

COMMUNITY NetLink

NEWS FOR THE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK



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Extending Mental Health Services

to meet the surge
in demand due
to the pandemic

“It’s becoming clearer as we move through the COVID crisis that mental health services are more and more needed,” observed Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN. “We’re doing what we can to identify needs, develop new services in English, and work

with community, private, and government sources to build a dependable funding base to meet the challenge.”

The Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers (SRQEA) provided special one-year funding to address these growing mental health needs. Ten community-based organizations received funding including Mental Health Estrie and the Argyle Institute in Montreal and hundreds of English-speaking Quebecers have benefitted as a result.

“Our focus with the new funding has been on outreach to the community,” said Tanya Gibson, Mental Health Estrie’s Executive Director at her office in Lennoxville. “English-speakers are spread out in pockets all across our region and connecting with them is a big challenge.”

Gibson explained that Mental Health Estrie focuses on supporting people with a lived experience of mental illness as well as their families and caregivers. While not a treatment center, they work to create peer support for their clients and

Extending Mental Health Services continued...

to connect people to the resources they need. The pandemic has forced them to move their outreach and support services online but Gibson said that this has had an unexpected silver lining.

“Not only can more people participate in our outreach and educational activities, but being online has opened a world of opportunity for us to bring very high-quality information to our clients and our community,” observed Gibson, pointing to a recent information session on Borderline Personality Disorder with a world-recognized expert in the field.

Mental Health Estrie is now moving back to more in-person settings, adopting a “hybrid” model for service delivery. Gibson hopes the MSSS can be convinced to continue funding the kind of work that SRQEA’s one year grant has allowed to develop.

“We remain full of hope that we’ll find a way to continue these services,” concluded Gibson, “but we feel precarious.”

Another good example of how SQREA’s support has had an impact is through the work of the Montreal-based Argyle Institute. Argyle’s “While You’re Waiting” program offers free-of-charge, virtual mental health support group sessions as well as mental health



promotion workshops to support English-speakers struggling to cope with the pandemic. This service also extends to English-speakers off the island of Montreal who were previously unable to access Argyle’s on-island mental health programming.

“Health Canada helped us build this collaboration with the Argyle Institute and we were excited to collaborate with the SRQEA to keep it going for a full year”, explained Johnson. “Argyle and Mental Health Estrie are great examples of



A 2020 STUDY
LED BY DR MÉLISSA GÉNÉREUX
AT THE UNIVERSITÉ DE
SHERBROOKE DEMONSTRATED THAT
ANGLOPHONES IN THE ESTRIE REGION
ARE AMONG THE MOST AFFECTED
BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. THE
STUDY ALSO REVEALED THAT
ANGLOPHONES ARE TWICE AS LIKELY
AS FRANCOPHONES TO HAVE
ANXIETY OR DEPRESSIVE
SYMPTOMS.

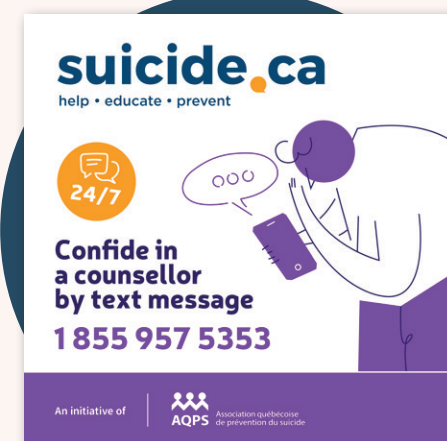
effective community-based responses to what we have documented as a particular need for English-speaking Quebecers.”

For more information about all ten SQREA-sponsored mental health projects, please visit <https://chssn.org/projects/cmhi/>

Photos (L to R) Emily McBurney, Outreach Coordinator and Tanya Gibson, Executive Director

Suicide prevention texting service now available in English 24/7

“CHSSN has been collaborating with the Association québécoise de prévention du suicide (AQPS) for the past few years and we’re excited about their new interactive suicide prevention texting service in English.” explained Russell Kueber, Director of Programs at CHSSN.



Minister Christian Dubé opened CHSSN’s NPI networks online webinar in February 2021

Adaptation Webinars Come to a Successful End

The sixth and final CHSSN 2021 Adaptation Webinar, “Building Together”, was held October 6, 2021, with more than eighty community and CIUSSS/CISSS online participants and a chock-full agenda.

“Adaptation is really the heart of what we’re all about at CHSSN,” explained CHSSN’s Executive Director Jennifer Johnson. “We support innovative projects that bring community and health system partners together to adapt existing French language services to an English-speaking clientele based on the most pressing needs of local populations.”

The webinar was hosted by Johnson and Ange Beaulieu, *Conseillère, Secrétariat à l’accès aux services en langue anglaise et aux communautés ethnoculturelles, Direction générale de la coordination réseau et ministérielle et des affaires institutionnelles* with the Ministère de la Santé et Services sociaux (MSSS).

The webinar featured presentations on two “best practice” projects on community outreach and enhanced mental health services in English in the Estrie (CIUSSS Estrie and ETSB) and Laval (CISSS Laval and Agape), as well as profiles of Dialogue McGill’s work on language training and professional development, the “*Interprétariat*” translation services based in Quebec City, and the growing network of Seniors’ Wellness Centres.

Daniel Desharnais, *Sous-ministre adjoint à la Direction générale de la coordination réseau et ministérielle et des affaires institutionnelles*, MSSS, opened the webinar and was complimentary about the Adaptation approach and its effectiveness. All Adaptation projects are approved by local CIUSSS/CISSS leaders as well as the MSSS.

“The feedback we got was very positive — people want this to continue,” reported Johnson. “We most certainly will be doing it again next year.”

Save the date! CHSSN to host a virtual conference on resiliency of communities

Conference on Feb 1st, 2nd and 3rd, 2022, Celebrating Resiliency.

A virtual CHSSN conference designed to celebrate and showcase Quebec’s English-speaking communities’ resiliency and contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Members of Contactivity, summer 2021.

Welcoming CHSSN's Newest Member

Contactivity Centre



“WE HAVE A VERY WARM AND CARING ENVIRONMENT,” SAID BENITA GOLDIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT THE CONTACTIVITY CENTRE, CHSSN'S NEWEST ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBER. “FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKING SENIORS IN QUEBEC, CENTRES LIKE OURS OFTEN TAKE THE PLACE OF FAMILY, KEEPING THEM CONNECTED AND ACTIVE.”



Members of Contactivity, summer 2021.

Contactivity started operation in 1972 as a drop-in centre for seniors in Westmount. It's grown to include a wide range of services and programs that attract seniors from across the island. With the pandemic, that reach has extended even further.

“We moved all activities online when COVID hit,” explained Goldin. “Now people can access us from anywhere. Our wellness and exercise programs are hugely popular. Zoom-based crafting groups have taken off too.”


The online savvy of Contactivity members has been enhanced by the Centre's innovative twinning program with Selwyn House, a boys' school in Westmount.

“At first, the boys were doing weekly home visits to seniors but the pandemic ended that,” Goldin remembered, “so they went online and started teaching our seniors how to use Zoom and other web-

based platforms to stay in touch with family and friends and to use the web for everyday needs like grocery shopping.”

Last year, the project had 104 boys from Selwyn and 72 seniors from Contactivity participating and ended with an online afternoon tea. A video of the year-end tea is available at <https://contactivitycentre.org/gallery.php>

Contactivity receives funding from the *Programme de soutien aux organismes communautaires* (PSOC) of the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MSSS), Canadian Heritage, and the City of Westmount as well as support from several private foundations.

And this year, a local real estate firm, Cromwell, has become a sustaining funder, starting with a donation of all the profits from its Bilboquet ice cream store in Westmount to Contactivity. Now that's the definition of a cool partnership! 


82%

of parents say early childhood services in English are very important

A recent province-wide study on early childhood services in English surveyed over 1700 English-speaking parents in Quebec. The results showed very significant interest and concern about what's available for children aged 0–5:

According to the survey, English-speaking parents say:

- The language of service does matter, particularly when it comes to specialized services or when additional levels of child or family vulnerabilities are present (e.g., being unilingual, having a low level of education or income);
- There's a significant lack of services available in English, particularly in the regions outside greater Montreal;
- The top concerns in accessing services offered by French-speaking services providers are that it will not be a welcoming environment, that their child will be misunderstood, or that as parents, they will not understand important information provided;
- The inability to find daycare spots for English-speaking children affects their ability to work, with women feeling the largest impact;
- Needs have increased with the pandemic and programming and services for dads are lacking;

These results highlight the need to improve access to early childhood services for the English-speaking population of Quebec. The results of this CHSSN sponsored study are being shared with provincial and regional partners as an indicator of how to improve early childhood services in English. 

The full report can be downloaded at chssn.org

28 English language organizations engaged covering all regions of Québec




Impacting more than 2000 English-speaking youth

Recent Launch of a Provincial Youth Mental Health Program

CHSSN recently launched a three-year youth mental health initiative for young English-speaking Quebecers aged 15–29.

“This initiative supports English-speaking youth in their efforts to access mental health resources,” explained program manager Amy Bilodeau. “The mental health of young people has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and we plan for this project to offer additional support.”

This initiative is based on the community mobilization model of CHSSN which promotes collaboration between English-speaking community organizations and mental health service providers and professionals, especially in the public system. It's funded by the *Secrétariat à la jeunesse* (SAJ) and the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation.

“We're so happy that we'll be expanding our programming for youth mental health through a continuing connection with the SAJ,” added Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN. “This partnership along with support from the Chagnon Foundation will allow us to address this long-hidden need.” 

A full listing of participating organizations can be found at <https://chssn.org/projects/ymhi/>

Developing Priorities for a New Federal Action Plan

Official Language Minority Communities across Canada are focused on doing their part in the renewal process of the federal government's road map for Official Languages.

“We’re well past the halfway point in the current five-year plan,” explained Jennifer Johnson, CHSSN Executive Director. “We’re engaging all our member groups and NPI’s in a priority-setting process whose results we’ll present to the government early in 2022.”

This is the fifth action plan to which CHSSN has contributed its input. Funding designed to support English-speaking official language minority communities in Quebec and French-speaking communities in all other provinces is distributed via a range of departments of the federal government, most notably Canadian Heritage, Justice Canada, and Health Canada.

“Based on our experience with these renewal processes, we’re confident our voice will shape decisions about the 2023–2028 action plan,” said Johnson. “The federal government — and in particular Health Canada — have a strong track record and a deep commitment to enhancing our communities’ vitality.”



▲
Roen Higgins,
award-winning
spoken word poet

Inaugural Women’s Health Event Organized by CHSSN

On September 9th the CHSSN Montreal Collective held a successful and appreciated online Women’s Health and Social Services event for over 80 participants from across the province.

The event was opened with a powerfully evocative performance by award-winning spoken word poet Roen Higgins.

Speakers Dr Joanne Pocock, Darla Fortune PhD, Jennifer Dupuis MSW, Amanda Keller PhD, Rusan Lateef and Dr. Tina C. Montreuil highlighted the existing inequality and vulnerability of women and their impact on psychological distress during the pandemic.

Presentations and topics of discussion included mental health, violence against women, parenting, and aging.

The event concluded with presentations from two Montreal women’s centers on the services they offer to women across the island.



◀ Matthew Munro, Health and Social Services Mobilization Officer with CASA



NPIs Responding to COVID- It All Comes Down to Trust

For Matthew Munro, Health and Social Services Mobilization Officer with CASA on the Gaspé coast, the biggest impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was a decision to return home to Gaspesia after decades away.

“My wife and I both were working in the public health and social services system in Quebec but the demands on us during the pandemic were just unacceptable for a young family with three children,” he remembered, “so a year ago, we decided to come back to the coast and find a better fit for our professional and personal lives.”

Munro had worked as an access liaison officer for the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay for a dozen years and he put that experience to work responding to the needs of the English-speaking people served by CASA.



“The pandemic really highlighted a lot of the access-to-service problems for anglophones in a remote region like the Gaspé,” said Munro. “Responding to those needs isn’t easy for the CISSS either; the hiring pool for health professionals who have the right linguistic and cultural background and abilities is small.”

Munro listed the kind of needs that the pandemic has exacerbated including greater social isolation, substance abuse, and domestic violence along with a general increase in mental health pressures.

“Many anglophones are hesitant to approach public and community-based service providers,” explained Munro. “They are, however, ready to talk to an organization they trust like CASA that’s been working in the community for more than forty years.”

Munro has used that trust to build even stronger links with service providers, connecting English-speaking people in need with the services that are available.

“There are lots of demographic challenges here,” concluded Munro, “but CASA has built the kind of relationships with the people it serves and with the public system that allow us to take them on.”

Seniors' Wellness Centres: A Lifeline of Support!

SOME ACCOMPLISHMENTS THIS YEAR:

- CREATION OF A SENIORS' KNOWLEDGE HUB FOR SHARING RESOURCES
- 2 ONLINE COMMUNITY-OF-PRACTICE SESSIONS
- 625 HEALTH EDUCATION AND HEALTH PROMOTION SESSIONS LED BY 17 ORGANIZATIONS
- 10,607 PARTICIPANTS IN SENIORS' EVENTS
- 450 VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENTS

Record Numbers Attending the Community Health Education Program (CHEP)

CHSSN's Community Health Education Program has seen record numbers of English-speakers (180+) participate in health education sessions over the last year. Erica Botner, the CHEP program manager, says "the pandemic is playing a role in the increased numbers, as people seem to have greater needs for health information, improved digital literacy, and the ability to participate in these sessions from the comfort of their own homes — so the sessions are reaching more people".

For more information about CHEP, please visit <https://chssn.org/chssn-programs-and-projects/community-health-education-program-chep-2018-2023/>

CHANGES AND THANK YOU'S

The CHSSN's Director of Administration Brenda Edwards recently passed on the management of CHEP to Erica Botner after overseeing the program since 2008. CHSSN wishes to underscore its thanks to Jo Anne Jones and Kelly Howarth, our CHEP consultants, for their expertise and commitment in delivering the health education offering well over the past 10 years. A special thank you is also in order to the MUHC Telehealth team who originally partnered with the CHSSN back in 2005 to deliver CHEP sessions through the McGill RUIS until March 2020.

Thirty English-speaking community organizations are now participating in the Seniors' Wellness Centres initiative across the province. Several coordinators running these centres have observed that the centres have become a true lifeline for their participants.

"English-speaking seniors were already isolated but the pandemic has made their situation even more

challenging," explained Erica Botner, Seniors Program Manager at CHSSN.

To meet the increased need during the pandemic, many centres have developed enhanced outreach efforts that include making weekly phone calls to seniors, sending care packages, offering a hybrid of virtual and in-person programming and providing information on how to access a variety of services.

This program is funded by the Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers. For more information, please visit <https://chssn.org/projects/senior-wellness-centres/> and see the map of centre sites across Quebec on pages 10–11.

CHSSN Gets a Brand New Look

"When the CHSSN team was brainstorming the qualities of our organization that we wanted to express in a new visual identity," remembered Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director at CHSSN, "we quickly agreed on a short list: Helpful, Credible, Approachable, Passionate and Informative. These are the qualities that will inspire our future and that have shaped our new brand identity."

With this new look, CHSSN says goodbye to the 20th Anniversary logo that highlighted that milestone in the network's history.

"I'm proud of our new look — I believe it represents our vision forward into the future, especially the importance of our relationships with communities and partners," said Johnson. "After twenty years of engagement, these are the qualities that we believe must be reflected in everything we say and do for our next 20 years!"



A Departure & Some New Faces!

After 11 years with CHSSN as our Financial Manager, Denis Dussault, is retiring!

Denis has been such a critical part of CHSSN's success, always ensuring the sound financial management of our programs. More importantly, he has helped create and maintain a sense of family in our team. He will be sorely missed by all of us here at CHSSN but we're happy that he will be enjoying more time with his grandchildren and chasing that little white ball on the green.



Denis Dussault, Financial Manager



Sara Lakhri, Project Administrator



Amy Bilodeau, Program Manager for Youth

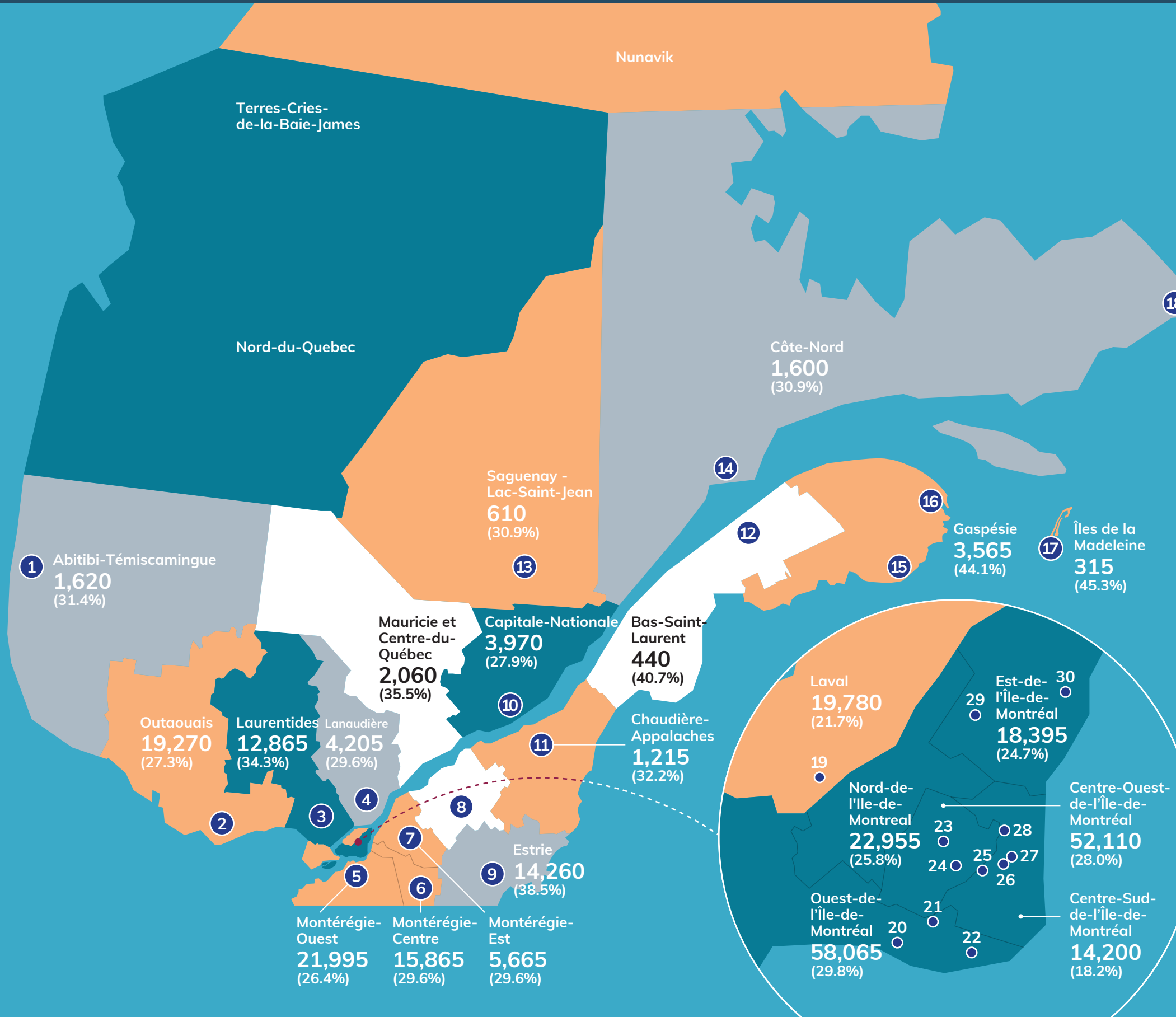
CHSSN's team is also expanding — we have two new young faces we are proud to introduce to you.

Sara Lakhri joined CHSSN at the end of August and will be a Project Administrator for CHSSN supporting the Program Managers with their projects. Sara is a recent graduate of the MBA program at Laval and we are super happy to have her aboard!

The newest member of the team, Amy Bilodeau, is our Program Manager for Youth, focusing on the over-13 age group. Amy has a background in mental health and that makes her the perfect person to manage our Youth

Mental Health Initiative! Amy has been working with the English-speaking community in Quebec City with Jeffery Hale Community Partners for many years and brings her knowledge of program management and volunteer programs as well as a deep awareness of the challenges facing the English-speaking community.

Welcome aboard Sara and Amy!



Population of English-speaking seniors 55+

297,740
2016 Census of Canada

27.1%
% of total English-speaking population

30 organizations
76 sites

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Neighbours Regional Association - 1 site | 14 North Shore Community Association (NSCA) - 2 sites |
| 2 Connexions Resource Centre - 5 sites | 15 Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) - 9 sites |
| 3 4 Korner's Family Resource Center - 5 sites | 16 Vision Gaspé-Percé Now (VGPN) - 9 sites |
| 4 English Community Organization of Lanaudière (ECOL) - 2 sites | 17 Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders (CAMI) - 2 sites |
| 5 Montérégie West Community Network (MWCN) - 3 sites | 18 Coasters Association - 10 sites |
| 6 Assistance and Referral Centre (ARC) - 2 sites | 19 The Youth & Parents AGAPE Association Inc. (AGAPE) - 2 sites |
| 7 Montérégie East Partnership for the English-Speaking Community (MEPEC) - 1 site | 20 The Teapot 50+ Centre - 1 site |
| 8 Centre for Access to Services in English (CASE) - 2 sites | 21 NDG Senior Citizens Council - 1 site |
| 9 Townshippers' Association - 4 sites | 22 LaSalle D&D 50+ - 1 site |
| 10 Jeffery Hale Community Partners (JHCP) - 1 site | 23 African Canadian Development & Prevention Network (ACDPN) - 1 site |
| 11 Megantic English-speaking Community Development Corp. (MCDC) - 5 sites | 24 Cummings Centre for Seniors - 1 site |
| 12 Heritage Lower Saint Lawrence (HLSL) - 2 sites | 25 Contactivity Centre - 1 site |
| 13 English Community Organization of Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean (ECO-02) - 1 site | 26 Saint-Antoine 50+ - 1 site |
| | 27 Tyndale St-Georges - 1 site |
| | 28 The Yellow Door - 1 site |
| | 29 East Island Network for English-language Services (REISA) - 2 sites |
| | 30 Almage Senior Community Centre - 2 sites |

● Location of head office