



Pan-Canadian Community Development Learning Network Profile of Effective Practice

The Centre d'avancement et de leadership en développement économique communautaire de la Huronie – CALDECH

The Legend of the Lafontaine Wolf

The pioneers of Huronia came from various regions of Ontario and Quebec. Though sharing the French language and Catholic religion, they remained distant on a social level. One day, a wolf of legendary proportions came to the disparate population to change it for all time.

The wolf first appeared in Huronia in the early 1900s. It began its reign of terror by massacring some forty sheep belonging to farmer Colbert Tessier. The farmer tracked down the paw prints.

No doubt about it, he concluded, those are the tracks of big dogs, like the two of François Labatte, the fisherman. Rifle in hand, Colbert went to confront Labatte. He briefly examined the paw prints on Labatte's property, raised his rifle and then shot the two animals point blank.

That same night, Colbert heard a howl that chilled him to the bone: Lafontaine had lost two dogs but gained a wolf. With each new sunset, the wolf haunted the herds. He made no distinction between the rich or poor farmers who had come from Batiscan or Joliette. They all now had something in common: the fear of the wolf.

Enough was enough. Theophile Brunelle, who was blind in one eye, pledged a High Mass of thanksgiving if God helped him kill the wolf. In early September, Theophile spotted the wolf at the far end of his field in the 17th concession. The farmer ran to get his old rifle. Upon his return, the wolf was still there. Theophile

This Profile of Effective Practice is one of fifteen stories examining how innovative, community-based initiatives are using comprehensive approaches to improve social and economic conditions on a local level.

The profiles were created as part of a 2.5-year project of the Canadian CED Network looking at the links between social inclusion and community economic development.

For other profiles, more information on the project and additional resources on social inclusion and the CED, see the notes at the end of this document.

slowly shouldered his rifle and, closing his good eye, pulled the trigger. The force of the shot knocked him to the ground. Miraculously, the wolf also fell, but in his case, never to rise again.

News of the wolf's demise spread quickly and a celebration was held that evening at the Brunelle farm. The following day, the whole community assembled for High Mass offered by Theophile Brunelle. Pastor Beaudoin benefitted from the occasion to consolidate the new solidarity of the settlers. "The hardships caused by the wolf have succeeded in uniting a whole region", he declared solemnly. "Lafontaine has entered a new era. The wolf's presence has helped transform the village into a true community."¹

Huronian: on the Tracks of the Lafontaine Wolf²

The region can boast being the cradle of French civilization in Ontario. In 1610, a young French mediator or interpreter, Étienne Brulé, became the first European to enter the territory Ouendaké - which meant "peninsula" in the language of the native Ouendats. The commercial and military ties between the French and the Ouendats intensified in 1639 with the creation of the mission Sainte-Marie-au-pays-des-Hurons. In 1649, the dispersion of the Ouendats by their rivals, the Iroquois, led to the withdrawal of the French to the city of Quebec. The territory, which remained strictly a passageway, attracted the attention of Governor Simcoe of High Canada at



the beginning of the 1800s because of its strategic potential as a centre for fur trade and as a military base. The first wave of permanent francophone settlers, composed of French Canadian and Metis voyageurs, arrived in 1828 and took the land along the Penetanguishene Bay. Those first-comers came from Drummond Island, which had just been lost to the Americans. Starting in 1840, other French Canadians, encouraged by the Pastor of Penetanguishene, Amable Charest, came in three waves to colonize the north-west lands of Penetanguishene, in particular Lafontaine and then Perkinsfield. The immigrants from Quebec came mainly from Sainte-Geneviève-de-Batiscan, Joliette and the counties of Vaudreuil and Soulanges. The descendants of those first settlers are among the more than 13,000 francophones who inhabit the Simcoe County today. The francophone population

Some hundred years after its legendary apparition in Lafontaine, the wolf reappears time and again to assemble the community. Now in its fourth year, the Festival du loup is a Huronian celebration with music, theater, literary activities, and wolf-howling contests. Thanks to the devoted work of all its partners, the Festival du loup is now the biggest event -- anglophone or francophone -- of the entire township.

Huronian

Current-day Huronia corresponds to the ancient territory inhabited by the Abogirinal Ouendat people (named Hurons by the French at the beginning of the 1600s) and what is today the northern part of Simcoe County. That county includes the city of Barrie at the south, the cities Penetanguishene and Midland, the township of Tiny with the towns of Lafontaine and Perkinsfield in the north, the municipalities of Wasaga Beach and Collingwood to the west and, lastly, Lake Simcoe and the city of Orillia to the east. It is bordered to the north and the west by the emerald waters of the Georgian Bay, which Samuel de Champlain baptized "Mer Douce" in 1615.

in the south of the county was comprised primarily of new settlers, in particular in Barrie, the canton of Essa, as well as the Borden military base. It has grown since the 1980s and represents about half of the Francophonie of the region.

History

The Centre d'avancement et de leadership en développement économique communautaire de la Huronie (CALDECH) works to promote the creation of jobs, to contribute to the establishment of local businesses, to ensure a francophone participation in the economy, to strengthen the community in terms of self-financing, and to offer training and consultation services.

When CALDECH launched its activities in 1998, Huronia had four francophone organizations: Alpha Huronie; La Clé de la Baie (with its cultural centre and its radio community which broadcasted two hours per day); the local office of the Association canadienne française de l'Ontario (ACFO); and the local office of the Collège des Grands Lacs. In addition there were some primary schools and one secondary school.

About CALDECH

The Centre d'avancement et de leadership en développement économique communautaire de la Huronie (CALDECH) has the mandate to create jobs, contribute to the establishment of local businesses, ensure a francophone participation in the economy, strengthen the community's self-financing, and offer training and consultation services.

That was the infrastructure in place in 1998 to promote the community life of francophones of the region. Apart from the region's limited infrastructure, there were also many family "clan disputes" and very little communication among the local organizations.

For CALDECH, the first challenge was thus to assemble the community and to establish good communication among those groups. According to Raymond DesRochers, Executive Director of CALDECH, "We had to start with community development before doing any community economic development." They opted for a common challenge, namely, that of providing the community with an employment resource centre. After many meetings and discussions, the community and its partners gained headway – HRDC financed the centre and has been financing it since. The centre now has accomplished many successes and is the pride of the community.

CALDECH then proposed holding a first assembly of the active members of the community, all community partners, as well as the people of the Borden military base in order to posing certain questions: Where are we in our progression as a francophone community? What are our assets? What can we do to strengthen our community? That first meeting led to the creation of a roundtable of Simcoe County organizations and to a comprehensive planning process that identified the assets, needs, and roles of each organization and partner in the development of the community.

CALDECH initiated a series of consultations with different groups, such as youth and seniors, to better understand their concerns and needs. The process started in Lafontaine, a small community with a very strong francophone identity. The Lafontaine Golden Age Club identified many services which seniors require, in particular an old age home and an activity centre where women could do quilting and leave their work on site. That process of consultation, needs assessment and support for the development of projects distinguishes CALDECH's approach and has made the organization the key player that it is today: a community economic

development corporation, the only one of its kind in francophone Ontario. CALDECH presently manages more than fifty economic initiatives in the region that involve the private sector as well as the community sector.

Activities

i. Capacity Building

CALDECH works with community groups to increase their project management capacities. Its approach consists of accompanying and supporting people with:

- committee work
- incorporation of an organization
- project planning
- how to prepare funding applications
- how to work with the municipality
- how to organize public meetings
- management and chairing meetings... among many other tasks

ii. Marketing Support and Business Development

- budget analysis
- funding applications
- incorporation
- business plan
- marketing plan
- support with administration
- project management
- organizational management

iii. Community Revitalization to Counter Linguistic Assimilation

One of the solutions is job creation in the francophone world for youth and other sectors of the population. That activity is linked to the creation of an infrastructure: when francophones become owners of their infrastructure, they become more visible and credible in the anglophone community and the municipality. That in turn serves as a good model for young people.

iv. Lobbying to Obtain Services in French in the Economic Sector

With government studies as proof, CALDECH has noted that government services in the region do not offer quality services in French, despite the fact that they are supposed to. The lobbying of CALDECH is focused on the needs of the francophone community to obtain services in French.

Participatory and Comprehensive Analysis

CALDECH works in a minority setting that is very rooted but that is also very vulnerable to the assimilating forces that surround it. In order to survive as a distinct community, the francophones of Huronia must seek to preserve those places where they can live their language and culture.

That reality has provided the francophone community of Huronia with a strongly assertive and demanding tradition. In 1979, the community established its own *École secondaire de la Huronie* in Penetanguishene after months of unfruitful efforts to obtain a francophone school in the region of Penetang. Hundreds of organizations, parents and students from throughout Canada (Ontario, Quebec, Acadia and elsewhere) mobilized to help with the creation of the

secondary school of Huronia, also called the "school of resistance." Though the school only existed for one year, it became a symbol of the fight for the development of Franco-Ontarian culture. The conflict was settled in 1982 when the Supreme Court of Ontario rendered a decision in favor of the francophones of Penetanguishene. Following those efforts, the secondary school Le Caron was constructed to respond to the needs of francophones of the region. The Le Caron school celebrated its 25th anniversary from May 20 to 22, 2005.³

Moreover, Huronia is a rural region: the largest city, Barrie, has more than 125,000 inhabitants while most of the other municipalities of the county are rural and have populations of less than 20,000. Thus, as a rural region, Huronia is confronted with a multitude of complex development problems shared by all rural communities of Ontario: dispersed population, limited social, human and financial capital, youth exodus, severe lack of professionals, etc.

That is the reality in which CALDECH evolved and which determined not only its services but also the approach CALDECH adopted to best work with the community. Raymond DesRochers, a community worker strongly anchored in his experience in international development, and his team have infused CALDECH with a spirit of empowerment and a tradition of grassroots work. That approach starts at the point where the people of the community left off, i.e. it takes account of their own experiences and capacities.

Given the demographic reality of the region, CALDECH was never challenged to include various ethnocultural groups. For that reason, it does not have pronounced policies on diversity. However, the organization is guided by the needs of the community, and in the case of Huronia, the main need is to create and conserve spaces to reverse the effect of assimilation by offering activities in French for francophones. Thus, CALDECH implemented practices of inclusion and empowerment to respond to that need. For example, it hires people from the region for its projects, even if those people do not have all the capacities required. And if they are already assimilated in anglophone culture, CALDECH supports them so that they can resume learning French. Thus, CALDECH contributes not only to employment creation and economic development opportunities, it also contributes to strengthening the human and social capital of the region. This constitutes a commitment by CALDECH to strengthen the community and fulfill its mission as an organization.

Outcomes and Evaluation

In 1998, when CALDECH proposed assembling the francophone community of Huronia in order to improve communication, collaboration and to better serve the population, they equipped themselves with tools and mechanisms for viewing the community not only on a global level, but also with respect to all the components that form a vibrant and healthy community: health, environment, culture, social life, and economy (including infrastructure).

The work of CALDECH and its partners contributed to many accomplishments for the francophone community of Huronia. Some of these are:

- An employment resource centre that serves francophones, anglophones and assimilated francophones;
- The creation of a comprehensive plan to guide the long-term development of the francophone region;

- Support with the creation and incorporation of the Villageois, a non-profit organization that aims to establish a retirement home;
- Support with the creation of the Festival du loup, the biggest cultural event (anglophone or francophone) of the township of Tiny;
- Obtaining a license from the CRTC for the community radio station;
- Creation of about a dozen non-profit organizations, each with its own board of directors;
- Founding the Centre écologique de la Mer-Douce;
- More than \$10 million of direct and indirect impact on the economy;
- More than 400 person-years of jobs created in Huronia.



Raymond DesRochers, directeur general of CALDECH, in front of the Villageois

Success Factors and Lessons

According to Raymond DesRochers, almost all the government programs that support projects are harmful. "All the programs, whether they're from Canadian Heritage, Industry Canada... as soon as you say that you are going to finance projects, you will harm the communities. You're feeding them with an eye-dropper. I compare that to a garden. In the spring, there is still a little water in the ground, but a few weeks later, it's dried out. The government may send you some litres of water (a subsidy), and the farmer will take a gulp and water his garden. But that'll be good for only two weeks. What I would prefer is to get help in building a well that will help me get my own supply of water."

Apart from the question of financing, human resources trained in CED is also an issue. The lack of human resources in the CED sector is a general problem. However, in the Franco-Ontarian community this problem is particularly accentuated due to the limited access to training opportunities. As of October 2005, a first Franco-Ontarian post-degree training program in CED will be available at Collège Boréal. However, for the short-term this is still a problem.

The key to success of the revitalization activities in Huronia is the local involvement and leadership. "If we didn't have Rosita DesRoches at the Villageois centre, or Martin Lalonde at the Festival du loup, we would have no success. It requires dedicated, committed people. Those people put energy in the community, and often, with very little recognition other than the satisfaction to have done good work. We would have never gotten so far if it wasn't for them."

"It requires first and above all building a critical mass, and supporting the existing institutions. At the very beginning we had a problem with the community radio station, which operated one or two hours a day. We developed a request to present to the CRTC to operate 24/7. We got the permission.

With that in hand, we had increased credibility. Then, we began to develop loads of projects. Even with a limited budget, we succeeded in generating about fifty projects, while other organizations with bigger budgets had no projects with francophones in our region. Our success contributes to our credibility. Today the municipality consults us in development matters and francophones are no longer marginalized. But now that we've built this critical mass, what do we do with it? We've proven ourselves. But now what strategy do we follow?"

The intervention of a university, such as the University of Ottawa or Laurentian University is also a coveted partnership. "That support would be very useful to help us in developing a diagnosis of the region. The universities have all kinds of studies and resources. However those are not always shared with the communities." According to CALDECH, a partnership with a university would allow them to intensify their work in the community.

"We mustn't forget that the Simcoe County has less than 20,000 francophones, and those are completely divided between the South and the North. The region of Barrie attracts francophones from outside (from Northern Ontario and from Quebec), who are not aware of the French services. When you arrive in Southern Ontario from Timmins, your priority is to have a job, not of live in French. But the francophones from the North have more money than those from the South, who have been there for 200 years and who have a very historical and rooted perspective. So we're talking about two very different communities. If it's possible for a small community to generate \$10M worth of projects, imagine what one could do in bigger places. The key is to set oneself up with a local CED structure. But the potential is enormous. If we set up a long-term plan at CALDECH, it will create a precedent, and we'll see a major change in French Ontario."

Monique Beaudoin

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For more information about CALDECH, go to:

<http://www.huronie.org/CALDECH/caldechindex.htm>

Notes

¹. The legend of the wolf, extracted from the official program of the Festival du loup, July 2005.

Success factors

- A competent and committed staff
- Stable and long-term financing
- Partnerships, someone who plays the unifying role, as well as a meeting place
- Involvement by the community

2. Taken from the website of the Regroupement des organismes du patrimoine franco-ontarien (ROPFO): Francoroute.ca: <http://www.ropfo.ca/cgi-bin/tourisme.pl?mode=region&fiche=223>
3. Taken from the website of the secondary school of Huronia: <http://www.huronie.com/historique.htm>

References

Survey and interview with Raymond DesRochers, director general of CALDECH, November 11, 2004, and July 15, 2005.

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École secondaire de la Huronie, website: <http://www.huronie.com>

More Profiles of Effective Practices and other resources on social inclusion are available at: <http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/en/pages/learningnetwork.asp>

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