



March 2022

A Reason to Stay: Retaining Youth in Northern Ontario

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Land Acknowledgement

NPI would like to acknowledge the First Peoples on whose traditional territories we live and work. NPI is grateful for the opportunity to have our offices located on these lands and thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land.

Our main offices:

- Thunder Bay is on Robinson-Superior Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg and Fort William First Nation.
- Sudbury is on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Atikameksheng Anishnaabeg as well as Wahnapiatae First Nation.
- Kirkland Lake is on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of Cree, Ojibway, and Algonquin Peoples.
- All are home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

We recognize and appreciate the historic connection that Indigenous people have to these territories. We recognize the contributions that they have made in shaping and strengthening these communities, the province and the country as a whole.

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Author's calculations are based on data available at the time of publication and are therefore subject to change.

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About the Northern Analyst Collective

The Northern Analyst Collective, a project of Northern Policy Institute, will allow members to “time share” a professional policy analyst. By merging our collective resources we can ensure that the smallest municipality or local charity can access high-end skills at an affordable price.

About Northern Policy Institute

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent think tank. We perform research, collect and disseminate evidence, and identify policy opportunities to support the growth of sustainable Northern communities. Our operations are located in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and Kirkland Lake. We seek to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts Northern Ontario, Ontario, and Canada as a whole.

NAC Partner

Société Économique de l'Ontario



Having started its activities in 2001, RDÉE Ontario became in October 2017 the Société Économique de l'Ontario (SÉO). THE EOSS is a provincial network that, with its professional team, demonstrates innovation in economic development, entrepreneurship, employability and immigration. The SÉO ensures the full participation of all stakeholders in the Francophone and bilingual economic community in the prosperity of Ontario and Canada.



About the Authors

Andre Ouellet

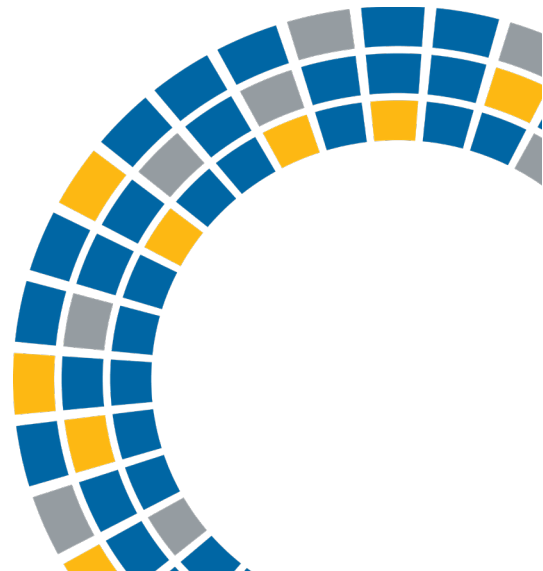


Andre Ouellet was born in Glace Bay, NS, on Cape Breton Island and grew up in Tilbury, ON. Andre obtained his B.A. and M.A. in Political Science at the University of Windsor, with a focus on voter turnout in Canada, with a specific focus on the federal level. A passion he learned from his mother by tagging along with her as she completed her own B.A. in Political Science at Cape Breton University. From his own childhood lessons, Andre maintained a passion for kindness and compassion to his fellow person through policy and advocacy. In his spare time, he enjoys cooking, baking, and watching combat sports.

Dr. Martin Lefebvre



Born in Kirkland Lake and raised in Timmins, Martin Lefebvre, PhD, is a lifelong northerner. He left only to undertake graduate studies at the University of Western Ontario, and immediately returned. His doctoral thesis studied institutional investor location preferences in the USA in the past two decades. His other research interests include sports analytics, spatial statistics, and location theory. In his spare time, Martin likes reading, painting, fencing as well as watching baseball and Canadian football.



Notes

The Youth in Northern Ontario Survey was developed to help find solutions to youth out-migration in Northern Ontario. The survey was produced by Northern Policy Institute in partnership with the Société Économique de l'Ontario (SÉO), in furtherance of its youth innovation program, JeunINNO.

The following report outlines the findings of the survey. Certain limitations must structure the way the data should be considered. The first limitation involves sampling. There were 146 respondents to the English survey, and 40 respondents to the French survey. Seventy-three per cent of the Francophone sample was 18 years old or less, and 50 per cent of those were 16 years of age. Fifty-five per cent of the Anglophone participants were 26 years of age or older.

Hearst was over-represented in the Francophone sample with 80 per cent of participants coming from that community. Conversely, the Anglophone sample was more evenly distributed, with most drawn from Greater Sudbury (25%), Timmins (21%), and Sault Ste. Marie (20%).

The Anglophone data represents adults seeking fulfilling employment and entertainment, while the Francophone data demonstrates more adolescent concerns. Survey responses differ more noticeably across age cohorts than language of the survey.

Furthermore, analysis was made of two surveys administered at the JeunINNO activities held on March 29-30, 2021, at École secondaire de la Rivière-des-Français, in Noëlville. The first survey included six students, five of whom authorized the use of their responses. Two educators participated in the second survey. Due to the limited scope of these surveys, only relevant data was considered in this report.



The study is largely good news for the North. Essentially, opportunities exist for retaining Northern youth in the area. The metrics regarding what youth liked about the North show that nature is high on the list, and as such, would be wise to use in campaigns for youth retention and recruitment. The opposite metric, what surveyed youth disliked about the North, revealed that both groups (22 per cent of the Anglophone sample and 35 per cent of the Francophone sample) indicate having nothing to do. We recommend a focus on attracting businesses into the region and providing the necessary infrastructure, including public transportation.

The next point indicates that the boomerang concept, that people return back to their communities, is very real and present. While an overwhelming majority of both Anglophones and Francophones surveyed reported that they knew someone who had left the community to live elsewhere (93 per cent of both samples), a majority of both samples also knew someone who had moved back to the community (61 per cent of Anglophones and 65 per cent of Francophones).

About jobs, most respondents (59 per cent of Anglophones and 55 per cent of Francophones) stated that there were "some, but not a lot" of job opportunities in their field within their community. Forty-three per cent of Anglophones surveyed answered that job opportunities were something that "should exist for youths that would make them stay in the community."

Of particular interest, however, is to find that despite the difference in age, 30 per cent of the Francophone sample had similar responses. We recommend that Northern communities find an industry that keeps the money in the North.

We also see youth activities high on the wish lists of respondents from both the anglophones and francophones, with sports coming up frequently as something people would like to see more of in their communities as well as youth clubs, nightclubs, and restaurants. The post-JeunINNO questionnaire responses also show significant interest in athletics and outdoor activities. Marketing campaigns reflecting a healthy and active lifestyle could work toward keeping Northern youth here in the North.

When asked if they would like to stay in their community, 48 per cent of both Francophone and Anglophone samples wished to stay in the North, while only 25 per cent of Anglophones and 20 per cent of Francophones responded "no." Furthermore, when asked where youth see themselves in the next 10 years, the Anglophone and Francophone samples (34 per cent and 40 per cent respectively) replied with some variation of "Northern Ontario."

Survey questions also touched on entrepreneurship. Importantly, Northern youth want to become entrepreneurs: 47 per cent of Anglophone respondents and 43 per cent of Francophone respondents. Among those interested in assistance, the groups differed in what they were seeking. Anglophones were more likely to seek capital (17%) or help with evaluating a business plan (32%), while Francophones expressed interest in mentorships (26%) and having access to co-working space (17%).

The post-JeunINNO survey results included mention of a workshop on the basics of starting a business and another on monetizing one's artwork through self-promotion. One of the two instructors in the JeunINNO post-workshop survey had interest in a workshop on music production. It will be important to improve Internet infrastructure in the North for a generation with these aspirations.

An interest in entrepreneurship was also expressed by the JeunINNO survey respondents. Two of the five participants expressed a desire to become web-based entrepreneurs – a YouTuber and Twitch streamer respectively.

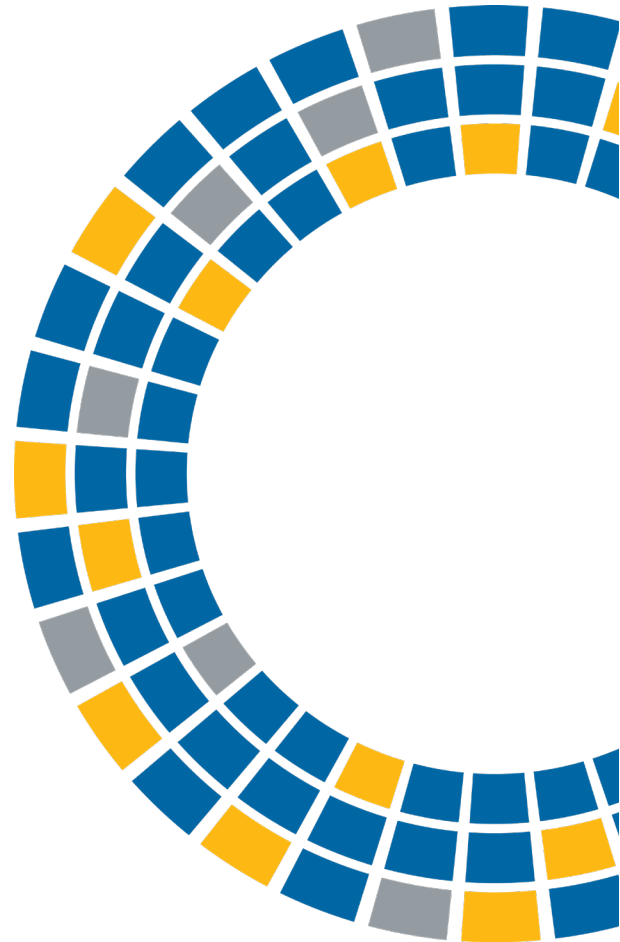
A final question on this topic asked respondents if they were interested in participating in a business idea competition. Sixty-one per cent of Anglophones responded "no" with 19 per cent saying "yes." Francophones were warmer to the idea, with a combined 60 per cent responding "yes" or "unsure" and 40 per cent indicated "yes". A Francophone Dragon's Den-style competition may see some community interest.

42 per cent of the Anglophone respondents reported having an intermediate level or better French fluency. Conversely, English fluency was near-universal across both groups, with only 12 per cent of all Francophones surveyed reporting having a beginner level fluency in English.



Final Remarks

Overall, the results of the Youth in Northern Ontario Survey are positive. When looking for solutions to youth out-migration in Northern Ontario, nature in the North is a marketable feature when speaking to Northern Ontario youth. The survey results also demonstrate that key is attracting more diverse employment and entertainment opportunities to the area and developing the proper infrastructure to support these new businesses.



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