

Conference Proceedings

Shaping Our Future with Two Languages

November 24 and 25, 2009
Crowne Plaza Lord Beaverbrook Hotel
Fredericton, New Brunswick



1969 - 2009 Forty years of Official Languages in New Brunswick

On April 12, 1969, the members of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick passed unanimously the first legislation affirming the equality of English and French in the province. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of this Act, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages organized the conference *Shaping Our Future with Two Languages*.

Close to a hundred persons, from all backgrounds, attended the event, held on November 24 and 25, 2009, at the Crowne Plaza Lord Beaverbrook Hotel in Fredericton.

This activity had two objectives: firstly, to gain a better understanding of people's perceptions and attitudes toward official languages, secondly, to explore new avenues for promoting the use of English and French in the province. The subject might have seemed sensitive, even controversial. However, the exercise revealed that New Brunswickers are much more at ease with this question than might have been thought.

The conference brought out the progress achieved over the past few decades in terms of official languages while highlighting the challenges that continue to exist. Among other things, it appears necessary to increase the amount of interaction between the two linguistic groups, improve the teaching of second languages, and better explain the rationale for duality.

By the close of this conference, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages had some very worthwhile proposals at its disposal for better promoting English and French in the province.

This document presents an overview of the presentations made by the speakers as well as a summary of the interactions between participants. We hope that it will assist you in your reflections on official languages.

Happy reading.

Michel A. Carrier
Commissioner of Official Languages
for New Brunswick

40 Years of Official Languages: How Are We Doing?

Two renowned authors, Herménégilde Chiasson and John Ralston Saul, opened the conference with a fascinating conversation during which a number of topics were discussed: language, culture, education and society. Many were in agreement that this conversation was the highlight of the conference. Afterwards, Richard Myers and Antoine Landry led a question-and-answer session that gave the participants the opportunity to interact with the two speakers.

John Ralston Saul

Excerpts (Verbatim):

“There is no question in my mind that this experiment with real bilingualism, Robichaud, Hatfield, experiment was very, very important for Canada as well as for New Brunswick. (...) I don't know if you realize the extent to which doing this here was central to the country re-thinking itself.”

“If there is no body in the clothing, what's the language? If education isn't filled with literature, filled with meaning, filled with philosophy, filled with political experience and filled with local reality then it's just, just language. (...) I believe in culture and culture expresses itself through language and there's an

astonishing opportunity I think with the experiments and the experience here to do something quite different through French, through English and then the two in different ways together.”

Herménégilde Chiasson

Excerpts [Verbatim translation]

“The aboriginal peoples show the only in-depth knowledge and the only really visceral knowledge of this space. We, for all practical purposes, are still immigrants, and still full of complexes when it comes to Europe.”

Speaking about the issue of the cost of bilingualism:

“The first argument that will be brought up is that it will be expensive. Everything is expensive. The pyramids were expensive; people built them because they believed it was the right thing to do. I think there is a price to be paid for living together, and I believe that price should be costed in relation to curiosity, in relation to quality of life, in relation to a richness that must be defined in some way other than by money.”

Survey on Official Languages

Chris Baker

Continuum Research

(The slides from Mr. Baker's presentation are in the power point document.)

Chris Baker presented the highlights of a survey on bilingualism and linguistic duality in New Brunswick.

The survey* was conducted between June 9 and 21, 2009, among New Brunswickers aged 18 and over. A total of 800 interviews were done (400 in English and 400 in French).

The survey results reveal that 82% of New Brunswickers are in favour of the concept of the *Official Languages Act* (75% of anglophones and 97% of francophones). Although support for official languages is strong, that does not necessarily result in a bilingual population. Only 15% of the anglophones said they were bilingual, while that percentage rose to 70% among francophone respondents. It is interesting to note that the percentage of bilingual anglophones is higher (37%) among respondents aged 18 to 24.

A majority of respondents (57%) felt that their personal attitude towards bilingualism and official languages had not changed over the past 10 years. However, 82% of francophones and 63% of anglophones believe that relations between the two linguistic groups have improved over that same period.

A large percentage of respondents (74%) give great importance on teaching the other official language. Also, 73% recognized the positive attributes of linguistic duality and the province's bilingual status.

Furthermore, the survey results reveal a very different perception between francophones and anglophones regarding the future of the French language in New Brunswick: 55% of francophones felt that the future of the French language was threatened, while only 22% of anglophones shared that opinion.

Chris Baker drew the following conclusions from the survey results:

- Demographic trends indicate that New Brunswick will become more bilingual and bicultural.
- French must be promoted as well as protected.
- Good marks on providing government services in both languages but room for improvement.
- New Brunswickers embrace bilingualism and biculturalism because it contributes to their own pride and sense of identity.

* The margin of error at the provincial level is +/-4.1%, with a confidence level of 95%, and +/-5.0% for each linguistic subsample.

82% of New Brunswickers support the *Official Languages Act*

Continuum Research

Official Languages: Perceptions and Attitudes

Joseph Yvon Thériault

Holder, Canada Research Chair in
Globalization, Citizenship and Democracy,
Université du Québec in Montréal

Joseph Yvon Thériault began by commenting on the results of the survey conducted by Continuum Research. While recognizing that the situation is positive overall (support for bilingualism, improvement of relations between the two groups, provision of services in language of choice, etc.), he believes that not everything has necessarily been resolved. Assimilation continues to exist, the exodus of francophones to other provinces is a challenge, and separate institutions for each community are still at issue.

The speaker went on to paint a portrait of the evolution of relations between anglophones and francophones in New Brunswick since the 1960s. The inequality between the two groups and a desire for independence on the part of the francophone community gave rise to major changes in those relations. The official languages legislation, the legislation on the equality of the two linguistic communities, and the concept of duality all bear witness to that evolution.

For Joseph Yvon Thériault, over time, the legal dimension has become the main tool for defining the relations between the two communities. The sociologist is concerned about that, because he believes that political debate is necessary to conclude social pacts.

Excerpt (Verbatim translation):

"It can be said nonetheless that, over time, the legal dimension has become the main tool for defining relations between the two communities, between the majority community and the minority community. Over the past 10 years, it is in that field, rather than in that of politics, that the francophone minority communities have tried to acquire new rights and more duality. (...)

I have always expressed doubts about the legal turn that relations between the linguistic communities have taken (...). Such a shift leads to judicialization; that is, judicialization depoliticizes relations between the communities; it tends to make linguistic recognition a right, an obligation, and not a political pact, recognized and negotiated by the two communities. Judicialization is a tool that, in my view, is poorly adapted to a policy of recognition. The law separates true from false, good from evil, right from non-right. It is poorly adapted to the nuances of relations between communities. Judicialization takes the heat out of political conflicts and transforms them into the rule of law. For many, that is not a problem; but political life, to be productive, needs a certain amount of passion. Judicialization levels everything down, it tends to make a court decision the highest level to which the government is prepared to go.

I wonder today, for example, if, in the area of health, we are not putting the cart before the horse by litigating, before the community has really debated, clarified, or spelled out what type of health system it wanted. As though it were up to a judge rather than political debate to define this type of consensus.

I am not calling into question the scope of political legislation. I said at the outset that the *Official Languages Act* had changed the power relationship between New Brunswick's linguistic communities in an interesting way. I am simply saying that these laws have a greater chance of being accepted if they are the result of a compromise, a political pact, than if they are imposed by the courts.

If there is any particular concern that emerges from the survey that has just been presented, it has to do with the whiff of political appeasement, the avoidance of conflict surrounding linguistic issues that have not yet been resolved. Appeasement that could signify that very difficulty of transforming societal issues politically and reliance on the courts to impose solutions on us."

“If New Brunswick can’t make bilingualism work, what hope is there for us?”

Comments from a Catalan professor to Donald Desserud

Donald A. Desserud

Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and
Political Science Professor
University of New Brunswick, Saint John

(The slides from Mr. Desserud’s presentation are in the power point document.)

Donald Desserud presented the results of the Social Capital Survey that was conducted in 2003 (see speaker’s power point presentation). That survey dealt with social and civic attitudes and beliefs. It was meant to verify the Social Capital theory. This theory suggests that communities where citizens are closely engaged in their community have strong economies and dynamic governments.

New Brunswick is certainly known for its strong community involvement. But it seems that the strong economy component is questionable. Why is the theory not working in New Brunswick? Is it because New Brunswick is divided into two linguistic communities?

A survey was conducted to determine whether the two communities were different when it comes to social / civic attitudes and beliefs.

Are New Brunswick’s two linguistic communities united or divided? The survey results show that they are more united than one might think. In fact, the two groups shared similar opinions in numerous areas:

- language and political orientation,
- identification with community, province, and country,

- role of government,
- general attitudes concerning society.

Among the results conveyed by Mr. Desserud, those with respect to conflicts between the two linguistic groups are particularly interesting.

A majority of anglophones (74%) and of francophones (64.3%) believe that the two linguistic communities will always be in conflict. However, within the two groups (65% of anglophones and 84.8% of francophones), it is felt that the top priority of government should be to ensure harmonious relations between the two communities.

After presenting the results of this survey in detail, Donald Desserud underscored the originality of New Brunswick’s bilingualism initiative by relating an experience he had in Spain in 1997. After Mr. Desserud had given an address at the University of Barcelona, a Catalan professor asked him if the Confederation of Regions (COR) political party had retained its official party status following the last provincial election. Quite a surprising question, to be sure! The Catalan professor explained that the Catalan community was very interested in the New Brunswick situation and that the arrival of the COR party with its policy of opposition to official bilingualism was a source of concern for them. The professor summed up his fears as follows: "If New Brunswick can’t make bilingualism work, what hope is there for us?"

Richard Clément

Director, Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute and Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa

(The slides from Mr. Clément's presentation are in the power point document.)

The speaker described the main elements that must be taken into consideration when trying to create a corporate culture, particularly a bilingual organizational culture. A corporate culture is what distinguishes one organization from another, what characterizes it or gives it a brand image.

When it comes to a culture of bilingualism, the following three factors or challenges must be taken into account:

1 Linguistic duality vs. bilingualism

It is necessary to establish a distinction between linguistic duality, or the capacity of organizations to provide services in both languages, and bilingualism, which refers to the integration of both languages in all functions of the organization, at both the individual and the operational level.

2 Institutional completeness and intergroup contact

It is difficult to create a bilingual culture if the two linguistic communities do not speak to each other. Intergroup contact is often deficient.

3 Opposition between the globalization movement and the minorities conservation movement

The belief that globalization will lead to the dominance of English is widespread. However, there is a very strong movement in response to globalization and the

growing influence of English. Europe's efforts aimed at protecting regional languages are one example of that. Furthermore, some believe that the English language risks fragmenting upon contact with other languages, such that it would no longer be possible to speak of a single English language, but rather various dialects of that language.

Different approaches to organizational culture

The speaker indicated that there are several philosophies with regard to corporate cultures.

- Mechanistic: Culture is considered a productivity tool.
- Humanist: Culture based on the valuing of individuals.
- Systemic: Organizational culture is only one unit within a set of related units – management units, production unit, etc.
- Political: An organizational culture serves to promote the values of the organization's leaders – it becomes the subject of a power struggle.
- Cultural: The goal of this organizational culture is to transform the symbols, beliefs, and values shared by the organization's members. A similar culture in terms of bilingualism would mean that all members of the organization adhere to individual bilingualism and institutional bilingualism.
- Cognitive: The cognitive approach rests on a series of learnings that promote the implementation of the cultural approach.

“Are we ready to accept that bilingualism is part of the basic skills of managers?”

Richard Clément

Characteristics of a cultural approach

The cultural approach is characterized by a series of principles:

- Precedence of action: The development of this culture does not rest on a policy statement or statement of principles but rather on concrete actions that are taken first by the organization's leaders. These actions will become models to be followed and then values. In other words, through action, values are developed.
- Emphasis on persons: Each person is expected to develop the aspects of the culture that are desired.
- Culture of tolerance: People are expected to develop the various aspects of the culture in their own way as long as the fundamental goals are reproduced.
- Self-investment: The value is not only institutional, but individual.
- Being a member of a winning team.
- Positive reinforcements.
- Inspiring leadership: The example is given first by the leaders.

Next, Richard Clément addressed the notion of bilingualism. In that regard, he quoted Fishman, a sociologist of language.

“...ethnicity (*cultural identity*¹) represents an avenue whereby understandings of ‘the world at large’ are arrived at, that is to say, through ethnicity, ordinary individuals are not only linked to collectivities – and

social integration is attained thereby – but to notions of ‘life’, ‘society’, and ‘the world’ as well.”

Fishman, 1977, p. 16

“Ethnicity is the cup of custom (patrimony) passed on by one's parents (paternity), from which one drinks the meaning of existence... through which one envisions life (phenomenology)....”

Fishman, 1977, p. 24

“...language can be vastly more than a means of communication. By its very nature language is the quintessential symbol [of ethnicity], the symbol par excellence....

...Language is the recorder of paternity, the expresser of patrimony and the carrier of phenomenology.”

Fishman, 1977, p. 25

For Richard Clément, Fishman marks the link between ethnic identity and language. According to the speaker, this link seems nonexistent in several Canadian bilingualism programs. In other words, the issue of bilingualism is treated solely as a matter of second language learning.

Was bilingualism not supposed to contribute to social cohesion? It has been forgotten that bilingualism must be built on harmonious relations between communities, and if those relations do not exist, neither will bilingualism. In that regard, the speaker mentioned the European Union's languages program entitled *For Social Cohesion*.

¹ Italics by speaker

Prejudice and intergroup contact

To create a bilingual institutional culture, you first have to deal with any conflicts that may exist between the two groups. In most cases, access to resources, or rather, the impression that one group benefits more from resources than another group, is the core of the conflict. This conflict may even become an element of individual or collective identity.

Intergroup contacts are the antidote to these erroneous perceptions. However, these contacts must rest on cooperation rather than competition. They must be close rather than distant. They must also be egalitarian and established in a climate that favours tolerance. Contacts make it possible to manage anxiety in relation to the other – the person speaking the other language – and thereby make it possible to increase the individuals' linguistic confidence.

How to achieve a culture of bilingualism

Bilingualism must first be a shared value rather than a rule or a response to a policy established by some authority. It must not be perceived as a generator of discrimination between people, but rather a basic skill in a bilingual context. The leaders must resolutely create an environment that values bilingualism, in particular through recruitment and staffing, training and evaluation, and the promotion of bilingualism. The strength of the commitment to creating such a culture of bilingualism can be determined by the answers to several questions, notably:

- Are we ready to accept that bilingualism is part of the basic skills of managers?
- Are we ready to accept that knowledge of official languages policies is part of the stock of knowledge of managers?
- Are we ready to accept that employees receive mandatory training on official languages?

Richard Clément emphasized that a culture of bilingualism must also protect the minority language. He mentioned the insidious trap of conversation. Conversation has its own rules of engagement, and francophones must be aware of that to avoid the reflex of switching to English.

The speaker concluded by stating that young people are the backbone of a culture of bilingualism. In that regard, education, awareness raising (including within the family) and contacts between the two linguistic groups play a central role in promoting the development of positive attitudes toward bilingualism.

Round Table

The round table brought together the morning's speakers and the following four persons:

- Christiane D. Guérette, Executive Director, Stan Cassidy Foundation
- Elisabeth Crener, Head of Information Programs, Radio-Canada Acadie
- Jordan Graham, university student and municipal councillor for the City of Fredericton
- Philip Lee, author and associate professor of journalism, St. Thomas University

The moderator of the round table was Donald Arseneault.

The participants were asked to respond to various questions, in particular:

- Have attitudes and perceptions regarding official languages evolved over the last 40 years? If yes, what influenced them?
- The *Official Languages Act* targets equality of status and use of English and French. Have we achieved that equality?
- Do you believe that the concept of equality is understood in the same way by the two linguistic communities?
- How can our official bilingualism be turned into an economic and social asset?

The discussions during this round table were wide-ranging. The following is merely an overview of what was discussed.

Progress of French in New Brunswick

Everyone recognized the progress achieved in terms of official languages in the province. One anglophone participant explained that French was a private language in the 1960s – it was very seldom heard in public spaces. That is no longer the case today.

The affirmation of francophones no doubt constitutes the most important progress factor. Other factors were emphasized: legislation and language policies, court decisions, the role of the media, and a global context that attaches greater value to cultural diversity.

Perceptions

The participants recognized that it is easier for the two linguistic groups to speak to each other today. Mention was made of the considerable work accomplished through the years by Dialogue New Brunswick. However, much remains to be done. The two linguistic communities do not know each other very well (they coexist rather than live together). For example, few anglophones are familiar with the hit songs of New Brunswick's francophone artists. One participant believes that francophone journalists should work in anglophone press rooms, and vice versa. That would result in journalistic coverage that better reflects the situation of the two groups.

“Are we not experiencing only half of what this province has to offer living in New Brunswick without knowing the other language?”

A participant

The risks associated with isolation of the two communities were raised. The case of Belgium was mentioned. "Are we not experiencing only half of what this province has to offer living in New Brunswick without knowing the other language?" asked a participant.

An anglophone professor said he was surprised by the fact that young anglophones feel they are being magnanimous by speaking French with francophones; it seems that they do not understand the notion of linguistic equality.

Equality

It is difficult to talk about equality without agreeing on what the word means. Some believe that equality consists in being treated in the same manner, whereas others believe that it consists in being recognized for what you are (which implies that a community's particular situation is taken into account). And how is equality between two communities measured? The consensus was that progress has been made but that New Brunswick has not yet achieved complete equality.

One francophone participant's take on the issue was that there is no equality between francophones and anglophones in terms of access to information. Francophone journalists have difficulty finding francophone resource persons during government press conferences. While it is possible for an anglophone journalist to pursue a career in New Brunswick without speaking French, the reverse is not the case for a francophone journalist, according to one anglophone participant.

The perception that francophones have an advantage on the job market still exists. Moreover, one participant in the room mentioned that the appointment of unilingual English judges in the province is totally contrary to the spirit of the *Official Languages Act* and therefore to the principle of equality.

Use of French

Reportedly, a large number of francophones choose to respond to surveys in English. How can that behaviour be explained? There does not seem to be a single reason for that situation. One participant mentioned that assimilation was very much present in his community, despite the progress achieved by French. An anglophone added that he is always surprised by the fact that francophones answer him in English when he speaks to them in French.

Official Languages as Assets

According to the results of a survey conducted by Continuum Research, a majority of New Brunswickers believe that bilingualism is an economic asset for the province.

The danger of looking at the other language solely from the instrumental point of view was raised, because language is also a culture. Could not New Brunswick develop a language industry (interpretation, translation), given its bilingual status and its expertise in the field?

Workshops

In the afternoon, the participants were asked to answer the following question:

What can we do to better promote full recognition and use of our two official languages, both by the general public and by government organizations?

To do this, four groups of about 20 persons each were formed.

Although the measures proposed by the participants are quite varied, a number of them are targeted towards young people – the future of official languages – and the education system. The government certainly must step up efforts in order to promote English and French more effectively. However, several measures point to each citizen's responsibility in this regard. The discussions also illustrated the need to better explain the purpose of duality in education. Indeed, some see duality as an isolation factor that impedes better understanding between the two communities and promotion of bilingualism.

What follows is a summary of the participants' comments and suggestions.

Placing the emphasis on young people; starting in the schools

- It was noted that young anglophones do not have sufficient opportunity to speak French and that they quickly lose what they have learned. Young people need to be able to have experiences in French outside the classroom in order to gain confidence.
- Instruction should focus not only on the language but on the whole culture that goes with it (living the experience). This would provide a much more solid foundation to spark and maintain interest in the other language.
- The participants believe that there must be more opportunities for interaction between anglophone and francophone students, particularly through sports and cultural activities. That interaction would give students more of a chance to speak their second language.
- It was mentioned that the linguistic insecurity among certain young francophones causes them to tend to speak English with young anglophones.
- Some suggested that French second language instruction be completely revised such that students become truly proficient in the language.
- Efforts also need to be made to increase proficiency in English among francophone students in certain parts of the province.
- There must be more promotion of the advantages of bilingualism; it must be explained that bilingualism broadens horizons and does more than merely improve one's chances of finding a job.
- It was suggested that schools should issue a bilingualism certificate in the same way as a high school diploma.
- The French immersion program should be more oriented towards the pursuit of a post-secondary education in French.
- Textbooks should celebrate more the contribution of the anglophone and francophone cultures to the province.
- It was suggested that the European language passport concept be adopted.

It was suggested that schools should issue a bilingualism certificate in the same way as a high school diploma.

- There should be more promotion of bilingualism in the schools.
- Young people must be made aware of their language rights and the importance of requesting services in their language. Some even suggested that a course on official languages be developed.
- It was recognized that more use must be made of new technologies (e.g., a new portal to which students in both sectors have access).

Changing attitudes

- It was mentioned that francophones often tend to switch to English when in the company of anglophones, even if the latter are speaking French. The origin of this behaviour is quite varied: simple politeness, the desire to be accommodating, historical reasons (French language not valued, private aspect of the language). Needless to say, this behaviour creates some confusion among anglophones over the relevance of promoting French. This widespread behaviour also undermines the efforts made by anglophones to learn French.
- Citizens must be encouraged to request services in their language.

Valuing all skill levels

- The participants believe that bilingualism can be fostered by doing more to promote partial skills. We tend to value only total bilingualism and to consider intermediate levels as limitations. However, receptive bilingualism should be seen as a springboard rather than as an obstacle.

Increasing interactions between the two linguistic communities

- Dialogue NB should obtain more resources for fulfilling its mandate.

Learning the other official language throughout life

- It was mentioned that post-secondary institutions offer few opportunities to become more proficient in the other official language.

Placing more value on bilingualism

- Bilingualism should be celebrated more, specifically by emphasizing common points, resemblances between the two linguistic communities.
- An information campaign to explain the *Official Languages Act* and dispel the myths surrounding official bilingualism should be conducted. (Awareness campaigns are ubiquitous, but there is nothing concerning official languages.)
- It was suggested that bilingualism successes be published, for example, on a website.
- Tourism ads in New Brunswick should promote the province's bilingual character.
- There was criticism of the fact that immigrants are not given the option of choosing French school for their children.
- Bilingual commercial signage is one way of recognizing New Brunswick's unique character.

Culture

- Efforts should be made to better integrate the two linguistic communities at major cultural events.
- The works of our artists should be translated into the other official language.

Within government and other institutions

- Deputy ministers should be bilingual.
- The provincial government's website should present information in both languages simultaneously. This would promote greater visibility of English and French.
- A mentorship program within the civil service should be set up to enable employees learning the other language to use that language more often.
- A broad network of bilingualism champions should be established within the provincial civil service.

- There should be more tools for promoting official languages and more awareness of those tools. The success of the *English/Français* and *J'apprends le français* pins was mentioned, and it was suggested that a glossary of common words be developed and distributed. Those tools should also be available to companies in the private sector.
- Resources should be offered to professional associations so they can deliver services in both official languages. The existing resources are considered deficient and not well known.

Post-secondary

- The participants believe that universities could do more to promote the two official languages.

The Commissioner of Official Languages acknowledges the financial support of the government of New Brunswick for the activities organized by his office in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the *Official Languages Act*.

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