

Shigawake

St.Godefroi

Hopetown

Hope

New Carlisle

Cascapedia-St-Jules

# Connecting Communities

A Rural Revitalization  
Project





# Revitalization Project Conception

The Revitalization Agent position was the result of a collaboration between the Committee for Anglophone social action (CASA), the Community economic development and employability corporation (CEDEC) and the Centre local de développement (CLD) of the MRC Bonaventure. The initial idea for the project emerged from a "territoires innovants" project which had been underway at the CLD of the MRC Bonaventure. Under "territoires innovants" an Anglophone development agent had worked at the CLD with the specific task of engaging the English speaking community.

At the conclusion of the "territoires innovants" project, the CLD recognized the value of a resource who could mobilize the English community. The director of the CLD approached CEDEC and CASA to partner in the initiative, recognizing their active roles in economic and social development within the English speaking community of the Gaspé Peninsula. CASA subsequently approached Canada economic development for Quebec regions, and successfully mounted a project to launch the Revitalization agent position in the MRC of Bonaventure.



# Revitalization Project Mandate

The revitalization agent was charged to work directly with six devitalized municipalities; namely the municipalities of Shigawake, St.Godefroi, Hopetown, Hope, New Carlisle and Cascapedia-St-Jules. Four of these six municipalities possess a significant proportion of Anglophone residents; the project objectives were not exclusive to the English speaking community.

The specific targeted outcomes included:

- the creation of a round table uniting community leaders to discuss economic development issues **1**
- entrepreneur exchange opportunities prioritizing increased networking between English and French entrepreneurs. **2**
- Regular meetings with elected representatives, business and community leaders, and development agents to address economic development issues throughout the targeted communities. **3**

The general approach of the revitalization agent to achieve these outcomes, was to engage the public in these communities, mobilize these individuals around initiatives that were of interest to them, assist in the elaboration of development plans, and identify potential funding sources for project ideas.



**1** Community members and elected officials discuss agricultural and urban zoning issues in the Municipality of Shigawake.



**2** Entrepreneurs displayed their businesses and produce at the Growing Forward Gardening Forum.

**3** Community members gathered to explore development issues & challenges in New Carlisle.



# Economic Development

At the onset of the revitalization project, none of the six participant municipalities had elaborated economic development plans. Economic development was largely considered to be the responsibility of the private sector, and municipalities did not appreciate the role they must play to frame and encourage economic development in their communities. Likewise, social development was also left in the hands of numerous volunteer and social committees active within these municipalities. Collaboration between these numerous organizations was minimal.

Community development consultations included the public, development agents and elected officials to discuss development priorities and potential.



## STEP 1

### Structured yet informal public consultation

#### **GOAL: maximize public participation and idea exchange**

The first steps to elaborate development plans were to invite the public, (including municipal councils) to participate in development committee meetings. There was a particular focus on youth participation in these meetings, to the end that younger community members begin to take their place in community development. The first series of meetings were social and informal in their presentation; a meet and greet social mixer offering snacks and refreshments, followed by a structured activity where participants were asked to provide feedback on their development ideas.

The municipalities of Shigawake and St. Godefroi were grouped together for their meeting, as were the municipalities of Hope and Hopetown. New Carlisle, and Cascapedia-St. Jules each had independent meetings. Community turnout for the meetings was positive and encouraging. A core group ranging between 20 and 30 participants were present at each meeting, with a strong population cross section with respect to language and age group.

During the structured portion of the meeting, participants were asked to express their ideas and priorities in the following development subtopics: family services, community heritage, arts & culture, sports & leisure, municipal infrastructures, business development, agriculture, tourism, residential development, community embellishment. This information was later compiled, and used to build the basic framework for each municipality's development priorities.

# STEP 3

## Formalize development plans

# STEP 2

## Create a formal development committee

### GOAL: engage citizens who participated in the public consultation process

The next step in the process was to formalize development committees within each municipality. Participants on development committees were largely sourced from those who had attended the public consultation meetings in each of their respective municipalities. Additionally, at least one municipal councillor joined each development committee to assure proper communication between committees and elected officials.

### GOAL: Elaborate on development priorities stated during the consultation process

Development committees elaborated further on the basic development frameworks, until they had established and defined clear development priorities for their municipality. In some municipalities, further development subcommittees were established to explore a specific sector, for example, such as agriculture or family services.

The revitalization agent accompanied each development committee group in all six municipalities, helping to formalize a final development plan document for each, which was then tabled at each respective municipal council. Each council in turn ratified the development document.

The promotional campaign to encourage public participation in the development plan process, targeted youth in particular.



Community members in New Carlisle working in sub-groups to further refine development priorities.



## STEP 4

### Public launch of development plans

#### **GOAL: Validate public participation with results, engage and mobilize additional citizens**

A municipal launch was organized in each municipality to present the development plan document to the public. The occasion was also used to inform citizens of other initiatives that were underway that included their community.

This step was integral in encouraging the development plan process to come full circle. Mobilized citizens were able to witness how their ideas were validated through inclusion in the development plans. Passively participating citizens were informed, and provided an opportunity to ask questions and discuss concerns. The launch also provided further reinforcement to elected officials that successful action and development planning implies ownership of the process at the grass roots of their communities.

Community members, development agents and elected officials gathered at St. Godefroi's Place du Quai for the official development plan launch.



# Action planning

Each of the six municipalities has a small population base, with limited pools of mobilized and organized individuals who tend to act on their community's behalf in multiple volunteer initiatives. The danger of exhausting the population base with too many simultaneous initiatives must be seriously considered.

A dual approach to social and economic development was adopted, in order to avoid participant burnout, and also to address prevalent issues that accompany devitalized communities such as social exclusion and poverty. In effect economic development gains cannot be realized unless appropriate social development mechanisms are in place.

Citizens, development agents and elected officials worked within the inter-municipal committee to launch the inter-municipal sports and leisure coordinator project. Many of these same individuals are also implicated in other development initiatives.

## PFM MADA

It was immediately clear from the six municipal consultations that none of these municipalities had family or seniors policies in place. Nor had any of the six undertaken the planning process to this end. Instilling family and seniors policies was immediately prioritized by all six development committees. Furthermore, Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés du Québec offered a program to encourage communities to hire family policy (PFM) and senior policy (MADA) coordinators.

Subsequently two PFM MADA coordinators were hired to work with the six municipalities, who were regrouped geographically such that one coordinator was charged to work with the eastern municipalities of Shigawake, St. Godefroi, Hopetown and Hope. The second coordinator was hired to work with the central community of New Carlisle and the western community of Cascapedia St-Jules.

The coordinators mounted family policy committees in each of the six municipalities under close collaboration with the revitalization agent. The final family and seniors policy documents will be completed no later than autumn 2013. This project is financed by the Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés du Québec, and the six municipalities.





**Politique Familiale**      **Municipalité amie des aînés**  
 Exprimer les besoins de vos communautés.      Express specific needs of your communities.  
 Concilier travail et vie familiale.      Balance work and family life.  
 Améliorer les services de soutien aux familles.      Improve services available for family help.  
 Adapter les milieux pour favoriser le vieillissement actif.      Adapt environment to allow seniors stay active.  
 Autant de problématiques qui vous concernent...      Your everyday life could be improved...

**Votre municipalité vous invite à vous impliquer dans le projet de la Politique Familiale Municipale et Amie des Aînés.**  
**Your municipality invites you to get involved in the project for the Family Policy and Friends of the Elderly.**

Faites partie d'un Comité Famille pour prendre les décisions adéquates.  
 Join a Family Committee and be part of the changes to come.

**Contact:**  
 Hope, Hope Town, St. John's, Carleton Place  
 Carleton Place, St. John's, Carleton Place  
 Tiffany Boudreau (418)-781-3162      Aude Bulvez (418)-392-0999

Suivez-nous / Follow us on Facebook:  
<http://www.facebook.com/PolitiqueFamilialeMunicipaleMRCNonaventure>

Promotional material encouraging citizens to participate in the PFM MADA initiative.



## Intermunicipal sports and leisure coordinator

Early in the consultation process it also became evident that there was great concertation potential between the four eastern municipalities of Shigawake, St.Godefroi, Hopetown and Hope. Each of these municipalities has sports and leisure infrastructure, but lacked a coordinator to fully exploit the available resources, plan, and animate activities for residents. There was also an expressed concern amongst these municipalities that activities needed to be multigenerational and bilingual in nature.

An inter-municipal committee was formed comprised of elected officials, MRC officials, the revitalization agent and citizens from the four municipalities. Under the framework of the Unité régionale loisir et sport Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (URLS) Loisirs Jeunesse program, the committee sought funding and partnerships to hire an inter-municipal sports and leisure coordinator.

The resulting three year project is financed through partnership contributions from the four municipalities, Pacte Rural, Baie des Chaleurs active et en santé (BDCAS) and is managed by URLS. The consultation committee meets quarterly to assess the projects outputs and performance.

The inter-municipal sports and leisure coordinator has organized activities that are multi-generational and bilingual within the four eastern municipalities.

The inter-municipal sports and leisure coordinator organizes activities to take advantage of all the available infrastructures within the four eastern municipalities.



## Eastern Municipalities Plenary Table

The development plans of the four eastern municipalities illustrated that these communities shared several commonalities in their economic development objectives. In March of 2013, the first Eastern Municipality Plenary Table session was hosted in Shigawake, where elected officials, development committee members, and mobilized community individuals were invited to discuss a common vision for economic development in the eastern municipalities. The ultimate goal of this table will be to mount a shared economic development initiative within the eastern municipalities.

The first meeting mostly concerned the structure of the table, and how the meetings will function. Each of the municipalities was asked to return to their respective councils, and prioritize their top five economic development priorities, as well as their top five social development priorities. This in combination with the development plans will serve to establish common ground from which development ideas can be explored.

The next meeting of the table will be in November of 2013, following the municipal elections. The table will serve as an excellent launching pad for newly elected officials to become initiated immediately in the issues surrounding the economic development of their municipalities.

Initiatives like the inter-municipal committee, which united all four mayors and municipalities for a common goal, resulted ultimately in the birth of the eastern municipalities plenary table.



The Bonaventure Agricultural Society Division "A" took advantage of the revitalization agent's services to mount a successful project to renovate fairground infrastructure.

The Kempffer Cultural and Interpretation Center is operated by a dynamic organization, and actively seeks development opportunities.



## Mobilization

In addition to the PFM MADA coordinators and the inter-municipal leisure coordinator in the eastern municipalities, the revitalization agent position has provided support for a variety of projects which have already been completed or are underway in each of the municipalities.

The essential element of mobilization is to empower individual citizens to promote their project ideas. Moving ideas to the project stage requires the following elements:

- 1) A dedicated team of citizens who share the project's vision, and who are prepared to carry the project through to completion.
- 2) A realistic project costing and accompanying project timeline so that citizens understand what will be required of them in terms of time and financial investment.
- 3) An understanding that some funding may or may not be sourced from a variety of programs. It cannot be expected that projects be realized at no cost to the community.
- 4) The planned project should have the support of the municipality, and be conducive to their development plans.

The projects and initiatives that are listed below have already been formalized, and have implied the direct involvement of the revitalization agent. Furthermore, there are multiple potential projects that are not listed here as they are currently in the conception and discussion stages.

Although their bid was not successful, a group of citizens mounted an attempt to win Kraft's "Hockeyville" contest in New Carlisle.



### Shigawake Agricultural Society

Infrastructure improvements to the fairs grounds  
(COMPLETED)

TOTAL INVESTMENT: **46,500\$**

### Municipality of Shigawake

Purchase and installation of outdoor children's play equipment for the park (COMPLETED)

TOTAL INVESTMENT: **14,300\$**

### Municipality of Shigawake

Construction of walking track, and restroom facilities for visitors to the park and rough campsite users.  
(SEEKING FUNDING)

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **77,579\$**

### Municipality of St. Godefroi

Renovations and upgrades to the municipal camp site (IN PROGRESS)

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **16,558\$**

### Municipality of Hopetown

Renovations to the community center (SEEKING FUNDING)

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **100,000\$**

### Hopetown Sports Club

Rink animator and manager (COMPLETED)

TOTAL INVESTMENT: **4,250\$**

### Municipality of Hope

Renovations and reparations to Hope park infrastructure (IN PROGRESS AND SEEKING ADDITIONAL FUNDING)

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **43,000\$**

### Heritage New Carlisle

Hiring of a director for Maison Kempfer (COMPLETED)

TOTAL INVESTMENT: **31,500\$**

### Municipality of New Carlisle

Installation of cooling and dehumidification system in the arena (SEEKING FUNDING)

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **500,000\$**

### Municipality of Cascapedia-St. Jules

Demolition of existing and construction of a new youth center (SEEKING FUNDING)

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **130,000\$**



## Entrepreneur Exchange

The final mandate of the revitalization agent was to foster entrepreneur exchange and interaction, amongst English speaking and French speaking entrepreneurs. This was achieved chiefly through two specific events; the Local Products Festival in Shigawake in July 2012, and the Growing Forward Gardening Forum in Hopetown in March 2013. These two initiatives were targeted based on growing popularity of the locavore movement, ease of access to resources, and an actively mobilized citizen base in this sector.



## Local Products Festival

The Local Products Festival was conceptualized and launched by CEDEC and the revitalization agent. The two day event was hosted at the Shigawake Fair Grounds, and welcomed local agricultural producers, food transformation, artisans, and artists to display and sell their wares to the public. The Chamber of Commerce MRC Baie-des-Chaleurs partnered in the event offering advertising through its media members. The Ministère Agriculture, Pêcheries et Alimentation (MAPAQ) partnered with financing for the event through "Les Aliments du Québec" program.

Thirty-seven vendors participated in the event, coming from as far away as Percé and Matapédia. Over 1000 shoppers visited the festival; sales were brisk for vendors and the event was a success. Plans are underway to make the festival an annual event.

This festival has opened a new local marketplace where none previously existed. It has played an integral role in promoting local businesses to a new client base, providing new networking opportunities for entrepreneurs and in stimulating interest in launching new businesses in the area.

Local fresh produce sold out quickly as approximately 1000 visitors took advantage of summer's earliest harvest at the Local Products Festival.

Artists and artisans displayed their work at the Local Products Festival.

# Growing Forward Gardening Forum

This event was held at the Hopetown Old School in late March 2013. The event was conceptualized, planned and executed by the revitalization agent, with support from CEDEC and CASA. The location was ideal as the old classrooms offered multiple presentation spaces, and the date was selected to capitalize on availability of professional growers pre-planting season, yet close enough to spring that participants were beginning to think about gardening.

Seven garden presentations were offered throughout the day; fine herb cultivation, garlic growing, the importance of biodiversity, how to preserve heritage seeds, market gardening, companion gardening, and wild foraging. All presenters were local producers with the exception of the invited presenter from Seeds of Diversity Canada. Local businesses were also offered kiosk space in the common area, so that between presentations they could sell or promote their products.

All presentations were bilingual. Any unilingual presenters were partnered with a translator, and power point slides were also translated prior to the event. The event was a success. An average of 50 people attended each presentation; a wide cross section of the local population was represented as participants were of all ages, both sexes, and originated from both English and French communities.

The positive spinoffs for this event were numerous:

- Co-attendance and participation of both Franco-phone and Anglophone communities.
- Networking opportunity for local businesses, and French and English speaking entrepreneurs.
- Added appreciation and value of local agri-business and commercial garden growers
- Stimulation of local interest in market gardening which is a potential niche business in the community.
- Positive usage and showcasing of potential uses of the Hopetown Old School, a local infrastructure seeking to offer community activities.

Plans are currently underway to make the gardening forum an annual event. Following the feedback from both participants and presenters, alternate forum possibilities such as food transformation are being explored.

Garden forum participants listening to Seeds of Diversity's Lyne Bellemare.



Publicity for the Growing Forward Gardening Forum.

**Growing Forward Gardening Forum**  
**March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013**  
**at Hopetown Old School**  
 225 Ave. 100, Hopetown

5\$ entry fee (under 15 free of charge)  
 Presentations  
 Information kiosks  
 Snack bar  
 Garden products for sale

Sponsored by:  
 Benevoventure Agriculture Society Division "A"  
 CEDEC  
 CASA

**Best organic gardening practices** Best practices for growing organic, and the benefits of composting. In English  
**Presentation time 9:30 – 10:30 (bilingual presentation)**  
 Presenter: André Poirier (76, 20 years old, and this will be his 8th year producing vegetables in Saint-Charles, Québec. Growing has been a passion for the author since a kid, and today, I find that going organic is the only sustainable way to grow food.

**All about garlic** All presentations relate to plant garlic, caring for garlic, when to harvest, how to store and various ways to use garlic.  
**Presentation time 10:40 – 11:40 (bilingual presentation)**  
 Presenter: Sophie Bouchard (have been growing organic vegetables for 15 years, and have cultivated garlic since I was 8 years old. My passion and the experience in growing garlic has been my education.

**The importance of protecting biodiversity**  
**Presentation 1: 11:50 – 12:50 (bilingual presentation)**  
**Presentation 2: 2:15 – 3:15 (bilingual presentation)**  
 Presenter: Lyne Bellemare is communications coordinator for Seeds of Diversity, a Canadian volunteer organization that preserves the biodiversity and traditional knowledge of food crops and garden plants.

**Growing a gardening business** The workshop will discuss the business of caring, growing, selling, storing, preservation, and resources for selling market crops.  
**Presentation time: 1:50 – 2:50 (bilingual presentation)**  
 Presenter: Diane Copier is an 17 refugee who now grows vegetables on a small farm in Québec. She uses Chinese.

**The fine side of gardening** Tips and suggestions for outlasting, hardening, drying and cooking with the herbs and edible flowers.  
**Presentation time: 3:20 – 4:20 (bilingual presentation)**  
 Presenter: Claire Charbon is a knowledge and great farmer, and manages your day. For 17 years, her business located in Caplan, La Pêche, has offered thousands of varieties of vegetables, the herbs, potatoes the edible flowers and fresh fresh eggs.

**From the forest to your table** Join us to discover the treasures that are hidden in the forest and your own backyards in order to eat local, you will learn when and where to find them, how to identify them and how to cook and conserve them.  
**Presentation time: 4:30 – 5:30 (bilingual presentation)**  
 Presenter: Renée Gauthier is an agro-forestry specialist and Christine Boudreau is a forestry biologist. Together they run an agro-forestry operation in St. Charles for education and demonstration.

# Revitalization sustainability

The original project mandate of the revitalization agent ended on March 31st, 2013. The MRC of Bonaventure recognized the value of a dedicated agent for devitalized municipalities, and offered to assist in funding the continuation of the position for an additional year. All six municipalities opted to retain the services of the agent, and likewise agreed to fund a portion of the position. The revitalization agent position is currently under the direction of the MRC office; its previous direction was through CASA, the CLD of the MRC Bonaventure and CEDEC. However the project mandate remains the same; to aid in mobilization and development of the targeted communities.

To ensure the continuity of the gains already achieved by the revitalization agent position, certain elements must be maintained that are not necessarily exclusive to the maintenance of a formal revitalization agent.

- 1) **MAINTAIN LIAISON BETWEEN PARTNERS, AGENTS AND GOVERNANCE.** It is essential that direct relations be maintained between the municipalities, the MRC, rural development agents and various provincial and federal offices, as well as non-governmental organizations. Organizational exclusion for a municipality acts much the same as social exclusion for an individual. Engaging in simple participation and mobilization in an "excluded" municipality presents a considerable challenge. Now that these municipalities have extended themselves to engage within the organizational network, if these relationships are not maintained, they may be even harder to re-establish once lost.
- 2) **IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE PROJECT FUNDING RESOURCES.** Programs and project funding change frequently. Calls for project submissions open and close within a relatively short period of time. It is essential that vital program and funding information be shared within these devitalized municipalities on a regular basis. Crucial to this information exchange, is the inclusion of mobilized private citizens as well as municipal councils. Citizens must be encouraged to promote projects that may have substantive impacts for their community. The sharing of program information extends beyond simply pointing out "where the money is"; these programs are indicative of current development priorities, which can act as a development compass for communities.
- 3) **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION.** Communication between all partners and citizens is the most essential element for effective development. It also represents the greatest challenge. To inform and engage the public, a wide spectrum strategy must be used to reach all segments of the population. Communications must be planned with age, education and language in mind. While social media are very popular and usage is widespread, this does not indicate the actual capacity of social media users to decode the information they are receiving. Furthermore, social media does not effectively reach older segments of the population.

An even greater challenge is posed by real time communication. The successful development of these communities depends on the mobilization and implication of all segments of the community, regardless of language. Meaningful exchanges are constrained by the capacity of participants to function in both languages. It is possible to mitigate language barriers by offering translations, but this can make processes cumbersome and time demanding. It is not reasonable to expect citizens to engage in a process where they don't feel comfortable or understood. There is great potential for the development of communication strategies and resources in these dual language communities.



# Participation Survey Results

45 respondents filled in the survey

Please calculate the number of persons who selected each category

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION	UN-SATISFIED	%	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	%	SATISFIED	%	VERY SATISFIED	%
Time of event	0	0,00%	3	6,67%	12	26,67%	29	64,44%
Format of event		0,00%		0,00%	12	26,67%	33	73,33%
Guest speaker		0,00%	1	2,22%	7	15,56%	33	73,33%
Topic & content		0,00%		0,00%	10	22,22%	34	75,56%
Documentation provided	5	11,11%	9	20,00%	12	26,67%	19	42,22%
Opportunity network	1	2,22%	8	17,78%	14	31,11%	20	44,44%

	Yes	%	No	%	Note
Did you acquire information and/or skills at this event that you believe will help you to start or grow your business?	31	68,89%	5	11,11%	
Did you meet new person at this event that you believe will help you start or grow your business?	25	55,56%	8	17,78%	

How did you hear about this event:	<i>Mail, Facebook, Word of mouth, Email, Radio, Spec, CEDEC, Jennifer(CLD), Wendy(CEDEC), Carmen St. Denis(MAPAQ)</i>
What were the strong points of the event?	<i>Bilingualism, Dual cultures, Variety of info, Great Speakers, Informative, Networking, Intergeneratioal, Location, Cantine, Respecting of time and schedule, Well organized, Short presentations</i>
What could be improved ?	<i>Too general, Better photos required, Longer pauses, Too much, Better handouts, Longer more specialized workshops, larger space, More chairs, More speaker info like contact info, One language for less translation time, Two day event, Earlier in winter</i>

Please indicate your current employment status  
Please calculate the number of persons who selected each category

	Number	%
Autonomous worker (artist, consultant, other)	9	20,00%
Owner/Manager of an SME (Small Medium enterprise)	2	4,44%
Thinking of starting a business	4	8,89%
Other (Please Specify)	24	53,33%

	Number
Personal gardening	30
Business gardening	15

## Comments / Suggestions

More! Awesome day! More business cards please! Black out windows for better viewing! Great day! More often please! Better announcing of products for sale! Bravo!! Loved my day! Great Initiative! Great communications with public! Don't stop! Next year please! Excellent! Again in the fall! Thank you for all the hard work! Worth the 100kms of journey! Great to be mixed communities! I learned a lot...maybe too much! Very interesting! Genius!

