

# COMMUNITY NetLink

NEWS FOR THE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK

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◀ Muriel Clarke and Steve Guimond



## Quebec City Patient Navigator

“moves ahead by leaps and bounds”

“Oh my gosh!” says Muriel Clarke from her home on the Magdalen Islands. “Just about all of Grosse-Île knows Steve.”

Then she reels off a dozen names of people who have benefitted from CHSSN’s Patient Navigator Steve Guimond.

“What a blessing that man is,” she continues. “You don’t know how much stress it takes off your shoulders knowing

Steve is waiting at the airport when you get to Quebec City.”

Steve Guimond is much more modest about the work he does but agrees that it’s hard to overstate how challenging a trip to Quebec City for specialized health care can be for a patient coming from Gaspé, the Magdalen Islands, or the Lower North Shore.





# Quebec City Patient Navigator

continued...

“It’s a thousand-kilometre flight from Blanc Sablon on an air service often disrupted by weather and other delays, flying into a major urban setting, then negotiating your way through an often-confusing hospital system,” says Guimond. “And then there’s the language challenge for many of these patients who are unilingual anglophone.”

The Patient Navigator role was created by the Quebec Community Health and Social Services Foundation (QCHF) pre-COVID with a goal of serving 250 patients per year. The pandemic interrupted that plan but the service is back on track and growing.

“We reached our initial growth target in 2023,” says Guimond. “We’re on track in 2024 to boost that to at least 300 patients.”

The service has also “moved ahead by leaps and bounds” in acceptance by the public health system and with some key foundation partners according to Guimond.

“Our service currently receives financial support from the Réseau universitaire intégré de santé et de services sociaux (RUISSS) de l’Université Laval, the Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux (CIUSSS) de la Capitale-Nationale as well as the Jeffery Hale Foundation of Quebec City and the Good Samaritan Fund of the United Church of Canada,” explains Guimond.

All this effort, though, has a single, simple goal. “It changes everything,” says Muriel Clarke. “All we have to worry about is the plane landing, then Steve makes everything easy.”



Participants at the ARC NPI information and exchange event



## Assistance & Referral Center (ARC)

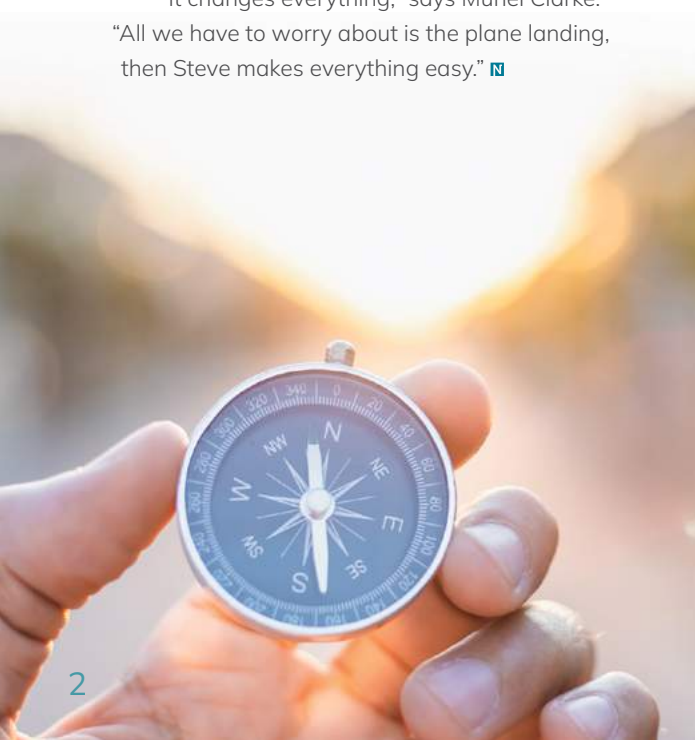
### organizes NPI information & exchange event

ARC, the organization supporting and promoting the health and vitality of the English-speaking population in the Montérégie, recently organized an information and exchange event that brought together 24 people from ten different regions across the province of Quebec who participate in the CHSSN Networking and Partnership Initiative (NPI).

**T**he overall goal of the NPI program is to support community and public partners to improve access to health and social services in the English language.

“Participants had an opportunity to network and share successes and challenges between regions,” says Chris Lapointe, Executive Director of ARC. “We also invited health and social services partners to come and present information which provided valuable insights and learnings.”

Among the presenters was Kettly Pinchinat Jean-Charles from the Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux (CIUSSS) du Centre-Ouest-de-l’Île-de-Montréal who spoke about caregiving services available from the Provincial coordinator specializing in close assistance to ethnocultural communities and English-speaking people. The event was held February 29<sup>th</sup> in Brossard.



# Adaptation Leaders Form New

# Exchange Community



On March 12<sup>th</sup>, CHSSN in collaboration with the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) Montérégie-Centre welcomed the newly formed exchange community of English-language “répondants” to a networking, sharing, and working meeting held in Montreal.

**R**épondants oversee the English-language Services dossier for their establishments and often play an important role in mobilizing their regional access committees and acting as a key reference and entry point into the health and social services system for NPIs.

“It was a fabulous event — all our goals were achieved and more,” said Émilie Bergeron of the CISSS Montérégie-Centre. “It was so nice to meet everyone and to develop relationships. I felt there was a positive energy between us and that people would not hesitate to contact each other afterward.”

The activities carried out during the event aimed to:

- Strengthen collaborative ties
- Share expertise, knowledge, and innovative projects
- Develop joint projects

“I think that inter-regional projects will flower in our exchange community and that we will work together instead of working only on our own things,” continued Bergeron. “There’s a multitude of projects that we can do together.”



(Above, L to R) Jennifer Johnson (CHSSN), Camille St-Laurent (CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l’Île-de-Montréal), Stéphanie Fiset (CIUSSSCN – DERJHSB), Karissa-Ann Clayberg (CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest), James Carter (CHSSN), Annie Lavigne (CIUSSS de la Mauricie-et-du-Centre-du-Québec), Ange Beaulieu (MSSS – Secrétariat à l’accès aux services en langue anglaise et aux communautés ethnoculturelles), Marie-Pier Maheux (CIUSSS du Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean), Leah Berger (CIUSSS West Central Montréal), Marie-Ève Barbeau (CRSSS de la Baie-James), Maryse Bérubé (CISSS de Lanaudière), Caroline Van Rossum (CIUSSS de l’Estrie – CHUS), Émilie Bergeron (CISSS de la Montérégie-Centre), Marie Chiu-Neveu (CHUM), Camille Harrigan (CISSS des Laurentides), Kaara Brown (CISSS de l’Outaouais), Joanne Dubois (CISSS de l’Outaouais), Lynn Mailloux (CISSS de la Montérégie-Est), Danica Logan (CHSSN), Jessica Gilles (CIUSSS CSMTL)



# Giant Steps for Autistic Individuals

Standing at the entrance of the new \$54 million-dollar Giant Steps Centre on Molson Street in Montreal is a powerful confirmation that one woman's vision and dedication can change the lives of thousands of children and their families.

**G**iant Steps began as a specialized school in 1980 when music therapist Darlene Berringer decided to do something to improve the learning and quality of life of autistic children who were not thriving at school. Along with parents and other concerned community members, she began an after-school music program for seven kids on the autism spectrum in a church basement.

Giant Steps grew quickly and moved through various home bases in Westmount and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, before opening the new Giant Steps Centre in September 2023. The first-of-its-kind Centre features four distinct, but integrated, pillars: a specialised school for students aged 4–21, Adult Education and Employment services, a Research and Innovation Hub, and a Resource and Training Centre.

Giant Steps School is a private school in the public interest which means that parents do not have to pay tuition for their children to attend. Demand is high, however, and nine out of ten students who apply to Giant Steps cannot be accepted.

They collaborate with 14 school boards and offer elementary, high school and adult education curricula as well as work experience programs to adults on the spectrum. Their Resource and Training Centre plays a vital role



(Left, top and middle) Start of the school year at Giant Steps (Below) Giant Steps' World Autism Acceptance Day walk



in providing training on autism across sectors and supports many types of organizations, including CHSSN.


"We've been a member association of CHSSN for several years," explains Marla Cable, Assistant Director of the Resource and Training Centre. "Jennifer Johnson came to see us before Christmas and explained that early childhood and mental health issues were becoming important for CHSSN NPI networks."

Supporting outside organizations in understanding and serving autistic individuals is part of Giant Steps' mandate so plans were rapidly underway to hold an online event on March 21–22, entitled "Autism in the Early Years: a Symposium for Parents and Professionals" in close partnership with the Youth and Parents AGAPE Association (a CHSSN NPI) with financial support from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The two-day event attracted nearly 200 registrants and featured



keynote speakers and stakeholders who presented on a variety of topics for parents and caregivers.

"This was a first for us," said Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN. "It's incredible how much interest and passion exists to help these vulnerable individuals and families. This kind of partnership shines a light on their

situation and educates our communities in how to support them better." 

For more about the Autism in the Early Years conference or other information about autism, contact Giant Steps at [resources@giantstepsmontreal.com](mailto:resources@giantstepsmontreal.com) or the AGAPE Association in Laval, [agapeassociationinc.com](http://agapeassociationinc.com)

# Northern Ontario Francophones: Similar Realities & Inspirational Solutions



**(Above, L to R)** Jennifer Johnson (on the left) and Russell Kueber (on the right), with Chantal Chartrand, Planning and Community Engagement Officer, North West Region, and Diane Quintas, Executive Director for the Réseau du mieux-être francophone du Nord de l'Ontario.

**(Below left, L to R)** Russell Kueber (on the left), Danielle Barbeau-Rodrigue, Director of the Francophone Affairs Unit of the NOSM (Northern Ontario School Medicine) University, and Jennifer Johnson (on the right).

**(Below right, L to R)** Didier Pilon, French Language Services Lead at the Health Sciences North, Monique Rocheleau, Associate Executive Director of the Réseau du mieux-être francophone du Nord de l'Ontario, Jennifer Johnson, Russell Kueber, Roxanne Langemann, Planning and Engagement Officer of the Réseau du mieux-être francophone du Nord de l'Ontario.

“The similarities between English-speaking communities in Quebec and francophones in the rest of Canada always surprise me,” says Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN reflecting on a recent visit to francophone health networks in northern Ontario.

CHSSN has made strong connections through the Société Santé en français with francophone groups in other parts of Canada — Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, and New Brunswick — but last February’s trip was the first direct connection with the large and vibrant French-speaking communities in northern Ontario through Le Réseau du mieux-être francophone du nord de l’Ontario.

Over two days in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, Johnson and CHSSN Program Manager Russ Kueber met with 15 community and health care system service providers to learn how they are


ensuring access to services in their minority language in the Ontario public health system.

“These visits are truly inspirational for us,” reflects Johnson. “They shared challenges and success stories and gave us lots to think about in terms of the trajectory of individual patients through the system and where and how accompaniment and translation services are most effectively provided.”

Johnson was particularly impressed by the dedicated teams that work directly with patients and their families, remotely using technology and in person, to ensure timely and effective access to health and social services.

“This takes the embryonic service we currently offer through Patient Navigators in some regions and raises it to the next level with very impressive results,” says Johnson. ▣





The Senior Wellness Initiative's funding will double this year.

\$2 million

## to Support & Expand the Senior Wellness Centres

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) was very pleased to see a commitment to increase support in the Quebec budget for the Senior Wellness Initiative (SWI) serving the English-speaking population in dozens of Senior Wellness Centres (SWC) across Quebec.

Starting in 2024–2025, funding available for the SWI network will double to \$2 million to expand existing programs and increase the number of sites for SWC activities. The current 74 sites supported by 30 organizations will increase to 125 sites supported by 34 organizations over three years.

These sites offer health education and health promotion activities designed to maintain and improve the health and well-being of English-speaking seniors, increase access to knowledge of health and social services, and decrease social isolation.

With a focus on prevention, SWC activities are community-led, cost effective, adapted to the linguistic and cultural needs and realities of English-speaking seniors, and open to all. They create a support network that allows English-speaking seniors to stay in their homes for as long as possible.

▲ Participants in CASA's Senior Wellness Centre

SWCs are an innovative response by community organizations to address a gap in services for seniors. While each SWC is unique, provincial coordination by CHSSN ensures consistent levels of safety and quality across all activities. Formal and informal collaborations with health and social service professionals at regional and provincial levels support this flexible, adaptable, inclusive and multifaceted approach to improving overall health and wellbeing.

"The public system has a hard time connecting with this segment of the population," says Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN. "This program is an excellent example of how the community sector can have a powerful effect on the lives of potentially vulnerable people in need of connection and care." ■

# Protecting English-Speakers' Rights in the New Santé Québec:



James Carter,  
CHSSN Program and  
Policy Advisor

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES CARTER,  
CHSSN PROGRAM AND POLICY ADVISOR

## **Q. BILL 15 IS THE LATEST REFORM TO QUEBEC'S HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK. WHY DID CHSSN BECOME INVOLVED IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS LEADING TO ITS ADOPTION?**

**JC.** Bill 15 creates Santé Québec, a new state enterprise that will amalgamate all public institutions under the governance of a single board of directors appointed by the Government. We believed that the changes to network operations and governance would affect key elements of the application of the right to services in English. We submitted a brief to the Government proposing amendments to secure certain provisions supporting the entitlement.

## **Q. WHAT WERE THE KEY ISSUES CHSSN THOUGHT REQUIRED AMENDMENTS TO THE BILL?**

**JC.** Bill 15 moves the legal requirement to develop government-approved access programs of services in English from the institutional level to Santé Québec. We believed that the effect

could be an access program that is less connected to the specific needs of an English-speaking community. The CHSSN amendment proposed that the institutions, in collaboration with Santé Québec, should develop an access program for its local English-speaking population. The second issue related to regional access committees. Currently, regional access committees advise local institutions on the development of an access program. Bill 15 would change this and attach the committees to Santé Québec. We felt this approach would cut off important community representation at the institutional level. The CHSSN amendment sought to re-attach the regional committees to the institutions and ensure committee members would be representative of a region's English-speaking population.

## **Q. HOW WERE YOUR AMENDMENTS RECEIVED BY THE GOVERNMENT?**

**JC.** The amendment regarding access programs was not retained. However, in parliamentary session, the Government

clarified a number of issues addressed by our position. It stated that the access programs will continue to be developed by the institutions and involve the regional access committees. There was an affirmation that the institutions and the regional committees were the best suited to assess the needs of an English-speaking clientele. The regional access programs would then be consolidated into one document called the access program for the English-speaking population.

CHSSN was concerned that Santé Québec would create new regulations for regional access committees that would put into question the current provisions ensuring community representation. The CHSSN amendment to re-attach regional committees to the institutional level was not retained. However, the Government adopted an amendment accepting the CHSSN position that all committee members must come from English-speaking communities; and that the community's organizations must have the sole responsibility to nominate them.






**Q. WERE THERE ANY OTHER ISSUES THAT AROSE DURING THE BILL 15 PROCESS THAT CONCERNED YOU?**

**JC.** Yes, there was one significant development. During the parliamentary committee hearings, the Government presented an amendment that would give Santé Québec the power to ask for the removal of the bilingual status of institutions currently benefitting from this designation. However, with the dissolution of boards, the community's legal ability to maintain bilingual status would be compromised. As this was a late amendment and not addressed in the CHSSN brief, we offered a proposal to mitigate the amendment's negative impact. The Government subsequently revised its amendment to include a requirement that Santé Québec obtain agreement of at least two-thirds of the regional committee concerned as well as obtain a positive opinion of the Minister's provincial committee before submitting a request to remove a bilingual designation.


**Q. SANTÉ QUÉBEC WILL COME INTO BEING IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. DOES CHSSN HAVE A PLAN TO ADDRESS THE QUESTIONS THAT WILL LIKELY ARISE DURING TRANSITION?**

**JC.** Yes, we are preparing for the next phase. For example, we will seek clarity on how our current administrative relations with the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) will be impacted by the new functions of Santé Québec. Also, we are interested in the role the current regional committees will have within Santé Québec, once they are transferred. For example, we would look for assurances that the stability and continuity of the current committees be maintained with sufficient administrative support; and that their role to continue to work with institutions be affirmed. 

## Expanding Efforts in Early Childhood & Youth Mental Health

Over the next five years, CHSSN will expand its efforts in the areas of early childhood, youth and families, and mental health with support from the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation. This assistance will also increase CHSSN's capacity in research and communications.

"We are extremely thankful to have continued funding from the Foundation to sustain our mobilization efforts," says Anne-Marie Cech, CHSSN Program Manager for Early Childhood, Youth and Families. "There is lots of work to be done to sensitize government and service providers to the needs facing our English-speaking communities throughout all regions in Québec."

"An important component of this funding addresses the high mental health needs of English-speaking youth aged 15–29 in the province," explains Amy Bilodeau, CHSSN Program Manager of Youth & Mental Health. "We've built a lot of momentum with our Youth Mental Health Initiative that engages 27 organizations across the province. This renewed commitment means we will continue to advance the youth-led and organizational support work that we started together three years ago." 

For more information on Bright Beginnings, please visit [chssn.org/projects/bright-beginnings/](https://chssn.org/projects/bright-beginnings/)

For more information on the Youth Mental Health Initiative, go to [chssn.org/projects/ymhi/](https://chssn.org/projects/ymhi/)



First Ever

# Mental Health & Wellness Forum

Through the generous support of the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Secretariat à la jeunesse, the Chagnon Foundation, Health Canada, and the Secretariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise, CHSSN hosted over 100 dedicated mental health community workers at a first-of-its-kind provincial Mental Health and Wellness Forum, February 13–14, 2024, in Montreal.

This event fostered a collective “brave space” for in depth discussions surrounding access to English mental health services and supports for the diverse English-speaking population of Québec.

#### TOGETHER WE EXPLORED:

- building relationships with partners in the ecosystem of mental health
- celebrating community-based promising practices in mental health promotion
- acknowledging shared challenges & exploring strengths for capacity building
- delving deeper into how access to mental health care support is shaped by intersectionality
- reflecting on inclusive and targeted programming for vulnerable, equity-deserving groups within our English-speaking communities

“The room was packed to maximum capacity,” observed Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN. “Just another indication for me of the importance of mental health issues. They’re becoming, arguably, priority number one for many community organizations in our network.”

CHSSN extends its heartfelt gratitude to our collaborators, speakers, panelists, kiosk partners and funders who contributed to this successful event! 🙏



Bringing Communities Together

Rassemblons nos communautés

quebecnorthshore.org



(L to R) Nathalie Chevrier (Neighbours), Sharleen Sullivan (Neighbours), Jody Lessard (NSCA), Brittney Chabot (ECO-02), Laury Boulianne (NSCA), Ashley Roy (ECO-02). (Absent from photo) Kayla Kippen (Coasters).

# NPIs Join Forces to Develop New Northern Network

Northern NPI organizations NSCA, Neighbours, Coasters and ECO-02 came together in Sept-Îles on March 18 & 19 for an inaugural event to develop a Northern Community Network Community of Practice (CoP).

“These organizations all work with English-speaking communities in rural and remote regions,” explained Jody Lessard, Executive Director of NSCA, the host organization for the gathering. “We experience similar challenges trying to deliver services, create partnerships, and develop programs.”

The two-day event allowed participants to share success stories, explore challenges, and exchange resources as well as establishing an action plan to meet more frequently as a CoP.

Lessard said it was great to host the event, as it was the first time most of the participants had visited her region. Nancy Bilodeau from the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) de la Côte-Nord was also on hand to share her expertise on the region’s Access Program and the current initiatives in place that are offering services to the English-speaking population. [N](#)

## New UQTR Study of Priorities for English-Speaking Seniors

CHSSN recently commissioned a study of English-speaking seniors’ perceptions of healthcare needs with Dr. Marie-Michèle Lord, professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR). The research aimed to draw a portrait of seniors’ perspectives on aging well.

“It was exciting to work with Marie-Michele Lord and her team at UQTR on this needs assessment,” said Erica

Botner, CHSSN’s Program Manager for Seniors. “We got to hear what matters most to English-speaking seniors across the province.”

Study results are based on an online questionnaire with responses from 565 seniors and three focus groups held in Montreal, Lanaudière, and Gaspésie.

“Some of the priorities we heard were improving living arrangements, access to home care services, palliative care, mental health, and elder abuse,”



said Botner. “It’s also worth noting that there is a big fear of being in long term care.”

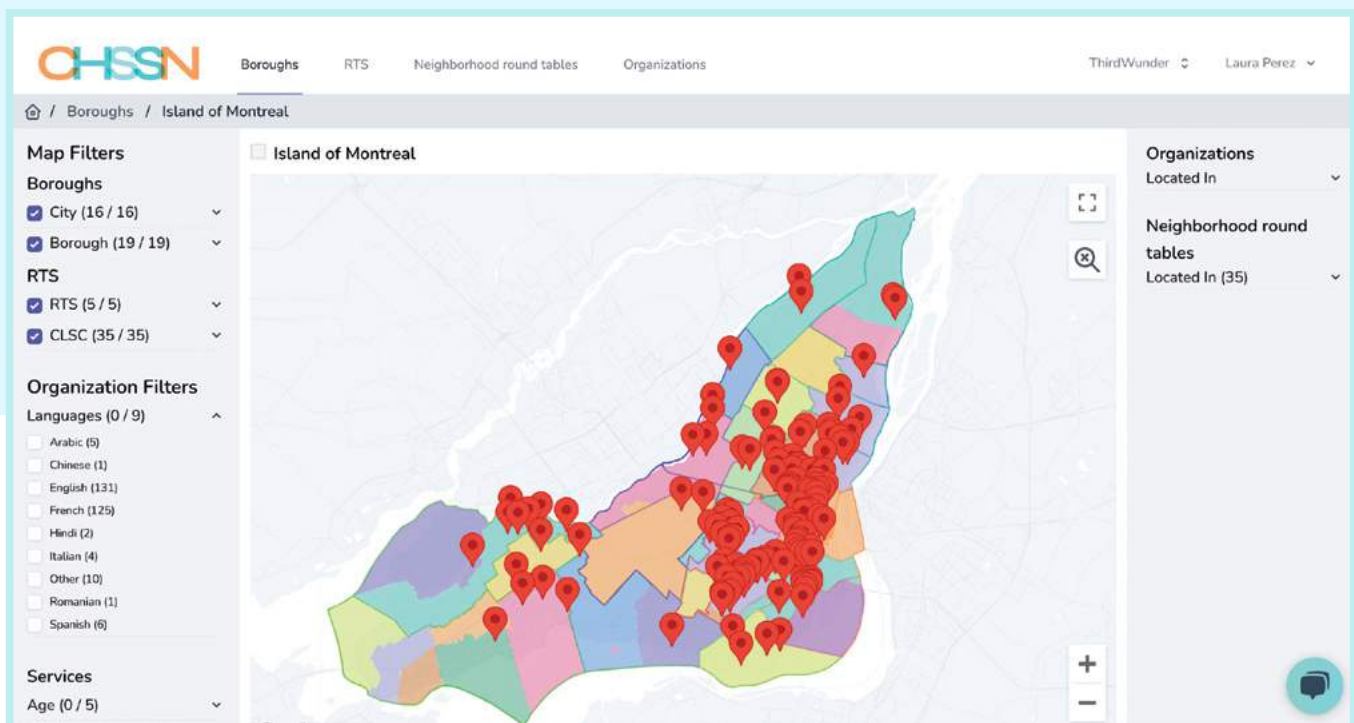
CHSSN looks forward to further analyzing the data collected and supporting organizations in improving access to health and social services for this population. [N](#)



(Left) Participants enjoy a chance to network (Above right) Jennifer Cooke, CHSSN Montreal Development Officer

# Mapping Montréal App Launch

On April 25, CHSSN launched a new tool available online through a web browser. The Greater Montreal mapping app has been developed as an online tool for organisations to find important information about their neighborhoods. It highlights demographic data by health region, local CLSC and neighborhood. This web platform also includes information on organisations and where their services are available. [N](#)



(Above) Screenshot of the Mapping Montréal App



▲ CHSSN President, Ron Creary, signing the visitors book at the CHSSN Satellite Open House

# CHSSN Montreal Satellite Office

## OPEN HOUSE

With three employees now working out of Montreal it was time to find a space! As luck would have it one of our partner organizations had just moved and invited us to visit and we fell in love with this amazing building — the original Hôpital général in old Montreal that was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and has had a vocation of providing social services throughout its 300-year history. We are excited to have a pied-a-terre in Montreal and look forward to meeting partners there in the future. ▣

# RDN / CHSSN Community Builder Award

On May 8, CHSSN had the pleasure of collaborating with the Regional Development Network (RDN) to award the first annual Community Builder Award to long-time community developer, Hugh Maynard, recognizing his years of support to a vast array of sectors in the English-speaking community. We also had the opportunity celebrate the retirement of William Floch, sous-ministre adjoint for the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise (SRQEA). ▣

(Below left) Hugh Maynard and his wife, Neva Shelton  
(Below right) Jennifer Johnson, Hugh Maynard and Cathy Brown  
(Bottom) William Floch, Jennifer Johnson, Hugh Maynard





### NEW CHSSN STAFF

CHSSN welcomed two new members (on the top left of the photo) in the last months: Claude Levesque, Program Administrative Assistant for Early Childhood and Families and Youth Mental Health and Megan Yang, Program Administrative Assistant for Seniors. Welcome to the team Claude and Megan!

(Back row, L to R) Claude Levesque, Megan Yang, Céline Lebigot, Anne-Marie Cech, Julie Lemieux, Jennifer Cooke.

(Middle row, L to R) Sara Lakhri, Amy Bilodeau, Jennifer Johnson, Flora Janos, Danica Logan.

(Front row, L to R) Russell Kueber, Erica Botner, James Carter. Absent from the photo: Steve Guimond



The Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) is a network of community resources, associations and public institutions dedicated to the development of health and social services for English-speaking communities in Quebec.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CHSSN VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR CONTACT US AT:**

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