INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT

February 15th, 2015
By Alison Brewin

KNOWLEDGE SHARING PROJECT

CANADIAN NETWORK FOR THE PREVENTION OF ELDER ABUSE

RÉSEAU CANADIEN POUR LA PRÉVENTION DU MAUVAIS TRAITEMENT DES AÎNÉS

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Executive Summary

The CNPEA 'Knowledge Sharing Project' has succeeded in laying the foundation for achieving the deliverables and outcomes the project was created to achieve. The first year has been focused on two main areas of work: (1) building the infrastructure in terms of human resources, project management and governance processes, and (2) engaging key stakeholders across the country to assess the needs of the sector and build the network that will be needed to sustain the Knowledge Hub into the future.

There have been challenges along the way. One challenge has been in managing the complexities of communications in a national project that is managed by volunteers. Another related challenge has been working through the inherent human resources and governance structures. Both issues were thought through in advance, but implementing communications and governance is always more challenging that the planning of it. However, the concrete plans the group made as well as their healthy working relationships have helped it succeed in addressing any challenges that have arisen.

The evaluation process has identified three other topics that are more ongoing, issues that the group will continue to work on throughout the project. These are Sustainability, Consultation and Engagement and Bilingualism/Diversity. They all represent both core principles of the project, as well as goals to be achieved. All three will likely remain challenges, but also areas of success to be monitored. In the first year, the group has been very successful in reaching out to a diverse network of stakeholders, have put their minds to sustainability through stakeholder engagement, and have put in place foundational structures for a bilingual and representative organization.

Evaluation Plan

The CNPEA identified the importance of taking a developmental evaluation (DE) approach to this project at an early stage. The DE approach allows for engaged, ongoing assessment of a project that is innovative, complex and broad in scope. The Evaluation Plan designed for this CNPEA project set out to achieve a regular flow of information, while still using traditional evaluation tools to collect reliable information about the progress of the work. In addition, the plan identified the value of using an Evaluation Panel to avoid the possibility of fatiguing sources of qualitative information about the impact of the project.

At the halfway mark, the evaluation process is focused on asking about the results and success of the needs assessment but also on exploring the effectiveness of the systems established in the first year for the project and its goals. The first year has been about recruiting the right professionals to the paid roles, consulting with the sector as broadly as possible to ensure the right information is on hand, and identifying the technical and substantive content scope of the final product(s).

The Evaluation Plan is based on these *project goals*:

1. To create mechanisms for sharing information about promising practices in elder abuse prevention and response, particularly an online resource (a 'Hub'), and
2. To increase the capacity in organizations and networks to prevent and respond to cases of elder abuse.

And goes on to identify the purpose of the *evaluation* as:

1. For the project team to utilize in developing the most effective and sustainable systems for knowledge exchange as possible within the resources and capacities of the organization, and
2. To report to stakeholders, particularly funders, about the outcomes of the project.

This report is designed to address the latter purpose by providing the evaluation findings so far for stakeholders. All of these findings have been reported to the project team for their own management purposes in a variety of written and oral reports over the year.

Schedule A of the project description includes a list of activities to be accomplished in the first year. The Quarterly Reports provided to the main funder outline the progress of those activities, as well as sharing the quantitative data related to those activities. The findings included in this report reflect the qualitative information that has been collected during this first year as it relates to the overall outcomes of the project, with a particular emphasis on process questions. Those anticipated outcomes are:

1. CNPEA is well positioned as a leader in knowledge exchange on elder abuse prevention and intervention and has built strategic partnerships that will facilitate connections with various stakeholders and enable knowledge sharing across and within disciplines;
2. Service providers and seniors' organizations are engaged and invested in the Knowledge Sharing Project, and are better connected with each other and better positioned to develop prevention and intervention strategies for their local communities;
3. Service providers and seniors' organizations have increased capacity and knowledge about promising practices/approaches regarding elder abuse, and are sharing this information with seniors and their families; and
4. The Knowledge Exchange Hub is sustainable through partnership-driven activities (networking, contributions in-kind, finances, expertise). Partners would include: Provincial funders, service providers, corporations, businesses, unions and foundations/major donors.

As the findings illustrate, the CNPEA has laid a strong foundation in the first year, one that seems very likely to achieve these outcomes and successfully complete the project as described.

Evaluation Findings

1. Consultation and Engagement

It is early in the project to determine if CNPEA is perceived as a leader by the diverse sectors involved in the prevention of elder abuse in Canada. However, early signs suggest the project will succeed in achieving this if the CNPEA continues to expand its networks and respond positively to the consultation feedback they have collected so far. 'Leadership' is a subjective concept that attracts multiple theories and definitions, but for the purposes of this project was best defined by a Management Team member in mid-project interviews as:

> *Success would mean people see the CNPEA as the go-to place to get accurate information as well as info across the country on best practice, knowledge exchange, sharing.*

In January 2015, all the information collected so far was considered and discussed and plans going forward designed accordingly. The project is laying the foundation for CNPEA to be a leader in the sector. The Project Team is collecting and analyzing extensive information about the needs of the sector and being very rigorous about applying those results to project deliverables. At each opportunity to know and understand the needs of the sector, the Project Team has been responsive, engaged and thoughtful.

This is both a part of the project's key activities (outreach) and an area of concern for the Management Team. *Are we reaching enough people? Are we reaching the right people?*

Given the consultation processes so far have reached over 500 people across the country, the project has been very effective in its outreach (there may be some individuals who have participated in more than one of the tools listed below). The tools utilized include:

1. A Stakeholder Survey (251 respondents)
2. A series of regional consultation events (9 events with total of 238 participants)
3. An Evaluation Panel Survey (18 respondents)
4. Communications with Advisory Committee of 15
5. CNPEA membership that has grown from 130 to 209 in the first year

Those consulted represent the diversity of the sector when considered geographically (all provinces, 2 territories), rural versus urban (50/50 in the survey, unsure in the consultations), professions and roles (all key ones represented), involvement of seniors (approximately 20%, which is an estimate of 16% self-identified in the survey plus participation in consultations), and francophone/anglophone involvement (2 francophone regional events, 16% of survey respondents).

The project didn't record gender breakdown, Aboriginal or First Nations identity or other cultural/ethnic identity demographics. It is evident from the consultation events that there were representatives of Aboriginal and First Nations communities engaged, particularly in B.C. and Northern events. There is First Nations representation on the Advisory Committee. There was also participation from individuals working with immigrant communities and immigrant-serving organizations.

The reach of the project so far is broad and diverse. Not everyone who has an interest in preventing elder abuse, and therefore an interest in a central resource of information, is connected into the project yet; but not only is that not possible within one short year, but the community development approach means that engagement will continue as the resource being developed grows.

The first survey of the evaluation panel pointed out that not everyone who could be reached has been reached, so there is clearly more work to be done. The Project Team has assessed this issue, and made a decision to focus resources on bringing as many people who are already connected to an in-person gathering in March 2015 to help continue building the network.

In addition to the results of the Evaluation Panel, the Ontario regional consultation event had low attendance compared with others, though they a were significant proportion of the survey respondents (11%). Quebec residents didn't participate in the survey in proportionate numbers (5%), but did participate in a robust regional consultation in November.

The Project Team has actively adjusted its activities in recognition of these concerns, included holding the March in-person meeting in Ontario, postponing the Quebec regional event to ensure appropriate engagement, enhancing bilingual information and activities, and focusing some attention on the sector in those provinces. Having said that, it is a real success of the project that the most engaged activities are outside of the most populated provinces, ensuring the voices of communities often marginalized by geography are central to the work. This is reflected in the 50/50 split between rural and urban participants so far.

From Consultation Stakeholder Survey:

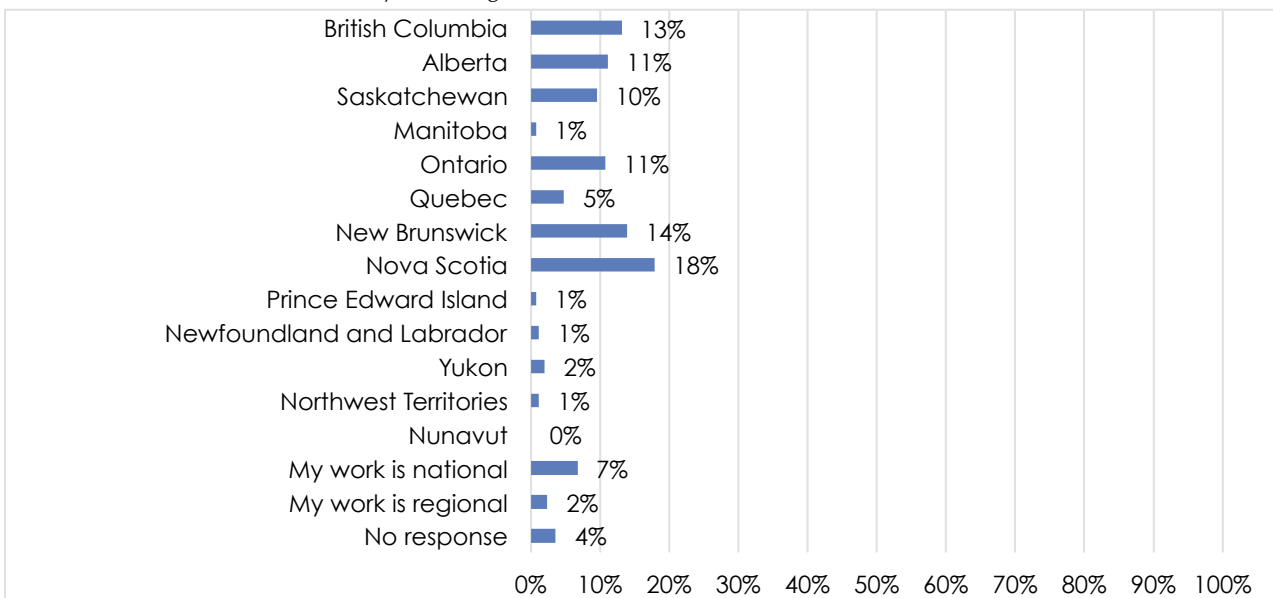*Exhibit 1 – Province or Territory Working with Elder Abuse Issues In*

Exhibit 2 - In what sector of elder abuse prevention and response services do you work or volunteer in? Select up to three options
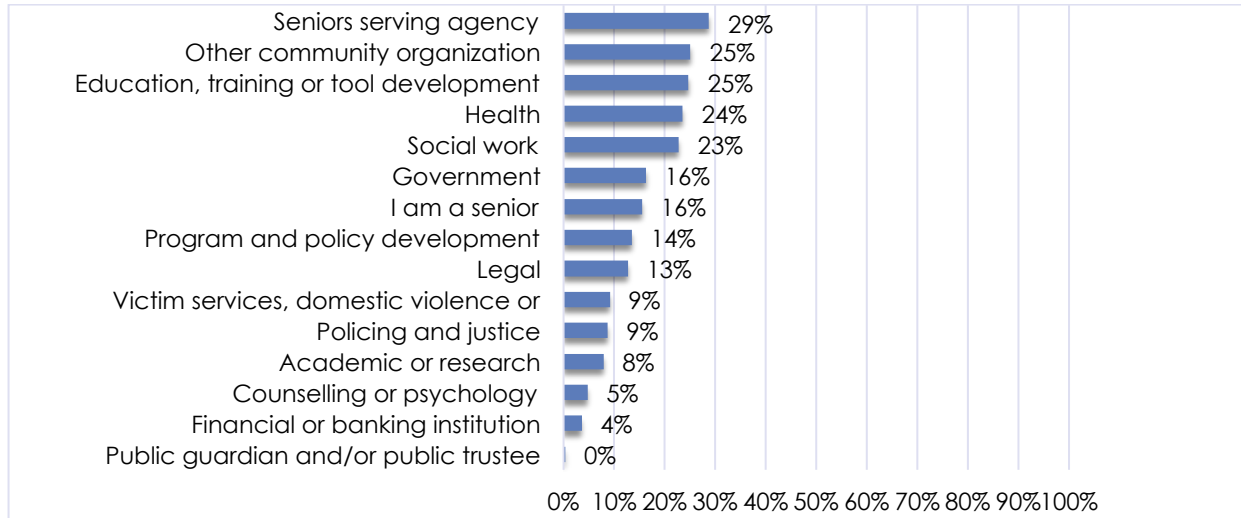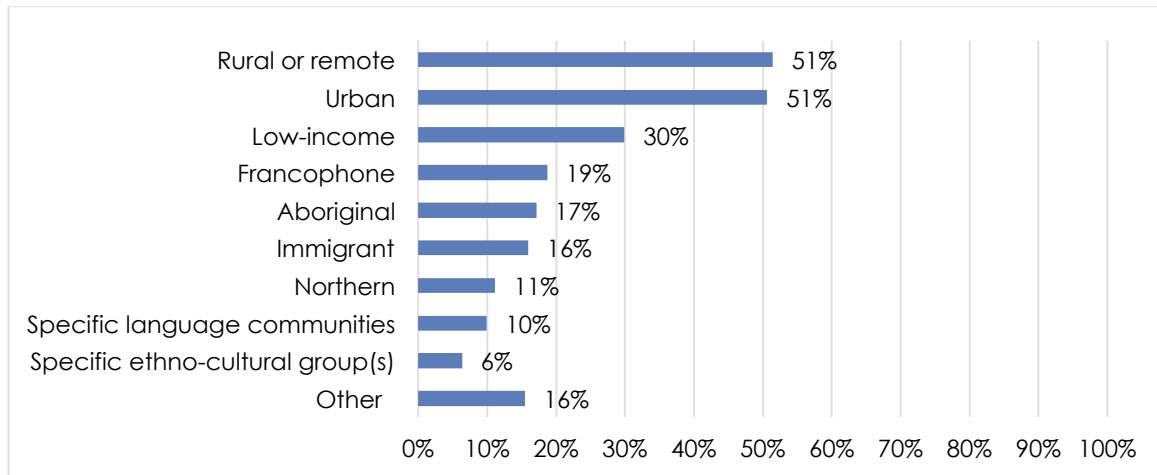
Seniors serving agency — 29%
Other community organization — 25%
Education, training or tool development — 25%
Health — 24%
Social work — 23%
Government — 16%
I am a senior — 16%
Program and policy development — 14%
Legal — 13%
Victim services, domestic violence or — 9%
Policing and justice — 9%
Academic or research — 8%
Counselling or psychology — 5%
Financial or banking institution — 4%
Public guardian and/or public trustee — 0%

Exhibit 3 – What best describes the communities you work with (select all that apply)

Rural or remote — 51%
Urban — 51%
Low-income — 30%
Francophone — 19%
Aboriginal — 17%
Immigrant — 16%
Northern — 11%
Specific language communities — 10%
Specific ethno-cultural group(s) — 6%
Other — 16%

2. Project Communications

Communications emerged as a key challenge in the interim interviews with the Project Team, and is probably the central process challenge of the project so far. All national-scope projects struggle with this, but CNPEA is also committed to keeping the management of the project in the hands of the sector. Therefore there is a high level of volunteer involvement and leadership. Volunteers by necessity are more complicated to work with than paid staff, particularly given their time constraints. To have a team of volunteers in a management role that is also scattered across the country and across time zones moves it beyond complicated to complex.

The specific challenges for this project were explored in the mid-project interviews conducted in November 2014. The issues that emerged in the first year of the project reflected the national scope and voluntary nature of the Management Team, the Advisory Committee, the Board of

CNPEA and the growing group of individual contractors managed by the Project Coordinator. The issues arising were about the need to be more efficient and effective in communicating activities to the Team, including the right people in the right discussions, and ensuring the Board of CNPEA had all the right information to monitor the project effectively.

A strong and effective communications tool that emerged in response to consultation events was a blog. To date 20 blogs have been written, sharing stories, best practices and highlighting innovative organizations and programs. This tool was not initially identified as an activity of the project, but has been an effective way to engage diverse organizations.
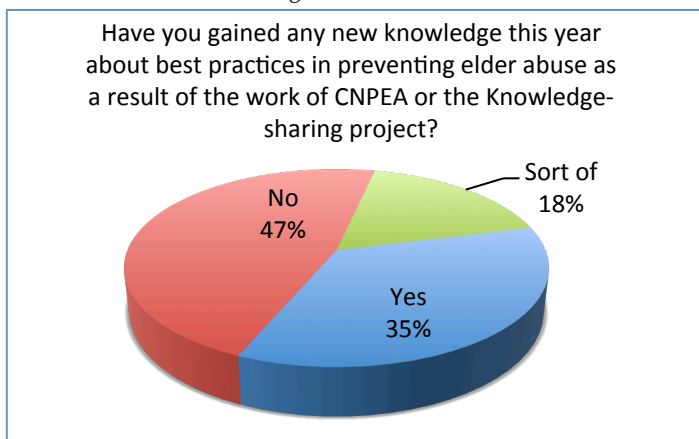
An evaluation brief was prepared for the Management Team based on the results of the mid-project interviews and some recommendations made. The resulting changes were made:

a. A new reporting system has been established between the project coordinator, Management Team and the Board of CNPEA;
b. A writer was contracted to assist with the blog and other content communications;
c. Decision-making processes were clarified to build more efficient communications.

Given the strengths and commitment of the core Project Team (the volunteer Management Committee plus the paid contractors), there has never been a communications crisis. In fact it is the strength of the organization that has managed any of the complexities in communications that have arisen.

There is also evidence that, regardless of the challenges, the communications processes are having an impact on the sector. Even with this first year's focus on consultation and infrastructure rather than external communications about the project deliverables, the Evaluation Panel is expressing the positive impact of the project. Half of the respondents to the first evaluation panel survey felt they already had new knowledge because of their involvement with the project.

Exhibit 4 – new knowledge of Evaluation Panel

Have you gained any new knowledge this year about best practices in preventing elder abuse as a result of the work of CNPEA or the Knowledge-sharing project?
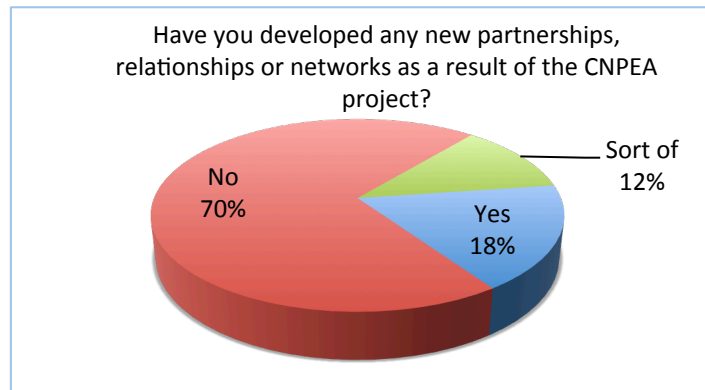
No 47%
Sort of 18%
Yes 35%

I'm still quite new to the knowledge-sharing project and my area of expertise is not in elder abuse prevention; it is part of my regular duties and so I've learned some but I know there is a lot of expertise around the table that I can learn from.
- An Evaluation Panel Member

Exhibit 5 – new partnerships

> *Seems to be moving forward well....*
> *things I would expect to be*
> *happening are happening....thanks!*
> - An Evaluation Panel Member

Have you developed any new partnerships, relationships or networks as a result of the CNPEA project?

No 70%

Yes 18%

Sort of 12%

3. Human Resources and Governance

The first step for CNPEA in fulfilling the project goals was to contract the services of a Project Coordinator. The process resulted in CNPEA contracting the project management services of the Canadian Centre for Elder Law, and in particular the coordination skills of their Director, Krista James as the Project Coordinator. The engagement of the Centre for Elder Law and Krista is seen as a great strength. Krista's location in B.C., but capacity to work bilingually was seen as a real asset to the project. Another advantage of the contract with the Centre is the resources made available to the project such as researchers, interns, admin staff and others. Other contractors have been brought into the team since the project began including an IT designer, an evaluation team and a writer.

The Project Coordinator's role was clearly defined at the beginning, but the innovative and exploratory nature of the project means it has changed as project activities, learnings and evaluative discussions have unfolded. The governance structure, with a voluntary national Management Team, has been challenging (as described above). Decision-making roles have been fine-tuned considerably as the project has progressed. The January in-person session allowed the Project Team to identify the changes needed and come up with new clarity going forward.

Despite the inherent challenges, however, the strength of the Project Team and its capacity to consider challenges, readjust, and move forward came up in the mid-project interviews. The web developer was struggling with design issues in his efforts to come up with branding and logo options for the organization and project. It might have had a very negative impact on the organization. As it was, the Team was able to identify the weaknesses in the process quickly and reassign tasks and relationships, resulting in only a small bump in the timeline. The web developer remains a part of the team, refocused from design to technical development of the site and the needed communications and branding materials were developed by an alternative designer retained by the CNPEA.

To resolve the challenges the group has faced in the initial months of the project, they had re-clarified decision-making processes.

4. Sustainability

Not only is the long-term sustainability of the Knowledge Hub an important outcome of the project, it is also a deliverable attached to the project funding *and* a professional and ethical concern of the Project Team. It is also a key concern of the Board of CNPEA, particularly because they were initially designed as a professional networking Board, but have moved to an active, project based organization – there are still organizational strengths that need to be built upon to support long-term sustainability.

Sustainability was raised in consultation events by the sector as a concern – *if we help build this thing, will it be updated and maintained appropriately beyond the project funding?*

The Consultation Stakeholder Survey results were clear that the sector has a very strong preference for face-to-face learning and networking. Even more than others, this group is more isolated from many social media and online tools that are standard practice in other communities and professions. Given this, building trust in and active interaction with the Knowledge Hub will demand human consistency behind the technology. There were also a number of suggestions in the consultation events that a 1-800 phone line be a part of the Hub to support uptake. All of which will require human resources. It is unlikely the Hub can be maintained by volunteers.

Before embarking on the project, the CNPEA developed a Sustainability Plan. That Plan continues to inform the work, but the first year has not provided much opportunity to implement it. It was part of the discussion at the January meeting of the Project Team, and is a central topic for the March meeting. Pursuing long-term funding is necessarily a part of ensuring the right resources are in place, but the Project Team has also determined that the Knowledge Hub is something that the sector can sustain itself depending on the technical development needs and the ongoing active participation of stakeholders. In other words, it isn't the CNPEA alone that needs to keep it relevant and updated.

This is part of the focus of the March in-person – to explore the strategies and possibilities inherent in a cross-sector ownership of the deliverables.

is up to date which will also lend to credibility to CNPEA as a source. If you don't have the funds then how can you do this?

5. Bilingualism and Diversity

CNPEA is a national, bilingual organization. Maintaining and supporting is time and resource consuming, though less as systems and organizational culture evolves. It means communications and decisions move more slowly, but the result will be more truly representative of the community CNPEA is serving.

The project has been successful in engaging francophone Board members and held two of the nine regional consultations in French.

The project also engaged the services of a bilingual Project Manager but one working in B.C., allowing for a national scope of relationship building. The organization has worked through some of the inherent challenges of building a truly bilingual organization, but the cost of translating materials and communications will be an ongoing concern.

Another area of concern for the Project Team is ensuring the involvement of Aboriginal and First Nations communities. One Team member, in mid-project interviews, defined the success of the project by the level of engagement of Aboriginal and First Nations communities. Indigenous communities in Canada are diverse in their cultural and linguistic norms so assuming generalized strategies for engagement of those communities can be counter-productive. Some principles were raised in consultation events: relationships to Elders in indigenous communities is very different than in settler cultures, as is the experience and prevention of abuse; the experience of Residential Schools has had a deep and enduring impact on indigenous people in Canada; access to the internet is problematic for on-reserve communities in rural and Northern areas; trust is usually achieved through the leadership of internal (to the community) service providers.

Therefore the strategies for reaching out to communities, the accessibility and uptake of online tools, the 'best practices' shared, and the strategies for getting the sector online may need to have an evaluative lens applied that is of, or very informed by, indigenous communities themselves. This is on the radar of the organization and helped define their Advisory Committee, Evaluation Panel and regional consultations.

16% of the respondents to the Stakeholder Survey identified themselves as working with immigrant communities. Many of the consultation event participants also identified themselves and their work as with multi-cultural and multi-lingual communities. Accessibility of online tools and the value of multi-lingual information were two key issues for these representatives. The Project Team will need to explore this further as it moves into testing accessibility issues with the technical outcomes of the project.

Conclusion:

The project is well underway and the organization has established the foundational pieces for successfully delivering the outcomes it has undertaken to deliver. The first year involved the complications inherent in building the Project Team and its communications but has successfully navigated that work. There will be ongoing work to ensure the right stakeholders are engaged, the deliverables are sustainable long-term and the project reflects the diversity of communities, professions and regions involved in preventing elder abuse. It is clear the Project Team is set to continue to build on their solid work do far and is likely to more forward on these issues over the next year.