

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2020 – 2021

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NORTH SHORE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

*Staying the course...*

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2020 – 2021**

To say this year has been hard is an understatement! The pandemic has meant a series of challenges from everyone: health-care workers, seniors, families, workers, parents, children, culture and tourism, services, manufacturing, small and medium-sized businesses, organizations... Communities have had to pull together to make sure the most vulnerable among us are cared for.

### ***Staying the course...***

The North Shore Community Association worked hard this year. Much of our programming moved to virtual platforms, but the NSCA adjusted our services and programs to continue providing activities and support as before—including in community development, partnership building, arts and culture, health and social services, seniors' programming, intergenerational activities, youth, education, and early childhood and literacy initiatives.

The NSCA had many successes despite the challenges that arose. We remain dedicated to serving, representing, and instilling pride in the English-speaking communities of Québec's North Shore, and to providing resources, facilitating community initiatives, supporting access to services, developing partnerships, and increasing our visibility within our communities.

Let's stay healthy and stay connected: as our communities begin the road to recovery, we will stay the course.

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## A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

Thank you for joining us as we look back in review of 2020–2021. During this period of uncertainty, we have been comforted, encouraged and humbled by the outpouring of generosity from our community.

Remarkable individuals, organizations, community groups have all stepped up to support each other in the form of meals, donations, time, volunteer services and staff stepping up to fill the gaps. Your support has been a lifeline to us and the communities we serve.

Most organizations around the world had to become creative in conducting business when the COVID-19 global pandemic took hold in March 2020, and the NSCA was no exception.

***Your support has been a lifeline***

In June 2020, we relocated our head office in Baie-Comeau to better serve our community members. Our office staff assisted in coordinating vaccination schedules for our seniors and maintained outreach services to senior shut-ins as well as respite care. From early childhood initiatives, seniors' social activities, and youth employability initiatives to mental health support, the staff and volunteers were kept busy, and our population was kept informed, healthy, and active.

We wouldn't have been able to keep progressing and expanding without staff and volunteers working in synergy. Thank you all for your kindness and hard work!

*Cathy Larivière, Chair*  
North Shore Community Association

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cathy Larivière	Chair
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Marcella Beaudoin	Director
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Jackie Bizeau	Director
Ryan Miller	Youth Director

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Eveline Audy	Executive Assistant
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Annie Lafrenière	Coordinator & Communications
Hélène Bélanger	Project Coordinator
Charlene Lavalée	Coordinator / Senior Wellness
Julie Harvey	Liaison Agent
Jane Shattler	Senior Outreach
Chantal Gilbert	Coordinator
Louise Mansbridge	Senior Outreach
Mallory Stonehill	Coordinator

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## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND VOLUNTEERS

### **MARC DESLAURIERS COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AWARD: MARILYN DUREPOS**

The award is bestowed to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the community and a significant contribution to the vitality of the English-speaking community of the North Shore. Recipients provide strong, active leadership and commitment as active volunteers.

This year's recipient is Marilyn Durepos of Baie-Comeau. Marilyn is a team player for many community initiatives and often volunteers for community-based events, whether with the NSCA, at school or at the church. She has contributed for many years with the educational sector and most importantly to the youth of the North Shore in her role as a parent commissioner with Eastern Shores School Board.

### **NORTH SHORE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION STUDENT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT BURSARY**

The award recognizes the contributions of students who make a difference in their community. This year's bursary was awarded to Jacob Perreault, who graduated from Baie-Comeau High School and who chose to pursue his studies at the Cégep de Baie-Comeau. Congratulations, Jacob, and best wishes in your future endeavours.

*Strong, active leadership*

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

### **CENTRE INTÉGRÉ DE SANTÉ ET DE SERVICES SOCIAUX (CISSS) HEALTH PROMOTION WORKSHOPS**

Most of the planned public health information workshops were put on hold this year due to COVID-19, though the NSCA has maintained its partnership with the CISSS Côte-Nord. A new initiative this year saw the NSCA coordinate and facilitate an accessible, informal activity with CISSS employees to help support the McGill Language Training project. The NSCA continues to disseminate and promote relevant CISSS information to keep North Shore communities informed.

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## **CENTRE D'ACTION BÉNÉVOLE (CAB)**

This continuing partnership initiative makes documentation in English available to seniors. The NSCA continues to translate CAB's monthly Meals On Wheels menu for the English-speaking population. The Community Liaison Agent in the Sept-Îles office assists in the coordination of registering seniors for this program. In addition, this year, the NSCA translated CAB's promotional information pamphlet into English and had 150 pamphlets printed to make them available for our English-speaking population.

## **MRCs OF MANICOUAGAN AND SEPT-RIVIÈRES SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT TABLES**

The NSCA was invited to sit at these tables to assist in providing necessary resources for the mobilization and consultation of local stakeholders to promote a collective and comprehensive action of local communities that have an impact on the quality of life and living conditions for our citizens. Some of the areas covered are related to health, education, community, housing, and social and economic development.

### ***Collective and comprehensive action***

## **COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK (CHSSN)**

In partnership with the NSCA, the CHSSN continues to connect communities and community members by offering support, training, and resources through virtual interactive videoconferences or Zoom online meetings on a variety of health topics. The information sessions are delivered by qualified health professions. This year, we hosted seven CHEP sessions, on topics such as depression, mental and emotional health, end-of-life options, and eating well and staying active during the pandemic.

## **DROITS ET RECOURS EN SANTÉ MENTALE (DRSM SEPT-ÎLES)**

In conjunction with the NSCA, the Community Learning Centre (CLC) and the Community Development Agent provided emotional health awareness workshops to the students at Flemming Elementary School and Queen Elizabeth High School. These workshops were very well attended, with an average of 25 students per session.

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## **CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW & ST. GEORGE (BAIE-COMEAU)**

The church maintains its affiliation with the NSCA to provide a key venue for various activities. The venue is a great location, with all the facilities necessary to carry out many of our wellness events.

This year, pre-pandemic, some of our seniors' wellness activities and community gatherings were held in the church hall, such as social get-togethers for bingo, a traditional turkey dinner, and a lasagna supper, much to the delight of our 50+ wellness community members.

## ***Quality of life and living conditions***

### **EASTERN SHORES SCHOOL BOARD SCHOOLS**

#### **BAIE-COMEAU HIGH SCHOOL**

BCHS presented an anti-bullying workshop made possible in part through a donation from the NSCA. The workshop was presented to grades one through four, grades five and six, and secondary students. Alain Pelletier animated the well-attended workshop in theatrical form and went on to discuss the roles of victims, bullies, bystanders, parents, and school staff, and how these roles are related to bullying.

#### **FLEMMING SCHOOL**

Although some events were on hold due to COVID, the children at Flemming School were creative: they designed and delivered Valentine's Day and Saint Patrick's Day cards for our seniors and staff. Our seniors were touched and expressed their gratitude that the children took time to remember them.

Intergenerational events encourage senior participation in mentoring activities, identify volunteer support, and increase senior involvement in community and school activities.

#### **QUEEN ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL**

QEHS hosted an anxiety workshop in December 2020 facilitated by the Clinique Le Marais. This well-



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attended session raised an important topic given the current global social situation.

## **ÉDUCALOI**

The NSCA joined forces with Éducaloi—a non-profit organization that makes the law and the legal rights and responsibilities of Quebecers easy to understand—to promote legal news articles on NSCA’s social media platforms, addressing various legal issues. The NSCA also showcased thirteen legal careers to raise awareness for students looking to pursue a legal career. A booklet listing various legal careers was created and made available to youth and schools. The NSCA collaborated with two MRCs to identify lawyers and notaries able to offer services in English, and a database was created to make this information available to our English-speaking population.

## **PODCASTS**

NSCA’s Development Agent, in a joint effort with the Programs and Communications Coordinator, continue to press forward to provide community news to Baie-Comeau, Fermont, Port-Cartier, and the MRC-Sept-Rivières through biweekly podcasts. If you miss an episode, the digital audio or video files can be accessed through a free subscription, on Facebook, or through the Spreaker Page ([www.spreaker.com/user/11606364](http://www.spreaker.com/user/11606364)).

## ***Information and awareness***

## **NEW PARTNERSHIPS**

New partnerships were forged this year with six community organizations to host mental health and community awareness information sessions and workshops for the English-speaking population: the Centre d’intervention Le Rond-Point, the Clinique interdisciplinaire Le Marais, Seniors Action Outreach (SAQ), ECO-02, Cain LaMarre Law Firm, and Éki-Lib. A diverse range of topics were covered: wills and protection mandates, consumer protection, nutrition, cannabis and its different uses, self-esteem, stress management, ADHD, fraud prevention, ageism, and mental health.

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### **CENTRE D'INTERVENTION LE ROND-POINT**

Le Rond-Point teamed up with the NSCA to deliver a workshop to our seniors on the much-debated topic of cannabis. Seniors walked away with information and insights into the medical uses of cannabis.

### **CLINIQUE INTERDISCIPLINAIRE LE MARAIS**

A new collaboration developed with the NSCA provided workshops and information sessions on self-esteem, stress management and ADHD.

### **CAIN LAMARRE LAW FIRM (Sept-Îles)**

This newly formed partnership provided a well-attended workshop on wills and protection mandates—a very good resource for legal information.

### **SENIORS ACTION OUTREACH (SAQ)**

This initiative reached out to our northern communities to offer an informative virtual workshop on ageism. Ageism is very much in the news as our population ages. Dr. Daphne Nahmiash animated this enlightening workshop and helped raise an awareness on an important topic.

## ***Representing the interests of the North Shore***

### **CENTRE DE JUSTICE DE PROXIMITÉ DE LA CÔTE-NORD**

The Centre de justice de proximité renewed its regional partnership with the NSCA and provided three legal information workshops to the English-speaking communities of the North Shore. Of particular interest were two webinars, on wills and on end-of-life options; both were well attended. A further information workshop on cannabis was equally well-received by the English-speaking population. The CJPCN also took the initiative to translate their Facebook page into English to accommodate the English-speaking population of the North Shore.

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## **COASTERS ASSOCIATION**

Coasters and the NSCA continue to move forward with a regional collaboration plan to regionally identify, share, and create a knowledge base and resources for early childhood services, youth, seniors, and health and social services. The two organizations share best practices, information, and knowledge development, and develop partnerships with other relevant regional organizations and structures to represent the interests of the North Shore, allowing us to speak with one voice. The English-speaking community will benefit from equitably distributed, sustainable resources that contribute to long-term vitality, education, and well-being.

***A forum for dialogue and discussion***

## **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK**

The NSCA is proud to be a founding member of the Regional Development Network, founded in November 2019. This network of regional groups works collaboratively for the socioeconomic development of English-speaking communities across Québec. The group is a forum for dialogue and discussion and supports organizations through research, training, expertise, and coordination to help them reach their development objectives. The RDN also acts on behalf of organizations with those involved in socioeconomic development, including governments, institutions, and organizations.

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# ARTS, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

The NSCA continues to support and promote community arts and cultural events, though this year some were held online, while other events took advantage of the community's increased comfort navigating virtual platforms. These events, such as holiday socials and potlucks, book fairs, book club gatherings, guided tours, and local arts and culture presentations, are promoted through our newsletter, website, and Facebook page.

## **CAPTURING COMMUNITY, ILLUSTRATING IDENTITY**

This year, the NSCA held a photo contest and invited amateur photographers living on the North Shore to take photos promoting regional identity, knowledge engagement, pride, and diversity. The project, "Capturing Community, Illustrating Identity," encouraged many talented photographers to capture the beauty of the region. Two local professional photographers, Francois Trahan and Kathleen Moleski, collaborated on the project and provided workshops. The photos were showcased and some were eventually put into the NSCA's first calendar to continue exhibiting the photographers and their photos. Forty-seven photos were selected and made into a mural to continue promoting the diversity and vitality of our region; an online banner version of the mural was also created.

*Regional identity, pride, and diversity*

## **A CHRISTMAS MEMORY**

The NSCA created a children's Christmas audio book entitled *A Christmas Memory*. This book reveals young artistic creativity and expressions through drawings and illustrations by grade-three and -four students. In addition to fostering the creativity and engagement of children in the community, the story contributed to the knowledge and preservation of the history of the local English-speaking community: the book is based on a true story of how Santa Claus arrived to Baie-Comeau in the late 1940s... by airplane! Those who remember the event and those who'd like to discover its artistic rendition can find the audio book on our website.

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## **CHRISTMAS CAKE-MAKING**

COVID-19 couldn't keep our 50+ members from celebrating the Christmas season: the Baie Comeau 50+ Wellness members got together for their annual traditional Christmas cake-making on December 1, 2020. Once again, a special thank you to Walter Bisson for sharing his traditional old-fashioned recipe and taking the time to explain the process. Everyone looks forward to sampling the batter, socializing, and distributing the cake to family and friends...if the cake lasts that long! A repeat had already been requested for the upcoming year.

## **TRADITIONAL TURKEY DINNER**

Before health restrictions came into place, both the Baie-Comeau and Sept-Îles wellness groups were able to partake in a traditional turkey dinner with all the fixings—a wonderful look at our heritage, which led to much reminiscing about Christmases past and different cultural traditions.

## ***A look at our heritage***

## **BOOK CLUB**

The NSCA's monthly literary and social offerings allow participating community members to discuss a current book and to choose new topics, authors, and writing styles for the next reading period. This initiative continues to attract community members from both the French- and English-language communities. The NSCA has book clubs operating in Baie-Comeau and Port-Cartier.

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# HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

## **CISSS CÔTE-NORD REGIONAL ACCESS PROGRAM**

The program is a key aspect of health and social services representation in English. We have strengthened and increased partnership initiatives with CISSS de la Côte-Nord. The NSCA provides support on English translations of essential documents for committee members, and analyzes compiled results from community surveys to ensure committee members have access to English documents, knowledge and awareness of needs of English-speaking users, which inform the English-speaking population of access to health and social services and help identify areas to be improved.

## **REGIONAL INTERPRETER AND ACCOMPANIMENT SERVICE**

We have solidified a key relationship by supporting the CISSS in retaining a permanent Regional Interpreter and Accompaniment agent, in a program fully managed under the regional CISSS: formerly a project-based initiative, the program is now permanent. The agent is located at the Sept-Îles hospital and is available to assist the English-speaking population with document translation, accompaniment to medical appointments, and navigation through the hospital. This critical service is frequently used, and every year has seen an increase in demand.

***Strengthened partnership initiatives***

## **AIRE OUVERTE**

Managed by the CISSS and in partnership with the NSCA, this program provides easy access to health services for young people between the ages of twelve and twenty-five so that they can have their needs met without the wait and paperwork at a regular CISSS. Professionals from the public and community health sectors are accessible and their services more visible with the youth demographic.

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## **ADAPTATION PROJECT**

This program helps the English-speaking population navigate the healthcare system. The NSCA provides support to the Regional Interpreter/Customer Service Agent in the dissemination of information to the English-speaking community so they have an increased awareness of services available to them and how to access these services.

## **COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM (CHEP)**

The NSCA, in partnership with the CHSSN, continues to offer access to services and information on health-related topics via interactive video conferences and virtual Zoom meetings in English. CHSSN delivered seven health education sessions presented by qualified health professionals on a range of topics.

Six additional community organizations provided workshops and information sessions on topics of interest to seniors, including wills and protection mandates, cannabis and its different uses, ageism, end-of-life options, fraud prevention, consumer protection, and nutrition. A total of 144 participants attended the ten sessions offered by partner organizations.

## ***Supporting well-being***

## **YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT**

Many teens and their families live through mental health issues. Loneliness, stress, anxiety, or mental health crises can affect our way of viewing life. Mental health is a prevalent topic currently, and should be talked about openly. Mental health encompasses many aspects such as self-esteem and its impact on our lives, body image, resiliency, and anxiety; across all of these, one of the major challenges is reaching out to obtain help. The NSCA helps support mental well-being by offering sessions and resource tools for youth and their families. A fridge magnet, wallet-sized resource card, and virtual workshops were offered to assist in coping with mental health.

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# SENIORS

As most programming moved online due to public health restrictions, many demographics struggled to adapt, not least elderly members of our community, many of whom were already facing isolation and a lack of technological fluency.

The NSCA recognized community seniors this year by promoting National Seniors Day, October 1, 2020, on our Facebook page and other social platforms. We hosted a virtual social get-together and had staff deliver approximately 125 senior care activity bags in Baie-Comeau and Sept-Îles, with games, puzzles, word searches, face masks, hand sanitizers, lotion, and lip balm, among other goodies. Our seniors were appreciative of this event that highlighted the infinite value our seniors have in our society.

Upcoming activities and events are posted on the NSCA website and Facebook page.

## RESPIRE SERVICES

Respite services continue to be successfully offered in the MRC Sept-Rivières area. This English-language service provides not only respite care but cognitive stimulation and company to seniors, and supports caregivers who require relief from continuous caregiving. This year, the NSCA provided 465 hours of respite care to 26 clients. This service is made possible with ongoing funding from L'APPUI Côte-Nord.

## *The infinite value of seniors*

## SENIORS' WELLNESS ACTIVITIES

Our 50+ community members were kept busy with new, varied, and interesting activities this year.

Seventy-five wellness activities were delivered in Baie-Comeau, Port-Cartier, and in the MRC Sept-Rivières. Some of these activities included virtual events for social teas, bingos, and even scavenger hunts. Our community members also enjoyed birdhouse building, a walking club, and knitting projects. The NSCA was able to reach out to a greater number of seniors and since fall 2020 has seen a significant increase in seniors participating, especially in the MRC Sept-Rivières, with an average of thirty to thirty-



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five participants spread over a three-day period. In order to help seniors join virtual events, the NSCA purchased iPads, which are loaned out to seniors who do not have access to internet or wifi, making it easier for them to participate in online sessions. Training on how to use the tablets was provided by staff on a one-on-one basis.

### **SENIORS CHECK-IN SERVICE**

This crucial check-in program is now in its fourth year of operations thanks to ongoing funding from the CHSSN. NSCA staff continue to provide services to seniors in the MRC Sept-Rivières, including companionship, conversation, resources, puzzles, books, assistance in obtaining services, and transportation to NSCA social activities, all of which help mitigate social isolation.

## ***Mitigating social isolation***

### **VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS**

“Depression in Older Adults” and “Demystifying End of Life” were two virtual workshops held in 2020–2021 by the L’APPUI Côte-Nord caregiver project. The first, held on June 11, 2020, drew twenty-three participants, and the second, on March 10, 2021, nineteen participants. Jennifer Hobbs Robert, former director of nursing and quality at Jeffery Hale – St. Brigid’s Hospital in Québec City, was the presenter for the two sessions.

Caregivers and participants receive copies of the *Caregiver Newsletter Côte-Nord* supplied by L’APPUI Côte-Nord and an information package containing informational leaflets.

The annual caregiver conference is an initiative of the North Shore Community Association in collaboration with the CHSSN and Health Canada’s Official Languages Contribution Program 2018–2023, and is funded by L’APPUI Côte-Nord.

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# INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Although COVID-19 put a hold on intergenerational events, seniors were present in the lives of community children and youth in other ways. Children from Flemming Elementary School created Saint Patrick’s Day and Easter cards for our seniors; the cards were then distributed to seniors by NSCA staff. These cards were very much appreciated, and some seniors kept them as “treasures”—reminders that they had not been forgotten on these special occasions, even at a time when direct social contacts were drastically reduced, for our own good.

Intergenerational activities also notably allow the NSCA to establish a list of occasional volunteers for school-based intergenerational events. Acting as a community partner to support intergenerational events encourages participation in mentoring activities, identifies volunteer support, and increases volunteer involvement in community and school activities.

## *Intergenerational events*

# YOUTH AND EDUCATION

## **CAREER FAIR FOR STUDENTS**

This popular and helpful annual event was held differently and creatively this year. Public health restrictions meant that North Shore students were not able to attend the career fair in Sept-Îles, normally held in March of each year at Queen Elizabeth High School.

Students explored career paths through pre-recorded career capsules. NSCA interviewed English-speaking professionals working in a range of fields on the North Shore, highlighting the experience and training required to enter a particular career. The recorded capsules were made available to orientation classes in North Shore secondary schools to help students decide which path may be of interest to them, and podcasts were broadcast throughout the year. NSCA career orientation initiatives are in part a strategy of the McGill Retention Project and the Secrétariat à la jeunesse employability project.

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## **MCGILL BURSARY PROGRAM**

The NSCA awarded two bursaries to students from the MRC Sept-Rivières. The recipients for 2020–2021 are studying toward a bachelor of social work at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi and a bachelor of science in kinesiology at the University of Prince Edward Island respectively.

The McGill Bursary Program continues to provide a financial incentive (a bursary allocation) to bilingual students from selected Québec regions with appropriate English and French language skills pursuing full-time studies in health and social services in a government-recognized educational institution.

Students who are awarded bursaries must commit to staying in a selected Québec region following the successful completion of their studies to work for a minimum of one year in a public health and social services institution or related organization.

## ***Employability for English-speaking youth***

### **YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMS**

The NSCA continues to pursue several initiatives to target employability for English-speaking North Shore youth ages fifteen to thirty-five as well as supporting the programs offered by the Carrefours jeunesse emploi Duplessis and Manicouagan; these programs are made possible through funding from the Secrétariat à la jeunesse. The NSCA has been working on implementing an employability plan to help youth prepare for and seek employment, and connecting them to various education and career paths. Thanks to these programs, service providers, academic institutions, and employers can adapt their services and offerings to better meet the employment needs of English-speaking youth.

In collaboration with the Regional Individual Employment and Services and Support (RIESS), the NSCA continues to address the challenges faced by the English-speaking communities of the North Shore. Job offers are obtained from a daily search of over fifty job sites and includes Facebook posts on training workshops, job shadowing offers, and new programs offered by educational institutions.

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# EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES

## **BRIGHT BEGINNINGS PROGRAM**

Through the various components of the Bright Beginnings program, the NSCA researched and compiled information and activities to enhance early childhood literacy. Early childhood literacy supports academic success and social adaptation, and encourages families to be a part of their child's educational process. We continue to have an increase in requests for the school readiness kits, baby book bags, travelling literacy bags, and access to speech and language specialists. Additional resources were expanded, including the creation of the social skills kit and a games lending library.

## **SOCIAL SKILLS KIT**

The NSCA, in collaboration with Manicouagan On s'Attache (MOA), created these resource kits, which contain various tools and games for children and families to enjoy while fostering self-regulation and emotional awareness. There are four games and an information packet to help families develop social skills. The kits are loaned out to families and are available through the NSCA office free of charge.

*Enhancing early childhood literacy*

## **GAMES LENDING LIBRARY**

Through the games lending library initiative, eight fun games were purchased to develop a lending library to help build the foundation of good language development for babies and toddlers from birth to five years old. These age-appropriate games help develop pronunciation and articulation, fine motor ability, hand-eye coordination, shape recognition, phonetics and sound recognition, communication through images, and introduction to reading and writing.

## **SCHOOL READINESS KITS**

School readiness kits include activities to prepare children for school and suggest ways to stimulate

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preschool-age children and equip them to develop skills in numeracy, language and literacy, concentration, motor skills, autonomy, and social and emotional integration. This year, nineteen kits were distributed to families.

The kits, which also contain resources and information for parents, are available free through the NSCA office.

### **BABY BOOK BAGS**

Twenty bags containing books suited for babies (colourful board books) to develop early reading skills and provide parents with resources were distributed to families.

Studies have shown that reading to babies contributes to the development of their growing brains and provides a good start toward lifelong reading. Reading helps develop language and speech patterns, improves a child's vocabulary, and teaches infants how stories are put together.

## ***Resources and information for parents***

### **BABY SIGN LANGUAGE**

A supplementary special workshop on baby sign language was developed and delivered. The three-part workshop was provided by NSCA staff certified in baby sign language. Baby sign language can be used with babies and toddlers, but also with children with special needs or language deficiencies, and is an excellent way to facilitate communication.

### **SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT VIDEOCONFERENCES**

Speech and language development workshops were offered on five occasions in Baie-Comeau, Sept-Îles and Port-Cartier. The workshops were animated by qualified, specialized, trained language and speech development professionals who provided answers to questions on literacy, language development, and bilingual education.

Discussions also explored the best strategies for joint reading, what to look for when picking a book,

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and tips to help support homework and school progress within a bilingual context. A total of forty-nine participants took part in the five sessions offered.

### **TODDLER TIME**

One of our most popular early childhood programs is still growing, and was on track this year again—another year filled with activities for children ages two to five years. Monthly Toddler Time activities include storytelling, songs, games, and crafts to stimulate young minds and encourage overall development, child literacy skills, socialization, and self-confidence in young children, while games help develop motor and sensory skills.

The nine monthly themed activities this year included Welcome Back from Summer/Hello Friends, Father’s Day Special, Let’s Celebrate, Mom, Making Special Easter Eggs, Welcome Back Friends, Halloween, Sleep, Christmas Time, Valentine’s Day, and Saint Patrick’s Day. The sessions remain popular and well attended.

## ***Enhancing early childhood literacy***

### **TRAVELLING LITERACY BAGS**

This book bag program lives on as a resource to help parents, families, and educators. Early childhood literacy matters, and to encourage and foster a love of reading, the NSCA creates backpacks containing thematic books, games, activities, and informational pamphlets for parents. Topics range from tooth-brushing, bedtime routines, sharing, healthy eating, exercise, vocabulary, and math skills. The books encourage children to engage in literacy learning at home with their families. The book bags, which are developed for children from birth to five years, are circulated on two-week loans, and are available in Baie-Comeau, Sept-Îles, and Port-Cartier.

### **STORY TIME**

Story time was offered again this year, with sessions held in partnership with the Bibliothèque le Manuscrit in Port-Cartier. The monthly family reading program for children from birth to eight years are

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led by a facilitator who reads books together with parents and children and create crafts to support literacy skills and help make children more self-assured.

The story time gatherings also allow young families to exchange during workshops with themes such as welcoming back friends after summer break, Halloween, space exploration, Christmas, and family literacy.

The expanded partnerships with the Bibliothèque Louis-Ange-Santerre in Sept-Îles and Baie-Comeau High School meant we were able to hold three events—free activities made available to everyone regardless of their language background.

## ***Tools and resources for parents***

### **HEALTHY EARLY YEARS**

HEY is a new initiative undertaken in 2020 to identify early childhood development needs in the birth-to-eight-years age group and to develop strategies, tools, resources and programs for parents and caregivers to help children achieve optimal psychosocial well-being. The NSCA created a Family Mental Health Tool Kit as a resource for families, with information on attachment, play, healthy eating and nutrition, family stress, signs and triggers of emotional turmoil, and communicating emotions, along with a QR code to access other relevant resources and videos. We also hosted webinars dealing with various topics such as self-esteem, social skills, resiliency, coping skills and emotions.

Mental health was another area covered this year and we offered informational webinars and workshops on topics including depression, anxiety, body image, self-esteem, ADHD, and dependencies. Workshops were promoted through social media platforms. A wallet-sized card with a QR scan code to access relevant videos on different mental health topics was created and made available to youth. The card fits perfectly into a youth's cellphone sleeve, so it is readily accessible. A fridge magnet listing available mental health topics was also developed and distributed to youth as a resource tool.



*Thank you for your support!*