

# THE JEUX DE LA FRANCOPHONIE CANADIENNE:

Development, Identity and Engagement of  
French-Speaking Youth across Canada

Canada

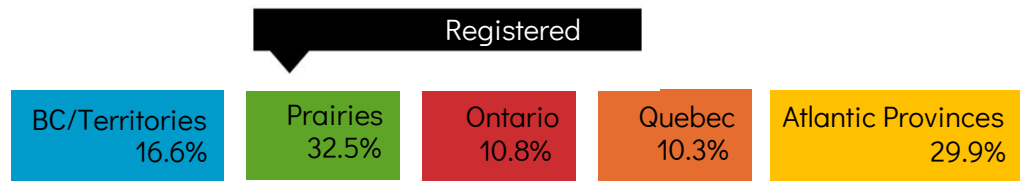


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Institut canadien  
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sur les minorités  
linguistiques

CIRLM  
Canadian Institute  
for Research  
on Linguistic  
Minorities



## Home Provinces/Territories of Participants



### Introduction

This summary document sets out the highlights of a comprehensive report on the experiences of youth participants in the 2017 Canadian Francophone Games (CFGames) held in Moncton–Dieppe. The main objective of the CFGames is to promote identity building among young people. We wanted to gain a better understanding of the experiences of the CFGames participants in terms of identity and engagement as members of the Francophone community. To this end, we conducted a survey at the end of the CFGames followed by a second survey six months after the CFGames.

### Background

The CFGames strive to serve as a CELEBRATION of French-speaking youth across Canada, an AHA! MOMENT for Francophone youth in terms of personal and cultural identity building, an opportunity for DEVELOPMENT and PERSONAL EXCELLENCE and an EVENT NOT TO BE MISSED that every community aspires to host. The CFGames are organized BY and FOR our young people and aim to uphold principles of SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

### The CFGames are:

- a **unique formula** combining artistic achievement, leadership training and athletic competition, all taking place in French
- a **Canadian event promoting the potential of our youth** and showcasing their cultural pride, self-confidence and leadership abilities in a friendly, competitive setting
- a **Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française** initiative supported financially by the Government of Canada.

The CFGames encourage Francophone youth across Canada to “exercise their talents in one of three sectors (arts, leadership and sports)” and to showcase “their cultural pride, self-confidence and leadership abilities...” The 2017 CFGames took place from July 11 to 15 in Moncton–Dieppe. This edition featured 11 official disciplines plus two demonstration disciplines across the three sectors. More than 70 competitions took place, and 425 medals were awarded during these CFGames.

## ARTS

- Visual Arts
- Improvisation
- Music
- Theatre (demonstration)

## LEADERSHIP

- Public Speaking
- Leadership in Action
- Media

## SPORTS

- Track and Field
- Badminton
- Basketball
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Volleyball
- Soccer (demonstration)

# THE CFFAMES 2017: KEY FIGURES

1  
language



13  
provinces and territories



1  
Unique event schedule  
at a single competition  
site

4  
Arts competitions  
165 artists



1  
Major cooperative  
activity


5  
Exciting sociocultural  
evenings

2  
municipalities

1  
CFGames Village


1  
official  
song




3  
Leadership competitions:  
60 leaders 

13  
disciplines


6  
Sports competitions:  
685 athletes


3  
major prizes :   
Flag of CFGames |  
Most Improved |  
Francophonie Spirit

900   
youth participants aged 14-18  
including participants from  
immersion programs

More than 700  
volunteers and  
officials 

255   
chaperones

More than   
425 medals awarded

More than 70  
competitive events 

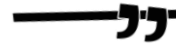
# BENEFITS OF CFGAMES

## Eye-opening experience for many participants

Bringing the youth participants from provinces and territories across Canada into contact with one another helps to raise their awareness as they learn more about other people's experiences as members of the Francophonie.



... I now know that my "community" doesn't just mean my province but also my entire country, because we are ALL one community, proudly using the French language that was given to us.



For many people living in the majority Anglophone setting, the space created at the CFGames gives them the chance to live – in some cases for the first time – entirely in French for a few days. This is especially true for young people coming from immersion programs.



There aren't a lot of chances to experience things in French at a school with just an immersion program, but now I look forward to it a lot more when the opportunities come up.



I really enjoyed having a chance to speak French outside of school.



For students from immersion programs whose first language is English, this space can help make them more comfortable expressing themselves in French.

“ French isn't my first language, and so sometimes I get a little stressed when I talk with Francophones, but after this week I feel more comfortable with the language. ”

It shows them that it is possible to live in French and may help them start wanting to do so.

After the CFGames, I'm looking forward to attending university in French.

“

Seeing how big Canada's Francophone community is showed me that when it comes to studying toward my future occupation, I don't need to attend school in English, because there are career development opportunities for me in my first language across Canada.

”

The CFGames offer participants an opportunity to learn more about the diversity of the Canadian Francophonie and all that its members have in common.



## Better knowledge about the Francophonie

86.2% of participants stated that they are now better informed about the Canadian Francophonie.

“ To me, one major benefit of the EFGames is reminding people that Francophones across the country have a lot more in common than we sometimes think. ”

I enjoyed seeing all the Francophone regions represented. It helped me see that we are not alone in our minority province and that it's important to protect and be proud of our language so that we can travel around and meet other people like us..

“ It really opened my eyes to the linguistic situation in Canada. I knew that people had challenges with linguistic insecurity in Nova Scotia, but I soon realized that the situation is like this for people all across Canada. ”

The experience also stimulates young people's interest in learning more about the Francophonie. 71.6% of participants reported that they were interested in learning more about the Canadian Francophonie.



## Opportunities to make connections

72.6% of participants said that they had made meaningful connections with people from other provinces and territories during the CFGames.



The CFGames helped me break out of my shell and get up the courage to talk with all kinds of new people and make new friends.



Six months after the CFGames, 53.9% of young people reported they were still in contact with people they had met from other provinces and territories, and 66.1% said that they had made lasting connections with people in other provinces and territories.

Social media is often mentioned as a tool to create and keep in touch with young participants.

With today's technology, keeping in touch with new encounters is easier.

# IDENTITY BUILDING

## Defining themselves

The terms used by youth participants to describe themselves refer mainly to their provincial or territorial (e.g. Franco-Ontarian, Franco-Manitoban), or regional (e.g. Acadian) identities.

The respondents also used broader, more encompassing terms. They used the term “Canadian” most often to describe themselves, followed by “bilingual,” “Francophone,” “French Canadian” and “Franco-Canadian.”

## Sense of belonging to the Francophonie

At the end of the CFGames, the vast majority (93.5%) of respondents stated that the CFGames had helped to promote their sense of pride as members of the Canadian Francophonie. Six months after the CFGames, the percentage of respondents who felt this way remained very high at 88.7%. 78.5% of participants stated that they identified as members of the Francophonie six months after the CFGames.

“ I've always been proud to be Francophone, but the CFGames helped me see that I'm not alone and that there are lots of people my age who are proud like me. ”

”

There's nothing like hearing a thousand young Francophones shouting together to make you feel like a true member of the French-Canadian community.

The French language is perceived as the thing that everyone has in common.

“

... There was a strong sense of camaraderie and fellowship with the other Francophone young people from across Canada. Everyone had something in common: the French language.

”

# ENGAGEMENT

Many participants became more aware about the importance of getting involved to protect the presence of French in the minority context. Some young people realized the extent to which events like the CFGames depend on volunteers.



I realized how critical the volunteers were to holding an event like this, which makes me want to get more involved! Especially in the sports sector, which is what I am really excited about!



From a broader perspective, participants make the connection between engagement and transmitting French to the next generation.

... If we don't get involved, who's going to make sure that French gets passed down to the next generation?

62.8% of respondents stated that their involvement in the CFGames had motivated them to take part or get more involved in French in their communities. Six months after the CFGames, 46.1% of the youth respondents reported that they had taken part or gotten more involved in the Francophonie since the CFGames. A similar evolution is evident among participants, 68.3% of whom said before the CFGames that the French language was either very or extremely important, and 91.7% of whom responded affirmatively to the same question after the CFGames.

### Desire to reduce linguistic insecurity

Linguistic insecurity among Francophone youth living in a minority setting is an ongoing challenge in light of the frequent criticism that young people experience in relation to their language skills or their accent.

Celebrating these various accents and creating a positive experience in French helps build self-confidence (Bergeron, 2017).

The eye-opening experience for many young people concerning linguistic and cultural diversity among Francophones living in minority communities helped to educate them about linguistic insecurity and the existence of different ways of speaking. The CFGames also helped participants to accept their own situations.



Hearing everyone else speaking in different accents, I wasn't afraid of being judged, and I felt comfortable talking to people.



It helped me to realize that I should be totally proud of my French language along with all its expressions, accents and everything else..



Language learning and a new appreciation of French have also been observed since the CFGames.

I'm more comfortable speaking the language.

My French improved a lot during that week.

Greater awareness about the diversity of accents and a new sense of pride in their language may even motivate participants to get involved in combating linguistic insecurity.

Because at the eFGames, I noticed that the level of linguistic insecurity was very high, and if I could help reduce linguistic insecurity among young people in my province, I'd be really happy!

## Findings

Based on the study outcomes, participation in the CFGames can help to strengthen young people's identity and sense of belonging to the Canadian Francophonie and, in some cases, Canada. It also motivates young French-speaking citizens to get more involved in their Francophone community. The cultural and artistic events lead to greater appreciation of French-language arts and culture in Canada. The event offers a Francophone space that brings people together and plays a role in the development of connections and friendships. These multiple connections among young people from different regions create opportunities to learn more about other Francophone regions across Canada.

It is observed that participants living in minority language communities realize how much they have in common with other people, while those living in a majority context (i.e. Quebec) gain greater awareness about the presence of, and challenges faced by, minority Francophone communities.

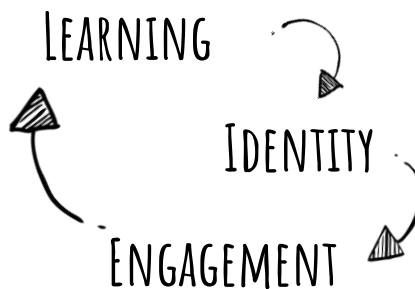
This major event helps the youth participants to realize that it is possible to protect the presence of French if they get involved. The pride in their identities fostered by this event gives them the confidence they need to find new ways to get involved in the Francophone community. The CFGames bring the participants into contact with other young people from different regions who express themselves using different accents. This helps to promote a certain openness and acceptance of these various accents, thereby strengthening participants' own sense of linguistic security.

“  
Everyone accepted my accent and made me feel  
like I should be proud of my own unique accent.”



The CFGames provide many participants an opportunity to build their leadership skills so that they can be there to help meet the needs of the next generation in minority Francophone communities.

The CFGames offer many of the youth participants a rewarding, meaningful experience in French in terms of both personal development and relationships. Many young people then go home motivated to share this experience with others in their respective communities.





### Describing the CFGames experience in one word

We asked participants how they would describe their CFGames experience in a single word. The words they suggested most often appear in the following word cloud. Greater prominence is given to the words suggested most frequently.

