

Café de Paris



An innovative approach to learning
French or maintaining French language
skills in support of the active offer



Société
Santé et Mieux-être en français
du Nouveau-Brunswick



RÉSEAU DE SANTÉ
Horizon
HEALTH NETWORK



Association Régionale de la
Communauté francophone de Saint-Jean inc.

New Brunswick
Nouveau Brunswick



BACKGROUND:
The environment in
which the *Café de Paris*
initiative was created

The government of New Brunswick ensures the consistent, effective and efficient delivery of clinical care through its two regional health authorities: Vitalité Health Network and Horizon Health Network.





Each of these health authorities is responsible for the management and delivery of a range of services, including hospital services, community health centres, addiction and mental health services, as well as most public health services. In addition to the inpatient and outpatient hospital-based model, these services are provided in a variety of settings: in homes, schools, clinics, and various locations within the community.

Each health authority conducts its internal business in an official working language: French for Vitalité Health Network and English for Horizon Health Network.





However, both health authorities must provide patients and the public with services in both official languages. They are bound by the requirements of the *Official Languages Act* and the *Regional Health Authorities Act* to ensure that patients and the public can access services and programs offered in the official language of their choice. With the *Official Languages Act*, the government of New Brunswick recognized an important principle: no matter where citizens may find themselves in the province, they are entitled to government services in the official language of their choice.

Within Horizon Health Network, a Francophone Liaison Committee and three Francophone Liaison Subcommittees (Saint John, Fredericton and Miramichi) play a key role in ensuring that Horizon respects its commitment to Francophone clients. These committees are made up of both community and hospital representatives.

"I worked out west for 12 years. During that time, I had no chance to speak French. Since returning to New Brunswick two years ago, I've held a bilingual position and use French regularly. I decided that it would be a good idea to take advantage of the services offered by Café de Paris to improve my language skills and be able to provide service to our Francophone clients and their families in their language. I love the fact that this language resource is tailored to our specific needs. For the past year, my assistant and I have been attending Café de Paris every Friday at noon. It's so motivating to be able to speak French on a regular basis. It's also practical, because it doesn't interfere with our workday. I'm extremely proud of my progress. I've learned a lot of new vocabulary and become familiar with French terminology relating to my work, all in a fun-filled atmosphere. This has renewed my self-confidence. We're fortunate to have this resource at our fingertips."



Gillian Hoyt-Hallett

Administrative Director
Stan Cassidy Rehabilitation Centre
Fredericton, New Brunswick

"I'd always wanted to learn French, but the circumstances were never right. When Café de Paris was launched in the hospital, I recognized a great opportunity. I was a true beginner. I knew a few words in French, but my knowledge of the language was very limited. By going to Café de Paris I picked up a lot of vocabulary and worked on my pronunciation. The tools and exercises used by the language instructors helped me a lot. They were perfectly adapted to my level. Café de Paris gave me self-confidence. My ability to communicate with Francophone patients and their families has improved. I saw that my perseverance paid off when I went from a basic level of French to an intermediate level. My knowledge of French helps me in my daily work and motivates me to continue improving."



Dawn Evans

Secretary/Receptionist,
Surgery Program
Saint John Regional Hospital

The active offer

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The active offer takes place when the client is proactively given, at the point of first contact with the health care system, the choice to be served in their official language of choice. More specifically, the active offer allows clients to express themselves and receive services in the language in which they are most comfortable.

In the field of healthcare, the active offer not only enables patients to communicate their needs and be understood more easily; it also allows healthcare professionals to provide optimal, safe, ethical, and equitable care to the linguistic minority community.

Hello!
Bonjour!

English or
French...

...it's your
choice!

The first *Café de Paris*: A pilot project at the Saint John Regional Hospital

The first *Café de Paris* was set up in 2013 at the Saint John Regional Hospital, New Brunswick's largest tertiary care hospital. The facility is also the primary healthcare referral centre for residents of the region as well as the referral centre for trauma and cardiac care for the entire province.

A local Francophone Liaison Subcommittee came up with the idea for the *café* during a brainstorming session. Initially, the goal of the subcommittee was to provide members of the Francophone minority with increased access to healthcare services in the official language of their choice. The subcommittee was seeking a strategy to raise awareness amongst employees and staff of the region's



healthcare facilities as to the existence and specific needs of the Francophone community. The challenge consisted of bringing about a cultural shift, of creating a favourable and inclusive environment for Francophones. It was also becoming increasingly important to raise awareness among healthcare professionals of the crucial role played by language in ensuring patient safety.

While, on one hand, the Francophone community was demanding more services in French, on the other, a large percentage of employees and staff appeared not to fully comprehend the effect and importance of providing the active offer in both official languages. In the minds of these employees and staff members, language requirements had no bearing whatsoever on the quality and safety of care.

To address this issue, the Francophone Liaison Subcommittee used a highly proactive approach: it created the *Café de Paris* project, a new free-of-charge workplace initiative designed to support employees and staff wishing to acquire or maintain a basic level of proficiency in French. The approach was constructive rather than restrictive.

The *Café de Paris* project initiators wished to create an informal space allowing employees to acquire or maintain basic French language skills, to interact more easily when speaking French, to benefit from more tools and resources, and to be able to offer services in both official languages in their respective work areas – all this in a relaxed, non-traditional atmosphere.

One of the first steps in the project was to bring the challenge to the attention of the governing authority. To this end, two members of the Francophone Liaison Subcommittee, Janine Doucet, the New Brunswick Heart Centre's Administrative Director, and Gaétane Lévesque-Dupont, Official Languages Advisor, have played a decisive role in the implementation of the *Café de Paris*. They began the process by meeting with the hospital's senior management to explain the approach and objectives behind the *Café de Paris* initiative. Similar meetings took place with all program directors as well as managers. By establishing positive relations with leaders, they succeeded in securing support for the new initiative. It also allowed them to create a snapshot of the environment and the language requirements of each department.

From the outset, the hospital's senior administration was highly receptive to the project and offered its full support. Senior management circulated a memo informing staff of the new *Café de Paris* initiative. A small unoccupied corner of the hospital was transformed into a charming, inviting spot complete with tables, chairs, and a flip chart on which a message welcomed all those wishing to learn and practise the French language. Given the context, it was essential that the environment not be intimidating. Gaétane, a retired French-language instructor, was hired to facilitate *Café de Paris* and offer individualized linguistic support addressing the specific requests and needs of those using the service. There is no doubt that the highly central and accessible location was a major factor in establishing the first *Café de Paris*. The visibility offered by its central location was a true asset to the success of this change and the cohabitation of the two linguistic groups.

In the first year of its existence, the *Café de Paris* offered language activities and sessions once a week. The day consisted of open, drop-in sessions where employees could bring specific questions or practise their French at lunch time or during breaks, and more structured sessions provided to employees on appointment to support the active offer of services in both official languages.

To promote the *Café de Paris* and its services and raise awareness amongst hospital staff, several "ice-breaking" activities took place during the initial months. It was crucial that cultural barriers be overcome and that the *Café de Paris*, the French language, and the Francophone community be demystified.

Furthermore, activities of a more cultural nature were scheduled in collaboration with the Francophone community (visit to the museum, city lights tour at Christmas, Mardi gras, performances, plays, etc.).

In a very short time, the Café de Paris initiative caught the attention of other facilities. As early on as the first year of its inception, the Café de Paris idea was replicated at St. Joseph's Hospital and at the Mercantile Centre (Public Health, Saint John).

Today, the Café de Paris services are offered in most healthcare facilities in the Saint John Region. In less than three years, the Café de Paris model was adopted by the New Brunswick Heart Centre, by St. Stephen, St. George, and Black's Harbour, Sussex, by Mental Health, and by Public Health. It has also been reproduced in Fredericton and Miramichi.

By invitation, the Official Languages team also offers Horizon employees active offer training which includes information on the Act, policies, and linguistic support services available to all staff.



"The language support I received from Fredericton's Café de Paris went a long way towards helping me get the job I currently hold, and I'm so grateful. Thanks to my sessions at Café de Paris, I was able to go from an intermediate level in French to intermediate plus. To prepare for my job interview, I went to Café de Paris every day for two months to practise French for an hour with my instructor. It's really a unique language training model tailored to our specific needs. It's nothing like a traditional class – there's a great deal of in-built flexibility. My instructor was fabulous. The sessions enabled me to practise what I already knew and learn new vocabulary, but most of all, they gave me confidence. It's important for me to be able to speak with my patients in the official language they've chosen."



Rebekah Malcolm

Registered Dietician
The Moncton Hospital

A flexible and adaptable format

From its beginnings, *Café de Paris* opted for a flexible approach adapted to the specific needs of employees using its services: level of linguistic competency as well as the length and the format of the sessions.

Much as in tutoring, the approach is adapted to the specific employee's linguistic level and particular challenges and objectives in his/her efforts to feel more comfortable with the active offer.

The *Café de Paris* offers individual as well as small or large group sessions, depending on participants' needs and preferences. These sessions vary in length between 30 and 60 minutes, according to the employee's availability. The schedule of *Café de Paris* sessions can also vary to accommodate participants' timetables. Although the majority of sessions take place during the regular work week, others are held on weekends.





Variations on the *Café de Paris* model

With time, the initial *Café de Paris* model evolved and became more structured. Different variations on the *Café de Paris* model then appeared, albeit with the same view to reaching the greatest number of people and meeting all their needs, however specific.

In addition to the standard *Café de Paris* model offering services at fixed times and places, there are now theme-based *Cafés de Paris* and mobile *Cafés de Paris*.



Theme-based

Café de Paris



Theme-based *Cafés de Paris* consists of two-hour sessions targeting a particular medical sector. Through role-playing exercises, terminology specific to the healthcare field, routine expressions used with patients, and commonly used questions and responses all enable employees to practise what they might experience in their everyday working lives. Official Languages has developed some 30 specific theme-based modules pertaining to such subjects as phlebotomy, oncology, emergency services, neurology, psychiatry, geriatric care, cardiac care, etc.

The mobile

Café de Paris



The mobile *Café de Paris* can bring its services to different units in a facility to support target groups. Certain departments such as the extended care unit with its patient rest periods lend themselves to this model.

Steps involved in setting up a *Café de Paris*

1

Secure the commitment and support of management and senior management

Before setting up a *Café de Paris* in a facility, it is crucial to meet with senior management to explain the context and objectives of the project and obtain its endorsement in order to help mobilize employees around the new initiative. It is also vital that senior management communicate its approval to all managers and employees. As well, senior management must support its managers in decisions regarding the active offer and Official Languages services.



2

Identify a champion within the organisation to advocate for the project

Being able to count on the support of an Official Languages champion from the ranks of senior management to enthusiastically promote the initiative is a valuable asset in its implementation. As a member of the same team, a champion facilitates contact with managers, his/her credibility opening lines of communication with Official Languages and paving the way to its initiatives.

3

Meeting managers and program directors

It is important to meet with managers and program directors in order to effectively describe the environment with regard to employees and their specific needs as well as challenges and constraints. These meetings also make it possible to organize and optimize logistics. Managers wish to be asked about their linguistic needs to help them deliver services to the population in both official languages; it makes them feel supported in rising to the challenge of providing the active offer and in many cases, encourages them to collaborate from the outset.

4

Identify the *Café de Paris* format best suited to your needs

Present an accurate picture of your organization and the linguistic needs of your employees. You must be thoroughly familiar with the internal culture. You'll then be able to determine the format your *Café de Paris* will take: fixed, mobile, or theme-based. You can also decide on your timetable and the number of sessions offered.

5

Call on dynamic and enthusiastic instructors

The success of this method owes much to the personality of the instructors. It is of utmost importance that the *Café de Paris* be facilitated by dynamic and caring instructors with highly developed social skills. Creating a climate of trust conducive to learning is key.

Instructors must be diligent and flexible so as to adjust to employees' work schedules and constraints. Unforeseen events such as emergencies may also arise at any time, requiring scheduled sessions to be cancelled.





6

Identify a physical space dedicated specifically to *Café de Paris*

If you opt for a fixed type of *Café de Paris*, you must find a physical location that is both welcoming and conducive to learning. To create enthusiasm, the *Café de Paris* must be visible in the facility's environment. The *Café de Paris* décor can be theme-inspired and furnished with comfortable chairs, tables, shelves for such teaching materials as English/French dictionaries, visual dictionaries, magazines, books, games, etc.

7

Offer participants educational resources

Café de Paris makes a variety of teaching materials available to employees: dictionaries, magazines, worksheets based on proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced), websites, short phrases in English and French helping employees perform their duties (often posted at their workplace), a booklet of useful "go-to" phrases and expressions for all occasions, picture-word vocabulary, and any other educational or linguistic tool facilitating the employee's tasks. Monitors can also provide tools and on-line resources adapted to the level and needs of learners. To enable the monitors to reach the most number of people possible, a diversity of activities must be offered to reflect various tastes and spheres of interest.



8

Promote *Café de Paris* within the facility

To dispel any misunderstanding, ensure that employees are thoroughly aware of the *Café de Paris* project early on in the process. For instance, a memo or an email from senior management clearly outlining the objectives behind the project might be provided. Interest and enthusiasm for the initiative must be cultivated. It must be made clear that it's intended for them, to support them in their work. Personalized email messages (word of the week, summary of session, links, etc.) sent regularly also helps sustain interest and encourage learning.

9

Organize “ice-breaking” activities

Ice-breaking activities are also important in getting employees to leave their comfort zone while having fun. In an attempt to reduce cultural barriers and promote exchanges between the Anglophone and Francophone communities, theme-based recreational and cultural activities are organized (holidays, seasons, etc.). These activities allow participants to experience the French language in a more informal and enjoyable context which, for certain individuals, is less intimidating. In addition, activities in the community can be organized, such as a visit to a museum followed by a meal to discover typical foods, or an outing to see a performance or a play (with linguistic support). Such activities make it possible for participants to become familiar with a new culture and a new language in a relaxed atmosphere.



10

Evaluation

A regular evaluation is essential to make linguistic support available to as many employees as possible and determine how best to support them. In this way, certain activities and teaching methods can be maintained while allowing for any tweaking reflecting constructive criticism provided by employees. Feedback serves to make adjustments so that *Café de Paris* remains an effective and relevant tool for employees.

"Ever since it started, I've been going to Café de Paris two or three times a week to keep up and improve my level of French. It helps me provide our Francophone patients with better service. Even though I'm at an advanced level of French, I still feel the need to practise so as not to lose the skills I now have. Café de Paris has enabled me to expand my vocabulary and learn new medical terms related to my work. I find being able to converse in French on a regular basis is very positive; it's restored my confidence.

I love the relaxed learning atmosphere of Café de Paris. There's no pressure, no judgment, and it's so user-friendly."



Hélène Vautour

Diabetes Education Nurse
Saint John Regional Hospital



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This document is funded by Health Canada
as part of the Roadmap for Canada's
Official Languages 2013-2018: Education,
Immigration, Communities.

The views expressed in this document are
not necessarily those of Health Canada.



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