



Office of the  
Commissioner of  
Official Languages

Commissariat  
aux langues  
officielles

# Vitality Indicators for Official Language Minority Communities 3: Three Francophone Communities in Western Canada

*Rural Francophone Communities in Saskatchewan*  
February 2010

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The Consortia Development Group conducted this study. Research, drafting and consultation with the communities were carried out from October 2008 to June 2009.

## Consulting Team

Michel Desjardins, President, Consortia Development Group – project manager and senior researcher  
Agathe Gaulin, consultant, Activa Solutions – senior researcher  
Paule Doucet, President, Doucet Associates Inc. – senior researcher  
Marc Johnson, President, SOCIUS Research and Consulting – consultant

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## Steering Committees

### *British Columbia*

Réal Roy, geography professor, University of Victoria, and President of the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique  
Stéphane Audet, outgoing Executive Director, Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique  
Yves Trudel, Executive Director, Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique  
Christine Sotteau, Government Relations and Research Coordinator, Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique  
France-Emmanuelle Joly, Director, Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique

### *Alberta*

François Giroux, Government Liaison Officer, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta  
Yvonne Hébert, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Calgary  
Jean-Claude Jassak, Councillor, Canadian Minority Alberta Council

### *Saskatchewan*

Denis Desgagné, Executive Director, Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise  
Joanne Perreault, Associate Director, Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise  
Josée Bourgoin, Coordinator, Terroir Interpretation and Development, Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise  
Éric Lefol, Research Professional, Institut français, University of Regina



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# Introduction

Since 2005, Canada's *Official Languages Act* has set out increased responsibilities for federal institutions in terms of supporting the vitality of official language communities. Pursuant to the amendments to Part VII of the Act, these institutions have, since then, had to implement positive measures that concretely contribute to the development of communities and the promotion of linguistic duality.

The strengthening of the Act led the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages to more closely study the vitality of official language communities. What are the main factors for this vitality? How can communities act on these factors and assess the changes these measures have had? How can federal institutions contribute to the vitality of official language communities and thus fulfil their obligations under Part VII of the Act? Why is it important for federal institutions to support community assessment of vitality? In short, these are the issues that the Office of the Commissioner wanted to examine.

In a 2006 study entitled *A Sharper View: Evaluating the Vitality of Official Language Minority Communities*,<sup>1</sup> the Office of the Commissioner noted that knowledge regarding vitality and how it can be evaluated varied. This study highlighted the many issues faced by community development stakeholders regarding research on vitality.

To follow up on these observations and recommendations, the Office of the Commissioner launched a multi-year action-research project aimed at better understanding the practical aspects of assessing community vitality. In 2006, it carried out the first phase by studying the vitality of three Francophone communities in urban settings: Winnipeg, Sudbury and Halifax. The following year, it examined three English-speaking communities in Quebec: Québec City, the Eastern Townships and the Lower North Shore.

The third phase of the action-research project, of which this is the summary presentation, consisted of carrying out a study on the vitality of Francophone communities in Western Canada: Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia.

This third phase took place at a time when official language communities and public institutions were better informed and more experienced regarding community development and vitality issues and opportunities.

Nevertheless, even though the concept of community vitality has received considerable attention since 2005, its meaning and uses are still rather vague.<sup>2</sup> In his 2006–2007 annual report, the Commissioner of Official Languages announced some principles to guide federal institutions' efforts to contribute to community vitality and promote linguistic duality within Canadian society. Some of these principles are the following: the need to adopt a proactive, systematic approach and targeted treatment; active participation by citizens; and the implementation of an ongoing process for enhancing the programs and policies according to Part VII. However, nearly five years after the amendments to Part VII of the Act, some federal institutions are still not clear on the definition of community vitality or on the positive measures to adopt in order to contribute to the vitality of official language communities.

## 1. Objectives

The objectives of the third phase of the action-research project were essentially the same as those for the two previous phases, that is:

- Identify success factors and best practices in terms of vitality in the selected communities;
- Express, using a logic model, the aspirations and goals of the communities in the sectors of community activity being studied;
- Identify, from an evaluative standpoint, quantitative and qualitative indicators that could help assess the vitality of official language communities based on their own priorities;

1 Marc L. Johnson and Paule Doucet, *A Sharper View: Evaluating the Vitality of Official Language Minority Communities*, Ottawa, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2006, on-line version ([www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/html/stu\\_etu\\_052006\\_e.php](http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/html/stu_etu_052006_e.php)), consulted October 30, 2009.

2 Marc. L. Johnson, "The Evasive Vitality of Francophone Minority Communities," *Canadian Issues / Thèmes canadiens*, Spring 2008, p. 21-24.

- Provide vitality evaluation tools to official language communities so that they can better plan their activities and development strategies;
- Prepare, for each community studied, a summary report of the assets and needs in the sectors of activity being studied;
- Educate communities and governments about the benefits of evaluating the vitality of official language communities by using recognized indicators.

## 2. Approach and methodology

The Office of the Commissioner wanted to carry out this study in a spirit of collaboration and active participation. For this reason, it consulted representative community associations from the three Western Canadian Francophone communities even before the study began. The associations therefore had the opportunity to learn about the direction and methods of the research project and to comment on them.

### 2.1. Steering committees

With the support of representative community associations, the Office of the Commissioner set up a steering committee in each province at the beginning of the study. These committees, comprised of association leaders, were responsible for guiding and supporting the consultants' work. First, they were asked to select the communities on which the study would focus. They then identified priority community development sectors.

The formation of three steering committees and the scope of their responsibilities are among the unique characteristics of this phase of the action-research project. By choosing such an approach, the Office of the Commissioner wanted to recognize the specificity of the communities and to give them greater flexibility when conducting practical research on vitality.

## 2.2. Communities and priority sectors studied

Although there are Francophones throughout British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan, they only represent a small proportion of the population. Each Francophone community in this vast territory must also deal with its own particular issues.<sup>3</sup> It was therefore not surprising to note some differences in how the steering committees chose to orient the project in their respective province.

### 2.2.1. British Columbia

In British Columbia, in order to represent the various small Francophone communities throughout the province, the steering committee chose to focus on British Columbia's Francophone community as a whole. In 2006, approximately 53,060 people in the province (1.4% of the population) identified French as their first official language spoken.

In this province, the priority sectors of activity chosen for this study were the following: community governance, immigration and migration, participation and community belonging.

### 2.2.2. Alberta

In Alberta, the steering committee chose Calgary's Francophone community for the study. In this urban community, 16,235 people, or 1.5% of Calgary's total population, identified French as their first official language spoken in 2006.

The priority sectors of activity chosen for the Calgary area were the following: community governance, visibility and diversity, communication and government services.

### 2.2.3. Saskatchewan

In Saskatchewan, it was decided that the research project would focus on a rural area: the large region encompassing Duck Lake, St. Louis, Domremy, Hoey and St. Isidore-de-Bellevue. In this region in 2006, approximately 550 people, or 21% of the total population, declared French as their mother tongue.

<sup>3</sup> To learn more about Western Canadian Francophone communities, see the *Francophone and Acadian Community Profiles of Canada*, prepared by the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, available on its Web site at [www.fcfa.ca](http://www.fcfa.ca).



A comprehensive development initiative entitled *Projet du terroir* is currently being carried out in the region. In order to tailor the Office of the Commissioner's study as much as possible to the rural reality in Saskatchewan, the steering committee chose to integrate this research into the *Projet du terroir*. Although it did not establish any priority sectors per se, the discussion in Saskatchewan revolved around four main themes: a collaborative economy, identity and a sense of belonging, demographics and migration, and intercultural dialogue.

### 2.3. Task Forces

In collaboration with members of the steering committees, a task force of 15 to 25 community leaders and key stakeholders was formed in each of the three communities. The task force participants were chosen for their expertise and knowledge in one or more priority sectors, and their work helped inform the content of the study reports.

The task force met twice during the winter of 2009. During the first meeting, participants were introduced to the project and asked to meet in workshops to determine targeted results for each sector. They then worked on a preliminary logic model and were asked to give their opinions on best practices in their community.

During the second meeting, participants first reviewed and refined the logic models. They then chose appropriate indicators to measure the achievement of results and proposed opportunities to integrate these models into community development.

## 3. Findings and conclusions

This study aimed to systematically collect information on three communities that differ in their reach and in the issues that confront them. Despite these differences, it is possible to draw some general conclusions about the experience of Western Canadian Francophone communities.

### 3.1. Study process

Firstly, the study served to mobilize communities around their own particular concerns or themes. In each case, the meetings allowed participants to better know one another, and to reflect and agree on the targeted results that would lead to increased community vitality.

The study also helped develop a profile of priorities and activities that communities would like to put in place in order to achieve concrete results. However, it is up to each community to implement its development plan and to periodically review the priorities set in this report based on time and circumstance. That said, the methodology and tools used in the context of the study may also be useful once it is time to evaluate the achievement of targeted results, and to adjust priorities as required.

The conceptual framework for the study, based on results-based management, proved to be a strong, effective theoretical context for gathering and organizing relevant information, and for giving meaning to the exercise. Western Canadian Francophone communities understood and accepted the proposed conceptual framework right away. This was undoubtedly one of the factors that contributed to the project's success.

The study also identified quantitative and qualitative indicators for the communities. Thus, each community can access basic tools to evaluate its vitality according to the desired results, and to meet its partners' reporting requirements. That being the case, the communities will no doubt need support in order to strengthen their evaluative capacities, in terms of financing as well as human and material resources.

### 3.2. Common points

The study highlighted at least three common realities or sources of concern for the Western Canadian Francophone communities in the study.

#### 3.2.1. Mobility

The first issue has to do with mobility. In the case of Francophone communities in British Columbia and Calgary, the issue mainly concerns the arrival of new Francophones and their integration into existing communities. In these communities, community organizations are concerned with the issue of diversity and the importance of promoting French as a common source of cultural heritage. They are also working to develop their capacities and increase collaboration among organizations in order to welcome, integrate and retain Francophone newcomers. In the case of rural Saskatchewan, efforts are mostly geared toward slowing down, if not reversing,

the exodus. In that province, the community specifically reflected on ways of encouraging youth to remain in the region and of increasing the influx of new Francophone families and individuals.

### 3.2.2. Communications

Secondly, each discussion group emphasized the importance of communications. Although the term varied—there was talk about promotion, visibility, marketing and appeal—Western Canadian Francophone communities were concerned about their image. They want to be known and recognized by the entire population—more specifically, the Anglophone majority and, in some cases, Aboriginal communities. They also want to increase their visibility among federal, provincial and municipal institutions by raising awareness among public decision makers about their particular challenges and realities. Furthermore, they deem internal communications very important for increasing exchanges between Francophones in the community, thereby contributing to the creation of a common Francophone space.

### 3.2.3. Governance

Lastly, the governance theme was approached from various angles. Each community hopes that its members will have a common understanding of the major community objectives. For this to happen, each community believes that it is important to set up dialogue and coordination mechanisms to promote greater collaboration among the various stakeholders and groups in the Francophone community. According to the stakeholders of the communities being studied, maintenance and strengthening of governance structures—be it through the recruitment and retention of qualified individuals, training activities, knowledge transfer or increased representation of the diverse composition of these communities—will lead to increased community cohesion.

## 3.3. Other study highlights

The study also highlighted other points that should be discussed.

### 3.3.1. Spaces where people can live in French

For the Francophone communities in British Columbia and Calgary, community vitality inevitably requires an increased number of spaces where people can live in French. Because Francophones are so few in number and are scattered over a vast territory, they use all available means in trying to create common spaces to facilitate physical proximity and community cohesion. These communities are in favour of creating multi-functional centres to house Francophone agencies, organizations and employees, and to welcome newcomers and offer one-stop services.

### 3.3.2. Political legitimacy and recognition of language rights as a critical source of community vitality

Western Canadian Francophone communities, particularly in Alberta and Saskatchewan, see progress in political legitimacy and the recognition of language rights as a determining factor for community vitality. This certainly explains the communities' support for the Gilles Caron case in Alberta. In this case, the intent is to show that the language rights guaranteed to Rupert's Land residents when it joined the Canadian confederation are still in force and must be reinstated. The case could therefore reverse the interpretation of history in Alberta and Saskatchewan. It could re-establish the legitimacy of the status and use of French in these provinces and result in a series of measures aimed at enhancing the vitality of Francophone communities.

### 3.3.3. Unique challenges for a rural francophone community

Finally, the study highlighted the particular issues and challenges faced by a Francophone community in a rural setting. Francophones living in rural settings in Saskatchewan are grappling with the exodus toward urban centres, the ageing population and the decreasing number of small agricultural producers and processors. In response, the community chose to focus on its *terroir*,<sup>4</sup> that is, its distinctive cultural traits and its unique know-how and products such as bison products, Gravelbourg mustard, peas from Bellevue, Red Fife wheat, Saskatoon berries, wild rice from northern Saskatchewan and more. As a result, for Saskatchewan's rural Francophone community, community

4 The following definition of "*terroir*" is the product of a collaboration by the Institut national de la recherche agronomique and the Institut National des appellations d'origine (re-named Institut national de l'origine et de la qualité in 2007). This definition was presented during UNESCO's "Planète Terroirs" international meeting in Paris in 2005: "A Terroir is a determined geographical area, defined by a human community, which generates and accumulates along its history a set of distinctive cultural traits, knowledge and practices based on a system of interactions between the natural environment and human factors. The know-how involved carries originality, confers its typical nature, and enables recognition of the goods and services originating from this specific geographical area and thus of the people living within it. These areas are living and innovative spaces which are more than just about tradition." (UNESCO, *A Project for the Terroirs Around the World*. Information materials for the UNESCO 34th General Conference, October 16-November 3, 2007.)

vitality and identity-building are inextricably linked. Culture and heritage are, for this community, the be-all and the end-all of vitality.

**3.4. Future action**

**3.4.1. Communities**

For official language communities in Western Canada that wish to pursue the vitality evaluation process according to the priorities they identified, the next step involves developing an action plan to implement the logic models. In this step, each output is reviewed and the implementation methods (i.e. areas of responsibility, timelines and necessary resources) are defined. The following table is a partial template of such an action plan.

**Table 1: Partial template of an action plan**

Product or service	Body responsible	Timeline	Resources
Output 1	Organization, committee, individual	Date	Financial Human Material
Output 2	Organization, committee, individual	Date	Financial Human Material

Communities would also benefit from preparing an evaluation plan that would help determine the necessary tools and processes to measure the progress toward increased community vitality. It is important to remember that community studies established the desired results, quantitative and qualitative indicators, and possible sources of data. It is now necessary to decide who will collect these data, how frequently, and who will analyze them. In short, this is the content of the evaluation plan.

Evaluation will be a crucial step for communities. It must be designed to provide information to both community leaders and public institutions that approve contributions and grants for community organizations. This step

could support accountability and help show how public investments contribute to community progress toward increased vitality.

As previously stated, the communities will no doubt require technical support during the next steps. Although they have some knowledge related to evaluation, the communities generally lack resources where community research is concerned.

The keen interest shown by community leaders and key stakeholders throughout the research project leads us to believe that they see the assessment of community vitality as one possible way to strengthen their position with respect to funding organizations.

**3.4.2. Federal institutions**

For federal institutions, which are required to take positive measures to support the development of official language communities, this study increases knowledge about vitality. It educates us about the complex reality of Western Canadian Francophone communities and shows the extent to which these communities, while sharing some similarities, are very different from one another. In this context, taking positive measures therefore means taking into account the particular characteristics of each community and adopting customized solutions according to the identified needs.

This study also reaffirmed the idea that community vitality depends on several factors: economic, social, legal, cultural to name a few. To act coherently in such a complex framework, federal institutions must cooperate. Rather than working in silos, there should be increased interdepartmental collaboration, as well as fruitful and ongoing collaboration with communities.

Lastly, the methodology and tools developed under this study provide federal institutions with valuable insight with regards to accountability. Institutions will be able to better interpret the impact of funds allocated to communities and to more objectively track developments. They will also be able to use these tools to work with communities on identifying and using accountability indicators and mechanisms that are understood and accepted by all parties.



# Introduction

This document presents the results of research conducted in fall 2008 and winter 2009 in the Saskatchewan Francophone community. Conducted by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, this research is the third phase of a multi-year action-research project aimed at better understanding the practical aspects of assessing community vitality. The first phase was carried out in 2006 with three Francophone communities in urban settings, and the second in 2007 with three English-speaking communities in Quebec.

This report consists of four sections. Section 1 describes the context of the study and the methodology used. Section 2 sets out a brief profile of the Saskatchewan Francophone community. Section 3 gives an overview of the various best practices in the community. Section 4 presents logic model and indicators produced and validated by the task force and retained by the research team. It also provides data sources that can be used to verify these indicators. Finally, Section 5 presents the conclusion of the report. Following the conclusion are a list of documents consulted (Appendix A) and a list of task force members (Appendix B).

## 1. Methodology

In carrying out the mandate provided by the Office of the Commissioner, the research team followed a step-by-step methodology similar to that used in previous phases. This methodology was designed to ensure optimal participation of the communities selected, in an effort to focus on the opinions and aspirations of these communities while helping to strengthen their capacities for planning and for evaluating community vitality. The methodology has also been refined based on lessons learned in the previous two phases.

In cooperation with the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise (ACF), leaders of the Saskatchewan Francophone community (the steering committee) were first selected and consulted to support the consultants' work and to establish the general directions of the study. The steering committee determined the community to be studied, priority sectors and other research criteria. It was agreed that the study would look at the region encompassing Duck Lake, St. Louis, Domremy, Hoey and St. Isidore-de-Bellevue.<sup>5</sup> These rural communities have the advantage of being located fairly close to one another.

This region is currently part of an overall development initiative entitled "Projet d'alternative de développement rural : le terroir" (referred to as the *Projet du terroir*). In order to adapt the Office of the Commissioner's study as closely as possible to Saskatchewan rural reality, the steering committee wanted to connect this research to the *Projet du terroir*.

With the help of the steering committee, a task force was set up, consisting of community leaders and key stakeholders from different sectors in the region. This group of approximately 15 individuals held meetings in the winter of 2009, during which it established the expectations for the *Projet du terroir* and expressed them in the form of a logic model. The task force then chose indicators to measure the achievement of anticipated results and discussed data sources that could be used in this community evaluation. The group also established a certain number of best practices recognized by the community.

This report was developed based on this work and on the collection and analysis of other pertinent documents and information on the Francophone community of the region encompassing Duck Lake, St. Louis, Domremy, Hoey and St. Isidore-de-Bellevue.

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<sup>5</sup> In the context of an inter-university research project on the geographic factors pertaining to development and to vitality conditions for Francophone minority communities, the University of Ottawa published, in 2005, a report on the vitality of the Francophone communities of St. Louis, Domremy and St. Isidore-de-Bellevue. For more information on this report (available in French only), please consult the Web site: <http://langlois.geog.uottawa.ca/rapports/saskatchewan.pdf>.

## 2. Community profile for the region encompassing St. Isidore-de-Bellevue, Duck Lake, Domremy, St. Louis and Hoey

### 2.1 Population<sup>6</sup>

#### 2.1.1. History<sup>7</sup>

Saskatchewan's Francophone community has its roots in large expeditions organized as far back as 1731 by Pierre Gauthier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye. Attracted by the beaver trade and driven by a quest for treasure, the route to the Orient and missionary work, the first French colonists established their first permanent settlements at Fort-à-la-Corne and Île-à-la-Crosse.

A large number of coureurs de bois, voyageurs and explorers from the St. Lawrence valley continued to settle in the West during the 18th and 19th centuries. Marriages between French men and Native women gave birth to the Métis nation, a unique Francophone population in Western Canada.

Toward the end of the 19th century, the Canadian government launched a major initiative to colonize the West, giving this region a new Francophone population made up of Europeans, Franco-Americans and French Canadians. Deliberately dispersed by the authorities of the time, this population primarily took root in areas that were favourable to agriculture. A hundred or so small French-Canadian towns appeared, carrying on a tradition of Catholic institutions and community life.

Little by little, the arrival of immigrants reduced the demographic weight of Francophones in the province. In the early 20th century, the Fransaskois community began a long battle to ensure the survival of the French language and to preserve its identity. In 1912, it created a representative association that, over the years, would become the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise (ACF). This association still mobilizes vital forces throughout the province to promote the development of Saskatchewan's Francophone community.

The communities examined in this study are part of three distinct rural municipalities: St. Louis, Hoodoo and Duck Lake. Geographically, these communities are located approximately 100 km northeast of Saskatoon and approximately 50 km southeast of Prince Albert. They are the main centres serving neighbouring rural communities.

#### 2.1.2 Demographics

Overall, the population in these rural municipalities dropped by 8.3% between 2001 and 2006, from 2,800 to 2,586 people. In 2006, 550 inhabitants declared French<sup>8</sup> as their mother tongue, which represents approximately 21.2% of the population. When the number of people who declared both English and French as their mother tongues in 2006 are added, the number of Francophones rises by a mere 15 people, to approximately 565.

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6 The statistics presented in the following section were drawn or compiled from 2006 community profiles prepared by Statistics Canada for the rural municipalities of St. Louis (RM431), Hoodoo (RM401) and Duck Lake (RM463). It should be noted that the rural municipality of St. Louis also includes the communities of St. Isidore-de-Bellevue, Domremy and Hoey. The references for these profiles are the following:

St. Louis rural municipality: Statistics Canada, St. Louis No. 431, Saskatchewan (table), 2006 Community Profiles, 2006 Census, product no. 92-591-XWE in the Statistics Canada catalogue, Ottawa, 2007, on-line version (<http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?Lang=E>) consulted November 17, 2009.

Hoodoo rural municipality: Statistics Canada, Hoodoo No. 401, Saskatchewan (table), 2006 Community Profiles, 2006 Census, product no. 92-591-XWE in the Statistics Canada catalogue, Ottawa, 2007, on-line version (<http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?Lang=E>) consulted November 17, 2009.

Duck Lake rural municipality: Statistics Canada, Duck Lake No. 463, Saskatchewan (table), 2006 Community Profiles, 2006 Census, product no. 92-591-XWE in the Statistics Canada catalogue, Ottawa, 2007, on-line version (<http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?Lang=E>) consulted November 17, 2009.

7 Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise, *Portrait fransaskois*, ACF, Saskatchewan, 2002, 27 p.

8 For the past few years, there has been a growing interest in research of definitions of the Francophone population that reflect the diversity and complexity of the Canadian Francophonie. Efforts in this area have been undertaken at the federal, provincial and university levels. For example, the Government of Ontario recently introduced a new definition of the province's Francophone population. This new definition counts those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English, but who know French and speak it at home. Further information can be found on the Office of Francophone Affairs Web site at [www.ofa.gov.on.ca/en/news-090604.html](http://www.ofa.gov.on.ca/en/news-090604.html).

**Table 2: Basic demographic data**

	St. Louis	Hoodoo	Duck Lake	Total
Total population 2006	1,006	804	776	2,586
Total population 2001	1,154	701	945	2,800
Variation (%)	-12.8	14.7	-17.9	-8.3
Population whose mother tongue is French (2006)	435	35	80	550
Proportion (%)	43.2	4.3	10.3	21.2

### 2.1.3 Language

Examining the population according to different linguistic variables sheds light on the presence of French in the lives of individuals living in the region.

**Table 3: Knowledge and use of French**

		St. Louis	Hoodoo	Duck Lake	Total
Total population 2006		1,006	804	776	2,586
Individuals with knowledge of both official languages	(N)	535	50	115	700
	(%)	53	6	15	27
Individuals who speak French most often at home	(N)	245	0	25	270
	(%)	24	0	3.2	10.4
Population 15 and older who speak French most often at work	(N)	105	0	0	105
	(%)	16.4	0	0	6.3

According to 2006 Census data, in this rural region of Saskatchewan, 700 individuals know both official languages, which represents approximately 27% of the total population. However, only 270 individuals (10.4%) stated that French is the language spoken most often at home. It should be added that a high majority of the regional population (83.5%) stated that English is the language spoken most often at home and 2.3% stated that they speak a non-official language.

With respect to language of work, only 6.3% of individuals 15 and older stated that they speak French most often at work.

### 2.1.4 Age

The median age of the regional population ranges from 44 to 48.3. This is higher than the median age for the population of the province of Saskatchewan as a whole, which is 38.7. The communities also have a higher percentage of individuals aged 15 and older than the province as a whole. The only exception is the community of St. Louis, where 80.1% of the population is over 15, compared to 80.6% for the province as a whole.

**Table 4: Age of the population**

	St. Louis	Hoodoo	Duck Lake	Saskatchewan
Median age	44	48.3	44.8	38.7
Population aged 15 or older (%)	80.1	86.3	81.9	80.6

### 2.1.5 Socioeconomic conditions

According to Statistics Canada, education levels in the regions being studied are quite similar to those of Saskatchewan's overall population. For example, in both cases, approximately 30% of the population does not have a secondary school diploma, while 26.2% has a secondary school diploma or equivalent. However, in the rural regions being studied, only 8.7% of the population has a university degree, as compared to nearly 13% for the province's population as a whole.

Moreover, median revenues for residents in the regions studied vary from \$18,401 to \$23,015. On the whole, these revenue levels are slightly lower than the median revenue for the entire population, which is approximately \$23,755.

## 2.2 Projet du terroir

The Projet du terroir is a rural development project that consists of promoting regional agriculture, culture and heritage through the concept of *terroir*. It was conceived by the ACF and the Institut français at the University of Regina in response to the major challenges faced by rural regions of Saskatchewan: outward migration, aging of the population and a reduction in the number of small agricultural producers. The project initiators wanted to boost the community's vitality through a *terroir* approach.

During UNESCO's "Planète Terroirs" international meeting in Paris in 2005, the following definition was proposed and validated:<sup>9</sup> "A *Terroir* is a determined geographical area, defined by a human community, which generates

9 This definition of "terroir" is the product of a collaboration between the Institut national de la recherche agronomique and the Institut National des Appellations d'Origine (re-named Institut national de l'origine et de la qualité in 2007).

10 UNESCO, *A Project for the Terroirs Around the World*, information materials for the UNESCO 34th General Conference, October 16-November 3, 2007, 10 p.

11 As will be seen later, these themes are implicit in the Projet du terroir logic model.

and accumulates along its history a set of distinctive cultural traits, knowledge and practices based on a system of interactions between the natural environment and human factors. The know-how involved carries originality, confers its typical nature, and enables recognition of the goods and services originating from this specific geographical area and thus of the people living within it. These areas are living and innovative spaces which are more than just about tradition."<sup>10</sup>

In Saskatchewan, the project proposes recognition of the region's living heritage and products through consideration of the environment, culture, knowledge and know-how found in a rural setting, particularly one with a Francophone culture.

The project initiators chose the region encompassing St. Isidore-de-Bellevue, St. Louis, Domremy, Hoey and Duck Lake as the project site due to its high concentration of Francophones, resources, authenticity, heritage and vitality.

The Projet du terroir is continuing to move toward its objectives, which can be broken down into four main themes: collaborative economics, identity and a sense of belonging, demography and migration, and intercultural dialogue.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.2.1. Collaborative economics

The Projet du terroir seeks to create conditions that are conducive to collaboration between stakeholders in the agri-food chain. It is hoped that these collaborations will lead to the creation of jobs that strengthen the region's French presence and Francophone identity. Communities believe that a strong and vital rural economy is achieved by recognizing local cultures and products and by revitalizing the agricultural sector (production, processing and commercialization). A strong and prosperous rural economy requires sufficient infrastructures and a qualified workforce. This kind of economy is also defined by the degree to which it attracts tourists and residents of urban centres.



### 2.2.2. Identity and sense of belonging

With regard to the preceding paragraph, the communities are hoping that the Projet du terroir will result in a strong sense of pride and solidarity within the population. By collaborating and developing projects such as economuseums, agritourism and *terroir* interpretive centres, communities will be recognizing their shared heritage. Such initiatives will help to project a more powerful image of Francophone communities and improve the image that citizens have of themselves.

### 2.2.3. Demography and migration

Fransaskois communities that participated in the study believe that the Projet du terroir could inject greater vitality from a demographic perspective. It could be said that the Projet du terroir will be considered a success once it has helped to slow down and reverse problems related to outward migration and aging of the population. The project will create regional jobs, recognize the farming profession, promote quality of life in a rural setting and intervene strategically with youth.

### 2.2.4. Intercultural dialogue

Given their geographic and sociolinguistic situation, rural communities in Saskatchewan believe that intercultural dialogue plays an increasingly important role in strengthening their identity and economy. The Projet du terroir is an opportunity to build bridges and create new connections with Aboriginal and Anglophone communities.

## 2.3 Community resources

Francophones in the region encompassing St. Isidore-de-Bellevue, St. Louis, Domremy, Hoey and Duck Lake are part of the greater Fransaskois family and its leading organization, the ACF. The area is also one of the 12 electoral districts of the ACF. These districts are based on the division of the provincial electoral map. In keeping with the ACF's governance structure, individuals in the area may elect their community representative.

The territory is rich in historic milestones. It includes Batoche, the site of the final battle of the Métis uprising in 1885, Fort Carlton Provincial Park, Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre and the *bison antiquus* that symbolizes St. Louis. The region has a fairly successful tourist industry, thanks largely to its recreational activities and its proximity to highways linking Saskatoon and Prince Albert. Many volunteer groups, most dedicated to culture, do work in the region. The list below presents the main services and community resources.

### Local organizations

- Centre francophone BDS Inc. (new organization created by the merging of the Association culturelle de Bellevue, the Association culturelle Cœur-franc de St. Louis and the Centre fransaskois de Domremy)
- Archives de Bellevue
- St. Louis Historical Society
- Amis de Batoche
- Dizaines for Batoche Development Co-operative Ltd.

### Services and other resources

- Tourist information centre
- St. Isidore School
- Foyer Jésus Marie (seniors' home)
- Bed and breakfast chez Tina
- Community newsletters
- St. Laurent Pilgrimage
- Pioneer Park (St. Louis)
- *L'Eau vive* (weekly newspaper)
- Scenic routes
- Service Canada Centre
- Camping grounds

### Provincial associations with local branches

- Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise
- Association des parents fransaskois
- Association jeunesse fransaskoise
- Conseil de la Coopération de la Saskatchewan
- Conseil culturel fransaskois
- Fédération des aînés fransaskois

### **Other organizations or programs that support the Projet du terroir**

- University of Regina (Institut français)
- Batoche National Historic Park
- Prince Albert National Park of Canada
- Bellevue Hamlet Board
- Rural municipality of St. Louis No. 431
- Town of Duck Lake
- Canada Research Chair in Rural Development (Université du Québec à Rimouski)
- UNESCO Chair – Université Laval
- Centre local de développement of the Charlevoix regional county municipality
- Midi-Pyrénées region (France)

## **3. Best practices**

This section describes what are perceived as best practices in the Francophone community in the region encompassing St. Isidore-de-Bellevue, Duck Lake, Domremy, St. Louis and Hoey. These practices were identified during discussions among the task force participants and then between the task force and the research team.

### **3.1 Multilingual community newsletter**

To facilitate intercultural dialogue, the Francophone community of Domremy publishes a community newsletter in three languages: French, English and Métis. According to the comments received, this initiative has helped to bring these communities closer together.

### **3.2 Multicultural gatherings**

The Saskatchewan Archeological Society organizes an annual event at the South Branch archeological site, a former fur trading post for the Hudson's Bay Company. At this event, participants move to the lively beat of fiddlers and carry out archeological digs. On the menu: bannock (flatbread) and grilled bear meat. The goal of the event is to bring together the Métis, Aboriginal People, Anglophones and Francophones in a celebration of their shared regional heritage. In 2008, the event drew together close to 200 people.

Every year, the Saskatchewan Historical Society holds Heritage Days. In September 2009, the event was organized jointly with the Town of Duck Lake, and its theme was the arrival of the pioneers. The activity, which took place in English and French, included 20 or so interactive and historical sketches. Visitors learned about the history of the Association Catholique Franco-Canadienne (now the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise) and about the *Patriote de l'Ouest* newspaper, and were introduced to local historical figures.

### **3.3 Regional tourism**

Over the past few years, the St. Louis Historical Society has been designing maps that show all of the historical sites of interest along the Saskatchewan River. Thirty sites have been identified, encouraging tourists to explore the region by canoe or a guided boat tour.

### **3.4 Terroir conference**

In February 2009, the Institut français of the University of Regina and the ACF organized a conference entitled *Terroir, Identity & Seduction*, which encouraged participants to reflect on the source of food products. Government representatives, researchers, entrepreneurs, farmers and consumers got together and discussed the many advantages of redirecting rural development. They attended workshops presented by experts from all across Canada, as well as from France and Louisiana, on topics such as organic gardening, food supply and culture, rural development in Saskatchewan, organic meat, farm tourism and economuseums. The event also provided the organizers with an opportunity to reaffirm their ties to other communities that have launched similar initiatives, such as Charlevoix, Quebec.

### **3.5 Mobilization of communities around projects of common interest**

Until recently, the communities of St. Isidore-de-Bellevue, St. Louis and Domremy managed their communities' cultural spaces separately. Cultural activities in these three communities were recently combined, thanks to the creation of a new organization. The Centre francophone Bellevue, Domremy et St. Louis (BDS) now manages the Centre culturel de Bellevue and the Centre fransaskois de Domremy.

It is expected that the new organization will be able to address common issues, such as improvement of road infrastructures. It is also expected that combined management of cultural activities will reduce duplication of effort and competition between the activities, and will give more weight to the community in its search for partners and sources of funding. This emerging community collaboration will no doubt benefit the *Projet du terroir*.

Each year, the town of Domremy organizes summer camps for the local youth. These day camps offer activities in French, such as crafts, reading and swimming.

Communities in the region are also working together on a daycare project. According to the project's sponsors, lack of access to daycare services could discourage new families from moving to the region.

### 3.6 Study on the *Projet du terroir*

In the summer of 2008, an intern working with the Institut français of the University of Regina led a broad study on the *Projet du terroir*. She focused on the following questions: How are the current culinary practices of the three cultural groups (Francophones, Anglophones, Métis) a reflection of the region's history? Why and how are culinary practices passed on from one group to another? To what degree do these practices reflect the respective identities of these groups? What specific practices are associated with each of these groups?

The study therefore sought to clarify the link between food and culture and the different connections that these three groups have with their food. The study also attempted to define strategies for accentuating these cultures through the products identified in their *terroir*.

## 4. Logic model and vitality indicators

This section presents an overview of the expectations and priorities established by the task force, which built and validated a comprehensive logic model for the *Projet du terroir*. It sets out the following:

- the logic model;
- indicators for the targeted results;
- data sources to be used to evaluate these results.

A logic model is an illustration of the sequence of expected results and efforts made to create or maintain vitality in a given field or sector of a community.

### 4.1 Fields of activity

#### 4.1.1 Intercultural cooperation

According to the rural Francophone communities in the region being studied, greater community vitality is achieved through connections with the Métis, Aboriginal and Anglophone communities. The *Projet du terroir* is a means of fostering dialogue and strengthening ties between these communities. This is why Francophone communities are interested in implementing mechanisms such as committees and multicultural discussion groups, as well as an intercultural forum.

#### 4.1.2. Research and planning

The *Projet du terroir* is a comprehensive development initiative that brings together stakeholders from the community, the government and the private sector. To ensure that the project has a solid foundation and to boost the capacity of community leaders, the region's Francophone community wishes to pursue research and planning activities. Some of these activities have already begun, including exploratory visits and a symposium on the concept of *terroir*. It should be added that the community is placing a lot of faith in the impending community leaders committee to ensure that the project is put in place. This committee will be tasked with guiding the project as a whole, and will serve as the primary resource for collaborative efforts and partnerships.

#### 4.1.3. Gatherings and celebrations

For the community, gatherings and celebrations are concrete ways of developing identity and a sense of belonging, in addition to promoting greater community bonding. The community hopes to take advantage of existing events to promote *terroir* products and, at the same time, help the population to become more aware of its consumption habits. The community is also hoping to introduce new events, such as a food-tasting festival, to celebrate the region's gastronomic creations and the professions linked to the agri-food chain.

#### **4.1.4. Internal marketing and persuasion**

The Projet du terroir offers many stakeholders a new way of thinking and acting. It aims to promote greater appreciation of professions that are linked to the agri-food chain. It also seeks to establish a greater sense of collaboration and interdependence between stakeholders, particularly producers and processors of food products. For instance, this interdependence could mean increased collaboration between a wheat producer and a baker or between a grain producer and a poultry producer. However, this change in attitude and behaviour cannot be achieved without a joint effort that targets awareness, training and skills development in areas such as marketing of heritage-related products.

#### **4.1.5. External marketing and persuasion**

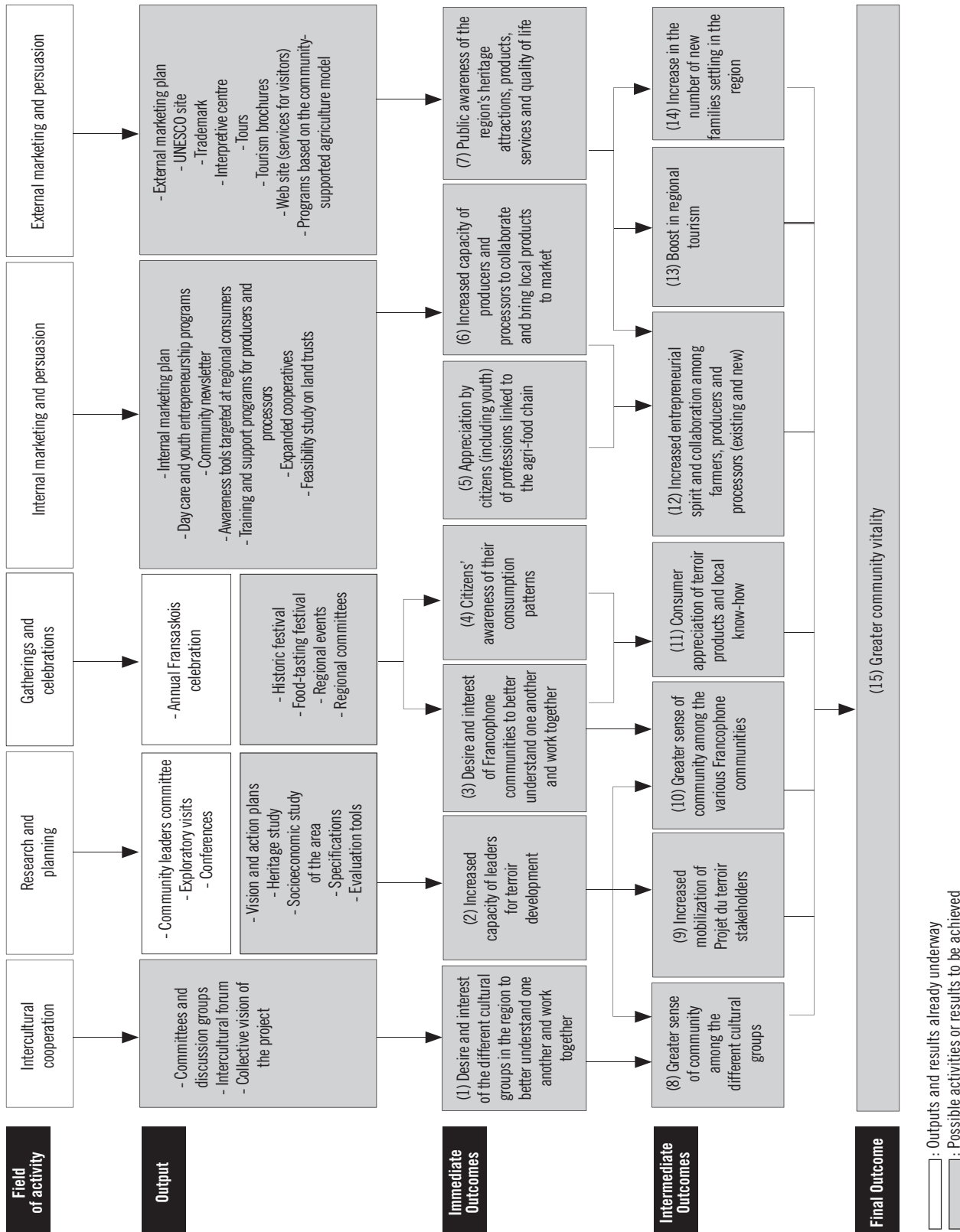
The community believes that it is important to promote its historic attractions, along with its products, services and quality of life, to the outside world. To do this, the community wants to show itself in the best possible light. It plans to use many different tools, including an external

marketing plan, a distinctive trademark, an interpretive centre, tours and a Web site. The community also plans to focus on initiatives such as programs based on the community-supported agriculture model, and to have the area designated as a reserve under UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Program. This designation would help to support the introduction of new sustainable development practices.

In the medium term, all of these activities will help to create a greater sense of community among the different cultural groups; further mobilize Projet du terroir stakeholders; increase cohesiveness among the various Francophone communities; produce a *terroir* and local know-how that are more highly appreciated by consumers; increase entrepreneurial spirit and collaboration between farmers and processors (existing and new); and boost regional tourism and the number of new families that settle in the region.

In the long term, if all of these results are achieved, the community will experience greater vitality.

# Logic model: Projet du terroir



**Table 5: Indicators and data sources – Projet du terroir**

<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Data Source</b>
<b>1. Desire and interest of the different cultural groups in the region to better understand one another and work together</b>	a) Cultural diversity of those participating in various activities	a) Counts; record of activities
	b) Number of jointly organized activities	b) Record of activities
	c) Citizens' views of their desire and interest in working together	c) Survey
<b>2. Increased capacity of leaders for terroir development</b>	a) Leaders' views of their own capacity with respect to terroir	a) Interviews
	b) Number of partnerships with other regions (e.g. Charlevoix, France)	b) Counts
<b>3. Desire and interest of Francophone communities to better understand one another and work together</b>	a) Degree of sense of belonging to the region	a) Survey
	b) Participation in festivals and regional events	b) Record of festivals and events
<b>4. Citizens' awareness of their consumption patterns</b>	a) Percentage of the population that feels it is important to buy local products	a) Consumer survey
<b>5. Appreciation by citizens (including youth) of professions linked to the agri-food chain</b>	a) Perception held by the region's citizens of professions related to the agri-food chain	a) Survey
	b) Percentage of Francophone youth who would consider a career in a profession linked to the agri-food chain	b) Data from guidance counsellors at Fransaskois schools
	c) Number of young people registered in programs related to the agri-food sector	c) Records from training institutions
<b>6. Increased capacity of producers and processors to collaborate and bring local products to market</b>	a) Percentage of producers and processors who claim to have the necessary skills	a) Survey
	b) Number of participants registered in training and support programs	b) Registration records
<b>7. Public awareness of the region's heritage attractions, products, services and quality of life</b>	a) Number of media reports pertaining to the region	a) Media logs
	b) Number of visits to Web sites pertaining to the region (e.g. terroir, Parks Canada)	b) Statistics from Webmasters
	c) Degree of knowledge of Saskatchewan's overall population about heritage attractions and quality of life in the region	c) Survey
<b>8. Greater sense of community among the different cultural groups</b>	a) Number of collaborations and partnerships	a) Counts
	b) Participants' degree of satisfaction and comfort with joint activities	b) Counts and interviews
	c) Degree to which stakeholders and the regional population adopt the project	c) Interviews and survey

<b>9. Increased mobilization of Projet du terroir stakeholders</b>	a) Number of committees created and operating	a) Counts
	b) Number of people present at public meetings on the Projet du terroir	b) Record of public meetings
	c) Number of projects initiated within the framework of the Projet du terroir	c) Counts
<b>10. Greater sense of community among the various Francophone communities</b>	a) Number of projects shared between stakeholders in different Francophone communities	a) Counts
	b) Volunteers' degree of involvement and diversity of Francophone volunteers	b) Community organizations' records
	c) Degree of trust shown by citizens towards members of other communities	c) Regional survey
<b>11. Consumer appreciation of terroir products and local know-how</b>	a) Demand for terroir products	a) Surveys for businesses
	b) Degree of customer loyalty	b) <i>Ibid.</i>
	c) Local consumers' view of terroir products	c) Consumer survey
<b>12. Increased entrepreneurial spirit and collaboration among farmers, producers and processors (existing and new)</b>	a) Number of individuals who develop and market terroir products	a) Counts
	b) Number of business partnerships between farmers and producers in the region	b) Survey for businesses
	c) Number of economuseums and agritourism activities	c) Counts
<b>13. Boost in regional tourism</b>	a) Number of tourists	a) Statistics from government and from tourism office
	b) Revenue linked to tourism	b) Government statistics
	c) Amount of hospitality services (e.g. accommodations, restaurants)	c) Counts
<b>14. Increase in the number of new families settling in the region</b>	a) Number of new Francophone families settling in the region	a) Counts; government statistics
	b) Number of new homes being built	b) <i>Ibid.</i>
	c) Number of children enrolled in French school	c) School records
<b>15. Greater community vitality</b>	a) Municipalities' openness to diversity and bilingualism	a) Municipalities' policies
	b) Number of bilingual signs and materials	b) Counts
	c) Views of citizens in the region of their identity, sense of belonging and pride	c) Citizen survey
	d) Net migration of the Francophone population	d) Government statistics
	e) Percentage of newcomers who speak French	e) <i>Ibid.</i>

## Conclusion

This study sought to gather and systematically document information on development initiatives in the large area encompassing Duck Lake, St. Louis, Domremy, Hoey and St. Isidore-de-Bellevue, rural communities in Saskatchewan with a concentration of Francophones.

The study first served to rally the communities around a common project and to develop a clearer vision and understanding of the *Projet du terroir*. The meetings helped stakeholders from the various towns to get to know one another and to integrate the idea that the community's vitality will only be achieved through a greater collaborative effort.

Second, the conceptual framework of the study assisted in gathering and organizing planning elements for the *Projet du terroir* in a coherent fashion. Stakeholders had to examine the *Projet du terroir* from a specific approach: the theory of results-based management. This approach appeared to be relevant and useful in giving meaning to the project. According to some stakeholders, the exercise helped them to understand the importance of investing in the *Projet du terroir*.

Third, the study succeeded in producing quantitative and qualitative indicators. The community now has basic tools for assessing its vitality in comparison with desired results and for meeting its partners' accountability requirements. That being said, the community will no doubt need support to strengthen its evaluative capacities, in terms of both financial and human resources.

The study also helped in identifying issues and challenges specific to a Francophone community in a rural setting. Francophones living in rural Saskatchewan have to deal with exodus towards urban centres, aging of the population and a drop in the number of small agricultural producers and processors. In response, the community has chosen to focus on its *terroir*—in other words, its distinctive cultural traits, its know-how and its unique products such as bison products, Gravelbourg mustard, peas from Bellevue, Red Fife wheat, Saskatoon berries, wild rice from northern Saskatchewan and more. For Saskatchewan's rural Francophone community, community vitality and the strengthening of identity are intrinsically linked. For this community, culture and heritage are both the be-all and end-all of vitality.

Finally, federal institutions, which are required to implement positive measures to support the development of official language communities, will no doubt find this document to be an important source of information. They will be able to use this report to focus more closely on the particularities of the rural Fransaskois community and come up with positive measures that are adapted to its reality.



## Appendix A

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## Appendix B

### Task force members

Henri Gareau, representative for the rural municipality of St. Louis no. 431

Rose-Marie Carey, President, Association culturelle Cœur-franc de St. Louis

Rita Denis, Vice President, Centre communautaire fransaskois de Domremy, and farmer

Evelyn Gaudet, Member, Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise and resident of St. Isidore-de-Bellevue

Jos Poirier, Member, Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise, and person responsible for rural development

Donald Perrault, Agronomist, Province of Saskatchewan

Cécile Leblanc-Turner, Business Advisor, Conseil de la Coopération de la Saskatchewan

Lynne Girardin, Master's student in agriculture, with specialization in cattle production and economics, Department of Animal and Poultry Sciences, University of Saskatchewan

Alice Gaudet, Community Development Officer, Centre francophone BDS Inc., St. Isidore-de-Bellevue

Frédéric Dupré, Institut français, University of Regina

Gérald Gareau, Business Advisor, Conseil de la Coopération de la Saskatchewan

Lise Gareau, Coordinator, regional Fransaskois organization bridging project

Josée Bourgoin, Coordinator, Terroir Interpretation and Development, Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise

Joanne Perreault, Associate Director, Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise

Éric Lefol, Research Professional, Institut français, University of Regina

Denis Desgagné, Executive Director, Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise

### Representatives of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages

Jennifer Wessner, Liaison Officer, Regina

Martine Boucher, Policy Analyst, Ottawa

The members of the task force participated as individuals and the views expressed do not necessarily represent those of their employers or host organizations.

Michel Desjardins, President of the Consortia Development Group, facilitated the task force. He was assisted in the first session by Agathe Gaulin, an associate with this firm.

