

*"A healthy English-speaking community in a secure French-speaking Quebec.
A strong Quebec in a united Canada."*

PRESS RELEASE

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Community, Commitment, Cooperation ***Celebrating our Past. Building our Future.***

QCGN Partners Release Toolkit for Building Leadership in Rural Quebec

Montreal, Gaspé, Low, Netagamou – January 26th, 2010 - Quebec's English-speaking communities face multiple types of isolation and young women in these communities who are emerging as new leaders experience unique challenges that conventionally-designed projects fail to effectively address. "Supporting these young women while contributing to effective community development in the official-language minority context is a complex task," commented Sylvia Martin-Laforge, Director General of the Quebec Community Groups Network, who noted it is challenging to design projects that are structured enough for widespread delivery and efficient implementation, but flexible enough to be relevant across different communities with their unique needs.

"In English-speaking Quebec, with its diverse challenges, isolated rural communities, and lack of cohesion, finding the balance between structure and flexibility is difficult, to say the least," she said.

In March 2009, the QCGN sought to create a project specifically for the context of Quebec's English-speaking communities that could be implemented provincially, while being effective locally. The Building Leadership in Rural Quebec project involved 28 young women across three areas: the Lower North Shore, the Gaspé, and the Outaouais regions. In each location, eight to ten participants formed a collaborative team, working together to effect change in their communities, while learning about community development, leadership, and group dynamics. Twenty-one women acted as mentors and countless community members participated directly and indirectly in this project through donations, volunteering, and providing other support.

The toolkit we are launching today is the result of the documents that were assembled during the process, said Mrs. Martin Laforge, noting the toolkit is aimed at linguistic minorities interested in best practices for rural community development; individuals or groups who want help developing their rural communities; young women wishing to develop their leadership or community development skills; as well as community organizers, project coordinators, and other professionals.

"This could not have been done without the collaboration of provincial and regional partners who worked together in innovative, collaborative, and creative ways to tackle these issues, said Mrs. Martin-Laforge. The program design was constantly adapted to fit emerging needs and to take

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into account the goals of fostering inclusion, empowerment, network development, and skill-building for young women, she explained. The result was a flexible design that incorporates three tiers of learning: Experiential learning; Skill-building workshops and Coaching and mentoring.

"This project has allowed us to connect, but also to understand the Pontiac better," commented Heather Stronach, Executive Director of the Regional Association of West Quebecers, noting the materials that have been produced will continue to be useful for RAWQ. "I was just overwhelmed with the activities and accomplishments," added Ms. Stronach, noting that it is easy to see and feel the sense of commitment the women have to their community and what that means to them. "So it seems to me there's nothing that's going to daunt them based on their commitment, but also as a result of the program."

The Building Leadership in Rural Quebec Toolkit, which is the result of the women's documentation and reflection during the process, is now available on QUESCAN, a new community development website launched by the QCGN in September 2009. Click on the following link to download the [Toolkit](#).

"This project would not have been possible without dynamic and enthusiastic collaboration between multiple partners" concluded QCGN president Robert Donnelly, noting the Quebec Community Groups Network extends its gratitude to Heather Stronach of the Regional Association of West Quebecers ("RAWQ"), Michelle Gagnon of the CLC-St John's, Maria Chatterton and Cathy Brown of the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA), and Ana Osborne, Melody Strickland, and Marie Anderson of the CLC-Netagamiou. The QCGN also thanks Peter MacGibbon and the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation (3ci), Paule Langevin and the Community Learning Centres (CLC) Network, as well as project coordinators Lise Palmer and Brenda Rooney. Finally the QCGN would like to acknowledge funding provided by Status of Women, Canada.

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 32 English-language community organizations across Quebec. Its mission is to identify, explore and address strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of English-speaking Quebec and to encourage dialogue and collaboration among its member organizations, individuals, community groups, institutions and leaders.

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RAWQ is a community-based not-for-profit organization which serves and supports the English-speaking population of West Quebec by fostering an environment in which it can thrive. Its key activities are in education, culture and youth. RAWQ also plays a significant role in advocacy on behalf of the English-speaking community.