Heritage, vitality and future: Francophonie as an asset for Alberta

Brief submitted by the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA) and the Société historique francophone de l'Alberta (SHFA) to the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women as part of the implementation of the French Policy.

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Summary of recommendations

1. **The ACFA and the SHFA recommend the establishment of provincial coordination funding for the SHFA to structure its role in a sustainable manner.**

2. **The ACFA and the SHFA recommend the implementation of a microgrant program administered in coordination with the SHFA to support local Francophone heritage organizations in a targeted, flexible manner that is adapted to their reality.**

3. **The ACFA and the SHFA recommend the development of a joint strategy with the Alberta government to coordinate initiatives for the preservation and promotion of Francophone heritage**

4. **The ACFA and the SHFA recommend that the Government of Alberta establish a multi-party committee bringing together civil servants and representatives of Alberta's Francophone community.**

Introduction

[1]   The Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA) and the Société historique francophone de l'Alberta (SHFA) submit to the Department of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women and the as part of the implementation of the Francophone Policy. The ACFA and the SHFA wish to bring to the attention of the Ministry specific considerations relating to Alberta's Francophone community in order to develop its services and programmes in French.

[2]   Founded in 1926, nearly 100 years ago, the ACFA is the spokes organization for Alberta's Francophonie. Its mandate is to represent Alberta's French-speaking population; promote their physical, intellectual, economic, cultural, and social well-being; and encourage, facilitate, and promote French-language learning and Alberta's Francophonie at large. In 1964, the Government of Alberta formally recognized the ACFA and passed *The A.C.F.A Act*[1] to incorporate the organization. Since the Government of Alberta adopted its *French Policy* in 2017, the ACFA has also been identified as one of two stakeholders to be consulted to establish priorities.[2]

[3]   Founded in 2012, the SHFA is the leading organisation for Alberta's Francophonie in the heritage and history sector. The SHFA preserves, protects and promotes the heritage and history of Francophones in Alberta through its programming and by fostering collaboration and communication between practitioners and consumers in the sector. The SHFA contributes to the identification, preservation, promotion and dissemination of the historical heritage of Alberta's Francophone community. Recognised by the Department of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women as a credible stakeholder, the SHFA is designated as a Provincial Heritage Organisation (PHO).

[4]   In this brief, the ACFA and the SHFA present the following elements:

a) **The status of French in Alberta** by (1) providing a demographic overview of Alberta's Francophone community and (2) highlighting four pieces of legislation that support the provision of services in French and the recognition of the Francophone community in the province;

b) **Factors to be taken into consideration**, based mainly on existing literature, in order to understand the principle of vitality of Alberta's Francophone community as found in the Francophone Policy.

c) An **overview of the programmes and services** offered in French by the SHFA in the areas of memory, heritage and history.

d) **Recommendations** to ensure that the SHFA can fulfil its mandate.

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[1] Province of Alberta. 1964. *An Act to Incorporate l'Association Canadienne Française de l'Alberta*. https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/1964_ACFA-Act.pdf

[2] Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy: Enhancing Services in French to Support the Vitality of Alberta's French-Speaking Communities*, page 8. https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/713b7d93-c164-496a-8da8-813a34066ec4/resource/e9a9be57-1625-4bb7-82fb-cdfdb84c83c2/download/cul-french-policy-2023-english.pdf

Status of French in Alberta

[5]   The French-speaking community in Alberta is well established within the province due to its history, demographics and institutions.

[6]   The first Francophone presence in Alberta dates back to the 18th century, more than 270 years ago. French was the first non-Indigenous language spoken in the territory that became Alberta. By the 19th century, several Métis communities, French Catholic missions and French-speaking villages had been established. Among them, four (4) villages became officially bilingual: Beaumont, Legal, Falher and Plamondon.[3] Furthermore, the first French-language schools in Alberta date back to the 1860s. Three Catholic schools were opened, one at Lac Saint-Anne in 1859, one at the Lac La Biche Mission in 1862, and one at Fort Edmonton in 1862.[4]

[7]   Today, Alberta has the largest population with French as its first official language spoken and living in a minority setting in Canada after Ontario and New Brunswick.[5]

[8]   According to Statistics Canada 2021 Census of population, 79,010 (1.9%) Albertans report French as their first official language spoken; 85,290 (2%) report French as their mother tongue; and 260,415 (6,2%) report knowledge of French.[6]

[9]   French ranks 4th among mother tongues in Alberta, after English which ranks 1st (3,083,840), Tagalog 2nd (108,395), and Punjabi 3rd (91,070). However, French, ranks 2nd behind English in terms of knowledge of the language.[7]

[10]   Among these people, Statistics Canada estimates that 119,690 are likely to require services in French, or 2.8% of Alberta's population.[8]

[11]   Alberta also has the second-largest population of children eligible for minority official language education in the country (excluding Quebec). There are 75,055 children aged 0 to 18 with at least one parent who is a rights holder.[9] Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms ("Charter") allows eligible persons to have their child(ren) educated in the minority official language, which is French in Alberta.

[12]   It is also important to note that the median age of the French-speaking population is 43, which is higher than the median age of the province's total population, which is 38. In fact, the

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[3] Government of Alberta." Francophone heritage in Alberta". https://www.alberta.ca/francophone-heritage

[4] François McMahon et France Levasseur-Ouimet. 2007. " French-Language Education in Alberta". http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/fr/article-190/%C3%89ducation_fran%C3%A7aise_en_Alberta.html

[5] Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

[6] Sociopol. 2024. *Demographic Portrait of Alberta's Francophonie Provincial Profile.* https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Alberta-Portrait-provincial_Traduction-EN.pdf

[7] Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

[8] Sociopol 2024. *Demographic Portrait... p.7*

[9] Statistics Canada. 2024. *Study on the Underclassification of Children Eligible for Instruction in the Minority Official Language in the 2021 Census.* https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/98-26-0008/982600082021001-eng.cfm

Francophone population has a higher proportion of people aged 65 and over (18%) compared to the proportion observed among the Anglophone population (14%).[10]

[13]   Moreover, the French-speaking population has grown and diversified over the years. This has had a significant impact on the growth of Alberta's Francophonie and the demand for French-language services.

[14]   The number of Albertans with French as their first official language spoken increased by 35.9% over 20 years (2001-2021).[11] The number of Albertans with knowledge of French increased by 54.6% over 30 years (1991-2021).[12]

[15]   Although many Francophones were born in Alberta, the majority came from across Canada and around the world. Among Albertans whose first official language spoken is French, approximately 24% were born in Alberta, 44% came from elsewhere in Canada, and 32% from elsewhere in the world.[13]

[16]   A closer look at the data from the 2021 Census shows that 3,120 (4%) Francophones identify themselves as Indigenous, mainly Métis (74%).[14]

[17]   In terms of ethnocultural diversity, 22,935 (29%) Francophones belong to a visible minority group. Of these, 11,480 (15%) identify as Black, 4,340 (6%) as Asian, 3,845 (5%) as Arab, and 2,665 (3%) as Latin American.[15]

[18]   The percentage of Albertans with an immigrant background within Alberta's Francophone population is higher than within Alberta's total population, which stands at 23%. Africa is the birthplace of 50% of this francophone immigrant population, a significant difference from Alberta's total immigrant population, 57% of whom come from Asia.[16]

[19]   Moreover, the French-speaking population is scattered throughout the province, as Francophone communities have historically been established across the province. About one-third of the French-speaking population lives in Calgary, one-third in Edmonton, and the remaining third is scattered among medium-sized cities (Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Red Deer, Lethbridge), towns with federal services such as national parks (Jasper, Banff) and military bases (Wainwright, Cold Lake), more traditional rural communities (Peace River region, St. Paul, Bonnyville, Legal, Morinville, Beaumont, Plamondon), and newer communities (Edmonton and Calgary Metropolitan regions, Brooks).

[10] Sociopol. *Demographic Portrait of Alberta's Francophonie – Provincial Profile*, p.21. https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Alberta-Portrait-provincial_Traduction-EN.pdf
[11] Statistics Canada. 2019. *The French Language in Alberta, 2001 to 2016: Facts and Figures.* https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2019016-eng.pdf?st=pjEe95Zr ; Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta.*
[12] Statistics Canada. 2019. *The French Language in Alberta, 2001 to 2016.*; Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta.*; Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 1991 Census of Population, Alberta.*; Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 1996 Census of Population, Alberta.*
[13] Sociopol *Demographic Portrait...* p.26.
[14] Sociopol *Demographic Portrait...* p.31.
[15] Sociopol *Demographic Portrait...* p.32.
[16] Sociopol *Demographic Portrait...* p.26

[20]	Here is a table summarizing the Francophone presence in these municipalities:[17]

Municipalities	First Official Language Spoken (FOLS)	Knowledge of French	Potential Demand for services in French	Indigenous identity among FOLS	Ethnocultural diversity among FOLS	Individuals aged 15 to 24 among FOLS
Airdrie	1 525 (2.1%)	5 410 (7.3%)	2 460 (3.3%)	40 (2.6%)	455 (29.8%)	**1 55 (10.1%)**
Banff	265 (3.9%)	880 (12.8%)	845 (10.2%)	0 (0%)	20 (7.5%)	**50 (22.7%)**
Beaumont	790 (3.8%)	2 030 (14.5%)	1 265 (6.15%)	40 (5%)	130 (16.5%)	**50 (9.2%)**
Bonnyville and area	865 (4.4%)	2 265 (11.6%)	1 380 (7%)	70 (8.1%)	10 (1.2%)	**55 (7.4%)**
Brooks	390 (2.7%)	540 (3.7%)	385 (2.6%)	0 (0%)	285 (73%)	**45 (11.5%)**
Calgary	23 590 (1.8%)	86 140 (6.7%)	34 640 (2.7%)	695 (2.9%)	8 370 (36%)	**2 560 (10.8%)**
Camrose and area	235 (0.8%)	1 035 (3.6%)	425 (1.5%)	15 (6.4%)	15 (6.4%)	**10 (4.2%)**
Canmore and area	920 (5.4%)	3 180 (18.6%)	1 395 (8%)	0 (0%)	40 (4.3%)	**70 (7.6%)**
Chestermere	300 (1.4%)	925 (4.2%)	390 (1.8%)	0 (0%)	100 (33.3%)	**20 (6.6%)**
Cochrane	790 (2.5%)	2 880 (9.2%)	1 150 (3.6%)	10 (1.2%)	25 (3.1%)	**45 (5.7%)**
Cold Lake	815 (5.3%)	1 930 (12.6%)	1 100 (7.1%)	50 (6.1%)	45 (5.5%)	**80 (9.8%)**
Crowsnest Pass and area	125 (1%)	500 (4.1%)	250 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**5 (4%)**
Edmonton	23 205 (2.3%)	67 175 (6.7%)	33 165 (3.3%)	600 (2.6%)	10 750 (46.3%)	**2 615 (11.3%)**
Falher and area	1 240 (25.3%)	1 815 (37.1%)	1 610 (29.5%)	30 (2.4%)	20 (1.6%)	**80 (6.5%)**
Fort Saskatchewan	420 (1.6%)	1 495 (5.6%)	735 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	70 (16.9%)	**20 (4.8%)**
Grande Prairie	1 575 (2.5%)	4 890 (7.7%)	2 315 (3.6%)	150 (9.5%)	250 (15.9%)	**125 (7.9%)**
Grande Prairie County and area	410 (1.4%)	1 470 (5%)	675 (2.3%)	35 (8.5%)	20 (4.8%)	**15 (3.7%)**
High Prairie, Slave Lake and area	365 (2.2%)	625 (3.7%)	675 (4%)	0 (0%)	35 (9.9%)	**10 (2.7%)**
Hinton, Edson and Yellowhead County	575 (2%)	1 825 (6.5%)	855 (3%)	55 (9.6%)	35 (6.3%)	**25 (4.3%)**
Jasper	175 (4.5%)	765 (19.5%)	465 (10%)	25 (13.9%)	10 (5.6%)	**35 (20%)**
Lac La Biche County and area	410 (5.4%)	895 (11.8%)	580 (7.7%)	35 (8.5%)	10 (2.4%)	**20 (4.9%)**
Lacombe and area	330 (0.9%)	1 530 (4%)	655 (1.7%)	15 (4.8%)	10 (3.1%)	**50 (15.2%)**
Leduc and area	990 (1.9%)	2 990 (5.7%)	1 395 (2.7%)	70 (7.3%)	100 (10.2%)	**40 (4%)**
Legal and area	1 400 (2.8%)	3 610 (7.3%)	2 245 (4.4%)	50 (3.6%)	35 (2.5%)	**100 (7.1%)**

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[17] Sociopol. *Demographic Portrait...; Statistics Canada. Census Profile, Census 2021, Alberta.*

Lethbridge	920 (1%)	5 060 (5.3%)	1 795 (1.8%)	15 (1.6%)	275 (29.9%)	**130 (14.1%)**
Lloydminster	185 (1%)	935 (4.9%)	345 (1.8%)	15 (8.1%)	30 (16.2%)	**15 (8.1%)**
Medicine Hat	475 (0.8%)	2 210 (3.6%)	1 035 (1.7%)	25 (5.3%)	60 (12.8%)	**40 (8.4%)**
Okotoks and area	1 120 (1.5%)	4 425 (6.1%)	1 685 (2.3%)	75 (6.8%)	65 (5.9%)	**85 (7.6%)**
Peace River and area	605 (4.6%)	1 365 (10.4%)	850 (6.5%)	25 (4.2%)	50 (8.3%)	**30 (5%)**
Red Deer	1 285 (1.3%)	5 315 (5.4%)	2 200 (2.2%)	60 (4.7%)	340 (26.5%)	**115 (8.9%)**
Red Deer County and area	500 (1%)	2 145 (4.4%)	840 (1.7%)	35 (6.8%)	10 (1.9%)	**30 (6%)**
Rocky View County	395 (1%)	2 805 (6.9%)	865 (2.1%)	15 (3.8%)	55 (13.9%)	**35 (8.9%)**
St.Albert	1 815 (2.7%)	7 115 (10.6%)	2 930 (4.3%)	75 (4.1%)	270 (14.8%)	**175 (9.6%)**
St. Paul and area	1 025 (7.8%)	2 145 (16.2%)	1 525 (11.4%)	55 (5.4%)	0 (0%)	**55 (5.4%)**
Stony Plain, Spruce Grove and area	1 250 (1.4%)	4 775 (5.4%)	2 400 (2.7%)	65 (5.2%)	145 (11.6%)	**80 (6.4%)**
Strathcona County (including Sherwood Park)	1 660 (1.7%)	6 725 (6.9%)	2 725 (2.8%)	60 (3.6%)	245 (14.8%)	**115 (6.9%)**
Wainwright	150 (2.4%)	340 (5.4%)	215 (3.4%)	30 (20%)	0 (0%)	**25 (16.7%)**
Wood Buffalo (including Fort McMurray)	1 650 (2.3%)	4 380 (6.1%)	2 485 (3.4%)	120 (7.3%)	385 (23.3%)	**100 (6.1%)**

[21]   To serve this population, there are a number of organizations and institutions managed by Alberta's Francophonie. Four (4) Francophone school boards (Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord, Conseil scolaire FrancoSud, Conseil scolaire Centre-Est, and Conseil scolaire du Nord-Ouest) administer 49 elementary and secondary schools, serving a total of 9,550 students. As for early childhood education, there are more than fifty (50) daycare centres and preschools, many of which are integrated into Francophone schools.[18] There is also the ACFA and its 13 regional chapters, as well as over sixty (60) community organisations. Alberta's Francophone also benefits from a large number of private companies. Other organisations and institutions run by the Anglophone majority also offer services in French. These include one French-language post-secondary institution, the University of Alberta's Campus Saint-Jean, and more than 225 schools offering French immersion programs or French as a second language courses.

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[18] Learn Square Inc. 2023. *Analyse démographique et déserts de garderie : Portrait de la petite enfance francophone en Alberta.* https://fpfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Analyse-demographique-et-deserts-de-garderie-Fevrier-2023.pdf. (Available only in French)

Legislative framework

[22]   Five main pieces of legislation govern the provision of French-language services in Alberta and the recognition of Alberta's Francophonie: (1) the *Official Languages Act*, (2) the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, (3) the *French Policy,* (4) the *Education Act*, and (5) Alberta's *Languages Act*.

[23]   At the federal level, Alberta's Francophonie is recognized as an official language community in Canada under the *Official Languages Act*. Adopted in 1969 and modernized for the last time in 2023, the *Official Languages Act* recognizes French as one of the country's two official languages, while highlighting its vulnerability and the need for specific measures to protect it. The *Official Languages Act* guarantees access to French-language services in federal institutions, many of which are located in Alberta.

[24]   As part of its obligations under the *Official Languages Act*, the federal government makes a number of transfers to the province of Alberta concerning official languages. These include the *Canada-Alberta Agreement on French-Language Services*[19] and the *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction* ("OLEP")[20].

[25]   In addition, Alberta has constitutional obligations regarding the provision of French-language services under Sections 19 and 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.[21] These sections respectively guarantee (1) the right to communicate in French in federal courts, and (2) the right to a Francophone education of equivalent quality to that offered to the Anglophone majority for all children of Canadian citizens whose mother tongue is French, who received their primary school instruction in French in Canada, or one of their children received primary or secondary school instruction in French in Canada, including school management.[22]

[26]   At the provincial level, Alberta adopted its *French Policy* in 2017, which was revised in 2023, to develop its offer of French-language services and broaden its access to the federal government funds available for this purpose.[23]

[27]   Through the *French Policy*, the "Government of Alberta acknowledges the past, present and continued social, cultural and economic contributions of the province's significant and diverse French-speaking population. Through meaningful engagement, dialogue and

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[19] Government of Canada. "Supporting access to French-language services in Alberta." https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2024/12/supporting-access-to-french-language-services-in-alberta.html
[20] Government of Alberta. "Official Languages in Education Programs." https://www.alberta.ca/official-languages-in-education-programs
[21]Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy: enhancing services in French to support the vitality of Alberta's French-speaking communities*, page 5. https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/713b7d93-c164-496a-8da8-813a34066ec4/resource/e9a9be57-1625-4bb7-82fb-cdfdb84c83c2/download/cul-french-policy-2023-english.pdf
[22] Government of Canada. "Section 23 –Minority Language Educational Rights." https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccdl/check/art23.html
[23] Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*.

collaboration, the government is committed to enhancing services in French to support the vitality of the Francophonie in Alberta in a targeted and sustainable manner as resources allow."[24]

[28]   The *French Policy* "applies to all government of Alberta departments, agencies, boards and commissions, and to court services."[25]

[29]   To support the implementation of the *French Policy*, the Government of Alberta released its *French Policy: 2024-2028 Action Plan* in May 2024.[26] This is the province's third action plan since the adoption of the *French Policy*.

[30]   More specifically, in its plan, the ministry reaffirms its commitment to increasing cultural and heritage services in French by supporting museums, archives and non-profit organizations that preserve and share the Francophone experience in Alberta.[27]

[31]   For its part, Alberta's Language Act also allows Albertans to express themselves in French in the province's courts and members of the Legislative Assembly to use French in the Legislature.[28]

[32]   In its Education Act, there is a section specifying who may access Francophone education in Alberta, in accordance with the principles of Section 23 of the *Charter*, as well as provisions for the establishment of Francophone school regions, including the appointment of Francophone school trustees.[29]

Factors for consideration

[33]   First, the ACFA and the SHFA believe that integrating the concept of *vitality of memory* into programmes dedicated to preserving history and memory is essential. This would enable the government to implement its *French Policy*, particularly the principle of 'vitality' mentioned in the policy.[30]

[34]   In the eyes of Alberta's Francophonie, the concept of <u>vitality</u> is fundamental to providing French-language services that truly meet the needs of French-speaking communities and are equivalent to those offered in English. By understanding what Alberta's Francophonie means by 'vitality,' the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women will be better able to guide its actions to implement the *Policy*.

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[24] Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.
[25] Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.
[26] Government of Alberta. 2024. *French Policy: 2024-2028 Action Plan*. https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/2b40e62c-9c60-4cbf-adb8-d8b9ec6041e0/resource/ffe50331-5dde-47e3-b6b1-e8e9d210ca52/download/acsw-french-policy-action-plan-2024-2028.pdf
[27] Government of Alberta. 2024. *French Policy: 2024-2028...p.12*
[28] Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.5
[29] Province of Alberta. *Education Act*. https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=E00P3.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779846450
[30] Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.

[35]   The concept of community vitality, particularly in relation to Francophone minority communities, has been examined in numerous studies by Canadian researchers.

[36]   Vitality is based on three "structural variables... (demographic, institutional and statutory) that ensure the maintenance or growth of the group as a distinct entity."[31] The statutory variable refers to the socio-economic and historical status of a language group. The demographic variable concerns the distribution and number of people who identify with the language group. The institutional variable, meanwhile, depends largely on the willingness and ability to develop institutions (e.g. schools, organisations, hospitals, etc.).[32]

[37]   Researchers agree that "the overall vitality of a language community is the result of the interaction of these three groups of variables."[33] Consequently, a weakness in any one of these three variables affects the overall vitality of the community. That is why it is crucial for the Government of Alberta to support the development of French-language services within government institutions and Francophone community institutions.

[38]   While vitality variables are generally associated with socioeconomic status and recognition of linguistic groups, they alone do not fully capture the structuring role of heritage and historical memory organizations in the Francophone ecosystem. These organizations actively participate in the production and dissemination of collective representations that contribute to the symbolic and social recognition of Alberta's Francophone community. By promoting the past, transmitting collective narratives and preserving heritage traces, they reinforce the social legitimacy of the community and support its capacity for sustainable integration into the public sphere. As such, their action can be understood as a cross-cutting factor that acts at the interface of the statutory, institutional and identity dimensions of community vitality.

Identity construction and language transmission

[39]   Researchers also explain that French-speaking institutions "can ensure the transmission of language, memory and culture, as well as the construction of identity."[34] As a result, community organizations within Francophone communities in minority situations (FCMS) have a "dual mission", unlike organizations in the Anglophone majority. In addition to fulfilling their

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[31] Rodrigue Landry. 2021. « Loi sur les langues officielles et vitalité des minorités : mission impossible ou œuvre inachevée? » *Minorités linguistiques et société/Linguistic Minorities and Society*, (17), page 132. https://doi.org/10.7202/1084703ar. (available only in French)

[32] Jake Harwood, Howard Giles et Richard Y. Bourhis. 1994. «The genesis of vitality theory: historical patterns and discoursal dimensions ». *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, (108), 167–206. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1994.108.167

[33] Anne Gilbert et al. 2005. « L'environnement et la vitalité communautaire des minorités francophones : vers un modèle conceptuel ». *Francophonie d'Amérique,* (20), p. 52-53. https://doi.org/10.7202/1005336ar (Available only in French)

[34] Éric Forgues et al. 2020. « La construction d'espaces francophones comme projet de société en milieu minoritaire. » *Minorités linguistiques et société / Linguistic Minorities and Society*, (13), 29-48. https://doi.org/10.7202/1070389ar; (Available only in French)

primary purpose, they must also contribute to identity building and language transmission among French-speaking Albertans.

[40]   A person's social context (e.g., family, school, community) plays a key role in how they identify themselves. As explained in the Montfort decision, the family unit alone is not enough to ensure that a person can identify as a member of their community. Community organisations need to offer programmes and opportunities to interact with the community in order to ensure that individuals can identify strongly with their community.[35] The role that community organisations and institutions play in shaping the identity of French speakers cannot therefore be overlooked.

[41]   Moreover, coordination between community institutions is important, as it ensures that "children and young people's identity development will take place with less fluctuation, confusion and anxiety."[36]This alignment explains why Alberta's Francophone community organizations are often called upon by Francophone schools to offer programmes and services in French. In fact, Alberta's Ministry of Education states that Francophone schools have a mandate to offer a programme that promotes "the development of language, identity...".[37] The provision of programmes and services by community organisations therefore also becomes essential to the full implementation of section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

[42]   Furthermore, the role of community organizations in ensuring language transmission also challenges schools with French immersion programmes. French immersion programmes in Alberta are designed to teach children French and use extracurricular activities in French "to develop language skills and appreciation of the culture."[38]

[43]   Furthermore, having access to opportunities to speak French on a daily basis allows French learners and French speakers, both young and old, to counteract the phenomenon of linguistic insecurity. Linguistic insecurity has been defined as a feeling "a sense of unease, discomfort or anxiety experienced when using or attempting to use one's first language or a second language"[39] or even a "perception that a person's accent, choice of words and grammar do not correspond to linguistic norms."[40] For learners of French, linguistic insecurity can also result in them not believing that they can truly identify as bilingual.[41]

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[35] Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française (ACELF). 2022. *Comprendre la construction identitaire*. https://acelf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CCI-F1-4_ressource-1.pdf (Available only in French)
[36] ACELF. 2022. *Comprendre la construction identitaire*. Ch.3 p.5 (Available only in French)
[37]Government of Alberta. "Francisation (Francophone Education)". https://www.alberta.ca/fr/education-guide-francophone-education
[38] Government of l'Alberta. « Le français langue seconde - Immersion. » https://education.alberta.ca/%C3%A9ducation-en-fran%C3%A7ais-en-alberta/immersion-fran%C3%A7aise/?searchMode=3 (available only in French)
[39] Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. "Linguistic (in)security at work- Exploratory survey on official languages among federal government employees in Canada." https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/publications/studies-other-reports/2021/linguistic-insecurity-work-exploratory-survey-official-languages-among-federal-government-employees-canada.
[40] Canadian Parents for French. 2020. *Développer la sécurité linguistique : soyez courageux! Parlez français!* p.1 https://cpf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020-Linguistic-Security-Brief-FR.pdf (available only in French)
[41] Canadian Parents for French. 2020. *Développer la sécurité linguistique...* (available only in French)

[44]   Institutional completeness can counteract the phenomenon of linguistic insecurity, in that "Linguistic security also depends on access to an array of life spaces that make the use of French an everyday thing."[42]

The community's vitality of memory in all its diversity

[45]   The temporal dimension of a community is an essential component of its identity. Historical roots help to consolidate the social fabric and strengthen members' sense of belonging. To understand this role, it is important to consider memory, heritage and history as a true cultural ecosystem, within which a community exists and evolves over time. This ecosystem is nourished by reminders of the past, whether material, immaterial or documentary, and shapes collective representations of identity.

[46]   It is in this context that the concept of vitality of memory was proposed, expressing the strength and diversity with which a community inscribes its past into the present.[43] Unlike a linear or static approach to memory, vitality of memory highlights the evolving nature of the relationship between history and memory. History, based on rigorous scientific research, illuminates and documents the past. Memory, on the other hand, corresponds to the different manifestations of this past in collective life, whether in the form of narratives, commemorations, symbols or cultural practices. Finally, heritage constitutes the tangible and intangible traces of this past, buildings, archives, traditions and artistic expressions, which anchor this memory in the social and symbolic space.

[47]   The vitality of memory of Alberta's Francophone community is not limited to a series of past events; it is a living process, continually activated in everyday life and community practices. **Bilingual municipalities, Francophone educational institutions, community organisations, historical commemorations and cultural activities all serve as places where memory is embodied**. This dynamic demonstrates that Alberta's Francophone community is not just a heritage to be preserved, but one that is constantly being updated.

[48]   Furthermore, the vitality of memory is nourished by family stories, private and public archives, and oral traditions. These forms of memory, sometimes invisible, play a crucial role in maintaining a sense of belonging for members of Alberta's Francophone community. They reflect the strength of local networks and intergenerational solidarity.

[49]   The transmission of memory is closely linked to the construction of identity, as described above. For young people, new learners and French-speaking newcomers, growing up in an environment where their language and cultures are valued contributes to the development of a positive and confident identity. Indeed, "knowledge […] of one's heritage and culture not only reinforce the importance of preserving one's mother tongue, but also promotes the acquisition of a positive cultural identity and improves self-esteem and feelings of security."[44]

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[42] Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française. 2020. "National Strategy for Linguistic Security". P.17

[43] Roy, Alain. 2021. "From vitality to vitality of memory: conceptual foundations of the role of memory and heritage in the vitality of official language minority communities". https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2021/bac-lac/SB4-64-2021-eng.pdf

[44] Farmer, Diane et Marie-Paule Lory. 2019. The Canadian Modern Language Review/ La revue canadienne des langues vivantes. *Langues et identités plurielles en contexte éducatif canadien francophone: comment une langue s'épanouit-elle au travers des mouvement de société*? https://www.immigrationfrancophone.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Farmer-et-Lory-2019.pdf. p.360 (available only in French)

[50]   French-language schools, French immersion programmes, heritage institutions and community organisations play a central role here. They offer not only academic knowledge, but also spaces for the preservation and dissemination of shared memory that strengthen personal identity. It is through this synergy between institutions and the community that lasting transmission takes place.

[51]   Vitality of memory is expressed in three complementary ways:[45]

- Tangible heritage, consisting of buildings, historic sites, museums, monuments, and so on;
- Intangible heritage, which includes mythical narratives, oral traditions, living practices, music, celebrations, and commemorations; and
- Documentary heritage, consisting of archives (documents, correspondence, photographs, recordings, websites, etc.) and publications.

[52]   These three dimensions intertwine to create a complete memorial ecosystem. For example, a memorial takes on its full meaning when accompanied by commemorative ceremonies, educational plaques or narratives that explain its significance.

[53]   Alberta's Francophonie is diverse, as demonstrated in the demographic profile section. Far from standardising this diversity, collective memory can become a space for dialogue, mutual recognition, integration and belonging.

[54]   By highlighting the diversity of Francophone backgrounds, the vitality of memory offers an inclusive collective narrative in which every component of the Francophone community has its place. This plurality is an asset for the province, as it fosters intercultural dialogue and helps build a society where differences are recognised as a source of richness.

[55]   Vitality of memory is not just a matter of identity; it also has an economic dimension. Promoting Francophone memorial sites stimulates cultural tourism (visitors and entrepreneurs), supports cultural industries and contributes to the development of urban and rural areas. In addition, heritage conservation and promotion encourage the transmission of know-how in areas where heritage is alive and well. One need only think of the areas where the French-speaking world has contributed economically for generations, such as beekeeping, dairy, chocolate, cheese, textiles and others, embodied by the *Économusées* currently in operation.[46]

[56]   Therefore, investing in the vitality of memory also means investing in sustainable cultural and economic development.

Recommendations

SHFA's structuring role in provincial coordination and local support

[57]   The SHFA is unique in its vision, provincial scope, experience and expertise. It occupies a unique position within Alberta's memory ecosystem as a provincially mandated organization

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[45] Roy, Alain. 2021. "From vitality to vitality of memory...". p.12.
[46] Économusée Network Society. https://artisansaloeuvre.com/en/artisans/

specializing in Francophone memory, heritage and history. As such, it acts as a reference point, a hub of knowledge and a coordinating centre for community, institutional and government stakeholders.

[58]   The SHFA was founded in 2012 in response to the observation that the University of Alberta's Saint John's Campus was no longer meeting the community's needs in terms of heritage and history. Since then, the SHFA has established a solid operational base, but it remains limited to one permanent full-time employee.

[59]   Since its inception, the SHFA has earned several awards for its work:
- In 2013, the ACFA named the SHFA a leader in the Franco-Albertan heritage and history sector;
- In 2021, its podcast entitled 'La place' won the award for best Francophone podcast at the Canadian Podcast Awards and received a special mention at the Governor General's Awards for Community History Programmes;
- In 2021, the Government of Alberta named the SHFA a Provincial Heritage Organization;
- In 2023, it co-founded a national organisation eventually named the Canadian Francophone Heritage Memory Network and participated in the creation of the Canadian History Collective of the Canadian Historical Association.

[60]   Unlike local or sectoral organizations, the SHFA has a comprehensive view of Canada and Alberta, regional issues, and the dynamics specific to different Francophone communities. This position allows it to identify emerging needs, structural gaps, duplicate initiatives, and opportunities for synergy between organizations.

[61]   Operationally, the SHFA already plays an informal provincial coordination role: supporting local organisations, connecting them with government partners, supporting the development of heritage projects, advising on the conservation of archives and objects, and mediating between public heritage institutions and Francophone communities. Recent examples include collaboration with the Royal Alberta Museum on a temporary exhibition on Franco-Albertan history and community outreach work at the Provincial Archives of Alberta. However, this role is currently being performed by the SHFA without sufficient funding to support its formal mandate as a Provincial Heritage Organisation (PHO) recognized by the province.

[62]   **That is why the ACFA and the SHFA recommend establishing provincial coordination funding for the SHFA to structure its role in a sustainable manner.** This would give the SHFA the means to conduct strategic monitoring, document the state of Francophone heritage across the province, support organizations in developing projects that meet professional standards and government expectations, and strengthen the overall coherence of heritage initiatives in Alberta.

[63]   This coordination funding would also have a leverage effect on interdepartmental relations. The SHFA would be able to act as a specialized interface between the departments concerned—Arts, Culture and the Status of Women, Education, Higher Education, Tourism, Parks, Municipal Affairs—and Francophone communities, facilitating the alignment of public policies with realities on the ground.

[64]   Furthermore, most Francophone heritage organizations in Alberta rely on volunteers and have very limited administrative, financial and technical capacities. Many of them have significant heritage assets but are unable to access major funding programmes because of their size, status or lack of specialized human resources.

[65]   **In addition, the ACFA and the SHFA recommend the implementation of a microgrant programme administered in coordination with the SHFA to support local Francophone heritage organizations in a targeted, flexible manner that is adapted to their reality**. These microgrants could support, among other things, the digitisation of local archives, the holding of commemorations, the documentation of oral histories, the production of educational materials, the promotion of places of remembrance, and the training of volunteers.

[66]   In Alberta, several organizations recognized as PHOs already administer grant programmes targeting projects related to their respective fields of expertise. The Archaeological Society of Alberta, the Historical Society of Alberta, the Archives Society of Alberta, and the Alberta Museums Association each offer their own funding mechanisms.

[67]   This mechanism would help reduce regional inequalities in heritage conservation and promotion, particularly in rural and remote areas where access to specialised resources remains limited. It would also encourage the emergence of locally-led projects that are rooted in communities and consistent with provincial priorities.

[68]   In addition, the microgrant mechanism would also enable the SHFA to support local heritage organizations using an approach developed by and for the Francophone community. This support would fill the gap between the current low level of operational capacity among many of these organizations and the funding programs offered by the provincial and federal governments, as well as other PHOs.

[69]   The SHFA's role in administering, supervising and supporting these micro-grants would ensure the rigour of the projects, compliance with heritage standards and appropriate accountability. The SHFA would thus act as a guarantor of the quality, consistency and sustainability of the initiatives supported.

[70]   The combination of structured provincial coordination and a microgrant programme would create a continuum of action, ranging from government strategy to local action. This model would strengthen the vitality of memory throughout Alberta, while providing concrete support to the community actors who are its primary bearers.

[71]   **In short, funding the SHFA's provincial coordination role and establishing microgrants are two complementary levers for strengthening the Francophone memory ecosystem**. They will ensure an overall vision, consistency in government interventions and direct support for communities, which is essential for the sustainable transmission of Francophone memory, heritage and history in Alberta.

Community, intergovernmental and interministry coordination

[72]   At the federal level, the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028 does not include any specific measures to support memory, heritage and history in official language minority communities. This gap creates an intergovernmental vacuum that provinces, particularly Alberta, can help fill by partnering with community organizations in the sector.

[73]   Although the federal government has not yet fully assumed a leadership role in this sector, the Alberta government is taking a proactive approach. In the French Policy 2024-2028 Action Plan the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women has committed to implementing three actions in this area, namely:[47]
- "Enhance service delivery in French at the Provincial Archives of Alberta and digitize and enhance physical and virtual access by the public;
- Ensure that collections, exhibitions and learning programs at the Royal Alberta Museum reflect the experiences of the Francophonie;
- Improve the Francophone visitor experience at other Alberta historic sites and museums with audio-based information about exhibits and historic sites where bilingual text panels do not exist."

[74]   These actions clearly outline the provincial government's responsibilities with regard to memorial sites that belong to it.

[75]   However, despite the mobilisation of several community actors to preserve and promote Francophone heritage, their efforts remain scattered and insufficiently coordinated.

[76]   The lack of a coordinated provincial community strategy explains this fragmentation. Currently, each organization and government institution acts according to its resources, mandate and vision, without always being able to align itself with an overall direction. This lack of consistency weakens the collective impact of initiatives and reduces their visibility in Alberta's public sphere.

[77]   To remedy this situation, **the ACFA and the SHFA recommend developing a joint strategy with the Alberta government to coordinate initiatives to preserve and promote Francophone heritage**. This strategy could include mapping stakeholders and resources, establishing guidelines for exhibitions, archives and educational programmes, and planning joint projects. The SHFA, in collaboration with the ACFA and community organizations, could lead the development of this strategy, while the provincial government would play an essential supporting role by providing funding, access to institutional resources and consistency with the places of memory under its mandate. Such an approach would strengthen the collective impact of Francophone initiatives and ensure their visibility and accessibility throughout Alberta.

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[47] Government of Alberta. 2024. *French Policy 2024-2028 Action Plan: Enhancing services in French to support the vitality of the Francophonie in Alberta. https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/2b40e62c-9c60-4cbf-adb8-d8b9ec6041e0/resource/ffe50331-5dde-47e3-b6b1-e8e9d210ca52/download/acsw-french-policy-action-plan-2024-2028.pdf* p.12

[78]   **In addition, the ACFA and the SHFA recommend that the Government of Alberta establish a multistakeholder committee bringing together civil servants and representatives of Alberta's Francophone community**. The assistant deputy minister responsible for the heritage division and the SHFA will serve as the heads of their respective networks to ensure effective coordination.

[79]   To ensure the effective implementation of the Community strategy, this committee would be tasked with **coordinating initiatives, facilitating the sharing of resources and ensuring consistency between projects developed by the various actors involved in Francophone memory, heritage and history**.

[80]   According to the French Policy, multistakeholder committees are a best practice for to "foster dialogue and collaboration for the development and enhancement of meaningful services in French."[48]

[81]   In addition to government coordination, this committee could also oversee the development of a **framework for preserving Alberta's Francophone heritage, ensuring that historical objects and documents deemed important by the community are preserved**, even when no other preservation solution exists. This strategic role would fill gaps identified in the memory ecosystem and provide lasting support for Francophone cultural vitality in Alberta.

Conclusion

[82]   In conclusion, the vitality of memory of Alberta's Francophonie depends on an ecosystem where individuals, institutions and the environment interact. Coordinating initiatives, supporting the SHFA and community organisations, and implementing a concerted strategy and a multi-party committee will make it possible to preserve and promote Francophone memory, heritage and history in a sustainable manner, while consolidating the province's identity and cultural development.

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[48] Government of Alberta. *French Policy*... p.10