

C0088



# Evaluating The Impacts of a Community Strategy to Increase Resilience of Seniors and Access to the Services They Need in their Language

## Summary

- Francophone seniors in the Saint John region have limited access to French-language services and community support.
- For many of these seniors, using English becomes more difficult as they age. Because they live in a predominantly English-speaking region, this loss of English creates a language barrier that can lead to social isolation.
- The Association Régionale de la Communauté francophone de Saint Jean (ARCf), the Horizon Health Network (community development), and Famille et petite enfance francophone Sud partnered to address this challenge.
- After performing a needs assessment, the project team created a community centre that offers services for seniors, allowing them to socialize with their community in their own language. Among the services offered were information sessions on topics such as disease prevention, understanding long-term care, mental health, preparing a tax declaration and fraud recognition.
- A support guide on community health and social services was developed to help caregivers find relevant French-language services for the seniors in their care.
- This project evaluated the impact of the Francophone community centre on local seniors.
- 140 participants (including seniors, health and social workers, and informal caregivers) attended activities at the center – 94 Francophone women, 43 Francophone men, 1 Anglophone woman and 2 Anglophone men.

<b>HSPF Focus Area</b>	Increasing independence and promoting healthy lifestyles
<b>Project Start &amp; End Date</b>	January 14, 2022 – March 31, 2023
<b>Organization/Agency</b>	Association régionale de la Communauté francophone de Saint Jean
<b>Location</b>	Saint John, New Brunswick
<b>Principal Investigator(s)</b>	<a href="#">Elda Savoie</a> , <a href="#">Mario Paris</a> , and <a href="#">Michel Tassé</a>

Indicator	Impact / Outcome / Result	Quote
<i>The team that compiled this summary was not provided with sufficient data to support the outcomes listed below. As such, all results presented should be viewed with caution.</i>		
<b>General health</b>	In the post-training session surveys, participants said they learned new strategies to improve their wellbeing (both mental and physical) from group discussions.	
<b>Social interaction</b>	At least 105 unique individuals engaged socially in activities hosted by ARCf, such as a celebratory seniors' dinner and an intergenerational event in partnership with an early childhood centre.	
<b>Request for services</b>	The ARCf noted that demand for seniors' support services has increased and that the membership of Arc-en-Ciel 50+, a seniors' club associated with ARCf, has doubled. By the end of the project, the number of seniors involved in ARCf activities had risen from 15 to more than 100.	"People now know we exist, It's accessible and we're visible in the community. We were hidden away before."
<b>Empowerment and community engagement</b>	Survey data suggested that participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Felt they gained knowledge from information sessions</li> <li>• Learned the value staying active in the community and engaging in aging research.</li> <li>• Felt more connected to the Francophone community.</li> </ul>	"It's great! We can come in when we want during the day."

## Methods and Comparison

The project team consulted with Francophone seniors in Saint John to better understand their health problems and needs. In response to the seniors' feedback, the opened a community centre.

The impact of the community centre was measured using:

- Feedback surveys after social activities and training sessions (the number of respondents ranged between 6 and 105).
- Informal observations made by the project team.

Data to support the outcomes was not made available and data analysis was not performed by the project team. As such, all results presented should be viewed with caution.

## Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The community center became a valued hub where seniors could create a Francophone community and access learning opportunities. Through information sessions and social activities, this initiative facilitated community support and personal skill building, while emphasizing the seniors' role in managing their well-being and potentially reducing feelings of social isolation. Overall, this type of community centre could help seniors live safely at home for longer by increasing their autonomy and enhancing their quality of life.

## Recommendations

The project team recommends that community hubs of this type continue to be offered to Francophone seniors, providing them with opportunities to access training, services, and social activities in the language of their choice. The team also recommends performing a needs assessment beforehand to ensure that the needs of the local seniors will be met.

## Next Steps

The ARCf will continue offering a community centre where seniors can gather and receive training. The United Way has provided temporary funding to cover the cost of human resources, and efforts are under way to create new partnerships with existing organizations. Additional financing is needed to provide language and cultural training to existing service providers so they can become more accessible to Francophone seniors. The ARCf will be working with the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT) to assess the demographic data of Saint John seniors and to identify additional needs of Francophone seniors.

## Disclaimer

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