

THE FUTURE IS NOW

Towards a community vision for the future of the
**ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY
OF THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS**





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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the English-speaking community of the Magdalen Islands has been engaged in a structured approach to community development. This has been guided by knowledge development and mobilization, strategic planning, and partnerships with local stakeholders to develop and implement relevant projects that meet the needs of the community.

MANY DIFFERENT ACHIEVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO DATE:

- Health promotion programs have been having an impact on access to services and therefore supporting the health and well-being of community members
- Revitalization projects have rejuvenated local communities (CAMI's historical site, Entry Island)
- A social economy approach has created employment and enhanced skill acquisition
- Collaborations between the municipality of Grosse-Île, CAMI, CEDEC, the school, and partner organizations in the French-speaking community have created a strong network for implementing projects
- Municipal autonomy
- Development and sustainability of Cap Dauphin Fishermen's Coop
- Development and implementation of the CLC (Community Learning Centre)

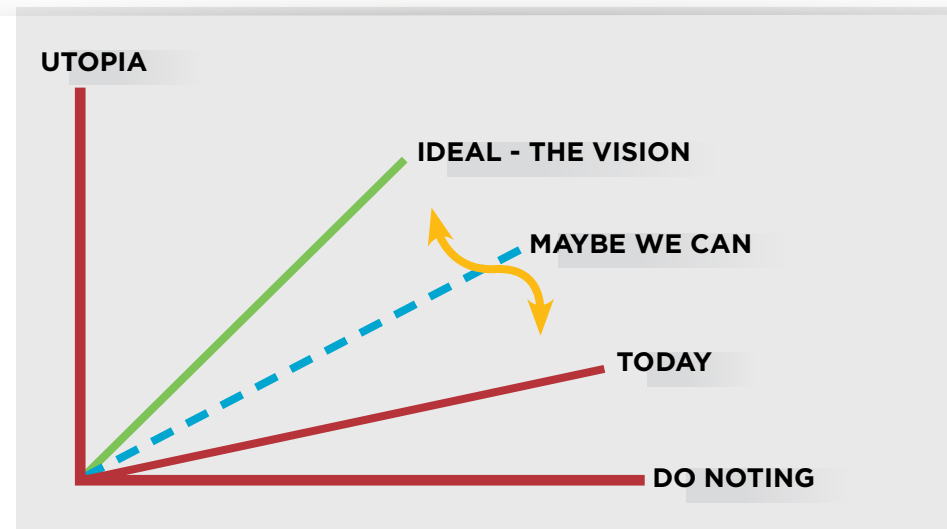
YET, CHALLENGES REMAIN.

- The population continues to decline and age with repercussions on the school, churches and community services
- It remains difficult to recruit workers for local jobs
- Volunteerism is declining and changing form
- The local economy is largely dependent on the lobster fishery
- Community life could be more dynamic (moving away to PEI, returning for fishing, youth outmigration)
- Environmental degradation and the uncertain effects of climate change threaten the integrity of the landscape and environment that are the foundation of the community

In this context, a need is now felt to take a critical and creative look at the future of the community. This community visioning project called The Future is Now reflects the need to ensure the long-term vitality of the English-speaking community of the Magdalen Islands. The intended outcome is a road map laying out where the community wants to be in 10, 20, or 30 years.

PROCESS

Developing a “Theory of Change” is integral to this Road Map. It will be based both on research examining situations in rural and coastal communities (in Canada and internationally) and on the input of key community actors. It will make explicit the ways in which the community believes change will happen (its theory). Therefore, community engagement and participation will be important in understanding local realities and the vision residents have for where they want the community to be going and how they see it getting there.



KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

In this document, we present a first step in this process: the knowledge we have from available statistics and from the research literature. This will be used as a springboard for community discussions that will help to surface a Theory of Change and develop a Road Map. It will also be used to identify policy changes as well as attitudinal changes that could support the community’s vision.

First, the research literature was reviewed with a focus on some key themes in the areas of community and economic development, and in education and out-migration among coastal and island communities. Case studies of similar communities in the Global North (Western, industrialized societies) were identified. For the full review, readers can refer to the Appendices. Second, statistics were compiled from a variety of sources, mainly the Census of Canada, but also from school records and other available sources. When possible, these are presented over a period of time so that changes are evident. In addition, some key policy and structural impediments were identified that are currently considered antithetical to the type of development the island community is striving for; others may emerge in the follow-up phases of the project.

OUR APPROACH

The approach adopted for The Future is Now is aligned with asset-based community development and place-based development. These ways of looking at community development emphasize the importance of using local assets (existing resources in the local community, such as the capacities of residents and employees, associations and institutions, as well as infrastructures and other assets) and of developing a mindset focused on strengths. Community members know their weaknesses and concerns, but often overlook their inherent capabilities. Place based development aligns with this approach through its focus on leveraging a community’s natural, physical and human attributes for development purposes, leading to a development trajectory that is specific to, and rooted in, place.

The goal is to build the vitality of the community, its resilience and long-term sustainability. However, these concepts can evoke the image of a state to be maintained (sustainability) or returned to (resilience). But what is to be maintained, for whom, at what cost and who gets to decide? Island studies have shown that successful island societies (and others too!) are achieved not through their ability to withstand change, but rather through their ability to adapt in the face of change. For this reason, ultimately the goal of community development in this context is to amplify the adaptive capacity of the community in the face of inevitable socioeconomic, environmental and political change.

“Embracing change makes island communities able to continue island life; that is, change makes them resilient” (Kelman and Randall, p. 354).

WHY NOW?

The timing is ideal to engage the community in revitalization. There is a level of concern among community members regarding depopulation and dwindling school enrollment. In addition, the lobster fishing industry is presently lucrative, so many community members have financial resources to draw on. As any seasoned fisherman knows, this may not always be the case, and given the impacts of climate change, future cyclical declines in the fishing industry have the potential to be catastrophic. These types of challenges and opportunities are a galvanizing force for community engagement and community development initiatives; a platform for discussion and action.



KNOWLEDGE BASE

In the sections below, we provide an overview of what we know on a number of themes: demographic trends, education, economic conditions, social and community life, and the environment. For each theme, we present some insights from the research literature, some key statistics on the situation in the Magdalen Islands English-speaking (and broader) community, the main challenges, and finally some opportunities and recommendations. When relevant we insert examples of similar communities elsewhere in the world and what we can learn from them. These can all be used as a starting point for discussing the changes community stakeholders would like to see in the future and how they can be implemented.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Many rural and coastal communities have been contending with downward trends in population numbers for decades. There are several intertwined factors influencing these declines, as well as some promising examples of communities that have managed to reverse the trend.

INSIGHTS FROM THE RESEARCH LITERATURE ON OUT-MIGRATION

The literature shows that in rural communities, education is often the main reason for youth out-migration. We will present the situation surrounding education in the next section, focusing here on out-migration. (For more detail, please refer to the literature review in the Appendices).

Young people generally do not want to leave, but see they need to.

- Only a minority of youth actually want to move, but most all understand the need to move
- Those that want to move are drawn to the financial and lifestyle options available in urban settings
- The majority however leave reluctantly or don't leave at all
- This difficulty in leaving is related to place attachment; primarily to family and relations, but also to the landscape and the culture or lifestyle in the rural setting
- Of those that do leave, most hope to return into employment in their chosen field but are often willing to take other employment if it means being able to live in or near their home community
- The highest-achieving rural students are among those with the greatest community attachment and it is their perceptions of local economic conditions that have great bearing on their decision to stay or leave

Women leave rural communities at higher rates than men

- Young women leave rural communities at a much greater rate than males due to the lack of local economic opportunities for them in

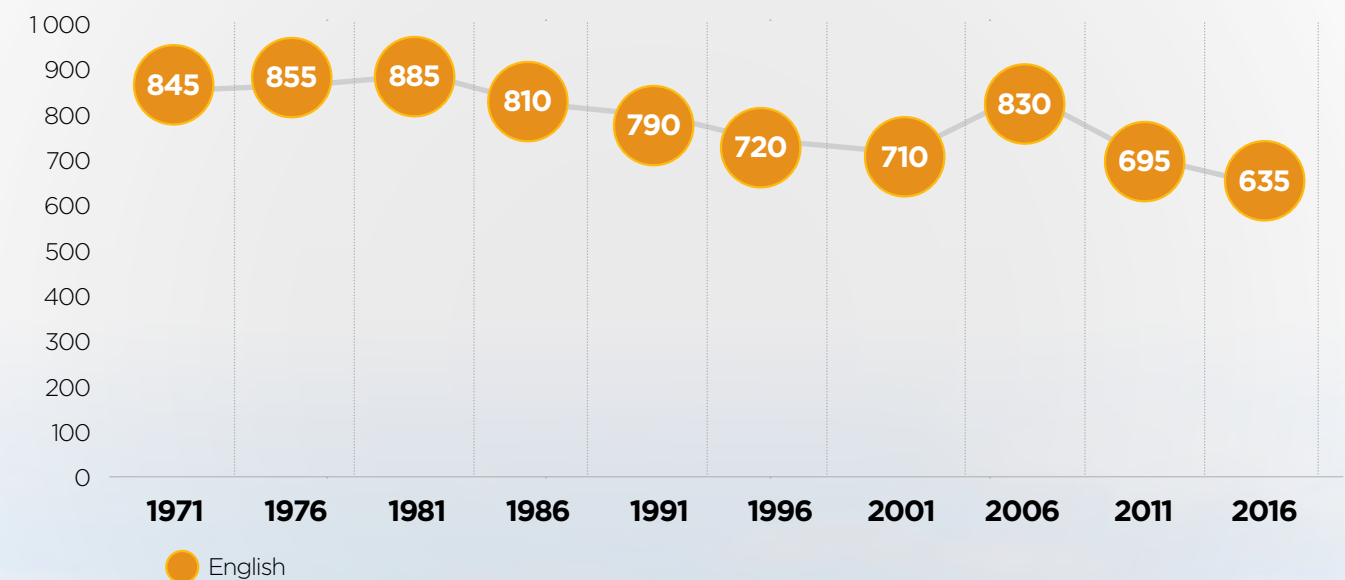
traditional, gender-biased, local economies

- Schooling is often thought to be 'woman's work' and suited for those with aspirations beyond the local community
- Despite higher educational achievement, females are destined for economic disadvantage due to a gendered resource sector combined with service industry jobs, which continue to disenfranchise women
- Nonetheless, women play important roles in community survival as they build social capital, take leadership roles and influence decision making, directly as well as indirectly

THE SITUATION IN THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS REGARDING POPULATION NUMBERS

The English-speaking population of the Magdalen Islands has never been very large, and it has been steadily declining over the past half century.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING POPULATION, MAGDALEN ISLANDS (MOTHER TONGUE)

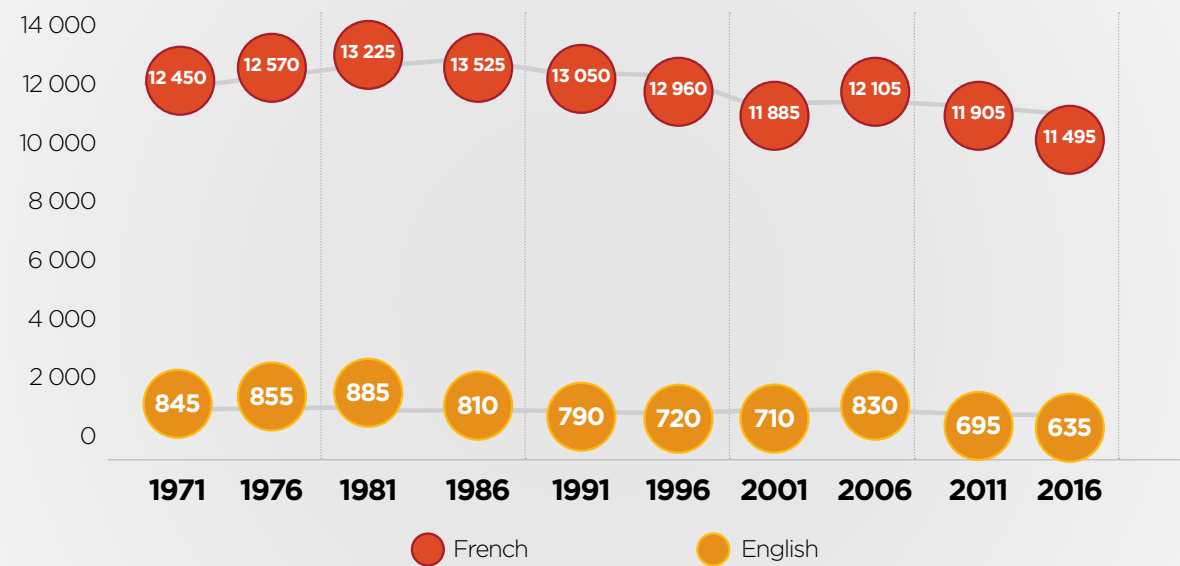


Source: Census of Canada

* There seems no apparent reason for the increase in population reported in the 2006 census. Since fishing season often coincides with the census-taking period, it could be that a larger number of fishers and/or fisher families were present on the islands during the census period and therefore completed the reporting as residents of the Magdalen Islands rather than as residents of PEI or other jurisdictions.

This is also true of the French-speaking population (although the decline is less dramatic and proportionally lower).

FRENCH AND ENGLISH-SPEAKING POPULATION, MOTHER TONGUE



Source: Census of Canada
 If the decline continues at about the same rate, we could expect a population of 571 in 2031 (9% decrease from 2001-2016, and another 9% from 2016-2031). In reality, however, this decline is very unpredictable and could be accelerated by a domino effect, as family and friends leave more rapidly as their social networks leave, and the services needed to maintain a decent living in the community disappear.

PROJECTED DECLINE 2011-2031

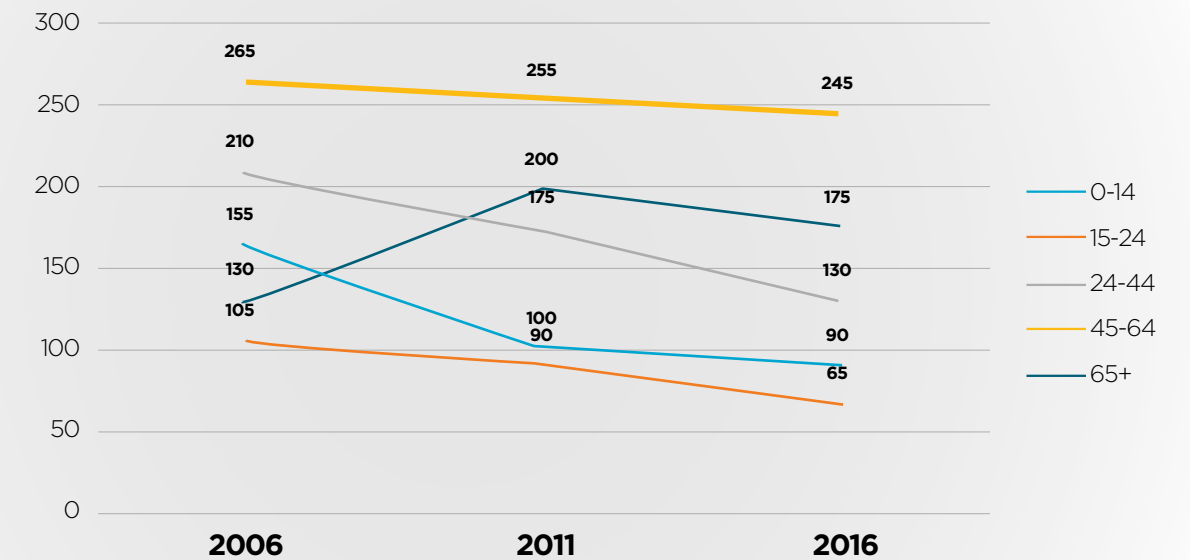


In general, family size and the number of children per family have declined over the years, following a general trend in Quebec society. The effects of this, however, are felt much more directly in a small community, since they have a marked impact on school enrollment and the types of services that can be offered to families. The lower birth rate combined with outmigration is a particularly worrisome trend. The school on Entry Island has already closed and the school in Grosse Ile has only about one third of the students it once housed at the peak of the baby boom in the late 1960s.

The age structure of the population matters for many different reasons. The numbers and proportions of people in the different age groups has an impact on the types of services that are needed, and also on those that can be offered. For example, the types of activities that can be organized for a school population of 80 children and youth are not the same as for 40. The budgets are reduced, the pool of volunteers may also be, and the number of students per grade is smaller. Sports, outings, events and other activities all become harder to organize when the numbers decline.

The data below shows that the number of people aged 65 and over has increased (from 130-175 between 2006-2016) while all other age groups have declined. The number of children aged 0-14, for example, have decreased from 165 in 2006 to 90 in 2016; and adults 25-44 have decreased dramatically, from 210 to 130 in just ten years.

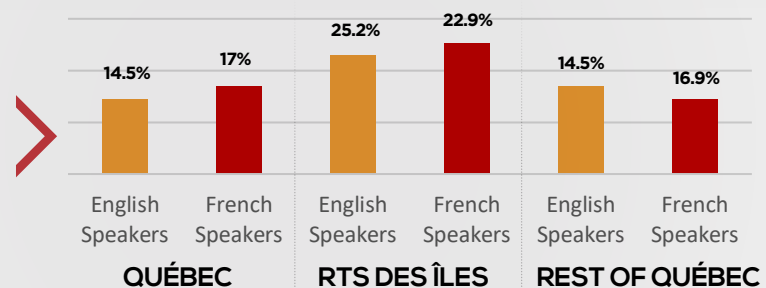
AGE STRUCTURE (ENGLISH-SPEAKING POPULATION)



*Data from the Census of Canada, for First-official language spoken (FOLS)

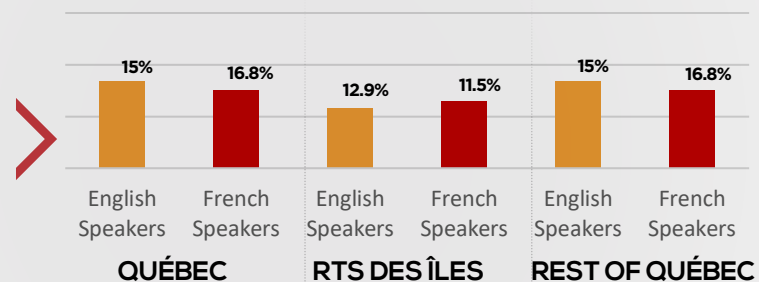
In 2016, the proportion of seniors was much higher among English-speaking Magdalen Islanders than among Francophones, and both are higher than elsewhere in the province.

PROPORTION OF SENIORS (65+) BY FIRST OFFICIAL LANGUAGE SPOKEN QUÉBEC, RST DES ÎLES AND THE REST OF QUÉBEC, 2016



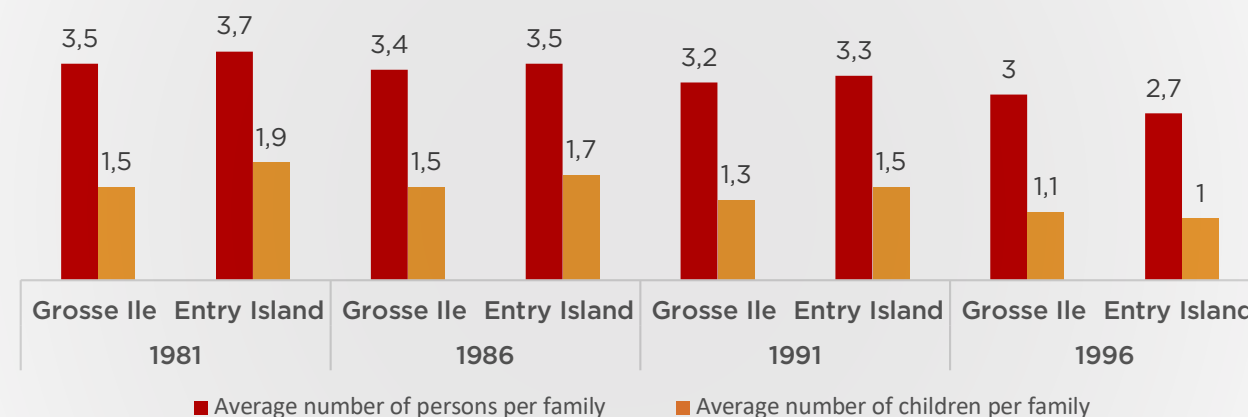
On the other hand, the proportion of children aged 0-14 is lower than elsewhere in the province, but it is slightly higher among English-speaking Magdalen Islanders than among Francophones.

PROPORTION OF CHILDREN 0 TO 14) BY FIRST OFFICIAL LANGUAGE SPOKEN QUÉBEC, RST DES ÎLES AND THE REST OF QUÉBEC, 2016



Average family size and average number of children per family have decreased over time, following the general trend in Quebec and all Western societies. As an example, the chart below shows that from 1981 to 1996 the average number of persons per family went from 3.5 in Grosse-Île to 2.7, and the number of children dropped from 1.5 to 1.1 (this data is not available for later census years).

PERSONS PER FAMILY AND CHILDREN PER FAMILY



*Data from the Census of Canada, for Grosse-Île and Entry Island. We were not able to access data for later census periods.

CHALLENGES

1. The population is declining steadily over time
2. The decline is most strongly marked among younger generations, while there are greater numbers of seniors and they represent a high proportion of the population
3. This presents some major challenges for community life, services, governance, and more. For example: there are fewer children to keep the school dynamic; there are more seniors, some of whom may become isolated and others who will require increasing assistance and services; there are fewer residents in the active adult age range to occupy jobs, volunteer, sit on committees and boards, and more.
4. As these realities become more accentuated, the community has less to offer to potential residents, be they returning community members, newcomers, or even vacationers. This leads to inter-community migration whereby English-speakers move from their traditional communities (Entry Island, Grosse Île) to the main communities on the Islands (Grindstone). This trend, to be closer to employment and other amenities, facilitates integration with the French-speaking majority, and eventually assimilation.
5. This decline could lead to a situation where the community is no longer viable.

EDUCATION

Education is important for a wide variety of reasons, both personal and societal. It provides young people with the tools to make choices regarding their future, it prepares them for future careers, it provides life skills, critical thinking skills and a host of other abilities that help us all function in the world where we live. Education is empowering. In addition, education is known to have a positive impact on health and well-being. And, of course, a well-educated population is better able to take advantage of economic opportunities and build a strong local community. However, small rural and coastal communities face particular challenges accessing educational opportunities and encouraging youth to complete their studies.

INSIGHTS FROM THE RESEARCH LITERATURE ON EDUCATION

“Rural youth are implicitly encouraged to accept an education that is presented as the only «ticket» out of the community’s economic and social trouble, and to educate themselves into other places”
(Corbett, 2004, p. 453).

Formal education is not seen as relevant for youth who want to stay

- Formal education is typically suitable for opportunities in larger and urban centers, not in fishing and many other blue-collar professions associated with rural labor markets
- What counts as success in a rural community does not align with measures of school performance
- For those whose families are entrenched in local networks, apprenticeship and less formal ways of transferring knowledge and resources, the world of higher education has been understood as ‘irrelevant’
- What is found in rural, Canadian communities is young white men working in resource extraction industries, living lives defined as successful by local standards
- This often works well for the males, but may be harder on the females

“...these expert systems ... dis-embed and mobilize young people rather than engage them in a process of learning how to live well and carefully within a place” (Corbett, 2004, p. 466).

Education and out-migration are intimately linked

- The current education system shaped by neoliberalism is designed to ‘select and sort’ rural youth for out-migration and ‘dis-embed’ them from their local traditions and culture.
- This is done in formal ways such as the preoccupation with standardized testing as well as use of curriculum written about foreign locations by strangers.
- This is also done informally through attitudes and worldviews that favor careers and lifestyles that exist in more urban settings.

Parenting, schools and teachers have a difficult balancing act in addressing this dynamic

- Parenting is at least as important as what happens in school in terms of influencing and informing choices youth make
- Teachers and administrators understand the priorities of the education system (standard curriculum and testing) and the inapplicability of their outcomes to many of the students (especially male) in the local community.
- They are aware of issues facing the community, they love their community and at the same time may be unclear about their role in changing the community

Education is important for community vitality

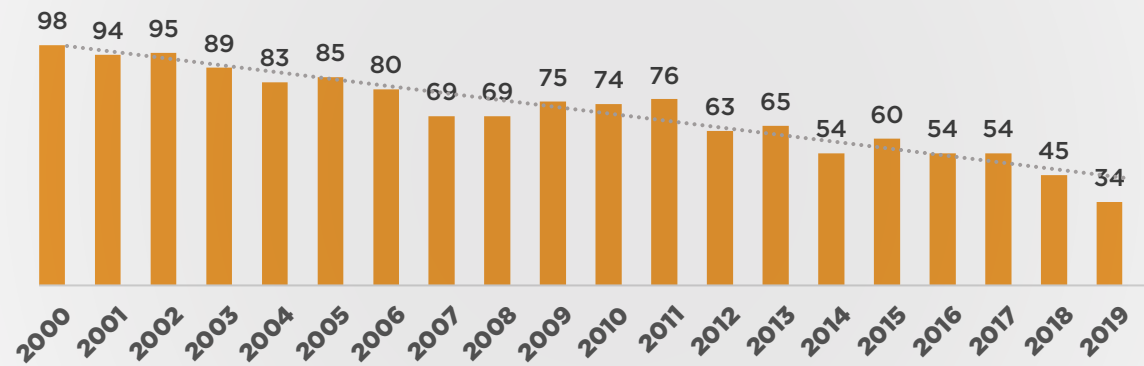
- Institutions cannot survive without active community participation and strong leadership is required from community leaders within the group’s society.
- Vitality of official language minorities is dependent on the literacy levels and skills possessed by individuals because of the tools and information needed in order for the communities to grow and develop.
- There is a clear association between the likelihood of citizen participation and levels of formal education
- In a setting where resources and opportunities for adult education are limited, it is challenging to develop opportunities for further schooling among adults

THE SITUATION IN THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS REGARDING EDUCATION

The situation in the Magdalen islands is marked by several factors on the local context. There is now only one English-language school (located in Grosse-Île), originally built to contain 120 students. With a declining English-speaking population, the school is far from full, yet attracting new students is difficult since under Bill 101 in Quebec, specific criteria need to be met for students to have eligibility to English-language education.

Since 2000, the number of students enrolled at the Grosse-Île school has fallen from 98 to 34 projected for the fall of 2019.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN GROSSE ÎLE SCHOOL



Source: Grosse Île school, courtesy of the principal

Until the early 1970s it was not possible to complete secondary studies in English in the Magdalen Islands. Currently, students can complete their high school at home, but there are no post-secondary programs in English on the islands (Cégep or university) so students must leave the islands if they wish to pursue studies.

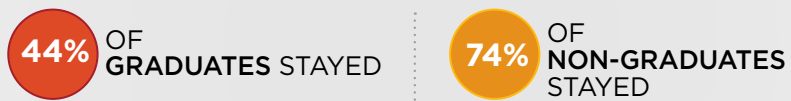
Historically, there has been a strong trend by Anglophones to migrate to the Maritimes, whether to study or to work. Recently, Montréal and other urban centers in Quebec have been increasingly chosen as the destination to go study, where some choose the English colleges to further their education (Arsenault & Chevrier 2007).

Another factor affecting educational attainment is that because the lobster fishery is currently quite lucrative, it is highly attractive to young people looking to earn money and have a respected job (especially boys) which tends to encourage dropping out.

With the help of the school, we compiled a list of students entering grade 7 from 1978-2018. Of those who began grade 7 in Grosse Île:

- 60% graduated (40% did not)
- 55% are still living on the islands (45% are not)

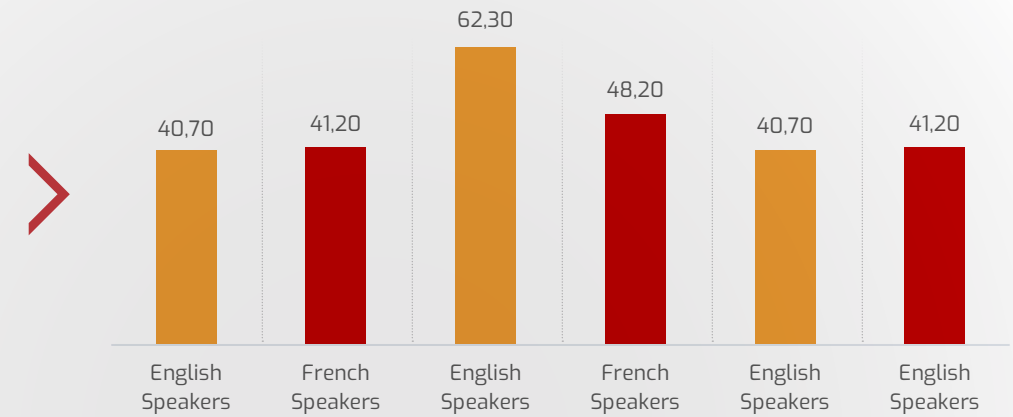
IN ADDITION



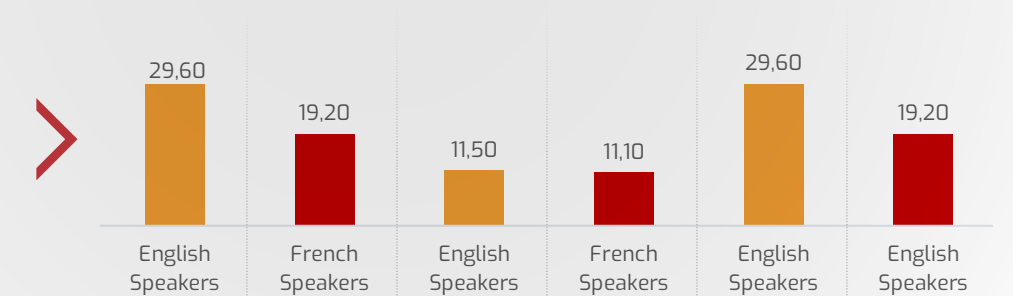
This confirms the general trend for those with higher educational achievement (in this case simply finishing high school) to leave the community. It also underlines the fact that overall, the less educated are those who stay, which over time leads to a population with lower educational levels, while the more educated move elsewhere.

Current statistics (2016 census) show low levels of educational attainment among English speakers on the Magdalen Islands on the whole:

PROPORTION WITH LOW EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY FIRST OFFICIAL LANGUAGE SPOKEN QUÉBEC, RTS DES ÎLES AND THE REST OF QUÉBEC, 2016



PROPORTION WITH HIGH EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY FIRST OFFICIAL LANGUAGE SPOKEN QUÉBEC, RTS DES ÎLES AND THE REST OF QUÉBEC, 2016



Source: JPocock Research Consulting, 2016 Census, Statistics Canada. Population in private households - 25% sample. The linguistic concept is First Official Language Spoken with multiple responses distributed equally between English and French.

CHALLENGES

1. Declining school numbers, potentially affecting the quality of school life and access to specialized services for students
2. Difficulty attracting new students because of eligibility requirements
3. Lack of post-secondary and adult education opportunities in English language on the Islands
4. Many students do not have enough French to pursue schooling in French language
5. Attractivity of work in the fishery, which encourages dropping-out (especially among boys)
6. Rules and regulations in the education system create barriers for providing educational services in different ways

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Economic conditions interact with demographic, educational, social, cultural and environmental realities in often complex ways. Therefore, none can be addressed in isolation from the others. A systemic approach is needed for all.

INSIGHTS FROM THE RESEARCH LITERATURE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Successful island economies tend to specialize in one or a few industries that are often natural resource based

- Rather than diversification and economies of scale they engage in what is referred to as “flexible specialization,” which means that they specialize in one or a few industries that are often natural resource based, focusing their limited resources while remaining adaptable
- This is more easily achieved the smaller the population and the greater amount of cultural and social cohesion
- Being on the fringe of large-scale industrial activity can be beneficial as it allows for a focus on nurturing cultural and ecological integrity that people from all over the world may be willing to pay a premium to experience

Place-based development has been shown to be a successful approach for rural, island and remote regions

- It takes into consideration culture, environment and community, local capacity, and governance regimes that shift authority and control away from central powers

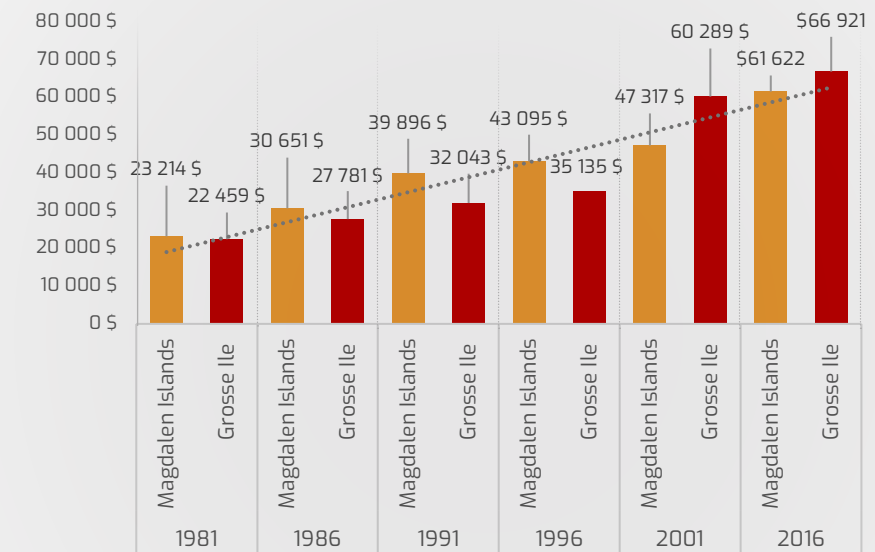
“Place-based development, in contrast to conventional sectoral, programmatic or issue-defined perspectives, is a holistic and targeted intervention that seeks to reveal, utilize and enhance the unique natural, physical, and/or human capacity endowments present within a particular location for the development of the in-situ community and/or its biophysical environment” (Markey 2010, p.1).



THE SITUATION IN THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS REGARDING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Despite high levels of seasonal unemployment, residents of the English-speaking community have high average household incomes.

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Source: Census of Canada data
*It is difficult to access comparable data for the different census years because of changes in data collection methods (here we do not show 2006 and 2011 data). Nonetheless, we can observe a general trend that has been quite constant up through 2016.

These statistics, which show higher average incomes among residents of Grosse-Île than the overall population of the Magdalen Islands, can be explained in part by the fact that the English-speaking community holds a proportionately higher share of the lobster fishing licenses. According to one resident, about 100 of the 325 licenses are held on Grosse-Île (which represents about 5% of the population). When licenses come up for sale, English speakers buy them up, because often the whole family will help finance the purchase.

This relative affluence makes it difficult to recruit workers for other jobs, for example in the service, not-for-profit, community and other sectors where they would be working fewer hours per week than in the fishing industry and therefore earning about the same amount while working more weeks.

These statistics hide disparities, however: women earn much less than men, and not all households benefit to the same extent from high incomes in the fishery.

In addition, on the Magdalen Islands, the fishing industry is one of the few employment opportunities where knowledge of the dominant language of French is not required for employment, and many island residents are limited to employment that does not require fluency in French. This is changing over time, however, as the general trend is moving toward fewer English speakers who only speak English.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Without infrastructure and essential services, recruiting new residents and workers from away faces many challenges.

INSIGHTS FROM THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

Some island territories in recent decades are successfully implementing unconventional economic structures.

- These involve some form of community ownership over their resources and/ or local industry, resulting in more autonomy and less impact of globalization.
- For example, non-profit community development corporations, community land trusts, and/ or heritage trusts to protect land and cultural resources from both market forces and the whim of current governments.

Communications technologies are an important infrastructure to build and maintain.

- ITCs contribute to the rebirth of some remote areas by enabling marketing (of place and products), tele-commuting, and education

The role of senior government is critical.

- Without funding and resources for capacity building, most small communities simply would not have the internal resources to undertake meaningful community and economic development.
- Governance via local community groups and associations are key resources in devising and implementing development plans.

THE SITUATION IN THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS REGARDING INFRASTRUCTURES AND SERVICES

The community has a number of public infrastructures: the school and municipal infrastructures. There are also some cooperative and private structures such as Cap Dauphin Fishermen's Co-operative, CAMI buildings, churches, etc...

However, there are few rental homes and transportation options are limited for people without a car and a driver's license. In addition, the gas station is only open part of the year, and local grocery options are limited.

Some essential services are also limited or lacking entirely. For example, daycare is currently unavailable, placing limits on the ability of parents to work outside the home.

CHALLENGES

1. The fact that essential services are lacking, makes it extremely difficult to attract newcomers.
2. There are few houses and/or apartments to rent
3. There are no daycare services
4. The gas station is open seasonally
5. Transportation is challenging since there is limited public transport and distances are far
6. There is no integration process or plan
7. Internet connection is not reliable
8. Generalist organization (related to critical mass)

KNOWLEDGE OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES, AMONG ENGLISH MOTHER TONGUE



Source: Joanne Pocock, Baseline Data Reports, produced for the CHSSN.

CHALLENGES

1. Many people are very reliant on the lobster fishery, so if there is a downturn, they are extremely vulnerable.
2. Many residents do not have good enough skills in French to occupy jobs that require a certain level of bilingualism (inside or outside the English-speaking community).
3. High incomes in the fishery make it difficult to recruit workers for other types of work (even jobs with good conditions and benefits).
4. While average household incomes are high, there are disparities in the community, and women often earn much less than men, resulting in disadvantage.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE

Social and community life is intimately bound up with the economic situation and its development. It is also affected by the levels of education among community members and their ability to participate fully in the life of the community.

INSIGHTS FROM THE RESEARCH LITERATURE ON SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE

The networks of relationships among people who live and work together, and who share norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation are what is referred to as “social capital”.

- Groups high in social capital are more resilient and exhibit characteristics such as high rates of participation in community organizations projects and collective action for the public good
- Social capital includes both bonding (connections with friends and family) as well as bridging (participation in clubs and associations, and other connections between groups)
- Small communities can have high levels of social capital, but they can also be fraught with rivalries and divisions that can undermine collective capacity
- Social capital and volunteerism go together

Bringing people together for a common purpose increases trust, reciprocity and sense of belonging

- A sense of community can be created or promoted by bringing people together in small groups and working with them to create a shared sense of community

THE SITUATION IN THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS REGARDING SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE

Interviews and discussions with residents of Grosse-Île and other stakeholders suggest that social and community life is being affected by many of the preceding issues, as well as some others. These are certainly not unique to the Magdalen Islands, as many represent general trends in Western societies and across the globe.

Increased mobility

- People can easily go to other communities for their needs, including shopping, social activities, and more.

Increased connectivity and on-line communications

- As is the case elsewhere, the internet has changed the way people communicate, entertain themselves, and spend their time generally.
- This has had the effect of decreasing in-person interactions and levels of participation in local activities and events

Greater contact and connection between English and French speakers

- More people are bilingual and able to interact with people from the other linguistic group.
- There is more intermarriage between Francophones and Anglophones
- There is less rivalry and conflict between the two language groups

Decline in volunteerism and civic engagement

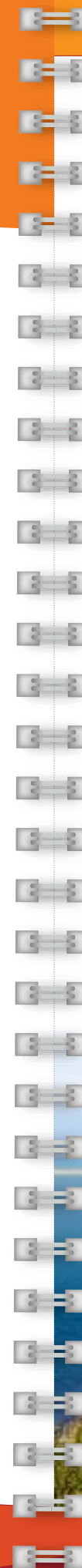
- People are less available and inclined to volunteer
- Few people are willing to sit on boards and other governance structures
- There has been a decline in social clubs and committees (women's institute, church group, leisure committee)

Decline in the role of the church

- Weekly or bi-weekly church services are led by lay readers with a pastor travelling to the islands every two months
- Attendance has declined
- Church is no longer central to social and community life

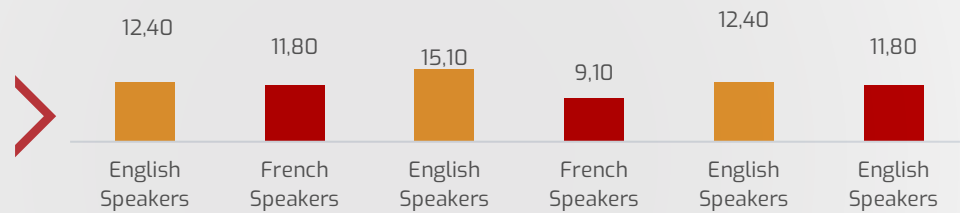
Gender relations and roles are changing

- More women have paid employment today than in the past
- Women do less traditional physical labor now than in past generations (farming, gardening, etc...)
- Women still shoulder a lot of responsibilities (childcare, budget, administration, etc.)



A higher proportion of the English-speaking population lives in lone-parent families than is the case among Francophones: 15.1% compared to 9.1%. This suggests greater vulnerability in Anglophone families and is worth looking into further (for example, English speakers may be able to rely more consistently on extended family for help).

PROPORTION LIVING IN LONE-PARENT FAMILIES BY FIRST OFFICIAL LANGUAGE SPOKEN QUÉBEC, RTS DES ÎLES AND THE REST OF QUÉBEC, 2016



Source: JPocock Research Consulting, 2016 Census, Statistics Canada. Population in private households - 25% sample. The linguistic concept is First Official Language Spoken with multiple responses distributed equally between English and French.

CHALLENGES

1. As people are less engaged in the local community and its structures, it becomes more difficult to organize community activities.
2. Long-standing institutions such as the municipality, CAMI and the church will face difficulties in recruiting the next generation of leaders and ensuring sustainability.
3. Given the education levels of many of those who stay, it will become increasingly difficult to fill positions in an increasingly complex work environment (policies, regulations, project management, accountability requirements, etc...).
4. There are few meeting places in the community that all community members might frequent.



ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

A host of environmental issues face all societies, indeed all life on earth today. Recent studies and reports highlight the major threats of land degradation, biodiversity loss, air, land and water pollution, and the effects of climate change. Small rural and island communities will be affected in specific ways, most urgently perhaps by the effects of climate change as extreme weather events become more frequent, ocean levels rise and ocean species (such as fish and sea mammals) are impacted.

INSIGHTS FROM THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

Climate change is seen as one of the greatest threats posed to the future of humankind and the world.

- The changes predicted include rising global temperatures, increase/ decrease in precipitation (depending on region), more severe weather events, sea level rise, less sea ice, and reduced air quality.
- The exact timing and degree of these impacts is not well defined and vast amounts of research are ongoing. However, changes can already be observed in most regions.
- These changes may seem small, but they can have significant impacts for communities.

Small islands around the world have a much greater dependence historically, socially and economically on marine territories and marine life

- therefore, they stand to be impacted disproportionately by threats to the oceans

Climate adaptations are critically important today

- Climate adaptations are measures that reduce negative impacts or take advantage of emerging opportunities
- Most policy measures to date have focused on climate change mitigation (reducing greenhouse gases).
- A certain level of change is going to take place due to carbon levels and warming already in place.

Effective adaptation requires coordinated efforts and should be grounded in a solid understanding of a community's capacities and vulnerabilities.

Other environmental threats also exist, such as various types of pollution, oil spills, and more.

THE SITUATION IN THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS

Fishing industry

- Climate estimations suggest that over the next 10-50 years the Gulf of Saint Lawrence will experience temperature and oxygenation changes at three times the rate of global trends.
- In the short-term we can expect downward pressure on the economics of the fishery due to reduced availability of bait and extreme weather that will interfere with harvesting. In addition, environmental stresses on other species such as whales can cause disruptions in fishing periods and procedures as protection measures are invoked for the threatened (yet non-fish) species.
- Warming generally improves performance of life processes of lobster and is contributing to the current abundance of stocks. However, excessive warming can reduce performance and cause death.

Energy

- Electricity for the islands is being supplied from diesel-fired power plants
- Quebec's 2013 - 2020 Climate Change Action Plan commits the province to undertake research on road infrastructure and seawalls to protect against coastal erosion
- Hydro Quebec's website indicates that they are looking into transitioning the Magdalen Islands to greener forms of energy through a gradual transition to renewables such as solar and wind, coupled with energy conservation behaviors (Hydro Quebec, n.d.). Large scale wind farms will have an impact on landscape and might have an impact on surrounding fish populations.

Landscape

- Coastal erosion is increasing
- Public security issues are arising related to the increase in erosion
- Water tables and other environmental issues are increasingly of concern

CHALLENGES

1. Unpredictable changes in ocean temperature, weather patterns, fish populations and more
2. Coastal erosion
3. Marine species and populations are likely to experience impacts, with fishers experiencing the unintended consequences of protection measures.
4. If and when sea levels rise, land will be lost

OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We have outlined in the sections above a number of challenges to demographic trends, education, economic conditions, infrastructures and essential services, social and community life, and the biophysical environment. While these challenges are real and often complex to overcome, there are opportunities that can point the way towards more resilient, sustainable and adaptive communities.

First, it is important to emphasize that the English-speaking community of the Magdalen Islands has many assets to draw on, for example:

- The strong connection to place and tradition, a tight-knit community, and love for the local environment
- The Little Red School House is a living homage to the community's history and pioneers.
- Pointe de l'Est National Wildlife Area, Brion Island and Old Harry Beach are points of community pride and could be leveraged to expand the local tourism in ways that are appropriate to scale and culture.
- Being the nesting grounds for multiple bird species including two species at risk, makes the area a draw to bird watchers, a growing segment of the ecotourism market that is well developed in terms of international networks and marketing platforms that can be tapped.
- Gaspésie is a leader in wind energy. The Islands may be well positioned to forge partnerships that might result in local wind energy production, perhaps a community owned energy sector as a number of European island communities are doing with government support.
- Diaspora are also an asset for return visitors, second home owners, retirees and potential investors.
- CAMI has a strong social media following.
- A number of social enterprises (co-operative, non-profit) already exist

The literature points to a number of approaches, models and strategies that could be considered in support of community vitality. The P.L.A.C.E model was identified by a group of researchers who studied the case of Fogo Island, Newfoundland, over a period of six years, which they feel may be helpful to other small, remote communities (Slawinski et al. 2019). It shares many attributes with place based and asset-based theories and goes a bit further in offering specific strategies community organizers can use to help gain buy-in and momentum. This may provide inspiration:



Another set of recommendations for community economic development are outlined by leading Island Studies scholar Godfrey Baldacchino:

1. Develop an ecologically and culturally friendly tourism industry that appreciates local and small-scale assets, engages with the local community, and respects the cultural and natural ambiance of place.
2. Pursue second-home residents and urban refugees seeking to escape the rat race; such as artists, professionals and retirees. This attraction is enabled by electronic connectivity which allows them to maintain connections and in some cases employment elsewhere while keeping residence in a peripheral community.
3. Production and promotion of well-branded, good quality, high-value added and locally sourced products, services and natural assets geared for niche export markets, including the tourists and new residents.
4. Injection of new investment: a phoenix-like, resurgent flagship industry possibly replacing a moribund or redundant one.

(Baldacchino 2015 "Placing Identity: Strategic Considerations for Rebounding Peripheries")

- P** Promote community champions; people who really care and want to make a difference
- L** Link insiders and outsiders. When you bring these groups together knowledge-sharing happens, new expertise is built, and new inspiration develops.
- A** Assess local capacities or assets. Communities take stock of what they have and figure out what is special about where they live. Do not try to imitate other places and create direct competition.
- C** Convey compelling narratives. Come up with positive, true stories about the place that resonate with people in the community. Repeat them so they become a foundation of inspiration and confidence.
- E** Engage «both/and» thinking. Don't dismiss opportunities that might seem opposed to each other; find a way to engage with both.

People who might be attracted to spend all or part of the year on the Islands could also include community members who have moved away. With employment opportunities, new Canadians could also be attracted to move to the Magdalen Islands.

Travel and tourism have become one of the fastest growing industries world-wide and island and remote regions in particular are receiving a great upswing in visitors and economic activity as a result. This has come with a mix of positive and negative effects, such as environmental footprint, monetization of cultures and traditions, and disruption to traditional livelihoods. These issues have given rise to the call for 'sustainable tourism' which advocates for tourism development that is authentic to communities and done at a scale that does not compromise the environment (physical and human). Opportunities for the Magdalen Islands include ecotourism as well as cultural, birdwatching and rural tourism.

Place based education (PBE) is an approach that could help to find ways to make school more relevant to local realities. At its simplest PBE is a curriculum based on local phenomena designed through student input and community involvement. One of the strengths of place-based education is that it can adapt to the unique characteristics of specific places and in this way can help overcome the disconnect between school and children's lives. Because PBE is based in the community, it will deeply reflect the community, and as such, there are no generic models of the approach. However, there are common elements; namely, local phenomenon as the basis of curriculum, students as creators of knowledge rather than consumers of knowledge, students playing a central role in determining what is studied, teachers as co-guides and brokers of community resources and learning possibilities, and the wall between school and community being crossed frequently. There are five areas of practice in PBE: cultural studies, nature studies, real-world problem solving, internships and entrepreneurial opportunities and induction into community processes.

In addition, PBE could be a way for education and development policies to be integrated and self-reinforcing through enhanced school-community relationships that not only retain youth, but also strengthen local economies and broaden the imagination of young people in regard to the possibilities of life in their home communities. Environmental issues could certainly be part of the focus of PBE projects.

Concerning climate change, all policy and planning measures should integrate climate change factors in recognition of its far-reaching impacts. In addition, there are opportunities for investing in building a "green economy," for example in renewable energies (wind, solar, biofuel) and establishing designated, protected areas. However, the literature cautions against overlooking or underinvesting in pressing issues such as health, education and basic needs.

STRUCTURAL IMPEDIMENTS (POLICY AND SYSTEMIC ISSUES)

In doing community social and economic development, we realize that some issues cannot be addressed by local projects and initiatives alone, since they are influenced by factors related to policies and broader systems. There are a variety of national and provincial policies and systemic issues that affect the situation in the Magdalen Islands, which we outline briefly below. A general observation is that policies developed for urban settings often don't work in regions, and are not adapted for English-speaking communities.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Out-migration and lack of in-migration is affected by education policies and services. First, Bill 101 prohibits children from attending an English language school unless they can meet the eligibility criteria (one of the two parents received the majority of their schooling in Canada in English). It is therefore impossible to recruit Francophone children or the children of immigrants to ensure the sustainability of the school. Second, adult education, DEP programs and post-secondary education are not available in English on the islands. As a result, youth and young adults have to leave the islands to pursue studies or complete high school after age 16.

EDUCATION

Students who have academic difficulties and those with learning disabilities do not have adequate professional support (diagnosis and support from specialists).

In addition, in the Magdalen Islands, vocational training is not available in English, so that educational pathway is closed off, unless students leave the islands.

Distance education is not coordinated or organized in English.

Critical mass is needed for Emploi-Quebec to offer training courses (often a course requires at least 15 students to be offered, which is extremely difficult for English-speaking students)

The current school system is not creating bilingual graduates. Yet without language skills many jobs are closed off.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Current employment insurance eligibility criteria make it possible to access EI under age 18 (as of 14 years of age). This creates a disincentive to finish school and an incentive to work seasonally. It appears incongruent that a young employee cannot pay into the Quebec Pension Plan (RRQ) until age 18, but can pay into the EI plan and receive benefits.

The Skills Link (Connexions Compétence, skills for at-risk youth and employment integration) and Projet de Préparation à l'Emploi (Emploi Québec) have criteria that English-speaking youth often do not meet (for instance because they are receiving EI).

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE

English-speaking community organizations receive recurring funding from the federal government via the Official Languages program. However, provincial funding for social and cultural programs goes disproportionately to Francophone organizations, leaving the English-speaking community struggling to ensure sustainable programs and services not covered under federal funding.

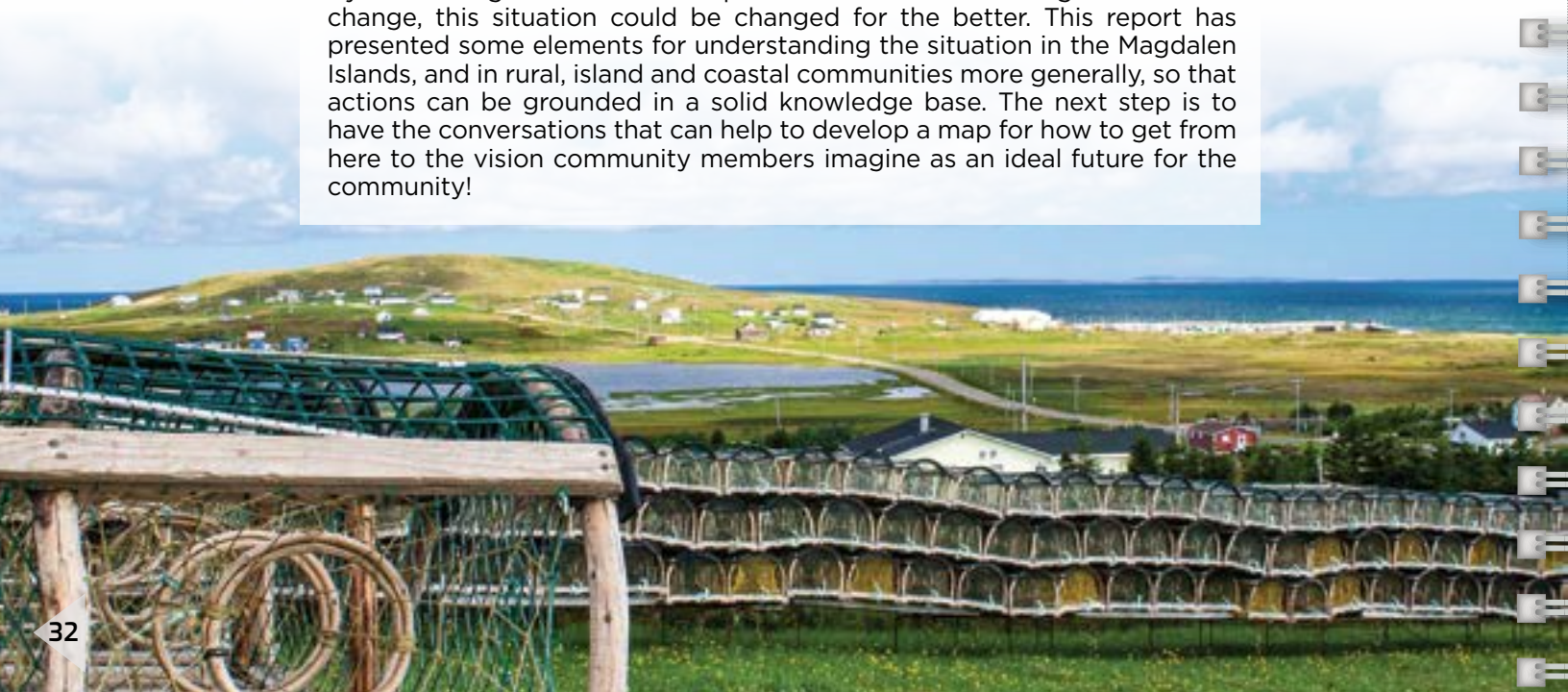
CONCLUSION

The English-speaking community of the Magdalen Islands is in a paradoxical situation, which is slightly different than many other rural communities. While devitalization is often a downwards trend on all or most fronts, with communities experiencing low incomes, low rates of economic participation, out-migration and more, here we see an upward trend in incomes and organizational dynamics, with a downward trend in population numbers and the engagement of residents in social and community life.

There are various reasons for this. The lobster fishery has brought economic prosperity to some community members and improved the situation of the average household. Combined with employment insurance benefits, fishers and their families can earn a good income. Alongside this, the main community organizations (CAMI, Municipality, CEDEC, etc.) have chosen to collaborate rather than compete, and they have actively worked to develop a shared vision for the community. Moreover, they have been successful in securing funding for many projects, which has helped to maintain the vitality of the community. We also see greater integration with the French-speaking community, with a higher proportion of residents speaking French, and more connections across what used to be a linguistic divide.

On the other hand, there continues to be a population decline and an ageing population overall. The number of school-aged children is extremely low, with mixed effects on school dynamics and availability of services. In addition, drop-out rates continue to be high, and those who do finish high school have no local opportunities to continue their education in English, so they are forced to move away if they wish to pursue studies. Many do not have a level of French that would enable them to study in a French-language institution. In addition, the social and cultural life of the community is affected by a decline in volunteerism, and in community engagement and participation more generally.

By addressing the structural impediments that are creating obstacles to change, this situation could be changed for the better. This report has presented some elements for understanding the situation in the Magdalen Islands, and in rural, island and coastal communities more generally, so that actions can be grounded in a solid knowledge base. The next step is to have the conversations that can help to develop a map for how to get from here to the vision community members imagine as an ideal future for the community!





Preserving our past, building our future

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