with insufficient services creates a significant burden of care for some families and communities. There are currently plans in place to develop a regional park and eco-tourism, which may have a significant impact on the local culture and economy (CDRBSL, 2006).

A number of additional concerns overshadow the research field site, which could threaten the level of community commitment required to achieve successful sustainable development. A climate of perceived dependency and hopelessness due to level of

perceived bureaucracy, secrecy, slowly developing local communications infrastructures, language barriers, the cutbacks to social programs (federally/ provincially), the increasing neo-liberal shifting of responsibility to the individual, the poor proximity to political representation, and difficulty of this small rural community and others in the region to fit the criteria for funding programs that do not take into consideration the unique realities of the territory, leave community members feeling “out of sight, out of mind” as anecdotally reported within the field site.

Netagamiou School is located in the remote community field site of Chevery on the Lower North Shore of Quebec. The Netagamiou School/Community Learning Centre (CLC) is based in the primary field site community of Chevery, with links to other organizations through its partners. It serves a multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-generational community of diverse individual and group stakeholders from local and extended communities. The Netagamiou School/CLC serves students from three communities of the region (Chevery, Kegasaka and Harrington Harbour), offering education in English and French at the preschool and primary levels, education in English at the secondary level, as well as Adult Education services through the school board offices located in the Netagamiou School. Students from the other communities live in residence during the school year and travel back and forth to their own communities during school breaks. The Netagamiou School enrolment in 2009-2010 was 50 students from Pre kindergarten to Secondary 5.

Netagamiou School has an exceptional history of promoting student community service as well as an open door philosophy for parent and community groups. The school environment is characterized by friendly, positive educators and support staff that easily

develop an encouraging, nurturing rapport with students, often going above and beyond the call of duty. One prime example is the accessible teacher/student relationships whereby students have even called teachers (at home) regarding homework questions.

The Netagamiou School/CLC is part of the Commission scolaire du Littoral (CSL) school board, which according to the 2009-2010 school enrolment served a preschool and primary student population of 357, a secondary student population of 624. The school board has 215 employees, 13 primary and secondary schools and 14 adult education centers. The mission, vision and values of the school board are as follows:

Mission

In virtue of article 207.1 of the Education Act and in keeping with the principle of equity and through the actions and commitment of its personnel, its establishments and its education stakeholders, the mission of the [school board] is to support its schools and centers in their quest to enable students to reach their full potential.

Vision and Values

In keeping with the principles of respect, equity, responsibility, transparency and perseverance, the school board aims at contributing to the development of qualified and autonomous citizens who are ready to be integrated into society and who will contribute to the development and sustainability of the communities of the [region] (Commission scolaire du Littoral, 2010).

1.5 Literature Review

In order to further explore this research topic it is important to identify and define key terminology. The following section will present some definitions.

Role of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) In Rural Communities

This thesis is the report of an action-research project, which explored the numerous interrelated, interdependent factors that influence education for sustainable development

in rural communities. The concept of education for sustainable development (ESD) has gained worldwide momentum with the publication of *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 (UNESCO Website, 2006). Education for sustainable development has been defined in various ways that take into consideration components such as development and improved quality of life, sustaining current resources for future generations. However, UNESCO's definition of ESD is by far the most comprehensive, reflecting the breadth and depth of the concept and potential outcomes. UNESCO defines ESD as being "about learning to: respect, value and preserve the achievements of the past; appreciate the wonders and the peoples of the Earth; live in a world where all people have sufficient food for a healthy and productive life; assess, care for and restore the state of our Planet; create and enjoy a better, safer, more just world; [and] be caring citizens who exercise their rights and responsibilities locally, nationally and globally" (UNESCO, 2006a). This definition captures the challenges faced by the remote, Anglophone rural communities in Quebec.

Rural communities across Canada and in particular remote Canadian communities experience significant constraints in terms of access to quality learning opportunities found in many urban schools. The distance from larger urban centers, which offer access to diverse nonformal learning opportunities that complement formal education in the classroom or community based learning practices is a common challenge to promoting and improving basic education. Lack of access to a strong scientific community, a vast arts network, contact with different cultures, exposure to diverse employment fields are just a few examples of constraints to sustainable development experienced by rural communities. Small schools and low student population mean that teachers are required

to cover the basic curriculum as well as multiple subjects with multiple grade levels, often at the same time. However, due to their small size and close-knit nature, most rural and remote communities do offer community based learning environments that are readily accessible and where education for sustainable development can be applied in concrete, meaningful ways.

Spaces of Learning for Rural Communities

This research also needed to explore the spaces of learning that exist within and for rural communities in the context of individual and group learning, in particular through the use of distance technologies. There is a pressing need to critically analyze the traditional concept of adult learning spaces and methodologies. A paradigm shift and creative solutions are desperately required that reflect and respect the realities and capacities of rural communities, especially those that are geographically isolated.

Learning requires space. Palmer (1993) addresses this concept in his discussion of creating a space to learn and a space for reflection (p.69). Learning is often limited by a lack of space. Palmer states, "To create space is to remove the impediments to learning that we find around and within us, to set aside the barriers behind which we hide so that truth cannot seek us out. We not only "find" these obstacles within us; we often create them ourselves to evade that challenge of truth and transformation" (1993, p. 71).

Educators must not only create physical and time space, but emotional, cognitive, social and spiritual space as well. Creating a safe, nonjudgmental, non-threatening environment to consciously and thoroughly explore all beliefs, values, attitudes and needs will facilitate a positive and productive learning process. Opening doors to new learning

opportunities and spaces are also required for the community as a whole. Technology and the Internet has become a window on the world of learning opportunities, allowing students and adults to independently explore and learn about the world around them whether in formal education settings or nonformal, self-directed learning.

Rights and Responsibilities for Creating a Learning Society

Much of the academic literature and public policies do advocate for the rights of access to education (MELS, 2005). However, there is also a need for recognition of our individual and collective responsibility for lifelong learning. This point of view is not intended to underrate the daily struggles that many learners face in a search for adequate and appropriate learning opportunities. This point of view is put forth to suggest that as the world continues to rapidly change, each person has a responsibility to take an active role in lifelong learning that contributes to their own development as well as the sustainability and vitality of our communities.

The Role of Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is selected because of its congruence with the thesis topic and goals. “Collaborative learning is an umbrella term that encompasses multiple educational strategies and approaches involving both the teachers and the students in a joint intellectual effort... having students work in groups of two or more to explore an idea, solve a problem, or create a product...they all center on the students’ processes of investigation, discovery, and application, not on the teachers presentation of the material” (Gerlach, 1994, p.10). Saltiel (1998) provides a summary of the “elements of a

relationship between partners in learning” that will be valuable to draw upon in the CLC context. The elements include having a “shared goal or purpose, trust, respect, and loyalty, personality traits and qualities that are complementary, respect for each other, synergy between the partners [and] a valued relationship (p.8). Saltiel states the “purpose of collaboration is for the “participants to make use of each other’s talents to do what they either could not have done at all or as well alone... this is the essence of collaborative partnerships.” [He explains that in collaborative learning] “knowledge, power, and assistance are shared reciprocally... The relationship is significant because of the value the learner places on the partner. The relationship empowers the partners in learning to achieve more than they set out to do as individuals. This is what is known as synergy” (ibid, p.8). Given the current need for diversification of resources and socio-economic challenges, creating a collaborative educational design and community culture is essential for the sustainability of the Netagamiou community.

Embracing Diversity

An important aspect of this research is a respect for the diversity of perspectives found. There is evidence that an inclusionary framework eliminates traditional hierarchies, fosters dialogue and deliberation, and helps to challenge the traditional understanding of learning (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; Cameron et al., 2000; Zeeman et al., 1998). The concept of diversity sensitivity to diversity in education and research goes well beyond the parameters of the cultural domain. Educators, researchers, and policy makers have a responsibility to recognize that rural communities are not a homogeneous learning group in order to adequately address learning constraints unique to rural

communities. To declare that diversity plays an integral role in education for sustainable development in rural communities is an argument for the recognition and value of equality and a holistic approach to learning, one that supports a climate of care for equality, a desire to foster change and ameliorate the existing situation, and an openness and commitment to exploration of new policy and practice perspectives and solutions.

The timing is right for the development of new perspectives. There is a growing climate of inquiry around diversity sensitive education in political, research, education, advocacy, social and health milieus. If diversity is not addressed, we risk meeting the needs of learners inadequately and inappropriately, thereby wasting the precious resources that are available on ineffectual and inefficient practices, as well as alienating and frustrating the learner and destroying their motivation for learning and growth (Kincheloe, 2000; Adams, 2004).

Learner Centered Education

Recognition of diversity and an emphasis on meeting the diverse needs of the individual are the foundation of learner centered education. It seeks to place the individual and his or her needs, interests and desires at the center of the situation. A capacity building approach to learner centered education emphasizes the identification and recognition of the existing strengths of the person as well as ways in which to reinforce and build upon them, as opposed to merely identifying and reducing learning deficits.

Learning is most effective when differences in learners' linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds are taken into account. The same basic principles of learning, motivation, and effective instruction apply to all learners... Careful attention to these [and other] factors in the instructional setting enhances the possibilities for

designing and implementing appropriate learning environments. When learners perceive that their individual differences in abilities, backgrounds, [beliefs], cultures, and experiences are valued, respected, and accommodated in learning tasks and contexts, levels of motivation and achievement are enhanced (BEA, 1997, p.5).

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is a valuable skill to teach participants so they may continually reflect upon knowledge and skills acquired to identify further areas of personal and/or collective learning and development. Cameron et al. (2000) define reflection as “a process of consciously examining what has occurred in terms of thoughts, feelings, and actions against underlying beliefs, assumptions and knowledge as well as against the backdrop in which specific practice has occurred” (p.218). Francis’s study (2004) also supports the argument that “fostering analytical skills” of participants offers a means to build the capacity of the subjects, and contributes to rather than detracts from the reliability and validity of the study. Ainscow et al. (2004) aspire to a similar process that encourages critical appraisal (reflection) and a respect of group interpretive process. A continuous feedback loop (strategy) is employed for gathering data, analyzing the impact, developing increased inclusive practices, analyzing the subsequent impact, gathering more data.... and on, and on... all in a collaborative learning process. This kind of educational approach could serve as modeling for a collaborative, critical thinking approach to sustainable community development. This approach was adopted in this study from the inception to the implementation of the Chevery CLC as the hub of educational activities for the development of the community.

The challenge for report writing purposes is that the amount of data collected to iteratively progress with the action-research plan cannot be accurately portrayed in detail.

It is hoped that the narrative presented in the following chapters of this study will help illustrate the fact that the concepts defined in this chapter provided the context for our actions: Education for sustainable development (ESD), spaces of learning, rights and responsibilities for creating a learning society, collaborative learning, embracing diversity and learner centered education.

The next chapter, Chapter 2, states the research questions and presents a discussion of the action research methodology adopted for data collection and analysis as well as a first finding in terms of the discovery of a variant of action research Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a more appropriate method for the purposes of our study.

CHAPTER 2: THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The first chapter described the main focus of the thesis, a case study of the Netagamiou Community Learning Centre as a hub for implementing education for sustainable development in a remote rural community, through cultivating collaboration, recognizing capacity and sustaining communities. This chapter presents the research questions and describe the on-going data collection approach and a reflective analysis of the action research methodology as adopted and initially implemented and as evolved into a variant: Appreciative Inquiry (AI).

2.1 Research Questions and On Going Data Collection

With the CLC as the central piece of my action-research work the following three primary research questions were foremost in my mind in preparing my research proposal.

- 1) What impact, when implemented, does the development of a community learning center have on the outcome of an education for sustainable development in rural communities?
- 2) What impact do collaborative learning and inquiry have on the outcome of an education for sustainable development program in rural communities?
- 3) What impact does researcher/educator familiarity with the topic, the setting of the research, the population of the research locality and related factors have on the outcome of an education for sustainable development program in rural communities?

On Going Data Collection

In relation to what kind of data to collect, an important message to remember is “value diversity”. McMillan (2004) reinforces the concept that “nothing is trivial... whatever is seen, heard, or experienced is recorded and considered” (p. 263). Multiple sources of data provide a means to triangulate research results. The following sources were used for data collection as recommended in the literature (Anderson, 1998; Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

A surprising variety of community records was found at the rural site of my study including minutes of committee meetings, field site community photos, announcements, community and regional records, newspaper articles, news releases, newsletters, organizational brochures and pamphlets”, etc. Observations of significant public events i.e. town meetings (Discussions, decisions, outcomes), community posted announcements (location, timeliness, content), and reports from past and current community projects were also analyzed for dissemination of information and decision making processes. Records from the Community Learning Centre such as focus group meetings, the mission statement, action plans, activity reports, community asset mapping records and CLC reports, volunteer records, etc. were compiled and analyzed.

A huge amount of data was collected in the process of experimenting with the action-research approach. Data were collected from a) Community members; b) Expatriates; c) Community Leaders. All ethics protocols were followed as outlined and approved during the thesis proposal process. In addition, I kept carefully documented notes as participant observer from the day I arrived in Chevery, in addition to data from numerous focus groups, which were organized on a regular basis to get feedback and this process is still

continuing on an iterative mode. Unfortunately due to thesis protocol restraints the rich and in depth analysis of the data collected will be published in separate reports.

Diverse and multiple data collection methods were selected (written, online and phone surveys, interviews and focus group meetings, analysis of secondary data) to ensure a broad and comprehensive evaluation base and to promote a triangulation of results. Data was collected from four years of records, surveys and reports (2006-2010) from the CLC in the field site.

The initial data collected was from expatriates in 2006 and community leaders across the region in 2007 to provide a broad understanding of the perspective of learning opportunities and sustainable community development challenges. From January 2007-June 2008, CLC data was collected from various sources (students, parents, teachers, community members and partners) using various methods (online student and partner surveys, community phone surveys, written student, teacher and community surveys, focus group meetings by the CLC Coordinator as well as a third party research team, committee meetings, attendance and videoconference records). Data collected included representation from 100% of the student body and 75% of the teaching staff, as well as representatives from the school/governing board and school board administration. Data was also collected from parents, community members and partners. Secondary data sources were also collected and analyzed (community development forum results, results from community organization surveys and reports, as well as school and community records, flyers, communiqués, statistics).

The data collected from primary and secondary sources was analyzed to map assets and gaps and then synthesized to identify priorities to be addressed by the partnership

network in the CLC of the field site. The priorities were presented back to the partnership table that validated the findings and further refined the priorities into a CLC vision and mission statement as well as a measurable action plan. In May 2009 an independent third party conducted an indepth case study research to explore the development of the CLC in this field site. This data was reported back to the field site CLC in the fall of 2009.

From January 2007 to June 2009, the data collected on an ongoing basis was regularly reviewed and the services developed and delivered were adjusted in an effort to be responsive to the evolving needs and interests of the stakeholders and the community at large. During this time, the vision and mission statement was reflected upon often and used repeatedly as a benchmark to ensure that services and practices developed and implemented were in line with the collaboratively identified short and long term vision of the CLC community. A study by Ainscow et al. (2004) supports this type of “collaborative action research” approach, suggesting that, “Existing knowledge is used supplemented by further research evidence to foster developments in the field (practice) and developments are scrutinized as a basis for pursuing deeper understandings (theory)” (p.127).

An Evaluation Framework Committee was established in February 2009, which included the following Partnership Table representatives: the school Principal, teachers, an Adult Education staff, community members, parents and the CLC Development Agent. Although recruitment of a student representative was recommended, no student was recruited due to the time commitment that would be required and that would

remove the student from the classroom. In 2010, another community partner was added as an Evaluation Committee member.

The Evaluation Committee identified five (5) areas of evaluation priority based on priority needs of the theory of change and the availability of measurable data for evaluation purposes. The CLC Coordinator worked with the CLC Provincial Resource Team (PRT) to identify key evaluation questions and indicators, as well as data collection sources, methods, frequency, time frame, analysis and reporting processes.

A concerted effort was made to work more closely with partners in collecting data and to dovetail evaluation processes where possible and appropriate. A constant comparative method has been used in the evaluation of the progress of the CLC in Chevery since January 2007. A repeated cycle of data collection, analysis, synthesis, reporting, and adjustment of practice has been implemented to ensure that the programs and services developed are reflective of and responsive to the needs of stakeholders. This is accomplished by being conscious of underlying assumptions, promoting capacity building strategies, and securing/using resources as effectively and efficiently as possible.

2.2 Lessons Learned from the Research Design and Methodology

The research methodology used in this study was action research, specifically collaborative action research. This methodology is congruent with the aim of the research, to cultivate collaboration among the researcher, the participants and other stakeholders. The reoccurring themes found in action research definitions include empowerment, advocacy, identification, reflection and development of knowledge that

can be readily applied to the real life experiences of participants and that contributes to policy and practice recommendations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Cameron et al., 2000).

This research project design was undeniably complex and complicated due in great part to my own internal conflict with limiting the research scope, what I felt, would be at the expense of the research experience and a disservice to the complexity of the field site and the research topic. The complexity of the research scope was compounded by the length of time spent researching within the community field site. In a concerted effort to respect the rhythms of the community field site and the established primary research topic timeline (impact of the three year development process of a Community Learning Centre) I made a request to the university to extend the research project timeframe, which was accepted.

I embarked upon research in this rural community field site with the goal of gaining a better understanding of the existing situation through an exploration of community member perceptions of past and present experiences. I explored the community's application of these learnings towards the identification of a desired future and the development, implementation and evaluation of an action plan, which included the mapping and sharing of existing knowledge and resources, acquisition of new knowledge, all geared towards the collaborative sustainable development of the rural community. During the last few months of the field site research community members and I were introduced to the concept of appreciative inquiry during a community strategic planning workshop. This was a profound learning experience because the appreciative inquiry concept gave an academic designation and meaning to my actions as a researcher in this field site. An introduction to appreciative inquiry offered a new way to interpret

my action research. This is an illustration of the iterative nature of the action-research approach adopted: a first finding for the researcher and the community was a methodological one, that of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to be discussed in this chapter. The progression is discussed in the following sections.

2.3 Action Research Methodology

In considering a research methodology that would fit with the thesis topic and the field site community, action research offered a methodology that seemed complementary to both. The choice of action research as an appropriate methodology was confirmed early in the research. I heard community members frequently bemoan the need for “less talk and more action” when discussing the state of community affairs at public events or while chatting at the local grocery store.

Action research is a systematic process of inquiry that uses repeated cycles of action and reflection to gain a better understanding of and/or to bring about a desired change. Traditionally however, the change emphasized in action research has been on solving a problem. Action research, as cited in Reed (2007), “was defined by Kemmis and McTaggart (1998) as follows: A form of collective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practice, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out (p.5)” (p.63). Reed goes on to describe action research as “the development of research questions and design in a collaborative way

across the research setting, iterative processes of data collection and analysis, and the feeding back of the results of the analysis in the setting to stimulate change” (p.65).

Hughes et al., (1994) discuss three types of action research: *technical action research*, which “uses a positivist, scientific frame of reference. Action research is seen as a method of solving problems”... *practical action research*, which “takes a pragmatic approach to solving practical problems, often arising in professional practice”... and *emancipative action research*, which “often employs a critical perspective to address issues of social change and emancipation” (p.2).

Hughes et al (2004) description of practical action research supports the iterative process outlined by Reed and summarizes the repeated cycles in action research as a process of “planning, acting, observing and reflecting” (p.11). The process outlined by Hughes of analyzing “the situation on the ground” which then

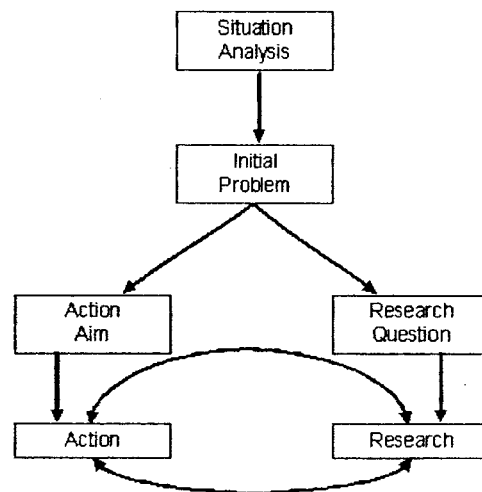


Figure 1: Bamenda Model of Action Research

“gives rise to a succinct statement of a problem to be worked on... lead[ing] to aims to be achieved through action and questions to be answered through research” is one that echoes the process of this research project (ibid, p. 10). A visual representation of this process is illustrated in Figure 1, The Bamenda Model of Action Research, developed by Hughes et al.

Lifelong learning is central to this research and the cyclical and reflective nature of action research is complementary in that the actions taken within this research were consciously selected for their ability to recognize and build upon existing knowledge, whether indigenous or academic, in a way which supported the development of new meaning formed through the collaborative analysis of individual and collective experiences. The purpose of this approach is to overcome the traditional gap between research and educational practice. At the same time, a collaborative approach to the action research, collaborative data collection, analysis and interpretation with stakeholders also supports the collaborative learning methodology selected for this study.

Collaborative data collection, analysis and interpretation was employed to eliminate the need for deception within the research design providing a counterbalance to the perceived social hierarchies and to help level the playing field for stakeholders regardless of status within the field site community. It also encourages, as Francis (2004) suggests, “an increased [awareness and appreciation] of different points of view [that] is more deeply understood. Thus, in analyzing focus group data, the goal [could] be [*not only*] to uncover an accurate reflection of individual [learning] experiences but rather to establish the varying ways these experiences can be felt and interpreted” (p. 260). Such an approach could also increase the validity and reliability of the study results in that the participants (informants) become actively involved in verifying the validity of the analysis and interpretation.

Ainscow et al. (2004) articulate throughout their article that the intention of the action research approaches employed, particularly the “critical perspective” and “collaboration”, encourages the identification, analysis and challenging of underlying assumptions of all

participants for an increased understanding of the others' perspective and to ultimately explore better ways of [learning and] working together (p.134). The concepts of critical perspective and collaboration warrant further reflection and questioning in order to ensure a safe, inclusive, non-threatening environment that will facilitate positive collaborative inquiry. Trust must be established and nurtured between the researcher and participants, as well as between the individuals within the groups given the existing social hierarchies. Community members at this field site are often the subjects of research and rarely the leaders of the research. Pursuing a collaborative action research methodology also provided an opportunity for participants who wished to become familiar with and actively engaged in the research process. A collaborative research approach may serve as a means to reconcile the diversity of conflicting viewpoints and build community trust and commitment through open, transparent dialogue (McMillan, 2004, p.13).

Action research was very appealing as a methodological approach for my thesis study because it reflects, as indicated by Bodgan & Biklen (2003), Ainscow et al. (2004), Cameron et al. (2000) and Hammersley (2004) an invitation for collaborative, critical reflective inquiry, an empowering and inclusionary approach to research that endeavours to tease out and acknowledge the diverse realities of participants' experiences. However, the final appeal is in the social process within which participants "with very different experiences, beliefs and methodological assumptions learn how to live with one another's differences, and even learn how to learn from these differences" (Ainscow, 2004, p. 136).

Borgia (1996) suggests that action research includes the following key considerations, all of which were observed in the community field site of this research project:

"Commitment: action research takes time, Collaboration: the power relations among participants are equal; each person contributes, and each person has a

stake...Concern: interpretive nature of action research (for example, relying on personal dialogue and a close working relationship) means that the participants will develop a support group of "critical friends."...Consideration: Reflection requires concentration and careful consideration as one seeks patterns and relationships that will generate meaning within the investigation... and Change: growing and changing are part of the developmental cycle of life [and]... is possible if one has the right nurturing and support, and the results are worthwhile" (p. 4).

The evolution of this research timeline definitely required a commitment to the research process. The initial research timeline was significantly adjusted and ended after a three-year research process instead of the one year anticipated. The one-year research timeline was unrealistic first given the scope of the research but also because upon entering the research field site I realized that in order to be sensitive and responsive to the rhythms of community life and to increase participants' perceived and actual control, pushing the research forward in the initial one-year time frame would be counterproductive and antithetical to the spirit of the research project. That being said, a commitment was also required to both process and end product. The end product was identified as the thesis manuscript, but equally importantly, a commitment to the research process was significant in terms of the other key considerations outlined by Borgia (1996). Equitable *collaboration* among multiple stakeholders regardless of level of social status, *concern* that participants' voice would be authentically re-presented in the decisions and actions taken; consciously *considering* the nuances of engagement, the development of relationships and the links between the needs, resources and opportunities as identified by the field site community were deeply rooted elements of this action research process. Finally, an element of change was prevalent in the evolution of the research from the initial thesis proposal to the final thesis manuscript, which is reflective of the change in

the researcher's understanding of the research field site and research practice, as well as the evolving social, political and cultural landscape of the field site.

Kurt Lewin is recognized as the founder of the action research movement that was popularized by Kemmis and McTaggart. (Drummond & Themessl-Huber 2007; Hatten et al., 2000; Masters, 2000; Palmu, 2000; Reed, 2007; Seymour-Rolls & Hughes, 2000; Tripp, 2003). As Drummond & Themessl-Huber suggest (2007), Lewin's "ideas in this area are as valid now as when they were first published, it is worth quoting him at length"

Planning starts usually with something like a general idea. For one reason or another it seems desirable to reach a certain objective. Exactly how to circumscribe this objective, and how to reach it, is frequently not too clear. The first step then is to examine the idea carefully in the light of the means available. Frequently more fact finding about the situation is required. If this first period of planning is successful, two items emerge: namely, an 'overall plan' of how to reach the objective and secondly, a decision in regard to the first step of action. Usually this planning has also somewhat modified the original idea.

The next period is devoted to executing the first step of the overall plan this second step is followed by certain fact-findings. This reconnaissance or fact finding has four functions. First it should evaluate the action. It shows whether what has been achieved is above or below expectation. Secondly, it gives the planners a chance to learn, that is, to gather new general insight. Thirdly, this fact-finding should serve as a basis for correctly planning the next step. Finally, it serves as a basis for modifying the 'overall plan'

The next step again is composed of a circle of planning, executing, and reconnaissance or fact-finding for the purpose of evaluating the results of the second step, for preparing the rational basis for planning the third step, and for perhaps modifying again the overall plan. (Lewin, 1948, p. 205f) (p. 432).

Interestingly, Hughes et al. (2004) suggest, "The key test of validity for action research is not whether research procedures conform to rules established by academics and professional researchers, but whether the knowledge works in practice. Until the

knowledge gained in action research is tested in practice, we do not know whether the action research is valid or not” (p.11). This holds true with my internal sense of research, not in the problem solving practical action research that Hughes et al. refer to but in the sense that action research and inquiry are initiated in the spirit of seeking new, confirming or disconfirming one’s understanding of a given situation or theory. To engage in action research with others would seemingly expand the understanding of the practice or theory exponentially, truly challenging the validity of the findings by holding them up to the light for all who are involved to examine.

Despite the preceding philosophical ruminations one question remains, how does one operationalize collaborative data analysis and interpretation with stakeholders, especially if there are conflicting viewpoints? Two solutions are presented and discussed. The first is the establishment of a coalition based approach (Mullen & Kochan, 2000) and the second is the analysis of critical incidents (Angelides, 2001). Several analyses of this kind were performed during the course of the research but should be excluded from this text for brevity. A coalition-based approach is interpreted, for the purposes of this paper, as a philosophical and practical methodology that recognizes the diversity of participant viewpoints and motives, and which promotes collaborative, capacity building efforts towards sustainable development. Mullen & Kochan, 2000, (2000) suggest that “empower[ing] everyone: increase[s] participation, provide[s] support, share[s] information, and move[s] decision-making as far down the organization as possible” (p.187). Mullen & Kochan’s study noted that their process “helped [participants] to build shared power and mutual trust” two key components of building a culture of commitment toward sustainable development in rural communities (p.189).

2.4 Partnership and Collaborative Based Action Research

One of the anticipated outcomes at the outset of this research project was the creation of a coalition, which I had preliminarily entitled the Canadian Coalition of Education for Sustainable Development in Rural Communities. The anticipated goal of this coalition was to bring together diverse stakeholders, including individual community members from the field site, who would be committed to analyzing and addressing education for sustainable development in rural communities in a non hierarchical, collaborative manner. The purpose of this coalition would be to identify the capacities and needs of rural communities, to mobilize resources, to advocate for proactive public policies, and to bring citizens from rural communities to the table as equal and active participants. Although a Canadian “Coalition” was not created during this research process, a “Community Learning Centre Partnership Network” was created that did bring together diverse local, regional, provincial and national stakeholders that included youth, parents, seniors, and other community individual members along with teachers, school and school board staff, registered and grassroots service organizations from diverse sectors (health, sports, religion, arts, culture, literacy, economic and community development) as well as engagement from all levels of government (municipal, provincial and national). This partnership network worked together among themselves, with the CLC community and with other communities across Quebec to collaboratively create a common vision and an action plan, which encouraged those involved to share knowledge, resources, leadership, efforts and decision making in mutually beneficial ways. The network consciously and appreciatively identified, celebrated and built upon the existing strengths of individual

community members and organizations, not always agreeing but striving to achieve consensus and ultimately collective success around the identified common vision for the future.

2.5 Appreciative Inquiry

Throughout my field site research experience I struggled with the traditional focus of action research on “problem solving”. I believe in the power of self-fulfilling prophecies, and therefore visualizing and focusing on the achievement of a desired positive future seemed like a much more appropriate investment than focusing on problems. Therefore, using a methodology that focused on problems instead of progress concerned me as I worried that if we were focusing on problems we might be investing precious energies on the wrong end of the spectrum and should instead be focusing on “what was already working well and what was desired for the future”, not “what didn’t work”.

In terms of sustainable development, and as Bushe (2007) suggests, “From the practical standpoint... it is very difficult to get a group of people who work together to talk about things they might hope for but have never seen (p.2). This is especially true for this field site region which has experienced years of being labeled as a problem region with high unemployment rates, low education levels, a mono-industry economy that is described as being in crisis, lacking in basic infrastructures such as a highway, water and sewage treatment facilities, a linguistic and predominantly unilingual English minority in a francophone province and... in general seemingly deficient in all ways deemed as measures of value by the majority.

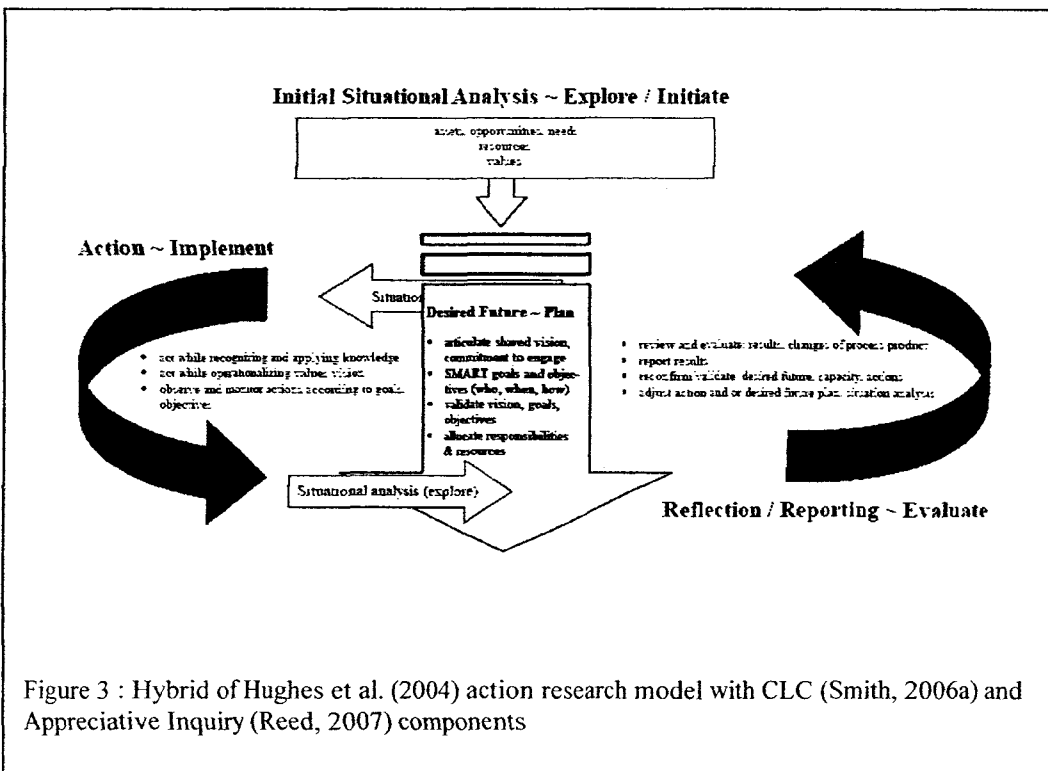
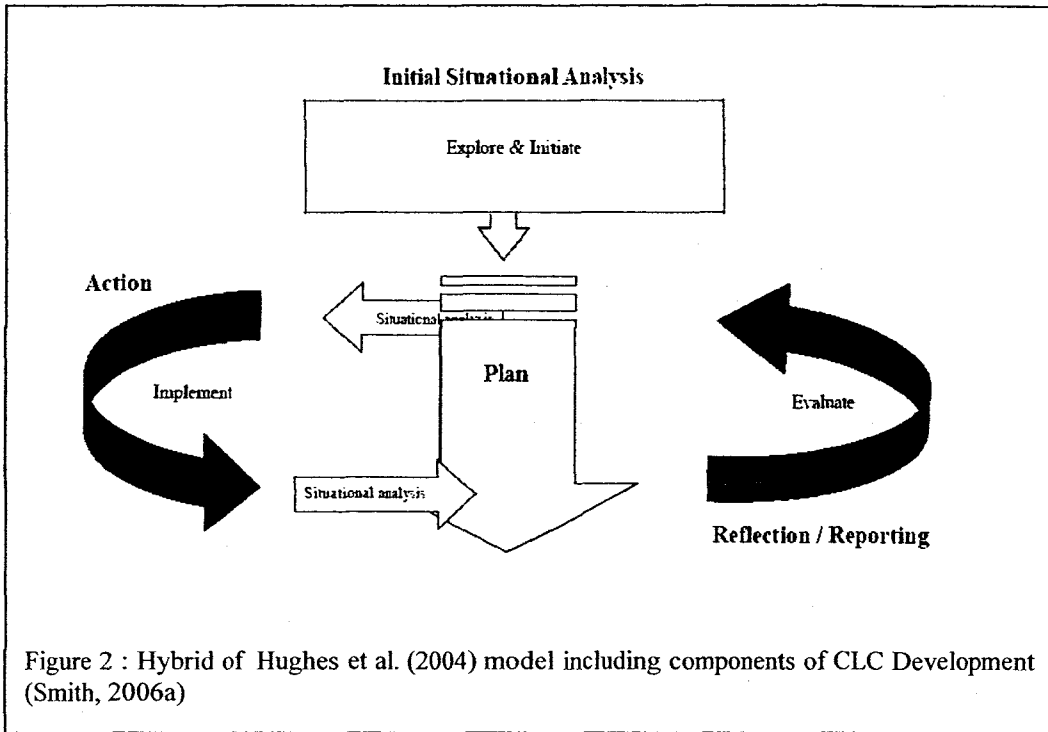
The region has undergone years of studies by regional, provincial and national organizations, which disproportionately focused and analysed the issues and problems of the region as opposed to exploring and building upon the strengths. Much of the previous research and project based funding received was designed to address regional problems and deficiencies. Although problem solving based action research is a frequently used methodology, it is not one that readily encourages practitioners, community members or researchers to look appreciatively at the existing strengths of any situation in order to build upon them. In her discussion about the principles of appreciative inquiry (AI) Reed (2007) refers to the impact of “learned helplessness”... whereby “in response to the suggestion that they were unable to change their situation, it was found that people became apathetic and hopeless” (p. 23). Given the number of perceived and real challenges faced by the field site community and region; it was my belief based on observation and experience in the field site that, appreciative inquiry based research offered a more balanced and capacity building versus deficit reduction approach to research for this rural community. As Reed acknowledges “AI has been accused of being naïve and idealistic in the way that it concentrates on positive experiences... to the extent that it can ignore or suppress accounts of negative experiences” (2007, p.39). However, Reed cites McNamee’s argument that “problems and weaknesses are often much easier to address when evaluation takes an appreciative stance” (ibid). Reed also makes the case for appreciative inquiry “inform[ed] research”, which resonates deeply with the research approach I was seeking for this field site (ibid, p. 42).

Appreciative inquiry supports education for sustainable development and collaborative learning in part because it encourages recognition of past successes and

current knowledge and seeks to build upon them. One appreciative inquiry process commonly used is grounded in a four-step or “4-D cycle” framework, that Coghlan et al. (2003) as cited by Reed claim “is the most often used AI framework” and includes the Discovery, Dreaming, Designing and Delivery phases (p. 32). The *Discovery* phase is grounded in the assumption that in all situations “there is something that gives energy... [and although] the negative often seems more vivid and important... [this first phase is focused on] fill[ing] the organization’s conversations with talk of positive possibilities... a quest that can be difficult to embark on against a background of focusing on failure or deficit” (Reed, 2007, p.33). The second phase, *Dreaming* offers an opportunity for participants to collaboratively “develop ideas of what the future might or could be” and brings participants to dream and identify their desired future without “putting too many limits on ideas” (ibid). In the *Design* phase, participants begin planning for their desired future, “developing provocative propositions” with the aim to confidently and assertively create statements “with no caveats or conditions” (ibid). The last, *Delivery* phase, funnels group energy into more detailed “action planning” whereby the group identifies “specific activities and actions and make[s] commitments to tasks and processes” designed to support the achievement of the desired future (ibid).

Having discovered appreciative inquiry late in my field site research, I re-analyzed the action research methodology of Hughes et al., (1994); creating a hybrid appreciative action research model, in an attempt to more authentically reflect the process that I felt had been taken during the field site research (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2 and 3



The most resonant components of appreciative inquiry were the emphasis on identifying a positive desired future versus solving problems and generation of hope and optimism through a recognition and building upon past successes and previous or current knowledge. Bushe's argument rings true, "It seems that generativity and positivity are both possible without each other, but that without generativity, positivity by itself does not promote much change" (2007, p.9). Change in the status quo was the goal of this action research project... a change in knowledge and understanding around the complexities of collaborative learning and sustainable development, which when applied to real life situations would support a positive change in individual and collective behaviour for this field site community.

2.6 Achieving Resonance and Triangulation

Resonance is a very important part of this research topic and process. The goal of the research methodology was to represent participant's voices through the process and end product i.e. CLC mission statement, action plan, etc. As Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggest, "presence in the text" and "giving voice" both play an integral role in the writing of the thesis manuscript (p. 188 and p. 201 respectively). In order for the thesis text to resonate with the reader, it needs to authentically represent the participant's experiences and perspectives. In order for the participant's experiences and perspectives to be authentically represented, participants need to be explicitly included. Bogdan and Biklen suggest that "since individual people with particular points of view designed and carried out the research, [this] should be reflected in the writing" (p188). I agree with this

argument for a number of reasons. Including the voices of all research participants is an ethically appropriate writing style that resonates with my personal preference for fairness, truth, and equality.

My thesis and research topic is very much about empowerment... empowerment through knowledge and learning (emancipatory and transformational learning through critical thinking and reflective practice); empowerment by making a commitment as a researcher to hearing and including the voice of the participants. I hope to engender a sense of individual and community presence and voice within the world through my research, partly by promoting the message that the existing knowledge, skills, and experiences of the participants have value in achieving sustainable development. I anticipate that adopting an approach that is less pretentious, less authoritarian and that “includ[es] the autobiographical, political and self-reflections”...of the participants will reveal the potential biases... [and] is [a] more open and transparent method of inquiry and research documentation (ibid, p.188).

This discussion is incomplete if an analysis of who will be represented during the writing of my thesis is not explicitly identified; the challenge is in achieving the fair and equal representation of all voices, especially if divergent participant perspectives emerge. I would not feel that I am truly representing the voice of the “others” by taking a traditional approach to writing the thesis that involves only the researcher’s interpretation of the events. Consequently, I propose a philosophical shift away from traditional thesis writing by consciously acknowledging those involved as active participants versus passive subjects of research. In order to align the above-mentioned philosophy with practice, I ensured that participants are provided the opportunity to read, reflect upon, and

provide feedback on the thesis text as a means to verify the authenticity of the representation. In this way, the participant's position is recognized and valued as a reader, supporting the voice of *all* participants and increasing the confirmability of the research.

Following this approach meant that all the names mentioned in this text are real rather than pseudonyms. The participants wish that Chevery and its story as well as their individual efforts towards sustainable development and achievements be recognized and acknowledged properly.

2.7 Role of Researcher Familiarity with Setting, Assumptions, Characteristics and Biases

It is important to acknowledge and understand the impact of the researcher's assumptions, characteristics, values and biases on the research. Being a reflective researcher is imperative at all times, but especially so when the researcher is both familiar with the field site and participants and actively engaged in the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Frankel & Devers, 2000; Mulhall, 2003; Shenton, 2004). I acknowledge that I made a number of assumptions about the topic and field site that need to be brought forward. These assumptions were confirmed or negated through the data collection and analysis process and during the literature review.

As a researcher I acknowledge the following characteristics and values, many of which are products growing up in the community field site. I value equality, believing that each person has something valuable to contribute no matter how big or small, each contribution has value including those that are divergent. I value non hierarchical

structures and shared learning where all participants commit to taking responsibility for their own learning and success. I am aware of and recognize a personal need to facilitate positive change. I prefer a holistic approach to learning, recognizing diverse ways of learning and teaching, challenging assumptions with critical thinking and nonlinear thinking.

It is also important to consider expectations that could be potential researcher biases if not explicitly identified and addressed. I anticipate that my perceived roles will be as primarily a student, secondly as educator, and thirdly as a researcher. All of these perceptions may have an impact on the participants' responses given the small size of the community. I feel confident in my ability to negotiate the various roles without compromising the integrity of the research and am conscious of need to reflect on the impact of contact with subjects outside of the research interviews. I believe the field site participants are generally very curious, social, inquisitive, and outgoing. I believe the field site community is seeking, prepared for, and willing to work towards a positive change. I believe that this change will be perceived as positive for the majority of individuals from the field site community, but recognize that it will present an unwanted challenge to the status quo that others may have enjoyed.

2.8 Participant/Observer Continuum

Qualitative researchers participate in a variety of procedures, and they must be accountable for any and all forms of participation. At the outset I recognized my tendency to be a high participator; I expected to take an active researcher role during this

study and therefore acknowledged myself as a participant along with the people from the community. One might expect less impact if one was merely gathering data from interviews without the pursuit of any action. However, given the nature of the research topic and given the small size of the community, it would seem unrealistic to expect that the research inquiry would not have an impact on the field site and potential actions taken by participants.

This is not an unusual approach in qualitative research. It is becoming more common for qualitative researchers to integrate participants (including themselves) by taking a first person approach as well as incorporating participants' direct quotes in the thesis writing (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p.201). Reed (2007) supports this viewpoint, describing, "engagement between the researcher and participant [as being] seen as a fundamental part of action research... that the act of carrying out research has an intended and acknowledged effect on the world being researched" (p. 64).

In addition to recognizing my tendency to be a high participator who frequently takes on leadership role and given my familiarity with subjects and setting, it is important to give significant consideration to potential researcher biases as well as the impact of this familiarity on participant involvement. I acknowledge that my participation may have functioned as a motivator, modeling engagement, initiative, and a "can do" attitude. In an effort to mediate the risk of researcher bias, data collection conducted for the CLC was done with an assistant (from the local participant group) using questionnaires and focus groups. Analysis of the CLC data collected was also done initially by an assistant and then reviewed by the researcher, the assistant and at times other participants. During the initial stage of the CLC development, participants' input was collected, compiled,

synthesized and then redistributed to the group inviting corrections, further input, and validation of the content. According to Shank & Vilella (2004) these issues fall under the general heading of participator *accountability* (p. 49).

Reed (2007) offers another way of looking at the engagement of the researcher that moves beyond the traditional researcher process of identifying a research topic, exploring the literature, identifying research methodology and questions and then collecting and analyzing data in an effort to generate new theory or understanding about the topic. Reed proposes, “this process... is not always shaped entirely by the researchers – there are a number of different stakeholders with interests too, and if the researcher is to make the research useful... [one approach] is to move away from the idea of research as an individual and private activity, in which it is seen as a demonstration of the unique brilliance of the single researcher or team, toward an idea of the research as being a collective activity, in which people share and develop ideas together” (2007, p.96).

2.9 Data Analysis: Constant Comparative Analysis

Data were collected and reviewed on an ongoing basis including: CLC annual reports, CLC development reports, CLC reports by stakeholders in the Partnership Network, local documents: social development reports, municipal action plan, CLC journals, and cross referenced with CLC focus group and research participant data.

Throughout the research project documents were collected, analyzed and at times adjusted in response to the feedback of and new knowledge acquired or shared by research participants and community members. Revised documents and plans developed

were shared with research participants, the community at large and other stakeholders for further validation.

Repeated cycles of situational analyses, planning, implementation or action, reflection, continued or adjusted actions depending on outcomes from the reflection process, reflection, evaluation and reporting were used to encourage reflective practice and to provide an opportunity to collectively and collaboratively create new knowledge and inclusive decision making, always with an eye on the desired future as identified by the participants.

2.10 Evolution of the Research Design: From Monumental to Manageable

My academic advisor offered warnings early on about breadth and depth of a typical graduate thesis research project. It has been a tremendous personal challenge to limit the research focus, mostly because doing so seems so antithetical to the accurate representation of the complexity of the field site experience. Being a person who is a self dubbed “information junkie” and someone who also consciously and continually seeks and analyses the links between situations has significantly contributed to the challenge of a maintaining a manageable research project. Upon entry into the field site the scope of the research project continued to escalate from unwieldy to monumental. I struggled as a first time researcher who has a decided preference for comprehensive analysis of micro and macro level issues and an unfortunate simultaneous problem with setting limits. A great part of the struggle also resulted from a determination to respect rhythms and desired directions of the field site, leaving me feeling a bit like a ship at sea, at the mercy

of the tides and elements. After much reflection, the CLC emerged as the primary research focus and, having a predetermined three-year development framework, still left me somewhat captive to the timeline, as I was intent on exploring the whole CLC development process in my research. My research focus also shifted from a proposed exploration of learning circles to an analysis of CLC framework in terms of collaborative learning elements, recognition of capacity and education for sustainable development. It was with the patience of a practiced academic advisor, many starts and stops, and much reflection that the research scope was whittled away to a more manageable core focusing on the current thesis manuscript.

Chapter 3 presents the entry of the researcher to the research site in the form of a narrative of a personal journey before moving on to Chapter 4 for the presentation of the CLC case study through the evaluation of the work accomplished in the process of sustainable development initiatives and achievements from 2006 to 2010.

CHAPTER 3 MY PERSONAL JOURNEY TO CHEVERY

This chapter introduces the context of the inception of the thesis topic and project. It recounts the researcher's personal journey back to her birthplace of Chevery, describes the entry into the research site of the Netagamiou CLC community and presents lessons learnt as part of the process of this research journey as important findings of the project.

3.1 Planning My Thesis Project

My Masters degree journey has been about more than getting the degree... it has also been about seeking ways to make a positive change. Making a positive change in my personal life... moving from one career to another or to another stage in my career... making a positive change in my learning and knowledge... making a positive change in the world... specifically a concrete, comprehensive, positive, deep and long lasting change in my community of origin.

It all began in December 2006 in front of my laptop, browsing the Internet, seeking what... I don't quite remember... but something... a new direction and hopefully something that would resonate with my growing sense of feeling "out of place" in urban Montreal. I decided to explore the UNESCO website (United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), an international organization often referred to by a respected professor. Browsing the main titles, I noticed the Education for Sustainable Development tab and clicked on it to explore further. After reading for only a brief time, I realized I had found what I was looking for... a thesis topic and a means to return to

my native community, at the very least for a year, while completing graduate thesis research.

Education for sustainable development is a concept that reflects my understanding of the challenges faced by the Anglophone minority language remote/rural communities in Quebec, particularly my native community and resonated deeply with my personal and professional values. The more of the website that I read the clearer the path became, and after almost two years of researching and attempting to finalize a thesis proposal on another topic, it took me one day to outline the new thesis concept that pulled from my previous personal, academic and professional experience. I titled the thesis topic: “Education for Sustainable Development in Rural Communities: Cultivating Collaboration, Recognizing Capacity, Sustaining Communities”. In a nutshell, my Masters thesis topic was based on two primary beliefs. The sustainable development of rural communities would be possible if 1) collaboration and collaborative knowledge exchange occurred among stakeholders of all sectors from the grassroots to the ivory towers; and 2) a sincere, conscious, and concerted effort must first be placed on recognizing the capacity that exists in rural communities before any steps should be taken toward building capacity. With this being said, the most important factor is that members of the community recognize and value their own capacity, for without this individual and collective self-confidence, feelings of inferiority and a general lack of self-worth would undermine efforts of the community and other stakeholders assisting in the sustainable development of the community.

After much reflection over the first two years of course work for my Masters, I had come to recognize the source of the deep value that I have for collaboration and capacity

building. Let me start with collaboration. Growing up in a small, remote, Anglophone minority language community in Quebec instilled a deep sense of community and interdependence, with neighbors and families working together to share knowledge, skill, and support.

My appreciation for capacity and capacity building is rooted both in my native community as well as in my undergraduate studies and professional experience. I gained a respect for recognizing the diversity of capacities that exist from witnessing the vast intelligence, resilience, and ingenuity of people in my native rural community, some with very little formal education. Far too often, community members would tend to belittle their own intelligence with comparisons to others who had achieved a “higher education” despite the fact that they themselves were successful and vastly skilled individuals in their own right. “It takes all kinds to make a world” my grandfather used to say. Simple words; but filled with wisdom and reverence for the diversity of the human experience and potential. It was this respect and value of diversity and helping others that led me to an undergraduate degree specialization in Therapeutic Recreation. Therapeutic Recreation allowed me to work with people of all ages and abilities across all settings (community and clinical) and permitted me to draw upon diverse personal interests in everything from health care, to community development, to sports and education. In particular, it provided a professional practice background advocating for those in society that are often the most marginalized, people with disabilities. Therapeutic Recreation Specialists are known for promoting a capacity building rather than deficit reduction approach to health and well being. Capacity building that begins with a recognition of the existing strengths and an emphasis on building on these

strengths as opposed to focusing on “fixing the problems” or a person’s deficits. The Therapeutic Recreation profession also advocates that differences should be recognized and celebrated. It was from this mix of personal and professional background that I developed an appreciation for finding different and creative ways to accomplish the same or a similar end result.

It was always a part of my internal consciousness that I would continue my formal learning and pursue graduate studies. After exploring a number of different programs I settled on Education quite simply driven by a love of learning and a desire to have a better understanding of how and why people and societies learn. I was quickly inspired by new readings and the knowledge shared by others in the classroom environment.

Between January and April 2006 a thesis plan was outlined and presented to the university. A request was made to my employer for a one-year leave of absence and a letter was presented to the field site community leaders and the community at large. I initially contacted the person that I thought was the primary community political authority. He accepted my request to send a formal letter of presentation and suggested to forward the letter to the President of the Municipal Local Committee. Because of my familiarity with the community members, I was able to identify the president of the local committee myself and forward the letter immediately. Serendipitously, my letter of presentation was sent on the night of the public meeting. As a result, the presentation protocols usually taken (i.e. present to community leaders who decide whether or not to accept on behalf of the community... and then subsequently present to the community) were expedited and the letter was presented directly to the public. Bessette (2004) asks, “How will the research or development initiative be introduced to the community?”

Usually, the process begins with researchers or development practitioners having a set of preliminary planning meetings with the local leaders” (p.29).

In hindsight, I am very pleased that the letter of presentation I sent to the community leaders was read out loud at a public Municipal Local Committee meeting. This provided the community at large the information that I was coming to the community and the background to my research. This is what I would identify as a best practice approach that is supported by Bessette (2004) “One important factor to consider is the agreement of a community to work with a research or development initiative. In many cases, the authorities of a specific community will give their agreement without the community itself being aware of this, and without understanding the implications in terms of participation and involvement in a concrete development action. This often leads to artificial situations. So before selecting a specific community to work with, it is better to discuss this in the field with different community groups and resource people, and explore the interest and potential of such work” (p.27).

In May 2006, before leaving for the field site, I attended a Quebec Association for Adult Learning (QAAL) event, where a new initiative called Community Learning Centres targeted specifically for Quebec Anglophone communities and school boards was introduced. As I sat in the audience, my thoughts began to swirl with excitement and anticipation, ideas jumbling around in my head, all vying for immediate contemplation... but most importantly a vision began to emerge: a vision of a small and remote but vibrant Anglophone community buzzing with energy and development opportunities in the face of crippling out migration and a dwindling fishing industry. I knew this was an opportunity not to be missed and introduced myself, the field site, and

inquired how to get more information about the project. I was advised that school boards and local schools were responsible for submitting a proposal and it was suggested that I contact the school in the field site community. I included the concept of the community learning centre (CLC) into my thesis proposal. Should the local school be accepted as a CLC site, I would examine the impact of the CLC as an educational support for collaborative learning and sustainable community development. In June 2006, the thesis proposal was accepted, arrangements were finalized for a one-year sabbatical from work, and my research journey began. I anticipated it to be a one year journey which turned into a four year action-research project. I decided to tell the story of this journey in such a way that beyond a thesis manuscript it will also serve as a public report documenting the different stages of the development of the CLC and its interaction with sustainable community development for Chevery, the research site and my birthplace.

3.2 Introduction To The Netagamiou CLC Community

Arrival at field site

Shortly after my arrival at the field site community, Chevery, someone told me that when people make a big change in their life, they are usually running away from something or running to something. In my case, I was doing both. I was running away from a lifestyle that was becoming increasingly foreign as my husband and I tried to raise two children alone in the hustle, bustle, seemingly indifferent environment of a major Canadian urban centre, and most importantly away from all our family and friends. I was running away from a work environment where I felt I could no longer

make a concrete difference and where I felt as though I had reached the limit of what would be accepted in terms of the contributions that I wanted to make. I was running to the familiarity and contentment of a small, remote community where I both did and did not know what to expect. However, I am getting ahead of myself in describing my journey as a researcher returning to my native community in search of a place to make a meaningful difference, to sustain my native community and region, by offering twenty years' worth of experiences, knowledge and skills acquired away from Chevery.

I arrived in the community June 29, 2006 and focused on settling in both physically (into a family home) as well as socially (meeting and visiting with family and friends, becoming familiar with local happenings and the general operations of the community itself). I came to my field site with a very clear idea of what I was looking for: a learning experience that would allow me to combine the application of my previous experiences and knowledge with my thesis research for the benefit of the Chevery community field site. More specifically, I was seeking a way to explore the concept of education for sustainable development, but beyond the traditional parameters of environmentally friendly practices to include indigenous knowledge, culture, and collaborative rural community development. My quest was grounded in the value of collaborative learning, in the search for examples and an opportunity to nurture a shared learning experience among participants that recognized and embraced the diversity of existing knowledge among community members... a capacity building versus deficit reduction approach to lifelong learning and education for sustainable development. The journey has been a profoundly personal one, filled with far too many stops and starts to count. It has been a journey that started with the clear conviction and the ambitious

intent of a novice researcher and one that has ended with a sense of uncertainty as to the ultimate value of the research findings, beyond personal growth and possibly some community benefit.

I found a rural/remote field site... or community that was hustling and bustling with activity. A community full of life, knowledge, and collaborative learning based experiences. These collaborative learning experiences were driven by a genuine desire to move the community forward in response to and in an attempt to address authentic community needs. These collaborative learning experiences were shaped at times by the serendipitous discovery of beneficial resources as well as by the active research conducted by the participating individuals. The adults involved, engaged in meaningful dialogue and collaborative learning as characterized by Gerlach (1994).

The field community population was less than 350. The region as a whole is home to less than 6000 people, primarily Anglophone, but Innu and Francophone as well. One of my realizations was that it is little wonder that people living in this community field site question their value. Time and again... politicians, media, and others are heard asking... why should we invest so much money in such a small place. This “return on investment” bottom line budget mentality has no place in a society that purportedly values each individual for their inherent and unique worth.

My observations of community life and the community culture were shaped by such conversations with community members and confirmed my suspicion that the confidence level of the community as a whole was very low. Some people that I encountered would discount the value of their own knowledge and instead point out the value of my knowledge gained from “university studies” and living in “a big city”. I

would reply that knowledge is relative and... relevant only in relation to its context. My favorite example to illustrate my point was as follows. Should I ever be stranded on the snowmobile trail in the middle of the winter because my snowmobile broke down, all my studies at university would have little value compared to a community member's common knowledge of winter survival skills and snow mobile repair.

Such exchanges confirmed my viewpoint that if people do not recognize their individual and collective capacity for growth, learning, and development, then their lack of faith in their own capacity could become a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure. I also realized that community members need to believe that others recognize and value their capacity and, that a supportive climate of collaboration must be cultivated among all stakeholders, demonstrating to community members through concrete examples that others outside the community have not only the capacity to help, but are interested and motivated to do so. Last but not least, one of my early realizations was the importance of locus of control and equality in the education for sustainable community development equation. Without a sense of control over the input or the outcome, community members would be slow to engage in any education for sustainable development process.

One of the first steps I took two days after arriving in the community was to set up a meeting with the local school Principal to discuss the Community Learning Centre initiative and to offer my volunteer assistance in researching and writing the proposal. The Principal and school board accepted the offer and immediately gathered and gave me a broad range of reports and resources to learn about the school from. I spent the

following two months reviewing school documents and preparing for the anticipated CLC proposal.

I recruited the help of the Social Development Animator, a community development agent responsible for mobilizing and supporting grassroots community development initiatives. I learned about the many community development initiatives previously implemented and currently underway. She offered to help prepare and circulate a community survey to gauge the level of community interest in and support for a community learning centre. The purpose of the survey was to introduce the concept of community learning centers, to determine if the community was interested and would support such an initiative. The response was positive and the results were included in the CLC proposal. In late August I presented a draft proposal to the Principal, the Social Development Animator, an Adult Education staff, and the schoolteachers to ensure that the proposal represented a comprehensive portrait of the school and community, for their input, and feedback. After everyone was satisfied with the proposal it was submitted to the independent CLC selection committee at the end of September 2006 and we were left to wait for the selection committee decision.

While waiting for the “right time” to engage local participants in my research, I decided to begin my active research process with expatriates, people who had been born and raised in the community and/or region, but had left for various reasons. So, quite ironically, I began my research with those who were geographically furthest from me in an effort to gain a better understanding of those who were geographically closest to me.

Expatriates were selected for this study for two reasons: First, to learn from the perspective and experience of individuals who had been born and raised in the

community, who had a sense of attachment to the community or region, but had left for various reasons. The second reason was to introduce the concept of a Knowledge Exchange Network to the expatriates who accepted to participate in the research... as a source of knowledge, support and assistance for the community members who remained.

An invitation was sent by email to contacts of the researcher, with an invitation for those who received the email to pass it on to other contacts that met the criteria (other expatriates). The introductory email included a brief description of the research project and an invitation to participate. The research project was also posted on a new, regional website frequently visited by expatriates. One research participant came forward from this recruitment source.

In total, twelve expatriate research participants came forward. Each participant who responded with an interest to participate in the research was sent an email “Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project”; a review of the research purpose and anticipated outcomes, participation instructions, two word documents including the Research Consent Form, and the Research Questionnaire. A third email was sent to each participant after they had returned the completed consent form and questionnaire to thank them for their participation. The results of each participant were saved separately in its original electronic format; and the responses of each participant were then transferred to a group Data Collection Form and compiled according to question.

In the meantime, I also integrated into the community by engaging in a number of community events, committees (including becoming a community representative member of the School Governing Board), and part time employment opportunities in an

effort to learn as much about the community as possible and to sustain my family and myself financially. I had learned in researching the CLC proposal that there had been many “community studies” over the years by regional, provincial and federal organizations. I also learned about the rhythms of remote community life and realized that the migratory employment nature of community members meant that many potential research participants were absent from the community until late October each year. Once these members returned, their priority was spending time with family and friends, restoring their home after an absence of four or five month, preparing for the winter i.e. making food supply orders for shipment via ferry, preparing “Christmas orders” from catalogue and online sources that might need to be shipped to family members across Canada, and generally re-engaging into the community happenings such as committee work and community events. It was also a time that local committees (i.e. the Sports Committee) would become very active in preparation for the well-known winter carnivals and hockey tournaments, a cultural and financial cornerstone of each community in the region. A very busy time that seemingly left little energy or interest for “participating in a research project”.

Regular updates were shared with the school staff and governing board throughout the fall until the exciting news arrived in December that Netagamiou School was chosen as one of the fifteen new Quebec CLCs. Netagamiou School would receive three years of funding and support to develop the initiative. I was asked, as the School Governing Board Community Representative, to travel back to Montreal to accept the new CLC status on behalf of the school. The Principal officially announced the news to the community during the annual school/community Christmas Concert. A Community

Learning Centre Development Agent position was posted, to which I applied, my application was accepted and I was offered the job.

3.3 Lessons from the Guideposts and Stumbling Blocks

This research study has provided a practical opportunity to explore the application of the education for sustainable development theory proposed by UNESCO through the development of the CLC in this field site community. Sustainable development of any community or region is not a linear or short-term process, nor one that can be successfully achieved without the active engagement of a broad cross section of the community in question. Although student success is at the very heart of the CLC *raison d'être*, the CLC development framework encourages communities to holistically explore, initiate, plan, implement and evaluate for lifelong learning and community development with the belief that a strong and healthy social, economic and environmental climate will contribute to a positively reinforcing cycle of student and community success. In conducting a comprehensive analysis of collaborative learning and education for sustainable development theories, I found that collaborative learning provides a deeply complementary educational philosophy and practice for operationalizing an education for sustainable development program in this rural community. Collaborative learning, interpreted as “working together” and “sharing support”, is explicitly cited as a past and contemporary value across the generations of the field site community. Collaborative learning provided the supportive learning environment from which new, richer meaning could be generated around CLC related sustainable development efforts. The full impact

that the development of a community learning center might have in terms of formal and nonformal education and sustainable development in this rural community cannot yet be unequivocally demonstrated. However, what can and has been demonstrated is that the CLC development framework does promote philosophies, policies and practices, which help create positive conditions for success both in respect to lifelong learning and sustainable development.

An analysis of the literature (Bosworth, 1994; Cramer, 1994; Flannery, 1994; Foote, 1997; Gerlach, 1994; Kasl & Yorks, 2002; Nelson, 1994; Peters & Armstrong, 1998; Salteil, 1998; Smith, 2006a; Smith, 2006b; Smith, 2006c; Smith, 2006d; UNESCO, 2003a; UNESCO, 2003b; UNESCO, 2003c; UNESCO, 2003d; UNESCO, 2003e; UNESCO, 2003f; UNESCO, 2003g; UNESCO, 2003h; UNESCO, 2003i; UNESCO, 2003j; UNESCO, 2005, UNESCO, 2006a; UNESCO, 2006b; UNESCO, 2006c; UNESCO, 2006d) as well as CLC documents and practices found there are many overlaps between the UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) theory, collaborative learning (CL), and the CLC framework and therefore, the CLC framework offers a viable and complementary process and structure for the delivery of education for sustainable development and collaborative learning.

Each one of the above references discusses the importance of fostering a collaborative learning relationship, and a supportive environment that is characterized with trust, respect, loyalty, equal distribution of power and authority in order to create synergy between group members whereby the emphasis shifts from a focus on individuals to a focus on creating collectively what could not be created alone.

Knowledge creation and exchange that recognizes and builds upon existing capacity is another underlying common theme across the ESD and Collaborative Learning (CL) theories and CLC framework.

An inclusive, participatory and holistic consideration of individual and collective needs, values, perspectives, actions, beliefs, attitudes of traditional, indigenous and expert knowledge are all welcomed and respected in the learning process in a desire to construct new knowledge from past and present experiences of group members. The new knowledge created is dynamic, and nonlinear, responsive to the evolving knowledge base and availability of resources, embraces multiple ways of knowing and respects and preserves the achievements of the past and prior knowledge.

ESD, CL and CLC practice are grounded in a desire to find common ground, a shared goal or purpose that is community based, locally relevant and culturally appropriate and that encourages a balance of learner rights and responsibilities. Participants create a learning environment whereby the group creates an open and constructive process that allows for cycles of action and reflection with an emphasis on critically questioning and summarizing progress towards the desired common goal, identifying and filling gaps in knowledge and resources along the way.

Being a researcher/educator who was familiar with and had a deep attachment to the field site helped in terms of accountability and the level of commitment required to respect the community rhythms in an effort to authentically re-present the field site experience. However, it was also this deep attachment to the field site that created a hindrance to the research in that I knowingly pushed the limits of the traditional academic research timeframe in a determined effort to respect my internal sense of research

integrity. It was this internal sense of research integrity, which would not allow me to use the field site for my own ends at the expense of the research field site process. Research for research sake, which deepens the understanding of theory and practice at the expense of the rhythms of the subject of study, or that yields an understanding of the subject that is useful only in terms of the researcher's ends seems unethical. As a novice researcher, I considered myself a learner in the field site; one that was seeking a collaborative learning relationship with participants grounded in the elements suggested by Saltiel (1998) these being, "a shared goal or purpose, trust, respect, and loyalty" (p.8). Being familiar with the field site community made it much easier to establish these elements with participants, allowing me as a researcher to explore the outcome of an education for sustainable development program (Community Learning Centre) in this rural community.

CHAPTER 4 The Story of Netagamiou CLC: A Catalyst for Positive Change

This chapter will present the main findings of the action research project based on the evaluation process of the Netagamiou CLC conducted from 2009-2010. First, a short introduction, then the timeline of the implementation of the CLC and then the actual findings and lessons learnt from the evaluation process will be presented.

4.1 Netagamiou CLC Research and Development

Much consideration was given to the potential role and impact of a Community Learning Centre during the CLC proposal-writing phase. While many vital and interesting projects and programs existed and new ones were being developed, it was noted that many citizens were unaware of the diverse resources available. It was believed that a Community Learning Centre would increase public awareness of the available programs and services and result in increased access to and engagement in these services/resources. It was also anticipated that a Community Learning Centre would play an important role in helping to coordinate the existing resources in our community and plan for future sustainable development. In short, the school set its sights on becoming a catalyst for positive change through the development of a community school approach.

During the exploration phase, one key action undertaken to achieve this positive change was to mobilize the school and community at large to support the development of an integrated, collaborative, holistic approach to lifelong learning and sustainable community development. The initiation, planning, and implementation phases focused on

identifying and marshalling the assets and resources necessary to bridge lifelong learning and community development philosophy, policy and practice gaps.

In a rapidly changing local and global community, the community learning centre initiative has helped develop the much needed infrastructures (educational, technological, and human resources) to allow a diversification of the school, making it literally and symbolically the learning hub of the community. It has helped students and adults to enhance their skill base in line with the socio-economic needs for future sustainable community development. The community learning centre initiative has acted as a catalyst for positive change lifting our English minority language community out of obscurity as an isolated, remote village and helped place it on a level playing field in terms of accessing resources and services, thereby assuring its development as a vibrant, thriving English speaking community.

4.2 A Catalyst of Positive Change

The role of the Netagamiou School has evolved beyond the traditional mission of a school, whose aim is to instruct, qualify and socialize, into a Community Learning Centre where community partners support the school in its mission and the community school contributes more significantly to community development. The Netagamiou CLC principal, teachers, staff, students, parents, partners and the community at large have worked hard to cultivate a culture of consciousness, confidence, commitment, capacity, and collaboration as corner stones of the desired positive change. It is important to explicitly note that a CLC is defined as “a formal partnership of one or more

schools/centres, public or private agencies and community groups, working together for the benefit of students, families and community” (CLC Framework, 2006). The title “Community Learning Centre” refers to the traditional school *as well as* to the comprehensive network of partners that have joined Netagamiou School on the journey to become a CLC.

Depopulation is a concern that presents a very real threat to the capacity of this Anglophone community’s survival. The reluctant departure of adults, youth and their families to urban centres as well as other provinces as they pursue academic and employment goals contributes to an increasing loss of critical mass. In 2007, Statistics Canada confirmed that, “In remote rural areas located farther from urban centres, the population remained nearly the same as in 2001 (-0.1%)... The lack of growth in such areas is often due to the fact that young adults move to metropolitan areas to pursue their education or find a job” (p.37). Although this statistical decrease in population may seem negligible at a micro level within individual remote communities, the loss of a three or four person family can be socially and economically devastating, an impact that is not adequately represented in the Census reports.

The Netagamiou CLC has worked hard to increase consciousness of the students and the community at large that “we don’t have to leave to live” by increasing awareness about the diverse educational and economic opportunities available and by equipping students and adults with the knowledge and skills required to not only survive but thrive in their native community. The goal of increasing consciousness has been to encourage increased community confidence and commitment to remain in or return to the region, as well as to nurture a propensity for engaging in entrepreneurial initiatives that could

support economic and community development. A few expatriates have returned to Chevery in the past four years and an increased engagement in school/community based initiatives has been seen among youth and adults living in our community.

The Netagamiou CLC has also undertaken a role to cultivate a culture of capacity, encouraging an increased awareness of the numerous and often unrecognized existing capacities. The Netagamiou CLC has endeavoured to identify and promote the indigenous knowledge unique to the community that could be used and shared with other communities; fostering a capacity building approach that capitalizes upon the local knowledge base. A number of strategies have been used to build the individual capacity of students, enriching the curriculum through technology, and community-based and collaborative learning with teachers. Adult learning has also been addressed to encourage parents and adults to further increase their capacity by taking advantage of formal and non-formal lifelong learning opportunities.

Another integral role of the Netagamiou Community Learning Centre has been to cultivate a culture of collaboration based on a solid foundation of interdependence and reciprocity, preparing students and adults for the future as active citizens in the local and global community. The Netagamiou CLC has helped build multi-directional, reciprocal learning relationships and knowledge exchange opportunities between i.e. students, teachers, parents, and the people from the immediate community; between the Chevery community and other communities of the Lower North Shore; and between Chevery and other provincial, national and international communities.

The Netagamiou CLC has used the MELS Quebec Community Learning Centre Framework for Action as a map on its journey to become a CLC and true catalyst of

positive change in the promotion of student success and sustainable community development. Following this Framework for Action, the Netagamiou CLC partnership network created the Netagamiou CLC vision and mission statement founded on input gathered from community members (including participants as young as five and seniors as old as 76 years of age) during the 2007 CLC focus group meetings. The Vision and Mission Statement reproduced in the next paragraphs has been an important touchstone for the CLC since 2007, helping to guide the development, implementation and evaluation of services.

“Netagamiou CLC Vision: The Netagamiou CLC’s vision is dedicated to supporting and promoting lifelong learning, growth, activity, services and exchanges that meet the diverse needs of students, the whole community and all partners involved.

Mission: The Netagamiou School/CLC strives to be a catalyst for positive change in students, families and the community by helping to cultivate a culture of lifelong learning, collaboration and capacity. Our mission is to:

1. Equip students and adults with the support, knowledge and competencies required to be actively engaged citizens and to make healthy and balanced life choices for academic and personal success.
2. Support the expansion and development of infrastructures and services to meet social, cultural, and economic needs as well as the sustainable development of our community.
3. Support the collaboration between the school, businesses, community groups and various government agencies to achieve a collaborative community development plan and to use existing resources as efficiently and effectively as possible.
4. Increase parent involvement with the school to facilitate academic and extracurricular service delivery, which will support optimal student success.
5. Establish a self sustaining CLC that will continue to enhance opportunities for our community.

Core Beliefs & Values: The Netagamiou CLC believes that...

1. Healthy family environments are crucial to community success
2. Learning is a lifelong process

3. The strength and vitality of the community depends on informed and engaged citizens
4. Creating leadership opportunities for all strengthens our community
5. Investing in our youth leads to happier, healthier and more successful communities in the future
6. When organizations work collaboratively and share resources the goal of sustainable development can be more effectively achieved

Purpose: The purpose of the Netagamiou School/CLC is to...

1. Facilitate access to quality lifelong learning opportunities for all members of the community
2. Provide a support system that contributes to the growth and development of all stakeholders.
3. Increase awareness and appreciation of the unique culture, heritage and natural resources of our community
4. Enhance opportunities for students, parents and community members through the establishment of reciprocal partnerships locally, regionally, provincially and globally.
5. Establish a comprehensive and integrated development plan that meets the needs of stakeholders.

Guiding Principles: The Netagamiou School/CLC is committed to...

1. Supporting the holistic development of youth and adult learners
2. Creating a culture that is open and receptive to innovative ideas and approaches
3. Being reciprocal, responding to the needs of *all* partners;
4. A grassroots approach to building our community
5. Recognizing and respecting diversity
6. Coherence from philosophy through to policy and to daily practice

Expected Results: Netagamiou CLC expects the following results

1. Active, engaged and productive citizens.
2. Increased collaboration for sustainable community development.
3. Improved access to and quality of services in relation to education, health, and economic development.
4. Increased parent and school collaboration to support optimal student success.”

Netagamiou School/CLC Structure: The Netagamiou School/CLC was planned as a single site structure (Netagamiou School) that takes an integrative, holistic approach to service delivery, whereby existing structures are transformed so that the whole school becomes a CLC. The CLC endeavors to share support and resources with other

Commission scolaire du Littoral CLCs as well as other Lower North Shore (LNS) communities as much as resources permit.

Partners & Supporters: The Netagamiou School/CLC developed a dynamic Partnership Network from the beginning that focused on bringing a wide range of partners and supporters together (such as government, local, regional, provincial, organizations as well as individuals: students volunteers, parents) for the support and mutual benefit of our school, community, and each other. Nineteen (19) formal partnership agreements and memorandums of understanding have been signed and more than one hundred and fifteen (115) organizations have offered support, resources, services, etc. to CLC related initiatives as of the date of this thesis manuscript finalization. The level of engagement of each partner varies throughout the year according to their capacity, interest in the initiative, as well as their needs and those of the school/community. Partners serve on the partnership table, the local steering and evaluation committees, as well as other program based committees.

Netagamiou School/CLC (Theory of Change) Action Plan: The Netagamiou School/CLC (Theory of Change) developed from the 2007 Action Plan was completed in 2008 and has been actively used as a service delivery point of reference. Services and programs were further developed, delivered, validated, and evaluated accordingly with the Netagamiou School/CLC community and partners.

4.3 A Brief History of the Development and Implementation of the Netagamiou CLC from 2007 to 2010

January - June 2007

The Netagamiou CLC was officially opened on January 8, 2007. Steps one to three in developing a sustainable CLC were accomplished during the first year. The school and community were mobilized to host a CLC launch, and students, teachers, community, school board and CLC Provincial Resource Team (PRT) were invited to actively participate in the launch by sharing examples of lifelong learning, knowledge and skills. Awareness about the Netagamiou CLC was promoted through radio, local newspapers, community communications, word of mouth, etc. The videoconference system was installed and a central space was designated for the Netagamiou CLC office on the ground floor of the school. Students and teachers, parents, community organizations and businesses were invited to the Netagamiou CLC room for presentations about the CLC initiative and to participate in focus group sessions.

Letters of introduction and invitation to partner with Netagamiou CLC were sent by the Commission scolaire du Littoral Administrator during the winter of 2007. The CLC Coordinator held meetings with potential partners, parents, teachers, and community group members on an ongoing basis to explain the CLC initiative, gather information about their respective organizations, identify how the CLC initiative could benefit each person/stakeholder on an individual and collective level (what's in it for me/you/us), and answer questions.

A diverse partnership table was established with representation from the school (Principal, Governing Board, teachers, students), the Commission scolaire du Littoral (a

school board representative and an Adult Education staff), local organizations and businesses, as well as regional and provincial organizations mandated to provide services to the community. The Netagamiou CLC partnership table held meetings over a period of 3 months to collaboratively create a “Vision and Mission” statement. During this time the partnership table explored what CLCs look like in other communities and used this as a basis to create a preliminary image of CLCs, then made the decision as a group to proceed with the development of the Netagamiou CLC. The CLC Coordinator led the partnership table through a mapping of the school/community needs and assets, which was then used to develop a vision and mission statement. The partnership table worked together to prepare a summary of priority areas to address as well as to determine the types of programs, which would bring the desired results.

Partners were invited to become actively involved in the development and delivery of programs and services. A program/service wish list was created and each partner was invited to identify what involvement or resources they could offer towards the development/delivery of these services/program. Some partners signed on for various committees who continued to work together over the summer for the implementation of some of the first programs, while others continued in an advisory capacity. The year 2007 ended with a draft action plan, which encompassed all the priorities identified and intended results in terms of impacts, outcomes, outputs and activities. The majority of the partners signed and returned partnership agreements.

2007-2008

Although the first year included the allocation of resources and the beginning of service delivery for some programs, implementation continued in year 2 and consideration was given to building capacity among the school, community and partners, as more programs and services were further developed and refined. Efforts were made to identify and put in place mechanisms to plan and monitor service delivery and capacity building strategies. Continued outreach to new partners and supporters for various Netagamiou CLC initiatives and programs was undertaken. The Netagamiou CLC worked with, was supported by and received contributions from local, regional, provincial, and national partners and supporters. The “Netagamiou CLC Vision and Mission” statement was used as a touchstone and key guide in the development of a comprehensive theory of change, action plan, programs and services. The draft action plan developed in 2007 was further refined into a one page “Theory of Change” which summarized the short term outputs (2007-2009), medium term outcomes (2010-2011) and long term impacts (2012+) anticipated by the Partnership Network. Also listed in this document were the primary programs being developed and delivered through the CLC Partnership Network in an effort to achieve the identified goals and objectives. Considerable work was also done to begin collecting and analyzing baseline data through the Tell Them From Me (TTFM) online student survey, student written surveys, phone surveys for adults as well as a community asset mapping. The year ended with a comprehensive end of the year report to stakeholders.

2008-2009

In 2008-2009 the Netagamiou CLC entered the “Implementation and Evaluation Phase”. Although some implementation and formative evaluation strategies had already been started in 2007-2008, the CLC shifted into full implementation in 2008-2009. A growing number of contributors (some official partners, some informal supporters) became increasingly involved in service delivery within the school (in class), through extracurricular activities, as well as in the community through the Netagamiou CLC.

In 2008-2009, an analysis of underlying assumptions driving the Netagamiou “Theory of change” was completed. In addition, the existing capacity to deliver was analyzed in terms of assets, gaps and capacity building strategies. The purpose of this analysis was to engage in a conscious and comprehensive analysis of the Netagamiou CLCs development process and sustainability. It was also in response to feedback shared by the independent researcher attached to the Netagamiou CLC who brought forward questions about CLC sustainability in relation to capacity building within the school and community.

2009-2010

In 2009-2010, the Netagamiou CLC focused on solidifying the long-term sustainability of the community learning centre as well as the evaluation of the first three years of development. A number of programs and services were developed with partners that supported the capacity building of local organizations to take the lead on i.e. arts, culture, heritage and nature based initiatives among others. Strategic planning sessions were held with local partners that helped these partners and community members learn how to develop a strategic plan as well as how to put a strategic plan into action.

Throughout the three-year development phase of the CLC emphasis was always put on dovetailing the interests of the school and community so that youth were always at the centre of the focus whether in an academic or community based forum. Among a number of program examples is the Arts & Sustainability Development Initiative, which holistically responded to the identified needs of both youth and adults in areas such as curriculum support and community based learning through a number of the CLC program areas i.e. Literacy, Youth Development, Arts & Culture, Lifelong Learning & Knowledge Exchange, Partnership Development & CLC Sustainability, as well as Entrepreneurship, Employability & Life Skills. Communication about the happenings of the CLC within the school and the community and to the partnership network continued to be both a priority and a challenge. The CLC made regular written reports at each governing board meeting and shared these reports with partners via email, by sending the reports home, and on the CLC bulletin board.

4.4 CLC Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential and valuable part of the development of any initiative. For the purposes of the development of a community learning centre it has allowed those involved to review, reflect and assess the overall impact of the Netagamiou Community Learning Centre on the school and community; as well as how needs were identified and addressed in relation to youth and community development, literacy, healthy lifestyles, partnership, arts & culture, and sustainability. Another important component of the Netagamiou CLC evaluation is to determine the degree of participation of all

stakeholders in CLC programs and services. Last but not least, the Netagamiou CLC evaluation will help to identify and analyze the benefits, outcomes, and potential areas of improvement for CLC programs and services.

Key CLC Evaluation Questions

For the purposes of the CLC project report, each CLC is expected to describe the progress in meeting 3 key objectives: a) development of school-community partnerships, b) student engagement and success, and c) access to educational services and lifelong learning for English-speaking communities. Below is a sample of questions that were used to evaluate the attainment of these three objectives.

Development of School-Community Partnerships

1. What partnerships have been developed with community organizations and what purposes do they serve?
2. How have the partnerships benefited the community in and outside the school?
3. How have the partnerships changed the role of the school?

Access to Educational Opportunities and Lifelong learning

1. In what ways has the CLC promoted lifelong learning among students and the broader community?
2. What has been the level of participation of students and community members in these activities?
3. What have been some of the outcomes of these activities in terms of benefits for community members?

Student Engagement, Success and Well being

1. In what ways and to what extent have students participated in CLC related initiatives?
2. In what ways have students benefited from CLC related initiatives?

In addition to the above questions, the Netagamiou CLC identified a number of specific evaluation questions aimed at exploring the achievements of the Netagamiou

CLC outputs from 2007 to 2010 in relation to the attainment of the above three pan-CLC objectives. A comprehensive evaluation plan was developed providing a detailed data collection source in response to the following research questions:

1. To what extent and in what ways are students/youth, parents and adults participating in CLC related initiatives introduced in the past three years?
2. What do students/youth, parents, and adults perceive as the benefits of these initiatives?
3. What new knowledge and skills have students/youth, parents, and adults acquired?
4. In what ways do students/youth, parents, and adults think that programs could be improved?
5. Are existing programs reaching all students/youth who might benefit from them?
6. Are existing programs involving all of the teachers/parents/adults and partners who might benefit from and/or contribute to them?
7. What strategies can be implemented to engage more students/youth, teachers, parents, adults and partners?
8. What has been the impact of the partnerships on student success and the CLC sustainability?
9. What is the nature of the partnerships?
10. How have the partnerships changed the role of the school?

Process and Outcome Evaluation

As suggested by the CLC Provincial Resource Team (PRT), *process evaluation* is as important as *outcome evaluation* in that it allows us to explore and evaluate not only *what* we did, but also *how* we did what we did. The partnership relationships, the type and extent of collaboration, the creation of a positive environment that will positively impact and ensure a climate for student academic and personal success and community development, conversations with key partners to identify how the partnership has advanced the partner's mandate, are all key variables to consider.

The outcome evaluation results pertaining to student success and community development have been identified in the evaluation framework for some of the Netagamiou CLC programs. Some of the data has been collected and other data

collection will be required before a complete analysis can be conducted and the findings reinvested into service delivery as part of the reflective practice and continuous quality improvement cycle.

Data Sources and Methodology

Diverse and multiple data collection methods were selected (*written, online and phone surveys, interviews and focus group meetings, analysis of secondary data*) to ensure a broad and comprehensive evaluation base and to promote a triangulation of results. Data were collected from three years of Netagamiou CLC records, surveys and reports (2007-2010).

From January 2007-June 2008, CLC data was collected from primary sources such as: students, parents, teachers, community members and partners using various methods (online student and partner surveys, community phone surveys, written student, teacher and community surveys, focus group meetings by the CLC Coordinator as well as a third party research team as well as i.e. attendance and videoconference records). Data collected included representation from 100% of the student body and 75% of the teaching staff, as well as from the school/governing board and school board administration. Data were also collected from parents, community members and partners. Secondary sources were also collected and analyzed (community development forum results, results from community organization surveys and reports, as well as school and community records, flyers, communiqués, statistics).

The data collected from primary and secondary sources were analyzed to map assets and gaps and then synthesized to identify priorities to be addressed by the Netagamiou

CLC partnership network. The priorities were presented to the partnership table that validated the findings and further refined the priorities into a measurable action plan. In May 2009 an independent third party conducted an indepth case study research to explore the development of the Netagamiou CLC. The data results were reported back to the Netagamiou CLC in the fall of 2009.

An Evaluation Framework Committee was established in February 2009, which included the following Partnership Table representatives: the Principal, a teacher, an Adult Education representative, a community partner representative, a teacher/parent, and the CLC Development Agent. Although a student representative was recommended, no student was recruited due to the time commitment that would be required and that would remove the student from the classroom. In 2010, another community member was added as an Evaluation Committee member.

The Evaluation Committee identified five (5) areas of evaluation priority based on priority needs of the theory of change and the availability of measurable data for evaluation purposes. The CLC Coordinator worked with the CLC PRT to identify key evaluation questions and indicators, as well as data collection sources, methods, frequency, time frame, analysis and reporting processes.

A concerted effort was made to work more closely with partners in collecting data, and to dovetail evaluation processes where possible and appropriate. A constant comparative method has been used in the evaluation of the Netagamiou CLC progress since January 2007. A repeated cycle of data collection, analysis, synthesis reporting, and adjustment of practice has been implemented to ensure that the programs and services developed are reflective of and responsive to the needs of stakeholders. This

was accomplished by being conscious of underlying assumptions, promoting capacity building strategies, and securing/using resources as effectively and efficiently as possible.

General CLC Areas/Initiatives Evaluated

Although the Netagamiou CLC has developed numerous programs and services in its Theory of Change and action plan, the following programs were selected for comprehensive evaluation: Literacy, Youth Development, Health and Active Living, Arts & Culture, Lifelong Learning & Knowledge Exchange, Partnership Development & CLC Sustainability.

Evaluation Framework Timeline

The Evaluation Committee identified the following evaluation timeline, but the majority of the evaluation work was completed from December 2009-June 2010. A broad data source list was used for this thesis (submitted in July 2010) as well as the final report of the committee submitted in June 2010.

February 2009:	Prepared draft evaluation framework and enter data into framework
May 2009:	CLC Development Agent gathered data from existing sources, Data collection with independent research team for case study
May 2009:	Evaluation Committee analyzed data and the Evaluation Plan to assist with gathering of remaining required data
May/June 2009:	Report data: CLC Coordinator finalized report with Evaluation Committee (deferred to June 2010)
June 2009:	Share final report with partners and stakeholders and finalize thesis writing (July 2010)
Sept. 2010:	Review and reflection of Evaluation Report with stakeholders

4.5 Analysis of the CLC Findings

This report will offer an analysis of the results from data collected for the key evaluation questions of the first three years of the Netgamiou CLC. The report will also highlight a few of the Netgamiou CLC programs to illustrate the results in relation to the development of school-community partnerships, access to educational opportunities and lifelong learning, and student engagement and success.

4.5.1 Development of School-Community Partnerships

The Netgamiou CLC has developed a dynamic Partnership Network from the beginning that focused on bringing a wide range of partners together. The Partnership Network relationship is characterized by respect, collaboration, reciprocity, as well as many other shared values and goals, with the understanding that by working together we can achieve much more than we can alone. The Netgamiou CLC partnerships, programs and services developed are grounded in our shared core beliefs and values and reflect our CLC's purpose, to ensure that we reach our collectively desired results. The Netgamiou CLC Partnership Network has a revolving door that's always open. The level of engagement of each partner varies according to many things, including the partner's capacity, the fit of an initiative with the partner's mandate, the benefits for the partner, as well as the needs of the school/community.

A significant increase (352%) of community involvement in school (and community) has been found through the data analysis. More contributors (from 32 in 2006 to 115

partners-supporters in 2010) are offering complementary services and resources to the school and community than before. More partnerships are being developed on an ongoing basis including one between Concordia University School of Extended Learning, Lower North Shore regional and local partners, the Quebec CLC Network, and the Commission scolaire du Littoral Community Learning Centre network and schools.

Improved Planning, Coordination, and Management of Available Resources

Improved planning, coordination, and management of available resources has been achieved by partners working together to improve coordination of service delivery and to maximize the management of available resources in order to better respond to needs of school/community. Examples of this include the Eau-Naturelle Discovery Camp a 25 year old summer camp, which was reorganized in 2007 by partners such as the Chevery Municipal Local Committee, Chevery Sports Committee, the Municipalité de la Côte Nord du Golfe Saint Laurent, the Quebec Labrador Foundation and the Coasters Association with an emphasis on science, nature, culture and wellbeing, following feedback from students and parents and in consultation with Netagamiou School teachers.

The Netagamiou Municipal/School Library is another excellent example of the benefits of improved management of available resources through increased coordination and by partners working together. After more than two years of research, development and planning, the Netagamiou Municipal/School Library was inaugurated and a full time Library and Cultural Activities Animator started working in January 2010. This was accomplished in partnership between the Netagamiou School/CLC, which offered library space, electricity, office space, caretaking services and consultation services on new book

and literacy program selections and the Municipality which covered the insurance costs of the public library collection, book rotation transport costs, and made a financial contribution to the salary of the librarian. The Netagmiou School primary and secondary teachers offered consultation and support for the selection of library books and activities. The Chevery Municipal Local Committee also offered a financial contribution to the salary of the librarian for the public evening hours. Tourism and Culture Chevery (a non profit association with a cultural mandate) became the promoter for an application to Emploi Quebec and was responsible for the payroll while providing training and support to the librarian. A Chevery Senior Citizen's Club board member volunteered as a reading leader and mentor to students in the monthly reading program for 0-5 year olds. Together, representatives from this team of partners comprised the Library Committee guiding the partnership and service delivery development processes. A team of parent and student volunteers also contributed significantly to service delivery through the Born to Read and Sleepy Time Story Hour programs, the latter of which received a MELS award in 2009 as one of the top five literacy programs in Anglophone schools across Quebec. The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations and The Centre For Literacy were instrumental partners in expanding the permanent library collection through donations of new and gently used books. The Commission Scolaire du Littoral Adult Education Centre offered valuable expertise, training and support to adults and parents through their "Show me The Way" emergent literacy program for 0-5 year olds rounding out the coordination and management of existing resources for the benefit of youth and the community.

In all of these cases the school has opened to the community offering space for activities, services, programs, office space, etc. for free or very nominal fees in return for support and services to the school and community.

The Netagamiou CLC has not gathered any data to date from stakeholders that would demonstrate the level of stakeholder understanding about CLC concepts and the roles stakeholders play in developing a common vision for lifelong learning and community development. However, the number and diversity of stakeholders involved in the development and operation of the Netagamiou CLC over the past three years has increased significantly. The Netagamiou CLC has established a strong, supportive, and diverse CLC Partnership Network, from which members serve on the partnership table as well as a number of program and project based CLC committees. The Netagamiou CLC partnership network has worked collaboratively to develop a dynamic and flexible CLC operational framework. This has been accomplished through partnership table and committee meetings, as well as by informal exchanges and networking between partner organizations.

We Need to be Informed in Order to Be Better Prepared for the Future

A communication plan to disseminate information about the CLC, school, and community related issues was a topic of concern that emerged from the focus group meetings in 2007. A number of people expressed concern about difficulty accessing timely and accurate information about topics pertaining to the community and region. In 2007, the Chevery News newspaper was established through the Netagamiou CLC in an effort to improve this situation, by providing a forum for Netgamiou CLC partners to

share information of interest to the Netagamiou CLC community. This quickly expanded to include information about and from other communities on the Lower North Shore and developed an email list serving more than 400 members from the Lower North Shore, expatriates as far away as Mexico, Mississippi and Alberta as well as others interested in the Lower North Shore. In November 2007, the Netagamiou CLC mobilized a Lower North Shore (LNS) wide meeting with the support of the Centre local de développement (CLD) de la Basse Côte Nord to discuss the growing demand for a Lower North Shore print newspaper. The LNS Communications Task Force was established and a six-member task force with representatives of the larger group of stakeholders was created comprised of the organizations from the region. As of June 2010, a nonprofit organization has been established and plans are actively underway to launch a LNS regional community newspaper in 2010.

The Netagamiou CLC has made regular reports to stakeholders (teachers, students, parents and partners) by email, through the Netagamiou CLC bulletin board, in print and through presentations at local, regional and province wide meetings. The goal of the ongoing communication about the Netagamiou CLC initiatives has been to ensure that all stakeholders remain aware of and engaged with the happenings of the CLC. Having so many CLC committees has created a challenge to ensure that stakeholders are aware of the various projects and programs. Partners have been asked repeatedly over the three years, during case study interviews, through surveys, and one on one conversations about their level of satisfaction with the degree of communication. To date stakeholders have responded affirmatively, and have reported that their requests for more information have always been addressed when needed. Sixty three percent (63%)

of parents who responded to a CLC survey reported that they feel the CLC has resulted in increased English services to the community.

4.5.2 Access to Educational and Lifelong Learning Opportunities

Increased Access to Diverse Lifelong Learning/Leisure Experiences

The Netagamiou CLC partnership network has developed a number of programs and services in response to the needs identified by the school and community for increased access to diverse lifelong learning/leisure experiences. Among these are videoconference sessions with groups such as the Canadian Space Agency, the Royal Botanical Gardens, Champlain College, children from other schools in New York, across Canada and the Lower North Shore, Ann Harbour Hands on Museum, the Montreal Alouettes, the YMCA's of Quebec, and the Smithsonian Institute to name just a few. In addition, students from Netagamiou School have participated in a variety of community based learning opportunities such as the History of Chevery Lecture Series, whereby seniors/adults from the community helped students research Chevery historical landmarks. Students have participated in exchange trips with students from Ontario; they have also had the opportunity to participate in local, regional and provincial learning opportunities such as Family Literacy Week activities, Netagamiou Career Fair, and the Chasse au Trésor Francofolies. The students' exposure to new learning opportunities and situations has helped increase student awareness of the opportunities that exist, reinforcing that there is a place, a job, and things of interest for them that they might not have imagined living in an isolated community. It is hoped that the experiences gained

through CLC related initiatives will support the students in choosing the right path for their academic and life success.

Videoconferencing – A Window on the World

In keeping with the Netagamiou School Success Plan, videoconferences that support curriculum enrichment are available to all teachers. Each year, teachers were provided a “videoconference wish list” form and invited to identify videoconference topics that could support their courses to be covered during the school year. The Development Agent used various content provider (companies that provide videoconference sessions) search engines to find potential videoconferences that would meet teachers’ needs. The MELS Quebec Provincial Resource Team has also been very helpful in researching and/or recruiting videoconference conference providers. A CLC search engine has been established on the LEARN website, which may be used by teachers to review the videoconference that teachers in other CLC schools have participated in. Each videoconference is described according to the MELS reform broad areas of learning, cross curricular competencies and subject specific competencies. Teachers are asked to provide feedback about the videoconference session including activities engaged in prior to, during and after the conference as well as any recommendations they have for content providers and other teachers. The data collected about videoconferences are registered on the LEARN website and will become a valuable teacher databank.

Secondary 1,2,3 students participated in a videoconference with an Art History professor from a well known Quebec Cegep. The teacher shared the following comments about the value of the videoconference for her students.

“[The professor] was so knowledgeable about the topic; she had info that students wouldn’t just find in a book. She gave info on background of the paintings, for example: what was happening in that area at that time, why certain subjects were traditional meaning a subject that all artists painted and why some paintings were modern for that time. She sent a course package in advance of the presentation, which was very helpful. This videoconference helped meet the curriculum requirements because the presentation included so much information about the artist. The students then used the knowledge gained to paint their own VanGogh paintings. She introduced us to paintings that we might not have covered. Plus they got to meet and learn from a professional who studied Art History”, introducing them to another art career”.

Numerous educational and lifelong learning opportunities have also been offered to adults since 2007, such as the LEAP (Local Employability Access Program) program with Carleton University, the adult healthy living exercise program through Adult Education Services, as well as a number of videoconference based sessions such as but not limited to strategic planning, fundraising, etc.

In 2010, the Netagamiou CLC worked with the Mecatina and St. Paul’s CLCs to create a videoconference registration form to help both the CLCs and partners in coordinating requests for videoconferencing services.

In addition to distance based education sessions, Netagamiou students have also engaged in a variety of in class and community based learning opportunities. Some examples are discussed here in relation to the outcomes of the Netagamiou CLC action plan and broad program areas.

Health Education and Promotion Services

A Health & Active Living Program was established through which health education and promotion services have been developed and implemented. A number of physical activities already existed such as the Netagamiou School extracurricular sports program

(soccer, volleyball, track and field, cross country team, and a community based youth hockey club). These activities have been run primarily by dedicated volunteers and successfully engaged 100% of the primary students as well as the majority of secondary students. During the development of the Netagamiou CLC action plan the need for increased emphasis on health education and health promotion was identified. The Netagamiou CLC became an active participant in the annual CLC Health Week through the Quebec CLC network. This annual CLC health week offered health education on a variety of topics such as healthy eating, physical activity, and drug awareness to name a few. The 5/30 Challenge was another annual health initiative implemented in the school and community by the Coasters Association and the CHSSN under its Health Prevention and Promotion Program. The anti-bullying Pink T-Shirt Day has become an annual favourite among students and teachers. The Netagamiou School has adopted this event, which was started and sponsored by the Coasters Association in 2009, and students became the lead animators in 2009 and 2010.

According to attendance records sixty-eight percent (68%) of Secondary 1-5 students and one hundred percent (100%) of the Pre Kindergarten to Grade 6 students have attended student extracurricular sports programs. Fourteen percent (14%) of secondary 1-5 students attended the Healthy Life Skills program implemented from 2008-2009. One hundred percent (100%) of Netagamiou School students and staff participated in the anti-bullying events organized by the Healthy Life Skills student leaders in 2009 and a Netagamiou House Team in 2010. In terms of adult engagement in health education and promotion activities and according to CLC volunteer records, 91% (29/32) of parents have attended sporting activities that their child(ren) are registered in and 53% (29/55) of

parents have volunteered for healthy and active living program activities serving their child(ren). In 2008-2009, a Healthy Living Adult Exercise class was offered in response to parent requests to the Netagamiou CLC. Twenty-two percent (12/55) of parents (*all moms*) and 24 (*non parent and senior*) adults registered for this class.

Some of the benefits most frequently cited by students as being achieved through healthy & active living program include: having access to many sporting activities, fun, improve sports skills, “help get things off your mind”. Netagamiou students are very engaged in sports (93% of secondary students), some have reported learning new skills in after school program. Forty partners have contributed to the Health and Active Living Program over the past three years and four new health and active living programs have been added: Quebec en Forme, Anti-Bullying Pink Shirt Day, Dove Sleepover for Self-Esteem and the Healthy Life Skills programs but students have repeatedly asked for more physical activities and sports (TTFM surveys 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010) including swimming lessons, gymnastics, more PE classes, ping pong, Wii stations. The benefits, new knowledge and skills acquired and suggested improvements from parents and adults still need to be evaluated.

Parent Education and Support

A Parent Education and Support Program was developed offering activities and support services designed to strengthen the family capacity to help their child’s development. Parent involvement opportunities in children’s education and school environment have always been a priority for the Netagamiou School. An active Governing Board has successfully recruited many parent volunteers over the years to

assist with many school events. Parents are also active participants at school activities such as the annual Student Christmas Concert and the end of the year ceremonies to name a few. During the past three years parents have also contributed to their children's education by volunteering their time as tutors for the homework assistance program in 2007, as parent leaders in the Born to Read Program and as parent volunteers in the Netagamiou School Canteen. Parents have been involved in the school environment in a number of ways including school trips i.e. the annual soccer tournament / trip between Netagamiou and Harrington Schools whereby parents drive their children to and from the tournament by snowmobile. Parents have also volunteered to help teachers chaperone other school trips such as an exchange between Netagamiou and another school in the municipality. Parents remain actively involved in their children's activities in the summer at the Eau-Naturelle Discovery Camp, assisting with the camp committee, field trips, opening and closing ceremonies. A significant number of secondary students come from two other communities and live in residence during the school year. Due to the lack of a land route and the exorbitant costs of airfare, parents of students from the feeder schools in Harrington Harbour and Kegaska are not able to engage in many of the Netagamiou School environment activities. They do however offer significant support at a distance by serving on the Governing Board and through fundraising efforts for school events.

Family support services have included the Just for Parents education sessions, which were offered throughout the school year in partnership with the CSL Adult Education Centre, LEARN Quebec as well as the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations. Both face to face and distance based education sessions have been offered;

however these have not been well attended by parents. Anecdotal reports from parents suggest that there is a good informal parent peer support network in place and that parents, who are actively engaged in leading or participating in activities with their children (i.e. parents are volunteer Scout leaders, soccer and hockey coaches, bring their children to the monthly Sleepy Time Story Hour, etc.), prioritize their time towards volunteering for activities/events their children are involved in versus attending parent education sessions.

Parents in Chevery mobilized partners in September 2008 to develop a family support service that would help manage work – family schedules. The Chevery Sports Committee accepted to be the promoter for a project and with the engagement of three other local and regional organizations supported a group of five parents to develop a proposal that was submitted to the Ministère de la famille et des Aînés under the “Support programs for projects issued by the community in order to facilitate family and work”. After a number of meetings the committee identified a proposal for a drop in centre service to offer before and after school as well as lunch time supervision for school children aged 4-12. The project was accepted and awarded two years of funding to pay an animator as well as for some equipment and operational expenses. The Drop in Centre opened on March 23, 2009, located at the Netagamio School who offered the school kitchen as the drop in centre site and office space for the animator. Children attending the drop in centre also have access to the gym, adjacent to the kitchen. Local community members, community organizations and businesses have been very supportive with their contributions to this initiative.

A full time animator position was created and this service has been available on a year round basis including pedagogical days, some holidays, and the summer. The Drop In Centre opening hours vary depending on the time of the year, for example on regular school days it is open from 7:45-9:15 a.m. and from 12:00-5:15 p.m. On pedagogical days and holidays the opening hours are normally 7:45 a.m. – 5:15 p.m. From 2009-2010, an average of 7-8 children frequented the drop in centre each day, and at times children who are visiting from outside the community have used the drop in centre services. Parents pay a user fee to access the service and steps have been taken since the beginning to support the Drop in Centre's long term sustainability. Parents have reported that the drop in centre service makes juggling family and work life much easier, in particular for Pre Kindergarten (who attend school only from 9:15-12:00) and younger primary students who are participating in after school programs. Prior to the drop in centre, parents were car-pooling and juggling trips between the school and the baby sitter/home day care, then back to school at 3:00 p.m. for extracurricular activities and clubs.

Employability and Life Skills Development

Numerous employability and life skills development activities have been developed over the past three years for both students and adults. Some have been programs that were delivered for i.e. period of 20 weeks (LEAP program for adults and the extracurricular Life Skills Program for secondary students), while others were class based activities which were implemented as a part of the secondary POP class (i.e. National Entrepreneurship Day, Netagamiou Career Fair, Career Quest, POP class Career Cruising

research on potential Coast Careers, etc) all in an effort to increase student awareness about the employment and entrepreneurship opportunities that exist in the region.

Another resource implemented under the sponsorship of the Carrefour jeunesse-emploi Duplessis was the Carrefour des Ressources, a movable rotary pamphlet stand situated in the Netagamiou Municipal/School Library. The Netagamiou CLC has become a centre of education, information, and service delivery for students and the community at large, especially for partners who serve the Lower North Shore communities but do not have offices in Chevery. The CLC had gathered many, many career, employability, entrepreneurship, education and partner promotional flyers about resources and programs available to students and adults. The Carrefour des Ressources increased the visibility of and improved accessibility to this wonderful array of resources for students, teachers and the community. This new resource allows the Netagamiou CLC to actively promote services of partners mandated to serve the school and community by literally getting the information off the table and into an organized, interactive presentation format. The portability of the movable rotary pamphlet stand also allows the Netagamiou CLC to move it from the Netagamiou Municipal/ School Library to other areas in the building and community as needed.

The Netagamiou CLC offered assistance to the CSL Adult Education Centres for the launch of the Vocational and the Recognition of Acquired Competencies (RAC) programs for adults. Both these videoconference based program launches were among the highest attended sessions for adults. Anecdotal reports from participants indicate that there is a significant interest and an increased willingness to attend adult education sessions that share employment, employability and entrepreneurship related information

as well as information about adult education programs that may result in employment in the region. This is not surprising given the employment rate and the desire of adults to find work in the region.

Culture and Heritage Promotion and Learning

Culture based activities were of great importance to the Netagamiou School and part of the school success plan prior to the CLC development. Cultural activities, including arts education and appreciation, cultural and heritage promotion/preservation based activities became an important part of the Netagamiou CLC action plan.

In the spring of 2009, Netagamiou School teachers worked with a local professional artist to develop and implement an “Art, School and Community” ceramics project, which taught 100% of the student population sculptural techniques such as hand building and pinch pot ceramics. The project ended with an inauguration of a ceramic art installation created by the children in the lobby of the school as well as a temporary exhibit in the Netagamiou Municipal/School Library of the student’s pottery. Children expressed pride in their creations, the parents and community members who attended the vernissage positively reinforced the accomplishments, and more than 14 students and adults registered their name for future art sessions.

In September 2009 The Chevery Arts & Sustainability Development Initiative was launched in partnership with the Quebec Labrador Foundation, Tourism and Culture Chevery and the Netagamiou CLC. This project saw the research and development of an Artist in Residence (AiR) program model with input from local artists, school, students and community that will bring artists to the community regularly for school and

community based art workshops. A one-week Artist in Residence program was held with a Montreal based artist, art educator and Art Therapist with five (5) in class art workshops, one (1) community based art workshop, and one community exhibit of art work was implemented with youth and adults on natural, cultural and heritage themes. Under this project mandate a Lower North Shore Arts & Culture Guild was also researched, developed and launched with the support of the Lower North Shore CEDEC. The aim of the LNS Arts & Culture Guild is to promote an increased awareness of LNS arts and culture based resources available for i.e. teachers who would like to bring artists and artisans into the classroom; map the LNS community resources for community based arts learning; mobilize/support the arts and cultural development of Chevery and other LNS communities, and support arts education, economic, community and cultural development.

The Netagamiou CLC worked with Tourism and Culture Chevery to plan a one week Summer Arts (Film) Camp in both Harrington Harbour and Chevery, and to coordinate the Chevery Festival of the Arts, Conference & Trade Show (FACTS). Lower North Shore Arts and Culture Guild members were invited to attend, exhibit and participate in the one week Chevery FACTS. All of this was possible through funding provided by the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine, the Forum Jeunesse Côte Nord, LNS Council of Mayors, and the Caisse Populaire Desjardins Tête-à-la-Baleine. Exhibits included student and adult artwork; a secondary student who had received training through the Coasters Association sponsored art class photography program offered a digital photography workshop. Other activity workshops and interpretation sessions included cooking, traditional crafts and a one day conference

aimed at building knowledge and capacity around arts, culture and heritage based themes, and two day Trade Show providing an opportunity for artists and artisans to showcase/sell their artwork. Rooney Productions, the professional film company leading the youth film camp premiered the films created by the students during the arts camp, which will be later uploaded to YouTube.

Tourism and Culture Chevery developed a five year Sustainability Plan with funding from SADC Côte Nord, the QLF Arts Initiative and in partnership with Lise Palmer Consulting. The comprehensive strategic plan identifies school and community based arts, culture, heritage, nature and tourism based initiatives that will help achieve the Netagamiou CLC action plan. This strategic plan is perhaps the most comprehensive example of how the education for sustainable development has been transferred from theory to practice within this rural community setting in a way that consciously supports collaborative learning while recognizing and building upon local capacity in ways that are locally relevant and culturally sensitive.

Another capacity building initiative supported by the Netagamiou CLC was the creation of an arts educational resource, “School – Community Art Connections” was created for Netagamiou School and shared with other LNS schools/communities highlighting the arts education opportunities offered by a local artist. The booklet summarizes the vast number of arts education topics and workshops that Michael can offer schools and community members either in person or at a distance through the VCN technology, and the booklet was uploaded to the Internet on a regional website.

Developing educational materials to promote Chevery’s unique Anglophone heritage and available cultural activities to promote awareness of and pride in our culture and

heritage was another Netagamiou CLC action plan target area. Some examples of programs that have contributed to the increased awareness of heritage and pride in our culture include the Chevery News newspaper, the History of Chevery Lecture Series through the Grade 4,5,6 Social Studies class, the History of Chevery Exhibit hosted at the Misty River Restaurant, the research and writing of the History of Chevery book through the Netagamiou Municipal/School Library by a group of community adults, and the 2010 Netagamiou School mini heritage fair which was attended by 100% of the student body as well as a number of parent and community members. All of these initiatives, whether school and/or community based have a goal of increasing knowledge about the community culture and heritage, and whenever possible having the students assume a leadership role in the research and presentation process by linking it to school curriculum.

One project of interest was the Coasters Association sponsored Community Assets Mapping survey done in partnership with and adapted by the Netagamiou CLC. A Research Assistant was hired and trained from the community who interviewed adult community members asking them to answer the following 3 questions using a checklist system: “I know how to...” “I would like to learn how to...”, and “I would be willing to teach someone how to...”. The results from this study found a significant gap in the knowledge of seniors compared to younger adults in areas of indigenous or local traditional knowledge. This confirmed the concern that a loss of indigenous knowledge is occurring among the younger generations and that measures should be taken to mediate the loss.

An analysis of the aggregate of all culture and heritage related programs demonstrate that 100% of the student population, 88% of the teachers, 25% of parents, and 125

community adults have received culture and heritage related programming over the past three years. Benefits cited from these participants as being important include, opportunities for “working together... creative expression... kids [from our school] will know as much as kids living in Montreal or Quebec...” and a “ feeling of pride in [the] community”. Students and adults cite the acquisition of the following new knowledge and skills: learning about diverse art techniques, art appreciation and education theory and practice, creativity... as well as i.e. “How to work cooperatively... work together as a team other than in sports”.

Parents and youth had expressed concern through surveys, meetings and interviews about the lack of art based activities versus the plethora of sports related activities. In the past three years 22 partners have contributed to the Arts & Culture Program, creating seven (7) new arts & culture activities for youth and adults. Most importantly, a new, very active non-profit organization (Tourism and Culture Chevery) has been developed and a comprehensive five year strategic plan has been developed that includes arts, culture and heritage based education and service delivery, aimed at supporting youth and adult learning and the sustainable development of culture, the community and economy.

Citizen and Stakeholder Leadership Development

In terms of citizen and stakeholder leadership development opportunities, the Netagamiou CLC has worked with partners to promote citizenship and leadership development from Pre Kindergarten to Seniors, in school and in the community. One program that was specifically geared to develop leadership was the QCGN (Quebec Community Groups Network) Leadership in Rural Communities training program for

young women. Although the ten session training program targeted young women, the project that emerged in Chevery, engaged a total of twelve (12) youth and thirty-nine (39) adult volunteers (including the nine female adult program participants) who contributed more than 1,413 hours over a six-month period to the development of the Chevery Community Green Space. The project engaged eleven (11) partners and allowed Chevery to work with and learn from two other regions in Quebec. A total of \$50,000 of cash and in kind contributions and the work of the nine community leaders helped create two community picnic areas, one Green Space parking area, a new 1.5 km trail, two clearings suitable for camping, the construction of eight picnic tables and the donation of three more. The group piloted a leadership development toolkit, which is very user friendly and is predicted to be a very user friendly tool for leadership development with others, including youth.

The following feedback that was given by those involved in the training program and green space development demonstrates the leadership development achieved.

“We have demonstrated that we are capable of making changes to our community that have an effect on all our lives.... The project was realized on schedule demonstrating to our group and the community that a focused group of individuals can accomplish realistic goals... We realized that we do have the power to meet our own needs... Everyone took a leadership goal rather than just the “natural leaders” or those with more leadership experience and the realization that leadership can mean different things... Community mobilization for the realisation of a project, which will benefit all the population of Chevery (youth, families, elderly)... I’m the person that doesn’t see the finished project, willing to help but often don’t have the same final vision as everyone else, can’t seem to visualize the finished project. Just being part of the group made me more involved in things than I would normally be, I couldn’t be a leader of the whole thing but I can be a helper for the group.”

Literacy Based Education

The Literacy Program has received a significant amount of support from partners and has been extensively developed over the past three years, in keeping with one of the priority areas identified by Netagamiou School in its proposal to become a CLC school as well as the school board strategic plan. Literacy, or more specifically the level of leisure reading among students, was identified as an area of concern in the first TTFM student survey (2007-2008). Students from Grade 5 to Secondary 5 reported reading only an average of 10 minutes per day, compared to the average of 36 minutes in replica schools. Following anecdotal reports of teachers who expressed concern that many secondary students were experiencing difficulty comprehending and in recognition of academic importance of literacy, an intensive literacy program was developed and implemented. Further exploration with students revealed that, especially among secondary students their reason for not reading was a lack of interesting reading materials. Concerted efforts were made with partners, especially through Quebec Federation for Home and School Association book donations and The Centre for Literacy's Traveling Trunks program to increase the selection of books for young adults in the Netagamiou Library.

At the same time, programming was developed for children aged 0-5 and their parents to support early literacy development in both English and French (Sleepy Time Story Hour, Born to Read and the CSL Emergent Literacy program).

Students in both the English and French Language programs at the primary level were engaged in the research, writing, illustration, translation, publishing and presentation of their own book about a local community artifact that played an important role in the early development of Chevery. In 2009, this book and the Sleepy Time Story Hour was

recognized as one of the top five programs across Quebec promoting literacy and received the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport 2008-2009 award for the “*Plan d’action sur la lecture à l’école*”. The students involved expressed both pride and satisfaction for their accomplishments. Their comments demonstrate the success of this program in achieving cross-curricular competency goals:

“We learned how to read to little kids and they liked it. Some words were hard to read so we had to ask for help. We had to collect the money for the story hour and count it to see how much we had. We had to check off names on the paper to see how many people were there and then count how much money was paid. Some people gave 10 dollars and so we had to give them back five. I liked everything about the story hour. I liked the reading to little kids... when they grow up they can tell other little kids about it. When we did the story hours, sometimes it was hard because they didn’t listen or would ask questions like “What does that mean?” The story hour will keep going, which is good because the little kids are learning more and can get out with other little kids. They have more activities. We have after school activities, but the little kids had nothing. It’s a good way to give something to the little kids and raise money for the school. Everyone wins, and maybe we can do other things too.”

and...

“I like the fact that we also wrote our own book, that we’re actually going to print it and make it a real book and then sell it. One challenge was finding information... doing the research about the tractor; thinking about how to draw the pictures for the story. I learned that you can make many kind of books. Another challenge was choosing the title; we all had ideas and had to vote on which one we wanted. I learned that it takes a long time to write a storybook. I liked that we learned about our history. I found it cool that Oliver is still there, and that it was put to good use, and helped Chevery. Writing the story of Oliver is writing down the history of our community... and we can sell the book to raise money for our school. I like this because we’re the authors, we did it ourselves... we’re the one’s that wrote the story. We did our own research before we wrote the book. We’re preserving history and people will know about our history.”

In addition to these programs, the Netagamou CLC partnership network has succeeded in achieving its goal of coordinating and sharing resources more effectively to

create a Municipal/ School Library that includes the hiring of a full time Library and Cultural Activities Animator. In 2010, the local adult education centre sponsored student gift certificates from the Scholastic Book Club as prizes for the Family Literacy Week activities as well as subscriptions to an English and a French parenting magazine. The school Scholastic Book Club is another much-loved program offered by the school, which promotes literacy and provides a vital service for families. All grades from Pre Kindergarten to Secondary 5 can order books from the Scholastic Book Club each month. In addition, since there is no bookstore in our small, isolated community, parents have worked with teachers at times to use the Scholastic Book Club for birthday, Christmas gift certificates and students report they enjoy the Scholastic Book Club because they can choose and buy their own books.

All grades from Pre Kindergarten to Secondary 5 (ages 4-17) can visit the library weekly with their teachers to review and borrow books. An Author “wish list has been started by the librarian in an effort to ensure that, when funds are available, books that interest the youth are bought for the library. The library visits have had a positive impact on student library visits outside of class. More students are visiting the library during public evening hours, reading in the library and borrowing more books, magazines, etc. as evidenced by the following data:

Table 1 - Summary of School / Municipal library loans from 2009 and 2010

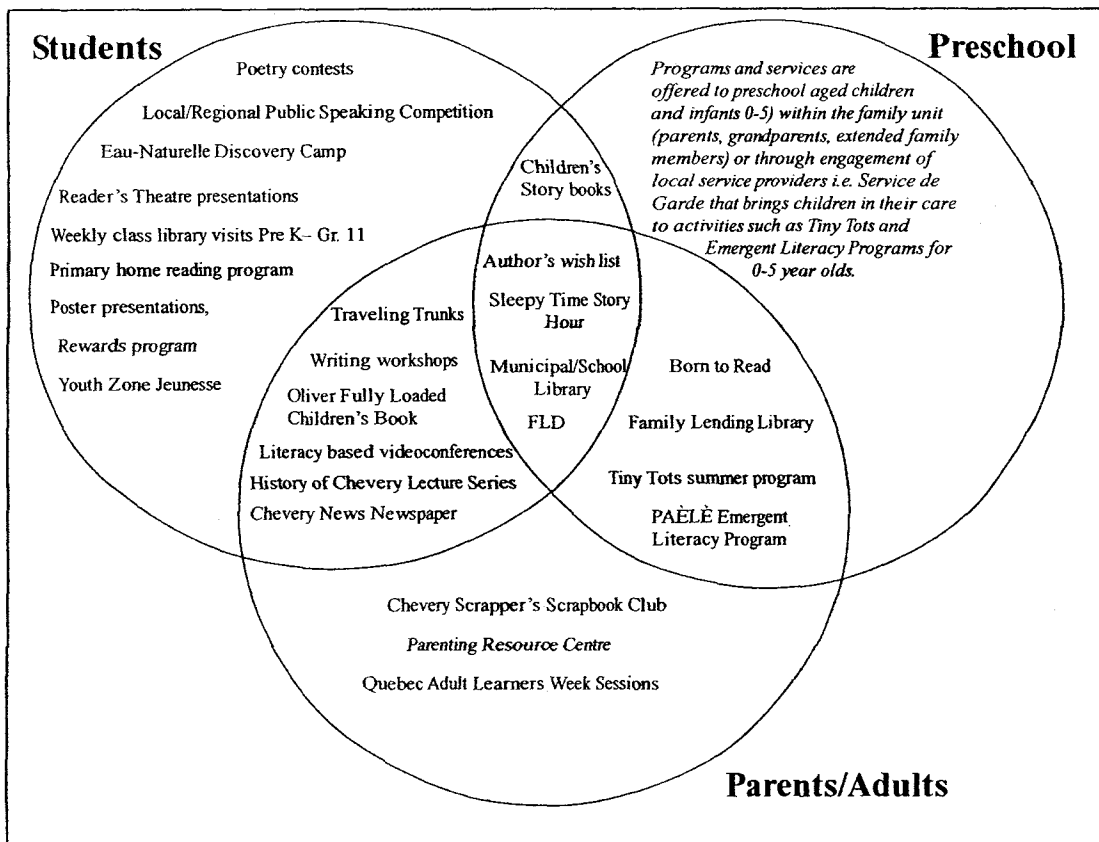
Year 2009	5 ½ months of 2010	Results
Adult books = 96	Adult books = 284	295% increase

Youth books = 323
 Magazines = 26
 VCR movies = 18

Youth books = 382
 Magazines = 87
 VCR movies = 100

18% increase
 232% increase
 450% increase

Anecdotal reports from parents and teachers and data from library borrowing records indicate an increased interest and engagement in reading among students and adults. This has been confirmed by results of the TTFM student online self-reported survey. Leisure reading time among students has doubled since the first TTFM student surveys, from 10 minutes per day to 20 minutes per day, and although this remains below the level of replica schools, it is a significant improvement.



Source: Netagamiou CLC - Diagram 1: Venn diagram demonstrating the delivery of literacy activities to different target groups through Netagamiou CLC related initiatives

4.5.3 Student Engagement, Success and Well being

The following is a summary of the outcomes from 2007-2010 that pertain to student success, engagement and well being. (TTFM, CLC surveys and reports, anecdotal reports)

Background: Students from Grade 5 to Secondary 5 have completed the online, anonymous Tell Them From Me (TTFM) survey in December 2007, November 2008, December 2009 and April 2010. The quantitative and qualitative data from these surveys provided great insight into the student's opinions in areas such as student engagement, student wellness and school climate. The results are based on student self reporting. Limitations: It is noted that due to the small student population, one student leaving or arriving in the survey cohort could significantly influence the results (*i.e. a poor reader leaves and a strong reader enters the cohort*). However, the baseline taken in 2007 can be compared to subsequent years, monitoring for changes in the trends. Although no direct correlation can be drawn in relation to the survey results and programs/services delivered, it is important to acknowledge the programs/services delivered between surveys, especially those that have been implemented in an attempt to address problem areas. The TTFM results were cross-referenced with the Netagamiou CLC Action Plan Outputs and the following analysis is presented.

Awareness of/Positive Attitude Towards Diverse Lifelong Learning/ Leisure

The following TTFM survey areas were collected under the "improved awareness of/positive attitude towards diverse lifelong learning/ leisure experiences" output of the

Netagamiou CLC Action Plan: value school outcomes, positive learning climate, [student] expectation for success, aspirations: trade and apprenticeship programs, finishing high school, and aspirations: college and university. There in an increase in 2/6 of the attitude related TTFM measures (value school outcomes, positive learning climate, a decrease in 2/6 of the attitude related TTFM measures ([student] expectation for success, aspirations: trade and apprenticeship programs) but results remain better than replica schools; and a decrease in 2/6 of the attitude related TTFM measures (finishing high school, and aspirations: college and university) while being less than replica schools.

Access To and Engagement in Diverse Lifelong Learning/Leisure Experiences

The TTFM survey areas of “participate in clubs, effective learning time, homework time, read books for fun, participate in sports, intense physical activity and truancy” were analyzed under the Netagamiou CLC Action Plan output areas “increased access to & engagement in diverse lifelong learning/leisure experiences”. There is an increase in 5/6 of the engagement related TTFM measures (participate in clubs, effective learning time, homework time, read books for fun, participate in sports, and truancy) and a 1/6 decrease in engagement related TTFM measures (intense physical activity), but results remain better than replica schools.

Awareness and Use of Health Education and Promotion Services

An analysis of student experiences with: “Bullying Victims, Self Esteem, Depression, Anxiety and Smoking were analyzed and collected under the Netagamiou CLC Action Plan “Improved awareness & use of health education and promotion services” output

area. An improvement in 3/5 of the awareness and engagement related TTFM measures was observed (bullying victims, self esteem, depression), a slight deterioration in 1/5 of the TTFM related measure (anxiety), which remains significantly better than replica schools; and a deterioration in 1/5 of the engagement related TTFM measures (smoking).

Parent Involvement in Children's Education and School Environment

Increased parent involvement in children's education and school environment.

According to parent self-reporting, twenty nine percent (29%) of parents have attended school activities and ten percent (10%) of parents volunteer in school. No baseline data is available. One hundred percent of the activities listed by parents in the CLC parent survey about parent engagement include activities that were not in place prior to the CLC.

Student support: There is a decrease in 2 of 2 student support related TTFM measures: student advocacy and positive teacher-student relations. The TTFM results are questionable as they are contradicted by responses in open-ended questions, and results remains better than replica schools. Eighty-four percent (84%) of students reported feeling supported by adults and community in TTFM open ended question data source, particularly by teachers who are explicitly described as being/offering teacher support, teachers caring about students, teacher help, being nice, kind, willing to help... and easy to get along with. The differences between the student responses in the TTFM survey questions around student advocacy and positive student-teacher relations as compared to the open-ended question in the same survey tool are an area that could be further explored.

Family Support for Child Development

Increased family support to improve family capacity to help their child's development: 56% parents (9/16) of primary students using Drop In Centre Service and 100% of parents have enrolled their PreK – Grade 6 students in the available extracurricular school activities. Seventy five percent (75%) of the local community organizations contribute support to families through school/community initiatives. Sixty three percent (63%) of the parents strongly agree / agree that the CLC benefits parents.

Improved awareness of and engagement in development of employability and life skills: more than fifteen jobs have been developed or created for youth and adults through CLC related initiatives with partners over the past 3 years. Anecdotal reports from partners indicate that students are demonstrating transfer of knowledge to real life situations through application of employability and life skills acquired in class to job seeking and public activities.

Development of Entrepreneurship Skills and Knowledge

There has been increased activity in this area, although we have not calculated the precise percentage for the whole student population, 100% primary and a significant number of the secondary student population (estimated 75%) from the 2009-2010 school year have engaged in school based entrepreneurship skill & knowledge development activities over the past three years, winning prizes at the local and regional level for the Quebec Entrepreneurship Contest and the province wide National Entrepreneurship Day contest. The majority of secondary students participated in the 2009 Netagamou School

Career Fair, as well the majority of the Secondary 4-5 students participated in the 2010 Lower North Shore Career Fair hosted by the Coasters Association.

Awareness of, Engagement in Culture Based Activities and Pride in Culture

Increased awareness of, engagement in culture based activities and increased pride in culture/ identity: The TTFM survey measures the student “sense of belonging”, for which there was an incremental decrease 75%, down slightly from 77% of students who reported a positive sense of belonging; however the sense of belonging reported by Netagamiou students remains better than that reported by students at replica schools (66%). In addition, student responses during interviews about programs indicate a sense of pride for contributions to heritage presentations within the community.

Citizen and Stakeholder Leadership Through School and Community Engagement

Increased citizen and stakeholder leadership through school and community engagement: A decrease of working and volunteer hours has been reported in the TTFM engagement related measure (decrease in volunteer hours per day from 0.5 to 0.4 hours per day). It is interesting to note that there is an increase in reported time spent in clubs, activities and learning activities. Secondary 1,2,3 students continue to volunteer with the Chevery Senior Citizen’s Club Meals on Wheels program as part of their school curriculum. Students as young as those in Pre Kindergarten through to Secondary 5 are encouraged to and do actively engage in school/community volunteer opportunities. Some students have attributed their leadership skill development to participation in the Netagamiou School House System, which groups the student body into three inter-grade

teams who work together throughout the year to plan and host school events. Another volunteer based youth activity frequently cited by youth as contributing to their leadership capacity is the Junior Canadian Ranger Program that serves youth aged 12-17. The epitome of student citizenship and leadership was demonstrated by a group of secondary students in 2010 following the Haiti environmental disaster. A group of secondary students got behind a Secondary 2 student who expressed a desire to do fundraising for the Haiti relief fund. The group planned and implemented a series of school and community events, which raised more than \$3000.00 that, when matched by the federal government, resulted in a \$6000.00 contribution to Haiti relief efforts. The community has a high rate of volunteerism, offering excellent role models to youth. According to Netagamiou CLC records at least 80% of the community (youth and adults) volunteer each year. As with other communities, a core group of individuals volunteer many hours on a regular basis, however many other community members support this by volunteering at annual and one-off community events.

Student Definitions/Descriptions of Student Success

Student success is a concept and goal that all schools aim to achieve, most notably through the School Success Plan. Student success is a key outcome that the CLCs desire to support. It is important to be aware of the student's understanding of the concept of student success; how they define it in their own words, and if they associate their current student success with future academic and career aspirations. This question was added to the CLC focus group sessions following an observation from the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 Tell Them From Me survey results, which suggested that students did not recognize

their current academic and life experiences as being relevant to their post secondary studies or career aspirations.

Students from Grade 4 to Secondary 5 were asked to explain the meaning of student success in their own words. *“Tell me in your own words, what does it mean to be a “successful student”? Fill in the blank... I am a successful student if I...”* Students provided a number of definitions and descriptions that have been coded according to six broad areas: academic achievement, effort, attitude/behavior, perseverance, social, and extracurricular activities.

The first student success area, *academic achievement* was defined as “getting good grades”, “doing well in school” and “passing in school”. *Effort* was the second broad area attributed to student success. This was described as “doing all my work”, “get your work done” and “get my work done on time”, “do[ing] my work well”, “trying my best”, “work[ing] hard”, “tak[ing] my time”, “complet[ing] my assignment”, and “doing my best”. *Attitude/behaviour* was a third broad area, which was described as “not acting up in class”, “do well in class”, “learning from your teachers”, being “responsible”, “motivated”, “determined”, “serious”, “take school seriously”, “concentrate” and having a “good attitude” and “pride” in their work. A few students made the link between student success and interest in learning subject/topics “a person does well if it is what he/she likes doing” and “if you like your subjects”. *Perseverance* was clearly identified by students as an indicator of student success, which have been described (in succession for the purposes of this report) as: “stay in school”, “pass the year”, “pass this year without failing any subjects” or more specifically “with all my credits”, to “complete high school” and more specifically, to “get my high school leaving”. What was

interesting is that a number of students described or defined student success not only in terms of their current academic standing, but in relation to their future aspirations, for example, “help me in my future”, “go to trade school”, and “get a job”. Students identified being *social*, having social skills or a social support network; describing “get[ting] along with friends and work outside of school”, “friends and family [are] intact”, “be[ing] a good class mate”, “help out in different activities” and “being cool” as contributors to student success. *Extracurricular activities* was identified as a positive contributor to success for example “participat[ion] in activities” and access to extracurricular activities supported student success as an alternative to “stay away from drugs”.

The above results are corroborated by parent responses to the CLC survey. Sixty three percent (63%) strongly agreed/agreed with the statement that their child has an improved motivation to attend school, 50% strongly agreed that their child performs better, and 63% strongly agreed/agreed that CLC activities have promoted their child’s involvement in the community.

A class discussion about student success at the beginning of each academic year may contribute to increased awareness and critical thinking about the concept, and promoting reflective practice about student success may positively influence student success attitudes and behaviours.

Impact of the CLC on Students

Students from Grade 4 to Secondary 5 were asked to identify CLC related activities and then asked, “Have these CLC (activities, events, programs) helped you in any way as

a student? Can you give some examples?” Students provided a number of examples that have been coded according to the following seven broad areas of student interest in school/learning, learning / skill acquisition, future outlook, support, engagement, aspirations, and global citizenship and awareness.

Students reported that the CLC had impacted their interest in school/learning positively by making school/learning “fun” and “help[ing] me have fun at school”. The following statements indicated that the CLC has positively impacted learning and skill acquisition: “it makes me smarter because it helps me to read”, and it “helps you learn new things”, “I like doing sports and with Quebec en Forme it gives me more time to play and practice” be “better at sports”. Students reported that the CLC has helped in terms of future outlook for i.e. “hope for future, for jobs”. Global citizenship and awareness was also reported as an outcome of engagement in CLC initiatives, as evidenced by references about “go[ing] to different places” and “awareness of other cultures/areas”. Students identified support benefits from CLC related activities, events and programs such as “people [are] there to help you” and “it helped fight against bullying”. Students frequently reported *frequency and quality of engagement* as ways that the CLC has helped them as students, for example “get involved” or “more involved”, to “be more independent” and “more active”. Another benefit that students attributed to CLC activities, events and programs was related to aspirations for the future, such as “help[ing] to decide what to do after high school”, “career choices”, “vocational trades” “helped me learn about different careers”.

Seventy five percent (75%) of parents who responded to an anonymous survey strongly agreed and agreed that the CLC has brought more resources / services to the

school and community and is having a positive impact, meeting the needs of students and the community and it is important for the school to remain a CLC because the CLC “has been beneficial for my children”.

What the CLC Brought to Students and The Community

In response to the final focus group open ended question “Is there anything else that you would like to say about the CLC?” a number of students shared the following comments,

“The CLC gives us lots of great opportunities to get involved with the community”, “I think the CLC is a great thing and should be kept up in our school”, “The CLC is a great thing for our school and a lot of different things have happened since we got the CLC and I am happy about those things and how much they help us as students and as people”, “CLC is a good program to have for students. The activities are interesting and fun. It may help people in the future”. “I think that the CLC is a good community tool to have because it brings resources that wouldn’t be here if there was not a CLC.” It has been very helpful for the future of our education”.

“Everything is good, thanks for all you have done”, “keep up the good work”, “Thank you for what you are doing, “They are doing a great job”, “Keep up the good work and continue the programs and activities, thanks a lot”.

This chapter gave the main findings of the study on which this thesis is based through the presentation of the outcomes of the Netagamiou CLC evaluation process. After a brief history of the development of the CLC from 2006 to 2010, the process of the CLC evaluation was outlined. The presentation of the findings was grouped under three

umbrella sections: 1) Development of School Community Partnerships 2) Access to Educational and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for all and 3) Student and Community Engagement, Success and Well being.

The two originating questions for this action research asked:

- 1) What impact, when implemented, does the development of a community learning centre have on the outcome of an education for sustainable development in rural communities?
- 2) What impact do collaborative learning and inquiry have on the outcome of an education for sustainable development program in rural a rural community?

The Netagamiou CLC was used as the case study and the findings presented in this chapter illustrate that the goals of increased collaboration, recognition of capacity and development of a conviction for sustaining communities approach have been met. This means that the two of the originating research questions which this action research project set out to investigate have been attended to.

The next and final chapter will look at the impact of the researcher/educator familiarity and personal analysis of the outcomes of the CLC and its effects on the community from the researcher's perspective. The third originating question for this action-research proposed to look at "What impact does researcher/educator familiarity with the subject setting/population, have on the outcome of an education for sustainable development program in rural communities." This question will be addressed next.

CHAPTER 5 RESEARCHER ROLE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Supplemental Analysis and Conclusions by the Researcher in her Role as the CLC Development Agent

The following is a brief analysis of factors that have contributed to the three target areas of the CLC evaluation from the perspective of the CLC Development Agent: student engagement, success and well being; development of school-community partnerships; and access to educational opportunities and lifelong learning.

Collaboration is key to sustainable development. It is highly valued by local people, partners, and expatriates and its absence is cited as a weakness and threat to the sustainable development of the CLC and the community. A “Return on Investment” is also key. Direct, tangible and short-term outcomes (even small ones) are required to build trust within the school and community, and recognition among partners that benefits will come from investment of time, resources, etc. This perceived and actual “return on investment” for short-term initiatives encourages commitment to processes, which require longer term investments.

A simultaneous “top down” and “bottom up” approach is required to ensure sustainable development of the Community Learning Centre. Having policy and political support of cross sector government departments (federal, provincial, municipal), school board, school and community leaders combined with the active engagement of students, parents and community members, organization, and businesses is integral to creating a common vision and moving that common vision forward. Although great emphasis is often put on nurturing grass roots actions, sustainable development of any community by the general public alone is difficult if community

members hit a “political glass ceiling”. Encouraging a grass roots movement without equally ensuring political will could unfairly set community members up for failure, which could contribute to a deeper sense of helplessness and complacency in terms of engagement with future initiatives, if people feel a poor locus of control over their present and future.

It has been emphasized repeatedly over the three years, but warrants emphasis again that the Netagamiou CLC takes an appreciative inquiry approach to the development of the students, community and the CLC. Recognition of assets and strengths are a priority and identifying and acting upon a “desired future” versus “weaknesses” and “problems” approach are favored.

From the researcher’s perspective, the following additional factors will support the school/community in getting from where it was (pre-CLC) to where it wants to be long term.

5.1 Other Outcomes

Although the desired outcomes or objectives discussed in Chapter 4 were the primary areas of evaluation, it is important to acknowledge and explore other complementary and added value outcomes such as: support to teachers, people impacted, resources and infrastructures developed, services offered, developed and/or improved, jobs created, etc. The following is a brief summary of some of the results in these areas, some of which emerged from an analysis by the Commission Scolaire du Littoral CLC Development Agents and the researcher writing this thesis.

Support offered to Teachers and Adult Education Services:

- Social Studies: History of Chevery Lecture Series, Heritage Fair
- Science: Health Week, Nutrition, 5/30 Program, Owl Workshop, Global Warming workshops
- Arts: Photography, ceramics and painting arts education sessions
- Language Arts: Family Literacy Week, Librarian
- POP: Netagamiou Career Fair, Career Quest, National Entrepreneurship Day, Quebec Entrepreneurship Contest
- Adult Education: CSL Vocational, Parent Education, RAC (Recognition of Acquired Competencies), Emergent Literacy and Tell Me More Programs

People impacted through CLC related initiatives:

- 100% youth aged 0-17; 93 adults/seniors from the community involved in CLC related initiatives, who have for example:
 - delivered or received services
 - volunteered for CLC related initiatives;
 - children and youth who participated in CLC related initiatives;
 - been actively involved in a VCN session, program, other CLC related initiative and/or making use of access to school-CLC equipment and infrastructures
 - received information about CLC related and/or community-regional initiatives through i.e. CLC communications

- made contributions (in cash and/or in kind) to the sustainability of CLC related initiatives

Resources, Infrastructures, Equipment Developed/Improved

- Videoconference Centre
- Netagamiou Municipal/School Library
- Sports and Recreation: Soccer field, equipment, trips
- Technological equipment: digital camera, film camera, laptop, printer, digital display screen
- Drop In Centre
- Quebec en Forme
- Community Green Space
- Artist In Residence Program, Youth Arts (Film) Camp
- Art installations, exhibits and equipment

Financial Results:

- \$140,000 for the VCN system and CLC operations from 2007-2010
- 500,000 / year in cash and in kind contributions by / to school/community initiatives (including contributions by the school and school board)
- Diversification of funding sources through CLC related initiatives i.e. 30 new sources of cash/in kind funding from outside the community

Service Hours Offered/Week:

- School/CLC open year round ranging from 7:45 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., on average 68 hrs/wk
- During school hours: access to computers, internet, fitness centre, meeting space, lunch time youth programming, library, day care services, videoconferencing
- After school hours: gym, library, videoconference centre, computer lab
- Outside of the school year: i.e. summer camp, Christmas holidays
- Outreach program: library on wheels, Born to Read
- Office space shared with partners

Services Improved/Developed:

- Early Childhood Development: Drop in Centre, Tiny Tots, Emergent Literacy Programs i.e. Sleepy Time Story Hour)
- CLC Coordinator technical/program development expertise, curriculum support, resource mobilization
- Assist partners with coordination of service delivery/ development and implementation (i.e. Pink T Shirt Day, Adult Learners Week, literacy outreach program, cultural projects, etc.)
- Mobilizing Technical expertise by resources from outside the region: fundraising, video editing, strategic planning, gardening, photography, dance, grant writing, action plan development, evaluation, community development, leadership development, etc.

Jobs Created:

- Fifteen jobs created either on salary/staff or contract, examples include: Library and Cultural Activities Animator, Research Assistance, Eau-Naturelle Discovery (Summer) Camp, “Y” Not Here Animator, Quebec en Forme, LEAP Facilitator, Evaluation Assistant, Arts Assistant, Chevery Festival of the Arts, Conference & Trade Show Coordinator, Learning Lab (Computer/Study Hall), Drop In Centre Animator, Chevery Community Green Space trail workers, etc.

5.2 Recommendations for Sustainable Development of the Netagamiou CLC

Each Quebec Community Learning centre was given full funding for the first three years of operation to support its development with the goal that long-term sustainability would be achieved through the development of mutually beneficial partnerships between the school and the community.

Building partner “sustainability consciousness” has been a constant preoccupation over the three years as the Netagamiou CLC partnership network developed programs and services that would be sustainable in and of themselves as well as supporting the sustainability of the Netagamiou CLC office. Part of the increasing awareness and understanding about sustainability involved an inventory analysis for each program and/or service offered in terms of what could be contributed by the different partners, as well as how partners could use their existing resources as efficiently and effectively as possible to collectively and collaboratively meet the identified needs. Once a need was identified, the Netagamiou CLC Development Agent would work with the partners to

conduct an analysis of what resources would be required, the existing assets and gaps, identifying the financial costs (if any) and sources of funding within or outside the partnership network. In addition, significant efforts were made to develop and use a full cost/benefit analysis approach, which recognized both the cash and in kind resources contributed.

Following a broad analysis of the past three years and projections for the future, it is expected the following resources, grouped under six broad categories, will be required in order for the Netagamiou CLC to be sustainable long-term: Philosophical/Psychological; Human; Material; Technological; Policy/Political and Financial.

Philosophical/Psychological Resources

Philosophical resources such as a shared value of collaboration, reciprocity, equality, lifelong learning, mutual respect, inclusiveness, shared leadership, and openness are the essential cornerstones of CLC partnership network sustainability. Without these resources as individuals or as a group nothing can be accomplished. In addition, psychologically we need the ability as individuals and as a partnership network to recognize existing and potential assets; critically identify, address and find appropriate solutions to challenges encountered, while maintaining a commitment to achieving a shared common vision.

Human Resources

The need for a CLC Coordinator has been recommended in other reports by the Principal, teachers and partners and is reiterated here. The CLC Coordinator or Development Agent (job title in this school board) acts as a support staff to the teachers

for the research and coordination of curriculum supportive videoconferences and community based learning opportunities. The Development Agent also acts as a liaison between the school and community partners to identify and respond to needs of youth and the community. Youth have explicitly been at the heart of the Netagamiou CLC development over the past three years; however, the needs and interests of youth cannot be met without addressing this in the context of the family and community. As such, providing support to families and the community, including economic and community development are integral to the overall success, engagement and well being of youth. The Netagamiou CLC Development Agent works with all the above stakeholders to ensure that the available resources are leveraged so the identified needs can be met.

School board administration, staff and partners, who serve as partnership table and committee members are essential to this CLC. Without the leadership of the Principal and support from this broad range of stakeholders the CLC would not succeed in meeting its mandate.

Partners and supporters offer technical assistance and other forms of support not only to the CLC Development Agent but also to other stakeholders in the partnership network. For example the Municipalité de la Côte Nord du Golfe-Saint-Laurent, CLD Basse-Côte-Nord, and the Centre Régionale des Services Bibliothèque Publique Côte Nord have offered technical support in terms of budgets, applications to various funding sources, and training to staff and volunteers for example in library service management.

Volunteer human resources whether they are students, parents, or community members at large are integral to the success of many CLC initiatives. The case in point for this is the Sleepy Time Story Hour, a monthly reading program run by a senior

volunteer who mentors student “reader leaders” as they read to children aged 0-5 years of age. Other examples are: student field trips where parents volunteer by driving their child to school sporting events, or the school canteen run by parent and student volunteers.

Last, but certainly not the least in terms of importance, staffing of CLC related initiatives is an absolutely essential human resource contribution. Staff are provided by partners for joint projects such as the Coasters/CLC Research Assistant or the Quebec en Forme Animator positions. Staff are also hired as part of grant funded programs such as the Chevery Festival of the Arts, Conference and Trade Show Coordinator. Sometimes the staff positions are filled by adults and at times they are student positions. It is not conceivable nor advisable that the CLC Development Agent would be the sole staff person responsible for all CLC related initiatives. Whether the staff are hired on salary (part or full time) or on a contract basis, the CLC partnership network has helped to create an estimated fifteen to eighteen jobs over the past three years.

Material Resources

Material resources are probably the easiest resource to acquire for CLC related initiatives and could be bought or donated by partners/supporters. Material resources generally fall under two categories space and equipment. Space includes office, activity, meeting, etc. and has been provided by the school to partners on an in kind and on fee basis and has also been provided by partners to the Netagamiou CLC or stakeholders within the partnership network. Equipment resources such as office (telephone, digital

camera, fax, photocopier machine etc.) and activity equipment (sports, arts, etc.) have been provided by the school and by partners.

Technological Resources

Technological resources such as the videoconference (VCN) system and high speed Internet are highly valued resources offered by the Netagamiou CLC to the school and community. These resources are essential to the smooth day-to-day functioning of student academic activities as well as CLC operations and programs. The current VCN system is ISDN (phone line) versus IP (Internet) based. As a result a “bridge”, a technical piece of equipment that permits the two types of systems to connect, is currently a necessary but expensive tool for VCN operation. The school board is in the process of upgrading the existing high-speed Internet system in order to improve Internet connectivity and transfer to an IP based VCN system, which would eliminate the need for long distance or bridge VCN charges.

Policy/Political Resources

Policy and political resources should not be underestimated in terms of value for the CLC sustainability. This can and has come in terms of support (letters) written by partners attesting to the need for programs and services, or the positive impact that CLC related initiatives have had on students and the community. Representation is another political resource (i.e. being a partnership table member) that has supported the development of the CLC to date. Lobbying is another valuable policy and political driven resource that partners can offer the CLC in relation to leveraging funding support

for CLC related initiatives pursued by partners. Advocacy of all partners and supporters towards the CLC and the programs/services offered through the CLC partnership network provides valuable visibility and support for sustainability. Last but perhaps most importantly, government policy change with respect to education and community - economic development is essential to ensure favourable systemic changes are implemented, not only for the community learning centre(s) but for the rural communities such as Chevery or the Lower North Shore as a whole.

Financial Resources

Of course, aside from all the in kind contributions of stakeholders, each CLC does require a certain amount of cash financing for operations such as office and activity equipment or supplies and for the Development Agents position. A diversified financial plan is required to ensure the viability of the CLC. The following are possible sources of financing that have been and could be put into place.

Existing financial resources could be restructured to provide “core” funding from partners for whom the CLC provides a valuable service, in particular partners who have education, youth, community development, etc. mandates. For example the Commission Scolaire du Littoral (CSL) and various partners could each offer a set percentage of annual funding. It is projected that the cash required to operate the CLC on an annual basis is \$40,000. One suggestion has been that if the school board provided \$20,000 and three to four other partners each provided \$5000.00 from their operating budgets (or other variations of the partner: financial contribution ratio), this would quickly help achieve the financial operating cost goal.

In addition to core funding, other funding could be secured to address the identified needs on a program specific basis through grant and proposal writing for arts, cultural, heritage, nature, sports and leisure environmental, science and community development related programming.

Service agreements could be arranged with regional and provincial partners who do not have staff in the community and cannot afford the prohibitive travel costs to visit the community for service delivery purposes and who might be interested in support from the CLC for i.e. consultation, community mobilization, liaison, intake and referral services. The same could apply in terms of rental fees of school space for local, regional and/or other partners who need access to office/activity space and equipment. This has already been successfully implemented over the past three years and has contributed to the sustainability of the Netagamiou CLC.

Fees for programs and services offered have been implemented at the Netagamiou CLC for programs such as the Eau-Naturelle Discovery Summer Camp and the Sleepy Time Story Hour among others. The service fees have been set in consultation with parents of youth receiving the services. Consultation with users or service recipients about service fees is a good practice to ensure that the fees are not prohibitive and to encourage understanding between those providing and receiving the service(s) about the service value.

The last suggested option, although not a guaranteed source is award based funding. The Netagamiou School & CLC has received program and equipment funding for awards such as the Sleepy Time Story Hour, the National Entrepreneurship Day, as well as the Quebec Entrepreneurship Contest, which the Français langue maternelle class has won

regionally for two years in a row. Although the funding from this type of source is neither reliable nor significant in terms of amounts, it serves a dual purpose in that it does offer small cash contributions but perhaps more importantly it offers valuable recognition of the programs and services delivered, which boosts student/community pride and confidence, and could then in turn help leverage more funding from other sources.

Important to acknowledge in terms of policy implications is the difficulty smaller community groups experience in leveraging project funding, due to the competitive based funding application process, as compared to larger more established organizations, despite their exceptional work in communities.

5.3 Global Recommendations for the CLC

The goal of the CLC is to foster partnerships between the school and community, which bring new resources and opportunities for lifelong learning and community development.

The Netagamiou CLC strives to engage in reflective practice and continuous quality improvement processes. In this spirit a number of questions that were put forward following the 2008 case study report by the third party researcher are discussed here. Some of these questions/recommendations have been addressed and some remain areas to work on.

Collective Ownership and Capacity Building

What can be done to encourage collective ownership of the CLC? In order to encourage collective ownership of the Netagamiou CLC, increased and active engagement of all stakeholders has been encouraged and efforts have been made to formally and informally recognize these contributions at events, in writing and in person. In addition, collaborative initiatives among community groups/partners, communities, generations and cultures have been encouraged and nurtured not only to increase collective ownership but also to respond to the frequently cited desire among community members to “work together”.

What strategies can you develop to hand responsibilities for initiatives on to others? Training/mentoring has been offered in the following areas community mobilization, research, facilitation, strategic planning, action plans, evaluation, activity/service delivery, communication and report writing, fundraising, business plan development, advocacy, etc. to build capacity among individuals, in particular among those who had not previously been leaders. A delegation of leadership and support to new individuals to assume leadership roles has been a priority. Support has been given to community groups/committees for the development of formal governance structures where needed, for example Tourism and Culture Chevery, a new non profit organization with a mandate of local arts, culture, heritage, nature and tourism programming. Succession planning has been consciously promoted by fostering intergenerational mentorship between existing and emerging leaders; encouraging recruitment of new youth and young adults to community leadership positions and by building capacity in students to assume increased

responsibility for youth related activities such as i.e. Pink T-Shirt Day, DOVE Sleepover for Self-Esteem, and the 2010 Summer Arts (Film) Camp.

The Netagamiou CLC has also worked with partners to dovetail areas of need with partner strategic plans. To date, needs identified through the Netagamiou CLC have been included in a number of partner organization strategic plans, including but not limited to: the CSL Adult Education Centres, Coasters Association, Lower North Shore CEDEC and Tourism and Culture Chevery. This not only demonstrates collective ownership and capacity building but also may contribute to the CLC sustainability.

Despite all the publicity and promotion of CLC initiatives, concerted efforts have been made during service delivery to underline that programs and services are the result of the energies of multiple organizations. This approach is in line with the CLC “Integrated Model” structure that emphasizes a dovetailing of services among partners and the promotion of shared leadership versus claiming that programs are “CLC programs”. The Development Agent has consciously refrained from labeling initiatives as “CLC” to support the development of collective ownership and accurately reflect the situation – that in fact, the initiatives are the result of collective efforts and what we can achieve as a collective far surpasses what one individual or one organization can achieve. The Development Agent has functioned as a liaison, resource mobilizer, advocate, and coordinator in the partnership and service delivery development. This deference to emphasizing shared leadership may have had an impact on the student and community awareness and understanding of the breadth and depth of role and accomplishments of the Netagamiou CLC. Based on the responses of students in focus group sessions and anecdotal reports of adults from the community, there seems to be a better understanding

among those who have been actively involved as partners in the development of CLC related initiatives than among other members of the general public. The CLC model is a complex one to understand, especially if the approach taken is to “lead from behind” so that outcomes are not promoted as “belonging to” or explicitly the “result of” the Netagamiou CLC. Some community members have expressed an interest to better understand the role of the Netagamiou CLC and this is an area that could be further explored with students, parents, partners and the community as a follow up to this thesis and associated report.

Communication

Communication continues to be one of the biggest challenges for the Netagamiou CLC; specifically, communicating with students, parents and the community about the results and happenings related to the CLC. A number of strategies have been used including: posters, radio announcements, emails, memos sent home and through the mail to the parents/community, reports to the community at public meetings, CLC and community events, as well as through the school governing board meetings. A variety of communication strategies are needed to ensure that the broadest outreach is achieved. Ongoing reports to the school and community throughout the year and at the end of each year are recommended. One of the very important points to communicate to the school and community is that the majority of the resources and funding brought to the CLC community over the past three years has come from outside the community. It is important to convey this information as some community members had expressed concerns that the CLC might be a financial burden on local funding or compete with

existing organizations that required local funding. Over one million (\$1,000,000) in cash and in kind has been contributed by/to the school and community over the past three years; of this only \$550.00 cash has been collected in a community fundraiser specifically for the CLC sustainability. This provides confirmation that the CLC is not a financial burden on the community purse, but has instead helped diversify and leverage new funding sources for the benefit of the school and community organizations through the partnership structure at the core of the CLC.

A number of the students in the secondary 2-5 focus group did not know what a CLC was when asked. It is yet to be confirmed but it is interpreted that this number may reflect the experience of new students to our school and it is recommended that an orientation be done at the beginning of the school year to orient new students to the school setting. A number of initiatives have been put into place to respond to the needs of secondary students as suggested from the 2008 evaluation by the independent researcher attached to our CLC including: increased sports and arts programming, actively encouraging youth to express themselves and engage as active citizens in the community. A vision of how youth could be engaged in our community was identified through the 2009 CARS (Communities Achieving Responsive Services) consultation between youth and adults. In short, the adults and youth in the community created the following common vision, *“We want a community where youth are: involved as leaders, are trusted and respected, actively involved in volunteer opportunities in and outside school, supported by community, are partners in the success of the community, feel they belong, are creative and hopeful”*.

Parent responses from the CLC survey open ended questions confirm the need for more information but 75% of parents who responded report strongly agreeing/agreeing with feeling informed and 100% of parent respondents report getting their information from the CLC newsletter. This suggests that the CLC newsletter should be continued as a communication tool, but other communication improvements should be explored.

Responsiveness

What can be done to draw secondary students into the CLC and offer increased services to secondary students? More specifically, students whose parents do not live in Chevery seem to feel less ownership of the CLC. What would give them more ownership?

Responsiveness to student needs is an area of significant importance. Students participating in the TTFM surveys as well as CLC focus groups have been told that their input is essential and welcomed and the goal of soliciting their feedback is to ensure that the services offered meet their needs and interests. The school board TTFM Coordinator has suggested that, *“a follow up conversation could be held with students about the Tell Them From Me survey results. Included in this conversation could be a discussion about what the students would like to follow up on, how and what their role might be”*.

Including the students in these conversations and reflections is very important to engaging them in their school and community environment. Increased programming has been developed for students based on their feedback to date; some examples include arts, sports, career and literacy related initiatives and increased engagement of secondary youth has been observed.

Recommendations From Students

Students shared a number of recommendations for how the CLC and/or the programs and services offered through the CLC Partnership Network might be improved. “I would like the CLC to be more involved with the Sec 4 since they are coming from a different school. There was a lot of things that the CLC were doing but all the students didn’t get to attend all the different things that was for their group or category”, “I think that the CLC should involve the sec 4’s more because we don’t know what it’s all about because we missed out on most of the activities. We missed out on the VCN activities... and I don’t think that fair”, “I would like to have more video conferences during class”.

Support to other CLCs and Communities

The question of satellite schools and communities and their relationship to the CLCs is an interesting one but probably needs to be discussed at the larger level (school board, provincial network): As indicated in the Netagamou CLC Vision/Mission Statement it was the interest and intent to work with and share resources as much as possible with surrounding communities and other CLCs on the Lower North Shore. One of the first questions asked of the Netagamou CLC during a partnership table meeting in 2007 was “Will the Netagamou CLC work with other communities, especially those that do not have a CLC”? The answer was “Yes, as much as resources permit and when the Netagamou CLC has been established”. This came up again during a governing board meeting in 2009-2010. We are proud to report that the Netagamou CLC has helped put into place a number of initiatives this year such as the TD Bank Author public presentation in partnership with the Harrington Harbour Library; the Anti-Bullying Pink

Shirt Day at all schools in our municipality; and this summer the Chevery Summer Arts (Film) Camp for youth in our municipality. This could and should continue in the spirit of collaboration and in recognition of the importance of supporting youth, their families and communities from our feeder schools and neighbouring communities.

Curriculum Support and Community Based Learning

What can be done to support teachers further in their use of the VCN? Several strategies were put into place to assist in the use of the VCN as a curriculum support tool, namely meeting with teachers to identify VCN and community based learning “wish lists”. Teachers have increased in their outreach to the CLC as a resource and are encouraged to continue to do so. The LEARN VCN Request Form developed by the CLC PRT can be integrated into future Netagamiou CLC VCN and student community based learning activities to help better link the videoconference sessions with the reform.

Parent and Community Understanding of the CLC Approach

Despite the number of programs, services and resources developed through the Netagamiou CLC partnership network, the level of participant and stakeholder understanding of CLC concepts, the roles the CLC plays in developing a common vision is not clear. Parents also reported an interest in and a need for more information about the CLC. It is recommended that the findings of this report be reviewed with parents and creative, effective, parent identified mechanisms be implemented to improve understanding of the CLC concepts. The impact of the CLC on parents is not clear and needs to be further explored.

Literacy Program

Although there have been many resources and services developed under the literacy program, a few new things were identified by teachers for the next school year:

1. Start a reading marathon where students would read as many books as they want in a month and write a short report on the books they have read and at the end of the month the student with the most books read would receive a prize.
2. Have the kids write short stories sometimes truth, sometimes fiction and the library would have made into a book.
3. Puppet theatre where kids make their own stories and put on a puppet show
4. Book club for adults where one person chooses a book and everyone reads it then they get together and discuss it.
5. Monthly class book reviews with the Librarian.

5.4 Limitations

It has been somewhat of a challenge to coordinate feedback from students, teachers, parents, and partners for the CLC evaluation. These persons have been asked to complete surveys and interviews for the Netagamiou CLC (as is required by the CLC project), by the independent research team, the Quebec CLC Provincial Resource Team, Tell Them From Me online student surveys, as well various partner surveys for programs and services delivered. This feedback is essential not only for exploring the impact of the services developed and delivered but also to obtain student, teacher, parent and partner input on how services might be further improved. However, there has been definite overlap in the type of questions asked. The Netagamiou CLC has endeavored to adjust the CLC evaluation questions and process for the benefit of respondents by limiting the interviews to avoid respondent fatigue. Data has been collected and will be presented to the CLCs in the fall of 2010. It is suggested that Netagamiou CLC partners could be interviewed at this time to discuss and further validate the results of the report.

It has been a challenge, albeit a positive one, to accurately reflect the breadth and depth of outcomes associated with the development and implementation of the Netagamiou CLC over the past three years. The vast number of initiatives that have emerged, the number and diversity of partnerships as well as the complexity in their functioning would be a challenge for an experienced researcher to analyze, let alone a novice researcher. In the spirit of being a learning community, all who read this thesis and the associated report are welcome to discuss and debate it. Despite the gaps in data collection and analysis and difficulty triangulating the results, this thesis and the

associated report are respectfully and humbly presented with the hope that a critical analysis of the findings by stakeholders will contribute to an even deeper understanding of the meaning and the impact of the Netagamiou Community Learning Centre as an individual and collective entity.

5.5 Conclusion

The Netagamiou CLC set a goal of becoming a catalyst for positive change in our school and community. At the launch of the Netagamiou CLC in January 2007 a parent was asked, “What will make the CLC a success?” to which the parent replied, “If the CLC gives the school and community what it wants and needs”. The findings from this thesis suggest that the Netagamiou CLC has in fact responded to the identified needs of youth and adults in our school and community. This is evidenced not only by the increased awareness of and access to desired resources, the increased engagement of youth, adults, parents, and partners in lifelong learning (formal and non formal), the various community and economic development initiatives, but most importantly by the positive changes in youth attitudes and behaviours towards learning, well being and success. By working together the Netagamiou CLC partnership network can continue to support the school by helping to create the conditions that contribute to student success and well being and support the community by helping to bring to Chevery and the surrounding communities, new resources for lifelong learning and community development.

The Netagamiou CLC is not a single entity, nor a single person. The Netagamiou CLC is a dynamic, responsive resource and network of people from all ages and backgrounds that succeeds by working together collaboratively and creatively to support and promote lifelong learning, growth, activity, services and exchanges that meet the diverse needs of students, the whole community and all others involved. This thesis and the associated report on the evaluation process of the CLC have provided a snapshot of the outcomes of the first three years of the Netagamiou CLC and acknowledges that there are a number of limitations to the report as well as many additional areas to address in an effort to be responsive to the success of our youth as well as the needs and interests of the community.

It will be important to review the findings of this thesis with partners and to engage in a collective dialogue about the impact of the Netagamiou CLC partnership network from their perspective as well as the impact of the Netagamiou CLC on their respective organizations. This dialogue could have important implications on the findings in terms of policy and practice. Although the findings must be reviewed with partners and there are many areas to be improved, more data to be collected, analyzed and learned from... it is arguably fair to say that the Netagamiou CLC has successfully moved towards achieving its desired “theory of change” in the majority of output areas for the period between 2007/2008 and 2009/2010.

Rural communities are struggling with increasing depopulation as young and old leave to seek education and employment in urban areas, which in turn is contributing to the decreased capacity of the rural communities to survive. This is particularly true for the rural English-speaking minority communities of Quebec and even more so for the

remote, isolated communities of the Lower North Shore, which are being recognized as areas that require urgent development to sustain the viability of the communities and the well being of those living there. An educational paradigm shift and creative solutions are desperately required that reflect and respect the learning realities and capacities of the people in these remote, rural communities in their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

The Quebec Community Learning Centre program represents a tangible and positive example of progress towards operationalizing this shift. Given the strong history of resilience, resourcefulness, community spirit, and collaboration between the school and its community, this CLC initiative will undoubtedly help to further weave the threads of lifelong learning into the fabric of the community creating a vibrant tapestry of community learning and development.

One of the unexpected outcomes that developed as a result of the Community Learning Centres is an emerging partnership between the Concordia University School of Extended Learning, the Commission Scolaire du Littoral Community Learning Centre Network and Lower North Shore partners, with the support of the Quebec CLC Provincial Resource Team. In October 2009, the Commission Scolaire du Littoral CLCs were invited to attend a Post Secondary Access Conference and Charette (collaborative knowledge building process) in Toronto with the Quebec CLC Provincial Resource Team and the Concordia University School of Extended Learning. This three day conference, the meetings and consultations that followed has resulted in a collaboration that is hoped will support increased awareness, appreciation, access to and engagement in post secondary education among Lower North Shore youth, with the ultimate goal that these

youth will return to and reinvest in the Lower North Shore in the future. Concerted efforts are being made by all stakeholders to develop a collaborative and mutually beneficial relationship using an appreciative inquiry philosophy and practice. It is expected that a university assisted partnership such as this will contribute positively to student success, post secondary aspirations, increase knowledge, appreciation and engagement of university students and faculty with the region, and contribute to the Lower North Shore's sustainable development of its region.

Over the past three years I have witnessed in person the vision that I had of this small and remote but vibrant Anglophone community buzzing with energy and development opportunities in the face of crippling depopulation and a dwindling fishing industry. The intense energy and efforts were unquestionably there prior to the CLC, but it was the hope that the CLC would complement, contribute to and build upon these efforts in a positive, affirming way. So, it is with a sense of coming full circle that I conclude this story by looking forward to the school and community's continued positive and mutually beneficial relationship with existing partners and that the same relationships will be established and nurtured with many other new partners.

This thesis is a written representation of an intense and diverse research learning experience. Having embarked upon my research as a graduate student I had only a sense of the breadth, depth, trials and tribulations that research in the field site would bring. I have learned a great deal not only about the research process but about the subject of education for sustainable development, collaborative learning and the role of the community learning center as a potential catalyst for both. I am eternally grateful to the field site community, my academic advisor, and the many people who have contributed

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