

STRENGTHENING
RURAL
CANADA



RENFORCER LES
COMMUNAUTÉS
RURALES DU CANADA

Our people. Our communities. Our future.

Enrichment through literacy: toward integrated skills

Kapuskasing, Ontario

Prepared for Decoda Literacy Solutions

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Decoda
LITERACY SOLUTIONS



CRRIDEC
Centre régional de recherche et d'intervention en
développement économique et communautaire

RESDAC
RÉSEAU POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DE L'ALPHABÉTISME ET DES COMPÉTENCES

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1. Task Force

As part of the *Strengthening Rural Canada* initiative, which aims to design strategies on the development of human capital at the local level, a task force was formed. Its main goal was to write a community plan on literacy and skills development. Throughout the project, the task force comprised two consultants from the *Centre régional de recherche et d'intervention en développement économique et communautaire* (CRRIDEC), who kept in touch with the person responsible for community development for the Town of Kapuskasing. CRRIDEC met with numerous key stakeholders from community organizations through discussion groups that were divided by sector. These meetings were held to collect information on challenges facing the community with regard to literacy and skills development. After compiling data from the meetings, CRRIDEC organized a community forum, a collaborative process to identify concrete courses of action that would contribute to support community development, literacy and skills development, in relation to common themes that were previously identified.

Key community stakeholders who participated in discussions represented the following organizations:

Community and economic development sector:

- Kapuskasing and District Chamber of Commerce
- Town of Kapuskasing

Education and training sector:

- Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS)
- Kapuskasing Public Library
- Alternative Education Centre (AEC)
- Collège Boréal, Kapuskasing campus

- Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières (CSCDGR)
- Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario (CSPNE)
- Contact North
- Université de Hearst, Kapuskasing campus

Employment sector:

- Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB)
- Employment Options
- Ontario Works

First Nations sector:

- Kapuskasing Indian Friendship Centre
- Kash Kap School for Evacuees
- Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)

Health sector:

- Canadian Red-Cross
- Centre de santé communautaire de Kapuskasing et région
- Sensenbrenner Hospital
- North Eastern Ontario Family and Children's Services
- North Cochrane Addiction Services Inc.

2. Community Context

As with many Northern Ontario communities, Kapuskasing's history begins with the construction of the transcontinental railway. The town, surrounded by several small communities, has evolved to become a hub for services provided to a population of approximately 15,000 individuals. It is located at almost equal distance, by plane or road, from Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury and North Bay, all major urban centers in Northern Ontario.

Kapuskasing is easily accessible and well positioned to provide and distribute goods and services for the whole northern region of the province. Kapuskasing being one of the northernmost points by road, the town also plays an important role in supplying and distributing goods and services to isolated communities along the Hudson Bay and James Bay regions, as well as Northern Quebec.



Major changes in the community in the last few years

Local economy

Despite the community being well located to enjoy the growth and development of Northern Ontario, the town of Kapuskasing relies heavily on economic assets from forestry and mining industries, as well as hydroelectric energy production. Over the last few years, the community has certainly not been immune to problems and uncertainties arising from restructuring efforts and workforce reductions within local mining and forestry operations. Indeed, Kapuskasing's largest employer, the Tembec mill, had to significantly reduce its workforce.

In addition, in 2013, the Agrium phosphate mine in Kapuskasing closed down because the company decided to deal with an international corporation. Agrium being the second largest employer in Kapuskasing, its closing had substantial impact on the community, as more than 300 direct and indirect jobs were lost.

The Kashechewan evacuations

In May 2014, residents of Kashechewan, an aboriginal community located along James Bay, were evacuated as they waited for their houses to be rebuilt following major floods. Today, there are more than 450 evacuees from Kashechewan who will be staying in Kapuskasing for the next two years, possibly even four years. This situation had repercussions on the Town of Kapuskasing, where all residents were impacted by these changes, for instance in the health, housing and education sectors.

Reforms at Université de Hearst

En September 2014, Université de Hearst, a local postsecondary establishment, with campuses in Kapuskasing and Timmins, went through a transformation in order to stand out and continue to provide its services to local populations, while managing to attract clients from other regions. This reform was implemented along three major poles:

1. Adapted and innovative modes of delivery to enhance learnings and improve access: by drawing further from experiential learning, technology-assisted learning and an interdisciplinary approach. Indeed, Université de Hearst trains individuals who are eager to be involved in their community, aware of their environment and of their position in the world, who are able to contribute to the ongoing development of Northern Ontario.
2. Major studies and increased research to meet the specific needs of Northern Ontario: an interdisciplinary master's program will be added to respond to a regional request pertaining to graduate studies. For decades, Université de Hearst has been training graduates who contribute to the development of their communities. In fact, 80% of these graduates choose to settle in the province's North-Eastern region and become leaders in Northern Ontario. This in turn

means that more research is conducted, so the needs of Northern communities, businesses and citizens are better understood and known.

3. A greater emphasis on student mobility: a greater emphasis will be placed on student mobility, whether at the international level or within the country. Université de Hearst aims to enhance cultural diversity, by providing its programs to a foreign clientele, and by multiplying opportunities for exchanges with partners from across Canada and around the world. To strengthen Northern Ontario for the next decades, it is important to create channels that foster culturally sensitive ideas, which could inspire students to contribute to regional development, here and elsewhere. Furthermore, the University is committed to pursue its collaboration with colleges of applied arts and technology to facilitate transitions from college to university, where it is possible and practical to do so.

Université de Hearst continues to devote sustained and innovative efforts to increase registrations by diversifying its programs and services in order to meet the community's needs.

Overview of aspects that are working well

The Kapuskasing community has several strengths, among which:

- Bilingualism
- Quality of life
- Community infrastructures
- The development of new local businesses (Fromagerie Kapuskoise, Francoeur Shoe Repair, Kapuskasing Demonstration Farm, Ruchers du Nord, Dance Studio Kap Dance Project)
- Existing businesses (Back to the Grind Bakery, Studio Namaste, etc.)
- Low cost of living
- Postsecondary establishments (Collège Boréal and Université de Hearst)

- Natural resources (e.g. renewable energy)
- The community's vitality (community strategic plan)

It is also important to mention that Kapuskasing is a self-sufficient community because of its geographic isolation. It relies on committed and dedicated individuals who are constantly working to improve their community through their daily activities; they are an important component of community development. This makes it a lot easier to collaborate among organizations and therefore, it fosters better service delivery to various clients. Through collaboration projects and shared efforts, organizations manage to deliver effective services and set up innovative programs for the population.

Overview of aspects that need work

However, the Kapuskasing community is facing multiple challenges, among which:

- Out-migration of youth and young families
- Housing shortage
- Aging population
- Lack of qualified human resources (particularly among youth)
- Lack of volunteers (particularly among youth)
- Sense of belonging among residents and new residents
- Transparency at the municipal level

3. Community Development and Literacy Collaboration

All of the literacy centres in the region are members of the Literacy Network Northeast. They meet once a year, including the *Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières* (CSCDGR), to design a plan to make sure there is no duplication in literacy services. These meetings allow for all participants to share information about each of the centres and ensure positive collaboration.

The Literacy Network Northeast helps in providing training and workshops to literacy trainers so they can convey the information to learners. In addition, educational resources are provided to trainers to support them in their programming activities.

In Kapuskasing, the Alternative Education Center and Collège Boréal are members of the Literacy Network Northeast and share responsibilities since Anglophone participants are often referred to the Alternative Education Center, which offers bilingual programming. So far, one of these collaborations involves a tailored program in carpentry called *Carpentry Fundamentals*, which took place in the Fall of 2015.

This twelve-week program aimed for participants to build a wood cabin in the Provincial Park located in Moonbeam, a small neighbouring community. More than ten young Kashechewan evacuees now residing in Kapuskasing took part in the program.

During the first phase of the program, participants had to receive training on basic literacy and numeracy skills at the Alternative Education Center for a two-week period. This was followed by a one-week training session on workplace health and safety at Collège Boréal.

During the second phase, participants were onsite to apply the skills they acquired and build a cabin under the supervision of a certified carpenter.

The program was successful because various collaborations were established between organizations within the Kapuskasing region. It allowed for the delivery of quality training, access to basic tools and mentoring from a certified carpenter. All these elements ensured unique and practical training for each young participant and certainly fostered their learning.

Funds permitting, Collège Boréal would like to offer another such program on technical pre-learning in child development. Participants would acquire skills and basic training on this matter and could then choose to further their learning online in order to receive accreditation.

Suggested collaborations

During community discussions, lack of communication between organizations in and around Kapuskasing was raised repeatedly. One possible solution identified was the creation of a community communication officer position. It was suggested that organizations in the region work together to share financial resources allowing for this position to be created, or that a grant application be submitted in order to secure funds that could pay for the hiring of one or more interns.

It would be beneficial for organizations in and around Kapuskasing to seriously consider this avenue, because most of the issues raised in this regard would be partially overcome if such a position were created. Indeed, the community communication officer could, among other things:

- Facilitate communication between community organizations in order to share information.
- Establish new partnerships to better meet the needs of the market.
- Organize awareness weeks on various topics in schools, businesses, community, radio, etc.
- Organize activities to recognize committed volunteers, a welcome fair for new residents, a fair to explain the benefits of volunteerism in schools, and/or an inclusive cultural activity.
- Increase the visibility of organizations in social media.
- Prepare a welcome activity for Kapuskasing's new residents.
- Prepare welcome packages for Kapuskasing's new residents.
- Work at consolidating community spirit.

- Present and highlight the importance of opportunities related to education and skills development through workshops and training, etc.



4. Challenges and actions

During discussion groups and the community forum with key stakeholders from organizations in and around Kapuskasing, several challenges and courses of action were identified. CRRIDEC decided to draw a table of this information in order to facilitate understanding of all of the issues that were raised. It should be noted that the “partners” category does not mean that the organization has made a commitment. Rather, these are suggestions regarding partnerships that could be established to meet the challenges that are identified below.

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Challenges identified
• Lack of motivation and involvement among learners
• Youth retention in the community
• Barriers to employment
• Shortage of qualified workers
• Quality of welcoming and inclusion efforts within the community
• Lack of volunteers
• Lack in training in first and second language
• Barriers facing elementary students at Kash School for Evacuees

Challenges and Actions

Challenges	Strategies	Actions	Outcomes	Partners
Lack of motivation and commitment among people who attend training to acquire basic skills or new skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasize the importance of education, skills acquisition and ongoing training; link to workplace and employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a thorough needs analysis among learners and their start-up point to develop tailored delivery (it is also important to have good knowledge of the community and its learners, better evaluation and/or recruitment tools) Have an organization document and identify funding sources and available support to help employers fund the training they provide to their employees Encourage and allow employers to attend training on professional development Present employers with the benefits of investing time and money in training their employees; involve employers in the training development process as well as in learners' evaluations Implement an awareness campaign, organized by partners and focused on employers, employees, students, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of learners who attend training (including tailored training) Increased participation in professional development training among employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centre Alpha Alternative Education Centre Chamber of Commerce Collège Boréal Employment Options

Challenges and Actions

Challenges	Strategies	Actions	Outcomes	Partners
Retaining youth in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome young professionals from outside the community • Become a more welcoming community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a promotional plan about the benefits of residing or living in Kapuskasing • Develop training on the development of a succession plan for businesses and employers • Expand local educational programs to meet the needs of the local labour market (undergraduate program on community health and interdisciplinary master's at Université de Hearst, technical programs level 1 on heavy equipment at Collège Boréal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More young people from here and elsewhere decide to live in Kapuskasing • Increase in qualified professionals from outside the region • Increased registrations at Collège Boréal and Université de Hearst in the Kapuskasing region, following addition of new programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collège Boréal • Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB) • Kapuskasing Economic Development Corporation (EDC) • North Claybelt Community Futures Development Corporation • Université de Hearst

Challenges and Actions

Challenges	Strategies	Actions	Outcomes	Partners
<p>Barriers to employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate barriers to employment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial difficulties • Mental and physical health problems • Linguistic barriers • Others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare an inventory to identify barriers to employment within the community according to various clienteles among job seekers • Increase promotion of existing programs for youth and adults (mentoring program, access to jobs for youth between 15 and 29, etc.) • Provide training that takes into account mental or physical health problems • Provide more second language training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More youth and adults complete their programs • More job placements • Decrease of unemployment rate among marginalized individuals who face mental or physical health problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kapuskasing & District Association for community Livings • Centre Alpha • Alternative Education Centre • Collège Boréal • Disability Resource Centre for Independent Living • Employment Options • Ontario Works • North Claybelt Community Futures Development Corporation <p style="margin-top: 20px;">Please note: once the inventory of barriers is completed, it is likely that other partners will join these efforts.</p>

Challenges and Actions

Challenges	Strategies	Actions	Outcomes	Partners
Lack of qualified workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be more welcoming toward new employees • Raise awareness among employers about providing training to their employees on welcoming colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy on welcoming and internal culture for new employees • Develop a promotional plan and workshops to raise awareness among employers about investing time and money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in new employee retention • Increase in number of qualified and competent employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce • Collège Boréal • Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB) • Employment Options
Lack of welcoming and inclusion within the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance welcoming and inclusion efforts within the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant updating of the Town of Kapuskasing's website to relay information on local activities • Form a local welcoming committee for new residents • Create a welcoming activity for new residents • Organize cultural activities • Ensure better representation of community diversity in marketing tools (website, brochures, posters, videos, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation in local activities and volunteering opportunities • Better retention of new residents • Enhanced sense of local pride and belonging among residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce • Kapuskasing Economic Development Corporation (EDC) • Town of Kapuskasing

Challenges and Actions

Challenges	Strategies	Actions	Outcomes	Partners
Lack of volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage young people in the community to volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize a volunteer fair (combine the event with another that is already planned to maximize visibility) Recruit volunteers during the fair Develop a data bank dedicated to volunteerism on the Town of Kapuskasing's website: divide volunteer opportunities according to areas of interest and add descriptions of available opportunities Organize an activity to acknowledge dedicated volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of volunteers Enhanced understanding of the importance of volunteerism among youth and general population Better volunteer retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-schools in the region North Centennial Manor Extendicare Kapuskasing Canadian Red Cross Aging at Home Town of Kapuskasing Other organizations allowing for an intergenerational experience

Challenges and Actions

Challenges	Strategies	Actions	Outcomes	Partners
Lack of training in first and second language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and value skills in written and spoken language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an awareness campaign to encourage and support employers' efforts in investing in first and second language training, and purchasing tools for employees (dictionaries, Bescherelle, Antidote programs, etc. Promote the possibility for employers to hire a French/ English trainer to teach modular courses to employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of employers who invest in language training Number of trainers hired by businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chamber of Commerce Collège Boréal Université de Hearst
Elementary students from the Kash School for Evacuees face major barriers in oral communication and social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a preschool program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a preschool program tailored to the reality of this Aboriginal group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved oral communication and social skills among these students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative Education Centre Kash Kap School for Evacuees Town of Kapuskasing

5. Indicators of Success

Short-term Indicators

- Number of participants in the planning process
- Number of partnerships established following the planning process
- Design of a community plan on literacy and skills development
- Integration of the literacy community plan into the community strategic plan of the Town of Kapuskasing
- Report and communicate the literacy community plan to the Kapuskasing community
- Number of individuals who attend workshops on skills development
- Number of individuals who attend workshops on skills development

Long-term Indicators

- Increased awareness about literacy and skills development within the community
- Increased partnerships between community organizations
- An enrichment of community development through literacy and skills development

6. Conclusion

The most striking outcome from this planning process is undoubtedly the high level of participation among several stakeholders from community organizations that operate in diverse sectors. Despite their heavy workloads, these individuals expressed a will to collaborate and deal with the challenges related to literacy and skills development in Kapuskasing. It is comforting to see that the planning process was a success and an opportunity for people to work together in communicating and sharing about issues and priorities, as well as identifying possible courses of action, which will most likely have an impact on community development.

CRRIDEC hopes that the process will serve to mobilize the community and stakeholders, so they invest their time and resources to generate positive changes within the community. By promoting the importance of literacy and skills development, CRRIDEC is confident that Kapuskasing will be able to develop and strengthen the whole community.

First and foremost, it is important to promote the development of citizens, through their work, their personal development, as well as their community engagement. In doing so, the community of Kapuskasing will be stronger, more radiant and even more proficient in building its capacities.

