



Ronald Bisson et associé.e.s  
and Associates Inc.



Consultants en gestion



Management Consulting



Association des francophones  
du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario



**FINAL REPORT**

**“REFLECTION ON TRANSITION”**

**REPORT OF THE PLANNING SESSION  
HELD ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2010**

**MUNICIPALITY OF GREENSTONE**

**ACTIVITY ORGANIZED BY THE ASSOCIATION DES FRANCOPHONES  
DU NORD-OUEST DE L'ONTARIO (AFNOO)  
(ASSOCIATION OF FRANCOPHONES OF NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO) WITH  
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM FEDNOR**

Tel: (613) 741-4655  
Fax: (613) 749-2252  
ronaldb@bisson.ca  
<http://www.bisson.ca>

235 Chemin Montréal,  
Suite 209, Ottawa,  
Ontario, K1L 6C7

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. CONTEXT .....	3
2. OVERVIEW OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT OF THE REGION.....	4
3. ANALYSIS – WHAT EXPLAINS OUR CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION?.....	5
4. VISION PLANS.....	6
5. FOLLOW-UP.....	8
6. EVALUATION.....	9
7. FOLLOW-UP RECOMMENDATIONS.....	10
8. APPENDIX 1: DETAILED DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT OF THE REGION.....	12

## 1. Context

The Association des francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario (AFNOO) (Association of Francophones of Northwestern Ontario) received funding from FEDNOR to implement a project to promote the economic development of Francophones and the entire population of the municipality of Greenstone.

The project aims to encourage Francophones to take charge of their destiny in Longlac, Geraldton and Nakina, communities that are going through a transition period in the wake of the economic crisis, especially in the forest industry. Through this project, a community development agent was hired and trained to help empower the communities and their Francophone organizations, pull themselves out of the economic depression the region is experiencing and develop positive solutions. A day of community thinking was planned to start the process. Regular follow-ups will be done to ensure that the recommendations coming out of the brainstorming exercise will produce tangible results.

The need for this project is described in the AFNOO's strategic plan entitled "*A strategic approach: AFNOO five-year plan 2009-2014*" published in December 2008. In the plan's action section entitled "*Community and Economic Development*", one of the priorities is to help the communities find funding for community organizers/agents. Specifically, the recommendations from focus groups held in Geraldton (20 participants) and Longlac (27 participants) were to use the time available at organizations and clubs to promote community and economic development with a focus on training the next generation (succession planning).

The project is part of the strategic objectives of the *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality* announced by the federal government in June 2008. From 2008 until March 31, 2013, FedNor/Industry Canada will invest 4.5 million dollars through the Economic Development Initiative (EDI), to support business and economic development activities that encourage sustainable growth in Ontario's Francophone communities (the official language minority community in Ontario), in two priority areas.

- Community strategic planning activities that enhance the economic base and competitiveness of Francophone communities and small- and medium-sized enterprises; and
- Business and economic development activities that respond to the needs and foster economic growth of Francophone communities and sectors such as tourism, culture, knowledge-based industries and manufacturing.

The objective of the *Roadmap* is to strengthen linguistic duality, reinforce Canada's national identity and provide economic benefits for all Canadians.

The brainstorming session was held on Saturday, September 11, 2010. Forty-six people attended: 22 from Longlac, 14 from Geraldton, 4 from Nakina, 3 from rural areas, 2 from Thunder Bay and 1 from Hearst. The session lasted from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The agenda was as follows:

#### Morning

- Portrait of the region
- Challenge analysis: People say: “The economy is hurting in our region.” Let’s analyse this. Is it true? If so, why?

#### Afternoon

- Examples from elsewhere – Vision portraits
- Opening the door to reflection: What are some economic alternatives for our region?
- Conclusion: Next steps coming out of today’s session

The AFNOO, in partnership with the national Francophone economic development and employability network (Réseau de développement économique et d’employabilité, or RDÉE, Ontario), hired our firm to prepare and lead the session, write the planning session report and make follow-up recommendations.

## **2. Overview of the demographic portrait of the region**

The firm prepared a demographic portrait of the region of Greenstone using data from the 2006 census – First official language spoken. (See Appendix 1.) The highlights are as follows:

- Greenstone has a population of 4,860 people, comprised of 75% Anglophones (3,655) and 24% Francophones (1,155).
- The Francophone community is aging. Young Francophones aged 0 to 19 years make up 12% of their total cohort, compared to young Anglophones of the same age who make up 87% of their cohort. Among people 50 years and over, Francophone represent 30% of their cohort and Anglophones, 68%.
- The French language is alive and well in Greenstone since 85% of Francophones speak French at least regularly at home.
- Francophones are overrepresented in some occupations, such as business (finance and administration) and those unique to primary industry, but are underrepresented in professions such as health care, management, as well as natural and applied sciences.
- Francophones are overrepresented in some sectors such as forestry, real estate services, finance and insurance, but are underrepresented in public administration, construction, accommodation and food services.
- French is used daily in the workplace: 86% of Francophones use French at least regularly at work.
- Francophones have a smaller proportion of wage earners between \$30,000 and \$59,999 (29% versus 37% for Anglophones), but a larger proportion of people who earn \$60,000 and over (21% versus 17%).

### 3. Analysis – what explains our current economic situation?

The following question was used to launch the discussion: *People say the economy is hurting in Greenstone. Is it true? If so, why?*

The question was discussed for about thirty minutes. All agreed that the economy is doing very poorly in our region.

Each participant has a sad story to tell about families whose members lost their job, were forced to leave the area to find work, etc. Schools have seen registration plummet, and young people are leaving the region in droves. Social clubs are losing volunteers and are seeing a decrease in revenue. Salaries have been cut. Adult children are coming back home to live with their parents.

The group also noted that different segments of the population filter this reality through different lenses. For example, retirees say that they are less affected than young people by this economic depression because they are still receiving their pension. Where they notice it the most is in real estate and the shrinking value of their own house. Others employed in public administration are not as hard hit since they were able to keep their job.

The dependency on a single industry is the factor mentioned the most often as the reason for this difficult economic situation. People pointed out that forestry was the main employer and that a whole series of related small businesses depended indirectly on this industry. When the main industry shut down, this created a domino effect in the community.

Some said that it's hard to talk about diversifying the economy when times are good and money is coming in. Why look for alternatives when everything is going well? The community was under the illusion that financial prosperity would last forever. A while ago, students who wanted to go to university were told by their friends: "What's the point of getting a big diploma only to earn a small salary?"

People spent a few minutes discussing the Ring of Fire project. In general, comments reflected the need to continue taking steps to bring this type of project to fruition, while cautioning that the community should not fall into the same trap again by putting all its eggs in the same basket.

At the end of the conversation, there was consensus about the need to diversify the local economy while continuing efforts to develop large projects. It is important to do both. This is all the more true when one considers that 75% of Ontario's employees work for companies with fewer than 10 employees.

#### 4. Vision Plans

The firm presented examples of communities elsewhere in Canada that faced economic crises similar to what Greenstone is now experiencing. These communities developed various means to take charge of their destiny, namely by implementing a planning process called Vision Plan. Vision Plans are economic development plans which enable communities to articulate their vision of the future by building on industrial, commercial, residential and tourism projects. These Visions allow for the advancement of local development plans which:

- Take into account local resources (human, natural, economic, etc.);
- Take into account the ideas and visions for the future of business people and stakeholders interested in the development of their community;
- Build on the strength of local champions;
- Are implemented through a very inclusive, integrated approach;
- Are implemented in partnership with key local stakeholders: municipal councils, municipal elected officials, chambers of commerce, various organizations, business people, economic development corporations, etc.

Many regions have implemented projects such as these. As an example, the moderator presented projects that were put in place in Manitoba. They can be viewed on the website of the Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (Economic Development Council of Manitoba's Bilingual Municipalities) where this information was sourced: <http://www.cdem.com/content.php?pageID=4>.

The group then participated in an exercise of reflection taken from the Vision process. The objective of the exercise was to do analyses that would encourage people to envision a better economic future. Four questions were asked and groups were formed to discuss each question. The goal was to shed new light on the situation and discover a new potential for the region.

##### **Question 1:** What are the unique features of our region?

This group pretended to be a first-time visitor to Greenstone and described the region's features to a friend from out of town. This idea was borrowed from the First Impressions projects implemented by the Saskatchewan government a few years ago. The people involved in community A (mayor, councillors and residents) participate in a workshop which teaches them how to observe signs of economic vitality in a given village. Next, the group makes an unannounced visit to village B and records its observations. Conversely, another group from village B visits village A and does the same exercise. Both groups meet afterwards for a debriefing. The project is similar to the concept of the mystery shopper used by retailers to measure the level of service in their store. Participants maintained that the experience was very revealing and enriching for both sides.

Participants at this table identified various features that make Greenstone a special place:

- A mixed population composed of members of First Nations, Francophones and Anglophones;
- The diversity of languages spoken in the region;
- A healthy natural environment: lake, fishing, hiking, wide open spaces, tranquility and purity;

- Natural resources;
- A safe community in which to raise children;
- A friendly welcome.

**Question 2:** What are the region's strengths?

This group sought to identify the region's strengths that could be turned into economic opportunities. They identified the following elements that could be used as a springboard for various economic projects:

- The natural environment, fresh air, wild animals – tourism – the example of Churchill, Manitoba, was cited where people come to see the polar bears;
- Blueberries – agro-food products;
- The lake – cruises;
- Intensive gardening or greenhouse crops – green energy;
- The potential use of bilingualism in developing the language industry;
- Existing infrastructures – everyone says we are far from everything, but a large portion of Canada's road trade passes right in front of our door;
- The entrepreneurial spirit of its residents;
- Wind – we have a lot of wind and other regions have found ways to harness its energy to generate revenues.

**Question 3:** What economic development opportunities would we like to explore?

This group identified opportunities for economic projects in various sectors:

**Tourism**

- Alternative medicine centre, alternative health centre;
- Artists' guild;
- Respite centre for people in need;
- Traditional art similar to "Eagle's Earth" (inspired by the spirituality of the First Nations);
- Boat rides on the lake;
- Hunting;
- Using actors to reproduce historical voyages of Canada's early voyageurs.

**Green energy**

- Growing blueberries, gathering wild mushrooms (chanterelles);
- Wind farms and solar panels;
- Recycling: recycling centre for tires and glass (recovered for processing, creating small scale plants, even dividing wood allocations); the group noted that there is currently no recycling program in the region;
- Growing hemp;
- Examining studies that have already been conducted (business maintenance and expansion, gap analysis, cogeneration analysis, mining studies, etc.).

### Community for retirees and artists

- Review health care services and increase health care available to seniors;
- Research Native handicrafts and art that could be promoted (Internet, creating a local trade centre).

### Industry support services

- Certified services, ex.: Actlabs, see <http://www.actlabs.com/page.aspx?menu=40&app=220&cat1=502&tp=2&lk=no>;
- Services related to geophysical prospecting;  
Line cutters;
- Certification services for various trades (mining sector).

### Question 4: What economic development opportunities exist for a green economy?

This group noted the following elements:

#### Recycling

- Reuse/recycle: wood, windows, bricks, cement... give a second life to used products;
- Home-made handicrafts: establish a high school programme to initiate young people to the handcraft trade;
- Recycling clothing (to make towels and insulation, weaving);
- Recycling for compost;
- Recycling wood for heating;
- Cogeneration plant: electricity supplier, use of forest produce.

#### Environment

- Develop cycling trails, nature trails, community gardens, botanical gardens and community hen houses;
- Develop wind turbines in partnership with the First Nations.

#### Animal farming

- Fishing, fish farming, selling cooked fish;
- Mini-farms: fresh eggs and vegetables, fine herbs, locally produced food products.

### 5. Follow-up

The session ended with a discussion on possible ways to follow up on the day's events.

Participants really enjoyed the format of this planning session as it gave everyone present the opportunity to share their ideas in a positive environment. Participants all want a follow-up.

It was suggested that all organizations and communities need to get involved. Many said that the community needed to retain control of its destiny in order to turn itself around. The



municipality, CFDC, AFNOO, RDÉE and other organizations must get involved in order to develop a truly collective strategy.

## 6. Evaluation

Thirty-five people filled out the evaluation form. The quantitative results are as follows:

1. Did the session meet your expectations? The average was **4.66** on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not at all and 5 = totally).
2. What did you think of the moderator? The average was **4.80** on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = totally unsatisfied and 5 = totally satisfied).
3. Was the day's session a productive way to share ideas? The average was **4.69** on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = totally disagree and 5 = totally agree).

These averages indicate a very high satisfaction level among participants.

Twenty-five people wrote general comments as part of their qualitative evaluation. Many of these comments request a follow-up session.

1. This session was very productive and informative.
2. I really enjoyed the mix of citizens. It's the first time I felt it was not always the same faces around the table.
3. People really do want to take charge of their destiny.
4. I was surprised to see how many ideas come out of nothing. There is a huge potential, I am very happy to see the desire to move things forward. That's what I believe.
5. Bravo, the session was very well organized. The moderator was very knowledgeable and used his moderating techniques well. Continue the good work, you are important for our communities.
6. Excellent presentation, it's a good coordination to open doors for this community. I hope there will be a **follow-up**.
7. Very positive and encouraging.
8. Very beneficial day, some very good ideas were brought to the table. Now we have to work at **bringing these ideas to life**. What's the **next step**?
9. The session was very enriching and well organized.
10. We need to make sure that there will be a **follow-up**.
11. The session was well run, everyone had the chance and the time they needed to express their point of view. Thank you.
12. We need a **follow-up**.
13. I appreciate the opening that this session brought to our community. I would have like to see more concrete actions.
14. We need a **follow-up** on the subjects that were discussed.
15. The winds of change have blown through our minds. **I can't wait to see the next steps**.
16. After this consultation, the next steps are still vague.
17. We can't stop now. We need a **follow-up**.
18. Sylvie Lemieux did a great job bringing together a variety of people.

Congratulations.

19. A great beginning. We need a **follow-up**.
20. We need a **follow-up**.
21. We should do this more often. Thank you.
22. Very good presentation.
23. A **follow-up** is essential.
24. Very good.
25. A **follow-up** is very important, given the interest expressed here today.

## 7. Follow-up recommendations

Following this session, our firm recommends AFNOO take the following actions:

1. Organize a meeting to present the report.

Rationale: It was expected in the scope of the project that AFNOO would organize a second meeting to present the planning session report. This meeting could be held shortly after receiving the final report.

2. Present the report to the municipality.

Rationale: The municipality is the level of government which is closest to the community. Municipalities are exercising a growing leadership in the economic development of their region and in their population's prosperity. The exercise conducted by AFNOO has been very well received by all participants. It would be appropriate to present the report to the municipality to make elected representatives and employees aware of what was discussed. Such a meeting would also provide the opportunity to discuss possible follow-up action. As a reminder, one of the principles of community economic development is to ensure that the community participates in its own development. It is not a question of handing over responsibility for economic development to the municipality, but rather of ensuring that the municipality plays an active role as a partner working within its jurisdiction. The discussions should identify ways to bring the desire to work together to fruition while respecting each stakeholder's role and the region's various linguistic and cultural components, which are economic assets for all.

3. Create a local Francophone economic development committee.

Rationale: Participants clearly indicated their desire to participate in the community engagement that will be required to boost the region's economy. The Greenstone Economic Development Corporation brings together a wide variety of local partners. Francophones participate in this group on the same level as other residents of the region. However, there does not seem to be an economic development organization that brings together Francophones as Francophones and that conveys the collective identity of Greenstone's Francophone population. Greenstone's French-speaking population is an important value-added component of the region's economy. The assertion of the region's Francophone collective identity will make it easier for the community to participate in all initiatives aimed at reinforcing Canada's Francophone-based economic development. The objective of these initiatives is to utilize the Francophone presence throughout Canada and elsewhere in the world to build new bridges for trade which

would not otherwise exist. For such a strategy to succeed, it is necessary to develop a sense of the Francophone identity in the region's economy similar to what was achieved in the areas of education and culture. Francophones must therefore find a way to convey their own economic energy.

A coaching committee was set up to support the organization of September's brainstorming session. During the session, several people were identified who would be willing to act as resource persons for various economic initiatives and who would be ready to invest their time and energy in projects of interest to them. During the meeting on the first recommendation, the Francophone community could host a discussion to determine which economic development tool it would like to implement to bring together Greenstone's Francophones and give them a sense of economic identity.

4. Establish partnerships with the Greenstone Economic Development Corporation, RDÉE Ontario, the Anglophone community and First Nations in the area of economic development.

Rationale: The experiences of minority Francophone communities elsewhere in Canada show that reinforcing the Francophone economic identity is not automatically seen as an asset by the community at large. Some stakeholders feel worried and sometimes excluded. Even Francophones do not always recognize the advantages of creating a collective sense of economic identity for themselves. It is therefore necessary to establish solid functional partnerships with other members of the community (First Nations, Anglophones) in order to ensure that each stakeholder group can contribute to the development of the entire community while respecting the roles and distinctiveness of each component. These partnerships help all to understand that Francophones want to contribute fully to the economic development of their region, while helping to reinforce the Francophone presence in Canada.

5. Explore in detail various opportunities for economic development initiatives and make choices about which projects to pursue.

Rationale: As a reminder, the overall strategy proposed is to continue to support megaprojects like the Ring of Fire, while developing a multitude of smaller projects in parallel. Participants generated many ideas for potential projects and initiatives, but there are certainly more ideas to be developed. The economic development committee mentioned in recommendation #3 will need to organize a series of meetings throughout the coming year to explore in greater detail some high benefit projects, namely in the areas of alternative energy, the environment, tourism, the promotion of locally-grown items, youth and others. It will be necessary to get past the initial step of generating ideas to actually developing projects and implementing initiatives. Funding sources will have to be found for these initiatives. Here is an example that was discussed during the September's session which was new news to participants: Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) program conducted by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities <http://gmf.fcm.ca/fr/Partners-for-Climate-Protection/>.

6. Develop links with other Northern Ontario Francophones who are working on economic development in their respective communities.

Rationale: The federal government invests large sums of money in the development of minority Francophones communities in Canada, in particular through the *Roadmap* initiative adopted in 2008. This initiative is made up of several programs, including economic programs. The objective of these programs is to reinforce Francophone communities on all levels. The objective of this recommendation is to have Greenstone's Francophone population participate in economic development initiatives implemented first and foremost in Northwestern Ontario, next in Northern Ontario and lastly in the province of Ontario and elsewhere in Canada. This would allow Greenstone's Francophones to benefit from lessons learned, avoid reinventing the wheel and develop new partnerships with other Francophones.

7. Immediately initiate the organization of a planning session on green energy.

Rationale: New technologies and green energy generated a lot of interest during the session. Governments are increasing their investments in initiatives of this kind. We are proposing that AFNOO organize a one-day session in the coming months on this topic. AFNOO should establish a partnership with the Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM) which has a head start in implementing these types of initiatives. The CDEM could provide a resource person to present the projects implemented to date in Manitoba and explain how they got off the ground. This would give the people of Greenstone the opportunity to see how Francophones from elsewhere in Canada succeeded in launching green energy projects. From there, interested parties would have information at their disposal to launch a first initiative in Greenstone. We also propose that AFNOO organize this session as quickly as possible, even before the end of 2010, in order to sustain the momentum generated in September.

**8. Appendix 1: Detailed demographic portrait of the region**

Appendix 1 presents the region's statistical data. All data is sourced from the 2006 census.

Methodology: Small numbers have been rounded to protect respondents' anonymity. The categories *French* and *English* in the heading "First Official Language Spoken" were used. We did not use the categories *None* or *French and English*. These two factors explain why the numbers do not always add up to the totals under each heading.