



LANGUAGE POLITICS IN QUEBEC: A SOCIAL CONTEXT

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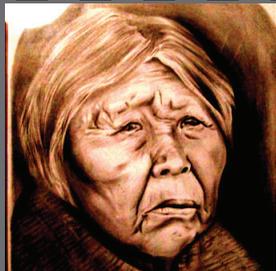
INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this document: To provide a backdrop of some of the historical particularities that inform the complex current realities faced by community groups working in different languages in Quebec. This is a living document, intended to encourage reflection and dialogue within and between community groups around how they are affected by the social context of language in Quebec. It is by no means comprehensive, and we will continue to develop it, hopefully with the help of those who read and engage with it.

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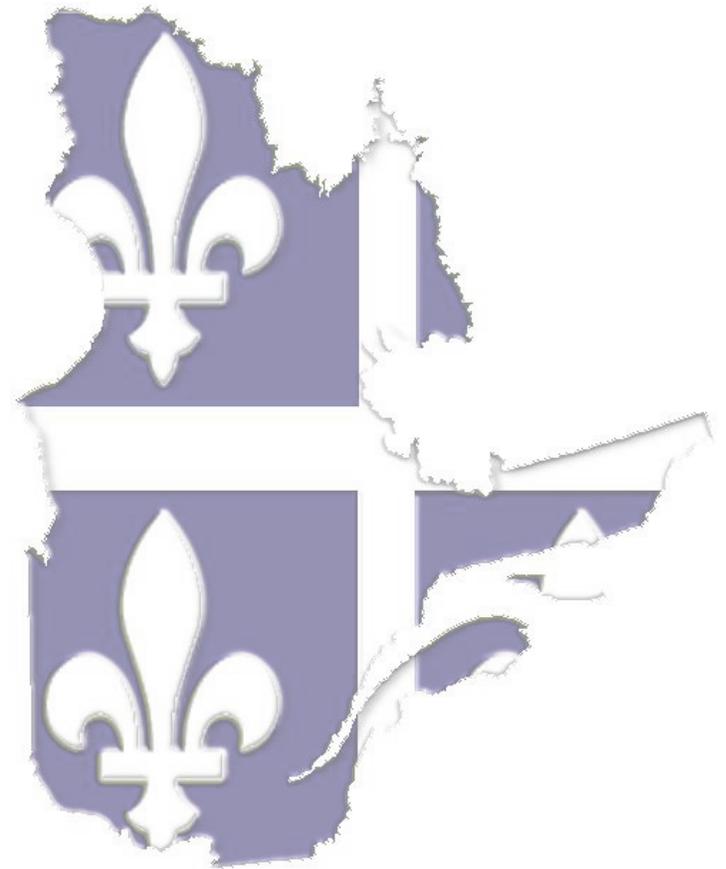
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A NOTE ON THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE, AND FIRST NATIONS
COLONIZATION AND ONGOING STRUGGLE
FOR SURVIVAL

ANGLOPHONE-FRANCOPHONE
HISTORY/TENSION

EXCLUSION AND MARGINALIZATION OF
(ANGLOPHONE AND/OR ALLOPHONE)
IMMIGRANT AND RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES



Thanks to Carlos Mota for the Illustration

LANGUAGE, AND FIRST NATIONS COLONIZATION AND ONGOING STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

2.1

In order to understand the social context of language in Quebec, we need to begin with what, for many of us, is the hidden history and ongoing legacy of the colonization of First Nations in Quebec.

A thorough discussion of this history would go way beyond what we can explore in an info-sheet, however one important piece of it, as far as language is concerned, is the Residential School System. As in the rest of Canada, between the 1840s and 1990s Quebec had many Residential schools in which Aboriginal students, who had been forcibly removed from their families and communities, were not allowed to speak their own languages, even among themselves and outside the classroom. The aim was to replace indigenous languages with English or French. Students were physically punished for speaking their own languages or for practicing non-Christian faiths. Given that language is at the heart of cultural identity and that the transmission of many Aboriginal cultures was and still is hinged on an oral tradition, these policies have resulted in a legacy of cultural genocide and “linguicide”.

In 2008, the Government of Canada issued a Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools, in which it acknowledged the legacy of the prohibition of First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages in those schools. However, many First Nations, Inuit and Métis people and communities do not feel that the apology was sufficient as a way of addressing the ongoing negative effects of the schools, although some feel that it is at least a start.

 <http://www.thestar.com/News/article/441786>

LANGUAGE, AND FIRST NATIONS COLONIZATION AND ONGOING STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

2.2



Thanks to Carlos Mota for the Illustration

In their response to the Government of Canada's Residential School Apology, the Quebec Native Women's Association made the following statement (excerpted):

"In order for this apology to be considered genuine, more efforts must be undertaken to correct current oppressive measures under the Indian Act that prevent Indigenous peoples from prospering socially, culturally, politically and economically...We therefore urge the Government of Canada to adequately fund Indigenous languages in a manner that is equivalent to the support given to the French and English languages..."



http://www.dominionpaper.ca/weblogs/anna_carastathis/1872

<http://www.faq-qnw.org/>

An important way in which Aboriginal communities have been working to reclaim their own power and agency is by protecting, enhancing and attempting to revitalize their heritage languages. There are several ongoing projects whose aim is to revitalize Aboriginal languages in Quebec, some of which can be found through the following links:



<http://www.universityaffairs.ca/fight-to-revitalize-canadas-indigenous-languages.aspx>

<http://www.ciera.ulaval.ca/publications/yawenda.htm>

<http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/chairholders-titulaires/profile-eng.aspx?profileID=1971>

<http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1300288303593/1300288303595>

<http://www.firstvoices.com/en/Huronne-Wendat>

<http://www.firstvoices.com/en/Kanienkeha-Mohawk-EN>

<http://www.erudit.org/revue/du/2008/v/ndu2547/019562ar.pdf>

MAINTENANT OU JAMAIS!



**MAÎTRES
CHEZ NOUS**

ANGLOPHONE-FRANCOPHONE HISTORY/TENSION

3.1

Up until Quebec's "Quiet Revolution" in the 1960s, the Quebec economy was dominated by an Anglophone elite. As a result, Francophones were excluded from higher-status positions and jobs. Although the French and English languages were both protected by law in Canada, only in Quebec was the principle of bilingualism instituted and there it was strictly one-sided – Francophones were forced to use English in dealings with the Anglophones, but the reverse was not the case. Being ethnically Quebecois and unilingually Francophone was a severe economic disadvantage up until the early 1960s (Wardhaugh, 1983, pp.74-80).

Quebec's Quiet Revolution attempted to tackle this linguistic inequality through the creation of francization programs. In 1961, the Office québécois de la langue française (Quebec Office of the French language) was created, and the introduction in 1977 of the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) greatly expanded its mandate. The office is responsible for applying and defining Quebec's language policy pertaining to linguistic officialization, terminology and francization of public administration and businesses.

One example of Francophone-Anglophone linguistic and cultural differences in the context of community organizations is the contrast in the history of volunteering in Francophone and Anglophone communities within Quebec, and also between Quebec and the rest of Canada. While charitable organizations and volunteerism became secularized in Anglophone communities in Canada from the beginning of the 20th century, Quebec's Francophone social services were provided by the Catholic church until the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s overthrew the Church's influence in favour of secularism. The Church had not encouraged volunteerism, and likewise, once social services had been turned over to the secular state, the prevailing attitude among Francophones in Quebec was that essential services should be provided by the state, rather than by non-profit volunteer-supported organizations ((Runte, Basil, & Runte, 2010, pp. 253-254).

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ANGLOPHONE-FRANCOPHONE HISTORY/TENSION

3.2

In 2008, the Bouchard Taylor Commission was formed in order to address growing concerns among Francophone Quebecois that Francophone language and culture were being lost due to the imposition of different values on Quebec society by immigrants from various cultural groups. Its recommendations are summarized here:



<http://www.accommodements.qc.ca/communiqués/2008-05-22c-en.html>

The Commission's recommendations around "reasonable accommodation" of the cultural and linguistic practices of new arrivals to Quebec sparked heavy debate and received criticism from different groups, many of whom have accused the commission of creating a hierarchy of cultures by deeming some practices to be more "reasonable" than others, and of encouraging racist and xenophobic attitudes towards newcomers to Quebec.



<http://www.dominionpaper.ca/articles/1589>,

http://www.macleans.ca/article.jsp?content=20070924_109270_109270

These are just some recent examples of linguistic and cultural differences and tensions between Francophones, Anglophones and speakers of other languages within Quebec. We acknowledge that the complexity of these issues cannot be entirely addressed in this info sheet, but we encourage groups to continue to think about and discuss how they have been affected by this backdrop.



EXCLUSION & MARGINALIZATION OF (ANGLOPHONE AND/OR ALLOPHONE) IMMIGRANT AND RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES

4.1

**In this section we talk about “immigrant” as well as “racialized” communities. By immigrant, we mean people who have left one country to settle in another. By racialized, we mean people who have had racial categorization imposed on them, and who have been treated unequally on that basis. It’s important to note here that not all immigrants are racialized, and not all racialized groups are immigrants. For example, Quebec has a black community that has been established since the 19th century.*

The current language laws in Quebec further complicate the already complex challenges faced by new immigrants, migrant workers as well as by well-settled racialized communities. For example, it is often a challenge for immigrant workers who have already learned English, in addition to their first language(s), to also have to learn French once they arrive in Quebec. For instance, migrant domestic workers have very little time to spend on French classes since their work days and working weeks are already long.

Immigrants who may speak English but no French upon arrival often feel alienated when trying to access necessary government services, due to their lack of comfort in French. Similarly, immigrant families who arrive in Quebec with more knowledge of English than French are required by Bill 101 to send their children to school in French, where it can be very difficult for them to catch up on French language skills as well as complete class work.

At the same time, A 2005 study by Quebec’s Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Communities revealed that both school drop-out rates and unemployment are higher for blacks in Quebec than for non-blacks. Language barriers were one of the factors that were identified as contributing to these this discrepancy.



http://www2.cdpedj.qc.ca/en/publications/Documents/Profiling_final_EN.pdf

<http://www.micc.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/dossiers/Consultation-communautes-noires-anglais.pdf>

<http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-cultural.cfm>



EXCLUSION ET MARGINALISATION DES IMMIGRANTS (ANGLOPHONES OU ALLOPHONES) ET COMMUNAUTÉS RACISÉES

4.2

An important way in which immigrant and racialized communities have been working to reclaim their own power and agency is by organizing within and between their communities to provide support, linguistic and otherwise, to those who are marginalized by mainstream government services, agencies, and schools. Some of these organizations can be found through the following links:



The Afghan Women's Center of Montreal:

<https://sites.google.com/site/afghanwomenscentreofmontreal/>

Alliance des communautés culturelles pour l'égalité dans la santé et les services sociaux (ACCESSS):

<http://accesss.net/>

Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique:

<http://arcencielfafrique.org>

Black Community Resource Centre:

http://www.bcrcmontreal.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=63

Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations:

<http://www.crarr.org/?q=node/1>

Desta Black Youth Network:

<http://www.destabyn.org/>

The Immigrant Workers Centre:

<http://iwc-cti.ca/>

PINAY: Filipino Women's Organization in Quebec:

<http://pinayquebec.blogspot.ca/>

South Asian Women's Community Centre:

<http://www.sawcc-ccfsa.ca/EN/>

Tyndale St. Georges Community Centre:

<http://www.tyndalestgeorges.com>