



The Community Learning Centre Initiative

Community Conversations Recap

January 18, 2013



Community Learning Conversations

This report provides a synopsis of conversations that took place in 28 communities across Quebec between November 7 and December 12, 2012. The aim of the conversations was to bring representatives of English public schools, community organizations and community members together to discuss the relationship between schools and their communities. The desired outcome was to determine how CLCs can continue their important work as liaisons fostering collaboration between schools and their communities.

More than 800 representatives participated in the Community Conversations. Participants shared ideas on what should be done to strengthen the ties that bind our schools and our communities together and to understand how CLCs contribute to both community vitality and student success. These conversations offered important insights as well as questions about the value, visibility, governance, and sustainability of CLCs. A clear and common thread wove through a great many of the messages received: the Community Learning Centre model in English-speaking Quebec has become a valuable vehicle for building community involvement and cohesion across the province.

By working together on community plans of action, measuring results, and solidifying stable funding, CLCs can continue to build upon their collective successes in our English communities. Participants acknowledged that their current reality is particularly challenging and that the network of Community Learning Centres is breathing new life, stability, creativity, and cooperation in communities across Quebec.

CLCs, the English School Boards and Quebec's minority language communities realize the landscape around them is an evolving and challenging one, including a new government, strains on public finances and uncertainty about the future.

For some communities, if there is no school, there is no English community. CLCs contribute to sustaining communities, strong schools and successful students by fostering connectivity and collaboration between the sometimes quite distinct worlds of education and community.

What was said by Community Conversation Participants



"So many people in our community can benefit from what the CLC has to offer. We need to get the word out."

Joliette CLC
Rawdon, December 10

"The CLC provides an opportunity to learn things that would not otherwise be possible"

James Lyng CLC
Montreal, December 4

"CLC and school can foster health and entrepreneurial culture – need to promote this with the youth".

Pierre Elliott Trudeau CLC
Gatineau, December 8



Background

All across Quebec and Canada, people are concerned about the success of our students, the strength of our schools, and the sustainability of our communities. The success of students, schools, and communities are all inextricably interwoven – the more people involved, the bigger the impact. These things are interconnected. Our model is based on the belief that by working together, our children can succeed, our schools contribute to the revitalization of English-speaking minority communities, and our communities contribute to strong and vibrant schools.

“The CLC is a venue for partnership development and collaboration toward student success. It is serving the needs of the community”.

Gerald McShane CLC
Montreal North -December 3

Based on the recognition that **it takes a village to raise a child**, the community schools movement is growing in Europe, Australia, the USA, and Canada. The vision for CLCs was to transform schools into community schools which produce a range of resources, services and activities, during and beyond the school day, to support the holistic development of students, their families, and the wider community

CLCs are currently funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage through the Canada-Quebec Agreement for Minority Language Education and Second Language Instruction and *le Secteur des Services à la communauté Anglophone, aux affaires autochtones et communautés culturelles* at the *Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport*.

Introduced in September 2006 in 15 English schools across Quebec, CLCs have the mandate to enhance student success and increase community vitality. All nine English school boards have CLCs, as does the Littoral special status school board and one center exists in the Jewish day school system. There are currently 37 centres situated in rural, suburban and urban communities, in a mix of elementary, high school and adult centres. Federal funding covers the salaries for the 37 coordinators and a six person provincial resource team (PRT), as well as an operating budget for the PRT to support the CLCs. Each CLC is working to find tailor-made solutions to answer the needs of its students, their families and their communities.

“Partnerships help ease partner transition into school culture.”

Quebec High &
Portneuf Elementary
CLCs
Quebec City
November 24

Currently, CLCs fall under the jurisdiction of the English school boards, and it was originally anticipated that school boards would absorb the expense of CLCs once the federal funding ran out. Unfortunately, School Boards in Quebec have been required to make substantial financial cutbacks for consecutive years, a situation which is not expected to be remedied at any time in the near future. Many school boards do not feel they have the capacity to financially support the ongoing development



of their CLCs. Each board has found its own innovative ways to support CLCs in their efforts, including providing a range of in-kind services, support, infrastructure and facilities to its CLCs. That said, absorbing the full expenses of them is not proving to be a viable scenario. Phase 1 CLCs will have exhausted their federal funding in June 2013, and phase 2s are down to minimal funding for 2013-14. **By June 2014 there will be no funding for any of the 37 CLCs.**

In March 2011, when the Canadian Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages released its report: **The Vitality of Quebec’s English Speaking Communities: From Myth to Reality**, there were 2 specific recommendations related to CLCs, basically urging the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages to:

- **Listen to the English-speaking communities** to determine their priorities and needs in relation to the development of the CLCs
- Provide the support needed to **maintain and develop CLCs in the long term**; and
- **Continue the commitment to the Community Learning Centres beyond 2013.**

The Department of Canadian Heritage released the Government’s response to the Senate report in November 2012. It stated that they were:

“...pleased with the success of the Community Learning Centres (CLC) and would like to continue supporting the Government of Quebec in this initiative. The organizations representing Quebec’s English-speaking community would also like a closer relationship with the Anglophone school boards to further engage community members in school life. To the extent that Quebec will make it a priority, Canadian Heritage will continue supporting the province in the implementation of CLCs or any other project that could lead to the establishment of school and community life environments.”²

The government is in the process of renewing their federal strategy for official languages – ‘The Roadmap’ - and through a series of parliamentary consultations with the minority language communities, the government came up with a series of recommendations, including one which applies to the CLC initiative:

*“The Department of Canadian Heritage [should] consult the official language minority communities to determine their priorities and needs with respect to community learning centres and maintain the network of coordinators of community learning centres”.*³

CLCs are the embodiment of school and community life environments and these recommendations prompted the network to organize a dialogue with the English-speaking communities of Quebec, and to relay the information from these conversations to the federal officials.

² <http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/SEN/Committee/411/ollo/rep/rep02GovResponse-e.htm> - March 2012

³ AFTER THE ROADMAP: TOWARD BETTER PROGRAMS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

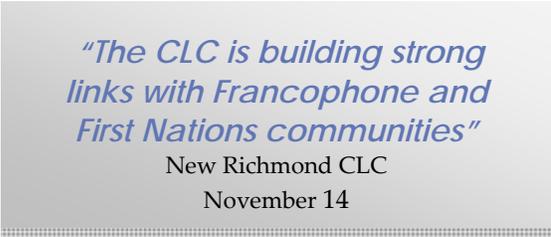
<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&DocId=5831366> – November 2012; Recommendation 16



Community Conversations

Participants were invited by their local English school board and community partners, to engage in a conversation about how to foster connectivity and collaboration between the two sometimes quite distinct worlds of school and community, and focus on collaborative efforts for the greatest impact. See appendix 1 for the list of Community Conversations. Representation was varied and included:

- School boards, CEGEPS, Universities
- Municipalities
- Community partners and leaders
- Students - parents – seniors
- Economic development and health partners
- Aboriginal and other cultural communities
- Local businesses
- Francophone partners

A grey rectangular box with a decorative border at the bottom, containing a quote in blue italicized text.

“The CLC is building strong links with Francophone and First Nations communities”

New Richmond CLC
November 14

While there was plenty of time for networking and building relationships, all 28 sites were given the same four discussion questions. Below is a snapshot of issues which were discussed.

1: In what ways are schools and communities connected?

Geography – sharing infrastructure - children/parents/families – community sustainability related to English school – activities for community

2: What are some ways in which our community and our schools/CLC are currently collaborating well together for student success?

Community kitchen – library – community service opportunities for students – Remembrance day – videoconference learning opportunities – lifelong learning – fundraising – sports – music – arts & culture – intergenerational – entrepreneurship – camps – career development – university partnerships

3: Thinking about these ways in which we’re already collaborating well, how can we do even better?

Communicate – communicate – communicate - listen to the students – increased and more varied programming/activities for the community – reach out to local businesses – support to parents and families – connect with other communities – parental engagement – bring in more community organizations and agencies

4: What are a few critical areas we could focus our collaborative efforts on for greatest impact?

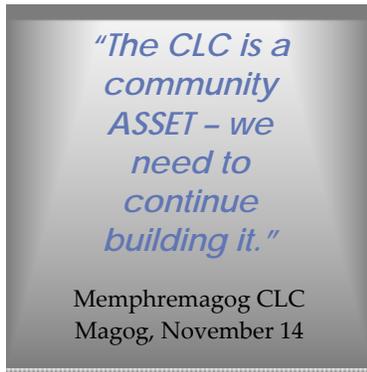
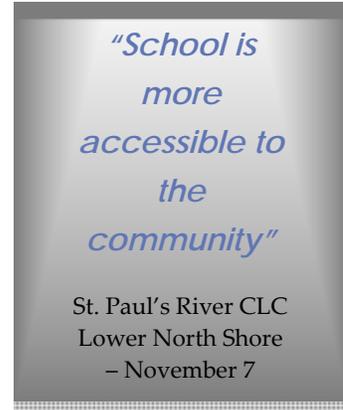
Grow the community volunteer base (all ages) – arts and culture opportunities – local history – coordinator is priority – community nights – sustainability – integration & increase services and program – CLC to become the community resource centre – involve French community



Community Contributions

A number of important ways that CLCs are contributing to their communities were highlighted and repeated in multiple Community Conversations:

- CLCs are helping keep youth in their communities - reaching out beyond the schools to contribute to youth retention
- Improved student health leads to student success and strong communities
- Working together increases students' sense of belonging and pride in their community
- CLCs are building strong links with both the francophone and First Nations communities
- Community members have access to resources that have typically not been available to the English community
- CLCs are changing the culture of communities
- Student success is a priority not only for the schools but for the future of our communities
- CLCs are fostering bilingualism – of youth and of community members



- CLCs are impacting community vitality through successful youth development – leading to greater employment opportunities for youth
- CLC schools are more accessible to the community - creating a caring, non-threatening environment
- Rural CLCs are reporting decreased isolation of rural communities, of seniors, of low-income families
- CLCs are encouraging students to explore beyond the academics towards civic engagement – students are engaged in learning what happens outside the classroom
- CLCs connects the often fragmented English community

Priorities

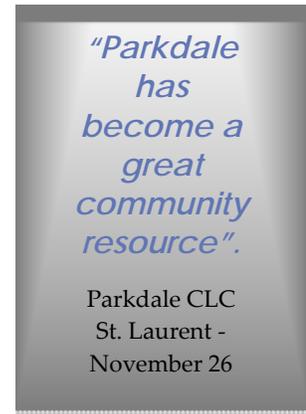
A number of themes emerged from the Community Learning Conversations but two specific issues arose at almost every conversation as a priority for moving the initiative forward:

1. The role of the coordinator is critical to the ongoing development and sustainability of the CLC to ensure the programs/activities/resources continue and expand – they are essential to this initiative moving forward.
2. The need for more/better communication between CLCs and the Communities they serve.



Three themes appeared around the subject of collaboration:

- Schools/school boards can no longer afford to provide all the activities/resources alone: there is a recognized need for partners to bring services to their students – take collaborative approaches to funding – seek strategic collaborations to stretch budgets – and consolidate resources between groups.
- CLCs create partnerships that serve collective, not just on individual goals
- CLCs are breaking down the silos of school and community working together – there is more synergy between organizations, schools, government



Conclusion

CLCs are giving voice to a more coordinated approach to meeting local needs. They are taking the place called 'school' and transforming it into a physical and social place for the community to meet, voice needs, plan and implement local initiatives, and make better use of existing local resources. Because CLCs are connected within a larger network, they are breaking down the isolation of English speaking schools and communities. They serve as a place for education and community development and as models for future policy and practice. CLCs are partnerships that provide a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of learners, their families, and the wider community.

Last year the 37 CLCs across Quebec worked collaboratively with more than 350 partners, leveraging more than **\$2.7+ million in services and resources into their schools and communities**. This represents services and resources which did not exist – were not available to the students and the community - prior to a CLC being in place. The Community Conversation made very clear that CLCs are valued by communities and that all stakeholders want to see and hear more from this initiative in the future.

"Student success is a priority not only for the school for but for the future of the community. Schools and communities need each other.

A healthy, successful student body = healthy community!"

Grosse Ile CLC - Magdalen Islands - November 14



Recommendations

Ensuring that the English speaking community remains a vital part of Quebec society requires investment in community projects and initiatives that can have a lasting impact on the economic, social and cultural aspects of community life. **CONSEQUENTLY, AND AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE CLC STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS, the following recommendations are being submitted for consideration for the next roadmap:**

1. **Secure funding for full time coordinators to address the increasing demand for existing and new services.**
2. **Secure funding for salary and operating budget for the Provincial Resource Team to support the CLCs and School Boards - conferences, professional development, training, evaluation, capacity building, and technology support.**
3. **Improve communications and raise awareness of the impact that CLCs are generating in communities across Quebec.**
4. **Continue to work in communities to engage all stakeholders in developing the Community Learning Centres.**

“Assurer la pèrenité des CSC – diversifier le financement /soutien.”

St. Willibrord CLC
Chateauguay - November 28

“The CLC is a valuable resource, offering many good projects and activities which link school and community”.

Chateauguay Valley CLC and Huntingdon Adult Education and Community Centre
Ormstown - November 28



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APPENDIX 1

NAME OF CLC	# of Participants	COMMUNITY	DATE OF CONVERSATION	SCHOOL BOARD
Quebec High and Portneuf Elementary ¹³	32	Quebec City area	November 24	Central Quebec
Gaspé Tri-School	15	Gaspé	November 14	Eastern Shores
New Carlisle	28	New Carlisle		
Grosse Ile	19	Magdalen Islands		
New Richmond	16	New Richmond		
Baie Comeau	13	Baie Comeau		
Metis Beach	14	Métis sur Mer		
Princess Elizabeth	33	Magog	November 13	Eastern Townships
Richmond Regional	21	Richmond		
Eaton Valley	12	Bury & Eaton Valley		
Parkdale	27	St. Laurent	November 26	English Montreal
Laurier Macdonald	50+	St. Leonard	November 27	
Gerald McShane ¹⁴	30	Montreal North	December 3	
James Lyng ¹⁴	32	Southwest Montreal	December 4	
Riverdale	50	Pierrefonds	December 11	Lester B. Pearson
Riverview ¹⁵	20	Verdun	November 12	
Netagamou	12	Chevrey	November 7	Littoral
Mecatina	10	La Tabatière		
St. Paul's	53	St. Paul's River		
Harrington	11	Harrington Harbour		
St. Willibrord	40+	Chateauguay	November 27	New Frontiers
Chateauguay Valley / Huntingdon Adult and Community Centre	60	Chateauguay Valley		
Valleyfield	24	Valleyfield		
St-Lambert / Centennial	49	St. Lambert BrossardGreenfield Park	December 6	Riverside
Richelieu Valley	21	Beloeil / St. Hilaire / Otterburn Park	December 5	
Laurentian Regional	20	Lachute	December 10	Sir Wilfred Laurier
Joliette High School	22	Rawdon		
Pierre Elliott Trudeau	35	Gatineau	December 8	Western Quebec

¹³ In conjunction with the Jeffrey Hale community consultation

¹⁴ Held in collaboration with Réseau Réussite Montreal

¹⁵ Riverview Visioning Session with Community Partners