

A little over a month has passed since the Community Vitality in Action Forum, and we remain inspired by the exchanges with our partners and stakeholders. The day was a powerful reminder of what we can achieve as a community when we work together toward shared goals.

On March 10, we brought together community groups from across Quebec to share their experiences and successes. The forum highlighted a key outcome of this work: when people have access to the skills and the support they need, they gain confidence, autonomy, and the ability to participate fully in society. Contributions from partners on the Project Advisory Committee—Nick Salter (PERT), John Buck (CEDEC), Cathy Brown (RDN), Joy Fyckes (Literacy Quebec) and Brigid Hayes—along with keynote speaker Kahsennenhawe Sky-Deer and M.C. Mélanie Valcin (United for Literacy), as well as collaborators from ABC Life Literacy and the Social Research and Development Council, demonstrated the strength of this collective effort. Funding recipients CASA and DESTA also played a key role.

Since 2021, TALQ and Literacy Quebec have worked together to support the Community Empowerment Literacy Initiative (CELI), which, on behalf of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), funds programs, research, and professional training to strengthen literacy and essential skills in Quebec's English-speaking communities. According to the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, 53.21.8% of Quebec's adult population is at or below Level 21 literacy or below, meaning that more than half of one in five Quebecers lack the tools needed to reach their potential and fully participate in society. From the outset, both organizations recognized the importance of a coordinated, multi-stakeholder response.

The path to CELI has not been straightforward. For more than a decade, our network has navigated a shifting landscape, beginning with the dismantling of the pan-Canadian adult literacy and essential skills program in 2014. Since then, we have advocated for an approach tailored to the needs of Quebec's English-speaking community. Even after CELI was launched in 2021, providing \$2.8 million over five years, structural barriers remained—particularly those related to Quebec's M-30 legislation, which limits how federal funds can be used within provincial organizations. Throughout this process, we have adapted and learned the value of collaboration, perseverance, and trust in achieving shared goals.

Literacy is a fundamental right. Improving it requires a broad commitment from governments, community organizations, educators, and families. As a linguistic minority, many English speakers in Quebec already face challenges in accessing services and employment opportunities, which are further compounded by low literacy levels. Despite these challenges, CELI has achieved important results: more than \$1.5 million has been distributed to community programs led by local and regional partners; professional development opportunities for service providers have expanded; research has been conducted; and spaces for meaningful dialogue have been created.

As co-leaders of CELI, we thank all those who contributed to the success of the forum, and we invite everyone to remain engaged in this work so all community members can access the literacy and skills needed to build the future they deserve.

Thank you for being part of this important journey.

Sylvia from TALQ & Wendy from LQ