
P'TIT BONHEUR DE SAINT-CAMILLE



ISSUE: Building on mobilization and involvement from local communities

ITINERARY 3B

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PROMOTERS

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Presentation of the issue:

In 1914, the municipality of Saint-Camille had 1,200 residents. In the 1980s, the population reaches a threshold of 440 people. The old general store is recovered by the financial institution, and the citizens get mobilized to acquire the building and found the NPO: Le P'tit Bonheur de Saint-Camille.

The people's concern is linked to the population decline of their rural municipality. This decrease causes the weakening of the community, the loss of local services and brings up the issue of converting derelict buildings.

Two major obstacles can be identified for the implementation of the project:

- the first issue: funding for the organization. The municipality, due to its size, has financial and taxation limits. In addition, the different levels of government can only offer modest contributions through very few projects. What remains is self-financing, to ensure sustainability, and the use of volunteers;
- the second issue is the small population of the community, which requires dedication beyond measure from the volunteers, outstanding mobilization and awareness of their importance to the project, and constant innovation.

Presentation by Benoit Bourassa, Director, and Patrick Merrien, President:

Le P'tit Bonheur was founded 25 years ago, in 1988.

Le P'tit Bonheur is a meeting place that welcomes all people, from all age groups, from Saint-Camille and the surrounding communities. The project has progressed and, in its current form, aims to save one of the buildings part of an architectural ensemble. It also includes the creation of a program of cultural and community activities that will contribute to the municipality's strategy towards the retention and attraction of families. The project activities are divided into four areas:

- the performing arts;
- the visual arts;
- the community services: morning coffee, communal meals, pizza/pastry sale, office space and meeting room leasing, Internet access and copy center;
- the Centre d'interprétation du milieu rural – CIMR (Rural community interpretation center): structured activities, communications, continuous training, research/development on rural innovation.

The values conveyed by Le P'tit Bonheur are: individual and collectively-shared leadership, solidarity, trust, tolerance, allowance for mistakes, innovation, etc. A practical example demonstrating the openness of the organization is presented: the current president was elected just two years following his arrival in the camillois community.

A bit of history is discussed during the presentation, thus identifying the origins of the project.

Over recent decades, several crises have led to a loss of local services: the loss of the dairy cooperative and a fire that destroyed the community hall, now non-existent. The Caisse Desjardins recovered the general store. Several initiatives were created to try retake the building, but were unsuccessful. A few years later, a grouping of services under one roof is created: library, Municipality, fire station, youth center.

In 1988, the *Groupe du Coin* (local group) is formed. This group of people is willing to invest locally to acquire the building which had been recovered by the Caisse Desjardins.

The key elements to remember according to Benoit Bourassa and Patrick Merrien:

- 1st key: the historical and social legitimacy;
- 2nd key: collegiality;
- 3rd key: usability;
- 4th key: maturity;
- 5th key: creativity;
- 6th key: reality;
- 7th key: adaptability.

Presentation by Renée Wilsey, head of the performing arts department:

Renée Wilsey has been with the organization since 1993. She says that she has made a foray into an inspiring world: the performing arts. Le P'tit Bonheur is a professional broadcasting facility, recognized by the Ministry of Culture and Communications and by Canadian Heritage. Each year, the facility hosts fifteen professional shows and ten "public development" presentations that offer a venue to emerging artists. The artistic direction, which has been the same for several years, prioritizes world music and songwriters. Throughout the year, they strive for a 50/50 balance.

The key elements to remember according to Renée Wilsey:

- concentrate activities within a given period instead of extending the programming throughout the year. During the summer, there are no performances at Le P'tit Bonheur (several festivals take place during this period);
- stabilize the financial resources. The financial picture of the sector demonstrates that 50% of the funding comes from own-source revenues and 50% from public funds (Ministry of Culture and Communications: 35%; Canadian Heritage: 15%). The Mécénat Placements Culture Program (Patronage culture investments), put forward by the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec - CALQ (Québec's Council of creative arts, literature & languages), has generated two fundraising activities (\$76,000 and \$125,000). This funding is one of the most important for the body because it stabilizes the financial resources of all sectors;
- membership and active participation to the professional networks are necessary and important keys to the distributor business. At the regional level, our presence in the Center Network includes 28 distributors from five regions. We are members of RIDEAU, the provincial network composed of 160 distributors for 300 concert halls, and grouping eight networks;
- join the networks to acquire the knowledge necessary as a distributor, and participate in the community life in order to find solutions to the current issues of this field;
- cultural mediation: a cultural approach is integrated with the development, for example, the partnership between schools and culture. This is part of the complete cultural mediation, put forward by the body several years ago;
- there is a committee of volunteers, a member of the Board and from management from the arts & entertainment sector. The volunteers are involved and engaged. They are important players in all the decision-making related to the programming. They are present during the performances and make sure that everything runs smoothly;
- performing arts are one of the oldest working area of the organization (1990) and, to this day, it remains very important for the promotion of the entire body. Putting forward culture as a gathering medium remains a winning strategy for the community.

Presentation by Michel Bachelet, head of the visual arts department:

Mr. Bachelet indicates that this component receives no subsidies. During openings, happy-hour events are organized as a self-financing activity. As well, two recurring events contribute to this sector's financing: the Salon de creation (Creation exhibition) and the Seymour Segal painting workshop. Both activities have existed since the founding of the organization, 25 years ago, and contribute to the promotion and good reputation of Le P'tit Bonheur. All of these activities are the lifeline of the visual arts department, but without forgetting the volunteers who prepare exhibitions.

Presentation by Marie-Claude Guyon, responsible for the pizza sale:

Madame Guyon says that 11,000 pizzas are prepared annually and distributed every Friday on two sites: Le P'tit Bonheur and Asbestos. Ten varieties of pizza are offered, 50 weeks per year. The dough is prepared by the baker around 3 AM. Then, from 7 to 9 AM, a team comes in to complete the preparation. The team is mostly composed of volunteers and has two permanent employees. Cookies and cakes are baked and sold on site (5,000-6,000/year), as well as French sticks. The orders are processed between 10 AM and 4 PM. Pizza is served either in a trio (soup or salad + 2 slices of pizza) or as an "all-you-can-eat" package. On average, 70 people, including 15-20 children, lunch there every Friday. Le P'tit Bonheur also encourages the local producers by buying locally foods such as boar, ham, cheese and other products.

RESEARCHER

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Summary of the researcher's presentation:

At the beginning of his presentation, Mr. Klein stresses that the researchers do not work for Saint-Camille, but rather with Saint-Camille. Mr. Klein also notes that Saint-Camille is an iconic local development achievement. *Le Monde diplomatique* publication named it "First global village" (www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2006/08/CASSEN/13778) – French only.

He says the community has given, and continues to give itself, the tools necessary to develop further. Because the initiatives are started at the local level, they have a greater impact on the community. In addition, culture is an essential part of this local mobilization.

Saint-Camille had to overcome the challenge of demography. The population decline affected the economy, social life, etc. In recent years, a population growth occurred: 75 people arrived and built a property within a housing project called Coopérative du rang 13 (Country road 13 cooperative).

Among the many initiatives of Le P'tit Bonheur, the researcher mentions one for a global project: the *Ateliers des savoirs partagés* (Shared knowledge workshops); recitsrecettes.org/workshops.

The researcher focuses on the challenge of cultural integration. He mentions that in the case of Le P'tit Bonheur and its community, culture becomes a way of life. For example, when a gold-mining company came to explore the area, the people stood together to preserve the landscape heritage. Gold would compromise the living environment: "The Art rush instead of gold."

The researcher explains the theory on: the effects of local initiatives within territorial areas.

First, he notes that a local initiative is a collective action. This initiative creates a resource mobilization and subsequently generates a local solidarity. This brings a territorial consciousness that creates a dialogue, in turn, this promotes individual and collective empowerment that subsequently generates new local initiatives, the development of entrepreneurial skills, etc. An endless spinning wheel...

The slide show well describes the concept, which is exemplified below:

- Le P'tit Bonheur is a place to regroup and develop a sense of belonging; we are very proud of this;
- we value human capital (volunteering), which translates into local solidarity and leads to increased self-esteem;
- collective action will create a territorial consciousness: history, identity, pride;
- and finally, Le P'tit Bonheur enables us to launch more initiatives that create the same process again and again.

Social innovation definition as per Mr. Klein:

"A set of coordinated actions within a shared governance model that expresses various types of leadership, where individual and collective goals coexist and where the actors collectively learn to work together. The structured convergence of all these actions towards a common purpose is a social innovation."

QUESTION PERIOD

Q.: In regard to public funding, has there been any changes or impacts?

A.: Le P'tit Bonheur receives funding (50%) for entertainment (cultural aspect). The other forms of financing are for the projects (CIMR, Inode Estrie, Ateliers des savoirs partagés), and the revenue from the pizza sales supports 60-70% of this aspect. The project that has had a significant impact within the organization is undoubtedly: Mécénat Placements Culture (Patronage culture investments). This program allowed us to put forward fundraisers financially supported by the CALQ, and has stabilized, in the medium and long-term, financing for Le P'tit Bonheur. This program has had a positive impact on many organizations throughout Quebec (see website: www.calq.gouv.qc.ca/mpc/accueil.htm – French only).

Q.: What is the volunteer/staff ratio?

A.: Ten volunteers for one employee. Le P'tit Bonheur has 100 volunteers and 10 employees (part-time, temporary and permanent).

Q.: How did you renew your team of volunteers?

A.: The Rang 13 housing project has brought in some of our new volunteers. In 2003, a survey was conducted and the citizens accepted the challenge to increase the population by 10% in 10 years. A regular newsletter was published; it was distributed by e-mail and included several pictures and articles, which made it more attractive. Every six weeks, meetings were held for the new buyers of the housing project. Incentives were offered, such as a tax break for 2½ years. These measures resulted in a population increase of nearly 17%; a new population very involved as volunteers.

Q.: What were the benefits for you from the researchers who participated?

A.: We had a meeting with the ACFAS, applied ethics courses were given to many citizens. Participating to the researches centered on the Saint-Camille developers allowed us to establish privileged relationships with academia.

Q.: Since you have a mercantile sector, are you subject to taxation?

A.: Yes, we pay taxes and must comply with hygiene and sanitation rules. All products sold are taxable. For the *Mécénat Placements Culture* Program, a tax receipt for charitable donation is issued.

Q.: Do you feel that the strengthening of Saint-Camille has created solidarity or conflict with other municipalities of the MRC?

A.: You can sometimes feel a slight rivalry; however, the projects conducted here have helped some municipalities start similar initiatives, such as the local housing project in Saint-Adrien.

Q.: What status do you have?

A.: An NPO with a charitable registration number.

Q.: Do you have a membership?

A.: Yes, it is annual, for individuals or families.

Q.: Is there turn-over within your board?

A.: It is composed of seven members. Formerly, some members had been there for a long time. Lately, the succession has been more important. The oldest directors have been there for four years. The directors must be very involved, as is the reality for many such organizations. The involvement and role of the board are also major issues in several organizations; this is a constant training topic during network meetings.

Q.: What is the meaning of the labels on the chairs?

A.: The label means that the person identified has financially participated in the funding project with the Ministry of Culture and Communications. This project involved the important purchase of performing arts equipment. The sale of chairs was symbolic, as each donor would have his name engraved on one of the audience chairs. The campaign raised \$15,000 and completed the self-funding required for the public project.

Q.: Is the *Groupe du Coin* still involved?

A.: A few years back, when Le P'tit Bonheur was experiencing financial difficulties, they bought the building and sold it two years later. The *Groupe du Coin* had also invested in the presbytery, for the construction of La Corvée housing cooperative.

Q.: Regarding the Rang 13 project, were the farmsteads distributed? Is it a co-op?

A.: Yes, it is a cooperative; a private owner sold his land to the cooperative. The new owners created a solidarity cooperative. The members are owners of their land and homes. Two conditions had to be met by the future owners, namely: to build within five years of the purchase of the land, and to do so for a permanent home. The second criterion was to have an agroforestry project (garden, animals as a means of subsistence, beekeeping, planting, etc.).

Final results for the community: 35 children come from Rang 13; they are mostly of school age and attend the village school. The newcomers are involved in the library, the Development Corporation, Le P'tit Bonheur, the Municipality and others.

The country roads (Rangs) are named in honor of the pioneers. Rank 13 was formerly very populous, but since it did not have electricity at the time, people had left it to find a new home.

Conclusion: we must rely on reality to change our destiny!

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

NOTE: All linked documents (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.) are only available in their original French version.

PowerPoint from Benoit Bourassa and Patrick Merrien, Le P'tit Bonheur de Saint-Camille

PowerPoint from Renée Wilsey, Le P'tit Bonheur de Saint-Camille

PowerPoint from Juan-Luis Klein, UQAM

Website P'tit Bonheur de Saint-Camille: www.ptitbonheur.org