

Community  
Portrait  
of Bonne-Espérance



September 2012

# Community Portrait of Bonne-Espérance

“Reaching beyond government to involve civil society and the voluntary and private sectors is a vital step towards action for health equity. The increased incorporation of community engagement and social participation in policy processes helps to ensure fair decision-making on health equity issues.” (WHO, 10).

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## BACKGROUND

### *A project on community development*

In 2009, the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) concluded an agreement with Quebec's Institut national de santé publique (INSPQ) to develop knowledge on the English-speaking population of Quebec as part of a program concerning health projects for official language minority communities. Gaining a better understanding of English-speaking communities in Quebec is one of the objectives of that collaboration, and it is explored here through the lens of community development.

#### Community development

has been defined as “a voluntary cooperative process of mutual assistance and of building social ties between local residents and institutions, with the goal being to improve physical, social, and economic living conditions.”<sup>1</sup>

The idea is for community members to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems by planning the development of all aspects of community well-being. The goal is to improve people's quality of life and to reduce social inequalities.

There are many different approaches to community development and many different groups that are engaged in it. Public health workers are one of those groups. In the Quebec context, community development has been identified as one of the main intervention strategies in public health. Many regional health boards and health centres are therefore engaged in community development.

The process of community development is grounded on several strategies:

- Community engagement
- Empowerment (of individuals and communities)
- Intersectoral collaboration and partnership
- Political commitment leading to healthy public policy
- Reducing social and health inequalities

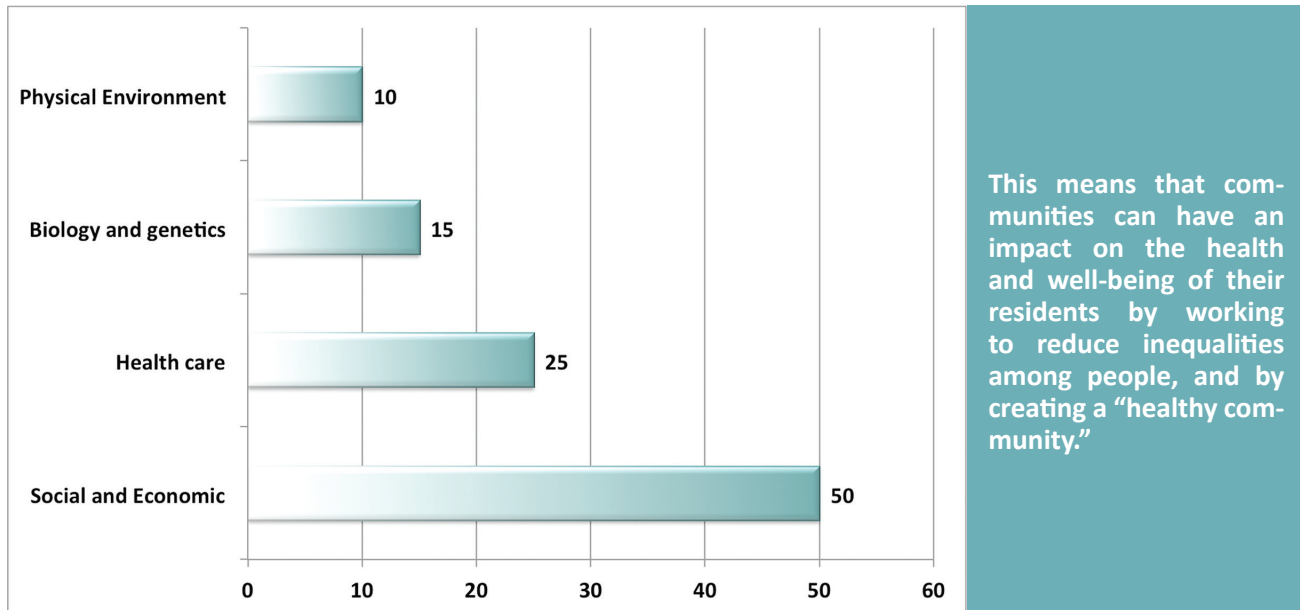
The underlying principle is that individuals and communities need to be empowered to take greater control over their health and future, with a view to reducing inequality among community members.<sup>2</sup>

### *Building healthy communities*

In keeping with the CHSSN's commitment to a population health approach that takes into account the range of health determinants, this project adopts a holistic view of health. This means examining ways to improve people's health, and the health of the community more broadly, through a socio-environmental approach, which considers health as a product of social and environmental determinants that interact to influence our health status.

The many different factors that contribute to health are referred to as health determinants. Health determinants are defined as the individual, social, economic and environmental factors that can be associated with specific health problems or with overall health status.<sup>3</sup> Although there are many health determinants—income and social status, social support networks, education, employment and working conditions, physical environments, biology and genetics, health services, and more—research shows that socio-economic and physical environments are among the main determinants of health.

Even within the same region, there are major differences between communities in terms of health, well-being, and quality of life, and some of these differences are related to varying social and economic conditions.



Lalonde, Marc (1974) *A New Perspective on the Health of Canadians*, Ottawa: Health and Welfare Canada

A healthy community is considered to be one in which:

- Residents have access to **quality drinking water, food and housing**.
- Residents **feel safe** in their community.
- Residents have **access to work** that satisfies them.
- Young **people want to stay** in the community or return there to raise their families.
- Residents enjoy a clean, safe, high-quality **physical environment**.
- The community has a wide range of well-coordinated **support groups**
- Residents maintain connectedness with their past, their cultural and biological heritage and with other individuals and groups, thereby developing a real **sense of belonging** to their community
- A wide variety of **social, sports and cultural activities** encourage residents to adopt active and healthy lifestyles.
- All residents have easy **access to public and private services**.
- Economic activity in the municipality has a **strong and diversified base**.
- Residents are **active participants** in the decisions that affect them.
- Residents have access to **appropriate health care services** and generally enjoy good health.<sup>4</sup>

A significant number of health determinants are beyond individual control and only the community can have an impact on them. Therefore, just as individual empowerment is important for health and well-being, so too is community empowerment. This means building the community capacity to structure itself in ways that help to improve the quality of life of its members. Beyond such traditional indicators as the economy and demographics, we must take into account factors such as democratic life, community dynamics and social capital, all of which testify to the health of a community as a living entity.<sup>5</sup>

## Access to health care among minority language groups

After social and economic conditions, health care is the next most significant determinant (estimated to account for about 25% of people's health). Having access to health and social services is therefore vital. However, many factors can play a role in facilitating or hindering access to such services. Research shows that language is one of these factors and can therefore be considered a health determinant.

Among English-speaking Quebecers, access to health and social services remains a challenge for many, in spite of the fact that rates of bilingualism in this group are on the rise, and English speakers are more likely than other language groups to be able to converse in both French and English.<sup>7</sup> There is, as well, a wide variation in accessibility and quality of health and social services in English across the province.<sup>8</sup>



Photo: [http://phil.cdc.gov/PHIL\\_Images/](http://phil.cdc.gov/PHIL_Images/)

Language barriers can create inequalities in health status because problems in communication and understanding reduce the use of preventative services, increase the amount of time spent in consultations and diagnostic tests, and influence the quality of services where language is an essential tool—such as mental health services, social services, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Language barriers also reduce the probability of compliance with treatment and diminish the level of satisfaction with the care and services received.<sup>6</sup> Minority language communities often have greater difficulty obtaining services in a language they understand well, and even official language communities face barriers.

The Community Health and Social Services Network was founded in 2002 in response to these difficulties experienced by English-speaking communities. It was established to support communities in their efforts to develop community infrastructure and build strategic relationships and partnerships within the health and social services system to improve access to services.<sup>9</sup> In doing so it aims to support English-speaking communities in Quebec in their efforts to redress health status inequalities and promote community vitality. Through a series of projects and partnerships that link community and public partners, the CHSSN is working to strengthen networks at the local, regional and provincial levels in order to address health determinants, influence public policy and develop services.

How is it that a group that is the linguistic majority in all other provinces (indeed in North America as a whole) needs such support? The situation of English-speaking Quebecers has changed over recent decades and a better understanding of those transformations can help shed light on current realities.

## Changing realities among English speakers in Quebec

Since the British Conquest in 1759, the English-speaking population of Quebec has experienced significant demographic, political and economic changes. Following the defeat of the French forces, increasing numbers of English speakers came to settle in what is now Quebec. While by no means were all these settlers well-off, historically the English-speaking population has been well-represented among Quebec's economic and political elite. The position of English speakers remained strong until at least the mid-20th century, however changing political circumstances led to an increasing outflow of English speakers from the province and a decline in the vitality of some of the communities they composed. Thus, from 1971 to 2001, the population who spoke English as their mother tongue

dropped by 25% and its share of Québec’s population fell from 13.1% to 8.3%. Meanwhile, the French-speaking population rose slightly (from 80.7% to 82.5%) while speakers of other languages almost doubled their share of the total population (from 6.2% in 1971 to 10.3% in 2001).<sup>10</sup>

However, over the 1996 to 2006 period, the English-speaking population in Quebec grew by 68,880, while its share of the provincial population was slightly higher in 2006 than it had been in 1996. The 2001-2006 period was one of growth for most English-speaking regional populations, with only the English-speaking groups in Côte-Nord and Gaspésie - Îles-de-la-Madeleine showing a decrease in size over that period. Relative to the total population, only Estrie and Laurentides experienced a drop in their share of the regional population. The regions in which the English-speaking population grew most were Montreal, Laval, Montérégie and the Outaouais.

Changes in Size and Proportion of English-speaking Population, 1996-2006<sup>11</sup>

Region	Size of English-speaking population			Proportion of regional population		
	1996	2001	2006	1996	2001	2006
Province of Quebec (total)	925,840	918,955	994,720	13.1%	12.9%	13.4%
Bas-Saint-Laurent	933	820	1,295	0.5%	0.4%	0.7%
Saguenay – Lac-Saint-Jean	1,795	1,765	1,830	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%
Québec - Capitale-Nationale	12,745	11,065	11,840	2.0%	1.8%	1.8%
Mauricie et Centre-du-Québec	6,033	4,885	4,995	1.3%	1.1%	1.1%
Estrie	24,770	23,390	23,580	9.1%	8.4%	8.0%
Montréal	560,813	563,940	595,920	32.1%	31.6%	32.7%
Outaouais	53,863	53,945	58,720	17.6%	17.2%	17.4%
Abitibi – Témiscamingue	6,363	5,315	5,355	4.2%	3.7%	3.8%
Côte-Nord	6,100	5,740	5,630	6.0%	5.9%	5.9%
Nord-du-Québec	12,080	14,385	16,945	31.5%	37.4%	42.8%
Gaspésie - îles-de-la-Madeleine	10,580	9,740	9,505	10.2%	10.2%	10.2%
Chaudière-Appalaches	3,340	2,685	3,705	0.9%	0.7%	1.0%
Laval	50,713	53,385	68,460	15.5%	15.7%	18.8%
Lanaudière	8,850	8,215	10,115	2.4%	2.1%	2.4%
Laurentides	31,213	30,565	33,175	7.3%	6.7%	6.6%
Montérégie	135,653	129,125	143,645	10.9%	10.2%	10.7%

But what is an “English-speaker”? The English-speaking population of Quebec includes citizens throughout the province who choose to use the English language and who identify with the English-speaking community. For some of those people English is their mother tongue, while for others English is the first official language they speak, and their mother tongue is a language other than English or French. In areas with high levels of immigration (notably in the Montreal area), the decline of the English-speaking population has been mitigated by some of these Allophones who speak English as a second language.

The English-speaking community has always been diverse in its make-up (originally comprising English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish, Catholics, Jews and various Protestant denominations, among others), and that diversity has increased over time to encompass people from a broad range of origins around the world. Today the English-speaking community is made up of many sub-communities that are multicultural and multiracial.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the contexts in which they are located vary greatly. **While the majority of the population with English as their first official language lives in the Montreal area (about 80%),<sup>13</sup> many English-speaking communities are**

located in rural or remote areas of the province. In some cases, English speakers are a very small proportion of the local population, while in other municipalities they may represent a significant percentage, or even a majority.

These changing demographic realities present a number of challenges to English-speaking communities, such as the issues related to an aging population and to outmigration among caregivers and youth. For example, among the population who speak English as their mother tongue, 8.3% left Québec for the rest of Canada between 1991 and 1996, and that percentage rose to 8.9% between 1996 and 2001. The rates for the total population were only 1.6% and 1.7% for those periods. Younger English speakers were the most likely to leave the province: 15.8% of those between 25 and 34 years old moved away, while fewer people age 65 and over left.<sup>14</sup> This means that the **generations that represent the future of their communities and can take care of ageing relatives are often not around to do so. Those who stay can be overburdened with care-giving, and the age structure of the community becomes skewed towards the older age groups.** The impact on health and the need for services can be significant.

Another challenge is the socio-economic status of English speakers in Quebec. Although poverty does not affect all English-speaking Quebecers, it is a reality for many, and the gap can be significant between French and English speakers. For instance, in some regions, English-speaking families are more likely to have a low income compared to their French-speaking neighbours. The same is true for educational attainment: **in some regions English speakers are less likely than their French-speaking peers to have completed high school or to have pursued post-secondary education.**<sup>15</sup>

**These issues are good indicators of demographic vitality**, an important dimension of community health. Demographic vitality refers to community characteristics such as the rates of ageing and unemployment, the proportion of caregivers to seniors, population size, and in the Quebec context, level of bilingualism.<sup>16</sup> Understanding demographic vitality allows health care workers, municipalities, policy makers and community residents to plan properly for services, activities and programs which will meet the needs of the community. For example, when a community has a large proportion of seniors the burden of care is greater on the care-giving generations, and steps may need to be taken to address the needs of both seniors and their care-givers. Or **when a community is losing its population, community services and institutional structures lose vital human capital and social networks are eroded, so planning needs to focus on strengthening the social fabric.**

This project is being carried out within the context of these transformations, and we therefore aim to document and illustrate the wide diversity of English-speaking communities in Quebec. This is being done through community portraits.

## *Six portraits of English-speaking communities in Quebec*

In order to get a more detailed understanding of current realities in English-speaking communities, this action research project adopts a participatory method by which a “portrait” is drawn of the community. Six of the CHSSN’s Networking and Partnership Initiatives chose one community in their area to participate in a process aimed at developing a portrait of that community. In keeping with community development principles, this project is carried out in the spirit of community-based participatory action research. In practice this means that the work is centred on the community (village, neighbourhood, community of identity), involves community members in the process, aims to inform action (future directions for policy, programs, and projects), and involves the systematic collection of information. It is predicated on the conviction that the community is the expert on itself. Through participatory action research, participants develop knowledge, the ability to think critically, and a culture of learning. Communities are then better able to identify and develop local solutions to local problems. Researchers who work with this



method find that individuals and communities can be empowered through the process.<sup>17</sup> Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions that build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional contexts which govern the use of these assets.

In choosing the communities to involve in this phase of the project we aimed for diversity. Some communities are in urban, multicultural environments, others in rural, small town communities, and others in remote communities of Québec. In some places English speakers are a very small percentage of the population; in others they represent a larger proportion. Some communities are thriving while others are more vulnerable. Consideration was also taken for local interest and capacity for being involved in doing a community portrait. In some cases a community was chosen because the Networking and Partnership Initiative (NPI) coordinator or host organization felt it was a good opportunity to reach out to that community and get to know it better. In other cases, there was a convergence of interests that made it a good time to bring together stakeholders and pool knowledge and resources, for instance, as a municipality developed a family and seniors policy, or as a health centre assessed the needs of the English-speaking community.

The six communities selected for this phase of the project are as follows.

Community	Region	Regional Association
Sutton	Montréal-Est	Townshippers' Association
St-Leonard	Montréal-Est	Réseau de l'est de l'île pour les services en anglais (REISA)
Laval	Laval	Youth and Parents AGAPE Association Inc.
New Carlisle	Gaspésie	Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA)
Sept-Îles	Côte-Nord	North Shore Community Association (NSCA)
Bonne-Espérance	Basse-Côte-Nord	Coasters Association

The method for completing the community portraits is inspired by various approaches used by groups active in community development, notably in the Healthy Communities movement (Réseau québécois de Villes et Villages en santé), among municipalities and by public health boards. There are several steps to completing these portraits. The first is to engage local stakeholders in the process. The second is to gather existing data, in the form of statistics, past reports and other information on the community. The third step is to obtain qualitative data via a town hall meeting (community consultation) where various themes are discussed and community members are asked to share their perspectives on their community. In some cases, in order to ensure that all perspectives are heard and a wide range of people are contacted, focus group interviews or individual discussions may be held with other community members.

**The information gathered is then analyzed and summarized by theme, focusing in each case on the community's assets, and the challenges it faces as concerns social and community life, the economy and incomes, education, the environment, and health and well-being.** The information is then summarized and a portrait drawn up, after which it is validated with community members and other stakeholders. This portrait presents the result of that process. The portraits can then be used to plan actions based on local realities, as defined by community members. Since each community is different, the way of addressing issues will necessarily vary, as will outcomes.

## BONNE-ESPÉRANCE:

Old Fort Bay, Saint Paul's River and Middle Bay

### *One municipality, three villages*

Bonne-Espérance is a municipality on the Lower North Shore in the Côte-Nord administrative region. It is located just west of the Labrador border. The Lower North Shore, commonly referred to as “the Coast,” consists of fifteen villages grouped together into five municipalities, plus two First Nations communities (Pakua Shipi and Unamen Shipu). The municipalities include the following villages:

- Blanc-Sablon: villages of Brador, Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon and Blanc-Sablon
- Bonne-Espérance: Old Fort Bay, St. Paul's River, Middle Bay
- Côte-Nord-du-Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent: Chevery, Tête-à-la-Baleine, Harrington Harbour, Kegaska, La Romaine
- Gros-Mécatina: La Tabatière, Mutton Bay
- Saint-Augustin : St. Augustine

#### Map of the Lower North Shore



The municipality of Bonne-Espérance is made up of three villages: Old Fort Bay, St. Paul's River and Middle Bay. All three communities are accessible via Route 138 from Blanc-Sablon to the east but have no road access to the west. Most communities are therefore accessible only by plane, by boat during the summer, or by snowmobile in the winter, weather permitting. It is a region of rugged terrain and harsh climate, not unlike that of Newfoundland and Labrador. It boasts a magnificent landscape rich in wildlife and natural resources.

Image: theLowerNorthShore.com

These communities stretch over 550 kilometres of coastline. The Lower North Shore is considered remote because there is no road access from the rest of Quebec to the east of Natashquan, with the exception of a road between Blanc Sablon and Old Fort, as well as a few small sections linking two villages together.

The village of Old Fort Bay is the most westerly community in the municipality of Bonne-Espérance. It has a population of 347. It has a community hall, an elementary school, a church, a fish plant and a few businesses.

The town of St. Paul's River is located between the communities of Old Fort Bay and Middle Bay. It has a population of 468. It houses the Bonne-Espérance municipal office, a high school, two churches, the offices of Coasters Association, a community hall, a baseball field, a track-and-field facility, a community learning centre, a fish processing plant, and several businesses. It also has a post office, a CLD branch office, a museum, a fire station, and two daycares.

Middle Bay is the most easterly village and has a population of thirty-two permanent residents. There is an interpretation centre that is open seasonally, a fish plant that is open sporadically, a church and a community hall.

# *Historical Roots of the Lower North Shore and Bonne-Espérance*

The Quebec part of the Labrador coast that extends from Blanc-Sablon to Kegaska has been occupied over the last nine thousand years, but until the 19th century, not on a permanent basis.<sup>18</sup> The people who came to the region were from diverse cultural backgrounds, beginning with the ancestors of the First Nations and Inuit. A series of nomadic peoples occupied the region, beginning with a group known as the Maritime Archaic people. Many other groups followed over time, leading to the Inuit and the Innu who lived in the area when the first Europeans arrived.

**The territory has shaped the way in which people have inhabited this land, and their relationship to the land has centered on the cycle of the seasons and the natural riches that could provide a livelihood, including fish, aquatic mammals (seal and whales), fur bearing animals, birds and forest resources. This has not however meant that the region has been cut off from the rest of the country or from world events; to the contrary, its history is intimately linked to events beyond its borders.**

The first Europeans known to have travelled to the Lower North Shore were the Vikings, prior to the “discovery” of the Americas by Christopher Columbus. These people (and those who came later) were all drawn to the region by an abundance of natural resources.

## *EUROPEAN CONTACTS*

The Native peoples first had contacts with Europeans well before the arrival of Jacques Cartier. Fishermen from Brittany, a province in northern France near the English Channel, began making regular trips to the Labrador coast in the early 16th century, fishing for cod in the Strait of Belle Isle and westward along the coast from Blanc-Sablon to Kegaska. Indeed, some claim that Blanc-Sablon, among other places, was named by Breton fishermen and echoes the toponymy of their country. The Breton fishermen typically left their home province in April or May, arriving in the Strait of Belle Isle and westward along the Labrador coast in the beginning of June. Each vessel chose a harbour, often resulting in disputes for the best fishing sites. Cabins were then erected near the shoreline to house the men and store the supplies.

**The fishermen would also built stages or wharves, as well as flakes on the shore to dry the fish after it was salted. In his journal of 1534, Jacques Cartier took note of the “great fishing” done by the Breton in Bradore Bay. The fishing season lasted to the end of August, but the fishermen often stayed on the coast until the end of September to complete the drying and melting operations.**



Photo: [theLowerNorthShore.com](http://theLowerNorthShore.com)

During this time spent on the shore, they had sustained contacts with the Natives. In the context of an increased demand for furs in Europe, trade with the Natives, who were interested in obtaining metal goods, came to have considerable economic importance. The fishermen paid the costs of the voyage with the cargo of fish, and the furs provided a profit.

The Breton were not the only ones to exploit the rich maritime resources of the region. Basque fishermen from both France and Spain were also involved in the coastal fishery since 1525, if not earlier. Initially drawn to the region by the cod, they quickly realized the commercial potential of the numerous whales along the coast and developed an important whale fishery

over the sixteenth century. At that time, the oil obtained by rendering the whale blubber was used to light much of Europe, including London and towns in Flanders. Archeologist James Tuck compares the whale-oil industry of four hundred years ago to the imminent oil boom in today's Newfoundland.

Like their Breton counterparts, the Basque whalers' first task once they arrived on the Coast was to find a well protected harbour where the crew could set up a whaling station. This would consist of shelters for rendering the blubber into oil and residences for the crew members. Middle Bay was one of the places where the Basque established such a whaling station. The crews generally used the same harbour for several consecutive years. From the early 1540s to the mid-1580s, there were at times **“well over a thousand Basques living and working for at least six months of the year in various ports.”** The Basque and the Native people not only traded together but it seems that the latter were included in some activities related to the whaling industry, among them members from the Innu nation that had learned some Basque language. Whaling was carried on until the end of the sixteenth century, then declined due to a combination of factors, including the embargo of Basque ships by the Spanish navy, strong Dutch and English competition, continual conflict with the Inuit, overfishing of the whales, and the growing strength of New France.

## NEW FRANCE

In 1533 Jacques Cartier was selected by the King of France for a voyage of discovery. He arrived on the Labrador coast in May of 1534, after having spent a dozen days in what would be called “new found land.” **He claimed the territory he explored for the King of France and called it “New France.” It is rumoured that Cartier erected the first cross claiming the land in the area of Baie des Rochers, about 15 km from what is now Old Fort Bay.**

The growing strength of New France brought significant changes to the Coast. This new power was intimately linked to the development of the fur trade. In order to gain exclusive control over this activity, the French government excluded Breton and Basque fishermen from trading furs with the Natives. At the same time, France began to send governors and viceroys to its newly created colonies. The beginning of the seventeenth century was also the time when monopolies started to be allotted to trading companies. On the Coast, the Compagnie des Cent-Associés was given a monopoly on all trade (except fishing, which French subjects other than the grantee were allowed to pursue) as well as the right to concede land in seigneurial tenure.



Seal Fishery. Photo: [theLowerNorthShore.com](http://theLowerNorthShore.com)

Between 1660 and 1760, the Company granted some concessions on the area between Kegaska and Blanc-Sablon to individuals who, most often, established posts to conduct the fur trade as well as seal and salmon fishing. There is historical evidence that such concessions were awarded and exploited on the territory on Bonne-Espérance during the 18th century. Indeed the territory of Bonne-Espérance was part of a new seigneurie from the year 1706 when Amédée Godefroy, sieur de Saint-Paul, was granted a concession on the bay and the river called Quitzezaqui.<sup>19</sup>

We don't know exactly what activities took place in St Paul's River under the French Regime. At that time, most of the grantees operated their enterprises from Quebec City. Research indicates that in the spring, they sent a vessel filled with trade goods, employees and fishing gear from Quebec to the posts on the Coast. After arriving, the men would set about hunting seals and once the hunting season ended they turned their attention to the salmon fishery. The fishermen also traded furs with the Natives. In the fall, the vessel returned to Quebec with the men and their catches. Later, some fall and winter sealing was also done at some posts.

With the fall of Montreal to the British forces, in 1760, many of the French entrepreneurs who had operated sealing posts along the coast returned to France: their departure opened the region to newly arrived English-speaking merchants. Many took possessions of the same seigneuries and concessions that had previously been managed by the French. In 1781, the St Paul's River seignury was acquired by two brothers, Philip and Nathaniel Lloyd. A great seal fishing activity developed. In the 1960s there were still remains of it: the oral tradition carried the memory of an important fishing post near Bonne-Espérance, and all the passes near this islet were blocked by nets that were attached to the shore with big iron rings.<sup>20</sup> From about 1805 onward however, the Labrador New Concern company which owned many of the posts experienced a series of bad seal-fishing seasons, then declared bankruptcy in 1820.

This was the end of the big concessions era that characterized both the French and English regimes. The departure of many of the merchants that had previously owned the posts along the coast paved the way for permanent settlement in the region. During the course of the 19th century, successive waves of people were to settle a narrow strip of the coast between the Natashquan River and the Labrador border.

## *THE PIONEER SETTLERS*

After the Labrador New Concern Company went bankrupt, many posts were put up for sale and the land became available for settlement.<sup>21</sup> The formerly seasonal fishermen who had previously worked for the Company or the merchants were able to purchase title over the fishing stations and gradually began to settle permanently in the region. In the Bonne-Espérance area, Nathaniel Lloyd sold the majority of his posts between Bradore "bull" and Baie-des-Rocher "bull". He kept his property at the mouth of the river where he continued to fish salmon.

The Goddards and the Chevaliers seem to have been among the first to settle in Bonne-Espérance. John Goddard came directly from England and established himself in Old Fort. He was joined by his nephew a few years later. Both married Inuit women from St Paul's River (who were mother and daughter). After working for Lloyd, John Goddard Jr. bought the Bonne-Espérance post from him in 1825. The Chevaliers are also among the first families to settle in St. Paul's River. Coming from Jersey, they settled in Bradore at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

From 1830 to 1855 several dozen French-Canadian families settled on the Lower North Shore. They came mainly from Quebec City and the south shore (Bellechasse, Berthier, Montmagny, L'Islet), attracted by the coastal resources and the prospect of being their own boss. Some of these families arrived in Bonne-Espérance: the Blais, Lessards, Lévesques, Giguères, Desmarais, Samsons. However, many left in the early 1860s and only a minority stayed in the region.

A third wave of immigration took place from the mid-nineteenth century which resulted in the arrival and settlement of many families from Newfoundland. At that time, two companies from St. John's had important installations at Caribou Island and Bonne-Espérance. They hired fishermen from many places in Newfoundland: Boone Bay, Baie-des-Roberts, Conception Bay, Harbour Grace, Hope Point and Corner Brook. After a few seasonal stays, many decided to live permanently in the region. It is at that time (1860-1895) that the Keats, Roberts, Buckles, Griffins, Dunns, Spingles and Thomas settled in



Photo: [theLowerNorthShore.com](http://theLowerNorthShore.com)

Bonne-Espérance. By the end of the century, few new families arrived, due to a decline in the fisheries along the coast and an economic depression, which forced many families who had settled in the region to go back to the west coast of Newfoundland, where they originally came from. It was during the 19th century that a permanent population was established in Bonne-Espérance, formed by a limited number of families whose descendants now represent a large proportion of the current inhabitants.

## *MIXED ANCESTRY*

Anthropologists have noted the Inuit ancestry of many residents of the Lower North Shore.<sup>22</sup> Calculations made between 1965 and 1968 showed that about 17.6% of the population on the Lower North Shore had Inuit ancestry. Most were in St-Augustine, Old Fort, St-Paul's River, and La Tabatière, where over a third of the population had Inuit ancestry. The immigration of Inuit to the Labrador coast seems to be related to the multiplication of seal and salmon fishing posts after the coast was opened for free settlement in 1820. This brought significant immigration during the 1830s and 1840s. The Inuit seem to have immigrated around the same time as permanent settlements began in the area.

In the St. Paul's River area there was an Inuit family composed of George Dukes and Jenny Menouque both of whom seem to have been "pure Eskimo." The couple had 3 children: Mary, George and Andrew, and only one grand-daughter, Lucy Anne Dukes, who married John Goddard Jr. The name was carried on by their sons Charles (married to Selena Langmaid in 1890) and William (married to Catherine Thomas in 1918). By the 1960s there were 10 families descended from them (Goddards, Roberts and Keats). Oral tradition has kept alive the memory of the Inuit ancestry in St. Augustine and St. Paul's River.<sup>23</sup>

**The heritage of the Inuit on the Lower North Shore is, however, not only genetic but cultural as well. Two cultural traits were borrowed from the Inuit: dog sleds and sealskin clothing. The Catholic missionaries used the dog teams and sleds (komatik) to visit the faithful in the winter, and people in dispersed villages used them to visit each other during the long winter months. They were used for transporting mail along the Coast and for hauling firewood.**



Photo: LowerNorthShore.com

In Old Fort Bay lived another family of Inuit ancestry: the descendants of Pierre Léon and Catherine Louis. Their daughter Catherine married James Féquet in 1887, the son of Francis Féquet. Their children John Alfred and Peter had descendants in 5 families in the 1960s. Four of their other children remained single and lived together (Irvin, Irene, George and Annie, born between 1894 and 1912). Another daughter, Élise-Anne married Frank Phillippe in 1886 and had at least 3 children between 1887-1902. In the 1901 census, the wife of another James Féquet and their children are listed as "red" but we do not know whether they were Indian or Inuit. A third Féquet, William, the son of Daniel and Emma Sellinger married Martha Nadeau in 1919, the great-granddaughter of Mary Kennedy and Napoléon Nadeau. Five of their children, including 4 sons, still had descendants in the 1960s.

The Lower North Shore was therefore a sort of melting pot of several different ethnic and cultural heritages: Montagnais (Innu), Inuit, French Canadian, English, Scottish, Irish, Jersey. In this it is different from other regions of Quebec. Of the 15 villages along the Lower North Shore, two are Aboriginal (Pakua Shipi and Unamen Shipu), two are mainly French-speaking (La Romaine and Tête-à-La-Baleine), and the rest are mainly English-speaking. Lourdes-Blanc Sablon is bilingual. As we can see, the mixed heritage of French and English speakers from different backgrounds and religious affiliations can still be seen today. It is also important to note that the geographic and cultural proximity to Newfoundland continues to contribute to the area's uniqueness.

## *The Coast lifestyle and economy*

The lifestyle of “Coasters” has changed over the past century, from an economy based partly on subsistence and partly on trade in maritime resources, to an economy that is even more integrated into the global market and dependent on government programs. Understanding those shifts is important in understanding the present-day situation. It can also help to grasp certain characteristics of the social organization in the region and provide clues to the unique circumstances in which the community can organize. In a context of a relative isolation, the history, culture and economy of Bonne-Espérance has been closely connected to the fisheries. The changes that have taken place in the management of marine resources have had an impact on people's living conditions, and they now face a drastic decrease in access to these resources combined with a drop in prices, leading many to abandon fishing as their main activity.

### *TOWARDS A FAMILY-BASED FISHING ECONOMY*

Like their predecessors, the first permanent settlers engaged in seal hunting, salmon fishing and trapping.<sup>24</sup> St Paul's River was known as one of the best places for trapping, although the fur trade was pursued on a limited scale, because the animals appeared in abundance only every four years. The settlers traded their surplus to itinerant traders who came to the coast in the summer months. The fishermen usually obtained their fishing gear on credit and paid for it in sealskins, seal oil and salmon once the season was over, hoping that their catch would allow them to obtain winter provisions as well, which depended on the success of the seal and salmon fishery. Some did well and earned a good living, but approaching the mid-1850s, the living conditions of many had declined and inhabitants were reported to be living in a state of great poverty.

As the inshore cod fishery developed, many became involved in this activity. Some were working for themselves, others as employees for the firms that had established in the region. Important commercial fisheries developed at that time around the dried salt cod, which was exported to various countries. One of the most famous posts at this time was founded by W.H. Whiteley on the island of Bonne-Espérance, where as many as 156 people were employed. In 1871, W.H. Whiteley invented the cod trap, a fishing device that would revolutionize the cod fishing industry, making it possible to catch hundreds of cod in a single day.<sup>25</sup>

At the beginning of the 20th century, many fishing companies ceased their operations. Independent family fishing consolidated along the Coast, along with the use of the cod trap. With the departure of the companies, fishing acquired more local features. The producers reorganized their relations of production around kinship and family ties.<sup>26</sup> Trade usually took the form of bartering, and the catch was used to obtain household supplies such as lard, beef and flour, as well as clothes, furniture and fishing gear. Fishermen generally bought their fishing gear on credit at the beginning of the season and paid it off in fish at the end. The capacity to procure winter provisions and supplies depended on the success of the fishery. Many lived in perpetual debt. Like situations elsewhere in the world, itinerant traders had no competitors and could increase the price of

their goods and lower the price paid for the fish. They often refused to give supplies on credit to the fishermen whose fishery had failed for consecutive years.

The success of the inshore cod fishery was tied to climatic conditions. If spring was late, the bait-fish remained offshore and so did the cod. Outfitted with small sailing craft, fishermen could not venture out to pursue the cod. When that happened, there was considerable privation, suffering and distress throughout the region. This vulnerability was not unique to the Lower North Shore, but it was no doubt made worse by the region's isolation. Before 1850, there were no services of any kind, be they schools, teachers, hospitals, physicians or nurses. The principal links to the outside world were the trading schooners that came from Quebec City and Halifax and visited the region between June and November. These vessels transported passengers, mail and supplies. During the winter, well into the twentieth century, the means of travel was a team of six or eight dogs with a komatik.

### *AN ANNUAL CYCLE MARKED BY TRANSHUMANCE, FISHING, TRAPPING, BERRY PICKING AND WOODCUTTING*

A particular lifestyle and pattern of spatial occupation developed in certain parts of the Coast.<sup>27</sup> In Bonne-Espérance, the majority of families owned both a summer and a winter dwelling. The summer house or fishing post was on an island or on some open and elevated spot along the shore. Winter quarters were located inland in more sheltered positions up the rivers and bays, where wood was more easily obtained. This has been called “transhumance” and has been part of the lifestyle since at least the 1850s when Abbé Ferland noted it in writing. It continued until the 1980s, when the modernization of fishing boats and the diversification of the economy rendered transhumance economically obsolete. However, many people continue to spend time on the islands during the summer.<sup>28</sup> Another characteristic of the local lifestyle is that families lived separated from one another. The closest neighbour, whether in summer or winter, would have been a kilometre or two away.<sup>29</sup>

People used the region's resources for their own subsistence. Traditional activities followed an annual cycle. In mid-April, or after school ended, families moved to the summer house by komatik. While preparing the upcoming fishery, they went ducking and collected seagull eggs. After the summer fishing, families would pick berries and process the fish. After returning to their winter home, they began cutting firewood, and then went trapping later in the fall. This led to significant cultural contacts between the settlers and the First Nations.<sup>30</sup> During the winter, the men hunted caribou and other game and repaired fishing gear. Winter was also the time of the year for families to visit distant friends and relatives.



Photos: [theLowerNorthShore.com](http://theLowerNorthShore.com) (left) and [Mary Richardson](#) (right)

This early lifestyle has had a lasting influence in the area. In St Paul's River, the summer posts have been passed on from one generation to another. Based on settlement patterns, fishing groups organized according to family relations and religious affiliation. This has led to a strong sense of family belonging and loyalty to one's family group. This has changed, however, with the decreasing role of the church, the arrival of non-denominational schools, and the creation of a single municipality including three villages.



## INCREASING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INTEGRATION

During the late 19th and early 20th century several shifts took place.<sup>31</sup> Many of the winter places were abandoned and people gradually settled closer together near services such as schools and medical facilities. Communications (telegraph, regular mail service) and transportation (steamship service) slowly developed. In addition, around the mid-20th century the influence of the itinerant traders decreased and that of government agencies increased.<sup>32</sup>

During the post-war period, the province went through a phase of industrialization. Fishermen, however, were faced with a deteriorating economic situation and did not succeed in drawing the state's attention to their problems. By 1950, with a population of 5,000, the Lower North Shore was among the poorest regions of the province. When mining began to expand in northern Quebec, many fishermen left their communities to build these new towns (Sept-Îles, Havre Saint-Pierre, Wabush, Shefferville, Labrador City). Once the mining centers were established, however, most of the migrant fishermen were not qualified for a permanent job and returned to their communities, where they combined small-scale fishing with income from various government work programs.



Photo: [theLowerNorthShore.com](http://theLowerNorthShore.com)

A major change in the economy and lifestyle took place in the 1960s with the arrival of motorized transport in the form of motorboats, cars, trucks, planes, snowmobiles and more. This brought more goods from the outside as well as more contacts with people from outside the region. People travelled more for studies, seasonal work or to visit relatives, and workers from other regions travelled to the Coast, including teachers, government employees and company workers. In addition, communications became more widespread, strongly influencing consumer habits.

The advent of a separatist government at the provincial level and the extension of the Canadian offshore limits in 1977 generated an entirely different context in which, suddenly, the Lower North Shore became the focus of a strong interest for both the provincial and federal governments. Between 1976 and 1985, government management of the fisheries was marked by disputes between federal and provincial governments, eventually resulting in federal jurisdiction over the fishery, in 1983.

The modernization and industrialization of the North-Atlantic fishery has had an impact on Bonne-Espérance. From 1975 to 1990 numerous government programs for boat construction, for purchasing engines and fishing gear, and for fish transportation and processing were implemented. Fishermen gained access to larger sums of money, the majority of the programs covering between 75% and 90% of the total loans required. More modern boats were introduced, fish processing was industrialized and the number of fishermen decreased. Radar, sonar and GPS systems became common.

By 1975, the community had gone from a family economy based on salt cod to an industrial economy promoted by the government in which fishermen's main role was to access the resource (not market it).<sup>34</sup> Another major change has been the snow crab fishery using longliners, which began around 1982-83. During this period, government subsidies for the crab fishery led to significant changes in the community, such as greater education and out-migration of youth related to higher income levels. The organization of fishing crews also changed around this time, although they generally remained based on family ties.

Before 1961 the Lower North Shore did not have any political status. The Conseil économique de la Basse-Côte-Nord was created that year, with the impulse of father Gabriel Dionne, from Tête-à-la-Baleine. This first regional organization led to the creation of a regional municipality for the Lower North Shore under the ministry of municipal affairs. The municipality had village committees with elected members, however authority remained in the hands of an administrator named by the Ministry.<sup>35</sup> The municipality of Bonne-Espérance was constituted in 1990.

## RECENT CHANGES IN THE FISHERIES AND SOCIOECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

The recent history of Atlantic Canada has been marked by the decline in the cod stocks and other marine resources. This has affected not only the economy but also the cultural heritage of the region.<sup>36</sup> In Bonne-Espérance, there was a complete closure of the cod fishery in 1993, which had the strongest impact on inshore fishers. Temporary income support measures were put in place and cod licenses could be bought back, however salmon fishermen had to sell back their licenses. Then in 2000, there was closures in both the cod and crab fisheries. There were only temporary income support measures this time, with no option for license buy-backs. These measures were for fishermen only, not fish plant workers or others affected. The cod fishery was re-opened in 2000, but in 2003 there was new moratorium on cod, and the crab fishery was closed in the region used by Bonne-Espérance fishermen, affecting 102 fishermen.<sup>37</sup>

The impact was drastic: 250 people in Bonne-Espérance were without work, affecting businesses, which in some cases had to let employees go.<sup>38</sup> Residents mobilized to obtain funds from Economic Development Canada and to lobby for support. Through courses, community members focused on ways to diversify the economy and develop a long-term vision.

**As one fisherman put it: I've been fishing even since I've been 10 years old for sure. Fished with my father. Started in a small boat. Quite a change. [...] If we had that technology we have now when the fish was thick... We can't miss them [the fish] now with the deep sounders and the fish finder we have aboard the boat. It's no problem at all to see them. Another technology is the GPS system. One time you could take a fog, leave the land and have no way to find your fishing gear. Lucky if you did. Now the weather has nothing to do with it unless it is too rough. It can be foggy and you can go out. Everybody is a good captain today. In my father's days, there were only few fishermen that would go out in the fog and look for their nets or trawls. Wasn't even a net then, was just traps, trawls lines and hooks and lines.**<sup>33</sup>



Photo: theLowerNorthShore.com

Both the crab and the cod fishery have since been reopened, but for small amounts. There are several fish factories in the area: in St. Paul's River (where they process mainly snow crab, cod, halibut, herring, mackerel and lumpfish eggs); in Middle Bay there is a factory that is not very active; in Old Fort Bay there is a plant that processes various sea products. Most of the product is sold internationally (USA, Japan, China). Prices and markets fluctuate quite a lot, creating uncertainty. Gas and oil prices are also higher on the Coast than elsewhere in Quebec.

With the decline in the fishery and several different moratoria, the region's economy has undergone many transformations. Many seek employment elsewhere, either on a full-time basis or seasonally. Some continue to earn a living off the fishery, but the conditions under which they do so have changed significantly in recent decades. The recent Plan Nord, proposed by Quebec's Liberal government, is part of this trend to capitalize on the natural resources of Quebec's north, including the Lower North Shore. How that might affect the region remains to be seen.

Various short-term projects were undertaken, including a boardwalk, a museum, genealogical work, and more. Lack of on-going funding, however, has made some of the projects difficult to maintain.



Photo: Mary Richardson

## *Population dynamics: outmigration, ageing and unilingualism*

The region's population has many characteristics that distinguish it from the rest of Quebec. First, there is a much higher proportion of English speakers than elsewhere, and second, there has been significant outmigration, particularly among younger age groups, leading to a larger proportion of seniors in communities.

### *LOWER NORTH SHORE*

Quebeckers whose first official language spoken (FOLS) is English represent 13.4% of the provincial population. On the Lower North Shore they account for 66.1% of the population, and 94.6% in Bonne-Espérance.

Another distinguishing feature is the very small populations along the Lower North Shore compared to the rest of Québec: the total population of the Lower North Shore was only 5,465 in 2006.

Like other communities on the Lower North Shore, Bonne-Espérance is different in many ways from other English-speaking communities in Québec, even those on the North Shore, in that the vast majority of the population is English-speaking.

#### Percentage of English speakers

	Quebec	RSS Côte-Nord	Lower North Shore (CSSS)	Bonne- Espérance (mother tongue)
<b>English FOLS</b>	13.4%	5.9%	66.1%	94.6%
<b>French FOLS</b>	85.7%	93.3%	30.6%	1.8%

Source: CHSSN 2010. Socio-Economic Profiles of Quebec's English-Speaking Communities and Statistics Canada, 2006 Community Profiles, Bonne-Espérance, Québec.<sup>39</sup>

According to community profile data provided by Statistics Canada, the population of Bonne-Espérance was 834 in 2006, 852 in 2001 and 906 in 1996. This represents a 2.1% decline in the regional population over a five-year period. The decline from the 1996 census to that of 2001 was 6.0%.<sup>40</sup>

**This represents a 7.95% decline in the regional population over a ten-year period. Compare this to the overall population of Quebec, which experienced a 5.7% increase in the population over the same time period.**

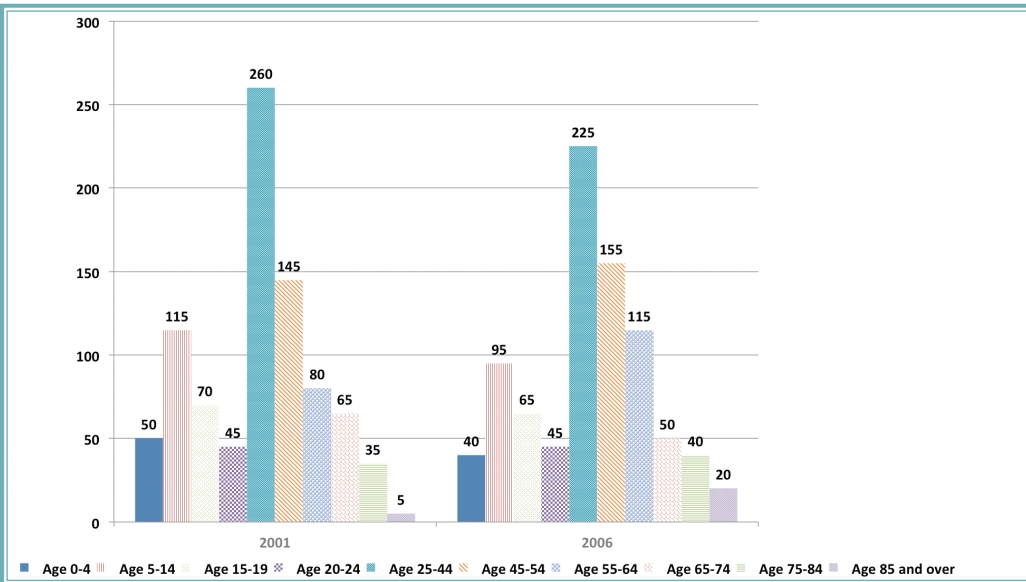
**Population change in Bonne-Espérance, 1991-2006**

Total population			
1991	1996	2001	2006
896	906	852	834
Population Change			
	1.1%	-6.0%	-2.1%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Community Profiles, Bonne-Espérance, Québec

The demographic profile of the community shows an ageing population, as the younger age groups (0-44) are decreasing, while people 45 years of age or older are increasing in number.

**Age structure in Bonne-Espérance**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Community Profiles, Bonne-Espérance, Québec

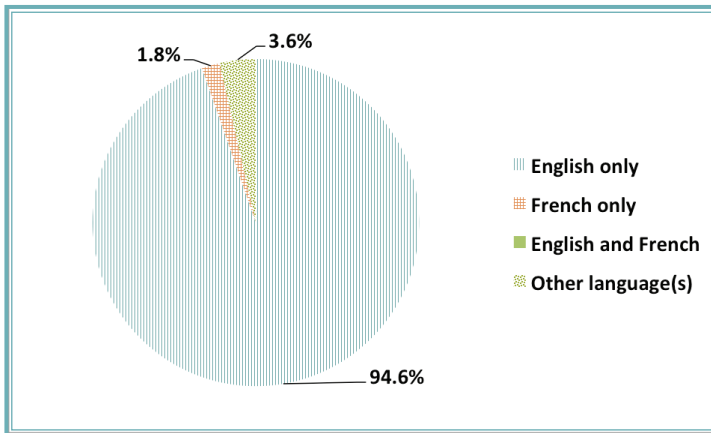
**Part of this demographic shift is related to the out-migration of young people from the Lower North Shore, an issue that is of concern to people from the region and is connected, in part, to the fact that many English speakers from the Lower North Shore do not speak French.**

## Language dynamics: a more unilingual English-speaking population

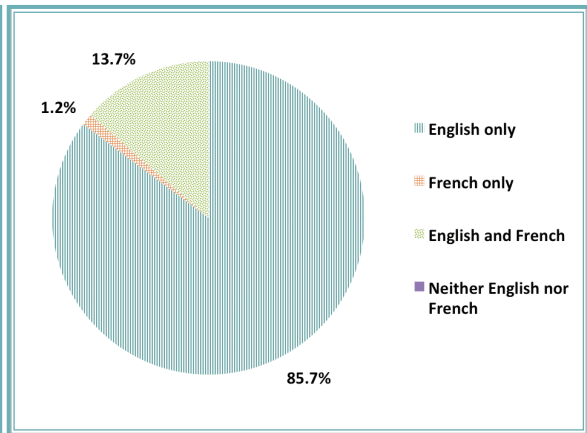
According to Statistics Canada, in 2006 almost 70% of English speakers in Quebec were bilingual and approximately 90% of English-speaking youth in Quebec were able to converse in both French and English at age 21. This is not the case on the Lower North Shore, or in Bonne-Espérance specifically, where English speakers are substantially less bilingual than in the province as a whole.

In Bonne-Espérance, almost 95% of the population speaks English as their first language and about 85% knows only English. Only 13.7% of the population knows both English and French.

Mother Tongue, 2006



Knowledge of Official Languages, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Community Profiles, Bonne-Espérance, Québec

This means that a large majority of the population are unilingual English speakers, in a province whose official language is French. Since employment opportunities are limited on the Lower North Shore, as we will see, many residents leave the region temporarily or permanently to find work. Yet many people cannot work in Quebec because of the difficulty working with French-speaking companies.

The explanation for these high levels of unilingualism includes the historical isolation of the communities on the Lower North Shore, including those that make up Bonne-Espérance. Particularly in the easternmost portion of the Coast, communication is easier with Newfoundland and Labrador than with the rest of Québec, be it by radio and television, or by road or ferry. Indeed, residents of this part of the Lower North Shore travel quite easily to Newfoundland and often opt to receive health care in Saint Anthony.<sup>41</sup>

At a youth consultation conducted in 2008 with 25 young people from along the Lower North Shore, being an English speaker was considered to affect their lives in a variety of ways. When they are in their home communities, since these are predominantly English-speaking, language is not an issue. However, when they leave the Lower North Shore for studies or work, language becomes an issue, since proficiency in French is often required. In addition, even in their home communities many programs, workshops and professional training opportunities are offered in French, and many job postings require applicants to be bilingual, creating barriers for many. **The youth recognize the impact language has on the present and future vitality of their communities, because they have limited choices in the area of post-secondary education, vocational training, adult education, career courses, and more.** In addition, the development of the tourism industry will also require people with language skills enabling them to socialize and converse with tourists from other parts of Quebec or other countries. Some youth therefore suggest finding ways to encourage young people to become bilingual, and to develop communities that are fluent in both languages. In particular, French-language training courses are needed.

# COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON BONNE-ESPÉRANCE

## Drawing a portrait of Bonne-Espérance: method and sources

From the perspective of a community development approach, it is important to engage and mobilize the population to get involved in issues that they care about. While statistics are a good starting point, and help to shed light on certain realities that affect a community, it is important to go beyond statistics and gather the perspectives of residents. To begin this process in Bonne-Espérance, the project leader (Mary Richardson) made an initial visit in April 2011. Coasters Association was the main contact organization because it sponsors one of the CHSSN's Networking and Partnership Initiatives and is connected to a vast range of initiatives along the Lower North Shore. It is a non-profit community organization that represents the interests of the Lower North Shore communities, so it is connected to many groups in the region.

During this visit various “stakeholders” were consulted. These are people or groups that have a particular interest in different aspects of community development. They included the mayor of Bonne-Espérance, a local CEDEC officer, a local economic development officer (Centre Local de Développement), a CSSS employee, the principal of the high school in St. Paul's River and elementary school in Old Fort, the youth coordinator for the Community Learning Centre, the facilitators for the PHASE program for the Junior Canadian Rangers, three members of the seniors club, and the mayor of Blanc Sablon. These meetings served to pool information that could be useful for the portrait and gauge the interests of these different groups. Various areas of overlapping interests included issues related to seniors' poverty, adapted transportation, air line costs and the cost of food. **The portrait was also seen as a way to provide further information for a family and seniors policy being drafted by the municipality.**

Then, during a second trip to the community, two community consultations were held: on May 25, 2011 in St. Paul's River, and on May 26, 2011 in Old Fort. We chose to hold separate gatherings in these two villages so that people would not have to travel in order to participate. It was hoped that more residents would attend in these circumstances. The invitation was extended to all community members. A total of about 12 community members attended: with one exception they were all women; ages ranged from mid-twenties to seventies; some were involved in municipal affairs, or church activities; three were from Coasters Association (the Executive Director, a health and social services development agent, and a coordinator); and others were simply there as members of the community. Although the number of participants is not high, those who attended are very active members of the community and volunteer on different committees. Their knowledge and diverse perspectives were therefore very valuable in providing a good overview. Given the size of the population, and the fact that the fishing season had just started and many adults had recently left the community to work elsewhere, turnout was considered good.

In drafting this portrait, we have also integrated information from past surveys and reports, existing statistics, historical information, and studies carried out by government agencies and academic researchers.

In the sections below, we will discuss the perspectives of residents of Bonne-Espérance regarding five themes, as they were discussed at the community consultations: community life, education, the economy, health and well-being, and the environment. The order roughly follows the theme's importance in determining health; since socio-economic conditions account for about 50% of people's health status, we present community life first, followed by education (which is closely connected to socio-economic conditions), and then the economy. Then we present the environment followed by health and well-being. In this section we highlight issues of health care and also discuss broader issues related to health such as lifestyle, habits, health problems that affect the population, and more.

In each case, we will highlight the community's strengths and challenges, and some perspectives for the future. A summary table is presented at the end of each section. This overview can be used to inform decision-making and to stimulate community engagement. The shaded box at the beginning of each section provides an overview of the importance of this aspect for community and personal health, based on scientific evidence.

## Community Life in Bonne-Espérance

*A strong sense of belonging and a concern for youth and seniors*

In this section we present the perspectives expressed by community members at the consultation held in May 2011 concerning social and community life in Bonne-Espérance, followed by some relevant statistics and perspectives for the future. A summary table brings together that information.

<b>Social Determinant of Health</b>	<p>Support from families, friends and communities is associated with better health. Support networks are important in helping people solve problems and deal with adversity. They contribute to an individual's sense of control over life circumstances. Support networks support a feeling of well-being and act as a buffer against health problems. In the 1996-97 National Population Health Survey (NPHS), more than four out of five Canadians reported that they had someone to confide in, someone they could count on in a crisis, someone they could count on for advice and someone who makes them feel loved and cared for. Some experts in the field have concluded that the health effect of social relationships may be as important as established risk factors such as smoking, physical activity, obesity and high blood pressure.</p> <p>The importance of the social environment can also be seen in the level of social cohesion in the broader community. Social cohesion refers to the willingness of members of a community to cooperate for the well-being of all, and it is known to exert a positive influence on personal health. The strength of social networks within a community are often referred to as civic vitality, and it is reflected in the institutions, organizations and informal giving practices that people create to share resources and build attachments with others. In addition, social stability, recognition of diversity, safety, good working relationships, and cohesive communities provide a supportive society that reduces or avoids many potential risks to good health. Social or community responses can add resources to an individual's repertoire of strategies to cope with changes and foster health.<sup>42</sup></p>
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The various organizations that serve the population of the Lower North Shore include: Coasters Association, the Centre local de développement, CEDEC, the Commission scolaire du littoral, the CSSS, Sûreté du Québec, the MRC, a local table for seniors, the Québec-Laborador Foundation, and more. These serve both French- and English-speaking Coasters, and some have official bilingual status, such as the CSSS and the school board.

### *BONNE-ESPÉRANCE'S STRENGTHS*

The community members who participated in the May 2011 consultation identified several strengths related to the social and community life of Bonne-Espérance. First, people **feel safe in their community**. Second, participants observed that people have a **strong sense of belonging** to their community. Third, there are **good support groups**. Participants pointed out that there are some **good leaders** but they are not necessarily engaged. And lastly, the amount of **musical talent** was felt to contribute positively to the social and community life of Bonne-Espérance. Currently some young people play music at the school regularly; this is a strength but also a potential that is not always realized.

Another asset is considered to be the young people who have **gone away to study in different areas** (such as biology, graphics and environmental studies). They are getting a broader, more diverse education and will be in a position to develop projects and work on the Lower North Shore, making a contribution to their home communities. These youth are good role

models and could encourage younger kids.

In terms of community life, many women know how to do **various crafts** such as knitting, quilting, sewing, and more. They could teach the younger generation and encourage them to value these arts.

Historically there has been a divide between Old Fort and St. Paul's, particularly among adults. However, participants believe that because the younger generations have gone to school together, and because they play together and visit each other's homes, they don't feel that divide as much. Still, some participants felt that there is some animosity between the villages and people sometimes will not go to the other village for activities.

Although it was not specifically mentioned at the consultation, the **Community Learning Centre** appears to be an asset to the social and community life of Bonne-Espérance as it provides a place for a range of different activities to be held, including physical and sports activities, music, games, cooking, a day care, a youth centre, a fitness room, intergenerational activities and more.

In one-on-one interviews, several people pointed out that one of the assets of the Coast is the **generosity of the people** and the help they will provide for those who need it, for example in the event of sickness. People all along the Coast will contribute to a fund to pay for travel to the city when a family needs it, or they will help to rebuild a burned down house. People have also been known to help pay for funerals. They hold bingos and raffles, put jars in grocery stores, and hold other fundraising activities. Some seniors in the community agreed that people from the Lower North Shore see their community as the whole Coast. When people travel for work they stay with families on the Coast and they go to great lengths to cook meals and organize before the person gets there.



Photo: Mary Richardson

This was echoed in an interview with employees of Coasters Association: people volunteer a lot on the Lower North Shore, to the point where they need to be able to secure positions and pay people so they don't lose them. Every week in the winter there are hockey games, carnivals, community suppers, and other community events, and people travel (by snowmobile) from all over the Lower North Shore to attend.

Many have noted that Coasters are very **resilient and proud** of the Coast culture. They identify first and foremost as Coasters.

All these participants felt that the Coast was a safe environment because of its isolation and small population, which make it a good place to raise children. They also appreciated the easy access to nature (for fishing, hiking, camping, etc.), to outdoor activities (snowmobiling, fishing, hockey and more) and to a gym. They also pointed out that all **Lower North Shore communities come together** to take part in and support events. The importance of **family ties and strong community bonds** was also mentioned, making people want to stay in the region or return to it.

**At a youth forum conducted in 2008, participants from all along the Lower North Shore (not just Bonne-Espérance) made many comments on the fact that from a young age they are taught to love and appreciate the region. There is a "traditional pride" in the culture and people are appreciative of their heritage, including skills such as cooking with local game, seafood, fish and berries.**

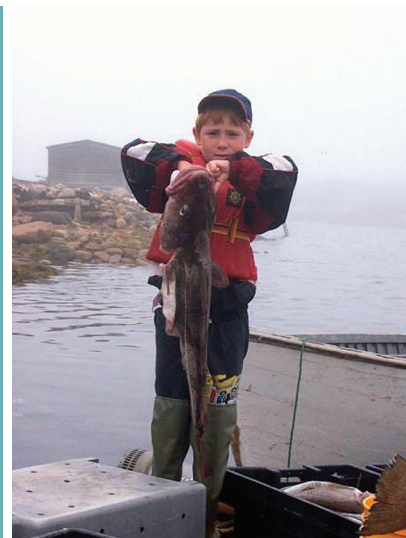


Photo: theLowerNorthShore.com



## CHALLENGES FACING BONNE-ESPÉRANCE

Currently about 47% of the community is over 50 years of age, and there are very few young people or babies. Because of the growing number of seniors, many of whom live alone, there is a **great need for day centres** where they can go during the daytime to participate in activities, socialize and have help with anything they may need. The participants also felt that the community has **lots of programs for youth, but not so many programs in place for seniors**.

In spite of the successes Bonne-Espérance has experienced with its youth, some challenges remain. Participants at the consultation continue to search for ways to involve the youth more, in sports and games, but also in church activities.



Photo: Mary Richardson

Some participants felt that **boys in particular need role models** who can give them some guidance. Some kids don't participate in activities because the parents do not want, or are not able, to drive them to the other village. This may point to a **need for transportation options**, but also to a **sense of divide between villages**.

In terms of community engagement, some challenges identified were a change in the “mind set of the population” which is less involved in the community. There is a need for more volunteers, and a loss of momentum and motivation. Some people feel that there is often criticism of committees, leading to a decline in the numbers of people getting involved.

Although people's sense of belonging is strong, some pointed out that **“you almost stay within your family, or clan.”** St. Paul's River has a reputation of being a “clique-y” community, but many say that this is not actually true, just a stigma.

Culturally, a challenge is the **gradual decline of musical traditions**, particularly in the context where many local musicians were never taught to read music. Although there are many musicians, they are not passing the knowledge down. Another challenge is that the children are not involved in what they would like to sing, particularly in church, and are therefore not motivated to learn music and practice it. The **lack of music teachers** who can engage young people and teach them how to read music and play different instruments constitutes a challenge for maintaining traditions and encouraging musical talent. Some residents believe that although roads and jobs are top priorities, arts and culture activities are also needed to bring the community together.

One very involved person pointed out at the consultation that **“I have no problem getting kids to volunteer, and I have no problem getting seniors to volunteer, but the people in our age group, it's hard.”**

Another challenge is that on the Lower North Shore **many parents leave their communities to seek work**, sometimes out of the province. For example, in Bonne-Espérance, about 90% of children had at least one parent gone, and about 15% had both parents gone.<sup>43</sup> During summer months, many children and youth did not have enough activities, but since 2006 the creation of KIDS summer camp for 4-12 years has filled that gap (KIDS stands for kindness, inspiration, determination, spirit).

**This leaves a high number of single parents for part of the year, causing stress and other difficulties, and in cases where both parents are gone, the children are left with grandparents or other caregivers.**



Photo: theLowerNorthShore.com

At the youth consultation conducted in 2008, participants identified various challenges that may also apply to Bonne-Espérance. The lack of sports and leisure activities was considered an incentive to leave, including shops, restaurants, movie theatres, concerts, fitness centres, theme parks, and more. The isolation, especially during winter months was also mentioned, as was the desire to encounter different cultures and experience diversity.

### *SOME STATISTICS ON SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE*

On the North Shore in general, people’s sense of belonging is strong: 76.6% of the population rated their sense of belonging as strong or very strong, compared to 55.5% in Quebec in general. On the Lower North Shore, this sense of belonging is even stronger: 91% of the population rated their sense of belonging as strong or very strong, and 43.2% rated it very strong. People with a very strong sense of belonging tend to be involved in their community, for example, by doing volunteer work. Of the North Shore sub-regions, the highest proportion of people who volunteer at least once a month in a not-for-profit organization is highest on the Lower North Shore (75.3 %) and on the upper North Shore (70.2 %).

**First, there is a great need for social solidarity in remote communities such as those on the Coast, where communications and travel are often difficult and people can be isolated for periods of time. Second, there tends to be high levels of social cohesion in smaller communities and people value their quality of life.**

#### Sense of belonging

	Quebec	RSS Côte-Nord	Lower North Shore (CSSS)
Strong or very strong	55.5%	76.6%	91%

Source: Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de la Côte-Nord, 2007. Rapport de l'Enquête Santé Côte-Nord 2005.

There are many reasons for this strong sense of belonging and community engagement.

Volunteering reflects the desire to maintain that quality of life and contribute to strengthening the social fabric.<sup>44</sup>

In order to get a sense of the level of social support that people have, we can look at the number of people in lone-parent families or living alone, as these people are less likely to have help with day-to-day tasks or on-going emotional support. Living with relatives may, on the other hand, provide greater social support.

In Quebec as a whole, English speakers are more likely to be living in a married or common-law family and less likely to be living alone. In the North Shore region and on the Lower North Shore, English speakers remain more likely to be living in a married or common-law family. However on the North Shore in general they are less likely than French speakers to be living alone, while on the Lower North Shore they are more likely. In Bonne-Espérance the percentage of lone-parent families is high compared to the rest of the province.

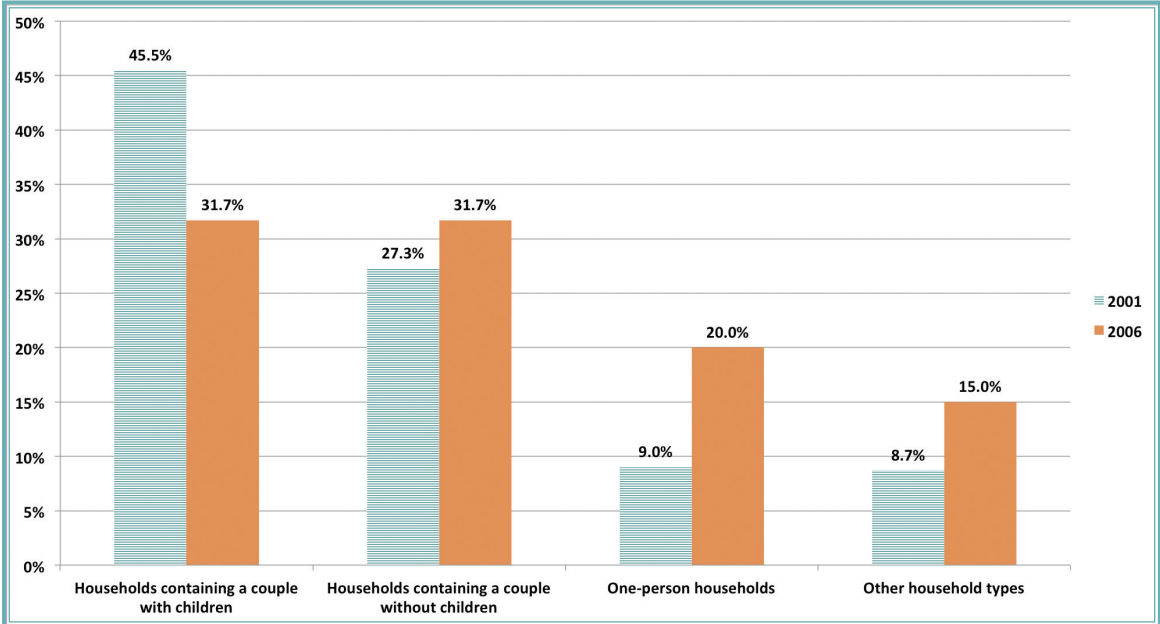
**Household living arrangements**

	Quebec		RSS Côte-Nord		Lower North Shore (CSSS)		Bonne-Espérance (Mother tongue data)
	English	French	English	French	English	French	All
Married or common-law	70.7%	69.7%	76.6%	71.6%	81.7%	72.6%	79.2%
Lone-parent family	11.8%	11.7%	13.6%	12.8%	9.8%	19.0%	20.6%
Alone	12.0%	13.4%	7.5%	11.5%	6.9%	5.7%	n/a

Source: CHSSN 2010. Socio-Economic Profiles of Quebec's English-Speaking Communities

In Bonne-Espérance, between 2001-2006, there was a rise in the number of households without children (and a decrease in households with children). There was also an increase in one-person households. This is a relatively recent phenomenon on the Coast, where a few decades ago almost no one lived alone.<sup>45</sup> In the context of the region, this situation points to a greater vulnerability of those persons who live alone, since many of them are seniors.

**Change in household living arrangements in Bonne-Espérance, 2001-2006**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Community Profiles, Bonne-Espérance, Québec

**Poverty is often greater among people living alone or in a lone-parent family.**

The community consultations ended with a discussion of what participants would like to see for the future of their community. Part of that vision was that **Old Fort and St. Paul's work together more.**

Several other points concerned activities that could enrich social and community life: **having a music teacher** for the region, proposing **more activities for men**, and having a **restaurant** in the community. Some would like to see a **covered rink** for wintertime activities. As far as youth are concerned, participants would like to see the **ball field used more.** In addition they would like to have a **coach** who could teach baseball and other team sports and organize games.

Several of the points raised focused on seniors. First, people would like to see **seniors be more active** and involved. One way to accomplish this would be to improve access to public buildings, such as churches and stores, by installing ramps. **A day centre** would be another way to encourage seniors to be active, and this was considered a necessity by many. A vision began to emerge in which the **existing community museum** in St. Paul's River would be renovated and reopened (it currently has mould and structural problems), and seniors' activities could be held in an adjacent room, perhaps with a coffee shop or a place to do crafts or play games.

Another way to assist seniors and other vulnerable individuals would be to **increase the hours of care provided by homecare workers.** In addition, having apartments or a **seniors' residence** could be a good solution for those who find maintaining a house too onerous.

For the parents of young children, there is a need for more day care spots. The current freeze on the number of spots allocated for the province affects everyone in the province.

Participants at the youth consultation held in 2008 also had some ideas for the future of the Lower North Shore as a whole. They echoed the wish to see a **greater variety of sports activities, as well as better infrastructures** such as a covered rink, swimming pool or driving range. They would like to see such activities promoted, and competitions held, as well as have an annual schedule of activities to maintain consistency and participation. In order to encourage the involvement of youth volunteers, as the participants at the consultations in Bonne-Espérance also wished, these young people suggested that **youth organize events themselves** to make things happen; that a diverse network of individuals work together; that they meet on their own to discuss youth initiatives and transfer that information to the municipal council; and that young people's schedules be taken into account in involving them. They would also like to have **mentoring programs and leadership training.** They also suggested sending emails to Coasters wherever they may be to keep them informed of events on the Lower North Shore so they remain connected.

These young people also suggested using song, dance and theatre to **preserve the culture and document the history.** They wanted to have courses in painting and sculpture as well as have seniors teach traditional skills. Education in history and heritage was also considered important.

People would like to see more volunteers being involved in the community. "We're experiencing volunteer burnout" "I'm getting tired. I have a young family as well." Having a community gathering with a volunteer appreciation aspect was proposed as a good way to encourage community engagement. "It could be an annual event between all the organizations that we hold something and play games" In particular, participants at the consultation would like to see younger adults be more active.

## *SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY LIFE*

The strengths of Bonne-Espérance are largely related to its small size and the Coast culture. Residents feel a strong sense of belonging, feel safe, have strong family and community bonds and are proud of the Coast culture. The small size of the community and its remoteness, however, are also the source of some challenges. Residents feel that there is a lack of activities for seniors and youth, there are not enough volunteers, transportation is difficult and many adults must leave the community to work. So many of the community's assets and challenges have the same source: isolation, small community size, and homogeneous, close-knit communities. In this context, how can residents take advantage of the positive aspects and overcome the challenges in building a strong social and community life? One idea was for villages to work more closely together. Finding ways to engage people was another, whether as participants in activities, as volunteers, or as workers in services to the population (such as home care, a day centre, or day care). Creating opportunities for people to be active and involved in things they enjoy and care about certainly seemed to be part of the key.

A table summarizing strengths, challenges, and future perspectives is provided at the end of the document.



Photo: Mary Richardson

# Educational attainment

## Barriers, disincentives and new attitudes

In this section we present the perspectives expressed by community members at the consultation held in May 2011 concerning education in Bonne-Espérance, followed by some relevant statistics and perspectives for the future. A summary table brings together that information.

<b>Social Determinant of Health</b>	<p>Health status improves with level of education. Education is closely tied to income and social status and provides knowledge and skills for problem solving. It helps provide a sense of control and mastery over life circumstances. It increases opportunities for job and income security, and job satisfaction. Education improves people’s ability to access and understand information to help keep them healthy.</p> <p>People with higher levels of education have better access to healthy physical environments and are better able to prepare their children for school than people with low levels of education. They also tend to smoke less, to be more physically active and to have access to healthier foods. In the 1996-97 National Population Health Survey (NPHS), only 19% of respondents with less than a high school education rated their health as “excellent” compared with 30% of university graduates. Canadians with low literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed and poor, to suffer poorer health and to die earlier than Canadians with high levels of literacy. In general, people with a higher level of education have more social relations, adopt a healthier lifestyle and have the feeling of being able to influence and control their lives.<sup>46</sup></p>
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There are 56 high school students and 47 elementary students in Bonne-Espérance, who come from Blanc Sablon to Old Fort. The high school is in St. Paul’s River, while the elementary school is in Old Fort.

### BONNE-ESPÉRANCE’S STRENGTHS

St. Paul’s River is the only village on the Lower North Shore that has a **high school that is not combined with an elementary school**. The school was once an elementary and secondary school, but in 2004, it became St. Paul’s High School. The elementary school is about 15 minutes away, in Old Fort Bay. Once students have finished high school, however, they often have leave the community to pursue their education. Depending on a variety of factors, such as where they know people or have relatives, students may go to Cegep or university in Lennoxville in the Eastern Townships, Gatineau, or Montreal. Few English-speaking Coasters are sufficiently bilingual to study in French, so their options are limited.

The main community strength in the area of education is considered to be those **youth who pursue their education** and return to the region or to their community to work afterwards. In addition, the **Community Learning Centre**, inaugurated in 2009 has turned the school into an important centre for community life and a place where positive attitudes towards school and education are fostered. In the evenings, different activities are offered: cooking, sewing, woodworking, computer science, fitness, tutoring, games in the gym (separate for kids, teens and adults). Some are organized and some are free. People pay 2\$ per visit or 20\$ a month. Originally the CLC targeted youth, but seniors and middle-aged people are increasingly being encouraged to use the facilities.

Other assets in the area of education include a **committed school principal and staff**, the **school success plan**, and the **scholarships and bursaries** that many local and regional businesses offer to graduating high school students. In addi-

tion, efforts are made to **hire students when possible** to bring them back, give them work experience and foster a sense of community engagement.

At the youth consultation held in 2008, participants mentioned the **sense of security and trust** they feel with the school they grew up attending. They also said that **vocational courses and adult education courses** are offered in the field of work.

## *CHALLENGES FACING BONNE-ESPÉRANCE*

The challenges identified by participants at the consultation underscore how closely connected issues of education are to employment and the regional economy. The main concern is the **out-migration of youth and young adults**. Attracting them back to the region remains a challenge and a goal for residents of Bonne-Espérance.

An important challenge in the area of educational attainment is the **distance from Cegeps and universities**. Students who continue their studies after high school must live far from their home and family at a relatively young age, and may not want to or be ready to do so. The costs incurred for post-secondary education are therefore significant and not all families are able to support further education. In addition, some families do not encourage their children to continue their education, and many employment opportunities on the Lower North Shore do not require higher education. Because many Coasters have a **low level of proficiency in French**, their choices for post-secondary education are limited.

Participants at the consultation also pointed out that **attitudes towards education vary** with some families placing a strong emphasis on school and others not as much. Also some parents themselves find it challenging to help with homework.

Many **parents go away for periods from three to six months a year to work**, and in some families both parents are gone. This creates stress on the caregiver (who may be elderly), and he or she may not be able to provide help and guidance with school work. Some parents take their children out of school in May because both parents have to leave to work in hunting and fishing camps. The students don't finish the school year, and may fall behind, get discouraged and even drop out. The absence of parents can also have an impact on the parent-child relationship, and the parent's ability to provide discipline and clear boundaries.



Photo: [theLowerNorthShore.com](http://theLowerNorthShore.com)

Lastly, participants pointed out that while the CLC is great, there are **few activities organized for children age 0-4**.

## *SOME STATISTICS ON EDUCATION*

In the province as a whole, educational levels have risen in recent generations; younger generations are more likely than older Quebecers to have completed high school or to have pursued post-secondary education. Overall, English Quebecers are more likely to have a university degree than are French-speakers (24.6% compared to 15.3%).

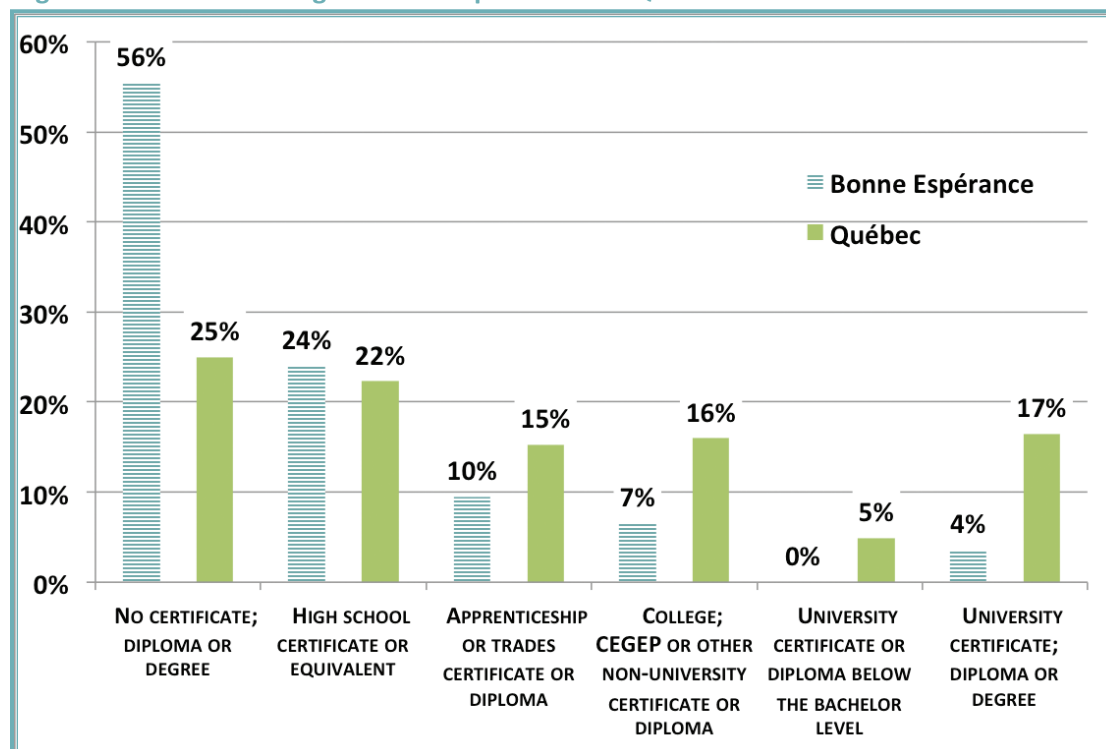
However, for several years, the Census has pointed out that English speakers in the North Shore region are not as well-educated as the regional French-speaking majority (72.3% compared to 53.8% have a high school diploma or less), which itself is below provincial and national averages. Compared to the English-speaking population across Quebec, English speakers in the region show a higher tendency to have low educational attainment and are much less likely to have high educational attainment. Only 5.3% of the English-speaking population and only 7.9% of French-speakers on the North Shore has a university certificate, degree or diploma.

On the Lower North Shore the figures for those with a university certificate, degree or diploma are 3.8% for English speakers and 9.6% for French-speakers. English speakers are more likely than French-speakers to have low educational attainment: 78.3% of English speakers have a high school certificate or less, compared to 69.7% of French speakers. Interestingly, the rates are similar for people between 25-44 years of age, and the gap is much greater in the older age groups where 87% of English speakers has high school or less, but only 53.9% of older French speakers age 45-64 does. *This suggests that younger English and French-speakers are more alike than older generations, though a higher proportion of French speakers in all age groups has a university education.*<sup>47</sup>

These figures indicate a certain socio-economic disadvantage for English speakers, as well as a social inequality between French and English speakers. In addition, they suggest that literacy levels may be quite low, which is related to difficulties finding and understanding written information, accessing services, and interacting with health or education professionals, for instance.<sup>48</sup>

In Bonne-Espérance, for the population as a whole (all age and language groups), the highest level of schooling for 2006 was relatively low compared to Quebec figures. The highest number of residents had no certificate, diploma or degree, and the numbers drop steadily as the level of schooling increases, with few residents having a university education.

### Highest Level of Schooling in Bonne Espérance and Quebec

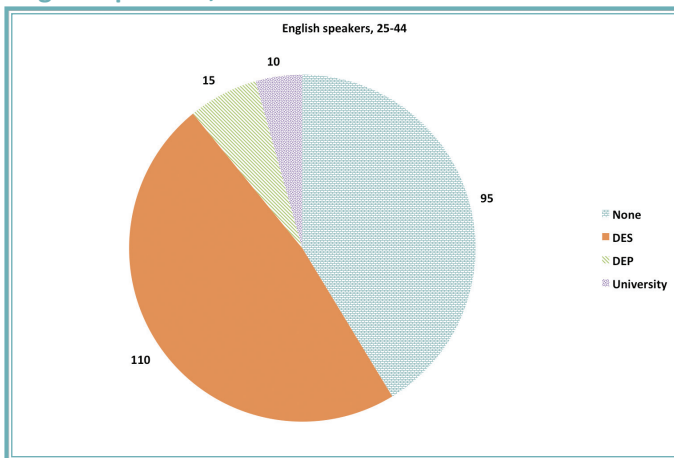


**Among English speakers, educational attainment does seem to be on the rise, with younger generations achieving higher levels of education. Among those between 25 and 44 years of age, a higher proportion has completed a high school diploma or trades certificate than among persons between 45 and 64.**

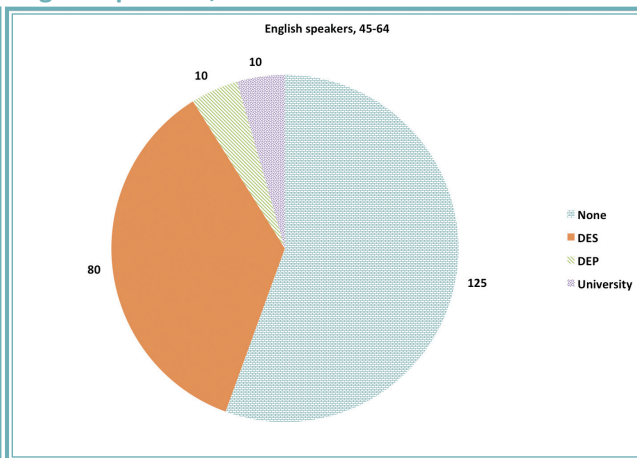
Source: Statistics Canada 2006, data produced by Institut national de santé publique.



### English Speakers, 25-44



### English Speakers, 45-64



Source: Statistics Canada 2006, data produced by Institut national de santé publique.

## PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

Based on the comments made by young people at the 2008 youth forum, youth seem to be motivated to learn French, or at least recognize the value in being bilingual. They would like to see more French courses on the Coast. They also identified a need for more guidance counsellors for the adult education sector. They expressed an interest in on-line courses related to employment opportunities on the Coast. Courses in song, theatre and dance would also be appreciated, as part of promoting the local culture. In addition, youth would like to see a program for them to learn from older generations. They also mentioned education on cultural heritage and history, which could be part of this effort to preserve traditional knowledge and value the unique heritage of the Lower North Shore.

## SUMMARY OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Bonne-Espérance has had some significant successes with youth in recent years. The rates of young people finishing a high school diploma have increased and the CLC has made the school a centre for community activities. In the population as a whole, however, educational levels remain relatively low. The main challenge is to encourage young people to take advantage of locally available educational opportunities, such as training in trades, and to mitigate the financial, social, family and personal impacts of having to live far from home to pursue Cegep and university studies. Some ideas for the future include on-line courses, more support for learning French and for choosing a career, as well as courses in arts and culture.

A table summarizing strengths, challenges, and future perspectives is provided at the end of the document.

## *Economic conditions*

### *Devitalized but actively creating opportunities*

In this section we present the perspectives expressed by community members at the consultation held in May 2011 concerning economic conditions in Bonne-Espérance, followed by some relevant statistics and perspectives for the future. A summary table brings together that information.

#### Social Determinant of Health

There is strong evidence that higher social and economic status is associated with better health. These two factors are considered to be the most important determinants of health. Health status improves at each step up the income and social ladder. Higher incomes promote optimal living conditions, which include safe housing and good food. The degree of control people have over life circumstances and the ability to adapt to stressful situations are key influences. Higher income and social status generally result in more control and more resources to adapt.

Studies are showing that limited options due to limited means and poor coping skills for dealing with stress increase a person's vulnerability to a range of diseases. For example, only 47% of Canadians in the lowest income bracket rate their health as very good or excellent, compared to 73% of Canadians in the highest income group. Low-income Canadians are more likely to die earlier and to suffer more illnesses than Canadians with higher incomes.

And perhaps most interesting of all, studies show that large differences in income distribution (the gap between rich and the poor) are a more important health determinant than the total income that a population generates. Income gaps within and between groups increase social problems and poor health. In other words, the more equitable a society, the better people's health is likely to be.

Of course, incomes are closely related to economic conditions and employment opportunities. Unemployment, underemployment, stressful or unsafe work are associated with poorer health. People who have more control over their work circumstances and fewer stress related demands of the job are healthier and often live longer than those in more stressful or riskier work and activities.

In addition, employment has a significant effect on a person's physical, mental and social health. Paid work provides not only money, but also a sense of identity and purpose, social contacts and opportunities for personal growth. When a person loses these benefits, the results can be devastating to both the health of the individual and his or her family. Unemployed people have a reduced life expectancy and suffer significantly more health problems than people who have a job. A major review done for the World Health Organization found that high levels of unemployment and economic instability in a society cause significant mental health problems and adverse effects on the physical health of unemployed individuals, their families and their communities. Lack of employment is associated with physical and mental health problems that include depression, anxiety and increased suicide rates.<sup>49</sup>

## *BONNE-ESPÉRANCE'S STRENGTHS*

At the community consultations held in May 2011, participants identified a few assets in the area of the economy and employment. The **fish plant increased its productivity** after about 15 years which is seen as a positive development. Coasters Association is one of the larger employers in Bonne-Espérance (the biggest after the school and the clinic) and its main office is located in St. Paul's River.

Some participants believe that there is a **potential for tourism** because of the abundance of sports fishing and other outdoor activities. Overall, participants observed that “we don't know the value of our natural resources.” Everything has been focused on the fishery for centuries and other resources have not been explored.

Some people believe that **local residents can live with less money** since they are resourceful and provide for some of their own needs. Many people interviewed agreed that on the Lower North Shore most people's basic needs are met; there is no homelessness and no one goes without food. People generally have what they need and the majority are hardworking and resourceful.

The fact that there is a **road to Blanc-Sablon** is a major asset, particularly as compared to the many Lower North Shore communities that do not have any road link to the rest of Quebec.



Photo: Mary Richardson

## *CHALLENGES FACING BONNE-ESPÉRANCE*

Several people at the community consultation mentioned the **high levels of people receiving employment insurance benefits** seasonally and social assistance in Bonne-Espérance.

The outmigration of youth and young adults is perceived as a major challenge, and the remedy appears to be job creation for those who want to stay. The tourist industry is seen as a possible source of employment; however in Old Fort the **lack of a wharf** is a challenge. There is an excellent harbour and the boat used to dock there, but now tourists cannot come to the community by boat. Although there are bus tours from Labrador, there are few tours offered in the sector.

As mentioned above, the **language barrier** is a major consideration, making employment in Quebec more difficult. Men often have valuable skills in the area of construction, however the difficulty in getting their license to work is compounded by the language barrier. As a result, many **work outside the region**, in Ontario, Newfoundland, the Northwest Territories or western Canada.

**Transportation** is a crucial issue because of the lack of a road linking the whole Lower North Shore, and the fact that the ferry only runs seasonally. In addition, plane tickets to other communities along the Lower North Shore or outside the region are extremely costly, and there is only one airline, so there is no business competition. This places limits on opportunities outside the community, as well as placing a financial burden on those who travel for personal or professional reasons. In the winter the ministry of transportation makes snow roads, for travel by snowmobile, which can make it easier to travel in winter than summer. In mild winters, however, the snow roads may not be passable for parts of the season.

Because of the patterns of employment in the area, **many seniors have no pension plan** and have never had a cheque until they get their old age pension, which does not leave them much disposable income for necessities such as dentures, eyeglasses, hearing aids, and other items.

Although people readily acknowledge that there is no homelessness or any people lacking food or a roof over their heads, there is poverty. The significantly over the years, making higher paid employment a necessity. For example, in a household survey carried out in 2005 on people's grocery-buying habits, the main reasons consumers gave for not buying fresh fruits, vegetables and milk were high price and poor quality. Cost was also the main reason given for not buying yogurt, cheese, eggs and fresh meats and poultry. The conclusions are that the "health of Lower North Shore consumers as well as the economy of the Coast is suffering due to not only to the high prices of the food available in the region, but also due to the high cost of transportation. The cost to bring the food in on the Coast is without any doubt very expensive which has its disadvantages, but receiving food of poor quality makes the situation even worse."

Another challenge is the fact that throughout the history of the Lower North Shore, the economy has been focused on fishing, to the exclusion of other resources. As one participant pointed out:



Photo: Mary Richardson

**We looked at the fish, and we've never explored anything else in our environment. There is tonnes: fiddleheads, there's Labrador tea. In one part of northern Quebec they're making spruce tea essential oil, there's alder roots that can be used for a beauty product, our bakeapple seeds can be used for an under-eye cream. We have never ever looked beyond the fishery, and to sit down with someone who actually knows what we've got and to say "did you know this could be used for this...?"**

### *SOME STATISTICS ON EMPLOYMENT, INCOMES AND VITALITY*

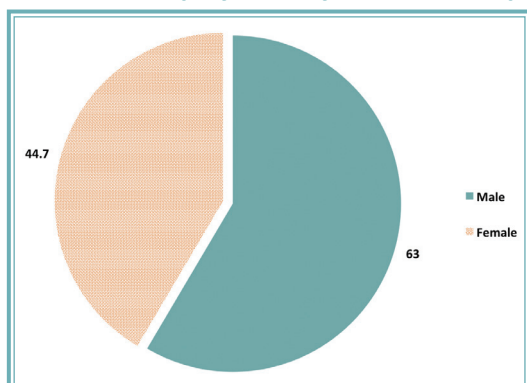
In the province of Quebec as a whole, about 65% of the population is in the labour force and of that number, about 93% is employed. The unemployment rate among French speakers is 6.6% and among English speakers it is 8.8%. On the North Shore, English speakers are more likely than French-speakers to be unemployed and to be out of the labour force, and the same is true for the Lower North Shore.

## Labour force activity

	Quebec		RSS Côte-Nord		Lower North Shore (CSSS)		Bonne-Espérance (Mother tongue data)
	English	French	English	French	English	French	All
In the labour force	64.6%	65.3%	61.0%	64.2%	63.9%	61.8%	65.7%
Employed	91.2%	93.4%	71.3%	89.0%	62.6%	68.5%	45.6%
Unemployed	8.8%	6.6%	28.7%	10.9%	37.2%	32.1%	54.4%
Out of the labour force	35.4%	34.7%	39.0%	35.8%	36.1%	38.3%	34.3%

Source: CHSSN 2010. Socio-Economic Profiles of Quebec's English-Speaking Communities

## Rates of unemployment by sex, Bonne-Espérance



**Rates of unemployment are high in Bonne-Espérance, even more so for men than for women. These percentages, however, include only those eligible for unemployment insurance, and not those who are not on the labour market.**

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Community Profiles, Bonne-Espérance, Québec

The main industry for people in Bonne-Espérance is the fishery. There are three fish plants, one located in each of the villages of Middle Bay, St. Paul's River and Old Fort. The fish plants are usually open during the spring and summer months. This facility employs approximately 100 people in total. There are two schools which employ about 25 people, including teachers, janitors, secretaries and technicians. The municipality employs about six people, Coasters Association employs about 21 people (full/part-time) and there are local businesses that employ a number of people. There are also companies that operate outside the region in fields such as construction or hunting and fishing clubs. Every year many people leave the community and go to work outside the region, and they usually leave in the spring and return in the fall. For most of the jobs that end in the fall, people receive employment insurance benefits during the winter months.

In Bonne-Espérance, the median total income for persons 15 years of age and over is \$20,456 (it was \$12,582 in 2000) compared to \$24,430 for Quebec as a whole. Of this amount, 50.6% were earnings and 44.9% were government transfers. The proportion of income that is from government transfers increased slightly from 2000 to 2005.

An interesting indicator of the economic and demographic vitality of a community is provided by the devitalization index calculated by the Ministère des Affaires municipales, des Régions et de l'Occupation du territoire (MAMROT). This index is based on data on population variation, employment and unemployment rates, rates of educational achievement, government transfers, low-income earners and average

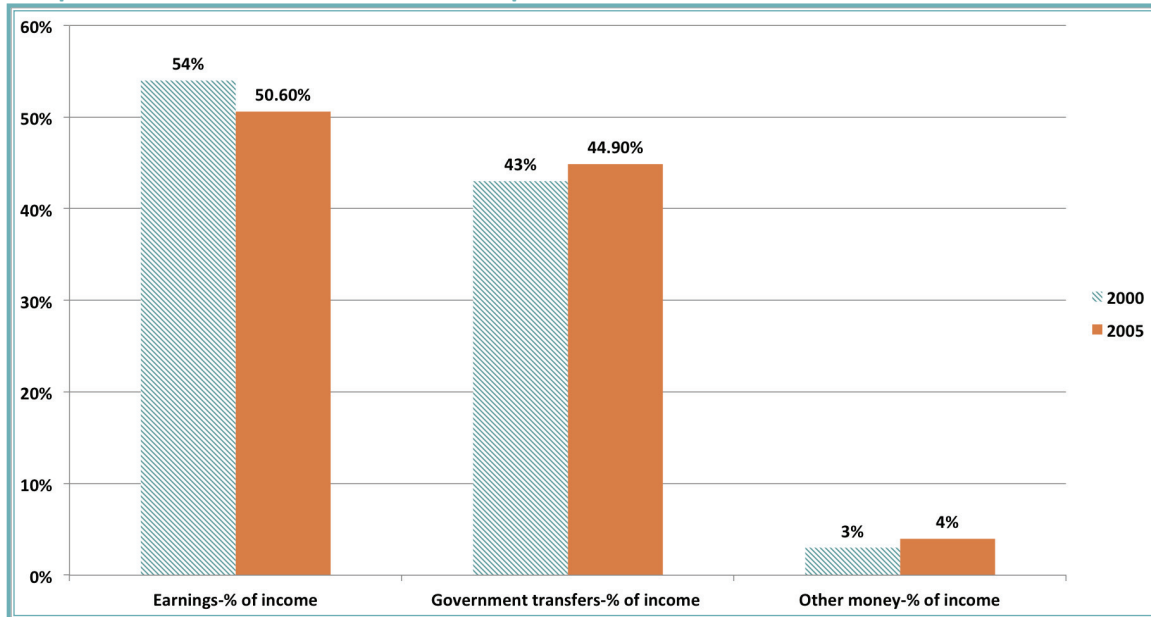


Photo: Mary Richardson

household incomes. A figure below zero means that the municipality is considered devitalized and the lower the number, the more so.

The calculation ranks Bonne-Espérance as the third most devitalized municipality on the Lower North Shore.<sup>50</sup> This is mainly due to a low employment rate, a high unemployment rate and high government transfers. Bonne-Espérance has one of the lowest development ratings (-12.46) as calculated by MAMROT.

### Composition of total income for Bonne-Espérance



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Community Profiles, Bonne-Espérance, Québec

### Devitalization Index for selected Lower North Shore municipalities

Community	Population in 2006	Population variation 2001-2006 (%)	Employment rate 15 years and older	Unemployment rate 15 years and older	% of the population 15 years and older without diploma	Government transfers (%)	Low income before tax (%)	Average household income	Development index 2006
Blanc-Sablon	1263	5.16	50.00	20.00	46.88	23.9	4.9	58,817	-1.33
Bonne-Espérance	834	-2.11	29.93	54.44	55.47	42.7	6.5	47,697	-12.46
Saint-Augustin	599	-4.31	47.31	31.25	51.61	34.6	0	51,461	-5.38
Gros-Mécatina	566	-1.22	20.62	64.15	58.33	35.2	13.3	46,172	-14.98
C-N du Golfe	1028	-13.10	51.14	26.23	49.71	31.8	0	51,818	-4.59
Pakuashipi	289	26.75	47.22	17.39	83.33	30	0	44,476	-4.00

Source: Ministère des Affaires municipales, Régions et Occupation du Territoire, <http://www.mamrot.gouv.qc.ca/developpement-regional-et-rural/indice-de-developpement/>

## *PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE*

One area that was identified at the community consultation as having economic development potential is **tourism**. This could include historic aspects of the Coast as well as sports and outdoor activities.

Currently Coasters Association is spearheading a **wildberry and non-timber forest products** project for the whole Lower North Shore. The plan includes a factory to house the wildberry processing industry in St. Paul's River. This project is partly a response to the challenge identified above that the local economy has been so centred on fish that other natural resources have not been explored, and people often do not know what the potential is. In a context where natural food and body care products are sought after and highly valued on the marketplace, the Lower North Shore population is working to take advantage of their local assets.

In general, **exploring the resources of the Lower North Shore** is seen as a positive way forward. The municipality would like to create sustainable projects for ecotourism, local foods, and other projects that value the Coast heritage.

Participants at the consultation also named several items on a **“wish list”**: more daycares, a restaurant, a dog groomer, and funding for exchanges.

## *SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS*

The economic assets in Bonne-Espérance include the fish plants, the road access to Blanc-Sablon, and the fact that people are resourceful. There is potential for tourism and projects that showcase the natural beauty and abundant natural resources of the Lower North Shore. The challenges are mainly related to the lack of sufficient employment opportunities locally, which mean that many people are unemployed or leave the community for work, often for long periods of time. The cost of living, while low in some ways, can also be higher for items such as groceries, gas and transportation. Residents' vision for the future includes the development of tourism and of an industry based on renewable natural resources of the Coast (wildberries, non-timber forest products, and more). In addition, people would like to see more services such as more daycares, a restaurant and a dog groomer.

A table summarizing strengths, challenges, and future perspectives is provided at the end of the document.

## *The natural and built environment*

### *A rich natural environment but poor infrastructures*

In this section we present the perspectives expressed by community members at the consultation held in May 2011 concerning the natural and built environment in Bonne-Espérance, followed by some relevant statistics and perspectives for the future. A summary table brings together that information.

<b>Social Determinant of Health</b>	<p>The natural and built environment is one of the determinants of health as it plays an important role in people’s quality of life as well as their physical and psychological well-being. At certain levels of exposure, contaminants in our air, water, food and soil can cause a variety of adverse health effects, including cancer, birth defects, respiratory illness and gastrointestinal ailments. In the built environment, factors related to housing, indoor air quality, and the design of communities and transportation systems can significantly influence our health, both as individuals and as communities.</p> <p>Where people live affects their health and chances of leading flourishing lives. Communities and neighbourhoods that ensure access to basic goods, that are socially cohesive, that are designed to promote good physical and psychological wellbeing, and that are protective of the natural environment are essential for health equity.</p> <p>For example, it has been shown that various elements of the built environment and services environment affect people’s behaviours, such as the amount of physical activity they do or their diet, which in turn can have an effect on physical characteristics such as body weight. Since obesity has become one of the most troubling public health problems in recent years—described as an epidemic by the World Health Organization—researchers and health organizations are seeking to better understand how to promote healthy lifestyles and prevent weight-related problems. There are many ways to change the environment to encourage people to use active transport, to eat healthier foods and to interact with their neighbours. For example, neighbourhoods can be designed with a blend of commercial and residential uses, with walking and biking paths, and with easy access to public transit and recreational infrastructures. This makes it easier for residents to do a number of activities in a walkable radius and have more frequent contact with neighbours<sup>51</sup></p>
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years—described as an epidemic by the World Health Organization—researchers and health organizations are seeking to better understand how to promote healthy lifestyles and prevent weight-related problems. There are many ways to change the environment to encourage people to use active transport, to eat healthier foods and to interact with their neighbours. For example, neighbourhoods can be designed with a blend of commercial and residential uses, with walking and biking paths, and with easy access to public transit and recreational infrastructures. This makes it easier for residents to do a number of activities in a walkable radius and have more frequent contact with neighbours.<sup>50</sup>

The relationship that Coasters have to their natural environment is strongly coloured by the lifestyle practiced in the region for generations. People used to hunt caribou, moose, ducks, rabbits, partridge and more, and still do. Wood used to be cut inland during winter months with the help of dog teams, and now with snow-mobiles or all-terrain vehicles.

**In the summer families moved out to the islands in the ocean in order to be closer to the fish stocks. Not only did they fish, but they also gathered seagull eggs to eat and other foods.**

Today people still go out to the islands, but mostly just for the weekend. Some also have cabins up the river where they can go. In the summer, many people in the area go berry picking. They pick partridge berries (red berries), cloudberries (bake apples), crow berries (black berries) and more. Many grow vegetables in gardens created with kelp compost.



Photo: Mary Richardson

In a meeting with seniors, some reminisce about their youth: they say they were raised to work hard, cutting wood and hauling water. In their view, things have changed a lot and young people don't expect to have to work as hard physically. Also the environment has changed a lot; for instance, the scallops were bigger, and the seagull eggs were not contaminated.

## *BONNE-ESPÉRANCE'S STRENGTHS*

Residents of Bonne-Espérance identified several assets to the local environment. In general they consider their physical environment to be high quality. In addition, they have access to **quality drinking water, food and housing**. Lastly, there are many **environmental resources** such as berries, plants and other elements of the natural environment.

In terms of transportation infrastructure, residents see the **road access** to their communities as an important asset. Some community members described the boardwalk as a big asset to the community. There is between one and two km of **boardwalk** along the waterfront in St. Paul's River. People use it to walk and it is a place where they can meet neighbours, walk their dog, socialize and more.

At the youth forum held in 2008 with young people from all along the Lower North Shore, some of the main reasons given for wanting to stay in the region were easy **access to nature** (fishing, hiking, camping, etc.), and **access to outdoor activities** (snowmobiling, fishing, and team sports). They appreciate a “free, slow-paced lifestyle” and the **Coastal environment**, including the beaches, landscape, fresh air, and small communities. They also mention the culinary traditions of

cooking with local products: berries, seafood, duck, moose, salmon and more. This relationship to the natural environment is deeply rooted in the Coast lifestyle and is an important part of people's identity and local history. Efforts to create a tourist industry on the Lower North Shore focus on selling this unique environment to potential tourists, including ideas such as snowmobiling, kayaking, fishing, hiking, and visiting archaeological remains.

### *CHALLENGES FACING BONNE-ESPÉRANCE*

At the community consultations, some challenges were also identified: **access to public buildings** for people with limited mobility, and the difficulty in **maintaining and improving the museum**. Some also mentioned that the **boardwalk needs maintaining** as it gets worn in places and needs repairs. This was thought to be a good project for Junior Rangers.

At the youth consultation held in 2008, some mentioned the cold climate as a disincentive for staying in the region, as well as the flies in the summer. The isolation of the Lower North Shore in general, and of the communities from each other, also was seen as a challenge, making some want to leave the region.



Photo: Mary Richardson

### *SOME STATISTICS ON THE ENVIRONMENT*

In a health survey conducted on the North Shore in 2005, the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de la Côte-Nord surveyed the population on their concerns regarding environmental health.<sup>52</sup> For the Lower North Shore territory, the main environmental health concerns were:

- Water pollution: 46.7% were concerned (the highest for the whole North Shore)
- Drinking water quality: 36.3% were concerned (the highest for the whole North Shore)

The Lower North Shore differed from the other territories in that residents are less concerned about:

- Air pollution: 25.1% were concerned (the lowest proportion for the whole North Shore)
- Industrial pollution: only 3.4% were concerned (compared to 44.7% in Manicouagan)

## *PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE*

One of the issues that is ever-present on the Lower North Shore is that of transportation, given the distances between communities and from other regions of the province. Even travelling to neighbouring communities and to Blanc Sablon can be a challenge, and having a **transportation system** was seen as a priority for the future. **Maintaining and improving the roads and other infrastructures** was also considered important by participants.

Within the communities, participants at the consultations felt it important to maintain the boardwalk (in St. Paul's River) and other community sites such as the museum, the churches and churchgrounds, and the cemetery. A suggestion was made to have the community hall maintained and utilized more.

People also wanted to see **walking and hiking trails** developed, and they would like to have an **operating pool and covered rink**. A park was also part of the community vision.

Finally, some would like to see recycling be more available and practiced in the community. The youth are working on a project to get a recycling project started in the municipality. They want to form a youth cooperative for jobs. They want to take the waste from the fish plant and other organic waste and make compost. This would also create jobs because they would sell the fertilizer.

## *SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENT*

The natural environmental assets of Bonne-Espérance include a high quality environment and range of natural resources. The challenges of that environment however are the cold climate and the flies in the summer months, making it harder to enjoy the outdoors. For the future, participants at the consultation expressed an interest in developing walking and hiking trails, and they also wanted to see more recycling and composting, as the youth are planning to do.

The built environment also has some assets: the road to Blanc-Sablon, and the boardwalk in St. Paul's River. There are some efforts needed to maintain and improve the built environment: ensuring access to public buildings for people with limited mobility, maintaining and improving the museum, and maintaining the boardwalk. Many of the suggestions for the future involved maintaining and improving these infrastructures in addition to the churches and cemetery.

A table summarizing strengths, challenges, and future perspectives is provided at the end of the document.

## *Towards community and personal health and well-being*

In this section we present the perspectives expressed by community members at the consultation held in May 2011 concerning health and well-being in Bonne-Espérance, followed by some relevant statistics and perspectives for the future. A summary table brings together that information.

### **Social Determinant of Health**

As we have seen, all of the above themes affect health and well-being in a myriad of sometimes complex ways. Social and physical environments—including social support networks, community organizations, educational opportunities, employment, incomes and social status, the natural environment, urban planning, transportation systems and the state of buildings, for example—are what most affect the health of both individuals and communities.

Health and social services also have a role to play in maintaining good health, preventing illness and treating people for health and social problems. In fact, the health care system itself is seen as a health determinant as well as a basic human right. Being able to access such services in an effective, efficient and reassuring way is therefore important. In Canada, we have a universal health care system that requires provinces to provide all “medically necessary” services on a universal basis. Yet access to care remains better for those in higher income brackets, and drug prescriptions are less likely to be filled by low-income earners. Many low- and moderate-income Canadians have limited or no access to non-insured health services such as eye care, dentistry, mental health counselling and prescription drugs.

People’s health and well-being are affected by the interconnections between all the health determinants. A good example of this is the issue of food insecurity. Food is one of the basic human needs and it is an important determinant of health and human dignity. Food insecurity more often affects households with lower incomes, lower educational levels, and other forms of deprivation. People who experience food insecurity are unable to have an adequate diet in terms of its quality or quantity. They consume fewer servings of fruits and vegetables, milk products, and vitamins than those in food-secure households. Dietary deficiencies – more common among food insecure households – are associated with increased likelihood of chronic disease and difficulties in managing these diseases. Food insufficient households were 80% more likely to report having diabetes, 60% more likely to report high blood pressure, and 70% more likely to report food allergies than households with sufficient food. Finally, increasing numbers of studies indicate that children in food insecure households are more likely to experience a whole range of behavioural, emotional, and academic problems than children living in food secure households. Additionally, food insecurity produces stress and feelings of uncertainty that can have a negative impact on health.<sup>54</sup>

### **BONNE-ESPÉRANCE’S STRENGTHS**

In the discussions held in Bonne-Espérance, participants identified a number of assets that the community has in supporting health and well-being among residents. The **high-quality natural environment**, and all it makes possible in terms of outdoor activities and procuring local foodstuffs (in particular fish, game and berries), can be considered a major asset to health and well-being, insofar as people take advantage of it. Residents of Bonne-Espérance appreciate the environment in which they live, as well as the safety of their communities, as these enhance their quality of life and are closely related to the

Coast heritage and cultural identity.

In terms of projects that directly target health issues, Coasters Association has started a Lower North Shore **cancer fund** to help families in the region who have a member in cancer treatment. The issue is not the actual treatment (which is covered) or the travel for the ill person (which is covered), but the cost of living while in treatment, and the cost of having a family member accompany the sick person (which is not covered if that person is mobile). The stipend provided through the CSSS is not sufficient to cover expenses when seeking treatment outside the region.

Another community asset is the Community Against Drugs approach developed and maintained beginning in 2008 by the Coasters Association and now maintained by the Community Learning Centre at St Paul's high school. This initiative led to the existing Youth centre, which has also become an asset to community health and well-being.

## *CHALLENGES FACING BONNE-ESPÉRANCE*

Participants at the consultation also identified two main health-related issues for Bonne-Espérance: the fact that there is no day centre for seniors, and the question of **home care for seniors**. They believe that more intensive interviews need to be conducted to get the correct information for home care, and a family member needs to be present with the senior during the interview. In the experience of some community members, seniors sometimes will not admit to the problems they face for fear of being taken out of their home. In their view, more hours need to be provided for homecare workers to provide help and companionship. This would provide more support to seniors and employment for workers in the community.

As mentioned above, **seniors do not have easy access to day centres** so that they can stay in their homes for longer. Currently, if they need care they have to move away from their community to a seniors' home in St-Augustine, Blanc Sablon or Harrington Harbour. Day centres would give an option to families caring for an elder relative who need care during the day for them.

As mentioned above, many people prefer to go to **Newfoundland for health care services** because of the language barrier with Quebec health care workers. Going away, however, presents challenges in terms of distance, stress and fatigue. In the case of critical illnesses the time away compounds these factors. The Lower North Shore Coalition for Health has assembled a "survival pack" with information for their stay, and documentation on specific health issues (heart disease, diabetes and colon and breast cancer, in particular).

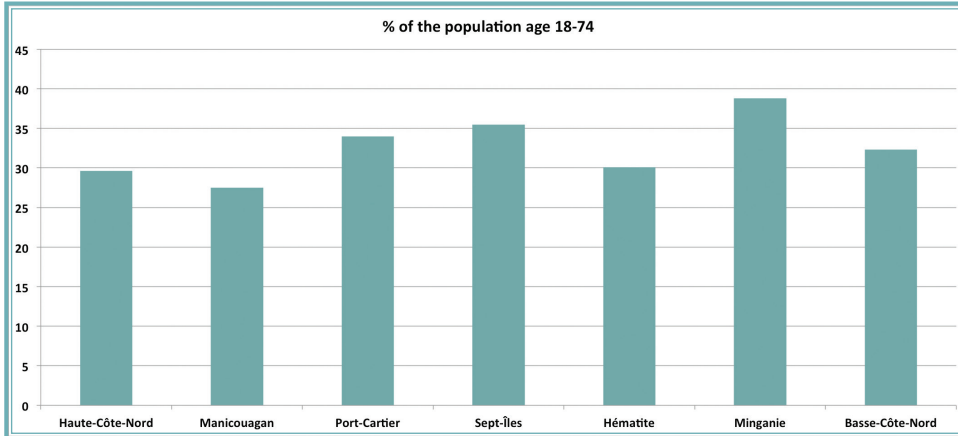
Another challenge is providing support for **children and youth with special needs**. Since a child may be the only one in his or her community with a particular developmental condition (physical, mental or intellectual), they and their families may have little support.

Another challenge to encouraging healthy lifestyles is the **cost and availability of healthy foods**. Prices are regulated for certain products (such as alcohol and cigarettes) but this is not the case for many healthy foods such as milk, eggs, fruits and vegetables (for which costs escalate during the winter). As mentioned above, a household survey carried out in 2005 on people's grocery-buying habits showed that people often do not buy fresh fruits, vegetables and milk because they cost too much or are poor quality. Cost was also the main reason given for not buying yogurt, cheese, eggs and fresh meats and poultry. The conclusions are that the **"health of Lower North Shore consumers as well as the economy of the Coast is suffering due to not only to the high prices of the food available in the region, but also due to the high cost of transportation. The cost to bring the food in on the Coast is without any doubt very expensive which has its disadvantages, but receiving food of poor quality makes the situation even worse."**

## SOME HEALTH STATISTICS

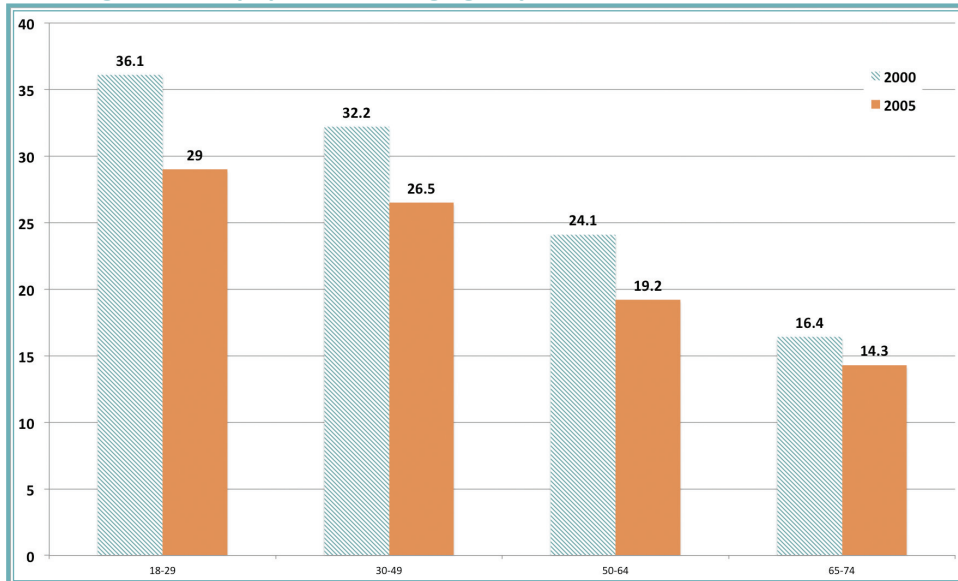
The Agence de la santé tracks many different health determinants for the territory it covers in order to get a picture of the health of the population. One of the lifestyle habits that can have a significant impact on health is smoking. Rates on the Lower North Shore are about average for the North Shore in general. If we compare rates from 2000 to 2005, they are declining for all age groups.

### Rates of smoking on the North Shore



Source: Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de la Côte-Nord, 2007. Rapport de l'Enquête Santé Côte-Nord 2005.

### Smoking: % of the population by age group, 2000-2005



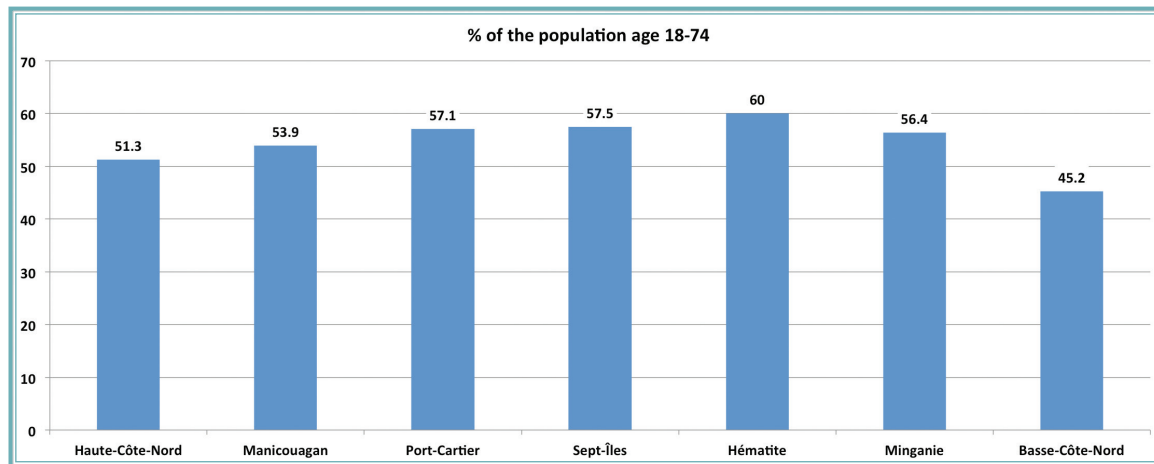
Source: Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de la Côte-Nord, 2007. Rapport de l'Enquête Santé Côte-Nord 2005.

Another lifestyle habit that can affect health is the number of portions of fruits and vegetables that people eat on a daily basis. Here the population of the Lower North Shore is below every other CSSS territory on the North Shore, most likely because of the higher cost and sometimes poor quality of produce, as mentioned with regards to the grocery basket study.

On the North Shore 13% of the population eats less than 3 portions of fruits and vegetables a day. This is especially true of certain population groups:

- People without a high school diploma (18.8%)
- People on the Lower North Shore (18%)
- Men on the North Shore generally (17.7%)
- People who live alone (17.6%)
- People who smoke regularly or occasionally (15.9%)

### Proportion of the population that eats 5 portions of fruits and vegetables per day



Source: Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de la Côte-Nord, 2007. Rapport de l'Enquête Santé Côte-Nord 2005.

## PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

Various ideas were shared regarding ways to improve health and well-being. One was to have a **covered rink** that could be used by the community, thus encouraging physical activity. Another was to have a pool in the community. Such infrastructure projects, however, face significant difficulties because of regulations regarding construction permits, which many skilled workers on the Lower North Shore do not have.

Another idea is to encourage **traditional lifestyles**, particularly traditional foods and gardens. It is believed that this could help reduce cancer and diabetes rates, which are linked to dietary and lifestyle factors. The traditional lifestyle included fishing, hunting and trapping, harvesting sea products and berries, and growing vegetables using kelp compost. Although few would want to return to the hard work of that way of life, many see value in some aspects of the lifestyle.

Some members of the seniors club mentioned the need for a **day centre**. Many seniors become isolated at home and need to get out to participate in activities, even just playing cards or knitting with other people. Many families are unable to take care of an elderly parent or relative during the day when they are off to work, and many of the houses are occupied by only one or two people, often an elderly couple. As the population ages, this need is expected to grow. Moreover, with outmigration, seniors can become isolated because family members are not close by to visit.

The Seniors Club also says they need someone to help **organize activities**. They have a woman who acts as an animator, but they also need help getting people out to go for a walk or planning activities to encourage social interaction and physical activity.

## *SUMMARY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING*

The health-related assets of Bonne-Espérance include both the natural environment and the types of social and financial support offered to those with cancer. The challenges are mainly in the area of services available. As mentioned above, a seniors day centre and more home care hours are seen as needs for seniors. Support for families with children who have special needs is also insufficient, particularly considering the isolation and low population density in the region, making it hard to find people facing similar difficulties in the same community. Suggestions for the future focus on encouraging healthy active lifestyles for seniors and for the population as a whole.

A table summarizing strengths, challenges, and future perspectives is provided at the end of the document.



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The municipality of Bonne-Espérance, with the three villages that make it up, has a long and rich history that is unique in many ways to the region of the Lower North Shore. It is considered remote both because of the distance from major centres of Quebec, but also because of the difficulties posed to travel within the region and outside of it. In addition, the rugged terrain and harsh climate make access to the communities difficult at certain times of the year and in extreme weather conditions.

Old Fort Bay, St. Paul's River and Middle Bay are all quite small communities (with populations of 347, 468 and 32 respectively) made up mostly of English speakers descended from a blend of Jersey Islanders, British, Newfoundlanders and Inuit. Various fishermen have been fishing, whaling and sealing in the waters off the Labrador Coast since well before the arrival of Jacques Cartier in 1534. First Nations, Vikings, Bretons, Basque, and later French, English and Channel Islanders were all drawn to the region by the abundance of wildlife and forests. These natural resources have provided a livelihood to generations of residents. The history, culture and economy of Bonne-Espérance have been closely connected to marine resources, and changes in their management have had a major impact on people's living conditions. They now face a drastic decrease in access to these resources combined with a drop in prices, leading many to abandon fishing as their main activity.

As the economic base has shifted, so too has the lifestyle and social organization of the villages. Whereas historically families lived separated from each other, and moved to islands in the summer and into bays and up river for the winter, they now are settled in villages around basic services and no longer move to the islands in the summer. In addition, the importance of government programs and services in the local economy, as well as in political dynamics, has increased significantly. With the decline in the fishery and several different moratoria, the region's economy has undergone many transformations. As a result, many people seek employment elsewhere, either on a full-time basis or seasonally. Some continue to earn a living off the fishery, but the conditions under which they do so have changed significantly in recent decades.

In 2011 the municipality of Bonne-Espérance had a population of 736, and has continued to decline. The reasons for this outmigration include the attraction of economic opportunities outside the region, and the fact that many English speakers do not speak French and therefore have difficulty finding good jobs in Quebec. In Bonne-Espérance under 14% of the population knows both official languages. This can be explained in large part by the geographical and cultural proximity of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the fact that communications are easier with that province than with the rest of Quebec.

### *COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON THE STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD*

In view of stimulating community development in the present-day context, two community consultations were held in May 2011. Various community assets and challenges were identified, as were perspectives for the future.

The strengths related to community life in Bonne-Espérance are largely related to its small size and the Coast culture. Residents feel a strong sense of belonging, feel safe, have strong family and community bonds and are proud of the Coast culture, including its musical and crafts traditions and the strong family and community bonds. The small size of the community and its remoteness, however, are also the source of some challenges. Residents feel that there is a lack of activities for seniors and youth, there are not enough volunteers, transportation is difficult and many adults must leave the community to work. So many of the community's assets and challenges have the same source: isolation, small community size, and homogeneous, close-knit communities. To build a stronger social and

community life, participants suggested that villages work more closely together, and that people be encouraged to engage in community life as participants in activities, as volunteers, or as workers in services to the population (such as home care, a day centre, or day care). Creating opportunities for people to be active and involved in things they enjoy and care about certainly seemed to be part of the key.

In the area of education, Bonne-Espérance has had some significant successes with youth in recent years. The rates of young people finishing a high school diploma have increased and the Community Learning Centre has made the school a centre for community activities. In the population as a whole, however, educational levels remain relatively low. The main challenge is to encourage young people to take advantage of locally available educational opportunities, such as training in trades, and to mitigate the financial, social, family and personal impacts of having to live far from home to pursue Cegep and university studies. Some ideas for the future include on-line courses, more support for learning French and for choosing a career, as well as courses in arts and culture.

The economic assets in Bonne-Espérance include the fish plants, the road access to Blanc-Sablon, and the fact that people are resourceful. There is potential for tourism and projects that showcase the natural beauty and abundant natural resources of the Lower North Shore. The challenges are mainly related to the lack of sufficient employment opportunities locally, which mean that many people are unemployed or leave the community for work, often for long periods of time. The cost of living, while low in some ways, can also be higher for items such as groceries, gas and transportation. Residents' vision for the future includes the development of tourism and of an industry based on renewable natural resources of the Coast (wildberries, non-timber forest products, and more). In addition, people would like to see more services such as more daycares, a restaurant and a dog groomer.

The natural environmental assets of Bonne-Espérance include a high quality environment and range of natural resources. The challenges of that environment however are the cold climate and the flies in the summer months, making it harder to enjoy the outdoors. For the future, participants at the consultation expressed an interest in developing walking and hiking trails, and they also wanted to see more recycling and composting. There are also some assets related to the built environment, such as the road to Blanc-Sablon and the boardwalk in St. Paul's River. There are some efforts needed to maintain and improve the built environment: ensuring access to public buildings for people with limited mobility, maintaining and improving the museum, and maintaining the boardwalk. Many of the suggestions for the future involved maintaining and improving these infrastructures in addition to the churches and cemetery.

On the theme of health and well-being, assets again include the natural environment. The challenges are mainly in the area of services available. A seniors' day centre and more home care hours are considered a need for senior residents. Support for families with children who have special needs is also viewed as insufficient, particularly considering the isolation and low population density in the region, making it hard to find others facing similar difficulties in the same community. Suggestions for the future focus on encouraging healthy active lifestyles for seniors and for the population as a whole.

### *SUMMARY OF BONNE-ESPÉRANCE'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS*

The community of Bonne-Espérance has experienced many accomplishments in recent years. As concerns youth, the pilot project called Communities Against Drugs, which had activities once a month with only 6 kids, has been taken over by the Community Learning Centre, which now operates 5 days a week. In the CLC many different activities are available for all residents: a day care for 4-12 year olds, a youth centre, a fitness room, adults and seniors activities, a music room, and more. In addition, the community has various sports activities, and provides oppor-

tunities for sports team from along the Lower North Shore to travel. This encourages young people to participate more, and enables them to see other places and meet other people. It remains, however, a challenge to find enough adults to teach kids how to play sports. The KIDS summer camp is another accomplishment not only in Bonne-Espérance but in many of the Lower North Shore communities. There is also a breakfast program at the school with about 30 kids each morning.

Junior Rangers is another example of an asset for young people aged 12-17 years. Rangers teach traditional skills, including map and compass, search and rescue, survival skills, cooking, skinning, shooting, and badges are awarded for acquired skills. Each year there is a winter meet that all Junior Rangers along the Lower North Shore participate in, and once a year selected Junior Canadian Rangers attend a summer meet. The program is fully funded by National Defence, and about 85-90% of high school kids participate, although some drop out along the way. Junior Rangers also includes PHASE training: Prevention of Harassment and Abuse through Successful Education. There are 10 modules, usually implemented over two years on issues such as suicide, addiction, sexual abuse and harassment, physical neglect and abuse, emotional neglect, vulnerable relationships, bullying, and more. The program is intended to create a safe environment for teens to talk about these issues. Junior Rangers also promote the Kids Help phone line.

As concerns seniors, there is Seniors Club in Bonne-Espérance that has existed for about five years. Their activities mainly include traditional skills and crafts: cooking, quilting, woodworking. Sometimes they work with the students, and they also hold seasonal events.

The wildberry and non-timber forest products project emerged out of the Healthy Lifestyles program from the Public Health Agency of Canada. A nutrition coordinator conducted focus groups along the Lower North Shore and people expressed an interest in developing the wildberry harvest as an economic development initiative in the context of the decline of the fisheries. The project received 500,000\$ from MAMROT and 300,000\$ from the Ministry of economic development.

Various other projects are underway as well: programs in telehealth, diabetes and more organize by the Lower North Shore Coalition for Health; programs in drug, alcohol and tobacco awareness and prevention; language training for health professionals; YWCA and YMCA; and Québec en forme programs.

## *NEXT STEPS*

The information contained in this portrait is already being used to further community development actions in Bonne-Espérance. For example, a family and seniors policy is being developed by the municipality. Steps are being taken to obtain a day centre for seniors. A music teacher has been hired at the school, and more. Other priorities can be identified and assessments made of what can be done, with whom and in what time frame. For example, at the meeting in St. Paul's River the museum project was suggested as a priority, including the possibility of making expansions to be used by seniors. Because of the range of projects and the many different actors involved, some feel the need for a "concertation" table to get all the organizations together within the community to do strategic planning (i.e. Coasters Association, the municipality, the churches, the CLC, etc.). As the community moves forward with these strong partnerships, intersectoral action, and political commitment, its members will likely feel encouraged to become ever more engaged in issues they care about. And that is what brings true empowerment.

Summary	COMMUNITY LIFE	EDUCATION	ECONOMY	ENVIRONMENT	HEALTH
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community feels safe</li> <li>Strong sense of belonging</li> <li>Good support groups</li> <li>Musical talent</li> <li>Educated youth</li> <li>Skilled craftspeople</li> <li>Divide between villages is decreasing with young people</li> <li>Community Learning Centre</li> <li>Volunteering</li> <li>Generosity of the whole Coast in times of need</li> <li>Pride in Coast culture</li> <li>Family ties</li> <li>Strong community bonds</li> <li>Communities come together all along the Coast</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separate high school and elementary school</li> <li>Educated youth</li> <li>Sense of security and trust in the schools</li> <li>Vocational courses free of charge for those who qualify for <i>Emploi Quebec</i> measures</li> <li>Adult education</li> <li>Community Learning Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fish plants</li> <li>Potential for tourism</li> <li>People are resourceful</li> <li>Road from Blanc Sablon</li> <li>Potential economic growth with natural resources</li> <li>Basic needs are covered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High quality physical environment</li> <li>Access to water, food and housing</li> <li>Environmental resources</li> <li>Road access</li> <li>Boardwalk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High quality natural environment</li> <li>Lower North Shore cancer fund</li> </ul>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seniors lack activities and a place to go during the day</li> <li>Youth not sufficiently engaged</li> <li>Lack of volunteers</li> <li>Loss of momentum and motivation</li> <li>Decline of musical traditions and no music teacher</li> <li>Communication</li> <li>Youth need role models</li> <li>Youth need transportation for activities</li> <li>Divide between villages</li> <li>Many parents leave the community to work</li> <li>Lack of sports and leisure activities</li> <li>Isolation</li> <li>Lack of different cultures and diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exodus of youth and young adults</li> <li>Pursuing educational opportunities</li> <li>Distance from Cegeps and universities: living away from home, costs and support</li> <li>Promoting positive attitudes towards education</li> <li>Parents having to leave the region for work</li> <li>Low levels of bilingualism</li> <li>Insufficient activities for children 0-4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High levels of employment insurance benefits and social assistance</li> <li>Outmigration</li> <li>Wharf in Old Fort not up to standard</li> <li>Language barrier</li> <li>Many work outside the region</li> <li>Transportation</li> <li>Cost of grocery basket</li> <li>Hidden poverty means that some needs are not met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to public buildings</li> <li>Maintaining and improving the museum</li> <li>Cold climate</li> <li>Files in the summer</li> <li>Isolation of the LNS and of the communities from each other</li> <li>Maintaining the boardwalk</li> <li>Wharf in Old Fort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No day centre for seniors</li> <li>To increase awareness of home care services for seniors</li> <li>Cost and availability of healthy foods</li> <li>People go to Newfoundland for health care services</li> <li>Children and youth with special needs</li> </ul>
Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Old Fort and St. Paul's working together more</li> <li>More volunteers</li> <li>Community gathering and volunteer appreciation</li> <li>More active younger adults</li> <li>Music teacher</li> <li>More activities for men</li> <li>Restaurant</li> <li>Covered rink, swimming pool</li> <li>More active and involved seniors</li> <li>Improved access for seniors</li> <li>Day centre for seniors</li> <li>More hours for homecare workers</li> <li>Seniors' residence</li> <li>Coach to organize team sports</li> <li>Community museum in St. Paul's River could be renovated and reopened</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More French courses</li> <li>Increased awareness of guidance counselling services for adult education</li> <li>On-line courses</li> <li>Courses in song, theatre and dance</li> <li>Education on cultural heritage and history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism development</li> <li>Wildberry industry, non-timber forest products and other projects that value the resources of the Coast</li> <li>Daycares</li> <li>Restaurant</li> <li>Dog groomer</li> <li>Funding for exchanges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transportation system: wharf + public transport + adapted transport roads</li> <li>Maintain and improve roads</li> <li>Maintain boardwalk, museum, churches, church-grounds, cemetery</li> <li>Upkeep of the community hall</li> <li>Develop walking and hiking trails</li> <li>Pool and covered rink</li> <li>Recycling and composting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Covered rink</li> <li>Encourage traditional lifestyles</li> <li>Day centre</li> <li>Help with seniors club</li> </ul>

## Endnotes

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26. Research in social and cultural anthropology has been conducted on the Lower North Shore since the 1960s, notably in St. Paul's River. There is therefore a large amount of information on the community (and others as well), to which we cannot do justice here. For those interested, Tugeon-Pelchat (2011) has a good bibliography and most of the documents are available at the Laval University Library in Quebec City. Most of these documents are in French.

27. Turgeon-Pelchat, Catherine, 2011. *La mer à boire : accès à la ressource et gestion de la pêche à St Paul's River*. Thèse de maîtrise, Anthropologie, Université Laval.
28. Belvin 2006 : 71; Breton mentioned distances of 2 to 3 miles between winter quarters.
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33. Roy 1990, quoted in Turgeon-Pelchat 2011: 59.
34. Dionne 1985, quoted in Turgeon-Pelchat 2011: 54
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44. Yvan Breton, personal communication.
45. See Public Health Agency of Canada, "What Makes Canadians Healthy or Unhealthy?" [www.phac-aspc.qc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.qc.ca); Ministère de la Santé et Services sociaux du Québec 2007, "Health, in other words..." [www.mssss.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.mssss.gouv.qc.ca); CHSSN 2003, *A Community Guide to the Population Health Approach*, [www.chssn.org](http://www.chssn.org); Juha Mikkonen and Dennis Raphael, 2010. *Social Determinants of Health, The Canadian Facts*. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management.
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47. Although educational attainment is not directly equated with literacy, people with lower levels of education are more likely to have lower literacy (and vice-versa).
48. See Public Health Agency of Canada, "What Makes Canadians Healthy or Unhealthy?" [www.phac-aspc.qc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.qc.ca); Ministère de la Santé et Services sociaux du Québec 2007, "Health, in other words..." [www.mssss.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.mssss.gouv.qc.ca); CHSSN 2003, *A Community Guide to the Population Health Approach*, [www.chssn.org](http://www.chssn.org); Juha Mikkonen and Dennis Raphael, 2010. *Social Determinants of Health, The Canadian Facts*. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management.
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