

People are talking...



about Official Languages

It's All About People



Michel A. Carrier

It happened in 2004 at the launch of Louis J. Robichaud's biography. The book signing was coming to an end, and I went up to the former Premier to have my copy autographed. He congratulated me on my appointment as Commissioner, and before long, we were discussing the state of bilingualism in the province. He told me that the progress achieved

since the passage of New Brunswick's first *Official Languages Act* went beyond anything he could have imagined at the time it was adopted back in 1969. He was visibly proud and delighted by what he was seeing and, above all, hearing.

What seems natural to us today when it comes to official languages was not the case in 1969. That is what the "father" of the first *Official Languages Act* had noted. This 40th anniversary is an opportunity to pay tribute to the political courage of Louis J. Robichaud, as well as that of then Leader of the Official Opposition Richard Hatfield. Let's not forget that this legislation was passed unanimously.

Talk about official languages generally revolves around legislation, policies, and court decisions. We forget that, behind this issue, there are people first of all, members of our two linguistic communities. That is why, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the first official languages legislation, we offer these personal accounts by men and women of all backgrounds. Their words help us realize the progress we have made, the benefits of knowing more than one language, and the challenges that lie ahead.

Our province is unique: it is the only one that is officially bilingual. That is something of which we can all be proud.

Happy reading.

Michel A. Carrier
Commissioner of Official Languages
for New Brunswick

A Lever of Change

“But that conference has always been held in English.” That was the rather unenthusiastic reply that Louis-Philippe Albert got from his boss when the young employee suggested that the provincial 4-H conference take place in French as well. The proposal was quite logical since the event brought together young anglophones and francophones from all over the province. At the time, though, English and French were not on equal footing in New Brunswick.



“We wouldn’t be where we are today without that piece of legislation.”

Louis-Philippe Albert

Back in 1967, Louis-Philippe Albert was a young agrologist with the provincial Department of Agriculture who had arrived in Fredericton a few years earlier. He remembers the virtual absence of French in the capital city at the time. “People speaking French stood out like a sore thumb,” recalls Louis-Philippe. “They were considered foreigners.”

While Louis-Philippe’s boss showed little interest in his proposal, the young people were very receptive. Louis-Philippe dared to stick to his guns, and the conference was held in English and French. Other civil servants would not have had the guts to do it. But all that would change thanks to the first Official Languages Act. Daring would be replaced by exercising a right.

At the Heart of the *Official Languages Act*, the Notion of Equality...

In the 1960s, strong winds of change and equality were blowing throughout the world, including New Brunswick. The Premier, Louis J. Robichaud, undertook a vast program of social reform known as Equal Opportunity. Its goal was simple: ensure equal access to quality public services for all citizens. Those services (education, health, social services) had until then been provided by county councils through local taxation. Rich regions were able to offer quality public services while keeping taxes low, whereas poor regions struggled to offer the bare minimum while at the same time taxing the population heavily. To put an end to that inequality, Louis J. Robichaud’s government eliminated county councils, reformed taxation, and centralized public services within the provincial government.

For Robert Pichette, former Executive Assistant to Premier Robichaud, the *Official Languages Act* was a logical extension of that notion of equality. “Louis Robichaud knew he would bring in official languages legislation one day, but the timing was another story,” says the Premier’s former right-hand man. “That legislation was part of his social equality agenda.”

... and the Issue of National Unity

The notion of equality was also at the heart of the work of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, known as the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission. In 1963, the Commission began criss-crossing the country looking for ways to restore a degree of harmony between anglophone and francophone communities. One of its objectives was to recommend measures enabling the Canadian federation to develop on the basis of linguistic equality. In 1967, it recommended in particular that New Brunswick and Ontario designate English and French as official languages for their respective provinces.

Spurred on by the desire to recognize the equality of his province’s two official languages and contribute to national unity, Louis J. Robichaud seized the opportunity to make New Brunswick the first – and the only – officially bilingual province.

Laying the Cards on the Table

The Premier carefully prepared the minds of the public for the introduction of official languages legislation. He began by announcing his intentions in the Speech from the Throne of January 27, 1968. Next, a motion was debated in the Legislative Assembly. And on December 4, 1968, a White Paper outlining the content of the future legislation was presented to the members.

Entitled Statement on Language Equality and Opportunity, the White Paper set out in detail the



Robert Pichette

rationale of an official languages act. It described how the act would be implemented, indicated that financial support from the federal government would be necessary, and noted that the success of the undertaking depended as much on the population's goodwill

as on regulations. It even contained excerpts from an address by Queen Elizabeth II in favour of a harmonious dialogue between the communities: "True patriotism does not exclude an understanding of the patriotism of others..." The White Paper also sought to reassure those who might fear the effects of official bilingualism, stating that its aim was to ensure that "no unilingual New Brunswicker finds himself at a disadvantage in participating in the public life of our Province."

A First in Canada

At last, one fine day in April 1969, Premier Robichaud introduced Bill 73 dealing with New Brunswick's official languages. The document was short, consisting of only four pages. However, its content was dense. The bill stated that English and French were the official languages of New Brunswick and that both languages enjoyed equality of status and equal rights and privileges. And there was more. The bill provided that the provincial government had to serve citizens in the language of their choice when so requested. Before a court, citizens could be heard in their official language of choice. The bill also confirmed that classes had to be arranged such that the students' mother tongue was the chief language of instruction.

On April 12, 1969, after only a few days of debate, the members of the Legislative Assembly passed New Brunswick's first Official Languages Act, and they did so unanimously. The Leader of the Official Opposition, Richard Hatfield, and all of his members, supported the bill introduced by Louis J. Robichaud. New Brunswick therefore became the first province to declare itself officially bilingual, and in so doing, Fredericton stole the limelight from Ottawa: the Canadian Parliament passed the federal Official Languages Act a few months later.

One Act, Two Communities, a Variety of Reactions

As might be expected, the first Official Languages Act generated some very favourable reactions in the francophone community. As an article in the daily newspaper *L'Évangéline* put it, "After such a long time, it is hard to believe that, finally, French and English will be on an equal footing in New Brunswick, clearly and unmistakably." [Translation]. In the anglophone community, opinions were more varied. "The advancement of French aroused concern among certain anglophones," recalls Louis-Philippe Albert. "The fear of the unknown."

Jackie Webster was a journalist in Fredericton in 1969 and wrote regularly for *The Globe and Mail*. She remembers perfectly the atmosphere at the time. "It was a big story, because there was so much to write about. There were all kinds of different views," she says. "The Richard Hatfield elements saw it as absolutely correct, were very supportive, and they all saw the advantage of a second language. But out in the communities, they were not nearly so supportive. They had to be persuaded."



Jackie Webster

She also recalls the fears that the legislation raised. "Work was one of the things, and it is one of the things that is still there today. Will the unilingual anglophones lose their jobs or would we all have to be bilingual? The other was the cost. We are a poor province, and that costs us a lot of money. The third thing was the thing that we don't want to acknowledge, any of us; but we all have it in various ways: bias."

Louis J. Robichaud was well aware of the attitudes towards the French language. Robert Pichette remembers the day that the Premier, flushed with anger, walked into his office and commanded him to drive him to the Department of Fisheries. The Premier had phoned his Minister of Fisheries, who had a bilingual secretary. Believing that he was talking to her, Louis J. Robichaud had spoken French. But the person on the other end of the line was not the Minister's secretary. After a moment, she said to the man whose voice she had not recognized, "Speak white." A few minutes later, that young woman had the opportunity of meeting the Premier in person.

From Words...to Actions

While the enactment of the first Official Languages Act took only a short time, the same was not true of its implementation. That represented a challenge from the financial, technical, and human standpoints.

“The government couldn’t proclaim the whole thing because it didn’t have the money,” says Robert Pichette. “It had to ask Ottawa for help. Just imagine, all the province’s statutes had to be translated. That was a huge job. You can’t proclaim the fact that you have the right to be tried in French if the laws aren’t available in French.”

Another reason for the gradual implementation of the Act was the need to ensure that unilingual civil servants were not put at a disadvantage by the introduction of bilingual services for the public. It actually took until 1977 for all of the sections of the *Official Languages Act* to come into force. It was therefore up to Richard Hatfield, who won the 1970 election, to implement the fundamental parts of the Act, notably government services in both official languages.

The Power of Symbols

A number of people thought that the 1969 Act was more symbolic than practical. The slow implementation of the Act explains that to a large extent, as does the way it was presented. But symbols are powerful, and it is widely recognized today that the first Act marked the beginning of a major shift.

For Louis-Philippe Albert, this legislation led francophones to demand more. “At the time, we were losing the productivity of many francophone farmers who did not have access to technology transfer in their language,” he explains. “The 1969 Act legitimized the efforts we were making to offer them services in French. There were some deeply rooted habits that had to be changed, and francophones had to exercise their rights. The Act helped us to move things along. We wouldn’t be where we are today without that piece of legislation.”

Official Languages Professions

They work in the shadows. Their names go unknown. And their work is seldom recognized. Yet, official bilingualism is impossible without their services. Translators, interpreters and terminologists enable our two linguistic communities to talk to and understand each other. The 40th anniversary of the adoption of New Brunswick’s first Official Languages Act is an ideal opportunity to pay tribute to these people. Here are portraits of three lovers of language.

Wilfred Alliston

When he talks about his profession, Wilfred Alliston compares it to that of an acrobat. With good reason. Just imagine. An interpreter listens to the words spoken by someone and, at one and the same time, remembers them, translates them, and restates them in another language. Acrobatics, indeed.

Born in Fredericton, Wilfred started out as a teacher but found that it wasn’t for him. Having learned French, he sought to capitalize on his bilingualism. He decided to apply for a position as a translator/interpreter. He was successful and in September 1973 he received his first assignment. Wilfred doesn’t regret his career change. “It’s a profession that brings with it the opportunity and

the need to keep learning, and it’s that constant learning that makes life interesting, even exciting,” he said in perfect, practically unaccented French.

Wilfred was in charge of interpreter training for many years, so he knows the aptitudes that are required to exercise the profession. He says that, apart from an excellent command of languages and strong analytical skills, you need fast mental reflexes and the ability to work under pressure. “You also have to have a passion for words and a passion for learning,” he added. The profession has its difficulties as well. “It takes total concentration. That’s the most exhausting part for beginning interpreters. With time, you get used to it, but at the start, it’s very hard.”



Annette Pelletier and Wilfred Alliston in the interpreters' booth at the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly.

The extreme concentration required by the profession explains why interpreters work in teams of two or three and take turns at the microphone every half hour or every hour depending on the situation.

You could say that curiosity is what underlies this profession. "We talk about everything, so we have to be interested in everything," Wilfred continued. "That's the appeal of interpretation." He also emphasized that preparation is fundamental to success as an interpreter: "Before a conference, you have to know why the meeting is being held, what the issues are. And you also have to know the specific vocabulary that will be used."

As an interpreter at the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, Wilfred Alliston witnessed first-hand the political changes of the last 30 years. He believes that the *Official Languages Act* and other measures enabled New Brunswick's francophone community to take a giant step forward. "Before those measures, French was around, but more as a private language," he said. "People spoke French amongst themselves, but in public, they spoke English. It wasn't a public language, not to any extent. All that has undergone a major change." He gave as an example the conference of a major New Brunswick association that was held recently in Fredericton. "One of the speakers spoke almost entirely in French. That sort of thing would never have happened 40 years ago. There's been a tremendous transformation of mentalities, and simultaneous interpretation has a lot to do with that," Wilfred concluded.

Annette Pelletier

When she was a child, Annette Pelletier liked to listen to foreign-language programs on the radio. She didn't understand a word of what she was hearing in Spanish, but she was captivated by how the language sounded. And then one day, she saw some interpreters on television. Right away, she knew what she wanted to do when she grew up.

Born in Edmundston, Annette was one of the first female interpreters at the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick. In fact, she embarked on that profession in 1971, just three years after the simultaneous interpretation service was established within this institution. She later worked in legal translation for a few years before returning to interpretation.

Annette likes to compare the job of a translator and an interpreter to that of an artist. "Translation or interpretation involves creation," she explained. "You're putting what someone else has said into another language."

Although her formal education ended a few decades ago, Annette feels like she is still at university. "Interpretation is a constant learning process. The variety is limited only by the number of conference topics. It's like university, but you get paid to go there." She explained that a knowledge of languages is not enough to be an interpreter. "You also have to know the culture that's associated with each language, because things are not necessarily seen the same way from one culture to another," she said. The fact is that interpretation consists in reproducing a message as it would be said in another language, not in transposing it word for word.

Does the interpreter ever draw a blank? Annette admits that it can happen, especially if someone is talking very fast. She explained that the context of a conference (what people already know about the topic) helps to compensate for any gap that might exist between what the person who is talking says and what is translated by the interpreter. But you can't always rely on the context. She recalls one day when an MLA asked a very simple question about "sangliers" [boars]. Her mind went completely blank. She couldn't remember what the animal was called in English, so she had to admit into the microphone that the word escaped her. One MLA misunderstood her admission and said that the interpreter hadn't understood the question! "We were no further ahead. I had to admit my ignorance a second time." Another MLA finally grasped the situation and gave her the translation.

Annette defines her work as being that of an artist, and with good reason. Interpreters have to more or less slip into the skin of the people whose words they are translating in order to express their thoughts, anticipate what they will say, and render their emotions. And sometimes, that can be tricky. Annette recalls a conference where a man was relating a deeply moving story. “It was someone who had had an extremely hard life, in part due to his own fault, and who had managed to overcome his problems,” explained Annette. “He was talking about these very painful times for himself, his wife and his children.” The interpreter had the words, but she could no longer get them out. She was all choked up. “My colleague and I passed the microphone back and forth several times during that conference.”

That reaction seems perfectly normal. After all, aren’t artists known to be sensitive souls?



Marion Macfarlane

At a very young age, when her family was living in Scotland, Marion Macfarlane fell in love with foreign languages. Today,

she indulges that passion by working as a translator at the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick. She juggles words in order to translate the thoughts of our political representatives but also to facilitate communication among people.

The staff of Debates Translation (the translation service of the Legislative Assembly) translates many words – 1.8 million in 2007. Translating the Hansard, the record of the MLAs’ debates in the House, is an important part of their work. According to Marion, this is a very delicate task. “On the one hand, you can’t have an MLA saying something he didn’t. On the other, you have to avoid falling into the trap of word-for-word translation since that can make the text heavy, even incomprehensible. You have to render the same message while respecting the genius of the other language.”

Marion believes that every language is a window on the world and therefore a source of enrichment. She herself has had the opportunity to live in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. In addition to English, her mother tongue, she has a command of German, French, and Latin. Generally, translators translate into their mother tongue. This is not the case with Marion, who translates mainly from English to French. According to her, one of the peculiarities of parliamentary translation is that the message to be translated is usually meant to be heard rather than read. “Speeches are crafted with a view to maximum aural impact and tend to be liberally sprinkled with catch phrases intended to stick in listeners’ minds,” she said. “Translators have first to check into whether an official English or French equivalent has already been coined, and if not, come up with a suitably snappy translation, a watchword that must then be adhered to faithfully in all future pronouncements in which it will, inevitably, recur.”

It’s well known that politicians often use a very colourful vocabulary. Marion added that this must be reflected in the translation as well. However, equivalents don’t always exist in the other language, and that makes the translator’s work even more difficult. And the expressions to be translated sometimes raise a smile... She gives the example of an MLA who compared the conduct of one of his colleagues to that of the likeable character Chicken Little, the chick with the anxious temperament. Several options were open to the translator, such as using the English name and providing a footnoted explanation, or using the adjective “alarmiste” [alarmist] or the expression “prophète de malheur” [prophet of doom].

Marion says that she has to translate texts on everything under the sun. “It’s a job where you learn a lot,” she said. But the variety of subjects also means that translators have to constantly add to the specialized vocabulary used in each area of activity (forestry, health, transportation). “You have to read a lot, and you have to read everything.”

What makes a successful translation? “It’s when you have the feeling that you’ve communicated the same message in an elegant fashion, that you’ve really facilitated communication,” said the translator. According to Marion, there are too many barriers in this world, and she, in her own way, is trying to knock them down by “facilitating communication,” as she so aptly puts it.

Testimonies



Languages: An Entry Visa to the World

Christie Dennison

Christie Dennison's parents enrolled her in the French immersion program because they wanted to give her every chance of success in a bilingual province. Mission accomplished. Today, thanks to her command of both official languages, Christie manages international development projects around the world. She is a true poster girl for French immersion in New Brunswick.

When asked about the challenges of learning a second language during the early school years, Christie Dennison sees none. "For me, it was something that offered advantages," said the young native Frederictonian. "It was part of learning."

All of her schooling took place in immersion, first at St. Dunstan's School, then at George Street Junior High School, and lastly at Fredericton High School. She therefore felt equipped to continue her studies in French and English at the University of Ottawa, a bilingual university.

The strong presence of two linguistic communities at this university and her participation in the House of Commons Page Program stimulated Christie's interest in the Canadian francophonie. She met francophones from across Canada and became friends with many of them. At the University of Ottawa, Christie studied political science and learned Spanish. Her BA in hand, the young woman left for Great Britain, where she obtained a master's degree in conflict resolution and peace studies. She felt she was ready to travel the world.

"I did a few internships, and I had the opportunity to work for the United Nations Development Programme in Uzbekistan, in central Asia. That was my first job in another country, and it was fantastic. I learned so much." Her work as a Gender and Development Advisor involved mainly participating in international committees that guided and supported local Uzbek organizations in promoting women's economic and social rights.

At the end of this first contract, Christie began looking for a new position. She found the perfect job, but it was in Senegal, a francophone country. Christie knew that her skills and her work experience made her an ideal candidate. Although she had never worked exclusively in French, that was no obstacle for her, so she went ahead and applied.

"They offered me the position. I went to Senegal for a year. It was a total immersion experience." In that country, Christie worked with groups of women in order to help them sell their products on local markets. The young woman really feels that this experience enabled her to improve her French tremendously. "Communicating effectively in a different cultural environment forces us to modify our physical and oral language," she said. "I communicated with my Senegalese colleagues mainly in French, because that was our only common language before I learned a little Wolof. They came from different ethnic groups and, like me, had learned French in school. A desire to collaborate on human development projects motivated us to overcome our cultural and linguistic differences."

While she was living abroad, Christie discovered that a consortium working in international development, SavoirSphère Canada – LearnSphere Canada, had its offices in her hometown. She got in touch with the organization. Then, she left the African continent and went to Haiti, where she worked for the United Nations for a few months. Finally, in 2006, Christie returned to Canada. Her contacts with LearnSphere panned out, and the organization hired her.

As Project Manager, Christie now works on international development projects that enlist the expertise of New Brunswick training firms and organizations. Naturally, her command of French is an undeniable asset. "Two of our largest international projects are in Cameroon, and they are francophone projects," she added. Christie believes that her immersion experiences, especially in Senegal, gave her a better understanding of the situation of francophones who live in a minority setting in New Brunswick. "It's not easy to live and work in a language other than your mother tongue," she said. "Even after attaining some level of proficiency in the other language, barriers still exist."

Although her current job enables her to travel on occasion, Christie would like to work abroad again one day. She already has the best entry visa: a command of several languages.



A Matter of Respect

Larry Nelson

A lifetime Moncton resident, Larry Nelson has been a close witness of the evolution of the two linguistic communities. Over the years, he has helped to build bridges between anglophones and francophones. For this businessman and respected community leader, serving a person in his or her language of choice is a simple matter of respect.

Larry Nelson grew up playing with anglophone and francophone kids. “Half my friends were French, half were English,” he said. He remembers being puzzled by the fact that some French kids, as they were called then, rarely spoke French in front of him. “I never realized that some went home at night and were told that the English people didn’t like them to speak French.” Things have changed a lot since then, Larry believes. “Many of my best friends are francophone, and when I’m with them, they speak French because they’re comfortable and they also know I’m comfortable. I know they’ll talk to me in my language if needed.”

Larry is a strong supporter of French as a second language. “We’re the only bilingual province, and this city is a bilingual city, so why wouldn’t you learn French?” wonders this well-known businessman. “My proudest moment was when my son got his Chartered Accountant, he did his internship in a Francophone firm. This [bilingualism] opens so many doors. Speaking both languages is an advantage everybody should have.”

As a kid, Larry Nelson wanted to play for the Aigles Bleus, the Université de Moncton’s hockey team. He didn’t have the opportunity because he started working right after high school. However, recognizing what the

Université de Moncton brings to the city, he became an important contributor to their fundraising campaign. “This community is as good as it gets because of the university.” He admits that a few people questioned him at first about his involvement with the francophone institution. His answer was simple: “I don’t have time for that.”

As president of Groupe Lounsbury Group, Larry makes sure that front-line staff are bilingual. “If you’re going to serve a community, you have to be able to serve them in their language.” It’s worth noting that signs on the Lounsbury Furniture Store on Mountain Road are in both languages. “I do it out of respect for the fact that we’re in a city that is bilingual.”

Larry is also known for his strong spirit of cooperation. A few years ago, when he was asked to be the chairman of the Friends of The Moncton Hospital Foundation, he told the board that the first thing he’d like to do was a campaign with the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont Hospital Foundation. He was told that the two foundations had their own activities. That didn’t keep Mr. Nelson from talking with his counterpart. Both foundations saw the benefits of working together, and the *Hand and Hand - Main dans la Main* lottery was launched.

Asked for his thoughts about the application of the *Official Language Act* and language policies, Larry Nelson’s reply was very simple: “You have a policy, manage it. Don’t allow people who are supposed to be able to speak both languages at the front desk to be there if they can’t speak both languages. Saying I don’t speak French isn’t an answer.”

Respect. A key word for Larry Nelson in making sure both official languages are treated equally. “It’s a two-way street: if you give respect, you get respect,” he concluded.



The Richness of Languages

Maria-Laetitia Uwimana

Maria-Laetitia Uwimana is well aware of the challenges associated with learning languages: she speaks four of them. For this young immigrant, each language is a key to exploring a cultural universe.

Laetitia grew up all over the world, at the whim of the assignments that her diplomat father received. Born in Rwanda, she spent her early years in Canada. She then lived in Japan and Switzerland. At home, French was spoken along with Kinyarwanda, Rwanda's national language, and a little English. When the family returned to Rwanda in 1990, Laetitia had to quickly become more proficient in Kinyarwanda in order to continue her studies. "It's a tonal language, one in which the intonation employed is very important," she says. "Depending on how you pronounce the word *umuryango*, for example, it means family or door."

Soon after their return, civil war broke out in Rwanda. Laetitia's family had to flee the country in very difficult circumstances and wound up in the Congo, then Togo.

Thanks to being sponsored by relatives already settled in Canada, Laetitia, her husband, and her little girl arrived in Fredericton in November 2005. She knew little about New Brunswick, but she did know it had two linguistic communities. "When I was in Africa, I had heard about Acadia over the airwaves of Radio France Internationale. I found that very interesting, because for me, francophone Canada meant Quebec."

The young family faced several challenges: housing, work, child care. Laetitia's husband had to improve his English rapidly in order to find work. As for Laetitia, her command of French and English enabled her to get a job. Shortly after, she was hired by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick.

The concept of official languages is not totally foreign to Laetitia. Her years in Switzerland had accustomed her to the use of several languages in one country. In her homeland, the official language, French, coexisted with the national language, Kinyarwanda.

Today, Laetitia is an investigator. Her work consists in dealing with the complaints received by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. "We gather the facts surrounding the complaint and ask the institution concerned to respond. Once all of the information has been gathered, we analyze it, and the Commissioner makes a decision."

Despite her job and her children, Laetitia finds the time to attend the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton on a part-time basis. As might be expected, she is very interested in languages. Her studies give her the chance to work on her Spanish.

"I prefer to speak to someone in his or her mother tongue. To people from Latin America, I speak Spanish; to a Rwandan, I speak Kinyarwanda; to an anglophone, English. That builds stronger ties." She also believes that the use of a person's mother tongue makes it easier to grasp subtleties of thought. "In my opinion, ideas are best expressed in your mother tongue, and there's nothing like having someone speak to you in that language."

At home, her children are learning three languages simultaneously: French, Kinyarwanda, and English. "For me, each language makes you richer," she stated.



Familiarity Breeds Understanding

Antoine Landry

Caraquet mayor Antoine Landry is an Acadian who is proud of his roots and his language but is also open to other cultures. In other words, he is a man who encourages dialogue.

Antoine Landry firmly believes in the importance of dialogue, and for good reason. His ancestor, Alexie Landry – one of the founders of Caraquet – benefited from it enormously. "He was one of the few bilingual Acadians," Landry says. "Some English soldiers he did business with tipped him off to Lawrence's strategy

to deport the Acadians, giving him the opportunity to escape. It took him two years to get to Caraquet. If not for the Mi'kmaq, he would have perished in the forest."

Over the years, Landry has always sought to promote respectful dialogue between the province's two linguistic communities. Very active within Dialogue New Brunswick's Ambassador Program, he initiated exchanges between the municipalities of Caraquet and Saint John. He believes those meetings made it possible to correct certain perceptions. "Representatives from the city of Saint John were afraid no one would be able to speak to them in their language," he says. "But of course we had bilingual ceremonies. Now they no longer view the Acadian Peninsula in the same way."

For the mayor of Caraquet, the adoption of New Brunswick's first official languages legislation in 1969 contributed greatly to the vitality of the French language. "We took a giant step forward," he says. At the time, Landry was Caraquet's town clerk. "For the first time, we would be able to communicate with the government in French."

A few years previously, Landry was the town's police chief. He says that using English exclusively posed major problems. "When I went to court, I had to express myself entirely in English; I had to write all of my documents in English. That was a handicap for us since poorly translated technical details often caused us to lose cases."

Today, Landry devotes considerable effort to increasing immigration to his town. "Our birth rate is low," he says. "That's why we've been working very hard on immigration over the past two years." The mayor makes a point of finding out the origins of the people who immigrate to his town, because he believes familiarity with several different cultures enriches people's lives. "There's an African proverb that says a people without culture is like a zebra without stripes." He then adds, "Take away a zebra's stripes and what you're left with is a donkey."

Landry notes that the vitality of the French language is a daily struggle, adding that francophones often tend to switch to English even when it's not necessary. "Today, there are lots more anglophones who speak French than you'd think. And when we speak French, they reply in French," he stated.

For Antoine Landry, harmony between the two linguistic communities is based on dialogue. "We're the only officially bilingual province," he said in conclusion. "Efforts have to be made on both sides."



Perpetuating a Heritage

Sandra Christopher

Corporal Sandra Christopher works with the Truth Verification Section of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Her work tools are the lie detector (polygraph) and words. When she talks about official languages, the depth of her sincerity comes shining through.

Sandra Christopher grew up in Riverview in a family where English predominated. "I would sometimes hear my mother speaking French, but that wasn't part of our daily lives," she said. Still, her parents decided to enrol her in the immersion program and then in a francophone school. "I better appreciate the gift my parents gave me in sending me to French school," Sandra said.

The path followed by Sandra is rather unusual. After studying English literature, she obtained a bachelor's degree in education. She taught for a few years in a French immersion program. Then she decided to join the ranks of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Very early in her new career, the young police officer was transferred to New Brunswick. Sandra clearly recalls the surprised looks of drivers who, after noting the name Christopher on her badge, asked for service in French only to obtain it immediately. "I was always happy to speak to drivers in French," she said.

After working as an investigator and information analyst, Sandra moved to Truth Verification. Her work consists in administering polygraph tests. "The test results are not intended for court purposes, they provide focus for investigations and eliminate suspects," she said. It's noteworthy that the police officer gives these tests in English and in French, which requires an excellent command of both languages and a good measure of concentration. "I have to react to what someone tells me," she mentioned. "You have to be able to think and express yourself quickly." She remembers very well the first tests she administered in French. "I was exhausted but very satisfied."

To maintain her proficiency in French, Sandra uses various methods. "I speak to my children in French. I listen to French radio, and I try to read in French. That helps me a lot with my vocabulary. At work, I try to write my reports in French. That's not always easy, but I make the effort."

When it came time to enrol their children in school, Sandra and her husband opted for French school. In addition to wanting to give their children the advantages associated with speaking both official languages, the couple also wanted to pass on a heritage that had already been lost to a considerable extent in their own family. “I have plenty of cousins, Leblancs and Landrys, who aren’t able to speak French.” Sandra realizes that the act of sending her children to French school makes them rightholders, or persons who will later be able to avail themselves of the right to send their own children to French school. “We want to perpetuate our heritage,” she said.



“My dream is that language barriers will be a thing of the past.”

Albert Grant

During an interview for a position as a French immersion teacher, Albert Grant was asked if he would be willing to teach in Blackville. His nervousness and poor grasp of English led him to offer this reply: “Certainly, I’m not a racist.” Well, you can guess the reactions of the selection committee members. But that was just one question among many. The young man was hired and, since then, has acquired a good command of English, learning his second language while teaching French.

Albert Grant earned his Bachelor of Education degree from the Université de Moncton in 1986. He didn’t have to search for a job for very long. “In the 1980s, immersion was all the rage,” he recalls. “The demand for teachers was very high.” He was offered a position at Miramichi High.

“My English was very limited, so it was a challenge,” says this resident of Val-Comeau. He remembers the morning announcements, which he didn’t always understand. “My students were fantastic. They realized

my weaknesses, and that helped them get over their fear of speaking French to some degree. So we were there to learn. I learned from them, and they learned from me.”

Albert took advantage of lunch hour to improve his English. He joined a group of teachers from the industrial department, who were delighted to help the newcomer. “I felt accepted from day one.”

For 21 years, Albert taught French to immersion students. For the past two years, he has been teaching in the intensive French program at the school in Brantville. Despite his 23 years of experience, he thinks there is always something to learn.

“Yesterday’s students aren’t the same as today’s,” he says. “Their needs aren’t the same. You have to adapt. The important thing is to be human and to be fair.” How can you get students interested in a second language? Albert explains that you have to find some way of grabbing their attention. “You have to find the pulse of your group. Once you find it, you can exploit it. It comes with experience,” he stated. Passion is definitely the key. “If the teacher isn’t motivated, the students will never be.”

While Albert admits that parents play a major role when it comes to their child enrolling in immersion, he believes that many students come to grasp the importance of speaking both languages after a while. “Personally, it wasn’t until I reached my early 20s that I started to realize the importance of speaking English,” he says.

Albert believes that immersion and second-language programs have furthered not only the French language but also harmony between the two linguistic communities. “Immersion programs have really helped French in New Brunswick,” he says. “People are much more open-minded than before. I believe our society is more accepting of language differences. My dream is that, someday, language barriers will be a thing of the past; that everyone will be bilingual.”



“My Place Is Here!”

Khalid Badrezzamane

It's hard to believe that Khalid Badrezzamane left Casablanca and its mild climate for Canada. But this French teacher who came to New Brunswick to learn English and decided to stay isn't complaining. He raves about the warmth of New Brunswickers.

When he arrived in Montreal in March 2002, Khalid Badrezzamane quickly realized that his chances of finding a job were slim without a Canadian diploma. He therefore enrolled in the bachelor's program at the École des Hautes Études Commerciales, where he heard that second-language monitors were being recruited – an opportunity to work while learning English, he told himself. “It was important for me to learn English in order to improve my chances of finding a good job,” he explained. “And also because English is a very important language, not only in Canada but around the world.” His application was accepted, and he was asked where he would like to work. “I requested a small place where people spoke English,” he says. And that's how this native of Morocco arrived in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, in October 2004. There, he helped students learn French, while he learned English.

Khalid had not planned to stay in New Brunswick. He was actually supposed to spend a year learning English and then go back to Montreal. But the warmth of New Brunswickers left an impression on him. “I received five invitations to social events during my first month in St. Stephen,” he says, still surprised. “I'd never thought I could live anywhere other than Montreal. But after meeting the locals and seeing the personal and professional opportunities available to me, I decided that my place was in New Brunswick.”

After two years at the school in St. Stephen, Khalid accepted a position as a part-time language skills evaluator, which required him to travel across the province. He still has a lasting memory of his first experiences driving a car in snow. He was then hired

by a private school and went to Woodstock to teach French. There, his English improved considerably. But after two years in that town, he missed French, so he requested and obtained a transfer to Moncton. Since 2008, Khalid has been teaching French at a private school in Moncton and for the Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area (MAGMA). “Here in Moncton, I can speak French, I can speak English,” he says.

Khalid's mother tongue is Arabic, but in a way, French is his second mother tongue. He explains that French is very important in Morocco, particularly in the private sector. “If you don't speak French, you have no hope of finding a good job with a private company,” he says. He adds that he was surprised by the variations in the French spoken in New Brunswick and Quebec. However, he notes that there are similar variations in Arabic.

Today, Khalid has no trouble expressing himself in English, his third language, although he's still very attached to French. “I consider it my language even though it's my second language.” He's aware of the challenges facing French, but he's confident. He believes that pride in the French language has to be cultivated and that an effort has to be made to speak it well. He also believes that francophone communities throughout Canada have to work together more to promote French all across the country. “French is my identity and my pride,” he declared.



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