

**Practice #15: The Health and Social Services  
Component of the Townshippers' Association (Quebec)  
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Innovative Practices in the field  
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Integration in an Official Minority  
Language Context**

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## Practice #15: The Health and Social Services Component of the Townshippers' Association (Quebec)

### This practice contributes to improving:

- Collaboration with community resources.

### The organization implementing this practice:

Townshippers' Association, Eastern Townships, Quebec.

The information contained in this file was mainly acquired from a telephone interview conducted on July 10, 2017, with Michelle Amy Lepitre, Special Projects Coordinator, Health and Social Services, Townshippers' Association. The information was complemented by documentary research, and these sources are cited as references. It was further validated by Rachel Hunting, Executive Director of the Townshippers' Association.

### Background

“Community vitality encourages requests for services in the official language of the minority and has a positive influence on the active offer of these services” [translation].<sup>1</sup> It is defined as “a community’s ability to take charge of its development based on several types of resources (demographic, political and legal, social, economic and cultural), that are transformed for the benefit of the community through dynamic leadership” [translation].<sup>2</sup> Studies have shown that strong community vitality can be associated with better self-rated health<sup>3</sup> and that community organizations play a positive role in the physical and psychological health of communities in linguistic minority situations.<sup>4</sup> With this in mind, we chose to outline the Townshippers' Association<sup>5</sup> that works on awareness-raising with health and social services to improve services provided to the English-speaking community of the Quebec Eastern Townships.

The Townshippers' Association is part of a larger network, the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN)—Réseau communautaire de services de santé et de services sociaux (RCSSS). It supports English-speaking communities in the province of Quebec and facilitates access to health and social services in their own language.<sup>6</sup>

### Objectives

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- 1 Comité sénatorial permanent des langues officielles. (2011). *L'épanouissement des communautés anglophones du Québec : du mythe à la réalité*. Rapport du comité sénatorial permanent des langues officielles (2011). Accessed on June 18, 2017, at: [http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2011/sen/yc34-0/YC34-0-411-2-fra.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/sen/yc34-0/YC34-0-411-2-fra.pdf) (2011).
  - 2 Commissariat aux langues officielles. (2007). *Les indicateurs de vitalité des communautés de langue officielle en situation minoritaire 1 : les francophones en milieu urbain*, Ottawa, p. i)
  - 3 Alimezelli, H. T., Leis, A., Karunanayake, C., & Denis, W. (2013). Determinants of self-rated health of Francophone seniors in a minority situation in Canada. *Minorités linguistiques et société*, 3, 144-170
  - 4 Harrison, S., Paré, F., Forgues, É., Guignard Noël, J., & Landry, R. (2009). La contribution des centres scolaires communautaires à la santé des francophones vivant en milieu minoritaire. *Francophonies d'Amérique*, 28, 197-212
  - 5 Townshippers Association. (n.d.). Accessed on June 18, 2017, at: <http://townshippers.gc.ca/portal/lassociation-townshippers/>
  - 6 Community Health and Social Services Network. (n.d.). About Us. Accessed on June 18, 2017, at: <http://chssn.org/about-us/>

The Santé et services sociaux/Health and Social Services component of the Townshippers' Association aims to build bridges between, on the one hand, the English-speaking population living in the Eastern Townships, and on the other hand, health and social service organizations and their professionals, in order to improve the Anglophone community's access to services in English.

## Features of the Practice

The Townshippers' Association works closely with a wide range of organizations and institutions to overcome the challenges faced by the Anglophone population living in a minority context regarding access to English-language health and social services. In fact, federal, provincial and municipal entities, as well as other institutions that deal with the Anglophone population in the area, often solicit the Townshippers' advice. This community networking approach allows professionals to gain knowledge about Anglophone seniors<sup>7</sup>, to identify their social and medical needs and to facilitate access to health and social services for people who are having trouble finding information about these services.

Among activities intended for seniors, the Townshippers' Association organizes awareness-raising workshops on specific themes, such as Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, physical exercise, nutrition and screening for diabetes. These workshops are occasionally facilitated by health professionals or by a dynamic group of volunteers. Arrangements for these workshops depend on the active engagement of the area's English-speaking community.

## Challenges

The main challenge faced by the Townshippers' Association is to make itself known to health professionals. Its main role is to link health professionals and Anglophone seniors living in a minority situation in Quebec; at times, the Association finds it difficult to have its role recognized by the health and social services system.

## Analysis<sup>8</sup>

### Why is this practice considered innovative?

This practice meets a community need. In fact, it was born from the need to facilitate access to health and social services for the Eastern Township Anglophone community and from the community's wish to assert its linguistic and cultural rights in a predominantly Francophone province. Both health and social service providers and professionals perceive this practice very favourably.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, a document intended for professionals was produced, describing the English-speaking senior population residing on the territory served by the Association. Townshippers' Association. (2017). *Profil des personnes âgées d'expression anglaise RTS de l'Estrie – CHUS*. Accessed on June 25, 2017, at: <http://townshippers.qc.ca/portal/wpdm-package/profil-des-les-personnes-agees-dexpression-anglaise-rts-de-lestrie-chus/>.

<sup>8</sup> This analysis is based on criteria defined in the *Innovative Practices Evaluation Framework* designed by the Health Council of Canada, available at: [https://healthcouncilcanada.ca/files/IP\\_Framework\\_Eng\\_final\\_1.pdf](https://healthcouncilcanada.ca/files/IP_Framework_Eng_final_1.pdf) also outlined in Appendix 1.

## Emerging, promising or leading: A promising practice

- **Quality of evidence:** The Townshippers' Association activities are evaluated in the context of the overall evaluation of the CHSSN network programs, while individual projects are evaluated by the Townshippers' Association.
- **Impact:** The practice reaches the general English-speaking population in the Eastern Townships, including some 8,000 seniors aged 65 and over. The Anglophone population is proportionally older (22.6% of seniors) than the Francophone population (16% of seniors).<sup>9</sup> According to providers who were interviewed, awareness-raising regarding active offer and networking efforts with health services providers are winning strategies when it comes to improving access to health services for seniors living in a minority situation, in this instance, Anglophone seniors and their families.
- **Applicability:** In Quebec, more than 60 organizations represent segments of the English-speaking population in this province. Many of these organizations have health and social services components.
- **Transferability:** As previously mentioned, other organizations in the province of Quebec share a comparable mandate. Elsewhere in Canada, associations hold a similar mandate with the French-speaking population. We do not have data that could lead us to affirm similar achieved results.

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9 Townshippers' Association, 2017, op.cit.