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Northern Francophone Communities

Vitality of Francophone Communities in the Territories

Summary

Study by

Anne Robineau
Christophe Traisnel
Éric Forgues
Josée Guignard Noël
Rodrigue Landry

Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities

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Department of
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Léopold-Taillon Building, suite 410
Université de Moncton, Campus de Moncton
Moncton (New Brunswick), Canada E1A 3E9
Telephone: 506 858-4669 Fax: 506 858-4123
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Studying the Northern Francophone Communities

intro

Francophone Canadians are spread out in all provinces and territories in Canada. Most small Francophone communities, and probably the least known, are established in the Yukon, Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunavut.

As with any minority community, the vitality of the Northern Francophone communities is not obvious. It is challenged by many problems which need to be understood in order to be overcome. But it may also be surprising to some that the Francophone communities are endowed with many advantages. It is not for nothing that they attract many Francophone migrants from one year to another.

At the request of the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Canadian Heritage Support Programs, the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities has agreed to conduct a comprehensive study of the Francophone communities. The complete study is available on-line¹. This document provides a summary.

The objective of the study was two-fold. First, to determine the factors that either help or hinder the vitality of Francophone territories, and second, to propose courses of action that could guide territorial and federal agencies as well as community organizations to support this vitality.

In fact, the study shows that the actors involved in the development of the Northern Francophone communities are numerous and particularly dynamic. The reality they face is not simple. Schematically, it can be said that these communities are small, very mobile and dispersed over a wide area, although concentrated in the few northern cities. They are protected by federal language rights, but are faced with a situation of multilingualism because of the strong presence of Aboriginal people.

The research team, co-directed by Anne Robineau and Christophe Traisnel, conducted an independent study and remedied the lack of census data on these communities by multiplying the means of investigation: the study of statistical data, literature analysis, interviews, focus groups and direct observation. To this end, the team could count on support from community leaders, including the Fédération franco-ténoise, the Association franco-yukonnaise, the Association des francophones du Nunavut and, of course, the sponsors of the study.

The complete study report contains several sections devoted to historical, geographical, demolinquistic, institutional and associative contexts, to the personal journeys of Francophone actors, to linguistic and community practices and representations, and finally, to the issues and needs of the Northern Francophones.

¹ On-line at the following address: www.icrml.ca.

1. Its History...

Did You Know?

The French-speaking settlers were among the first Europeans to explore and live in the territories. At the time of the creation of the Northwest Territories in 1870, Francophones accounted for half of the non-Aboriginal population.

During the era of the Klondike gold rush in the Yukon, some prospectors spoke French. They were many in Dawson City, a city founded by Joseph (Ladue) Ledoux.

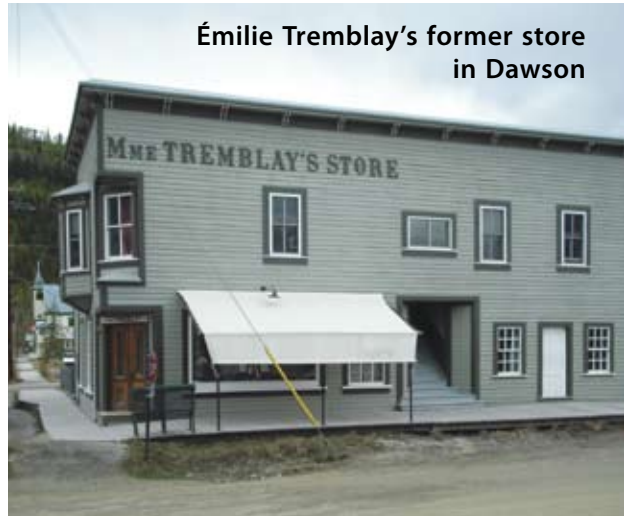
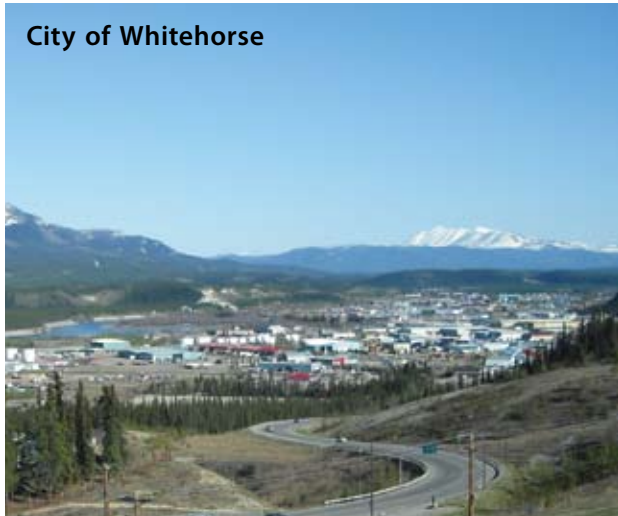
... ***already ancient.*** As we know, the territories' history dates back to ancient times, when the first inhabitants of America came by and left traces thousands of years ago. Aboriginals settled gradually, and were then faced with the conquest of the Europeans, mainly French and British. The explorers came through Hudson Bay and James Bay, through runners of the woods, through rivers and land. Some settled there to practice trade or exploitation of natural resources. There was Des Groseillers, who was trafficking as early as 1668. The 18th century saw the development of the Francophone Métis peoples who travelled the French territories.

... ***in the Yukon.*** At the end of the 19th century, a French Canadian named François Mercier established several trading posts in the Yukon. At the same time, Michel Laberge explored this territory on behalf of various companies. Along with a few families, Missionary Emile Petitot settled there in 1870 and started to document Aboriginal life and languages. Another missionary, Isidore Clut, apparently celebrated the first catholic mass there in 1882. Then came the gold prospectors around 1896, among which were François Buteau,

Joseph Juneau, Joseph (Ladue) Ledoux and Pierre Tremblay, whose names marked the heritage. Some will take root there and establish the first services, like Emilie Tremblay in trade, Agnès Ouimette and Emma Fontaine in hospital care or Euphrasie DeRuyter in teaching. Among the first politicians were Maxime Landreville, Charles Bossuyt, Joseph Paul Guité, Joseph Ena Girouard, Calixte Aimé Dugas and François-Xavier Gosselin. Some families, like the Besner's, Simonneau's, Forest's, Forget's and L'Heureux's, will remain there for a few generations.

... ***in the Northwest Territories (NWT).*** Laurent Leroux, who gained access to the Northwest Territories and Nunavut through Hudson Bay, founded Fort Resolution as early as 1786 on behalf of the Northwest Company. Under the orders of Alexander Mackenzie, he will take part in the exploration of the territories with François Barriault, Charles Doucette and Joseph Landry. The métis communities, who were pushed away from the Prairies after their rebellion of 1885, moved massively towards the territories, alongside Missionaries Henri Grollier, Gabriel Breynat, Monseigneur Grouard, Monseigneur Taché, Mère Valade and Pierre Duchaussois.

Figure 1
Spaces, history and urbanity in the Territories



... but quite current. Thus, the Francophones travelled through the Northern territories very early on, established the first trading posts, took part in the development of the métis communities, came to seek gold, but also established catholic missions, services, schools and communities. Their early presence is reflected in particular in the identification of the territories: many names

of rivers, communities and lakes have a French consonance. Since the 1970's, their history has been intensifying, with the installation of a genuine French-speaking organizational fabric (see Table 1, pages 14 and 15). Although fine, a historical French thread has been maintained in the territories since Canada's foundation.

Table 1
Chronological Key Dates of Contemporary French-Speaking Communities
(In Bold, items relative to Linguistic Profile)

| | Northwest Territories | Nunavut |
|--|-----------------------|--|
| Yukon | | |
| 1898 : Creation of Yukon Territory | | |
| 1979, 1983 : Association franco-yukonnaise's creation and constitution as a corporation | | |
| 1983 : Newsletter <i>L'Aurore boréale</i> | | |
| 1986 : Northwest Territories French flag | | |
| 1988 : First Canada-Yukon Agreement on French services | | |
| — : Yukon Languages Act and Bureau of French Services in Yukon Government | | |
| 1989 : <i>Petit cheval blanc</i> Daycare | | |
| 1984 : NWT Official Languages Act recognizes 11 languages | | 1981 : Association des francophones de Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit) |
| — : Association franco-culturelle de Yellowknife | | 1985 : Comité de parents francophones |
| — : Association francophone de Fort Smith | | 1988, 2002 : Newsletter becomes the weekly <i>Le Nunavoix</i> |
| — : First Canada-NWT Agreement on French services | | |
| 1986 : The weekly <i>LAquilon</i> | | |
| 1987 : Association franco-culturelle de Hay River | | |
| 1988 : Fédération Franco-Ténoise | | |
| 1989 : École Allain-St-Cyr, in Yellowknife | | |
| — : Association des parents francophones de Yellowknife | | |
| 1990 : The Education Act resumes article 23 of the Charter | | 1994 : Education program offered in French to Grades 1-7 |
| — : École Émilie-Tremblay | | — : CFRT FM Radio in Iqaluit |
| 1992 : Policy on French services | | 1995 : French parents allowed school management |
| 1993 : First Canada-Community Agreement | | 1997 : <i>Le toit du monde</i> , online newsletter of <i>l'actualité circumpolaire</i> |
| 1994 : Policy on Government communication | | 1999 : Creation of Nunavut |
| 1995 : EssentiE/les | | — : L'Association des francophones du Nunavut |
| — : Francophone Catholic Committee | | |
| 1990 : Amendment to the Official Languages Act and creation of the Commissioner of official languages | | |
| 1992 : <i>Plein Soleil</i> Daycare | | |
| — : NWT French flag | | |
| 1994 : Yellowknife French school board | | |
| — : First Canada-Community Agreement | | |
| 1997 : Policy on Official Languages | | |
| — : Maison Laurent-Leroux, in Yellowknife | | |

Table 1 (Cont'd)
Chronological Key Dates of Contemporary French-Speaking Communities
(In Bold, items relative to Linguistic Profile)

| | Northwest Territories | Nunavut |
|--|---|---|
| Yukon | | |
| 1996 : L'Association franco-yukonnaise Web Site | 1999 : NWT Grouping of Francophone parents | — : First Canada-Community Agreement |
| — : Yukon French school board | 1999 : NWT Forum on French | — : First Canada-Nunavut Agreement on French services |
| 1997 : Association des parents partenaires de l'école française | | |
| 1998 : Community partnership in education | | |
| 1999 : Joint working committee on education | | |
| 2000 : Orientation and training services for adults | 2000 : French school board | 2000 : RDÉE |
| 2001 : Francophonie Centre | — : NWT French portal | 2001 : École <i>Les trois soleils</i> |
| — : <i>Le Jardin d'Émilie</i> | 2001 : École Boréale Hay River | 2002 : <i>Les petits Nanooks</i> Daycare |
| 2002 : General state on Yukon Francophones | — : Radio-Taïga | — : Nunavut French flag |
| 2003 : Development of economic and employability network | 2002 : Cultural symposium in Yellowknife | 2002, 2008 : <i>La Société santé en français au Nunavut</i> becomes <i>Réseau de santé en français au Nunavut</i> |
| — : Global Development Plan | 2003 : Association des parents ayants droit de Yellowknife | |
| 2003 : Community partnership on health piloted by EssentiElles | — : The Nordcom network reunites <i>L'Aquilon, Radio Taïga</i> and <i>Intercre@tion</i> | 2003 : Youth Committee |
| 2005 : Immigration <i>Crossroad</i> | — : NWT Economic Development Commission | 2004 : Nunavut French school board |
| 2006 : Le Bureau becomes la Direction des services en français under government authority | — : NWT Health services network in French | 2009 : Nunavut Official Languages Act recognizes Inuit, French and English |
| — : <i>Vision Projet</i> | 2009 : Francophone college | |
| 2010 : Commission on the Consideration of the future of Aboriginal languages | — : Reception centre for Francophone immigrants | |
| | — : Official Languages Act currently under review | |

2. Its Population...

Did you know?

More than half of the inhabitants of the territories declare having an aboriginal identity. The Francophone population of the territories forms one of the most bilingual categories in Canada. There are more Francophiles than Francophones in the territories.

The Francophones have a higher level of education and are more active in the workforce than their Anglophone counterparts.

In the territories, nine Francophones out of ten were born elsewhere in the country or abroad. The majority of Francophones in the territories are from Quebec; they are, on the whole, “majority” that became a minority.

Francophones in the territories are involved most often in exogamous unions, or unions with non Francophone people.

On the whole, the Nordic populations of Canada are not very dense. Although the territories represent about 33 % of the country’s total area, their population represents only 0.3% of the Canadian population. In 2006, there were approximately 100,000 people, 30,000 of which in Yukon, 41,000 in NWT and 29,000 in Nunavut. English is the predominant language, but several Aboriginal languages as well as French are spoken also. Besides, more than half of the inhabitants of the territories state that they have an Aboriginal identity.

... of French mother tongue. Francophones² account for only a small minority within the populations of the territories. There are about 1,200 people whose mother tongue is French in the Yukon (4%), 1 000 in the NWT (2%) and 400 in Nunavut (1%) (see Table 2, p. 19). In the

territories’ entirety, they form close to 3% of the population, which appears to be modest, but is rather comparable to the Francophones in minority situations in the remainder of Canada, which represents about 4% of the population.

... who speak most often French at home. About 44% of Francophones in the territories speak most often French at home. This indicator is by far inferior to that of the rest of the Francophones in Canada (86%), or even Francophones outside of Quebec (58%) (see Table 3, p. 19).

... who speak most often French in the workplace. Francophones in the territories speak even less French at work than at home. Approximately 14% speak French most often at work. It is worth noting though, that many do use French at work, if not most often, at least regularly.

2 Individuals who have French or “French and English” as their mother tongue are considered Francophones.

... **who know French.** If one aggregates Francophiles who know the French language to Francophones whose mother tongue is French, the proportion of French-speaking individuals increases significantly. About 3,500 who live in the Yukon (12%) know French, as do about 3,700 in the NWT (9%) and 1,200 in Nunavut (4%), which amounts to 8,500 for the entirety of the territories (8%). The French-speaking community goes well beyond that of Francophones whose mother tongue is French.

... **bilingual.** The proportion of Anglophones in the territories who know the two official languages is slightly lower (about 8%) than that of Anglophones in the rest of Canada (9%) and almost equivalent to Anglophones in Canada outside Quebec (7%). On the other hand, the Francophone population in the territories is more bilingual than the rest of Francophones in Canada and those in minority situations outside Quebec. In fact, 88% of Francophones in the territories know the two official languages, a benefit shared by 83% of Francophones in minority situations.

... **who continue to speak French.** The territories' Francophone population is seeing a significant sliding towards the English language. When the number of individuals who speak French most often at home is divided by the number of individuals whose mother tongue is French, the index obtained illustrates the degree of linguistic continuity. This index oscillates between 42 (NWT) 44 (Yukon) and 46 (Nunavut) in 2006. Although this measure has seen a noticeable growth in the past ten years, the fact remains that one Francophone out of two no longer speaks mostly his mother tongue at home. This position unfavorably compares itself to that of most of the Francophones in the rest of Canada (96) and the Francophones in minority situations (61).

... **exogamous.** The unions in which Francophones in the territories get involved seem to be especially exogamous; they are involved with individuals of another mother tongue. The majority of

Francophone children are in fact from exogamous couples: 65% in Nunavut, 69% in the Yukon and 89% in the NWT, against 66% of Francophones in minority situations.

... **concentrated in the city.** Even though located away from big Canadian centers, northern Francophone communities are not less concentrated in the largest urbanized zones of the territories: 73% of Francophones in the Yukon reside in Whitehorse; 70% of Francophones in the territories in Yellowknife and 76% of Francophones in Nunavut in Iqaluit. This concentration places the Francophones in proximity of one another and thereby favors their community life (see Figure 1, p. 21).

... **who move.** Northern Francophones like to move. About 85% of Francophones were born outside the territories, elsewhere in Canada or, in a least proportion, abroad. They are much more mobile than the Canadian average (about 32%) or even the average in the territories (about 48%). Thus, the Francophones present a large variety of origins, although mostly from Quebec (45% in NWT, 54% in the Yukon and 58% in Nunavut). Their length of stay varies between two and three years in Nunavut, three and four years in NWT and between four and five years in the Yukon. It is essentially a migrant population, but has been noticeably more stable with time.

... **older than average.** The Francophone population is on average older than the English population. While between 45 and 60% of Anglophones in the territories are aged between 25 and 64 years, this age group accounts for more than 70% of the Francophone population. In other words, younger age groups are proportionally higher among the Anglophones, while older age groups are more numerous among the Francophones. This phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that a proportionally lower number of Francophones were born in the territories, compared to Anglophones and Natives, and also by the fact that the jobs that attract Francophones to the territories often require more qualifications.

Table 2
Territories Population, 2006

| | Canada | Yukon | NWT | NU | Territories |
|--------------------------|------------|--------|--------|--------|-------------|
| Total Population | 31,241,030 | 30,195 | 41,055 | 29,325 | 100,575 |
| % of Canadian Population | 100 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.3 |

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census.

Table 3
Demographic Profile of the Territories, Compared to the Rest of Canada, 2006

| | Canada | Canada (Except QC) | Yukon | NWT | NU | Territories |
|--|-----------|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Knowledge of French ³ | 9,590,700 | 2,561,955 | 3,550 | 3,720 | 1,185 | 8,455 |
| % | 29.6 | 10.8 | 11.8 | 9.0 | 4.0 | 8.4 |
| French Mother Tongue ⁴ | 7,536,315 | 1,012,545 | 1,225 | 1,035 | 415 | 2,665 |
| % | 24.1 | 4.3 | 3.9 | 2.5 | 1.4 | 2.6 |
| Francophones ⁵ who speak mostly French ⁶ at home | 6,450,380 | 586,975 | 545 | 430 | 190 | 1,165 |
| % | 85.6 | 58.0 | 44.5 | 41.5 | 45.8 | 43.7 |
| Francophones who speak mostly French at work | 3,544,795 | 227,175 | 170 | 160 | 50 | 380 |
| % | 87.1 | 22.4 | 13.8 | 15.5 | 12.0 | 14.3 |
| Francophones who know the two official languages (%) | 43.2 | 83.2 | 86.9 | 88.3 | 85.2 | 88.0 |
| Anglophones ⁷ who know the two official languages (%) | 9.4 | 7.4 | 8.0 | 7.7 | 7.7 | 7.8 |
| Francophone ⁸ linguistic continuity indicator | 0.96 | 0.61 | 0.44 | 0.42 | 0.46 | 0.43 |

Source : Statistics Canada, 2006 Census.

3 Knowledge of French only or knowledge of French and English.

4 Individuals who declare French or French and English as their mother tongue.

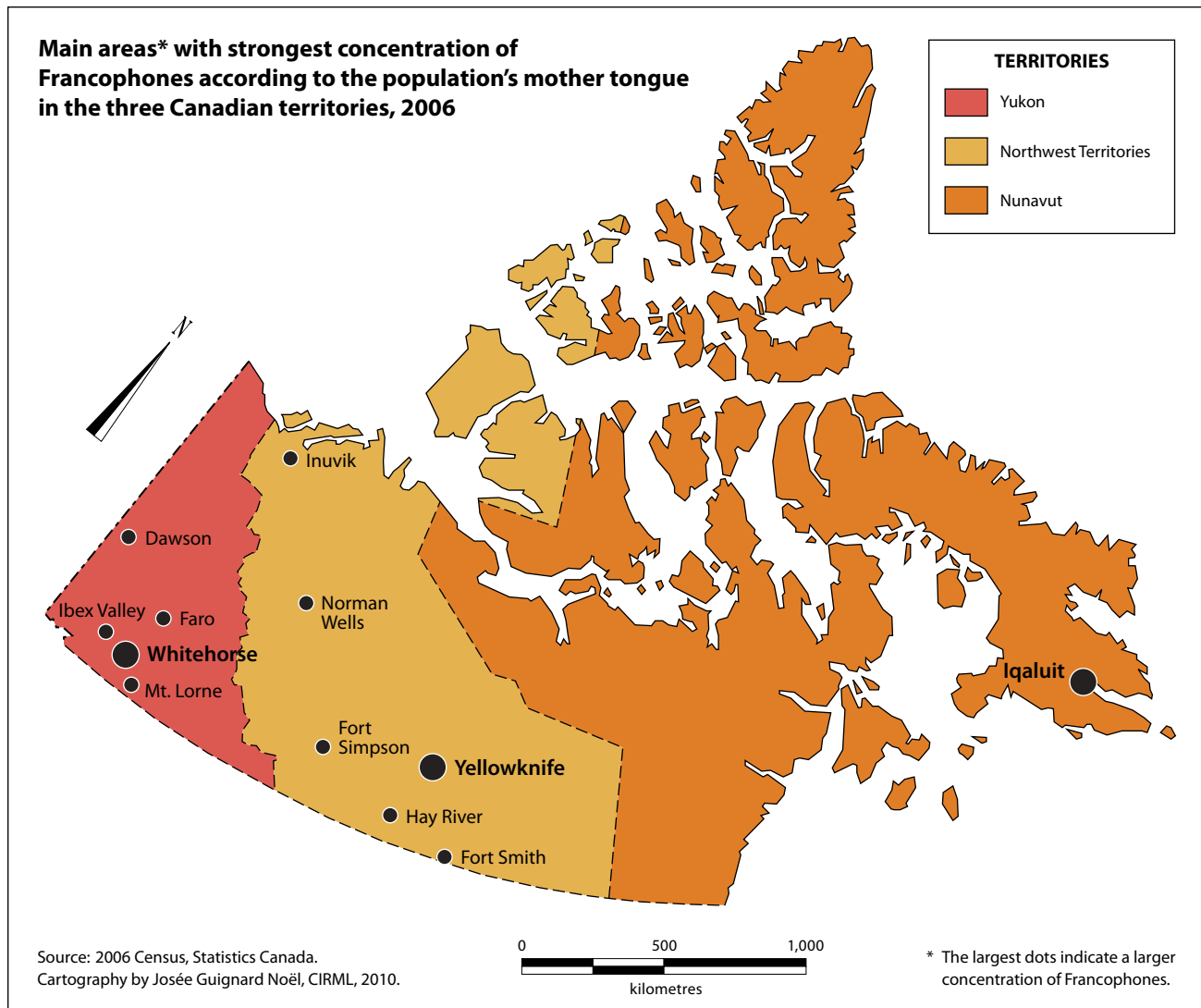
5 Francophone = of French or French and English mother tongue.

6 Multiples answers.

7 Anglophone = of English mother tongue.

8 Linguistic continuity indicator: the number of persons that have French as mother tongue that speak French most often at home divided by the number of persons that have French as mother tongue.

Figure 2



... well educated. Francophones in the territories have a higher degree of education than other Francophones in minority situations. While the average level of education for the majority of Francophones in Canada is the high school level or equivalent (30%), the average level among Francophones in the Yukon is a certificate or diploma from a college, cégep or another non-university institution (32%). Among Francophones in the territories (31%) and Nunavut (32%), the level of education increases to that of a certificate, diploma or university degree at the baccalaureate

or superior level. Compared to Anglophones, Francophones in the Yukon and NWT hold a higher degree of education. However, they hold a lower level in Nunavut.

... well employed. Francophones in the territories are more active in public administration and teaching, compared to Francophones in the remainder of the country, who tend to concentrate more in manufacturing, retail, health care and social assistance. They also benefit from a more favorable activity, job and unemployment rates than

Figure 3
Multilingual display of cultural activities in Whitehorse



do their Anglophone counterparts and even their Francophone counterparts elsewhere in Canada. Their average and median incomes are superior to those of Francophones elsewhere in Canada and those of their Anglophone neighbors in the territories. Their strong level of bilingualism, level of schooling and mobility surely favor this performance in the workforce.

In sum, the Francophone population does not account for a high percentage, but it is concentrated, well educated, experienced, mobile, bilingual and very active in the workforce. Nevertheless, as other Francophone communities in minority situations, it tends to use French less in unions which are often exogamous and in the workforce, which is mostly Anglophone.

3. Its Organizations and Institutions...



Did you know?

French is an official language in the three territories, a benefit shared only by Acadians in New Brunswick.

Nunavut and NWT have Commissioners of Official Languages, as do New Brunswick and Ontario.

École Émilie-Tremblay in Whitehorse offers a high school program which is a leader in educational innovation.

The newly established Collège francophone des T.N.-O. will offer courses in French to adults.

Community engagement is, for several Francophones, a professional springboard.

... in a protected framework. Under federal and territorial laws, the Francophone minority in the territories has rights in regards to government services, access to justice and education, access to support in its development etc. The exact range of these rights is the object of discussion. Community representatives wish the constitutional rights and the federal and territorial responsibility to be clarified in regards to their communities.

The 1980s marked an institutionalization of the territorial responsibilities towards the French. The *Northwest Territories Official Languages Act*, adopted in 1984 and amended in 1990, recognizes French, English and nine Aboriginal languages. It is currently being reviewed. It created a Commissioner of Official Languages position. The *Yukon Languages Act*, adopted in 1988, recognizes the two official languages of Canada and “the importance of the Aboriginal languages”. Hardly ten years after its establishment, Nunavut adopted

its *Official Languages Act* in 2009, which recognizes the French, English and Inuit languages as being equal, while instituting a Commissioner of Languages. Regarding education, the Yukon guarantees the linguistic rights of its Francophones in its *Education Act* of 1990, followed in the same manner by the NWT in 1996.

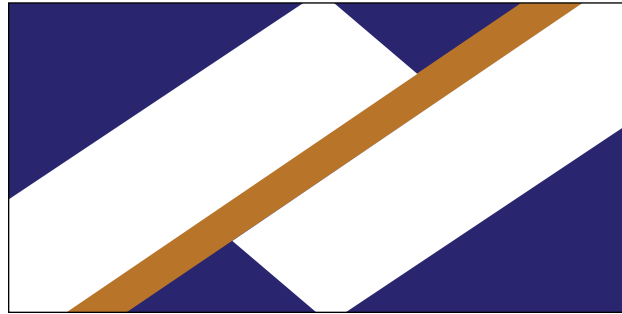
... with an engagement from the territorial governments. The Government of the Yukon endowed itself with a *Bureau des services en français* in 1988, a *Policy on French Services* in 1992 and a *Policy on Government Communication* in 1994. In 2006, the *Bureau* became the *Direction des services en français* with its own minister. The NWT adopted a *Policy on Official Languages* in 1997 and currently has a Languages Division, under a ministerial responsibility. Nunavut also has an Official Languages Director and a Minister of Languages.

... with an engagement from the federal government. The federal government, under the auspices of the Department of Canadian Heritage, has been closing Agreements with the Francophone community of the NWT since 1994, Yukon since 1993 and Nunavut since the creation of this territory in 1999. It has also been concluding Agreements on French services with the NWT government since 1984, Yukon since 1988 and Nunavut since 1999. The federal-provincial-territorial Agreements regarding education date back even further. In addition, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (through their support of the economic development employability networks) assume a support role in the economic development of the Francophone communities in the territories.

... with a community governance. Community governance of the Francophone minorities in the territories is an integral part of their vitality. This governance was officially set up with the creation of the spokesperson groups l'Association franco-ténoise in 1978, followed in 1979 by the Association franco-yukonnaise. L'Association des francophones du Nunavut saw its beginning in 1999 on the occasion of the new territory's creation. The study analyses at length these "Francophone aspirational groups" that reflect, conceive, apply strategies, act, mobilize, negotiate and realize, in the hopes of a stronger vitality of the Francophone communities in the territories. In every territory, community work is channeled in a dense and dynamic associative network.

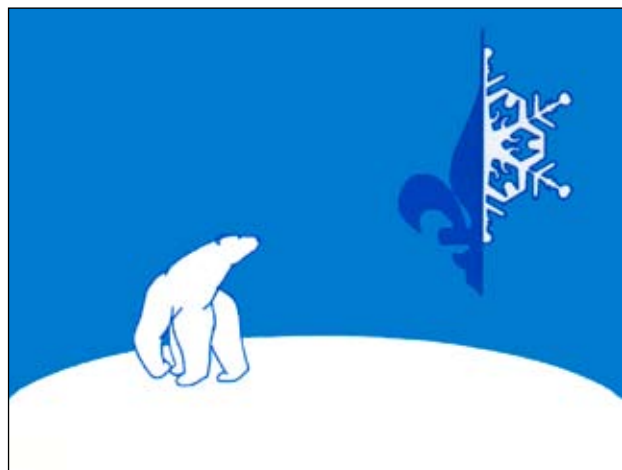
... in the Yukon. L'Association franco-yukonnaise (AFY) is at the center of the Francophone aspirational group in the Yukon. It heads several sector-based organizations in youth, immigration, health, training and communication. It also has partners such as education, health and services organizations. It conducted several exercises aimed at establishing a global development plan, such as the general States of the Francophones in the Yukon of 2002 and the Vision Project in 2006.

Figure 4

Yukon French flag, adopted in 1986

... in the Northwest Territories. Since its beginnings, the Fédération franco-ténoise (FFT) has been working at setting up sector-based organizations who then take over. Since 1997, the FFT has owned and operated Maison Laurent-Leroux, which accommodates the major Francophone associations. It conducted an exercise in community planning with the CEO from 1999-2004. The FFT still lacks a community space towards which the community can truly converge.

Figure 5

North West Territories French flag

... in Nunavut. The current Francophone network in Nunavut was at the time an integral part of the NWT, (l'Association des Francophones de Frobisher Bay – now Iqaluit –, the Comité de parents francophones, or *Le Nunavoix*). Since 1999, l'Association des francophones du Nunavut (AFN) took power

and a modest network still exists. There is a community space, but the Nunavut Francophones wish to endow themselves with a bigger space that can serve as a true center of attraction and socialization for the whole community.

Figure 6
Nunavut French flag



... for the French language education. The French language education sector was undoubtedly the first to establish itself in the territories. We can now observe a continuum of educational establishments well underway, which must nevertheless be completed and consolidated. Parents organized themselves to obtain school governance (Yukon Francophone School Board) and watch over it. Francophone children now have access to a daycare (*Le Petit cheval blanc*), a kindergarten (*Le Jardin d'Émilie*) and school (*Émilie-Tremblay*). The adults have access to orientation, training and literacy services. There now exists a complete community partnership in education which attends to the French language education in the Yukon.

In the NWT, parents associations (Association des parents francophones de Yellowknife, Regroupement des parents francophones des T.N.-O. and Association des parents d'ayants droit de Yellowknife) were numerous in fighting to obtain French schools and school governance. L'École Allain-St-Cyr was created in Yellowknife, followed by la Garderie Plein-Soleil and l'École boréale de Hay River. The parents were progressively granted school governance. The adults also

have access to the new Collège francophone des Territoires du Nord-Ouest and to a literacy program (Alpha TNO).

Even before the creation of Nunavut, parents in this territory got organized to obtain French education. In the mid-90's, the Francophones were granted an elementary program and partial management. They now have a daycare (*Les petits Nanooks*) and a school with programs from kindergarten to 9th grade (*Les Trois-Soleils*), governed by the Nunavut Francophone School Board.

... for a French community space. The idea to endow the communities with a "common place", a center for regrouping, socializing and creating, is well spread among Canadian Francophones. The multiplication of school-community centers among Francophone minorities in Canada made obvious the key role that these centers play in community vitality. The Francophones in the territories have been trying for a long time to endow itself with such places in their proximity. In 1997, the NWT created *Maison Laurent-Leroux*, but it does not allow for true community gatherings. In 2001, the Yukon obtained its Francophone centre, named *Maison bleue*. In Nunavut, the community place remains moderate and the community still awaits the creation of a true Francophone forum.

... for a cultural life in French. It goes without saying that a community space greatly contributes to its cultural life. Thus, in the Yukon, the Community Plan places arts, culture and leisure as its first priority. L'Association franco-yukonnaise coordinates a cultural program and organized a cultural week, a Francophonie gala, the publication of French novels, historic anthologies and board games. In the NWT, where the Federation was preceded by Francophone cultural associations in its main communities, culture is one of the main orientations of community action. The Francophones created, notably, a cultural cross-road, a Francophone film festival and a collection of media arts. Nunavut accommodates artists from the "south" and develops a cultural tourism project.

Figure 7
L'école Allain-St-Cyr in Yellowknife



... for a communication space in French. In addition to schools and community centers, communication media are the first tools of vitality with which small communities endow themselves. Since the 80's, Francophones have been keeping themselves informed with the bimonthly *L'Aurore boréale* in the Yukon, the weekly *L'Aquilon* in the NWT, and the *Bulletin the liaison* (which became the weekly *Le Nunavoix*). Then came Internet portals as well as the online magazine *Le toit du monde* and CFRT-FM community radio ("Cé fret!") in Nunavut during the 90's. The Radio-Taïga community radio and the Nordcom Network are the last additions to the NWT since the year 2000.

... for community economic development. As early as 1995, the Yukon Francophones conceived an Economic Development Plan in which they granted priority to tourism. When l'Association franco-yukonnaise joined RDÉE in 2003, it extended its work to include youth integration, business incubation, information and

communication technology and, later on, the economic integration of immigrants. The Pan-Canadian network RDÉE constituted a directory of businesses and organizations offering services in French. In the NWT, the Francophones created the Conseil de développement économique des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (CDÉTNO) in 2003, linked to the RDÉE, and which explores the same themes than in the Yukon. In Nunavut, l'Association des francophones became a member of the RDÉE in 2000 and follows along the same lines of intervention. Its priority is to set up a job forum.

... for the health of the Francophone community. The health sector expanded in the years 2000 thanks to the support of Health Canada towards the Francophone minority. Thus was created a health community partnership in the Yukon, sponsored by EssentiElles which have been working in health since 1989. The NWT Francophones created a French Network in health. La Société



Figure 8
La maison
Laurent-Leroux
in Yellowknife



Figure 9
Le Centre de
la francophonie
in Whitehorse



Figure 10
Le Franco-Centre
in Iqaluit

Figure 11
The economic strength of Francophones
with Odyssee Nunavut in Iqaluit



santé en français au Nunavut, which was first created, became the Réseau de santé en français au Nunavut, which is independent from l'Association des francophones du Nunavut.

... for a welcoming space for new arrivals. Support from Citizenship and Immigration Canada around the year 2000 encouraged community management of the reception service of new arrivals. L'Association franco-yukonnaise created *Carrefour d'immigration Crossroad*, a reception and integration service aimed at immigrants. CDÉTNO offers new arrivals an employability service. Fédération franco-ténoise endowed itself with a very new reception service to immigrants.

... and for an informal life in French. Let's not forget that outside these formal networks, other informal, sometimes more remote groups participate in the vitality of the Francophone community in the territories in their own way: the Francophone parish of Whitehorse, the Francophone communities isolated as Dawson, Hay River and Inuvik. In these small areas, which are victims of very harsh winters, private life is key. Quite often, socialization stems from private meetings, the neighborhood or the organization of meal between friends. These moments are essential to the full development of a life in French.

Figure 12
Dawson City in Yukon



On the whole, northern Francophones have woven an associative web by organizing motivated groups and more informal networks that watch over their interests and provide services in French – a progressive web, although a fragile one.

4. Its Issues and Future Perspectives...

4

Did you know?

The average length of stay for Francophones is of two to three years in Nunavut, three to four years in the NWT and four to five years in the Yukon.

Most often, Francophone migrants seek a Nordic space in the territories without knowing that they will find a Francophone community with rights and access to services.

Francophones who remain in the territories find great freedom, multiple leisure and job possibilities, as well as a “laissez-faire” which they find quite charming.

Francophones who leave were often confronted by realities which did not correspond to the myth that they had imagined of the Great North.

Francophones in the territories show a reception viewpoint developed by their widely shared migration experience.

The French language is perceived by Francophones in the territories as a language that is present here, but that is not from here.

Because of their fundamentally migrant character, the identity of Francophones in the territories and their sense of community belonging are much more vibrant than elsewhere.

Northern Francophone communities have a long history and, especially, a remarkable institutional achievement that has progressively founded itself in the last fifty years. Although organized, mobilized and protected by linguistic rights, these communities still face many challenges in maintaining and increasing their vitality. The study puts emphasis on many needs and challenges which also represent action plans for the community and public actors.

... **recognition of linguistic duality.** Francophone communities benefit from federal protection in the matter of official languages. The situation is less clear in regards to the territorial governments.

The linguistic duality is of course recognized, but varies with the recognition of Aboriginal languages. The territorial engagement towards the French language minority finds itself weakened and Francophones get the impression of competing against the Aboriginals. Discussions on this subject remain delicate. While trying to maintain closer relationships with the Aboriginal communities, Francophone communities are however demanding a more satisfying implementation of their linguistic rights by the territorial administration, often by resorting to the justice system. Aboriginal representatives are trying to assure, and rightly so, the linguistic and cultural vitality of

their communities. Thus, Francophone organizations have obtained living-proof throughout the last forty years: there exists a potential common ground between these two minority communities.

According to the communities and the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada, overshadowing the question of official languages by the process of granting governmental power from the federal to the territorial government did not help solve this misunderstanding. In the health field, for example, the transfer agreements contain no measures which ensure that the territorial administrations adequately serve their Francophone minority.

In order to compensate for the fact that they do not constitute an important group in regards to the regulation in force, Francophone communities in the territories would like the federal government to better accommodate its services in the two official languages. They also indicate that the preservation of linguistic and community vitality creates real costs that are not currently sufficiently covered by public assistance.

Lastly, the Northern Francophone communities are not only looking to convince the territorial and federal governments of the legitimacy of their claims, but also to be recognized by the various actors in the territorial society: the Aboriginals, the Anglophones, but also equally by the municipal administrations. They are trying to make them aware of the Francophone communities' contribution to the economic, cultural and tourist dynamism of the territories.

... the sense of belonging among Francophones.

The reduced size in number and proportion of the Francophone population, coupled with its great mobility and diverse origins, condition the sense of belonging among its community. It has been observed that Francophones often arrive in the territories without knowing that they will find a community which shares the same language. In fact, they project a self-confidence that originates from living in a majority environment and do not understand the issues of living in a minority

environment. This phenomenon creates transitional communities that take on the appearance of a relay. Rare in this respect are the "memory keepers". The attraction of these individuals towards the Francophone community dynamics demands a constant effort of mobilization on behalf of the Francophone aspirational groups. This problem renders essential the creation and organization of a Francophone cultural and community milieu. The very minority and diversified characters of this Northern Francophonie necessitates sustained efforts to create a closeness favorable to socialization in French. The means for communication, visibility, reception, artistic and cultural activities and the continuum of education in French constitute in this perspective the key direction for a sense of belonging among Francophones.

... community governance. The institutional achievement of the Francophone communities in the territories offers a general idea of the vitality of their community governance. Nevertheless, it faces many challenges, among which are dialogues between the organizations in this associative web, the mobilization of Francophones well beyond TLM (*Toujours les mêmes* "always the same"), consequent exhaustion of volunteers, influence beyond the capital cities and human resources ongoing training. The preoccupation of cultural autonomy which animates the communities could lead them towards a renewal of their style of governance in order to ensure a more active or deciding participation, in a word more democratic, favoring dialog and speech around their key issues. Some communities count on the youth to reinforce the Francophone presence and innovate its development.

... shared governance. Francophone communities govern themselves, but they also participate more and more in the governance of the official languages. They have benefited for quite a while from the federal policy on official languages, but this governmental contribution seems to lead them toward more administrative tasks, which they consider to be disproportionate. The requirements of their rendering of accounts impose a considerable

Figure 13
The village of Apex near Iqaluit



investment of time on small organizations, which is not compensated by additional resources. On the contrary, these increased costs add to additional community needs that weigh on a public assistance which remains rigid. In its turn, participation in the advisory actions of the administrations, wished by the community actors, increases what they perceive to be a misappropriation of their mission and organizational bureaucratization.

... services in French in the territories. The territorial administrations have progressively agreed to offer services in French (for example in schools, daycares, reception in hospital services, reception of immigrants, etc.) but the needs remain great and expectations are still more fervent in Francophone communities. Some emerging categories, such as

services to the elder, must be further considered. The one-stop shop approach to cover all administration activities, which made its proof elsewhere, is preferred by communities.

... education in the French language. After recently promoting a remarkable evolution, the education sector seems to be the one receiving the highest level of satisfaction among Francophone communities, but it remains the sensitive spot of the Francophone vitality. That's why expectations remain high in ensuring a complete and attractive education continuum. In order to surmount the risks of increasing exogamic unions, efforts must be multiplied to recruit, maintain and, often, frenchify children of rightful claimants in the education of the French language. Daycares,

elementary and high schools, post-secondary education, adult training and literacy are therefore sustained. More than ever, offers and innovative offers must be in place.

... health services for Francophones. Can one actually thrive in French if one cannot be well cared for in French? The granting of delivery and management of health services to the territories by the federal government did not take into account the official languages criteria, which created a gray zone as to the services offered to Francophones. Now, the question of access to health care in their language often constitutes an issue for Francophones in a minority situation, particularly when they (as are most of the Francophones living in the territories)

are new arrivals who have not mastered the English language. All Francophone actors denounce the lack of health services in their language in the territories. Some efforts have been undertaken, notably through French health networks and community initiatives, but there remains much to be done. This constitutes the sector showing the lowest level of satisfaction, although interesting forms of taking charge are emanating from communities.

In short, community and public actors must get involved through several means if they intend to efficiently meet the needs and expectations of Northern Francophones in the sectors where the law prevails. The report presents a more detailed list.