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CPF

Canadian Parents for French

Prince Edward Island



1977-2002



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~ A Look Back ~

The first 25 Years
“Promoting opportunities for young Canadians to learn and use French “

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Forward

Canadian Parents for French began shortly after the introduction of French Immersion to Canada. CPF-PEI is proud to be celebrating our 25th anniversary this year, **2002!**

I have been a part of CPF for seven years at various levels and capacities, beginning at my children's schools and now at the Branch level. I have seen many changes and achievements and have met many people in those seven years. Imagine what the past 25 years has seen! Many parents have walked through our doors contributing to our history. It is a history we can be proud of. We, the parents, past and present, have given many volunteer hours to promoting, creating and enhancing French activities for children across PEI and Canada. My hope is that it continues well into the future.

The majority of this document is the result of many hours of research, interviewing, letter writing, e-mails, faxes, etc. of Heather Doyle, our hired researcher for our 25th Anniversary. On behalf of myself and the Board of Directors, we wish Heather all the best as she furthers her education in the fall. She's done an excellent job and knows more about CPF now than we do!

At this time I'd like to thank all the Chapter and Branch volunteers as well as our staff for the part they played in the making of this history.

Enjoy!

Most Sincerely,

Cathie Walsh Ramsay, President
CPF-PEI

The Guardian: Charlottetown, PEI. Nov. 1983. 14.

Interviews:

- Mary Lou Morrison, personal interview, 22 June 2002
- Jean Collins, personal interview, 5 March 2002
- Patrick Kinnear, personal interview, 13 June 2002
- Linda Lowther, personal interview, 30 May, 2002

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- CPF PEI Newsletter*, January 2000. Spring Edition
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"The limit of my language is the limit of my world. To acquire a second language is to develop a second soul."

Zhaohi-chun, Oct 2000

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Prologue

In 2002, Canadian Parents for French Prince Edward Island celebrates 25 years of service in the Island community “*Promoting Opportunities for Young Canadians to Learn and Use French*”. I was hired to plan and organize activities to help commemorate this special occasion. One such project, was to compile and write a history of CPF - PEI. This project began in January 2002 and took months to complete. Data and information was collected through interviews with past and present CPF members, French Immersion administrators and teachers. Data was also extracted from past CPF newsletters, archives and periodicals. This information was then compiled into the following, a documentation of CPF PEI throughout the past 25 years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to this history: Jean Collins, Jerry Upkirk, Pat Kinnear, Linda Lowther, Mary Lou Morrison, Miles Turnbull, Patty Richard, Dorothy Maze, Mar Thompson and Paula Doiron - Lenentine for being generous with their time to grant me an interview. Cathie Walsh Ramsay for her contribution with the Forward and Gail Lecky for her guidance and advice. As well, I would like to thank Donnie Doyle and Beth Doyle for their volunteered time in editing this document. I would also like to thank all those who have contributed their time and knowledge to CPF - PEI throughout the past 25 years.

We here at CPF - PEI hope that all those interested in learning the history of how this organization began and developed in Prince Edward Island will find this both informative and interesting.

Heather Doyle
CPF History Author

The Beginning of French Immersion in Canada

"Canadian Immersion is not just another successful language teaching program, it may be the most successful program ever recorded in the professional language teaching literature..."

~ Dr. Stephen Krashen, Professor from the University of Southern California ~

The Beginning - Bilingualism in Canada

In 1867, at the beginning of Confederation, The Parliament of Canada adopted two official languages: English and French. Although, only officially bilingual in Parliament, the symbolic importance began to be realized when both French and English appeared on postage stamps and bank notes in the 1920's and the 1930's. As well, in 1934, the previously unilingual public service sector began to communicate with the province of Quebec in French. These factors, along with the establishment of the Translation Bureau in 1934, were the initial steps into helping pave the road to a bilingual Canada (Our Official Languages, pg 3).

As with most things, during the early stages of development, the path to bilingualism in Canada was not without its twists and turns. Some provinces had prohibited the teaching of the French language in the public school system. As well, friction could often be felt between Anglophones and Francophones.

Government officials began to realize that more needed to be done for Canadian citizens in the linguistic minority, as well as ensuring that all citizens and cultures were given the opportunity to flourish (Our Official Languages, pg 3). If conflict between the citizens of Canada

Canadian Heritage/Patrimoine Canadien

Without the aid of our partners, **Canadian Heritage/Patrimoine Canadien**, we would not have grown and prospered into the organization you see today. With their financial assistance and guidance they have helped us grow closer to our ultimate goal: That of having all Canadians know and appreciate the richness that linguistic duality brings to Canadian society and want to experience it. This goal is being achieved through making Canadians aware of the advantages of linguistic duality. The Canadian public, including youth, parents, CPF members and decision makers are aware of the value of FSL which fosters an appreciation of Linguistic Duality in Canadian society

Our goals are their goals :

1. The Canadian public, including youth, parents, CPF members and decision makers are aware of the value of FSL which fosters an appreciation of Linguistic Duality in Canadian society
2. Through research and advocacy, decision makers are made aware of issues and recommendations for improvement in accessibility to FSL programs across Canada.
3. Young Canadians learn about the French language and culture through extra-curricular activities.
4. Canadian parents are aware of the choices available to them regarding FSL education and exercise them.

On behalf of the hundreds of members and volunteers who have worked with Canadian Parents for French - PEI we would like to thank Canadian Heritage for their continued and unwavering support.



Canadian
Heritage

Patrimoine
canadien

Past CPF - PEI Board Members , continued

Alberta Somers - 1985 - 1986	Muriel Walsh - 1980 - 1981	
Julia Wright - 2002	Rene Martin - 1987 - 1988	Dianne Sambrooke - 1987 - 1988
Carol MacLeod - 1980	Jean Sullivan - 1980	
Jan Stevens Laroche - 1985 - 1990	Dorothy Maze - 1982 - 1993	Arlene Perry - 1998 - 1999
Eileen Conway Martin - 2000- 2002	Micheline Gallant - Lapp -- 2000 - 2001	
Patrick Kinnear - 1982 - 1993	Michelle Harris - 1995	Anne MacEwen - 1986 - 1993
Brenda Moore - 1980	Mary Lou Morrison - 1977 - 1980	Nancy Murphy - 1982, 1992
Joanne Pauley - 1985 - 1992	Karen Pineau - 1998 - 2000	Jim Pletcher - 1993 - 1997
Blanche Moyaert - 1992 - 1993	Nancy Matheson - 1996 - 2002	Theresa Kinnear - 1986 - 1993
Eleanor Reynolds - 1981	Cathie Walsh Ramsay - 1997- 2002	Phyllis Ramsay - 1993 - 1995
	Anne Sherman - 1982 - 1986	

continued to occur, the fabric of the entire Country would have eventually been affected. As a consequence of these concerns, in 1963, the federal government established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Bi-Culturalism. This committee spent seven years examining Canadian society and concluded that Canada was in a state of 'central crisis to its history' (Our Official Languages, pg 3). As a result, the committee felt the only way to solve these problems was to ensure that every citizen be given the right to an education in his or her official language. They also concluded that it was essential for the rest of Canada to recognize the 'distinctive character of Quebec' (Our Official Languages, pg 3).

In 1969, the Official Language Act was passed, with no opposition, becoming national policy. The Act declared that the English and French languages would have equal status in all institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada. This act was considered to be one of the most "ambitious initiatives since Confederation to ensure that those with different origins and traditions could continue to work together" (Our Official Languages, pg 3). Both French and English were to become part of daily life; both in society and in the government.

The Start of French Immersion

The accumulation of all these factors allowed Canadians to begin to realize the importance that bilingualism played in the character of Canada. Many Anglophone parents across the Country wanted their children to be exposed to bilingualism, but, at the same time, realized that the way French was being taught was unproductive. A group of parents, in Saint - Lambert Quebec, believed they had the answer. They felt it was feasible for English children to learn French, without harm to their English, by using French as a living language within the classroom: this theory developed into the French Immersion (FI) program.

What is French Immersion?

French Immersion is the teaching of a subject primarily or entirely in French to children whose first language is English. The goal of this program is for students, by the time they reach high school graduation, to be bilingual. Second language learning is offered through Core French courses, or Immersion programs. In Immersion, subjects such as Math and History are taught to students entirely in French. The French Immersion programs are designed to meet higher French proficiency goals than that of the Core French programs. (<http://apef-fepa.org>).

In 1965, after a difficult two year struggle, this group of parents received permission from the Quebec school board to begin the first ever French Immersion kindergarten class.

French Immersion in Canada was born.¹

¹ Through out the years, French Immersion would develop into various levels. Early Immersion is the most frequently offered immersion program. Immersion occurs during the earliest years of schooling: in kindergarten, grade one or grade two. When immersion is offered during the later years of schooling, from grades three, four or five, it is known as Delayed, Middle, or Intermediate Immersion. When offered in grades six, seven, or later, it is known as Late Immersion. Classes are offered in a school district/board as an alternative to the regular based curriculum (www.pch.gc.ca). Although the idea of French Immersion is a “unique response to a uniquely Canadian language situation” (www.pch.gc.ca), these experiences are not confined solely to Canadian society. There has been, and continues to be, significant interest throughout the world concerning Canada’s accomplishments in Second Language Learning and teaching. As well, its methods have been used in many other Countries to teach French, Spanish and other languages (www.pch.gc.ca).

Appendix D

Past CPF - PEI Board Members ¹²

Jean Collins - 1977 - 1980, 1985 - 1987	Marlene Cairns - 1995 - 1996	Margie Cain - 1996 - 2002
Ron Collins - 1985 - 1989	Eileen Callaghan - 1986 - 1995	Najam Chishti - 1992 - 2002
Sylvia Corcoran - 1996	Marion Copleston - 1985 - 1987	Joanne Creamer - 1997
Farida Chishti - 1997 - 2002	Ray Arsenault - 1986 - 1992	Suzanne Copan - 1990
Linda Dunn - 1993, 1995	Roma Dorgan - 1997 - 2001	Betty Fraser - 1985 - 1989
Linda Bell - 1997 - 1998	Cheryl Cudmore - 1993 - 1995	Rolland Bacon - 1985 - 1989
Michelle Gallant - 1993 - 1994	Bety Bordage - 1993 - 2000	Connie Gaudette - 1999 - 2000
Dr. Barry Maze - 1982	Sally Rice - 1991	Patty Richard - 1990 - 1999
Doreen Rowe - 1986 - 1989	Josephine Ripley - 1990	Elaine Scott - 1987 - 1988

~~Unfortunately,~~ due to lack of information, names of some members who have played a role on the CPF - PEI Board of Directors over the years, may not be found on the following list. As well, it is possible, some of the dates that are listed may be inaccurate. Based on the information on hand, the following is a fairly accurate summary.

CPF-PEI Educators of the Year

Each year, CPF - PEI awards an educator who has shown exceptional support and dedication to the quality and availability of French Second Language program in Island schools. There following are a list of the Educators of the Year:

1984 = Claire Smitheram
 1985 = Sister Marie Arsenaault
 1986 = Thomas Hall
 1987 = Tilmon Gallant
 1988 = Albert Seror
 1989 = Claude Brisson
 1990 = Jeanne Collins and Bernie Pepin
 1991 = Jean Shea and Louise Blouin
 1992 = Linda Lowther and Debbie Pineau
 1993 = Gail MacAleer
 1994 = George MacDonald
 1995 = Nancy DesRosiers
 1996 = Mar Thompson
 1997 = Beryl MacLeod
 1998 = Louise Seaward - Gagon
 1999 = Ida Bernard
 2000 = Monique Brisson
 2001 = Maurice Poirier
 2002 = Dominique Lecours

Overview of French Immersion on Prince Edward Island

"I pay tribute to those brave one hundred parents who registered their child in that first [French Immersion] class..."

~ Clair Smitheram, Key Note Speech at 25th Anniversary of FI on PEI Banquet ~

A Great Idea

In 1975, Ron Elliot, Superintendent of Regional School Board Unit 3 in Prince Edward Island (PEI), had an interest in having a French Immersion (FI) program in his jurisdiction. Although French was being taught in some schools across PEI, there was no official recognition or curriculum associated with these classes. Mr. Elliot did not speak French himself, but believed it would be a beneficial addition to the curriculum and a necessary part of a quality education (Clair Smitheram, 7/29/00).

He contacted Clair Smitheram, a Core French teacher at the time, and asked if she would be willing to take on the responsibility of researching French Immersion with the intent of developing the program for students in Unit 3. Needless to say, she welcomed the opportunity. Ron Elliot's plan was to send Ms. Smitheram to the Evangeline area, a predominately Acadian population, in Western Prince Edward Island. Here, she would observe the French First Language texts and programs and use this as the basis of their program. Ms. Smitheram, however, had a different idea. She decided to go straight to the source: Saint-Lambert Quebec, where French Immersion had first begun.

While in Quebec, she also visited the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (PSBGM) and the public school boards in Ottawa. Ms. Smitheram was overwhelmed

with the information she obtained. She observed Anglo-phone children being fully immersed and learning entirely in French. She took note of everything: "I spent my nights reading and my days asking a thousand and one questions" (Clair Smitheram, 7/29/00). She returned to PEI with her arms and head filled with information and ideas on how to begin French Immersion in Prince Edward Island.

French Immersion Begins in Prince Edward Island

In June of 1975, Clair Smitheram wrote a proposal based on what she had learned and presented it to the School Board. The Board, after seeing her presentation, decided that the idea of French Immersion on Prince Edward Island had merit. It would be offered the following September, providing the registration numbers met the numbers stipulated by the Board: a minimum of two classes, and a maximum of four (Clair Smitheram, 7/29/00).

Information programs, radio talk shows, and TV interviews were held prior to registration, to help inform parents and the community about the French Immersion program. Although much interest was shown at the information sessions and by the Island community, Ms. Smitheram feared there would not be enough students to meet the requirements set by the School Board. Her fears, however, were unfounded and on the basis of the registration numbers, 100 students were chosen to start Grade One in Spring Park and in Sherwood Elementary Schools. In 1975 Early Immersion became a reality on Prince Edward Island as a three year pilot program (CPF - PEI September 2000 newsletter).

Many parents, who already had children in the English curriculum, were expressing such interest in the program that Ms. Smitheram was once again approached. This time, the School Board came to her with a proposal to start a Late Immersion program, beginning at the grade 7

Statistics

Percentage of FSL Students in French Immersion

	NS	PEI	NB	NFLD
1991-1995	7.8%	22.9%	19.7%	6.9%
1992-1993	8.4%	20.5%	21.6%	6.7%
1993-1994	9.3%	22.9%	21.5%	6.5%
1994-1995	10.6%	23.1%	22.1%	7.5%
1995-1996	11.7%	23.1%	21.9%	7.8%
1996-1997	12.7%	23.6%	24.9%	7.5%
1997-1998	13.7%	22.7%	24.9%	7.8%
1998-1999	14.9%	23.8%	28.3%	8.8%
1999-2000	16.3%	23.9%	28.7%	8.9%

⇒ *Chapter Activities/Volunteer Opportunities:* participate in local activities such as book fairs, fun nights, swims, skates, etc. Workshops and training sessions are held twice yearly for support and encouragement as well as skill building.

6) **Programs** ¹¹ :

- ⇒ *Homework Workshops:* helps children in FI with areas where support s needed, and also helps parents cope with not being bilingual when their children are
- ⇒ *Summer Camps:* for immersion students, divided by age groups. Students have fun in French
- ⇒ *Encounters with Canada Bursary:* Grade 12 students are awarded a week at the Terry Fox Center in Ottawa for a week of bilingual encounters with young people from across Canada.
- ⇒ *Concours D'Art Oratoire:* province wide French public speaking contest, divided by age and different levels of French proficiency
- ⇒ *Doolys Speakeasy:* four Doolys locations and CPF - PEI team up to offer students a place to go on a Sunday afternoon. Pool, board games, and conversations with peers in French
- ⇒ *French for the Future:* sponsored by the Council on Canadian Unity . Grade 11 & 12 students spend a day learning about opportunities available to them after they graduate because they are bilingual.

(Canadian Parents for French PEI: Services Provided)

level. The entire process began again and the following year, Late Immersion began in Charlottetown at Birchwood and Queen Charlotte School in Charlottetown (Clair Smitheram, 7/29/00). In the fall of 1977 two new grade one Early Immersion classes began in the Summerside area. Unit 4 was the last Island community to offer the French Immersion program. On December 30th, 1976 the Eastern School Board announced they would be providing the program for 25 children in the Montague area beginning in September of 1977 (The Guardian, July, 1977).

“ It is worth it all to stand in line for 24 hours just to register in two minutes, if your child’s education is at stake”

- a parent discussing long registration lines for French Immersion during the “ early” years

¹¹ Some events held by CPF - PEI have not been listed, as well, some events that have been, may no longer be in existence

The Beginning of Canadian Parents for French

“.. This whole Conference is probably illegal and unconstitutional in the first place...”

~ Keith Spicer, concerning the historical Ottawa meeting in 1977 ~

Insightfulness of Keith Spicer

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) was founded in 1977. Keith Spicer, the Commissioner of Official Languages invited French Immersion teachers and administrators from all across the country to Ottawa to discuss the state of French education and French Second Language (FSL) learning in Canada. He also contacted 30 parents from across the Country, inviting them to this historical meeting as well (Globe and Mail March, 1977). Keith Spicer was concerned with the negativity and ignorance towards French Immersion that was occurring in many provinces across Canada, fearing it would affect the **already frail FI program**. His purpose reached far beyond merely bringing French Immersion teachers and officials together. He wanted to organize a group of individuals, apart from the school boards, to act as supporters and advisers of the French Immersion program (Globe and Mail March, 1977). He felt it was the Canadian parents who would be most passionate about the success of the French Immersion program. It was the parents who had the most at stake: the education of their children.

Canadian Parents for French Forms

At the Ottawa meeting, Mr. Spicer challenged the 30 parents to come together to share any concerns that they had regarding opportunities for Anglophone children to learn French in Canada. As well, he urged them to take on the

3) Advocacy Opportunities:

⇒ *Home and School*: meetings are attended by Chapter volunteers to keep up to date on what is happening in the schools and present FSL issues to parents and teachers

⇒ *Service Groups*: volunteer speaker to local service groups about CPF and FSL issues

⇒ *Meet the Teacher Night*: CPF - PEI volunteers talk to teachers and parents about FSL issues, programs and opportunities for their children.

4) Display Opportunities:

⇒ *PEI Teachers Federation Convention*

⇒ *Welcome Wagon Baby Shower*: introduces CPF to new and expecting mothers

⇒ *Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce*: mixers for displaying and giving out material

⇒ PEI Expo: over 5000 Islanders become familiar with CPF and it's activities

5) Volunteer/Board Support:

⇒ *CPF-PEI Annual General Meeting*: PEI members have the opportunity to meet and review accomplishments.

⇒ Speakers have included : the Minister of Education, the Deputy Minister, the Director of French Programs, National CPF Presidents, National Liaisons.

⇒ *CPF -PEI Educator of the Year*: awarded to an individual who has shown exceptional support and dedication to the quality and availability of French second language programs in Island schools.¹⁰

⇒ *Provincial/National Newsletters*: research articles on FSL, success stories, contests, job opportunities, extracurricular activities, meeting dates, etc.

⇒ *Student Newsletters*: designed for grade 1-6 and 7-12 full of contests with prizes

⇒ *Resource Room*: research and studies on FSL Education, learning tools, official language documents, publications, movies, videos, word games

¹⁰ See Appendix C for complete list of CPF - PEI's Educators of the Year

Programs and Activities

Besides acting as a support for parents with children in French Immersion, CPF also organizes programs and activities to help promote the French language within the communities and also to give French students the opportunity to practice what they are learning in the classroom. Activities that are participated in by CPF - PEI include the following:

1) Promoting French Immersion to the Island Community:

⇒ *French Immersion Information Meetings* : these meetings are initiatives of the School Boards and the Department of Education, attended by CPF. They are for (but not exclusive to) parents who are interested in starting their children in Early or Late French Immersion. These meetings give them the chance to ask questions and to get the information to help them make an informed decision in choosing the educational route of their child's future. It also allows CPF to display their materials, as well as give a small presentation on what CPF is, and the help they can give to FI parents and children.

2) Awareness of Educational System:

⇒ *School Board Meetings*: CPF-PEI volunteers attend the monthly School Board Meetings . This helps CPF -PEI stay involved and in tune with what is happening in the school system.

role of advocator for the 35, 000 children enrolled in French Immersion across the Country at that time. These parents met the challenge, five staying in Ottawa for a brainstorming session of their own and set up a new organization (French Immersion and Canadian Parents for French, 1988). This small group pooled ideas and information on French Second Language (FSL) teaching and provided support for the different groups fighting for the establishment and continuation of French Immersion across Canada.

These innovative founders quickly realized that they shared the same beliefs concerning their children's education. They believed that learning a second language would not only help to increase communication between Canadians, but it would also enhance thinking skills, widen horizons, and help to develop an appreciation for and respect of other people and cultures. They had the foresight to recognize Canada's two official languages as an opportunity for their children. They believed that learning both French and English in publicly funded schools should be an essential ingredient to a quality Canadian education. They saw French Immersion as a sound investment in Canada's youth and the entire future of Canada. Those few days in Ottawa were busy ones. They left, returning to their respective provinces, with their goals firmly established, and a name: **Canadian Parents for French** (CPF Newsletter, January, 1978).

CPF's goals began as, and have remained similar to, the following:

- To assist in ensuring that each Canadian child has the opportunity to acquire as great a knowledge of the French language and culture as he or she is willing to obtain
- To promote the best possible types of French language learning opportunities
- To establish and maintain effective communication between interested parents and educational and

governmental authorities concerned with the provision of French language learning opportunities (CPF - PEI Provincial Report, 1982-1983)

CPF National Association

It was the goal of the founding parents of CPF to recruit members from their provinces. They took representatives from each Province and formed a Board of Directors, constituting CPF National Association. CPF National was an ideal solution to allow each Province to become aware of problems and issues that were occurring across the Country. The Board of Directors for CPF National in 1977-1978 were: (CPF Newsletter, January 1978)



- Pat Webster, Chairman
- Judy Madley, British Columbia
- Elaine Kuhlemeyer, Alberta
- Marcel de la Gorgendiere, Saskatchewan
- William Tymchyshym, Manitoba
- Carmeta Abbott, Ontario
- Elizabeth Annesley, Quebec
- Shirley Urquahart, NS
- Wendy Scott, NB
- Mary Lou Morrison, PEI and NFLD
- Mary Ann Rainer, Executive Secretary



In October 1977, only a few short months after their founding meeting, the first CPF National Conference was held. With the help of many organizations, especially the Department of the Secretary of State, CPF National was able to sponsor Provincial delegates as well as fund the conference. Newly joined members from all across Canada met in Ottawa to talk with other parents committed to the idea of

CPF National Association:

- ☒ works with the federal government and national organizations and leaders to create an environment in which FSL education can grow and flourish
- ☒ monitors FSL education trends and releases an annual report on progress
- ☒ organizes, sponsors and supports French activities for students
- ☒ provides volunteer training and development
- ☒ develops and provides information and resources (Helping your Child Become Bilingual, pg 25)

CPF Branch :

- ☒ works with the of Department of Education and other concerned groups to ensure that there is support for French Second Language Education
- ☒ keeps members informed through newsletters, web sites, conferences and annual meetings
- ☒ organizes and sponsors summer camps, family camps, French public speaking competitions, and a variety of other activities in French for FSL students
- ☒ acts as a resource for local chapter volunteers and members (Helping your Child Become Bilingual, pg 26)

CPF Chapters:

- ☒ works with trustees, administrators and school principals to ensure the availability, continuity and quality of immersion and core French programs
- ☒ organizes \sponsors in - school activities in French such as public speaking competitions, winter carnivals, and performances by French artists
- ☒ Organizes\sponsors out of school activities in French such as camps, exchanges, road trips, family dances and weekend workshops
- ☒ produces newsletters and provides ways for fellow immersion parents to stay in touch with one another
- ☒ promotes French Second Language programs in the community (Helping your Child Become Bilingual, pg. 26)

CPF actively promotes and supports:

- > Core French programs
- > French Immersion programs
- > Extra curricular activities in French for students
- > Post secondary opportunities in French
- > Research on French Second Language learning
- > French as an integral part of Canadian life
(Helping Your Child Become Bilingual, pg 24)

Canadian Parents for French is national in scope, with Branches (Provincial Offices) in all provinces and territories across Canada (excluding Quebec). Each branch is made up of Chapters that represent different communities and cities across the Provinces. In Prince Edward Island, the local chapters represent the following families of schools:

West Prince	Westisle Family
East Prince	Three Oaks Family Kinkora Family Kensington Family
Queens County	Bluefield Family Charlottetown Rural Family Colonel Gray Family
Kings County	Montague Family Morell Family Souris Family (CPF - PEI By—Law Jan 2000)

The CPF Branch is managed by a volunteer Board of Directors with a paid staff position to administer programs (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages 1998 Annual Report). Canadian Parents for French Prince Edward Island works closely with the Department of Education, the School Boards, and the French Immersion and Core French schools and teachers.

effective FSL learning. Max Yalden, (successor to Keith Spicer) Commissioner of Official Languages, spoke at the reception concerning the importance and usefulness of an organization such as CPF. He gave welcome assurances of the continued support of the Commissioners Office. Jean Luc Pepin, co chair of the Task Force on Canadian Unity, spoke to the group of the multi faceted nature of Canadian unity. The Supervisor of Curriculum Development for the Ottawa Separate School Board, Adrienne Game, described the challenges of providing materials for FSL programs (CPF Newsletter, January, 1978).

Full Steam Ahead

In less than a year, an organization that began with a mere 30 parents, grew to almost 5, 000 members. The 2nd National Conference was on October 12-14, 1978, with more than 200 delegates in attendance. Much was accomplished, including receiving a letter from the Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Trudeau, the forefather of instituting a bilingual Canada: “*Both English and French Canadians have to learn about each other and respect each other...and the action taken by CPF carries a message of hope for the Country’s future*” (CPF Newsletter, December 1978).

In January of 1978, CPF National released their second newsletter, complete with the three goals that CPF had formulated at the first meeting in Ottawa, and how they intended to accomplish them.

To accomplish these goals, they intended to:

- √ produce publications popularizing relevant research, case studies and other pertinent information
- √ produce a current directory of resource people, programs and organizations
- √ produce an annotated bibliography of relevant research

- √ communicate the Associations goals and ideas to appropriate authorities and to the general public. (CPF Newsletter January 1978)

One year gone and CPF was well underway in making themselves known across Canada. Each provincial branch was busy lobbying for the beginning of and improvements toward French Immersion programs in their area.

What is CPF today?

Today, Canadian Parents for French is a non profit, member driven organization. It is an organization which works both with and for French Second Language students, their families, and their teachers. CPF is a trusted source of information on French Second Language learning in Canada, a support system for parents and a promoter of and advocate for French Second Language Education. Canadian Parents for French is a partner in education, working closely with educators, associations, business leaders, and decision makers in support of a better French Second Language Educational system across Canada (Helping Your Child Become Bilingual, pg 24).

CPF is Canada's largest advocacy group for French as a Second Language education (MacLean's Online, August 28th, 2000) and is made up primarily of English speaking parents and concerned people who have a stake in the French immersion and Core French Educational Programs. CPF offers these individuals the opportunity to work with others who are committed to enhancing the quality of French second language education. CPF works to ensure that young Canadians, in all parts of the Country, have opportunities to learn and use French as a second language outside their schools.

They provide programs where students can exercise their second language abilities. CPF believes that a quality education must include both of Canada's official languages (Annual Report 1999-2000). Canadian Parents for French provides services and programs that will assist the students, teachers and administrators in accomplishing their goals: giving children a good education, an education that will enable them to become "global citizens" (CPF PEI newsletter, November 2001).

Finally, the CPF-PEI Board of Directors and staff:

Cathie Walsh Ramsay - CPF-P.E.I. Branch President
Margie Cain - CPF-P.E.I. Past President
Eileen Conway Martin - CPF -P.E.I. Branch Vice President
Ron Pringle - CPF - P.E.I. Branch Treasurer
Darlene Hackett - West Prince Chapter President
Nancy Matheson - Kings County Chapter President
Farida Chishti - Queens County Chapter President
Julia Wright - East Prince Chapter President
Najam Chishti - Past National Director
Paula Lenentine - CPF - P.E.I. Branch Program Officer
Gail Lecky - CPF-P.E.I. Executive Director.

This was a great event to help celebrate the past 25 years of CPF - PEI, as well as showing all those who supported CPF - PEI throughout the years that they are truly appreciated.

Celebratory Activities Throughout the Year

Held this year as well, for the first time in many years, was Rendezvous 2002. Rendezvous is a chance for junior high French Immersion students to take part in a day with fun-filled French activities. For the first time since the early 1980's, and in honor of CPF - PEI's 25th Anniversary, this was held as an overnight event. On Saturday May 25th, 13 Junior High French Immersion students went to the University of Prince Edward Island to begin their weekend of Fun in French. They took part in many activities including a session at the Veterinary School on training your pet dog, and planning and performing a French skit. This event will hopefully be picked up by the PEI Chapters in the future.

Other activities are being planned throughout the year as well, all in celebration of this special occasion.

The Early Years 1977-1989

The Evolution of the PEI FI Parents Group

In Prince Edward Island following the emergence of French Immersion in 1975, a group of parents, with children in the first Immersion class, joined together to form a parents' support group. They met to share ideas, to encourage one another, and to help keep other parents of students in French Immersion informed of changes or insights into the program, as well as to help the already overworked FI teachers.

Because the FI program was in its infancy in Prince Edward Island, teachers were often left to develop the curriculum on their own. They would often gather together on a Saturday at each other's homes, once or twice a month, to discuss what they would use as program material. They would create the lesson plans as they went, since there was no curriculum established for French Immersion students at that time. "We were using materials that were used for Francophone students and it had to be adapted because it would be too hard [for French Second Language (FSL) students], or talking about things that didn't even exist here on PEI. So we cut out pictures, made posters, laminated and did stencils to give to the students [as learning tools]" (Linda Lowther, 5/02).

As a result, the parents helped out as well. They took the initiative to keep each other informed, and to act as advocates for continued improvements in the French Immersion program. It was the parents in this group who spread the word regarding French Immersion across the Island and who answered the questions of concerned and interested parents.

Mary Lou Morrison was the chair of this French Immersion parents group and had a daughter in the first immersion class on PEI. In 1977, she was approached by Clair Smitheram to attend a meeting in Ottawa on French Immersion education. Mrs. Morrison agreed, and became one of the 30 parents who formed Canadian Parents for French. She returned from Ottawa as the representative for Atlantic Canada, and was full of ideas.

It did not take long for the Island's French Immersion parents group to amalgamate with CPF and begin to consider themselves the PEI Chapter of CPF (Mary Lou Morrison, 6/02). CPF PEI began as a very informal group, meeting at each other's homes and working out strategies to maintain and improve upon the existing French Immersion program. Credit needs to be given to these parents, not only for taking a chance on a relatively unknown program, but promoting it and providing guidance to other parents. In October 1977, the parents in Prince Edward Island, attended the first National Conference in Calgary. Rundell Seaman, Carol MacLeod, Mary Lou Morrison, and Jean Collins attended this National Conference as the Island contingency (Jean Collins, 3/02). A plan was beginning, and the organization was well under way after only 8 short months.

A Successful Beginning

Island parents soon discovered the numerous benefits of joining a National organization. CPF National was full of information and a source of affirmation regarding what was occurring on PEI. It made them aware of shared problems occurring with other French Immersion programs across the Country³. The members of CPF - PEI found reinforcement at these meetings, used them to share ideas, and become aware of how other provinces were handling any

25th Anniversary Celebratory Banquet

The next evening, a 25th Anniversary Banquet was held at Le Carrefour de l'Isle-Saint-Jean in Charlottetown. CPF - PEI members, from past and present, were in attendance to help celebrate. Mary Lou Morrison, one of the original founders of CPF - PEI, was the evening's key note speaker. She recounted many memories of the experiences with the beginnings of French Immersion on Prince Edward Island and of Canadian Parents for French. All in attendance were enthralled to hear what the early years were like for those dedicated teachers and parents.

Many people helped to make this evening special:

Mr. Wilfred Arsenault, representing the Premier's Office
Honorable George MacDonald, Mayor of Charlottetown,
 (also Past Educator of the Year)

Dr. Joan Netten: CPF's National President and Order of Canada Recipient

Dr. Ian Richmond, CPF National Vice President

Claude and Monique Brisson (former Educators of the Year)

Lisa Dennis - Communications Officer for the Department of Education

Lucille Fontaine - Consultant French Programs

Michel Garneau (President of Le Carrefour de l'Isle-Saint-Jean) and **Mrs. Garneau**

Pat and Theresa Kinnear - past CPF - PEI Board Members

Dominique Lecours - 2002 Educator of the Year

Linda Lowther - Director of French Programs

Jim Nimmo - Educational Consultant for CPF - PEI

Mar Thompson - former CPF - PEI Board Member

Albert Seror - Past Educator of the Year

CPF Provincial Presidents and Vice Presidents from across Canada.

³ Montreal, Ottawa and New Brunswick (specifically Moncton and Fredericton) were locations that experienced very little problems initiating French Immersion, most importantly, receiving full support from people in administration. (Jean Collins, 03/02)

2002

In 2002, Canadian Parents for French Prince Edward Island is excited to be celebrating 25 years of success in the Island Community. In order to help commemorate this special event, many activities have been planned and are being held.

CPF - PEI 25th Provincial Annual General Meeting

In April of 2002, CPF - PEI was proud to welcome CPF delegates from all across Canada. These representatives arrived to partake in the 25th Anniversary celebrations, as well as a Branch Presidents and Vice President's meeting, conducted by Joan Netten OC (National President) and Ian Richmond (National Vice President).

As well, on April 26th, CPF - PEI held their 25th Provincial Annual General Meeting at the Inns on Great George in Charlottetown. Cathie Walsh Ramsay, CPF - PEI Branch President, conducted the meeting. First welcomed, was Dominique Lecours, CPF - PEI's 2001-2002 Educator of the Year. Next, Joan Netten sent congratulations on 25 years of service in the Island Community from CPF National. Cathie Walsh Ramsay, and Eileen Conway Martin were re-elected for a second term in their position of Provincial President and Vice President, and everyone was excited to welcome Ron Pringle to the team, as the newly elected Provincial Treasurer. The Honorable Jeff Lantz, Minister of Education, brought the group compliments and congratulations for the work that had been done in the past 25 years.

After the meeting, a reception was held at Wellington House, at the Inns on Great George, where delegates, CPF - PEI Board Members, and special guests, all mixed, preparing themselves for the busy weekend ahead.

backlash associated with French Immersion. Prince Edward Island was envied by many places (outside of Ottawa and Montreal).

Many provinces were amazed that the Island's Immersion program was initiated by a School Board administrator (Jean Collins, 3/02). Unlike most other provinces, French Immersion had not grown out of demands of parents, rather it had been initiated by one person who felt it would be a good idea.

Although not on the cutting edge, Prince Edward Island was not far behind when it came to its French Immersion program. PEI was one of the first provinces to enjoy a successful French Immersion program, and has always experienced, percentage wise, being one of the top provinces for enrolment in FI (Linda Lowther, 5/02). Because PEI was a small province, they were able to accomplish more than other, larger, provinces. There was a close relationship with the Department of Education, and many meetings were held between Immersion teachers across the Province so that they could prepare their materials in a cohesive manner (Linda Lowther, 5/02).

Teachers, officials and CPF members would visit other provinces that had successful programs, especially in the Ottawa area. They would observe what was being done and how they were conducting their French Immersion programs. They would, in turn, bring this information back to PEI. Other provinces would often visit PEI to observe what was occurring in the French Immersion program. *"The first Immersion class was tested from the time they were in grade one until they graduated. They were the most tested group that this Country has even seen. They were tested for everything: grammar skills, English skills and Math skills. They were guinea pigs"* (Patrick Kinnear, 06/02).

Everyone wanted to see what the teachers were doing, how they were conducting their classes: university

researchers, teachers and consultants from other provinces. How were the kids doing? Could they speak French? Could they cope? Could they actually read and do math? Parents wanted to know what was going on and as a result, classes were often disrupted and the teachers were under a lot of pressure, being watched all the time. (Linda Lowther, 05/02) .

Much credit needs to be given to the dedication and the perseverance of the first group of teachers who were able to endure this and continue to teach the children. They “invented the road as they travelled it, put in long hours, creating the material themselves because there was nothing there to work with” (Jean Collins, 03/02).

The Need to be Adversarial

With the retirement of Ron Elliot and the changing of School Board members, the easy road to establishing French Immersion on PEI was becoming a thing of the past. Many new School Board members and officials did not want French Immersion on PEI and wanted to see it abolished. In order to ensure that FI continued and remained strong, CPF-PEI went beyond merely being an organization that planned activities for French Second Language students.

CPF members became a politically tactile group. They were adversarial, and placed pressure on those in power. CPF - PEI was extremely effective in all they took on. *“It was (CPF - PEI) a non political, political power”* (Pat Kinneer, 6/02). CPF - PEI members began to be known across the Island for their determination, their accomplishments, and their outspokenness. “Every year it seemed as though we were fighting for the same thing. It [CPF - PEI] was so political, that some people did not even want to touch us. CPF - PEI was very political, very committed and very vocal. We were the ones that were going to get things done. You can never, ever stop a bunch of parents who want something for their children. For a bunch of parents,

- Certification of French-immersion graduates
 - A greater variety of course choices for French-immersion students, clearly advertised and protected against computer timetabling exclusions
- (The State of French Second Language Education in Canada, 2000, pg 30.)

CPF - PEI works closely with French Immersion schools, teachers, principals and the Department of Education. As well they rely on the continued support of parents, volunteers and Canadian Heritage. CPF continues their mandate of insuring that better FSL programs are available, and lobbying for improvements in French Immersion classes. CPF - PEI has become a permanent staple in Island society.

“CPF was (is) a strong, well informed politically astute group. They have been the strongest lobbying group in the history of the Canadian nation”

- Jerry Upkirk, former Superintendent of Administration for Unit 3 in PEI

CPF has been a major contributor to much of the research that has been conducted and continues to be an advocator of the benefits of being bilingual. The knowledge teachers and officials now have on how students learn a second language compared to when the program first began in 1975 is significant and adds to the benefits of the program.

Things have changed drastically in the past 25 years in regards to French Immersion. The need to lobby, although still important, is no longer a main priority of CPF - PEI. Instead, they have taken on a much more administrative role in the establishment of successful Immersion programs across the Island

In the year 2000, CPF - PEI experienced areas of strength in:

- Immersion programs in rural areas
- Written guidelines and provincial policies
- Development of curriculum for FSL programs
- Number of hours of French instruction set out in documents
- Established entry points and consistent start dates for English language arts
- Provincial immersion diploma

Areas of Action included:

- Define the qualifications for FSL teachers
- Increase teacher-education opportunities
- Involve parents in policy decisions
- Provide funds per FSL pupil to school districts
- Convey FSL research findings to school districts

Challenges for PEI included:

- Maintaining a corps of French-immersion teachers combining specialist language qualifications and the highest pedagogical certification

we had lot of influence. It was the progression, after we graduated, we moved into social activism for our kids” (Patrick Kinnear, 6/02).

Important Issues

From the very start, CPF - PEI faced many issues regarding the French Immersion program from the Island community. Because it was a relatively new program, parents were worried and unsure if it was the right option for their children. The biggest concern to CPF - PEI was accessibility to the program in the public schools. Because of their belief that French Immersion should be the right of Canadian children, there was a growing concern that children were being turned away due to lack of space, lack of existing programs or lack of transportation. “Our ideal situation would provide for universal accessibility to immersion programs” CPF - PEI Provincial Report, 1982-1983).

Registration: A Constant Battle

Registration issues were the cause of continual conflict between CPF - PEI and School Board officials. Because CPF members believed that a bilingual education was the right of a child, not merely a privilege, they believed that any child that chose to register should be accepted into the program. The School Board, however, had placed restrictions on the registration process: a minimum of 25 students were needed to fill one class. If 24 students registered, the class would not be held. If 26 students signed up, one student would not be accepted. The method of registration was a continual cause of concern as well.

In 1977, the newly formed CPF - PEI began their first battle. Unit 3 had decided to change their registration process from first come, first serve, to a lottery system. Although neither was an ideal process, CPF - PEI felt that their children’s schooling should not be left up to chance.

So, they lobbied: they were interviewed on TV, held meetings, and talked to newspaper and radio reporters. CPF - PEI's efforts paid off and they enjoyed their first victory. Registration in Unit 3 went back to first come, first served.

Registration issues have only, fully, been resolved in recent years. For many years, parents who wanted their children in the program, would line up for hours, sometimes at 5:30 in the morning for registration that began at 9:00 am. As time went on, and Immersion became more popular, parents began arriving even earlier, sometimes as early as 24 hours before the set registration time (Linda Lowther, 5/02). When officials began to see the increased number of parents arriving early, they opened up the gymnasiums in the schools for the parents to spend the night. Local coffee shops would donate coffee and donuts to the tired, but dedicated parents.

One year even then Premier Joe Ghiz waited in line to register one of this children in the Immersion program. The Superintendent of Education at that time, Parnell Garland, received a call from a parent wanting to skip the registration process. Superintendent Garland, however, would hear nothing of it: "**if the Premier [of PEI] is going to spend the night in the gym, so are you!**" (Linda Lowther, 5/02). Although this was not the ideal registration process, CPF felt that it was the lesser of two evils: parents who were truly committed to entering their children in the Immersion program could make themselves available for early registration.

Unit 4 continued to use the lottery, phone in system, which most individuals saw as incredibly unfair. The most controversial registration of all, parents who had rotary phones were unable to compete with those that had speed dial phones. As well, the parents who had party lines found it virtually impossible to try and contend. Units 1 and 2 in Tignish and Summerside area, had no formal registration policy. The number of students entering the program was

1981.

Prince Edward Island demonstrated the largest growth, with 25 of the schools in the Province offering the Immersion program to over 3, 800 students, approximately 15% of the student population. **Prince Edward Island had the largest increase in bilingualism among adolescents in the Country**, a trend which has continued on throughout the past six years. A continuing trend, is that the younger generation of Canadians are becoming more bilingual than any before⁹.

Significant Changes

One of the most significant changes of the 1990's, however, was the discontinuation of the registration process. Students (and parents) are no longer forced to wait in line, or face hours of getting a busy signal with the phone - in system. The School Board soon realized that something needed to be done, that the existing system was unfair. "They [the School Board] tried all sorts of way to handle registration: phone - ins, first come first served, but, when they saw that the numbers were stabilizing, they realized that it was not just some educational fad. With the numbers stabilizing, they realized that by making the program available to everyone, the program, in turn, would begin to stabilize as well. From the planning perspective and public relations, it was better to make it acceptable to all. So finally, in the 1990/1991 school year, French Immersion became available for all students on Prince Edward Island that wished to attend" (Linda Lowther, 5/02).

The programming and how French Immersion is taught in the classroom has changed significantly throughout the years as well. Considerable research has been conducted concerning French Immersion and the way that French Second Language students learn.

⁹ See Appendix B

1990 - Today

CPF - PEI Today: Is It Still as Important?

It goes without saying that French Immersion would not exist on Prince Edward Island today if it was not for the gumption and perseverance of Canadian Parents for French. Their dedication to ensuring the implementation and continuation of the French Immersion program all across the Island was inspirational. So, with French Immersion now firmly established in the school system on PEI, does it mean that CPF is no longer needed? Looking back at all that CPF has done and continues to do, one can answer with a resounding 'no'.

From 1990 until today, CPF - PEI has continued to play an active role in maintaining the quality of the French Immersion program on Prince Edward Island. A main part of their mandate is ensuring that parents are still aware of the benefits of the program, as well as providing quality activities for French Second Language students to use their French outside of the classroom setting.

French Immersion across the Country

Percentage wise, French Immersion has established itself across the Country, with PEI experiencing significant numbers of adolescents entering the program. In 1996, nearly 25% of the population of young Canadians, aged 18-29, were bilingual. 317, 351 students were currently enrolled in French Immersion programs across the Country, as compared to 37, 835 in 1977. More than 2 million English speaking students were studying French as a subject in school, and in almost every Province and Territory the percentage of bilingual teens aged 15 - 19 had doubled since

not significant enough to cause any type of registration problems.

Verbal Battlefield in Unit 4 ⁴

Unfortunately, the success that Unit 3 was facing in regards to the French Immersion program was not experienced across the Island. Unit 1 (Tignish area) and Unit 2 were trying to muster up interest in both the French Immersion program and with CPF - PEI. The most hard fought battle, however, was occurring in Unit 4.

In January 1983, Montague School Board Trustee Scott MacPherson introduced a Motion of Motion calling for a stronger French Core Program to begin at the grade one level. He wanted to see this replace a second French Immersion class in the area. Betty Fraser, President of the Unit 4 Chapter of CPF - PEI stated that they (CPF - PEI) would be in full force at the School Board meetings to register their protests (Eastern Graphic, Jan 26, 1983). Only a day after making this motion, Trustee MacPherson indicated that he was withdrawing the motion and resigning from the School Board. His resignation was one of four that year, causing many people to believe the French Immersion debate played a role (Eastern Graphic, Jan 26, 1983).

Canadian Parents for English

In response to the debate in Unit 4 and as an antithesis of CPF, a group calling themselves Canadian Parents for English (CPE) formed. This group pushed for the development of and improvements in, the Core French programs as opposed to expanding the already existing French Immersion programs.

⁴ At this time, the PEI Schools were split up into 5 districts. They were: Unit 1 (Western PEI, from Tignish to approximately Wellington area), Unit 2 (Summerside, Kinkora, Kensington areas), Unit 3 (Charlottetown and surrounding areas), Unit 4 (Eastern PEI, Montague, Morell and Souris regions) and Unit 5 (French school district)

They feared that French Immersion would replace other courses, and cause the English program to suffer. “Canadian Parents for French have sold their product [French Immersion] like Kellogg’s, and we have to catch up” (The Guardian, Feb 18, 1983). They also believed, that with French Immersion courses continuing to grow, English programs would suffer and ultimately lead to the loss of English teachers.

Canadian Parents for English decided to take over the fight abandoned by Trustee MacPherson. With the increasing interest in the French Immersion program, and the already small class sizes at Montague Consolidated, CPE was concerned over the possible loss of English programs. Members of CPF disagreed with this suggestion, as they had when Scott MacPherson suggested it.

As a result, the Unit 4 School Board meetings turned into a verbal battle field. On the pro immersion side, were CPF members. On the other side, were anti immersion parents who wanted a stronger Core French program. CPE also wanted the board to determine a deadline for the cut off point of registrations for the proposed second Immersion class (Guardian, March 2, 1983). In response to these questions and concerns, the Unit 4 school board decided to establish a policy regarding French Immersion, including the proposed cut off date for registration. “The lack of French Immersion policy has turned the last two monthly school board meetings into a tug of war as pro and anti immersionists lobby the school board over the status of a second grade one French Immersion class next year” (The Guardian, March 10, 1983). The School Board approved the French Immersion proposal for the addition of a second Immersion class in the Montague area, resulting in accusations from CPE that the board had been pressured into a decision. For CPF however, it was another victory.

Teen dances with French music and special French speakers were all programs they tried to bring into the schools. As time went on, many other activities have been added as important parts of CPF’s mandate⁸. “Those [extra curricular French activities] were [are] an important component of making the culture come alive and realize that there are other places, other than a classroom, where you can speak French” (Linda Lowther, 05/02).

Their ability to become educated and learned in all subjects that were a cause of concern for the French Immersion program, is no doubt, one of the reasons they have remained so successful in their endeavours.

Organizing out of Classroom Activities

CPF - PEI did not only lobby and fight for the implementation of quality FI programs. They also wanted to give French Immersion students the opportunity to use French outside the classroom.

In 1977, the first year of Canadian Parents for French, was also when the first French Immersion summer camp was held. A total of 60 children attended, and was an overwhelming success. The next year, in 1978, 5 camps were held, with 150 students in attendance. "The camps give the children an opportunity to use their classroom language in a recreational settings" (Mary Lou Morrison, The Guardian, 1978). This was the newly formed CPF - PEI's first major project.

CPF - PEI wanted to offer an opportunity for French Immersion students to use their French both outside of the classroom, as well as during the summer months, when opportunities were not readily available. Activities that were held at the camps included night walks, crafts, bonfires, swimming games, and a bus tour of the Acadian Village and Acadian Museum. French Immersion teachers from across the Island volunteered a week of their summer vacation to act as camp directors, assisted by Acadian student counsellors⁷.

Besides the French Camps, CPF - PEI organized other activities for French Immersion students as well.

⁷ Increased in size, French Camps still remain one of CPF - PEI's most popular activities

⁸ See Appendix A

The Lobbying Continues

The Souris/Morell area of PEI were facing even bigger problems. French Immersion had yet to be established in this area. In May 1982, the first vote over the immersion program in Morell was completed, defeated by a vote of 7-6. In January of 1983, a submission to initiate French Immersion in the two areas of Morell and Souris was proposed by a French Immersion committee.

Four months were spent designing a French Immersion policy, completed by a committee consisting of: school trustees Cyril Gallant, Donna Seres, Merlin McCarthy, French Coordinator Albert Seror, teacher Gail McAleer and Superintendent Ralph Stonefield. The recommendations called for the establishment of a French Immersion program in the Morell area. In an unprecedented move, a motion was made by Donna Seres for the board to hold an open vote, in front of the press and the public. This was completed and the motion, once again, was defeated by a vote of 7-5. The defeated vote against the French Immersion program did not dissuade the CPF parents.

Although frustrated with the lack of French Immersion in the area, especially with the addition of a second class in Montague, they still continued to promote the French Immersion program in an effort to get a class established (The Guardian, February 3, 1983). Concerned parents, teachers and educational specialists came together to discuss the advantages and problems that a French Immersion program would cause in Eastern Kings.

Melvin McQuaid, former Justice of the Supreme Court, chaired the panel discussion. Panellists included Unit 4 consultant Albert Seror, Superintendent of Education Ralph Stonefield, Immersion teacher Gail MacAleer, Unit 4 CPF President Betty Fraser and Trustees Robert Rose and Audrey Barter. Sister Marie Arsenault, French Coordinator in Unit 3, lead a session during the evening where adults

became the “students” as she conducted a typical French Immersion class. This gave parents an idea of what their children would experience during their first days in immersion.

This time, however, regardless of CPF’s efforts, French Immersion was not to become a reality in Unit 4 with only 11 students registering for the program⁵ (The Guardian, February 3, 1983).

Dealing with Negative Perceptions

Another issue that CPF - PEI found necessary to acknowledge was dealing with the negative publicity concerning the French Immersion program that was occurring in many areas.

One issue that was creating dissension was whether French Immersion was an elitist program. Much research had been conducted across the country, proving that Early Immersion was acceptable for everyone and that every child had the opportunity to get into the program if he or she chose. CPF - PEI wanted to dissuade this theory quickly, for it contradicted all the CPF - PEI believed French Immersion to be. In order for FSL to be a right, all children must have access to the program, regardless of race, religion, educational ability or socio-economical background. It was important for CPF - PEI to assure parents that any child had the right and the ability to enter the program.

CPF - PEI was also trying to reassure the fears of many, that French Immersion would eventually place a strain on the English school system. With the hiring of new teachers for the French Immersion programs, many Islanders feared that English speaking teachers would begin losing their jobs because they were unable to speak or teach French.

⁵ French Immersion is still not available in the Souris/Morell regions

Members of CPF empathized with the teachers. However, CPF wanted to ensure parents and the community that because “it [French Immersion] was faded in so gradually, that with retirements and retraining, people didn’t actually lose positions. There may not have been openings in the English stream, but there were not people that lost positions because of it” (Linda Lowther 5/02).

The Need for More Curriculum

Another problem that began to arise, was the amount of French being taught at the Jr. High and Sr. High level. P.E.I.’s Early French Immersion program was regarded as being very successful, even in comparison to programs in larger Canadian cities. However, parents found that once their children reached the Jr. High level, the program began to deteriorate. The reason for this problem was due to the fact that the schools were finding it difficult to find French Immersion speciality teachers in subjects such as Music and Library. As a result, the French Immersion program became ‘watered down’. (CPF - PEI Provincial Report, 1982-1983).

In comparison to the rest of the country, course offerings in Prince Edward Island were inadequate. They estimated that grade 10, 11 and 12 students were only receiving 12.5% to 25% of French Instruction at the high school level. This number, compared to other Canadian provinces at 50% French instruction, was significantly low⁶ (The Guardian, Nov 14, 1984).

Whatever the issue, the members of CPF - PEI worked diligently to find the solutions. They knew what needed to be done. Because they felt so strongly about the program, they were able to remain enthusiastic about defending it and ensuring that it would continue to flourish.

⁶ The number of course offerings at the Junior High/High level, has been an issue that has continued on for many years, a fight that CPF - PEI has been extremely active in, and one that has only recently been solved in the past few years.