

Eugène describes how he works to empower others and “transfer the power of the director to the members themselves” at GSEI

There is an activity centre, there's 27 of them in New Brunswick. They have certain common principles, but I like to believe that ours is different and stands out. We do have the social activity component, where we go bowling, soccer and all that. After a few years of working there, I realized that even though I could identify with the people I was working with, and some of whom were seeing the same psychiatrist as I was seeing, that there was something bothering me and I couldn't pin-point it, and I realized that I had too much power over people. I had seen that I was always the one who was deciding what the activities were, and I thought; “What if we could create a program that transfers the power of the director to the members themselves? And they can decide when they want to go have a coffee, they can decide and it will be an extension of the activity centre in the community, and they could get paid for it.” So, that's what we have been doing since 10, 12 years now. This year has been the most successful and we've had people who are all of a sudden doing volunteer work at the SPCA, the hospital, the YMCA. People who never had any motivation before. And they come back with the confirmation that they've done volunteer work and we pat them for that. And these people are all excluded from the market economy, they don't own anything, they don't have anything to sell, they just basically have the clothes on their backs. So I find this was a way, for me, of addressing that particular issue. And out of that came acknowledgement out of the province, where I received the New Brunswick Human Rights Award in 2003. So this is pretty much the role of our activity centre.