



# Bright Beginnings

**SUPPORTING  
ENGLISH–SPEAKING  
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

on the North Shore  
of Quebec

MARCH 2020

# Acknowledgements

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Information on pages 1 and 4–9 has been taken from the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) Early Childhood Framework available at [www.chssn.org](http://www.chssn.org).

## About this document

The primary objective of this document is to help build a knowledge base that can serve to identify the needs of children and their parents on the North Shore, to network with relevant organizations, and to build partnerships.

The approach is exploratory and aims to bring together quantitative data from publically available data bases (mainly the census of Canada) with qualitative data provided by staff working in the region with the target clientele. The portrait that emerges will be used to inform the strategic and action planning of the NSCA for this population group in the targeted MRC territories.



# WHAT IS Bright Beginnings?

**Bright Beginnings** is an adapted approach to supporting English-speaking children and families in the Gaspé and Magdalen Islands. It originated through a collaboration between CASA, CAMI and VGPN who began to work with regional and local partners to better adapt programs and services to support English-speaking children 0 to 5 years old and their families. This approach has been adopted by the CHSSN as a provincial framework for English-speaking communities.

## ADDRESSING UNIQUE RISK FACTORS

**Bright Beginnings** is an approach that responds to specific risk factors often faced by English-speaking children and their families such as:

- lack of services available in English;
- increased isolation and mental health problems; and
- high percentage of parents living on low incomes (poverty).



Gaspé-Magdalen Islands Bright Beginnings partners at a regional collaboration meeting held on January 23, 2019.

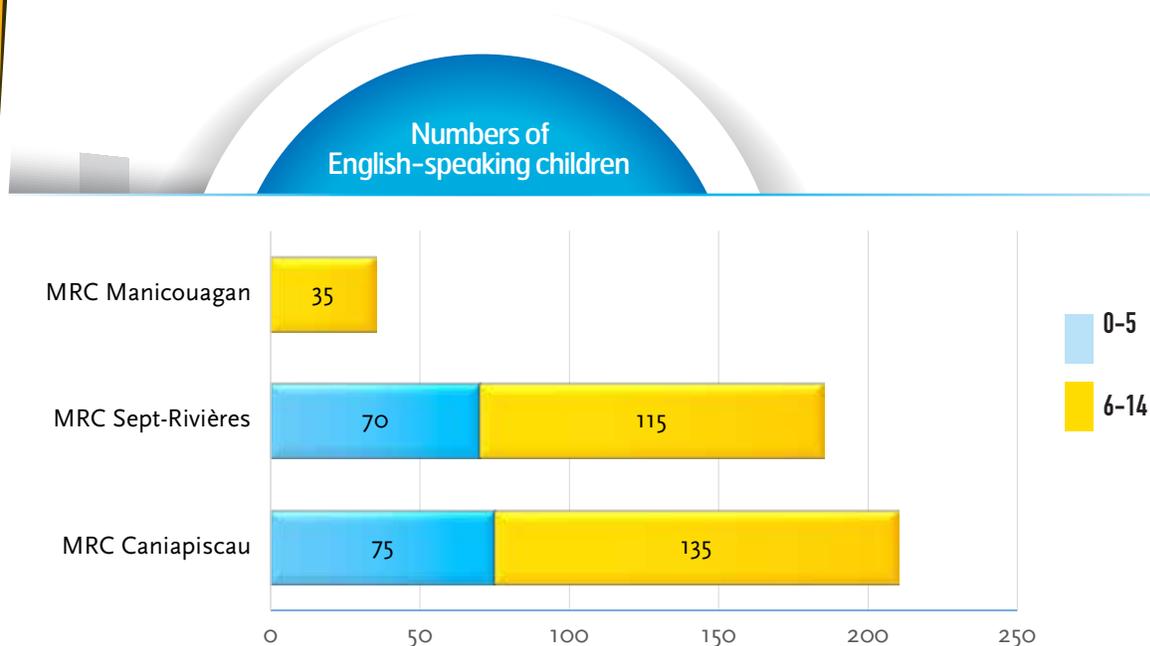


**A series of interviews carried out on the North Shore with service providers revealed that out of 32 organizations that offer services for children aged 0-8 (including schools), only seven are currently offering them in English, have a demand for such services and have the capacity and resources to do so.**

# English-speakers IN QUEBEC'S CÔTE-NORD REGION

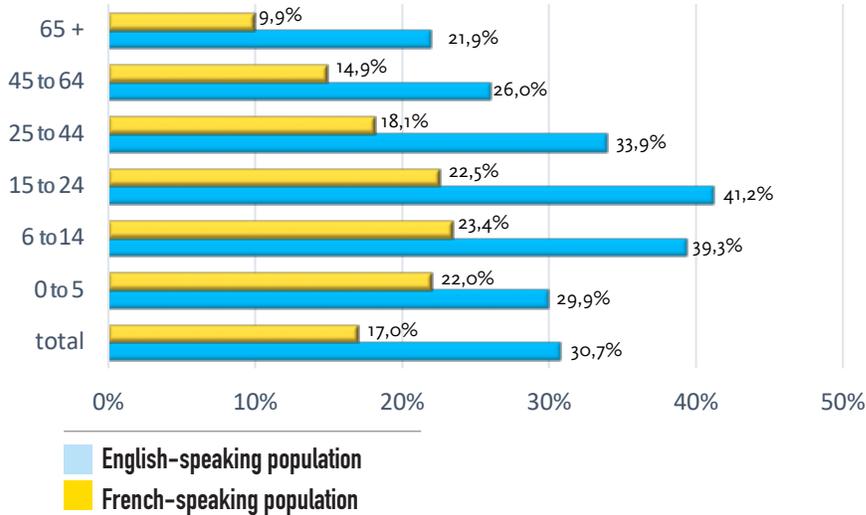
The North Shore Community Association (NSCA) covers five MRC territories in the Côte-Nord region. This document, however, focuses on the following three MRCs with significant English-speaking populations: MRC Sept-Rivières, MRC Manicouagan and MRC Caniapiscau.

MRC Caniapiscau has the most English-speaking children (75 children aged 0-5 and 135 aged 6-14), followed by Sept-Rivières (70 children aged 0-5 and 115 aged 6-14). MRC Manicouagan has lower numbers overall with not enough English-speaking children aged 0-5 to appear in the statistics, and 35 children aged 6-14. Although Manicouagan did not have a significant number of English-speaking children aged 0-5 at the time of the 2016 census, nonetheless it seems relevant to plan services for that group of families and children, as the situation may evolve over time and there can be various reasons why those numbers are low (they may be counted in another linguistic group).



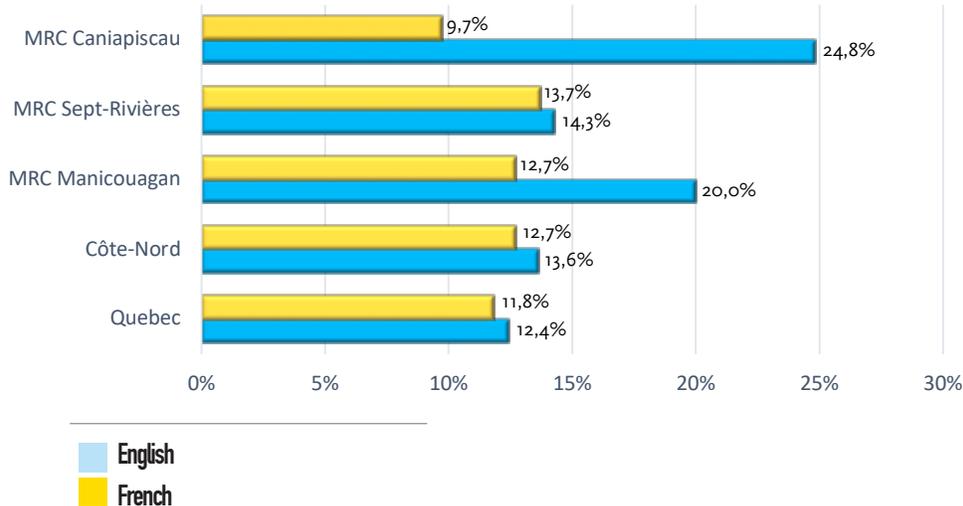
In the Côte-Nord region, the proportion of the population with an Aboriginal identity is much higher among English speakers than among French speakers (30.7% compared to 17%). This has significance for sense of belonging and service provision to English speakers, among other things.

### Proportion of the Population with an Aboriginal Identity



The proportion of the population living in a lone-parent family is higher among English speakers than French speakers in all MRCs on the NSCA territory. These rates are significantly higher than in the province as a whole, where 12.4% of English speakers live in a lone-parent family. This could suggest greater levels of vulnerability and need for support, both for parents and for children.

### Proportion of the population living in a lone-parent family



# Vulnerable children IN KINDERGARTEN

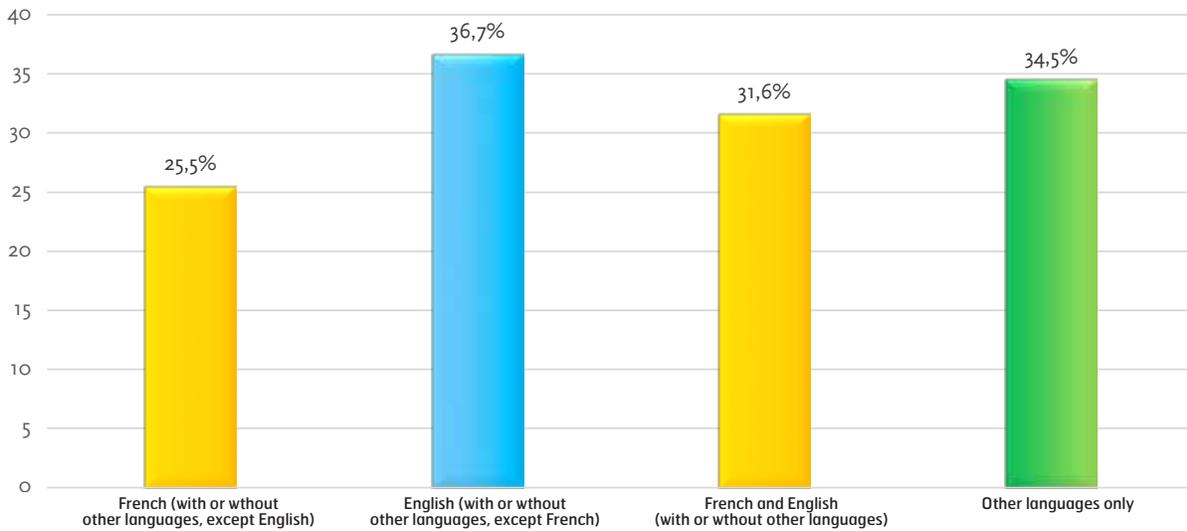


A survey carried out in Quebec among kindergarten children (*Enquête québécoise sur le développement des enfants à la maternelle 2017*) helps to determine the state of children's vulnerability in five domains of development:

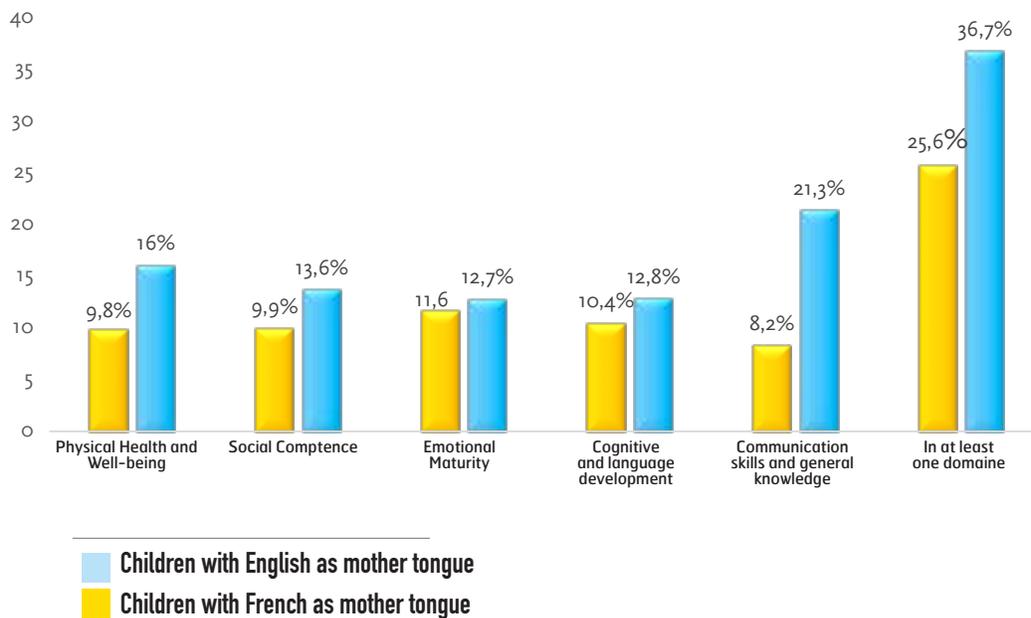
- 1 Physical health and well-being
- 2 Social Competence
- 3 Emotional maturity
- 4 Cognitive and language development
- 5 Communication skills and general knowledge.

The results show that in all regions of Quebec, a higher proportion of English-speaking than French-speaking kindergarteners were considered vulnerable, and this is true for all domains except "emotional maturity". Explanations for these high rates of vulnerability could include the fact that some English-speaking children do not go to school in their mother tongue, that they tend not to attend daycare as early, that they are less likely to participate in the Passe-Partout program, and that more of them live under the low-income cut-off.

Proportion of vulnerable children in kindergarten in at least one domain of development according to mother tongue, Québec, 2017



Proportion of vulnerable children in kindergarten by domain of development and in at least one domain according to mother tongue, Québec, 2017



# Parents with children aged 0-5 ON THE NORTH SHORE



## **A HIGH PROPORTION HAVE LOW EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:**

42.6% of English couples have a high school diploma as their highest level of educational attainment (compared to 24.8% among French couples). Among lone-parent English parents that proportion is 44.4% (50.5% among French lone parents).

## **A LOW PROPORTION HAVE A UNIVERSITY DEGREE:**

Among those parents in English-speaking couples, 17.0% reported having a university BA or higher (among French-speaking couples it was 20.6%).

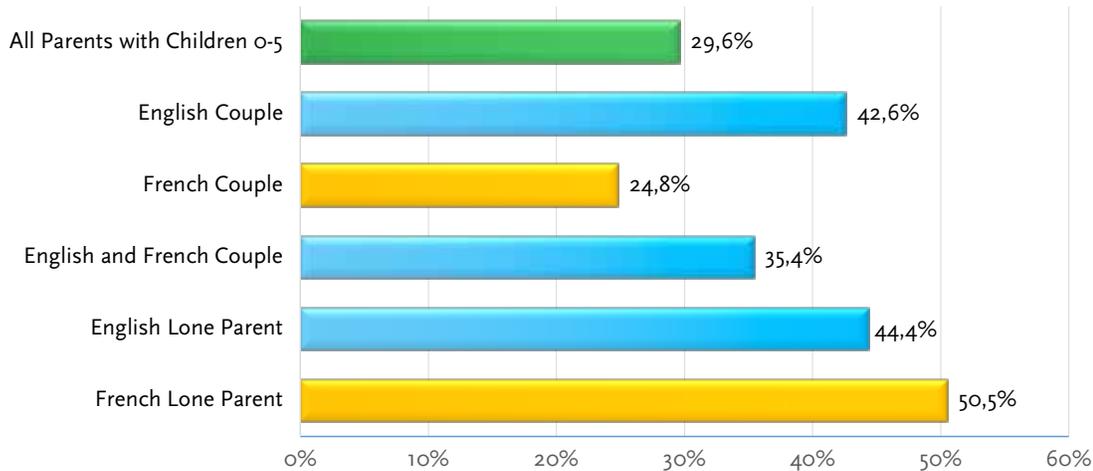
## **A VERY HIGH PROPORTION IS UNEMPLOYED:**

Among those parents in English-speaking couples, 30.2% were unemployed (among French-speaking couples it was 7.6%). Within mixed couples, those with one English-speaking parent and one French-speaking parent, 11.6% of parents with children 0 to 5 were unemployed.

## **INCOME LEVELS ARE IN THE MIDDLE:**

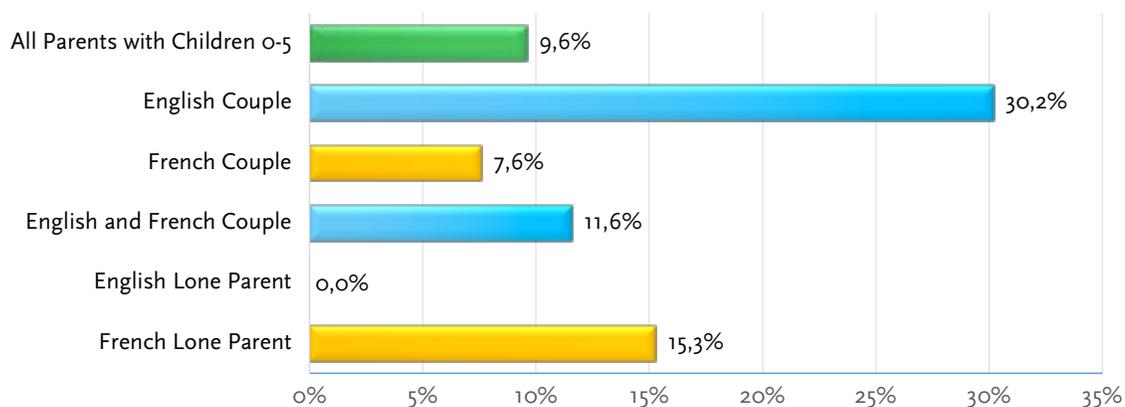
8.5% of English couples have an income under \$20,000 (compared to 12.6% among French couples) and a lower proportion has an income above \$50,000: 31.9% of English couples (compared to 39.1% among French couples).

Parents with Children  
0 to 5 with a **High School  
Diploma or No Degree**  
by Language and Family Structure  
RTS de la Côte-Nord, 2016



Provincial Average for Total Population Aged 15+ : **41,5 %**

Parents with Children  
0 to 5 who were **Unemployed**  
by Language and Family Structure  
RTS de la Côte-Nord, 2016



Provincial Average for Total Population Aged 15+ : **7,2 %**

## In summary.



**1**

The English-speaking population **ON THE NORTH SHORE** is relatively small in number and represents a small proportion of the overall population.

**2**

**THIS MAY MAKE IT MORE CHALLENGING TO OFFER SERVICES** specifically for English-speaking children and their parents, when numbers make it difficult to justify investments in resources.

**3**

**STATISTICS POINT TO A VULNERABLE POPULATION OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**, most likely in need of such services: a higher proportion of English-speaking children (compared to Francophones and to Anglophones in Quebec as a whole) lives in a single-parent family, and the rates of vulnerability among kindergarten children are high.

**4**

**THERE ARE FEW SERVICES FOR THE POPULATION** of English-speaking children on the NSCA territory.

**5**

**MANY OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN** on the territory identify as Aboriginal.

# Important issues TO CONSIDER



## ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN

A significant percentage of English-speaking children come from vulnerable socio-economic family environments. They are also faced with additional challenges of learning a second language and feeling a greater sense of isolation. Communication skills and social and emotional development could be, in many cases, priority protective factors to reinforce. Other important protective factors include motor skill development and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle.

## ENGLISH-SPEAKING FAMILIES

Due to language, cultural, and economic barriers, English-speaking families in low-income situations may experience additional social isolation and discrimination. They may also be unaware and even reluctant to participate in programs and services provided to them. Culturally and linguistically adapted outreach strategies that engage English-speaking parents and help them adopt positive parenting attitudes and practices is an important consideration.

## ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES

English-speaking communities lack accessible programs and services for children from birth to age five. These communities must be mobilized and proactive in supporting their service providers. Some examples include increasing the availability of child care services in English particularly for vulnerable families and ensuring English families can access child protection services in their language.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE EARLY YEARS

**A comprehensive approach to supporting our little ones involves long-term planning right from pregnancy until early adulthood. These early life transitions as indicated in the following infographic are crucial in developing a solid foundation lasting a lifetime.**

# Importance of the early years

Early childhood - the best time for taking action



## Promoting an ecosystemic approach

An ecosystemic approach promotes the development of strategies that reinforce protective factors that have a positive impact on the child, family and community. It encourages collaboration between partners and engages them in a joint planning process from pregnancy to early adulthood.



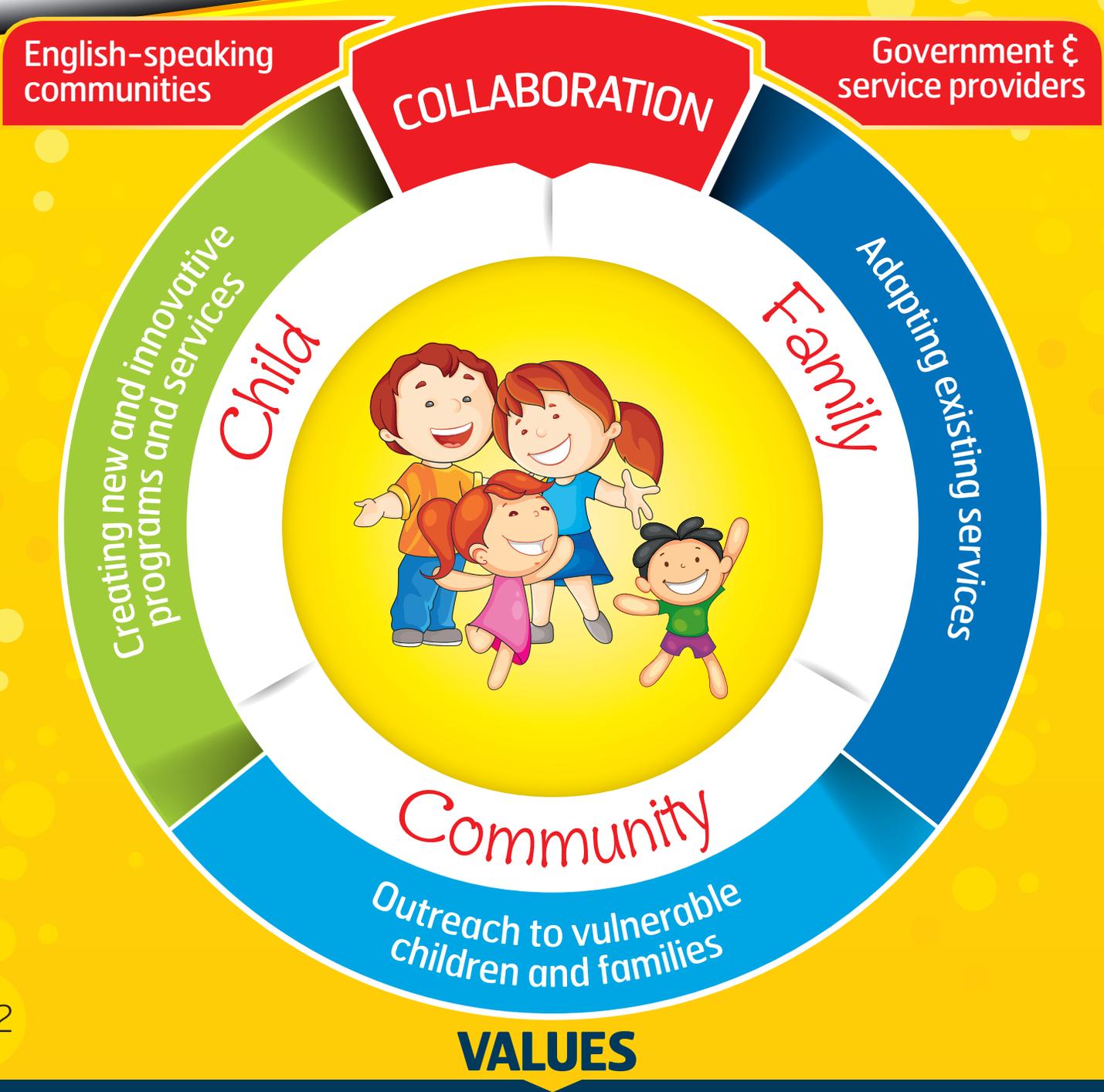
“Protective factors serve to shield children from difficulties. The more present they are in the life of a child, the better the child’s chances of developing their full potential, sustaining a positive educational experience, and fully assuming their parenting role as adults.”\*

## PROTECTIVE FACTORS BY SYSTEM\*\*

CHILD	FAMILY	COMMUNITY
<p><b>ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS</b></p> <p>Ability to understand and express oneself through oral language</p> <p>Early reading and writing skills</p>	<p><b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL</b></p> <p>Family income</p> <p>Level of educational achievement</p>	<p><b>NEIGHBOURHOOD'S PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS</b></p> <p>Availability of safe green spaces</p> <p>Housing quality (hygiene and affordability)</p> <p>Social cohesion</p> <p>Social capital</p>
<p><b>COGNITIVE SKILLS</b></p> <p>Sustained attention ability/memory</p> <p>Early numeracy skills</p> <p>General knowledge</p>	<p><b>PARENTS' ATTITUDES</b></p> <p>Sense of being competent (self-esteem/confidence)</p> <p>Parents' aspirations with regard to their child's educational achievement</p> <p>Parents' association with reading and writing</p>	<p><b>ACCESSIBILITY AND QUALITY OF SERVICES</b></p> <p>Daycare services</p> <p>Health-care services</p> <p>Social services</p> <p>Community services</p> <p>Public transportation</p>
<p><b>SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS</b></p> <p>Peer relationships</p> <p>Sense of being competent/self-esteem</p>	<p><b>PARENTING PRACTICES</b></p> <p>Quality of emotional and cognitive parent-child interactions</p> <p>Exposure to a variety of educational experiences</p> <p>Parent-child reading habits (early start, frequency)</p>	<p><b>MOBILIZATION ON BEHALF OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION</b></p> <p>Collaboration between child, family, and intervention practitioners</p> <p>Intervention practitioners' beliefs</p> <p>The community's involvement (alliances/partnerships)</p>
<p><b>PHYSICAL SKILLS AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS</b></p> <p>Fine and gross motor skills</p> <p>Diet</p> <p>Sleep</p> <p>Physical activities</p>		

\* Source: Taken from the Ecosystemic Partnership Approach guide – a handbook intended for local groups of partners by *Avenir d'enfants*.

\*\* Source: Taken directly from [www.agirtot.org](http://www.agirtot.org)



# BRIGHT BEGINNINGS Framework



## **COLLABORATION BETWEEN ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES, GOVERNMENTS, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS**

The Bright Beginnings framework promotes collaboration between English-speaking communities, governments, and service providers. This collaboration fosters increased dialogue and understanding of the issues and challenges facing English-speaking children and families. It also promotes the development of a trusting relationship between the principal actors to facilitate positive change.

## **LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF EXISTING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

Once a strong base of collaboration is established, this framework encourages English-speaking communities to support government and service providers in adapting existing programs and services (linguistically and culturally) to better meet the needs of English-speaking children and families.

## **CREATION OF NEW AND INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

In some cases, creating new and innovative programs and services designed to effectively meet the unique needs of English-speaking children and families may be a preferred or only option. Pilot projects can be an effective way to test and evaluate the effectiveness of a new approach!

## **OUTREACH TO VULNERABLE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES**

English-speaking communities are well positioned to support government and service providers by reaching out to vulnerable English-speaking children and families and helping them connect with programs and services.

# Values

English community organizations have three key values in common that will foster the greatest impact on the overall health and well-being of English-speaking children and families.

## **PRESERVING IDENTITY**

Receiving essential child and family-based programs and services that are linguistically and culturally adapted not only enables participants to fully benefit from them, but also helps to preserve their identity (acceptance of who they are), which is critical to their overall mental health and well-being.

## **SOCIAL INCLUSION**

Many English-speaking children and families feel socially excluded. This can be mitigated by creating greater understanding and acceptance of differences.

## **EQUITY**

Minority communities must be active participants in supporting governments and service providers to ensure an equitable distribution of programs and services available to them.

# Initiatives underway

In 2019, the following initiatives were underway.

## TRAVELLING LITERACY BAGS

Many studies have shown that early childhood literacy supports academic success and social adaptation. It encourages families to be part of the child's educational process and early exposure to reading is fundamental.

These travelling bags contain thematic books, games, activities and informational pamphlets for parents. Some topics covered include: brushing teeth, bedtime routines, sharing, healthy eating, exercise, vocabulary and math, which enhances a child's learning. The books encourage children to engage in literacy learning at home with their families and is an excellent way to have positive interactions and develop a love of books. We provide a two-week loan of books and literacy kits for children aged 0 – 5 years with all materials being housed in a back-pack. The travelling literacy bags are available in Baie-Comeau, Sept-Iles and Port Cartier



## STORY TIME

This family reading program is geared for children aged 0 – 5 years old. With a facilitator/reader on hand, parents and children participate in reading books together and creating crafts, which assists in developing the child's literacy skills making for a more self-assured child. The workshops are usually thematic and include healthy snacks and refreshments.



## TODDLER TIME

Children and parents come together once a month to participate in reading, making crafts and playing games. The activities are thematic in nature and allow the children to be creative, interact with other children and develop a sense of community and belonging. The activities strive to develop a child's motor and sensory skills.

## BOOK MUNCHERS

Books, books and more books! The North Shore Community Association promotes the *Book Munchers* program and monitors three book kiosks. These strategically placed kiosks are stocked with books and are available to the community. Take a book, leave a book program allows youth to have free access to shared English language books. Community members are free to take the books and then return them back to the kiosk.





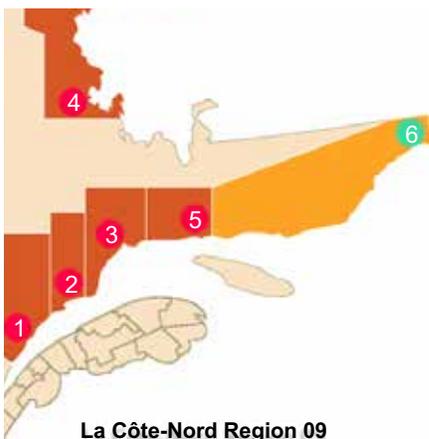
## SCHOOL READINESS KIT

The *School Readiness Kit*, for children 0-8 years, guides parents and young children in the transition from home to school. These kits contain resources needed to assist children to learn more effectively when information is presented in a variety of ways. The kit includes activities that suggest ways to stimulate and equip preschool-aged children. Ideally, a school-aged child will have skills in numeracy, language and literacy, concentration, motor skills, autonomy, and social and emotional integration. The School Readiness Kit is geared to children who are about to make the leap to kindergarten. It shows how much you can do with a book, along with many other valuable tools to prepare them for entry into school.



## BABY BOOK BAG

Studies have shown that reading to babies contributes to the development of their growing brains and gives them a good start towards a lifelong love of reading and good literature. Reading to babies is a way to inspire a love of books from infancy and an important way to grow a baby's vocabulary—first their understanding vocabulary and later their speaking vocabulary. Reading together encourages 'cuddle-time' and bonding. Our *Baby Book Bags* contain books suited for babies (hard-cover, colorful, and with pictures) to develop these skills and also provides resources for parents.



La Côte-Nord Region 09

- 1 M.R.C. Haute-Côte-Nord
- 2 M.R.C. Manicouagan
- 3 M.R.C. Sept-Rivières
- 4 M.R.C. Caniapiscau
- 5 M.R.C. Minganie
- 6 M.R.C. Golf du Saint-Laurent

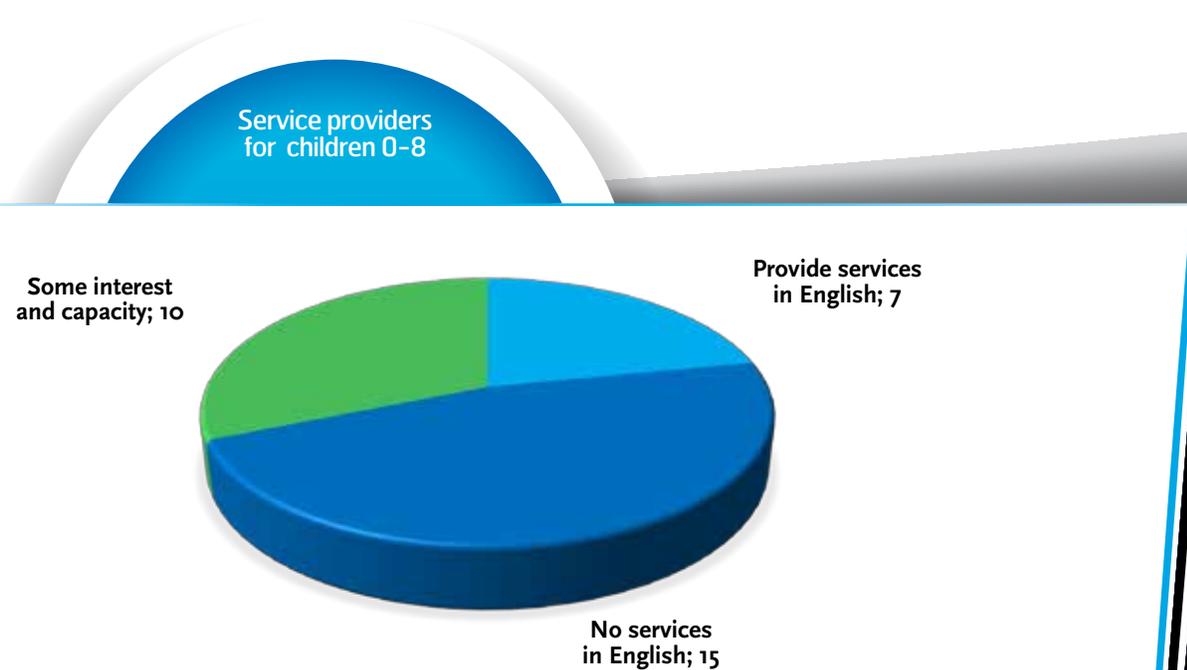
## REGIONAL ANGLOPHONE NETWORK (RAN)

The North Shore Community Association and the Coaster's Association have partnered together to collaborate regionally to identify, share and create a knowledge base and resources for childhood services and programs to support the development and adaptation of services to vulnerable English-speaking children, youth and their families. This collaboration assists in promoting the well-being and educational success of English-speaking children and youth within the region and allows the whole North Shore region's interests to be represented 'as one voice' by sharing information, knowledge and best practices.

# Perspectives from service providers

In order to gather more information on the services available to English-speaking families with young children on the North Shore, NSCA interviewed a total of 32 organizations. These organizations provide services for children aged 0-8 on the territories of the three MRCs. They were asked about the services they provide, whether they currently provide them in English, whether they see a demand for such services in English, and whether they have the capacity to offer them in English, given support to do so.

A total of fifteen organizations said they have no services in English, no demand for any such services and no capacity to offer services in English. There are various reasons for this, mainly related to low English-speaking populations, the importance of Innu language and culture and the ability of English speakers to access services in French. There are seven organizations that currently provide services in English for children aged 0-8 and their families, have a demand for such services, and have the capacity and resources to offer them. There are ten organizations that have some interest, some demand and/or some capacity to serve English-speaking children, but not all three.



The NSCA is pursuing collaborations with the organizations that currently offer services in English and that have some interest, capacity or demand to do so.

# Conclusion

On the whole, although the numbers of English-speaking children on the NSCA territory are relatively small, clearly there is a need for services that support them and their families, given the levels of vulnerability among young children and also the factors that can make it more difficult for their parents. A combination of school-based, community-based, professional and volunteer initiatives could help to fill the gaps and provide the most needed services for children and their families on the territory covered by the NSCA.

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