STUDY ON THE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS OF THE CENTRES SCOLAIRES ET COMMUNAUTAIRES

Final Report

Canada

**FINAL REPORT
STUDY ON THE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS
OF THE CENTRES SCOLAIRES ET COMMUNAUTAIRES
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Centres scolaires et communautaires (CSCs) are institutions in minority Francophone communities across Canada that offer both school and community activities.

The purpose of this report is to identify the factors determining the success of such centres and to recommend actions the Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH) could take to support these initiatives, in accordance with its strategic objectives and targeted results within its management and accountability framework.

The research methodology involved an analysis of CSC financial statements for the last five years; interviews with 34 community component directors, school principals and school board senior management; and visits to seven CSC.

Status of CSCs

In 2002, there were19 CSC, defined as institutions combining a school with services and facilities for community activities. These CSCs serve approximately 4500 students. One centre will open its doors in 2004, and four feasibility studies are currently in progress.

In most cases, the CSC is housed in a building that belongs to a school board or provincial government department. This considerably reduces the level of financial risk associated with the operation of the building. The community component's financial position is stable and balanced for all CSCs except one. All CSCs have memorandums of understanding or building management agreements.

Major Strengths of CSCs

All those interviewed were knowledgeable about the issues. The two major strengths cited were:

The CSC offers access to specialized facilities that a school or a community organization alone could not provide such as a larger gymnasium, an auditorium, high-quality audiovisual equipment, a large cafeteria and multi-purpose meeting rooms.

The CSC is a very important focal point within the community. The centres are often located in areas where the Francophone population is in a small minority and has fewer French-language services. The CSC can become a key institution in contributing to the vitality of the community in such cases. Most CSCs have seen significant increases in enrolment since their foundation.

Challenges for CSCs

Four challenges for the CSC were identified:

- **Operating budgets**. In the 1990s, there were significant budget cuts to the community component, seriously affecting their programming ability. While most CSCs were able to diversify their revenue sources, this new revenue is targeted for specific projects. There is a lack of sufficient revenues to foster a dynamic relationship between the school and the community components. As a result, such a relationship does not exist in some centres.

- **Institutional relations.** The community and school components have equal voices, but differ in size and culture. The relationship between these two partners does not develop automatically despite their sharing the same building. Management and service delivery structures, legislative requirements, and accountability terms and conditions differ greatly from the school component to the community component.

- **Interpersonal relationship between managers**. All school principals and community centre directors, who stated in the interviews that their centres operate smoothly, share a common vision for the institution. Comments such as: "our common vision makes the difference" or "united, we are strong" or "I know that the daycare centre keeps my school going" were expressed.

- **Common, shared CSC mandate**. The managers of the two components re-affirmed the need for a common understanding of the CSC mandate. This shared understanding is crucial for a dynamic relationship between the school and community components.

Conditions for the success of CSCs

Three conditions leading to the success of CSCs identified were:

- A common, shared vision of the CSC mandate to foster its integration into the community.
- Stable community finances, from diversified and permanent sources, to foster a dynamic relationship between the school and community components.
- Solid management and communications mechanisms between the school and community components.

Recommendations

(1): That PCH continue to provide ad hoc support for building the community component of CSCs, under the following conditions:

- That project developers clearly state the joint mission of the institution and its objectives.
- That project developers establish and adopt representation and management mechanisms providing a framework for ensuring co-operation between the school and community components.
- That the school component assumes responsibility for operation of the whole building.

(2): In provinces where there are both a French-language denominational system and a French-language public system exist, that PCH require a feasibility study for the community component. This study would explicitly state the terms and conditions for participation of the two school systems, and also show how the CSC would mobilize all the community's major strengths and foster the vitality of the community as a whole.

(3): That PCH provide financial assistance to the community component of CSCs in order to encourage, maintain and strengthen the dynamic relationship between the school and community components.

(4): That PCH implement terms and conditions designed to support various types of institutions fostering the vitality of communities – in addition to the CSC – under the following conditions:

- That the community component identifies one or more partners with significant financial capability, which could assume responsibility for the building's long-term operations.

- That project developers meet PCH requirements in conducting their feasibility study and in developing their business plans.

(5): That PCH proposes guidelines on the information to be gathered in feasibility studies for the establishment of CSCs or other types of centres.

A model feasibility study would include at least the following topics:

1. Demographic status of the community in question.
2. French-language services currently offered to the community.
3. Community need for services.
4. Discrepancy between existing services and those identified by the community as priorities.
5. Potential partners for a centre such as school system(s), various government agencies, private sector or other.
6. Various service-delivery models (CSC, multi-service centre, single-window service centre) that would foster the vitality of communities and/or linguistic duality.
7. Choice of a model and its justification.
8. Management model for the building.
9. Model for managing operations and programming that will foster a dynamic relationship between the partners and foster community vitality.
10. Business plan for the building.
11. Income and expenses associated with community programming.
12. Conclusions.
13. Recommendations.
14. Memorandums of understanding between the partners.

1.   TERMS OF REFERENCE

For more than 20 years, Francophone minority communities have promoted the establishment of CSCs. Since 1982, close to twenty such institutions have been established. The co-operative investment made by such communities, the local school boards, and federal and provincial funding agencies has fostered a new synergy within these communities.

The terms of reference for this research project are:

> *To identify the factors determining the success of CSC in minority Francophone communities, and to recommend actions that the Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH) could take to support these initiatives, in accordance with its strategic objectives and the results targeted in its management and accountability framework.*

Specifically, this research project examined three areas relating to CSCs:

- Current status of CSCs.
- Analysis of the benefits and challenges, in stakeholders' opinions.
- Conclusions and lessons learned.

Finally, the research project led to recommendations on actions that PCH could take in this regard.

2.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Nineteen CSCs were identified and, in August and September 2002, the directors of each sent in audited CSC financial statements for the last five or six years (1996-97 to 2001-02), or for the years of operation if the centre was less than five-years-old. A complete analysis of revenues (sources and levels) and expenses (operations and activities) followed.

In October and November 2002, interviews were held with 34 people, 17 from the community component and 17 from the school component. In most cases, the director of the community

component was also contacted. For some smaller centres, a volunteer on the board of directors was contacted instead. All those interviewed were knowledgeable about the issues. No interviews were conducted at CSCs that had been in operation for less than one year. For the school component, principals that were part of a CSC and, in three cases, a school board senior manager responded. Not all school principals or community component directors were available. In addition to the interviews, seven CSCs were visited.

Analysis of the audited financial statements provided a complete picture of the programming and operating costs of the community component of each CSC. However, since most buildings housing a CSC belong to a school board or a provincial government department, property revenues and expenses were not included. Therefore, it was impossible to analyze the overall financial position of the CSCs.

Limitations of the methodology

The limited resources available for this research project did not allow for validating and cross-checking of comments expressed during the interviews. Nevertheless, it was clear from the interviews that the community directors and school principals had a thorough understanding of their own particular situation, and expressed opinions based on their own CSC experience. A significant number of respondents had more than eight years of experience at their CSC. Only a few respondents were new to their positions. In spite of the inherent subjectivity of any interview process, the resulting trends, observations and conclusions point to the issues facing CSCs and suggest some direction for the future.

3.   CURRENT STATUS OF CSCs

3.1   Existing centres and centres being developed

The CSC concept dates back to 1982. Each CSC is unique and has been shaped by its demographic, educational and political circumstances. A CSC is a building or complex of buildings housing a school (Kindergarten to Grade 6, or Kindergarten to Grade 12, or Grades 7 to 12), and various community organizations and services.The C*ommission nationale des parents francophones* [National Commission of Francophone Parents] defines[1] a CSC as

> *. . . an institution offering, under the same roof, a homogeneous French-language school and community services and facilities. . . . The CSC is an extension of the concept of the community school. The French-language school is at the*
> *heart of the CSC, which also offers the following educational and other services: preschool services, adult education, library, permanent offices of*
> *Francophone community organizations, a theatre, workshops, health services, Francophone affairs offices.*

The following 19 institutions match this definition.

CENTRES SCOLAIRES ET COMMUNAUTAIRES 2002	
Province	**Centre**
	Centre Ste-Anne - Fredericton

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[1] **CNPF**, *Trousse d'information sur l'article 23 et le mouvement des parents francophones au Canada* [Information kit on Section 23 and the Movement of Francophone Parents in Canada], undated. (Published in late 1991 or in 1992.)

CENTRES SCOLAIRES ET COMMUNAUTAIRES 2002	
Province	**Centre**
New Brunswick	*Centre Beausoleil* - Miramichi
	Centre Samuel de Champlain - Saint John
Prince Edward Island	*Carrefour de l'Ile Saint-Jean* - Charlottetown
	Centre scolaire et communautaire de Summerside
Newfoundland and Labrador	*Centre Ste-Anne* - Grand'Terre, Lourdes
Nova Scotia	*Le Carrefour du Havre* - Dartmouth
	L'Étoile de l'Acadie - Sydney
Ontario	*Le Pavois culturel* - Longlac
	Le Centre Desloges - London
	Le Centre social et culturel Frontenac - Kingston
	Le Centre scolaire et communautaire Notre Place - Mississauga
Saskatchewan	*Le Centre scolaire et communautaire de Prince-Albert*
	Le Carrefour des plaines - Regina
Alberta	*Le Centre culturel et L'École Beauséjour* - Plamondon
	Le Centre culturel et L'École du Sommet - St-Paul
	Le Centre scolaire et communautaire Boréal - Fort McMurray
	La Cité des Rocheuses - Calgary
	Le Centre scolaire et communautaire Centralta - Legal

The research indicates that four CSC implementation studies are in progress or have been completed for locations in: the western part of Prince Edward Island; Hamilton and Pembroke, Ontario, and St-Vital, south of Saint-Boniface, Manitoba. The CSC in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, will open in 2004. There are no CSCs in the Yukon, Nunavut or the Northwest Territories. In the 1980s and 1990s, feasibility studies were conducted in British Columbia:

Victoria (two), Prince George and Kelowna. These studies have not led to the establishment of a CSC in that province, although there are some French-language schools operating there as community schools.

3.2   Financial position of CSCs

There is no standard model for the presentation of financial information for CSCs.

In most cases, the land and building belong to a school board or a provincial government department, which rents space to various community organizations. In some centres, the community component owns its own space. In one situation, the community component owns its space in the building, but only up to the outside wall. In all 19 cases, a community organization is responsible for the community component and for the relationship between that component and the school component. This may be an organization already existing at the time the CSC was created or a corporation established specifically for this purpose.

Although the status of each centre is different, some general observations can be made based on the analysis of the audited financial statements for the last five years.

All the CSCs, except one, are doing well financially and their budgets are balanced on the whole.

The level of community programming varies from region to region. For the largest CSC, it is approximately $1.5 million per year. For the smaller CSCs, it is around $50,000 per year. The general level of CSC activities varies between $200,000 and $400,000 annually. However, these data must be used with caution. At some centres, the financial statements show all the revenues and expenses for the host organization and for all the centre's activities. In other statements, only the income and revenues relating to the building's operation or to community programming are reflected and do not include all the activities of the community-based tenants using the centre.

CSCs usually have access to three sources of income: federal programs, in particular those of PCH and Human Resources Development Canada; provincial programs (for rent and some activities), and self-generated income (especially room rentals and admission and registration fees).

The revenues generated from renting space to other community groups or to the school component derive from a number of federal programs, including the Support for Official Language Communities Program and the Official Languages in Education Program, or from a federal/ provincial/territorial agreement on official languages. Where there are cost-sharing agreements, the provincial governments invest their share. For most CSCs, a federal official languages program is the major direct or indirect source of revenue. There is a high level of dependency on these programs.

In general, the income generated by community programming activities, apart from the rental of rooms, accounts for 10% to 20% of total CSC revenues. These revenues come from activity registration fees, some membership fees, and bingo or other fund-raising activities. As to the only centre in financial difficulty, 80% of its revenues are self-generated. This centre is in serious difficulty because it has less access to government funding than other CSCs. This is paradoxical, because among all the CSCs studied, this centre has the highest proportion of self-generated income. This unique situation suggests what may be the impact to the community component if funding from various sources is reduced.

The financial statements show the amount spent annually for building maintenance and the reserves set aside for that purpose. The interviews confirmed that the physical facilities of all centres are in good condition and are well maintained.

An analysis of the financial statements and the interviews also reveals that the level of activities at CSCs is on the rise, but that the type of activity is changing. All CSCs had to reduce their activities as a result of government cutbacks from 1995 to 1998. A number of CSCs changed their activities during that period. They offered fewer cultural and community activities that were traditionally free-of-charge and instituted new services (e.g. community access centre, or an employability centre) with new revenues obtained from HRDC or Industry Canada. Other CSCs increased the rental fees for their rooms, which was controversial in some locations and led to a decline in Francophone attendance at those centres. Some centres are moving toward offering government services to their community as single-window service centres. This transition within the CSCs is not yet complete.

On the whole, the proportion of expenses allocated to salaries are stable or clearly declining, while the general level of activities is increasing. The interviews confirmed that CSC employees, like those in the school systems and government agencies, are working harder or longer hours.

3.3 Management and co-ordination mechanisms

The CSCs have developed various management and co-ordination mechanisms between the school and the community components.

A large number of centres have memorandums of understanding setting out rental terms, control procedures, operating mechanisms, and so forth. Some centres have management committees that develop operating policies for the buildings and co-ordinate various components of the school and community programs. At other centres, the school principal is on the board of directors for the community organization responsible for the community component. Still other centres have adopted an informal approach where school principals and the community component management communicate regularly to co-ordinate matters.

In some cases, there is no co-ordination mechanism between the school component and the community component, and there is little communication between the two components, except as regards the use of the shared premises.

4.   STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF CSCs

CSCs with Web sites (see Appendix A) describe the centres' complete activities program. Some are very well designed and are even interactive, enabling the local community to see when certain rooms are available, for example.

The purpose of this research project was not to review the benefits of CSCs, nor to describe their activities, but rather to determine **why** the centres run smoothly or not, in the opinion of community component directors and school principals. Therefore, respondents were asked to describe their relationship with the other CSC component. The next step was to identify the factors that either contributed to the success of the project or prevented it (see interview questionnaire in Appendix B).

4.1   Major strengths of CSCs

The interviews confirmed the major strengths of the CSCs and their contribution to the vitality of their respective communities. All the respondents unanimously said that the CSC has a lot to offer, for both the school and the community. The benefits mentioned most often are:

- The CSC offers access to special facilities that a school or a community organization alone could not offer. Respondents identified specific facilities in particular: a larger gymnasium, auditorium, high-quality audiovisual equipment, large cafeteria and multi-purpose meeting rooms.

- The CSC is an important focal point in the community.

- In a number of cases, school principals pointed out that they there had been significant increase in enrolment because the school was part of a larger complex. The enrolment at the 19 CSCs is currently about 4500 students. Some schools have doubled their enrolment since the centre was founded. Some Casks have expanded their premises once since they opened, and are now considering a second expansion.

The level of enrolment and the volume of community activities have increased to such an extent in some centres that the limited physical space is preventing any future development. This clearly illustrates the appeal of a CSC.

The research parameters did not include a detailed analysis of the impact of the community component on the community. Some CSCs maintain current data on registration and participation of the institution's member groups in various activities. The directors of some centres emphasized the high number of Francophones reached by community activities.

One well-known fact is that some CSCs are home to daycare centres whose enrolment increases every year. The daycare facilities at some centres receive up to 200 children, and this is a good sign according to management. At present, some CSCs are examining the federal government's early childhood initiatives, which in a variety of ways could further contribute to the development of their own community.

All school and community respondents who regard their CSCs as a success unequivocally stated that the centre allows both the school and community components to offer a much greater range of community services because they are in the same complex. In these cases, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

All respondents also stated that without the CSC, their minority community would have missed significant development opportunities. What is particularly striking is that these CSCs were in regions where Francophones were in a very small minority, i.e. in communities that were weak in

many respects. The school principals and community component directors said that the CSC is a key institution that made it possible to change directions and breathe new life into their community.

4.2 Challenges of CSCs

In some cases, the school principal and community director of the same CSC stated independently that their centre is not yet a success. They indicated that the relationship between the two components is unequal and at times frustrating as the rough spots have not yet been smoothed over. These respondents said the benefit of having better facilities does not compensate for the difficulties encountered. Some managers said they regret the initiative, while others admitted that they would gladly withdraw their institution from the centre if that were possible.

In order to gain a better understanding of what is causing the difficulties, a second round of interviews was conducted. These revealed four key challenges that confront all CSCs.

4.2.1 Challenges relating to operating budgets

French-language schools in minority communities are now part of systems managed by Francophones. These are provincial systems or large school boards with large budgets. The funding they receive is based on the number of students. A school system does not have to make its facilities cost-effective because the funding formulas are (usually) sufficient to cover all the expenses of operating the school buildings.

On the other hand, the community component does not have access to guaranteed subsidies. Every year, it must submit applications to various funding agencies and other sources, first of all to ensure its survival, and then to be able to offer services to the community.

The rental of building space is one source of revenue for the community component. A number of respondents stated that feasibility studies had shown how this kind of rental could help the community component balance its budget. At some centres, the shared rooms that can generate net revenue are handed over to the community component to help it balance its budget.

This unequal budget situation between the two components has resulted in significant irritants at some CSCs. These irritants relate specifically to the rental of the gymnasium. For example, some centres rent out the gymnasium for weddings and other social events, booking reservations up to a year in advance. If the high school's basketball team finishes first in the league that year, the school has to host the final tournament. It can be very frustrating for the students and staff involved if there is a scheduling conflict because the gymnasium is already rented out.

This kind of problem may seem relatively minor to an outside observer. Considering that the cafeteria and other shared premises are also rented out, it becomes a major irritant for a school that is used to operating with complete independence within its own walls.

The other budget challenge concerns the cultural and community services that the community component offers to the school component. The budget cutbacks of the 1990s forced community groups to substantially reduce the cultural and social services they offered to their community and to the school, and in some cases, to eliminate them. Cultural programming is offered on ad hoc basis, depending upon whether or not certain grants or projects are approved. Therefore, it is difficult for the community component to plan its activities a full year in advance.

In contrast, the school's annual programming is set at the beginning of the year and published in the school calendar.

The inability of the community component to plan all its activities on an annual basis is another significant irritant that affects the relationship between the two components. The management at those centres currently operating smoothly referred to the "hollow years" in the 1990s, when the community component had to change course significantly in order to diversify its sources of revenue. A national meeting of CSCs in 1996 revealed that a several centres had seen their revenues drop by 35% at that time
(http://www.nald.ca/whatnewf/recon.htm).

The interviews and analysis of the financial statements show that in most cases, the budget situation of the community component has stabilized. Groups have identified new sources of project revenue, and have reached levels that allow for better planning of activities from year to year. Nevertheless, the community component continues to invest a significant amount of effort looking for funding. This energy is not being directed to improving the working relationship between the school component and the community component.

4.2.2   Challenges relating to the relationship between institutional partners

A school cannot exist in a state of uncertainty. Since it deals with children and adolescents, any school must be stable and able to plan events. On the other hand, the community component lives with the uncertainty of never being able to plan its operations more than a year in advance. Often, the planning horizon is even shorter.

The school is part of a sophisticated educational system, run by elected representatives who are accountable to their constituents (in most provinces and territories), and managed by professionals who hold the relevant degrees and are supported by highly qualified staff.

The community component is run by volunteers who give their time and are accountable at its annual general meeting, and is managed by a very small group of individuals, who are required to perform multiple roles.

A school functions at two speeds: full stop during vacations and full speed at all other times of the year. There is no slow time for a school. However, the community component has several speeds, depending of the abilities of volunteers and employees and according to the grants that are obtained.

It is already clear that while the CSC partners are unequal in terms of size and operations, they often have an equal voice in its management.

All these factors help to explain why the relationship between the school and community components of a CSC does not develop automatically, simply because the two are under the same roof. At some centres, the school principals and community directors independently admitted that there is little communication between the two components, and virtually no dynamic relationship between them. The community groups and the school are located within in the same building, but do not work together. To use an analogy, these people are living in a condominium and not in a housing co-operative.

In some cases, the inherent difficulties of the two systems were exacerbated by the advent of school governance in the late 1990s. This is an unforeseen consequence of this success. Some school principals said that since obtaining governance, they do not need the community component as much in order to offer high quality French-language services to their students. Before governance, their French-language school had fewer resources at its disposal. With governance, the school has more financial resources, and receives better services from its school system, which is now governed by Francophones. This increased capacity has made the school more independent from the surrounding community. According to these respondents, their school is now self-sufficient, which was not necessarily so prior to school governance.

The community component directors of these CSCs have noticed this subtle change and feel that the school does not need their services as much. These respondents also noted that the school system obtained governance at the same time as the community component saw budget cuts. The combination of these two factors has distanced the community component from the school component at some CSCs. In these cases, the pendulum has not swung back. Some community component directors stated that one of their greatest challenges continues to be to convince the school that it needs the community component.

In other centres, school governance led to a new awareness. Here, school principals stated that obtaining governance led to the recognition of the full development potential of a closer partnership between the school and the community. In these centres, the director of the community component and the school principal work closely together to increase the French-language services available in their community as much as possible. At other centres, the school component absorbs more than its full share of the operating costs for the shared spaces, because of the perceived benefits for its schools. The school principals and community directors of these CSCs said, independently of one another, that their component could not function as well without the other.

In the centres that described themselves as operating smoothly, the school principals and community components directors described how they invested the time required to foster a good working relationship. They do not take it for granted that the mere fact of being Francophones under the same roof is enough to build a strong institution. These centres have adopted various formal and informal means, varying from centre to centre, to foster their relationship.

For example, some CSCs have created management committees, meeting every two weeks. Other management committees meet less frequently on a formal basis, but the principals and directors communicate with each other often, on a regular basis. In one centre, the project developers built a single room for the school and community staff. In another, all school and community staff meets at the beginning of the year to get to know each other and to discuss activities they can jointly conduct.

These managers said that they must always be vigilant and work on the relationship between the two institutions, in order to ensure a dynamic relationship between the school and community components.

4.2.3   Challenges relating to the interpersonal relations between managers

The interviews pointed up the major impact that school principals and community component directors have on the development of the CSCs.

The school principals and community directors of all centres that described themselves as operating effectively shared certain characteristics. These managers had quite notable technical skills and management abilities. They had successfully identified and recruited varied and complementary human resources in order to serve their clientele more effectively, and had found the necessary financial resources to provide services.

At those centres not operating as smoothly, according to the two managers involved, it is apparent that technical skills and management abilities are not enough in themselves. The missing ingredient is a vision for the centre.

All the school principals and community component directors of the smoothly operating CSCs, made individual statements during in the interviews such as: "our shared vision makes the difference," or "united, we are strong," and "I know that the daycare centre keeps my school going."

These managers shared a common vision of the importance of their CSC to the vitality of their community. They described their personal efforts to make the centre run smoothly as a whole and to minimize irritants. For example, some community component directors serve on school boards, and some school principals serve on the boards of directors of the community components. Others regularly meet and discuss avenues for co-operation.

In all these cases, the vision shared by the mangers helps put irritants into perspective and develop a real will to resolve them for the greater good of the centre as a whole, not just for one component. These managers also encourage their staff to act in the same way. This culture, which seeks the greatest good for the whole, appears to be deeply rooted in these centres. However, the managers acknowledged that the situation is fragile.

4.2.4   Challenges relating to the common, shared mandate of the CSC

The managers who stated that their CSC was a success had established efficient operating mechanisms. However, they said that success does not depend only on the quality of these mechanisms, but on having a clear, shared understanding of the CSC's mandate. They made statements such as: "for me, the community component or the school component (as the case may be) is a full partner in my everyday life," or "there is a positive interdependency between the two parties," or "the centre fosters the community's vitality."

In such centres, the managers are very familiar with the broader community, can cite statistics relating to the community as a whole, and can describe the centre's impact on their community. These people state that their projects are important to the community.

The managers who said that their centre was not running as well said that there was no common, shared understanding of the mandate of the CSC as a whole. For these centres, co-operation is limited to sharing the premises and a few joint activities during peak times of the year. The managers in question said that people have directed a lot of effort to the physical structure of the building, but that the complex has no soul.

Some of the comments most frequently heard in interviews with the managers of such centres were: "a community approach should be developed for the building as a whole"; "there is a problem somewhere that I have not yet identified," and "we have not yet developed a collective life, we do not see ourselves as partners."

The managers who participated in the design of these centres confirmed that there was little discussion initially about the spirit required at the CSC, the values that would bring the two components together, and the shared mandate that people wanted for the institution. People seem to have concentrated their efforts more on obtaining the necessary funds to build the complex. As one manager noted, "we concentrated on the bricks, not on the heart and soul."

5.   CONCLUSIONS: SUCCESS FACTORS FOR CSCs

The interviews conducted for this research project highlighted three specific factors that contribute to the success of the *CSC*.

5.1   The need for a common CSC vision to foster its integration into the community

A CSC is a partnership project between a school and community organizations or, in one case in Ontario, between two schools (one public and one Catholic) and community organizations. The objective of this partnership is to create an institution that will act as a dynamic force fostering community vitality. To serve this role, the institution must be fully integrated into the community.

Every partnership has its difficulties. Any relationship between partners also involves various issues for each of the partners, and each issue entails pros and cons. In their daily operations, all CSCs experience successful and harmonious relationships, as well as disagreements, difficulties and tensions.

Based on this study, it can be concluded that one of the most important factors for the success of a CSC in Francophone and Acadian communities is the development and adoption of a common, shared vision of the institution's mandate. Without this common vision, differences and tension seem to predominate, leading to a breakdown of communication and reducing efforts to co-operate.

Therefore, in establishing new centres, stakeholders must first determine why the community and the school want to create this institution. This question must be discussed in detail by both school and community project proponents. The vision emerging from this discussion must be frequently reiterated and conveyed from manager to manager and from board of directors to board of directors. This common vision must transcend the individuals currently holding positions, reflect the heart of the community as a whole, and take root in both the school component and the community component.

5.2 The need for stable community financial foundations, from diversified and permanent sources, that foster a dynamic relationship between the school and community components

From the research, it can be concluded that the school component, consisting of the school boards or the provincial government departments, is largely responsible for the operational stability of the buildings that house the CSCs. In many situations, the school component is the sole owner of the site, and leases space to the community component. As owner, the school component is responsible for the maintenance of the physical assets. This relationship is formalized through long-term memorandums of understanding.

The school component appears to be satisfied with this approach. The greatest risk for the school component would be a shutdown of the community component's operations, as a result of the elimination of grants. Were that to happen, the school component would occupy the entire building. Given the large budgets of the school component and the increasing need for space, this is a calculated risk.

The research shows that for all CSCs, funding of the community component to provide community programming is unstable and uncertain. This is one of the most significant factors preventing CSCs from achieving their full potential. Agencies belonging to the community component receive grants from various government programs enabling them to offer a particular type of programming. These projects are all short-term (12 months for the most part), and the community component must submit applications to various funding agencies on an ongoing basis.

The budget cuts to community organizations in the 1990s have had a significant negative impact on the relationship between the school and community components.

The reaffirmation of the importance of a dynamic relationship between the community and the school within a CSC is the most significant factor identified in the research. The term "reaffirmation" is used because the authors of the CNPF kit (cited above) saw the situation with great clarity when they stated:

The CSC must be seen as an overall concept. If we want to achieve its full potential, the school component and the community component must function

harmoniously together. The activities of each component must complement those of the other, benefit from them and enrich them.

Renting space to the public on an ad hoc basis does not generate the kind of stable, permanent revenue that can allow the community component to offer a range of cultural and social services to the community. At best, these rentals help generate revenue that can reduce the net operating cost of some facilities, including the gymnasium. The research also showed that this ad hoc rental of space to the public could become a major irritant in the relationship between the school and the community. The criterion of cost-effectiveness must not take precedence over community priorities in the choices regarding the use of the premises.

On the basis of the research, it can be concluded that those CSCs that see themselves as a success today all have a diversified and very active community component. They have an annual volume of business varying between a few hundred thousand dollars to more than a million dollars. In some places, community groups have made an effort to reorganize and restructure in order to better serve their community. Some have taken a few years to move in a new direction and identify new sources of revenue other than those from PCH, on which they relied heavily in the past. At these centres, the community component offers a significant number of services to the community and to the school.

For its part, the school benefits from the positive effect that the community component can have on future enrolment. An increase in the school's enrolment in turn benefits the community component by increasing the clientele attending the centre. This creates a positive circle of mutual assistance between the school and the community.

5.3 Sound management and communication mechanisms between the school component and the community component

A CSC is a complex entity, requiring sound management systems. This management is on two levels: the operation of the building, and guidelines for relations between the school and community components.

To meet this need, the great majority of centres have developed memorandums of understanding governing these matters. A number of memorandums have clauses providing for periodic review (every five years, for example).

The negotiation and adoption of effective management memorandums is another factor contributing to the success of CSCs. A number of managers stressed the importance of these tools in ensuring a harmonious relationship between the partners.

In some provinces where there are several CSCs, some school principals pointed out that they did not have guidelines from their school board governing the relationship with the community component of the CSC. Without such guidelines, the quality of the relationship depends on the good will of the specific managers involved.

Another success factor would therefore be the development of guidelines by school boards where there are several CSCs within their area.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Recommendations regarding CSCs

6.1.1 *Seek proper financial support to build the CSC community component*

In the last twenty years, 19 CSCs have been established in Acadian and Francophone communities. In these communities, there are about 700 elementary and secondary schools, with approximately 170 000 students governed by 31 school authorities and some school administrations.[2] (See http://www.ctf-fce.ca/f/notre/francaise/ecoles/avant.htm.)

Setting up a CSC is clearly the exception rather than the rule. In many cases, the establishment of centres was a long and labourious business. Some managers stated that between five and seven years had elapsed between the feasibility study and the centre's opening.

Four potential CSCs are currently being considered. Where school governance is obtained, there will probably be a number of initiatives to develop a CSC in the community in question.

Historically, the financial support provided by PCH allowed community components to meet a large part of their capital costs on an ad hoc basis, depending on the feasibility of the project.

School governance greatly facilitates the establishment of a CSC, particularly when the school sector assumes responsibility for the building's operations as a whole, which is the case for the vast majority of existing CSCs. It is necessary to recognize the real value of this important contribution by school authorities, since such an approach eliminates the risk of failure of a CSC due to financial problems with the building. If the community component is, at some point, unable to pay its share of the operating costs, the school component will incorporate the whole building into its operations. This guarantee was almost impossible to obtain before school governance, and its lack considerably slowed down the establishment of a number of centres.

Feasibility studies carried out for CSCs in the past concluded that the project could not proceed because the community component was unable to assume financial responsibility for its part of the operating costs of the building. Without a partner with considerable financial stability, the risk was too great. The 31 French-language school authorities serving minority official language communities are partners that in most cases have the financial ability to provide for the ongoing operation of the building.

The research leads to the obvious conclusion that the community component will never be able to assume responsibility for its part of the building as far as capital expenses are concerned. It can only offer services to its community through annual grants or, at the very most, projects spread over two or three years. These grants enable the community component to pay its share of the operating cost of the building. In 2002, these costs varied between $8 and $10 per square foot, more or less everywhere in Canada. Analysis of the financial statements shows that some school boards indirectly subsidized the community component by reducing leasing costs or by absorbing a significant share of some of the expenses of renovating the building.

Although this research is not strictly speaking an evaluation of the experience of the CSCs, it can be concluded on the basis of the interviews, that a CSC is or can become a significant institution

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[2] **"School authorities" include school boards, school divisions, boards of education and districts set up to govern French-language schools. Ontario has 12 French-language school boards (in addition to six small school administrations, each managing a school in a remote region). New Brunswick has five French-language school districts, while Alberta has five French-language school boards. There is a French-language school board in each of the other provinces and territories, sometimes called a school division or board of education.**

contributing to community vitality. According to school principals and community component directors, these initiatives should be continued.

Applications for financial support should state the joint mission of the institution, its objectives, and the terms and conditions, and representation and management mechanisms providing for co-operation between the community and school components. This will enable the CSC to better achieve its full potential.

The support provided by PCH in building the community component of CSCs helps defray the costs of the space used exclusively by community groups or clients (offices and service areas, in particular), and of the space shared with the school component (gymnasium, cafeteria, auditorium, reception area, etc.).

Furthermore, to increase the institution's chances of success, the school component must assume responsibility for the building's operation. This means that community groups become the tenants of a building belonging to a school board or other educational authority.

To avoid an uneven partnership, such an approach requires a long-term agreement between the community component and the school component that would set out terms and conditions for access to the building, use of spaces, sublets to other community partners, insurance, maintenance and cleaning costs, etc.

Recommendation 1: That PCH continue to provide ad hoc support for building the community component of CSCs, under the following conditions:
- That project developers clearly state the joint mission of the institution and its objectives.
- That project developers establish and adopt representation and management mechanisms providing a framework for and ensuring co-operation of both the school component and the community component.
- That the school component assumes responsibility for the building's operations as a whole.

6.1.2 *Recognize the special situation where there is both a French-language denominational system and a French-language public system*

A special situation exists in provinces where there is both a public school system and a French-language Catholic school system.

The partnership between the community and school components is more complex in these provinces. In addition to establishing a partnership with the community, one must also be established between the public school component and the Catholic school component. The experience to date shows the potential benefits, but also the difficulties inherent in such co-operation where sections 23 and 93 of the *Constitution of Canada* are juxtaposed.

Francophones in minority communities must find ways of co-operating that maximize the impact of their institutions and services. In the *Arsenault-Cameron* decision, the Supreme Court of Canada acknowledged that minority schools are not only educational institutions, but also serve as community centres that can foster the vitality of the linguistic minority's culture and thus ensure its preservation.

Where there are linguistic minorities, CSCs can offer opportunities for the French-language public and Catholic school systems to find innovative ways of co-operating in order to better serve the whole community and to foster its vitality. In places where the two school boards agree to collaborate on such a project with the community, a CSC must be designed to fully respect the mission, values and independent action of the two school systems.

However, each school system is autonomous, and PCH will not intervene in debates between school systems. PCH's financial contribution to CSCs is for the community component only. In most cases, this initial funding enables the community to prepare a feasibility study and a business plan.

This report might serve to enlighten PCH in this regard, since the Department's support offered to a community will have a significant impact on the two educational systems in question.

Given the considerable influence that CSCs have in attracting and retaining students, as this report indicates, it seems unlikely that one of the two systems would allow the other system to be the only partner school in a CSC, particularly if it has a school in the same territory. The establishment of a CSC along these lines could lead to a significant reduction in students, and even to the school board closing the school not participating in the project. It is foreseeable that such a situation would create upheaval, provoked by the funding to the community provided by PCH.

Some school managers stated that in such a case, they would strongly recommend that their school board take legal action against PCH because under those circumstance, the Department would be supporting one of the school boards to the detriment of the other, through a third party, the local community.

It would appear that the Department of Canadian Heritage could be liable to legal action by a school board that did not participate in the project but would like to do so. Such a project could harm the development and vitality of a community if one of the two boards was forced to close its school or significantly reduce the services available at that school due to a drop in enrolment.

PCH must be very cautious in this regard. Even if a school board decides not to participate in such a project and gives its approval to the other board, PCH cannot decide to support the other unilaterally through the community. A school board cannot revoke the rights of its parents. The rights guaranteed by section 23 of the Charter are the parents' rights, not the school boards' rights. A local parent could take legal action if his or her rights were infringed in this way, notwithstanding any political agreements signed by his or her school board.

In the event that neither school board participated, there is another option available. PCH could decide to support two CSC in a specific place. One of the centres would be linked with the public system and the other with the Catholic system.

This option is impractical for two reasons. Firstly, the costs would be exorbitant. Secondly, the whole purpose of a CSC is to bring together the community's strengths under a single roof. There is thus an irreconcilable contradiction in such an approach, especially for small communities.

This particular situation merits further consideration. Given the impact and issues identified here, it seems clear that in provinces where there is a public system and a Catholic system in the same territory, PCH cannot support a community's application for the establishment of a CSC – if only one of the two school boards participates in the project. In such situations, the community must invite both boards to participate in the project. Such collaboration may take several forms. If such co-operation is not possible, the Department of Canadian Heritage will have to explore other avenues than the establishment of a CSC to foster the vitality of this community (see Recommendation 4 below).

Recommendation 2: In provinces where there is a French-language denominational system and a French-language public system in the same area, that PCH demand the feasibility study for the community component confirm the terms and conditions for participation of the two school systems, and also show how the CSC will mobilize all the community's strengths and foster the vitality of the whole community**.**

6.1.3   Make funding available to foster a dynamic relationship between the school and community components

The presence or absence of a dynamic relationship between the school and community components is the most important factor contributing to the success of a CSC identified in this study. When such a dynamic relationship exists, CSCs develop in accordance with the original vision of the concept, become major focal points in the community and make a very significant contribution to the community's vitality.

The creation and maintenance of this dynamic relationship requires that resources be contributed by both the community and school components. The school component already has the necessary resources in its budgets and structures. The community component needs some additional resources, beyond those for its current operations, so that it can more effectively cultivate this dynamic relationship between the two.

CSCs are built in regions where communities are weaker and not as well served in terms of French-language services, because that is where there is the greatest need. The authors of the CNPF kit noted in this regard: "The CSC is not a desirable option where the community already has well-established infrastructures. In that case, the centre would only be in competition with those institutions…." However, since CSCs have been built in regions where the need is greater, the opportunities for generating the required additional resources locally are limited.

These additional resources are needed to strengthen the foundations of the community component, and allow both it and the school component to work together to implement activities supporting a dynamic relationship between them. These activities would include:

- Enrichment of the school component by the community.
- Early recruitment.
- Retention of students.
- Use of the school as a tool for outreach to the local community.
- Use of the local community as an agent for strengthening French culture in the school.

These funds should also make it possible for CSCs, whether in a particular province and throughout the country, to exchange information and share best practices.

The conditions and criteria for funding the dynamic relationship between the school and community components should be more clearly spelled out. PCH could explore various options, such as including this support in federal-provincial agreements on minority-language education and agreements on the promotion of official languages.

Recommendation 3: That PCH provide financial support to the CSC community component in order to encourage, maintain and strengthen the dynamic relationship between the school and community components.

6.2   Recommendation about other types of centres

In 1982, the concept of the CSC was the only model for multi-sector co-operation that had a realistic chance of success. Since the school was the heart of the community, it was necessary to find ways of strengthening this institution and increasing its ties with the community. The research work by Rodrigue Landry and Réal Allard of the University of Moncton is clear on this point. Few government agencies offered any opportunities for co-operation at that time.

The full implementation of section 41 of the *Official Languages Act* will certainly stimulate the exploration of new types of partnerships, fostering greater synergy with community organizations. Government changes in the late 1990s are also leading to new modes of co-operation between government and communities that were beyond consideration in 1982.

Apart from CSC as such, some communities are now exploring options for establishing centres that could provide services to their respective populations.

Some provinces and regions are seriously exploring the possibility of creating single-window centres providing various government services (federal, provincial, municipal) or multi-service community centres offering various services including government services in French. Initiatives in the health and early childhood fields suggest that local health centres will be established in the future, and that other services, including daycare centres, could be provided there also. Employability centres are also becoming important in certain regions. The economic sector is just beginning to take off. The immigration sector is beginning to take shape, and it can be expected that services for welcoming and integrating Francophone immigrants into certain communities will soon be provided.

In some places, project developers will be increasingly looking to locate these services in the same complex, to create settings that foster community vitality. These centres for community development will accommodate various governmental, para-governmental, community and/or private services offered in the French language. They also will be Francophone in spirit and culture, and will serve as focal points for extending the influence of French culture within the community.

The significant partners of these centres will not necessarily be the school systems. Instead, other government levels or departments, and even the private sector, could partner with the community in establishing these centres. Because of PCH's mandate and mission, it would be entirely appropriate for it to take various measures to support these initiatives.

Some of these new approaches could take the form of direct administrative agreements with community proponents. Others could be in the form of clauses in federal, provincial and territorial agreements.

Recommendation 4: That PCH implement terms and conditions designed to support various types of institutions fostering community vitality – in addition to the CSC – in accordance with the following conditions:

- That the community component identifies one or more partners with significant financial capability that could assume responsibility for the building's long-term operations.

- That the project developers meet PCH requirements in conducting their feasibility study and in developing their business plans.

6.3   Recommendation concerning feasibility studies

All current CSCs have conducted feasibility studies on which their funding was based. In the interviews conducted, the managers occasionally referred to these studies and some of them were reviewed for this report.

It appears that there has never been any guidelines on the information to be collected nor the issues to be explored in a feasibility study by the community.

A number of managers stressed that their CSC feasibility study was too focused on fixed assets and operating costs, and did not sufficiently examine the factors that foster a dynamic relationship between the school and community components. Consequently, the CSC was built, but the dynamic relationship between the two components was not adequately developed.

Since PCH contributes a large part of the funding for community capital projects, it would be appropriate for PCH to propose a feasibility study model for project developers for any planned centre to foster community vitality, whether a CSC or some other type. These feasibility studies should also be an integral part of funding applications.

Recommendation 5: That PCH proposes guidelines on the information to be gathered in conducting feasibility studies for the establishment of CSCs or other centres designed to foster community vitality.

A model feasibility study should cover at least the following topics:

1. Demographic status of the targeted community.
2. French-language services currently offered to the community.
3. Community needs for services.
4. Discrepancy between existing services and the service needs and priorities identified by the community.
5. Potential partners of a centre to foster community vitality: school system(s), government agencies at various levels, private sector, other.
6. Various service delivery models (CSC, multi-service centre, single window, etc.) fostering community vitality and/or linguistic duality.
7. Choice of a model and justification.
8. Management model for the building.
9. Model for managing operations and programming that will foster a dynamic relationship between the partners and foster community vitality.
10. The business plan for the building.
11. Income and expenses associated with community programming.
12. Conclusions.
13. Recommendations.
14. Memorandums of understanding between the partners.

CONCLUSION

The research indicates that the overall experience of CSCs has been positive. However, all CSCs face challenges relating to:

- the budgets of the community component.
- the institutional relations between partners that have equal voices, but differ in size and culture.
- The interpersonal relations between managers.
- the common, shared mandate of the CSC.

Some centres are able to overcome these challenges more easily than others are.

There are some basic conditions for success:

- A common, shared vision of the CSC mandate by all partners and a deep commitment by managers to that mandate.
- Stable financial foundations for the community component that foster a dynamic relationship between the school and community components.
- Solid management and communications systems.

The advent of school governance and the increase in services offered in French resulting from the full implementation of section 41 of the *Official Languages Act* are two important factors suggesting that in the future there will be an increase in capital projects rallying community strengths. The school component is an important and substantial partner in these efforts. Other government and private sector organizations also have the potential to become significant partners. It can be expected that other CSCs will be developed in future. It should also be expected that community centres will take various forms, and may be established with the support of partners other than the school component.

APPENDIX A: CSC AND SCHOOL WEB SITES

Directory of French-Language Schools in Canada
http://www.ctf-fce.ca/f/notre/francaise/ecoles/avant.htm

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

La Grand'Terre – *Lourdes*
http://www.francophonie.nfld.net/arco/hir.htm

St-Jean **(opening planned for April 2003) – St. John's**
http://www.francophonie.nfld.net/fpftnl/fapdsj.html

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Carrefour de l'Ile Saint-Jean, *Charlottetown*
http://carrefour.peicaps.org/

Summerside
http://collections.ic.gc.ca/acadiedelile/sum/sum.htm
http://collections.ic.gc.ca/acadiedelile/sum/cen-sco.htm

NOVA SCOTIA

Carrefour du Grand Havre **– Dartmouth,**
http://www.nouvelle-ecosse.net/Clients%20Nouvelle-Ecosse/CCCGH.htm

Étoile de l'Acadie **(no Web site) – Sydney**

NEW BRUNSWICK

Fredericton
http://www.centre-sainte-anne.nb.ca/

Loi sur le Centre*, Sainte-Anne*
http://www.gnb.ca/acts/lois/c-01-1.htm

Miramichi
http://www.francophone.net/carrefour/

Saint John
http://www.arcf-sj.org/infrastructures/CSCSC/cscsc.htm

ONTARIO

Centre culturel Frontenac – *Kingston*
http://www.geocities.com/ccfrontenac/

Longlac (no Web site)

Centre Ste-Famille **(no Web site) – Mississauga**

Centre Desloges **– London**
http://www.ccrlondon.on.ca/centre_communautaire_r%E9gio.html **** link not working**
http://www.acfo-ls.org

SASKATCHEWAN

École Valois **– Prince Albert**
http://www.scfpa.ca/valois.htm (this site includes an annual calendar)

Centre Carrefour des plaines **(no Web site) – Regina**

ALBERTA

French-language schools of Alberta
http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/french/M_12/systeme/frecoles.asp

La Cité des Rocheuses **– Calgary**
http://www.citedesrocheuses.com/index.html

Centre scolaire et communautaire Boréal **– Fort McMurray**
http://www.cex.gouv.qc.ca/saic/francophonie/parten/869.html

École Citadelle **– Legal**
http://www.csrcn.ab.ca/citadelle/accueil.htm
http://www.francalta.ab.ca/central/CSC/ - centre's feasibility study

École du Sommet **– St. Paul**
http://www.cen3.ab.ca/sommet/

École Beauséjour **– Plamondon**
http://www.cen3.ab.ca/beausejour/

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

La Commission nationale des parents francophones **[National Commission of Francophone Parents]**
http://www.cnpf.ca/index.cfm?Repertoire_No=-1007459830&Voir=corporatif

Fédération nationale des conseillères et conseillers scolaires francophones **[National Federation of Francophone School Trustees]**
http://www.fncsf.ca/fncsf/index.htm

ACELF
http://www.acelf.ca/

Analyse politique des centres scolaires et communautaires **[Political analysis of the *centres scolaires et communautaires*]** – Annie Pilote, Laval University, 1999.
http://www.acelf.ca/revue/XXVII/articles/Pilote.html

Pour une pédagogie actualisante et communautarisante en milieu minoritaire francophone **[Towards a current educational approach to developing culture and community in a Francophone minority setting]** – Rodrigue Landry, Moncton University, 2000.
http://www.acelf.ca/publi/crde/articles/10-landry.html

N.B.: Suzanne Moncion, principal of Gabriel Dumont School, London, Ontario, provided access to her an unpublished paper, "Le partenariat : l'avènement des centres scolaires" [Partnership: the advent of *centres scolaires et communautaires*], prepared in late 2002.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

The semi-structured interviews followed a loose format. Depending on the respondents' answers and the centre's circumstances, more time was spent on certain aspects of the questionnaire.

Questions concerning the dynamic character of the centres.

1.   Could you share three success stories from your CSC?

2.   Which services are naturally related to the mandate of the centre? (For example, community access centre, communities on-line, early childhood health services, literacy screening, daycare services, cultural and artistic services, etc.).

3.   What is the appeal of the school for community activities? Vice versa? Is there real synergy between the school and the community components? Does this synergy deserve the additional investment of human and financial resources?

Questions regarding the centres' operations.

4.   How would describe your relationship with the other sector (school or community according to the respondent): Legal? Co-operation? Integration? Dynamic relationship? Etc.?

5.   How are profits generated at your centre?
        5.1 Rental of space: events, community tenants, etc.
        5.2 Public services: daycare centre, library, post office, etc.
        5.3 Commercial activities: shop, bookstore, and government services.

6.   When did you make your last major capital expenditure (building or equipment)? What is the current state of your fixed assets? What are your future requirements?

Concluding questions.

7.   Overall, what are the three most important challenges facing your CSC in the foreseeable future?

8.   Finally, what are the conditions for success of a CSC in your province and region?