BEYOND ‘LA BAGUETTE ET LE FROMAGE’: STUDYING MINORITY FRANCOPHONE CULTURE AND COMMUNITY IN WESTERN CANADA

by

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ABSTRACT

The question of French language rights has been continuously discussed in the Canadian State. In 1982 the Canadian constitution and Article 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guaranteed French students to receive primary and secondary education in that language. This research examines whether an elementary FFL school in Peace River, Alberta, produces a positive impact on French identity and culture. It also studies how francophone teachers and students define and construct French identity on a daily basis. In order to complete this study qualitative methods (participant observation, informal and formal interviews, questionnaires, and participatory action research) were used. The results indicate that an elementary FFL school of Peace River has succeeded in promoting positive attitudes to French language and culture and that extracurricular activities can reinforce this effect. This research demonstrates that students have more positive opinions of French language and culture once they have participated in a French cultural activity. Francophone students use the French language when they are in a FFL school and sometimes when they are among anglophones. L'École Des Quatre Vents and its teachers has become an effective tool in constructing French identity and a sense of belonging for a French-speaking community among a young generation of francophones. The status of French language has improved, whereas in the past it was stigmatized. This study reveals that education in French language helps students articulate and understand their culture better in the minority context of the Peace River region, Alberta.
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Chapter One
Introduction

The goal of this work was to study the minority French-speaking community outside Québec, particularly in Western Canada, the provinces of Alberta in order to see how French culture and language are preserved and transmitted, and what role education plays in those processes. The study of culture is one of the defining elements of the discipline of anthropology. Culture was first defined by anthropology as the sum of human activities and experiences and this meaning has become widespread across society. Whereas most ethnography was traditionally conducted by Europeans and Euro-North-Americans seeking to understand another culture, as a Russian-speaker from the Komi Republic in the Russian Federation, I pursued graduate studies at the University of Northern British Columbia in order to better understand the relationship between schools, culture and community in Canada. Both countries have much in common; both countries can be said to have ethnic and cultural diversity on their territories, yet for decades one dominant language and culture were promoted by the Canadian State. The majority of Canadian provinces sought to ensure that their population would be English in language and British in culture (Bouchard 1994; 2007). In recent decades, political changes led to progressive new policies that sought to promote the vitality of minority languages. This was the case in the Komi Republic where Komi language and culture started to be more promoted in some schools, over the last few decades, and similarly in Canada the Canadian Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms recognized the rights of minority French speakers to be educated in their language.

The proposed ethnographic research was conducted in the French-speaking communities of the Peace River region in Alberta. It is a regional centre servicing a larger
region that includes a number of town and villages where French-speakers constitute a
certain majority. The research took place in the French school of Peace River, l’École Des
Quatre-Vents or the Four-Winds School to better understand the process of language and
cultural maintenance and transmission to discover how identity and community is forged
within the town, regionally, provincially and nationally.

1.1 Organization of the thesis

This thesis document is organized in the following way. Subsequent to this
introductory chapter that covers the problem of research; Chapter two is a detailed literature
review of both English and French literature that highlights some historical aspects of
Canada as a whole focusing on French Canadians of Western Canada in particular. At the
same time, some historical events of Québec are discussed in order to better understand the
nature of French culture as it pertains to the Canadian context, and thereby demonstrates
what it means to be part of the French Canadian minority. Chapter three discusses
ethnographic research, the research procedures and methodology used. Chapter four
addresses the fieldwork results and analysis. Conclusions concerning French-speaking
minority in an anglophone environment and the role of French as a first language (FFL)
schools in promotion of French language and culture are provided in Chapter five.

1.2 Defining the Problem

I am interested in examining whether or not the establishment of FFL schools in the
Peace River region has produced a positive impact on French identity and culture. I am
asking if FFL schools have succeeded in promoting a positive attitude towards French
language and culture among francophones as well as among anglophones. My research
focuses on whether a FFL school in a minority Western context could be a tool of French
language and cultural promotion and reproduction. The questions that seem relevant to study are: 1) what is culture? 2) Can it be taught? 3) What is community? 4) How can a school effectively foster community and promote a given identity? Thus, the main issue of the research is examining the role of an elementary school as an effective tool in promoting minority French identity, language and a sense of belonging to a French-speaking community.

Canada is officially a bilingual country with both English and French recognized as the national languages. Moreover, nowadays Canada is considered to be a multicultural and multinational country. Nonetheless, according to several authors, the questions of linguistic assimilation, discrimination and the status of minority groups have been urgent ones, especially for one group of settlers that is French-speakers (Allard 2002; Balthazar 1996; Bastarache 1992; Cardinal and Lapointe 1990; Cardinal and Dobbon 2003; Cook 1995; Gilbert 1991; Handler 1988; Lachapelle 1992; Legendre 1982; Thériault 1992). Though the vast majority of French-speakers are concentrated in Québec, this does not lessen the fact that close to a million French-speaking individuals live in other provinces and face an English-speaking reality. According to Bastarache (1992), Dion (1992), Lachapelle (1992) they assimilate, as English dominates all services and public spheres and the word combination “francophonies en résistance” has become a well spread theme in the French speaking North America. Therefore, French speakers have a minority status in other provinces, outside of Québec. Moreover, Dubé (2002a) notes that francophones have never made it to assure their future and will always have ‘to survive’. According to Prokop (1989), the education system in most Canadian provinces, other than Québec, was at one time or
another perceived as a tool of assimilation, forcing French-speaking communities to adopt the dominant ethnic group of an English language and British culture.

In the 1960s, Canada was proclaimed a bilingual and bicultural country. During that time, culture was seen as a way of being, thinking and feeling. That is individuals were seen as being united by a common tongue, having the same customs, habits, and experiences (Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1967).

I took for granted that if individuals are united by a common tongue then it forms two cultural groups in Canada – English and French, thus one can assume that there are two main cultures in Canada. At the same time, this cultural duality is not a mixture of the two, because each culture has its own practice, it is alive and undergoes changes. Cultures can borrow from each other but one culture cannot be replaced by the other. “Culture is to the group what personality is to the individual. That is, it is rare for a person to have two personalities or two styles of living at the same time” (Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1967). Therefore, it is rare for a person to have two cultures because a certain culture is unique to individuals of one group.

People from different cultural groups may borrow some cultural traits or traditions through communication, share interests and even ways of living, but it seems highly problematic to assume that they would share a common mentality and consciousness as they speak, and especially think in different languages. It reflects the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis on the relationships between language and thought stating that people understand reality through the language they speak and as languages differ from one another, thus, the social ‘realities’ are never the same (Chandler 1994). Hence, several authors agree that people from different cultural groups with different backgrounds, ancestry, languages, traditions and values would
try to preserve their cultural individuality and diversity; uniqueness and peculiarity, as it gives them a sense of self-esteem, safety and protection especially if they were subjected to suppression (Bailey 1985; Bastarache 1992; Cardinal et Lapointe 1990; Gilbert 1991; Lachapelle 1992; Li and Denis 1983; Thériault 1992). During much of the history in Canada, most provinces except Québec enacted legislation which restricted the teaching of French as a classroom discipline and also the use of French as the language of instruction. Provincial legislatures adopted stringent English-only laws that limited teaching in languages other than English. The principal intent was to assimilate language minorities, particularly French-language minorities (Prokop 1989). Although these laws were relaxed by the provincial legislation, it was not until 1982 when the Canadian Constitution was repatriated and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was introduced that minority French-speakers had a recognized right to be educated in their heritage language (Department of Justice Canada, 2006). For example, Article 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms indicated that Canadian citizens of French linguistic minority have the right to have all their children receive primary and secondary education in that language (Department of Justice Canada, 2006).

Thus, francophone language rights were secured, but even then, French-language parents and school administrators had to repeatedly plead with their provinces to ensure that French-language schools be created and that the administration of these schools be given to French-speaking communities via French-language school boards (Edmonton’s Francophone Heritage, 2010).

Much hope has been put on French-language schools as a means of ensuring the survival of French-speaking communities. French-speaking teachers that were hired to work
in schools in Alberta and where they were a majority were often bilingual French-speaking Catholic nuns that circumvented the laws wherever possible to ensure that some level of French instruction was maintained (Aunger 1993; Bouchard 1994). Therefore, it seems that historically schools were sites of political and judicial contention for French-speaking communities which many struggled to maintain French-language education rights. According to Aunger (1993) and Bouchard (1994), the past twenty years have been a big challenge for minority francophones to practice their culture and language in the anglophone milieu of Alberta. It was not popular to be French and speak French and the English only environment was rather hostile to French-speakers. Nevertheless, FFL schools as a social institution have now changed and are entrusted with the responsibility of transmitting culture and language and maintain identity.

1.3 Differences and Similarities

The research on French-speaking communities of Canada has been done by numerous sociologists and anthropologists. Like Diane Gérin-Lajoie (2006) in her study of the identity shape among the teenagers at a French-speaking secondary school in Ontario, I use ethnographic theory as a relevant approach to study and analyze the identity of the French-speaking community of Northern Alberta. The school, as a social institution, has been chosen because, as Monica Heller (1998) states, it represents an important site of social and cultural reproduction. She studied French culture in Ontario and indicated that the school has a primary role in Franco-Ontarian’s mobilization and questions the evolution of the linguistic and political ideologies. She adds that the Franco-Ontarian
school is a place that seems to contradict its own mission to promote the pure local French language and culture and sometimes becomes the place that marginalizes francophones.

To summarize, I was studying whether the French-language school of Alberta remains the main if not the only place where French identity and culture are strongly encouraged, promoted and maintained. It involved viewing the problem of identity and minority status through the lens of schooling. It seems important to stress that my study will add to the existing ones a different perspective: studying French culture in Western Canada, particularly Northern Alberta, in order to understand and examine how teachers transmit culture and inculcate a French identity on a day-to-day basis. My thesis examines the ways in which the classroom culture of French schools promotes the French language and culture and the integration of children into a larger French-speaking community.

1.4 Physical description of the site

The proposed ethnographic research was held in a French-speaking community of the Peace River region in Alberta. This community is located 500 km Northwest of Edmonton and close to 650 km Northeast of Prince George. The Town of Peace River had a population of 6,315 individuals in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006). The Peace River region includes a number of towns and villages where French-speakers constitute a majority. This includes towns such as Falher, 60 km to the South of Peace River and a hamlet of Saint-Isidore, less than 20 km away from Peace River. French-speaking colonists founded the town of Falher in 1912, while the hamlet of Saint-Isidore was settled in the 1950s. Given the boom in Alberta, the region has also attracted French-speaking migrants in recent years from Québec and elsewhere. According to Statistics Canada (2006) there were 400 people indicating French as the only mother tongue in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006).
One of the advantages of the region for francophones is the presence of French schools. Nowadays there are three FFL schools under the jurisdiction of the Conseil Scolaire du Nord-Ouest #1 which includes the École des Quatre-Vents in Peace River, École Héritage in Falher and École Nouvelle Frontière in Grand Prairie.

The educational setting of the region has been changing throughout the history and development of the province which are going to be discussed in chapter two, but the Peace River region did not have dedicated FFL schools until 1988 when École Héritage was founded. An elementary French school in Peace River was opened more than ten years later, due to the lobbying of active francophone parents for establishing a FFL school in Peace River. L’École Des Quatre-Vents was opened in 1999 and provides educational services from kindergarten to grade six to children coming from francophone families or who have French background or heritage.
L'École Des Quatre Vents is situated in the Northern part of the town of Peace River. The name of the school ‘Four Winds School’ and the symbol of the school as a kite represents four cardinal points of the world. In other words, by its name and logo underline that francophones of the community are coming from everywhere, from all parts of the world. A memorial plaque fixed on the wall states that the government of Alberta is proud to commemorate the official opening of the school with this engraved statement “L’avenir appartient à nos enfants et nous sommes les gardiens de leur héritage”. This could be translated as ‘the future belongs to our children and we are the guardians of their heritage’. This phrase is significant as it underlines that the future of the French-speaking community and of the population in general belongs to the younger generation. In addition, it stresses the idea that it depends on parents, teachers and community members to maintain, promote and transmit their culture and language; pave the way and guard it for their children.

The next chapter will present literature review of similar research about French-speaking communities in Canada, their struggle to maintain French identity, language and culture and the role of school in this process. It will also provide an insight into Alberta French minority educational context and the status of French language instruction in this province as well as discussion of the means of French language and culture promotion in a minority milieu.
Chapter Two

Literature review

The topic of francophone Canadians has been examined in academic disciplines such as sociolinguistics, anthropology and education. Sociolinguistics and education have examined francophone communities from the point of view of language and anthropology has studied communities in its generic sense. This chapter begins with a brief summary of francophone history in Canada and presents events of the past that have brought French language to a minor position which have led to present francophone communities that continue to assert their linguistic rights. The focus of the discussion will be dedicated to FFL schools and the means by which French language and culture have developed.

2.1 Historical background

Canada, as a country has developed due to French and British Empire exploration and expansion. People came to this land in search of freedom or land, gold or fur. They brought with them different cultures, languages, traditions, values and ways of life. Thus, an important question has been how and whether people of various cultures could live side-by-side peacefully and successfully. Cook (1995:13) asks “who belongs here [Canada] and what belongs to whom?” In other words, is it possible for people of different ancestries to co-exist peacefully, sharing and accepting each others’ cultural peculiarities? Will the issues of someone’s domination, conquest and assimilation be always urgent?

As Camille Legendre (1982) and Louis Balthazar (1996) indicate, the settlement of Canada was a lengthy process and perception of the historical events by francophones and anglophones of Canada would be different. The major dominance of British law and English language started with the 1760 British conquest. For French-speaking Canadians, history
goes back more than a century ago, when Jacques Cartier landed on the shore of the St. Lawrence River in 1534. From 1608 until 1760, the French regime reigned. As a result, most French Canadians trace the origin of their collective identity back to the seventeenth century, when the original French colonies were developing in North America and when French-speakers of North America started to call themselves Canadians. Balthazar (1996) points out that French-Canadians existed on the territory of present-day Québec long before the modern state of Canada was created by the British. Those ancestors had common, collective history, common territory, culture, language, religion and a single economy where the members of the society shared common duties. However, the history of French Canadians according to Legendre (1982), Cardinal and Lapointe (1990) was one of survival. They feared assimilation and the threats of abolition of their cultural and linguistic rights. Their national identity was in the hands of the British administration and was discouraged due to several historical events. During the seventeenth century, the French dominated most of North America; however, in the eighteenth century the position and influence of the French colony was subject to change. In 1713, under the Utrecht treaty, France ceded to England the territory of Acadia (Bastarache 1986). Though there was no mention of linguistic rights, all of the administration was conducted in English. Later on, the British conquest of 1760 aimed to assimilate sixty-five thousand Canadiens. Thus, the interactions between the two populations led to English assimilation of the French. Trying to preserve their identity and culture, the French occupying the territory of Québec made this territory a ‘reservation’ against anglophone influence and dominance. In 1763, by the Treaty of Paris, the French officially ceded the territories of Canada to England and thus guaranteed the governors freedom to adopt and introduce legislation that would favour the assimilation of francophones. But the
growing discontent and agitation among francophones led to the Act of Québec in 1774 which rehabilitated the rights of the French and guaranteed the liberty of the Catholic religion. However, there was no mention of the language concerns because at that time religion and language were considered to be inseparable (Couture and Perreaux 2002; Bastarache 1986). The 1791 Act of Constitution divided the country into Upper and Lower Canada. Lower Canada adopted bilingualism and the usage of the two languages at work. Later, the British would return to the policy of assimilation. In response to the rebellions of 1837-1838, the Canadian government made English the only official language of administration. In addition, Lord Durham recommended the elimination of a French-Canadian identity in favour of a single Canadian identity (Balthazar 1996; Cardinal and Lapointe 1990; Couture and Perreaux 2002). In 1840, by the British Parliament Act of Union the British government adopted the policy to join present-day Ontario and Québec into one British colony called the “Province of Canada”. They also introduced the policy of unilinguism making English the only official language of administration. The French, however, continued to pursue the right to use their language in the Assembly (Cardinal and Lapointe 1990; Couture and Perreaux 2002). As French-speakers became a minority group in a new state they came to adopt a new name of Canadiens-Français, or French Canadians, though they continued to use the old term Canadiens among themselves.

Balthazar (1996) also points out that the catchword for French Canadians had become that of la survivance (survival), because they were in danger of losing their sense of national identity, culture and language. French Canadians resisted assimilation by following the Church’s encouragement to have as many children as possible and to use the French language as the guardian of the faith. Later, by the British North American Act of 1867 and
the establishment of the Canadian Confederation, a new country was created linking the provinces of Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Québec. It was always questionable if these provinces could really be united considering the diversity of French and English populations, differences in cultural backgrounds and values, and the usage of different languages. Accordingly, Confederation article 133 proclaimed two official languages – French and English hence any person had the choice to use French or English as a language of the government and legislation in Québec (Cardinal and Lapointe 1990; Bastarache 1986). On the one hand, the Confederation constitution guaranteed both French and English languages equal status on the judicial level and mainly in Québec. On the other hand, laws about the administration of education of francophones living outside of Québec were unclear. It was not clear if French speakers could have French language instruction in schools and by this maintain their identity. Though French-speakers constituted the majority within Québec, on a national scale, they had only acquired minority status.

2.2 Minority Status of the Francophones

Most minority groups, their cultures, personal identities, language, customs or traditions are discouraged by a dominant culture of the state. In Canada, for example, the burning question of national identity or culture of Québec as well as the issue of francophones living outside of Québec are widely discussed in the literature along with the difficulties that they faced in order to preserve identity, culture and language (Allard 2002; Aunger 1993; Balthazar 1996; Bastarache 1992; Cardinal and Lapointe 1990; Cardinal and Dobbon 2003; Cook 1995; Gilbert 1991; Handler 1988; Lachapelle 1992; Landry, Deveau and Allard 2006; Legendre 1982; Thériault 1992). At the same time, Allard (2002) indicates
that bilingual francophones prefer to address themselves as a ‘minority’ rather than considering themselves as members of an anglophone majority.

Debates about French-speaking minorities and their status has prepared the ground for the distinction between the ‘nation québécoise’ and French Canadians, thus dividing francophones even more within the country and providing the basis for assimilation (Cardinal and Dobbon 2003). Couture and Perreaux (2002) point out that from the nineteenth century onwards there were certain tensions between francophones of Western Canada and Québec. The identity of Western francophones was an imaginary notion to oppose the idea that the French could not survive elsewhere but in Québec (Couture and Perreaux 2002). Moreover, during the 1960s, French Canadians voted for the proposition that they constituted a nation (Couture and Perreaux 2002). Couture and Perreaux (2002) note that the Western regional identity, distinguished from Québec identity, had started to form 75 years earlier. In addition, they argue that the French-speaking population of the West had increased from 144,576 people in 1951 to 181,046 in 1996. According to Couture (2001), this constant rise, mostly observed in British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba, denotes that the number of francophones of the West from 1931 to 1991 has increased from 120,695 to 203,010. Thus, according to Couture and Perreaux (2002) and Couture (2001), the number of French in the West has always been considerable and it is possible to say that there is a Western French-speaking identity. Nevertheless, the tendency among francophones to distinguish the French Québécois from those living outside of Québec, has not led to feelings of security nor has it united the French speakers towards their struggle against minority status at a federal level.

Cardinal and Lapointe (1990) argue that the distinction between majority and minority is based not on the number of people, but on the power and control of social,
political, and economical institutions, the point being that if a society has a small ethnic
group it does not mean that this group is in a minor position to others as long as people from
this group are represented in different social, political and economical spheres and can
influence the decisions and promote certain ideas in the society. Nevertheless, the authors
suggest that the only way minority groups could achieve social or economic or professional
success is by assimilation. But assimilation affects the most important matter of those being
assimilated, the language.

Bailey (1985) points out that historically, two languages of unequal strength cannot
co-exist. Joy (1972) indicates that where there are two languages of unequal strength, the
weaker one is destined to disappear (Tanguay 2003:317). At the same time, Bailey (1985)
argues that there are certain grounds for optimism for the French speakers and their language,
stemming largely from the growth of bilingual immersion schools as well as French schools.
Though this statement was made two decades ago, it is true even in the 2000s. Evidence of
French schools growth can be found in the Peace River region, which has three FFL schools
that provide services to the francophone families of the neighbouring towns and hamlets.

Though some would believe that French is slowly disappearing, there is evidence to
indicate the opposite. For example, Bailey (1985) underlines that whether the individuals,
anglophones, bylaws and institutions recognize it or not, there is French presence in Canada.
According to the census of 1981, French Canadians constituted the second-largest non-native
group (Bailey 1985). The number of francophones during a 110 year period from 1871 till
1981 dropped by 4.4 percent from 31.1 percent in 1871 to 26.7 percent in 1981. Compared to
the British who constituted the majority, their proportion fell by over 20 percent from 60.5
percent in 1871 to 40.2 percent in 1981 (Bailey 1985). Thus, the French-speaking group was
able to survive and avoid assimilation. These figures show that francophones outside Québec did not have a tendency to disappear drastically but on the contrary could maintain their number. Moreover, these figures testify that some resistance exists among French speakers to assimilate.

According to Bailey (1985), by 1981, a quarter of the population identified the French language as their ‘mother tongue’. Even other ethnic groups, especially Germans and Italians, adopted the French language and moreover cited it as their ‘mother tongue’. Thus, there are indications that French remains the second most powerful language in Canada. Bailey (1985) contends that the French presence in Canada is significant and that there is no legal pressure or public opinion that can eliminate this status, as long as the French themselves want to maintain and transmit their culture. In other words, the means of survival are in the hands of the French population itself. Though the number of French Canadians who speak their native language is decreasing, the number of those who learn French remains high (Statistics Canada, 2006). In other words, French speakers constitute a large group of Canadians and have certain grounds for optimism for their future.

On the other hand, the optimism of Bailey (1985), Couture (2001), Couture and Perreaux (2002) has opposition. Most authors (Auinger 1993; Cardinal and Lapointe 1990; Cardinal and Dobbon 2003; Castonguay 2001; Gilbert 1991; Lachapelle 1992; Thériault 1992) look at the situation of francophones differently, namely from the point of view that the French-speaking population is being assimilated and anglicized at an alarming rate. Cardinal and Dobbon (2003) point out that the notion of French Canadians has been replaced by the notion of ‘francophones of Canada’. On the federal level, one encounters a paradoxical definition as “minority communities of the official language” (Cardinal and
Dobbon 2003). Thus, the minority status of francophones of North America is becoming more evident on all levels – federal, provincial, regional, municipal, etc. Gilbert (1991) and Gérin-Lajoie (2002) agree that the French-speaking communities outside of Québec face assimilation and are forced to integrate with the English-speakers. This assimilation has been reinforced due to the process of urbanization and migration of francophones into economically active regions that make francophones leave the homogeneous place of their language and social environment. Tanguay (2003) is pessimistic about francophone communities outside of Québec. He refers to Castonguay (1999) who discusses anglicization among Franco-Ontarians and stands for the inevitable decline of French population (Tanguay 2003). Consequently, Tanguay (2003) states that many researchers agree on the issue that francophone communities of Western Canada and South-Western Ontario are going to disappear. Thériault (1992) also supports the idea that the francophones outside Québec live in a more anglophone environment. According to him, the only way to preserve the language and the French identity outside of Québec is to have a sufficient number of people that could assure the prosperity of the French-speaking community members. Thériault (1992) calls areas of the francophones the “minute archipelago” in the vast ‘Anglophone Ocean’. Aunger (1993) refers to Joy (1972) and states that French-speaking population of the West is on its way to disappear. Lachapelle (1992) who studied French usage in Eastern Canada views the French compared to the English in the inferior position and believes that it is more difficult to transmit the French language, especially if the father’s language is English or another language. The best French maintenance environment is considered to be the situation where both partners are of the same mother language (Lachapelle 1992). It seems that an ideal
situation for language and culture retention could be a closed community, but it is not always possible for francophones outside of Québec.

The research results that will be presented in chapter four of my thesis will indicate that francophone families of the Peace River region become less united, more multicultural and exogamic (the custom of marrying outside a community or clan or tribe) whereas in the past, farming was important and families tended to live and work together to keep their farms running.

The deficit of French language usage from 1971 till 1996 has reached 8.5 percent and is continuing to increase (Castonguay 2001). Many francophones adopt English as the language to speak. Anglicization in Ontario among the 25 to 34-year old people has reached 44 percent in 1996 compared to 36 percent in 1971. The percentage of assimilation of francophones in other provinces constitutes almost 50 percent. From 1971 to 1996, the number of French population has dropped in Prince Edward Island by 31 percent, in Nova Scotia by 24 percent, in Manitoba by 42 percent, in Saskatchewan by 63 percent and in Alberta by 21 percent. The only exception to this trend was British Columbia where the use of French sometimes increased, but on the whole, assimilation was up to 90 percent (Castonguay 2001). These figures speak volumes to the fact that francophones, whether of Eastern or Western Canada, do not increase in number, but on the contrary they assimilate and lose one of their most significant cultural elements – their language. This at the same time contradicts the data reported by Couture and Perreaux (2002) and Bailey (1995) who indicate an increase in the French population in Western Canada. But English language usage at home is becoming a norm among the younger generations which may speed up the process of linguistic and cultural assimilation. Therefore, at the provincial level of Québec and at the
It was proclaimed by the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that the rights of French Canadians should be recognized. However, the idea of cultural and linguistic ‘survival’, minority status and the struggle against assimilation are still on the agenda and have a contradictory character. Thus, it seems interesting to study the issue of French language and its status, because in multicultural societies a language plays a differentiating role and remains at the very heart of conflict between majority and minority groups.

2.3 Linguistic Concerns and Rights

Language is a pure cultural notion. If culture is the principle characteristic element of a group, then language is the vehicle of this culture. Many authors (Boissonneault 2004; Gerin-Lajoie 2006; Bastarache 1986; Paquet 2002) define language as the mark of differentiation from other groups, of belonging to one’s own, and as an important vehicle of a public cultural transmission. Language is also studied as the central element of identity construction, cultural and social maintenance, and as a means of expression and communication. According to Boissonneault (2004), language is the vehicle of our world vision. By this unique tool we socialize and communicate expressing our knowledge, point of view and sense of humour. At the same time, Boissonneault (2004) points out that language bears our identity. By this we define what and who we are. It is the main criterion in determining belonging to a group. The French language has always been an indicator of belonging differentiation and is central in the notion of identity (Boissonneault 2004). Thus, language has always been a sign of belonging as well as a means of communication. It marks the social integration of a person which in turn constitutes the identity of a person. Identity has been defined as a social construct, grounded in social interaction, in the activities and
situations which arise as a product of the relationship of a social group to its social and physical environment (Boissonneault 2004). Consequently, identity is a result of shared social knowledge, and a reflection of shared membership. The notion of social construction fits perfectly into the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, where according to Mead (1934; 1964), Blumer (1986), Jewett (2006), Mains (1984), Prus (2007) and Tavory and Timmermans (2009), social reality is regarded as a construct which is a result of a social (cultural) interaction.

The discussion of the minority francophone status in Canada touches upon the issue of language. Thériault (1992) points out that the differentiation between Québec and the rest of Canada is based on the linguistic issue. According to Bastarache (1986), the linguistic rights have to be not only recognized by the State but secured by the Constitution or legislative authority. The status of the official language regulates the relationships between the State and the citizens. If the State makes two languages of the state official, then the State acquires a bilingual status. Hence, an individual has the choice of one or another language in his or her relations with the State and other individuals. The aim of the State is to assure that a group speaking a national language does not consider itself as a linguistic minority (Bastarache 1986). However, the status of French is not equal to that of English (Aunger 1993; Bastarache 1986; Bouchard 1994; Cardinal and Lapointe 1990; Cardinal and Dobbon 2003; Castonguay 2001; Gérin-Lajoie 2002; Gilbert 1991; Lachapelle 1992; Landry, Deveau and Allard 2006; Thériault 1992). In addition, Bastarache (1986) points out that the State has to provide the national equality for both linguistic groups. It should assure the existence and protection of a language or languages that are under the threat of extinction.
Nevertheless, the matter of minorities in Canada still exists. The State needs to adopt different measures in order to protect the linguistic minorities, support their cultural maintenance and existence, and recognize their rights. One of the urgent issues remains the linguistic status of the francophones, especially those outside of Québec. Balthazar (1996), Bastarache (1986; 1992), Cardinal and Lapointe (1990), Couture and Perreaux (2002), all agree that there were periods when laws protected francophone linguistic rights and there were periods when the linguistic rights of French speakers were abolished.

Rights for children to get educated in the French language were not always respected in regions other than Québec, New Brunswick and Ontario. In 1885, the right to French education was abolished in Manitoba, and in 1871 in New-Brunswick. Likewise, in 1905 the North-West Territories also fell under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Parliament and thus English language domination. Saskatchewan and Alberta appeared as provinces in 1905 and English law was strong there as well but with a certain status given to French. In 1912, Ontario anti-French and anti-Catholic movements made the authorities reduce the usage of French in schools. Francophones outside Québec, where their cultural and language rights were not taken into consideration, had to fight to survive. Due to the national movements in Québec and protests of the French population, the linguistic question has become a political one. The discontent of the population about their linguistic rights led to the creation of the 1963 Royal Commission on bilingualism and biculturalism (Cardinal and Lapointe 1990; Dion 1992; Lachapelle 1992; Bastarache 1986). The work of the Commission revealed the existence of so-called 'two Canadas' — one comprising French dominated Québec and the other composed of English dominated provinces. In 1967 the Royal Commission reported that there were two official languages, English and French. In 1969, the Royal Commission
adopted the official languages law and gave equal rights to French and English languages at the federal level. The Commission proposed only a temporary solution that could be only partially effective as francophones outside of Québec were left to struggle for their own language rights maintenance, protection and promotion.

According to Dion (1992) and Lachapelle (1992), the Canadian Constitution of 1982 strengthened the rights of the French-speaking minorities and adopted the policy of bilingualism and biculturalism. It is believed that anglophones started to respect francophones more. Before that it was hard to assure respectful treatment of French speakers in the Western parts of Canada, where anglophones were not inclined to accept French-speaking minorities (Dion 1992). The status of French at the federal level became more secured. That is, French language became more popular at the economic level and it became popular to show respect towards the French which united the nation.

Harvey (2002) points out that the Canadian Charter has the obligation to protect French minorities and to support French institutions such as families, schools, and universities. According to Lachapelle (1992), linguistic rights were extended by the Supreme Court. These authors show that the French language has gained prominence and has achieved higher status in New Brunswick and Ontario. Nevertheless, today francophones continue their struggle in order to retain their language, even in Québec. In Western provinces where English dominates, this process is going on more painfully. For a language to thrive its use should be relatively high. Until one language has a minor social status, it can lead to the phenomenon of language diglossia, that is two languages that exist side-by-side with each other in everyday life, but one occupies the privileged and public spheres while the other – secondary and private spheres. This is the case in Western Canada, though the French
language has achieved a valued status, it has become increasingly difficult to function in society using only the French language. Aunger (1993) and Bouchard (2007), underline that English language dominance in Alberta made the majority of French-speaking minorities use English at work. This results in an English vocabulary usage. Even though the French vocabulary is still known, it is rarely used and may be even lost over time as it is seldom practiced. As a result, it has become difficult for French speakers to discuss current issues in French as the vocabulary in a work environment is in English and communication is also done in English.

Thus, most francophones of Western Canada are bilingual, but the policy of bilingualism has a contradictory character. Balthazar (1996), Cardinal and Lapointe (1990), Gérin-Lajoie, Douglas and Roy (2002), Gilbert (1991), Legendre (1982), Thériault (1992) believe that it was the Quiet Revolution that provided the adaptation of bilingualism and gave it an English character aggravating relations between English and French majority and minority groups. On the other hand, Bastarache (1992), Dion (1992) and Lachapelle (1992) argue that the increase of bilingualism in Canada was partially due to the “baby boom” of the 1960s, migration between provinces and the improvement of the status of the French language. Although authors have different opinions as to the precise factors that contributed to the growth of bilingualism in Canada, the improved social status of French resulted in many Canadians learning French as a second language in immersion schools. At the same time, Bastarache (1992) indicated that most of francophones, especially outside of Québec, are bilingual due to economic necessity and cultural context, whereas bilingual anglophones regard bilingualism as an essential condition for the national unity. In most cases, French speakers outside of Québec learn English in order to obtain a better education in the future
and to find better jobs. According to Dion (1992) and Legendre (1982), the influence of English is associated with new technologies. For example, it has become the language of information, bureaucracy and communications even in Québec. English is used in the economic sphere and many of the clients and partners are Americans or of English origin. Francophones learn English not just for pleasure, self-education or hobby, but as a necessity.

Couture (2001), notes that bilingualism that is aimed at giving equal linguistic rights to francophones is gradually leading to the process of anglicization, as the number of bilingual francophones is four times more than the number of bilingual anglophones. In other words, French speakers tend to learn English more than English speakers learn French – 84 percent of francophones outside of Québec are bilingual and use English at home, at work, social services, education, whereas only 62 percent of anglophones of Québec are bilingual (Couture 2001). These figures support the notion that francophones are becoming more bilingual and assimilate.

On the other hand, Dion (1992) notes that the progress of bilingualism is higher among anglophones of Québec; young anglophones are more bilingual compared to francophones whose bilingualism is stagnating. Dion (1992) points out that francophones try to preserve their language and therefore avoid bilingualism. According to Dion (1992), bilingual anglophones have more opportunities to use French at work. Moreover, future generations of anglophones of Québec will use French more often. Dion (1992), however, does not mention the economic necessity as a factor for anglophones of Québec to learn French. The author notes that bilingualism depends on an individual’s level of education and social position. The more educated people are, the more they tend to be bilingual. Thus, bilingualism for anglophones in Canada, and even in Québec, becomes a sign of education
and even luxury, whereas the knowledge of English by francophones is economically and socially necessary for communication and assurance of a better future.

Anglophones of other provinces have fewer opportunities to use French at work, as English is the official language. Therefore, bilingualism in Canada is a peculiar phenomenon. In Québec, French is more often a sign of education among anglophones. In Western provinces, bilingualism is very often the result of economic necessity among francophones.

Bastarache (1992), Dion (1992), Lachapelle (1992), Legendre (1982), Thériault (1992) conclude that Québec remains the main province with French as an official language, whereas English dominates in all other provinces. However, while Québec is considered to be a ‘home’ or a cradle for the Canadiens Français, the language issues of French speakers and their minority status outside of Québec has not lost its urgency. Education remains the main place where language, culture and tradition can be transmitted and identity constructed and promoted.

2.4 Minority French-language Education in an Albertan Context

The struggle for French-language education dates to the enactment of the British North America Act in 1867. Though provisions were made to guarantee religious education across the country, minority language rights were not guaranteed. In the decades following the creation of the Canadian Confederation in 1867, the provinces adopted legislation forcing all separate and public schools to use English language as the language of instruction. This was met with resistance as French continued to be used in schools and the legislative assembly of the province of Alberta reiterated its commitment to ensure English-only instruction. In 1915, the Alberta Legislature unanimously passed the notion that any form of
the school system of Alberta had to favour the English language as the only language of instruction (Edmonton’s Francophone Heritage, 2010).

There were a few exceptions including private institutions such as the Collège Saint-Jean in Edmonton, but the role of the provincially funded and mandated education system in Alberta was to assimilate the population and to ensure the hegemony of the English language in the education system. It took over a half-century before the province of Alberta would revise its stance on French education and allow a greater use of French as a language of instruction. In 1968, the *Alberta School Act* was amended and schools could offer French-language instruction for up to 50 percent of the school day. In 1976, the Alberta School Act was revised to allow the use of French for up to 80 percent of the school day and the Alberta Government believed that any student should be eligible for admission to the French language programs (Edmonton’s Francophone Heritage, 2010). However, there were no dedicated French schools. In the Peace River region, there were a number of dual-track schools that offered both a French-language program and an English-language program and these included schools in Falher École Routhier School and Donnelly École Georges P. Vanier School. In dual-track schools, there was a French-language stream and an English-language stream (Bouchard, 2007). In Peace River there were no dual-track schools, but there were immersion schools. The education landscape changed in 1984 with the opening of l’École Maurice-Lavallé under the jurisdiction of the Edmonton Separate School Board. The first French school École Heritage in Falher opened in 1988 that conformed to Article 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In 1994, the creation of a French-language school board started to manage French school systems in Northwestern Alberta (Edmonton’s Francophone Heritage, 2009).
2.5 Means of Language and Culture Promotion

The promotion of French language and culture relies heavily on the school system as the school is the place where students can be socialized in the French language and culture. Due to the process of assimilation, exogamous marriages and the increasing inability of French parents to speak French at home, FFL schools and teachers in many cases have become the only tool of French language promotion. According to Landry, Deveau and Allard (2006), an exogamous marriage is a potential ‘hiding place’ from a FFL school that leads to assimilation. In other words, it might be possible that children from exogamous families speak English or another language at home or attend immersion schools. Besides, Gérin-Lajoie (2006) points out that language heterogeneity in the schools can be explained by the number of students who come from the exogamic families where one of the parents is francophone and the other is anglophone. In this kind of family, members often choose to speak English at home (Gérin-Lajoie 2006). According to Aunger (1993), the language spoken in the home is the mother tongue of the next generation. Although Aunger’s research is limited to the town of St. Paul, AB, it highlights that the family cannot always guarantee French language maintenance. The weakness of this study is that it was not conducted to study the role of French schools in Alberta, but rather various factors that contributed to reducing the francophone community to a minority within the town of St. Paul. Aunger (1993) does state that the school has a greater responsibility for the transmission of the French language but he does not focus on the role of the school. His emphasis is on the role of the family. My research puts the school front and centre, and my findings highlight that the role of a FFL school, in a minority context cannot be underestimated. According to my data, a FFL school in the Peace River region is the place where French culture and language
can be continued and transmitted to children. Teachers and parents pointed out that a FFL school is the place to preserve not only the French language, but culture and values. In FFL schools, students have more opportunities to learn and understand their heritage and obtain a sense of belonging to the francophonie of Canada and Alberta in particular because they are exposed to more francophone activities. Thus, students can better understand their history, and all the events that brought francophones to the stage they are now at.

Being in a FFL school one can participate in plenty of French activities. I found that in a FFL school students can better preserve their language. According to Prokop (1989), schools in a Canadian context were either a tool of assimilation or of identity promotion. Prokop (1989) describes schools in Alberta as the main strategy of the governors of the twentieth century to achieve assimilation not only of the francophones, but also of other immigrants. Education at the elementary level and English immersion programs were flourishing at the beginning of the twentieth century in order to make immigrants abandon their heritage in favour of the language and values of their new homeland (Prokop 1989). All provinces adopted such policies and the main target was child education, as children were considered more quick to adopt the rules, values and language. Another direction was to have English not only as a subject, but also as a means of instruction. Thus, the preference was given to monolingual teachers as they were considered one of the best tools of assimilation (Prokop 1989). English was used without translation.

In Canada, in the early twentieth century, the government’s aim was to assimilate all groups and make the population learn English and the institution of Canadian life (Prokop 1989). The annual reports of that period referred to the positive changes and the desire of younger generations to learn English and become Canadians (Prokop 1989). The role of
small elementary schools of that time could not be underestimated. They played a significant role in the education of immigrants and their children and contributed to the assimilation of various community groups, including francophones.

The previous discussion shows that Prokop's (1989) study was focused on Albertan rural elementary schools but it also provides insight on provincial legislation across Canada. Their aim was to use education as a means of assimilation in the early decades of the twentieth century. Nowadays, immersion schools and FFL schools serve to ensure French language survival. Gérin-Lajoie (2001), Gérin-Lajoie, Douglas and Roy (2002) are also of the opinion that the role of the school is essential in the guidance, production and reproduction of French language and culture. They point out that language plays the most important role in the process of identity construction. Aunger (1993) and Lachapelle (1992) believe that traditionally only the family is a haven for the French language, my research was conducted to better understand the role of FFL schools as agents of language transmission and identity formation. My findings that will be discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis suggest that the school does play an important role in promoting the French language and culture that was understated in Aunger's (1993) study. I agree with Dubé (2002b) who thinks that a French school takes on the parents' responsibilities of language and cultural transmission and thus presents the ideal place for the continuity of education and the promotion of culture.

Bouchard (1994) examined the challenges of establishing the first homogenous French-language school in the Peace River region, and the challenges facing the French-speaking community in maintaining French language and culture. He notes that the French language was not equal in status to the English language in Alberta, even in towns where the
majority was French-speaking. This is seen in towns such as Falher in Northern Alberta where virtually all the signs are in English and where the English language predominates in the public sphere even though French-speakers still constitute a majority (Bouchard, 1994). The same is true about the town of St. Paul in North-Eastern Alberta, which was studied by Aunger in 1989. Both studies highlight the difficulty of maintaining French language in a French enclave in northern Alberta. Their research echoes the work of Peter Li and Wilfrid Denis (1983) who analyzed the language shift from French to English used at homes in French Catholic settlements of Saskatchewan. According to Li and Denis (1983), ethnic exogamy was a critical factor in the shift from French to English as a home language. Thus, 79 percent of French-speakers had shifted to the use of English at home compared to only 21 percent of respondents who were either in endogamous marriages where both partners spoke French or single-parent homes where a single-parent was a French-speaker (Li and Denis 1983). Forty-eight percent of French-speakers without a French education indicated a shift to English language at home; 28 percent had some education in French language and they were able to maintain French language at home (Li and Denis 1983). With regards to social class, the only group that seemed to resist the shift to the English language at home consisted of farmers (Li and Denis 1983). Li and Denis (1983) as well as Aunger (1993) note that once the shift had been made to English at home, English would then be used in other situations, notably with friends and in public spheres. Though Li and Denis (1983) conducted their research twenty years ago, it indicates that it may be necessary to maintain and promote the minority language and culture in order to keep it from deteriorating or complete disappearance. It is possible to assume that those francophones who have shifted to English at home are more likely to use it outside the home and enlarge the group of those who have
assimilated. Over time this can lead to minority language atrophy, where French can be completely forgotten in favour of the dominant language. In order to maintain the language it is necessary to assure that it will be regularly used in a large number of different contexts.

Aunger (1993), Bouchard (1994, 2007), Li and Denis’s work (1983) testify to the gradual erosion of the French language in French enclaves of Western Canada. Jean Laponce (1984) believes that demographic and linguistic forces lead to the concentration of the language in the exclusive area. In other words, the best way for the language to assure its survival is for it to approach as much as possible the state of monolinguism, to ensure, if possible, its dominance in all social spheres or at least in the most important and to avoid identity conflict.

Central to the mission of the minority French-language school system that was established in Western Canada and elsewhere, was the use of French schools to promote the language and culture of French-speakers. French-as-a-first language schools outside Québec have to address a French population that is increasingly English speaking, where exogamy and assimilation have eroded the status of the French language. As Peter Li and Wilfrid Denis (1983) indicate, French-speaking enclaves on their own could not have safeguarded the French language. In other words, French schools have to provide a French-language environment where students are encouraged to speak French in order to prevent the decline of French culture. Kenneth Deveau et al. (2004), also insist on the significant role of the homogeneous French school as a tool against assimilation. However, Bernard (1992) questions how French-speaking schools can be an agent of cultural and social transmission and education. He states that the present day ethnolinguistic reality is under the threat of extinction, because of high numbers of exogamous marriages and English domination in all
spheres of society. Bernard (1992) underlines that a French school as an agent of cultural and language transmission is unsuccessful, therefore, its presence and persistence is a paradox. Moreover, Bernard (1997) notes that when social and cultural conditions are very discouraging, French minority schools are at the very high risk of deprivation. Furthermore, the author notes that the depth of aculturalization, a prolonged decrease of French-Canadian communities, and the chances of a French school being a tool of cultural transmission have diminished because of the vast linguistic assimilation.

Thus, a minority school is not unanimously seen as an ideal place for transmission and retention of language and culture. Nevertheless, my literature review indicates that despite of the hostile environment towards the French, a minority French-speaking school remains the main place where children can be taught French culture, language and traditions and form their French-speaking identity. It is in the school that children can freely communicate in French or their mother “tongue”. Education in French schools encourages students to use French language, makes them appreciate the culture and Franco-Canadian history in order to feel strong ethnic belonging. Chapter four will examine the ways in which French schools and education in the Peace River region try to promote the language and prevent the shift from French into English.

2.6 Identity Politics

Regarding the role of a French-speaking school it should also be noted that identities of teachers who work in French language schools located in minority areas should not be disregarded. Their roles as agents of linguistic and cultural reproduction are of great importance. They obtained political character in the process of promoting and constructing language and culture in the minority context (Gérin-Lajoie 2006). Sylvie Roy (2006)
examined the concerns of French-speaking teachers in Ontario about their daily work and the challenges they come across. Ontarian French-speaking teachers see their roles differently depending on their personal paths and backgrounds. They are not just teachers of French language; they are indigenous French-speaking teachers transmitting French language, culture, identity to students in the minority milieu. According to Roy (2006), French teachers from Ontario understand the importance of providing an authentic context for teaching the language and identity. They have to deal with students who have various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For example, many students that come to a French school may speak little or no French. French-speaking teachers have an opportunity to model the language, but must better understand their students when lessoning occurs in a context where French is the minority language (Sylvie Roy 2006). According to Diane Gérin-Lajoie (2006), due to their daily contact with students, teachers in French schools face the challenge of being responsible for reproducing French language and culture in a social context that is strongly influenced by the anglophone majority. Roy's (2006) and Gérin-Lajoie's (2006) research are both limited to Ontarian urban high schools, whereas my research is conducted in a small town, in a rural area of Northern Alberta. However, their studies provide an important perspective on daily work of French teachers in a minority context.

Gérin-Lajoie (2006) as well as Roy (2006) underlines that teaching language and culture in a minority context is quite different from that in a majority one. Teachers in a minority context are charged with the responsibility of transmitting language and shaping cultural identity of students. Gérin-Lajoie's (2006) research is relevant to this study as the goal of her research mirrors the interests of the present researcher. The goal of Gérin-Lajoie's (2006) study was to examine how, starting with their own identity paths, teachers deal with
their daily work, in particular, in terms of their role as agents of linguistic and cultural reproduction (Gérin-Lajoie 2006). She notes that the life histories of teachers working in a French-speaking minority context influence the way they understand their job. It is important to encourage pupils to fully live their lives and express their ideas by understanding their French background, promoting their identity and developing the sense of belonging to the community. According my interviewees, the role of the teachers is to be a model for students, have francophone identity and transmit it to students by everyday communication with pride and precision. Most parents of my research said that teachers have to create culture and speak the language with a good accent. This will help students to develop a feeling of belonging and to identify with the French family. Another FFL school staff member and a parent remarked that a teacher transmits the desire to live French culture; if a teacher feels at ease being French it will be transmitted automatically to students.

The role of a teacher is to be a good model. Therefore, teachers are often given the responsibility to teach French language, and they also become agents of identity formation. They must teach the language and ensure the integration of students into the French-language community and help them acquire a French-speaking identity which is “their” identity.

Marianne Cormier et al. (2004), point out that there is certain linguistic insecurity among students from the minority context. When students cannot use their native language on the everyday basis, this can lead to the deterioration of their self-esteem. The task of French-speaking schools and teachers is to encourage students to use French language and be proud of their culture, ancestors and heritage. The website of the Conseil Scolaire Francophone du Nord-Ouest #1 highlights the cultural and social role of the French schools, which is not to be confused with an immersion school whose role is to teach French as a
second-language and where it is presumed that the French culture will not be the culture of the students. Having underlined culture, community and identity in its mission, the French school board reiterates these themes in its values. The first priority is to educate, but this is followed by the need to promote the language and culture of a community. This main theme is echoed across the French-speaking schools of Canada.

It is also important to note that the task of the Federal government and other institutions is, according to Article 23, to make it feasible for francophones to maintain and promote instruction of their own language. The aim is also to remedy the previous injustice and assure minorities that they have equal rights and access to a high-quality education of their language in favour of their community. Deveau et al. (2004), doing their research in Nova Scotia, provide a remarkable example of Starets (1986) who states that francophone parents of Nova Scotia, living in a French speaking community, are more inclined to subscribe their children to the school of minorities, but at the same time prefer them to have lessons of mathematics and science in English for fear that children risk being disadvantaged in their future social mobility. Some parents still prefer their children to study in bilingual schools. Parents are afraid of the fact that French still remains a minority language in Canada; thus sooner or later their children will have to learn English in order to get an education, a better job and become a part of a bigger anglophone society. My research conducted in Alberta does not support the findings of Starets (1986) as presented by Deveau et al. (2004:96). In the study cited, Starets (1986) stated that the parents surveyed believed that the teaching of the sciences in French could be disadvantageous for their children as they pursue higher education and careers. In my research, everybody including immersion school teachers, FFL teachers and parents strongly or moderately disagree that French language instruction is a disadvantage to their
children. This difference could be explained by the fact that Starets' (1986) research was done more than twenty years ago in Nova Scotia, whereas I am focusing on Western francophone communities and their educational status in the 2000s.

In this regard, the task of French-speaking schools, other public institutions and government is to assure parents that sociolinguistic reality in higher education has changed. For example, French faculties and Universities in the late 1960s–1970s began to provide bilingual education and francophone programmes. In Alberta Le Faculté de Saint-Jean was an independent college before it was integrated into the University of Alberta as a French-language Faculty providing a university level education in French. The University served to train future French-language teachers both for immersion schools and eventually French-language schools. Nowadays, it offers a number of modern education programmes. Thus, French has started to gain a stronger position in Canada and there certainly have been positive changes in terms of French-language minority education rights.

The number of French-language schools is growing. There are thirty-four French-language public and Catholic schools providing a French-as-a-first language education to Alberta’s French-speaking minority (Government of Alberta, 2009). These schools are striving to promote a French-language and Francophone identity in order to ensure the survival of the French-speaking community. That is why French schools play a significant role in promoting and supporting French-speaking minority groups. As an agent of socialization, a school transmits the values of a society and community in which it is located. Schools in French-speaking communities represent a privileged place of cultural reproduction. When children begin school, the process of socialization in a French community has already started in their families, as most children in French-speaking schools
come from French-speaking or partially French-speaking families. Due to close relations with children, teachers play a crucial role in the school life and educational practices that take place in classrooms, through interactions.

2.7 Applied research

The applied component of my research focused on the school’s extracurricular drama activities that help in promoting French language, tradition and customs of the community and help to retain and define French-speaking identities. Handler (1988) and Théberge (2006) believe that language as well as traditions can be transmitted at school through drama classes and activities which involve music, folklore, dances, plays and other creative activities.

Richard Handler (1988), points out that the idea of the national movement in order to defend, protect and preserve French-Canadian culture and identity emerged in the nineteenth century with the appearance of “indigenous French-Canadian intelligentsia”. This supports the idea that French-speaking society of the nineteenth century was becoming more and more aware of the fact that their culture and national identity could become subject to extinction. Examining Québécois society and the way they created their traditions, Handler (1988) examined the folklore - music, dances, stories, celebration of holidays – as one of the forms of tradition and culture. He argues that in the nineteenth century there were people who started to articulate a sense of French-Canadian national identity and objectify French-Canadian culture. This idea is supported by Carpenter (1979) pointing out that “folklorists have helped to “maintain” French-Canadian culture “by writing and objectifying folklore” (Handler 1988:75). In other words, folklorists have prevented the disappearance of traits and features essential to French culture on a national level. Elements of culture once secured or
“fixed” in the past could protect the distinctiveness of the society. If any future changes occur, they will rest upon and even depend on those “fixed” essential cultural traits. This example shows that folklore traditions, music or dance are models of national self-expressiveness and identity formation.

Carpenter (1979) also points out that educated and influential native French-speaking elite of the nineteenth century became increasingly concerned with preservation of traditions, before they would ‘die out’ (Handler 1988). Moreover, the idea of French-Canadian history and culture popularization became widespread. Interestingly enough a francophone elite was becoming more conscious that their culture faced a threat of assimilation from a high influence of English language and culture even before the Confederation was created.

In order to preserve French culture, language and traditions, it is possible to use a variety of tools – education seems to be important, and cultural traits are best preserved in the form of music, songs, dancing, paintings, architecture, stories and myths. Theatre can combine all these forms and hence seems one of the most significant forms of transmitting culture and language, shaping identity, and promoting the sense of belonging to a community. Bertrand (2004), who studied the Franco-Ontarian community, also emphasizes that theatre plays a significant role in forming cultural identity. One of its roles is to reach the francophones that live outside of big urban centres and bring them close to the French culture. The birth of Franco-Ontarian theatre happened in the 1960s and flourished up to the 1990s. The province’s theatre groups include le Théâtre du P’tits Bonheur which appeared in 1967 in Toronto, le Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario (TNO) (1971) in Sudbury, Théâtre Action (1972), le Théâtre de la Vieille 17 in Rockland which appeared in 1979 and le Théâtre Cabano. In 1991 le Théâtre la Catapulte appeared, followed by le Théâtre La Tangente and
Corpus in the late 1990s. These theatres touch upon such themes as francophones “identity” and life and produce plays for children and adolescents. Franco-Ontarian theatre tours are found in Québec, Acadia, the Eastern parts of Canada, in Europe and Latin America. The main contribution of these tours is the expansion of the French language and its flourish. Bertrand (2004), underlines that it is necessary to establish and expand theatre boundaries in the regions that do not have the essential infrastructure to welcome today’s theatre. Furthermore, according to Bertrand (2004), it is necessary to create and establish post-secondary theatre programmes. It is significant that theatre activities in Ontario invite and initiate a number of the local community theatre companies. There are also theatre groups in schools that have gained popularity. French-language Western Canadian theatre groups have a long history as well. Le Cercle Molière in Manitoba was founded in 1925 as an amateur company that grew into a professional theatre producing both traditional French plays and those of contemporary Canadian authors (Le Cercle Molière 2010).

The effect of drama classes or similar activities would help to promote language and culture as well as maintain and transmit French-speaking identity. Théberge (2006) and Bertrand (2004) provide a more subtle analysis of the role of theatre education than Carpenter (1979) and Handler (1988). Whereas Carpenter (1979) and Handler (1988) focused more on folklore, Bertrand (2004) talks about establishing theatrical infrastructure and using it as a means of promoting French language and culture; Théberge (2006) notes that art courses in rural secondary schools can motivate children to learn their native language. It encourages the sense of belonging to a certain culture and makes students more confident in French language skills.
Whereas Théberge (2006) studied teenagers of 14-17 years of age in French-speaking rural communities of Ontario, similar research can be done in elementary French-speaking schools of other provinces. According to the province’s education ministry, Alberta Education, drama and visual arts are optional programs for grades seven to twelve (Alberta Education 2010). The present research distinguishes itself from other published research in that it studied the potential role of theatre for promoting identity in a rural elementary school. I suggested to my community partners that staging a French play with students of an elementary FFL school in order to see how language and cultural identity could be encouraged and transmitted through extracurricular activities and that it could help promote French language and culture, and develop a sense of self-esteem and belonging. I believe that feelings of competence, a sense of belonging and independence are essential characteristics of a minority context. Acting and playing different roles makes children become more open, flexible, conscious and patient. It makes children less shy and helps them collaborate with different people.

2.8 Theoretical framework

In this Master’s research on the French-speaking community of Western Canada I was aiming to define and understand such notions as community and culture. I looked at how, within French elementary school, teachers as social agents of French language and culture maintained identity and a sense of belonging to the French community and heritage among French-speaking students. I also looked at how a school, as a social institution, works on a daily basis to create a sense of common origin and culture through interactions and communication of the individuals that share common background, beliefs and ancestry.
The major theoretical ground for my research was symbolic interactionism. This theory combines elements of social interaction and cultural production theory. Besides, symbolic interactionism is at the root of ethnicity theory. Thus, according to Herberg (1989) members of an ethnic group can be viewed as a solid unit, acting together, and exercising sanctions concerning attitudes and acts. Yinger (1994) defines an 'ethnic group’ as a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have common origin and to share important segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients. According to Jewett (2006), cultural production theory foreshadows the ways in which sociocultural identities are constructed across time and space. The theory of cultural production falls into a larger theoretical framework in anthropology and social studies called symbolic-interactionism. The concept of symbolic interactionism has its roots in the theory of George Hebert Mead.

Mead (1934; 1964), points out that the behaviour of one singular person can be analyzed and understood only in terms of a bigger social group of which this person is inseparable and vice versa. The French community of Peace River could be analysed through the behaviour of individuals (students, teachers, parents) and this would give a broader picture of francophone social groups and vice versa. Mead (1934; 1964) states that people in a group interact through signals or gestures and it is through that process that objects acquire meaning. Furthermore, Mead (1964) interprets language in terms of signs and symbols which leads to an interesting conclusion in the case of this research - dual symbolic representation of French language.
On the one hand, French language can be characterized in terms of signs and symbols, used by a certain group. On the other hand, a French-speaking minority group’s practice and promotion of their language in Peace River, is symbolic. Nowadays, they speak French in public without embarrassment. Thus, speaking French has become a symbolic recognition of one’s identity and belonging to a certain heritage. While analyzing symbols or words, Mead (1964) is asking if the intent in the mind of one individual in using a symbol calls out the same intent in the mind of the other. In this Mead (1964) is close to the symbolic interactionism concept of culture study and analysis in which people’s actions are dictated by the meanings of things and develop in social intercourse. In his early work and discussion of language as a significant symbol, Mead (1934) talks about the adjustment through communication with the central factor in this adjustment being the “meaning”. According to Mead (1934), things or objects acquire meaning during social processes and throughout “mutual adjustment” (Mead 1934). Interpretation of the actions of different people involved in this process is done through communication. In other words, people act towards things based on the meaning those things acquire for them; these meanings are gained from social interaction and change through interpretation. This goes hand-in-hand with Lynch and McConatha’s (2006) discussion about the theory of social interactionism which underlines that our world is socially constructed and ‘reality’ is nothing but a set of symbols that have certain meanings and people act upon them according to the assigned meanings to these symbols.

This discussion is supported by Blumer’s (1980) argument on social behaviorism and symbolic interactionism. Herbert Blumer (1980) formulates four main principles that according to him were mentioned, but not stated by George Herbert Mead. First, that reality
exists on its own "against human beings" and can resist humans’ reactions to it. The second principle is that this reality is known through personal perception of human beings. The third principle states that depending on humans’ perceptions, which can change, the reality can be changed and modified. This is true about French communities. The attitudes towards francophones in Canada have changed from severe assimilation, to support and promotion, due to changes in people’s perceptions of French culture and also francophone persistence. The fourth principle is that reality can resist and verify humans’ perceptions of it. Later on Blumer (1986) pointed out that individuals in their social intercourse do not simply react to each other’s behaviour; they interpret them, they attach certain meanings to these actions when they react to them, they assign certain symbols. For example, earlier there prevailed a negative attitude towards French culture; assimilation and prohibitions of French language and culture were common. Nowadays the attitude is quite the opposite and French language and culture are promoted by the state. French has become an official State language. Thus, speaking or interacting in French becomes symbolic. Mead (1934; 1964) and Blumer (1986) claim that people are able to make indications to themselves about things or objects around them and react to such things or objects according to the meanings they have assigned to them or how they have interpreted or constructed them. Above all, a social action is a summary of individual interpretations of actions.

David R. Mains (1984) suggests that people construct their reality that they establish social structures and culture, and they maintain social organizations. In other words, culture as a part of society is symbolically constructed by humans and should be studied through meanings that people assign to things in the environment. Thus, culture should be studied through the theory of symbolic interactionism, because cultural activity is but a social
activity where, according to Mains (1984), “cultural objects are defined and rendered meaningful” (Mains 1984:209). For example Carnaval d’hiver in St. Isidore, has an important meaning to francophones. Through this, they can celebrate their traditions and way of life. These celebrations give meaning to such things as French dance, sleigh rides and traditional food.

Tavory and Timmermans (2009) state that “a theory can provide the ways in which social reality is constructed within action” (Tavory and Timmermans 2009:255). In other words, theory helps the researcher in analyzing the reality through the actions of the people under study. Symbolic interactionism is interested in how actions are constructed to build reality. Robert Prus (2007) in his article about language as a central means of social life, compares people who acquire knowledge of language speaking to ‘ethnologs’ or to a ‘society in miniature’ because language is not only a system of symbols and sounds but an effective tool of learning, communicating and knowing. According to Prus (2007), social science often ignores the fact that “people have to interact with people to learn notions of ‘whatness’ (considerations of ‘what is’ and ‘what is not’), ways in which to think about (and remember) things, and ways of acting toward (and adjusting to) things” (Prus 2007:673). In other words, in doing ethnographic research about languages, the theory of symbolic interaction seems very appropriate.

Prus (2007) states that “it is in acquiring language that people develop the basis for making comparisons and inferences, and it is only when humans can make comparisons and draw inferences that they have the foundations for acting with purpose, deliberating, making choices, and otherwise assuming a fuller range of agency-related capabilities” (Prus 2007:676). Ethnographic research and symbolic interactionism make it possible to study
people as “living, sensate, acting and interacting, linguistically enabled, community based creatures who do not simply have a history but who also live the history that has been forwarded to them by their predecessors through the enabling features of language and are actively involved in formulating their own notions of the past, present, and future” (Prus 2007:690-691). Thus, in order to implement my research the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism seems to be reasonable. This is the theory that will be informing my selection of methods, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.9 Summary

The analysis of this literature review provides a relatively pessimistic view on francophone communities’ existence and survival of French language and culture outside of Québec. Balthazar (1996) points out “la survivance” of the francophones in Canada. Aunger (1993), Bouchard (1994; 2007), Cardinal and Lapointe (1990), Cardinal and Dobbon (2003), Castonguay (2001), Gilbert (1991), Lachapelle (1992), Thériault (1992) believe that the French-speaking population is being vastly assimilated and anglicized. They argue that French culture and language have acquired a minority status in Canada and have no tendency to increase.

Nevertheless, the question of French-speaking communities in Canada is interesting to study. The reality is not always as pessimistic as it seems. My study examines French language in the Peace River region. Statistics Canada shows that the number of people indicating French language as their mother language in this region has grown from 300 people in 2001 to 400 in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006). It demonstrates positive changes, the growth of the French population and the popularity of the French language. Thus, sociolinguistic reality in Peace River has optimistic tendencies. This research and the
following discussion are going to present the results about francophone education and the role of the schools in promoting French language and culture to the younger francophone generation. French as first language schools of the present time play an important role educating students in their native tongue and exposing them to many francophone activities which do help them continue to speak French.

In the following chapter I will be discussing my research methodology. The main research method was participant observation which gives the opportunity to observe the social acts of the group under study as part of a larger social process which is ongoing and dynamic, as was pointed out by Mead (1964). Interviews, participatory action research, and questionnaires have provided a sound methodology to gain a deeper insight and understanding of how French culture and language are preserved and transmitted.
Chapter Three
Methodology

3.1 Applying Ethnography to the French-speakers of Northern Alberta

This Master’s thesis, which involved conducting an ethnographic study of a French school in Northern Alberta, was proposed in order to better understand the articulation of language, culture and education in the French as first language minority education system. Classic ethnography is the study of foreign cultures to provide an ethnographic monograph of culture and the ways of life of other people. The primary method was participant observation whereby the ethnographer spent a lengthy period of time in another culture, participating in the daily lives of the observed, recording notes in the field that would then be analyzed and published as an ethnographic monograph.

According to Clifford Geertz (1973) ethnographic field notes seek to observe, to record and analyze a culture in order to provide a “thick description” of signs and symbols and a deeper understanding of culture. Ethnographic field notes in this research were supplemented by other methods in order to provide a better understanding of what was observed. Examples of classic ethnography include Bronislaw Malinowski’s Argonauts of the Western Pacific (1932) that describes the life of the Trobriand Islanders.

This research conforms to the field of anthropology and education. Linda Valli and Marilyn Chambliss (2007) demonstrate how ethnographic methods can be used in the classroom. Building upon the work of Frederick Eriksen (1986), they “engaged in interpretive fieldwork research to understand teachers’ and students’ sense making within those activities and its relation to the broader social and political context” (Valli and Chambliss 2007:59). According to Valli and Chambliss (2007), analysis begins with “the
basic assumption that face-to-face meetings of teachers and students create distinct classroom cultures in interaction with larger, and often quite powerful, institutional and political contexts” (Valli and Chambliss 2007:57). The authors compared the classroom cultures of two reading lessons taught by the same teacher. My research studied ways in which the classroom culture of French schools promotes French language and culture to students.

3.2 Gaining access and the role of gatekeepers

The proposed ethnographic setting for this study was the French-speaking community of Peace River; particularly the elementary French school l’École Des Quatre-Vents. Due to family circumstances I moved with my family to the town of Peace River in 2007 where we continue to reside. Thus, my entire fieldwork was spent in this community where a French-speaking group constitutes a minority. I continue to be an active participant of the community as a resident of Peace River. Before entering the site, permission was obtained from University of Northern British Columbia’s Research Ethics board as well as Conseil Scolaire du Nord-Ouest #1 in St. Isidore, Alberta. Once permission was granted, I contacted the principal of the school to get access to the school site and discuss the way the research was going to be done. Actual field work in the French school in l’École Des Quatre-Vents started in February 2008 and lasted till the end of the school year, June 2008. I spent five months in the school, usually two or three full instructional days per week in the classrooms of different grades.

I began participant observation in l’École Des Quatre Vents by studying the school culture and by interacting with administrators, teachers, students, parents and community members. To ensure the success of the research, the gatekeepers of the research were identified. These individuals were important in gaining access and then became some of the
main informants. In this study, gatekeepers included the school’s principal and teachers. They provided further contacts with community members through “snowball” sampling whereby initial participants provide contacts for future interviewees. I was observing the school site and actively participated in other activities and events and though being a cultural outsider, tried to gain an insider perspective as much as possible.

3.3 Research methods

The methods that were used for this research included participant observation, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and participatory action research. These methods were used to thoroughly study the articulation of culture and language in French schools. Appendices at the end of the thesis include interview questions as well as questionnaires and survey data that will be used in the discussion of results in Chapter Four of the present research.

3.3.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires have certain advantages: all respondents get the same questions with self-administrated questionnaires and have to choose from the alternatives available. Socially undesirable behaviour and traits are reported more securely and even willingly by respondents in self-administrated questionnaires, as respondents are not trying to impress the interviewer and anonymity gives people a sense of security when answering personal questions (Bernard 1988). The questionnaires used in this research had both close-ended and open-ended questions and were distributed in the French school l’École Des Quatre Vents to both teachers and parents as well as the larger community of the Peace River region. The questions that were asked in questionnaires addressed the status of the French language and culture in the Peace River region, the role of teachers and FFL schools in the transmission
and promotion of French language, culture and identity, the advantages or disadvantages of FFL schools in a minority context and whether extracurricular activities could be a means of sustaining and developing French identity and a sense of belonging to the francophone community. Appendices V, VI and VII on pages 132-136 present the raw data and findings. Questionnaires guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and were coded individually according to the group of people they were coming from to facilitate tracking and analysis. Thus, twenty-nine questionnaires were returned back including nine(9) from the all teachers of l’École Des Quatre Vents. Twelve(12) were from francophone parents and eight(8) questionnaires were from immersion school teachers or teacher assistants. There is a preponderance of female respondents as all the teacher of l’École Des Quatre Vents are women, and only one of the twelve of the francophone parents was a male. It is only in the responses of a larger community that I had three male respondents out of eight.

3.3.2 Participant Observation

The literature review (Ely et al. 1991; Emerson et al. 1995; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Holy 1984; Schensul and Schensul 1999; Spradley 1980b; Wolcott 1999) describes participant observation as one of the most important methods in a qualitative research. For example Ely et al. (1991:42), states that “the most essential means of gathering ethnographic data are looking and listening”. This method requires participation of the researcher in the daily routine of a population under study as well as writing comprehensive field notes that chronicle what was observed. Participant observation provides the researcher an opportunity to witness the events that usually are hidden from outsiders and that might be taken for granted by insiders. In doing participant observation, a researcher observes participants in specific social settings and takes part in the activities which shape their daily
lives. Any social situation that involves people and some form of activity is suitable for participant observation.

Participation means near total immersion in the ordinary daily routines of the observed. The researcher's goal is often to understand an unfamiliar community, which entails some level of resocialization. Participating in the daily lives of the observed, the researcher seeks to acquire the status of a 'member' in the community and thus acquires greater insight and understanding of the group under study, and the meanings given for their activities. Nevertheless, the researcher must be continually negotiating access to events and must be respectful of the wishes of the community in which he or she is conducting research. Even though the ethnographer, after some time, acquires the status of an 'insider', there is still a limitation that he or she will eventually leave the site, the people under study and their daily lives and activities. Hence, he or she will always remain an outsider. Ladislav Holy (1984) states that the process of observation and the presence of the researcher in the setting under study are usually quite extensive and thus become less disturbing and that people will not be able to “act” for long periods of time.

While conducting participant observation in l'École Des Quatre-Vents, I was immersed in an atmosphere of French culture in order to resocialize myself. Observations took place inside the school in the classrooms, during recreation time, arrival or departure from the school, during extracurricular activities, celebrations, on the playground, and during lunch. While writing the observations, I was trying to define behaviour and at the same time avoid assigning typical attributes, characteristics of French people.
3.3.3 Field notes

Writing field notes is the process of transforming people being observed, events and activities being held, and places being visited, into words and later into publications. Ethnographic field notes help the researcher to capture as much of the reality as possible. Paul Kutsche (1998) believes that it is important to ask questions and record the data through field notes, tape recordings, photography, etc. It is important to use the informants' language in order to report their voices and ideas.

According to Spradley (1980b), field notes could be of various types and the sooner the researcher records observations, the more vivid they would be. They help to record personal feelings about the place and participants and to identify mistakes, confusions, questions and problems that arise during the research. They help to overcome and analyze personal biases as reading and rereading the notes will provide more insight into what was observed. Finally field notes will merge into common categories for interpretation and understanding of cultural peculiarities. Emerson et al. (1995) point out that the styles of field notes vary depending on what the researcher prefers. The techniques may vary depending on the situation and the attitude of those being studied, as some people may feel insecure or uncomfortable with a researcher jotting. I was writing field notes during participant observation simultaneously or sometimes at the end of the day.

Writing field notes has ethical considerations. Spradley (1980b) points out that the researcher should act in a way as neither to damage those under study nor the scholarly community. The main rule for the beginner is to remain flexible, open and adjust to the situation. The feelings of the participants should be a priority. One more important issue is the way the researcher leaves the site and people under study. Kutsche (1998) underlines that
it will not be appropriate to just say “Good-bye” and leave. Therefore, I thanked the participants orally and sincerely as well as in the form of a ‘thank you’ card. Children were presented with a printed book of the fairytale they had been introduced to during the study.

3.3.4 Directed Participant Observation: Participatory Action Research

In this research, I experimented with a form of directed participant observation. An applied component was working with students of l’École Des Quatre Vents to stage a French-language play. Twenty-eight students from grades three to six were involved in the project with consent forms obtained prior to the project from parents. Pre-project questionnaires were filled out by all twenty-eight students to evaluate how students saw and valued their language and culture. The questionnaires were also designed to gauge their interest in organizing an extracurricular drama activity in their native language. After-project questionnaires were filled out by thirteen students who were involved in acting or backstage activities (decorations, costumes); these results allowed me to see how they viewed and valued their culture after staging the play (see Appendices III, IV on pages 131, 132). I wanted to see if participating in a play, which took weeks to organize and practice, could contribute to a positive image of language and culture. The goal was to study extracurricular activities; the influence it had on how students learn in the classroom, and determine whether the school could be an effective tool in promoting identity, culture and a sense of community belonging.

This active participant observation is a variation of a participatory action research in which the observed have the right to do their own research and formulate their own question. Participatory action research is usually associated with advocacy and results demand improvements in the conditions of the group within the society (Ervin 2000). The project in
this research required me to play an active role in organizing an event where I was an active participant and observer. The important thing about participatory action research is that this process can go beyond a research plan. Things may not always go as easily as anticipated by the researcher. The participants may unsure, or they may not complete the task. The researcher has to keep in mind that the subjects are pursuing their own goals, which are more important than the research per se. In this study the directed participant observation went as planned and was completed by the play production for the family picnic in the school in June 2008.

3.3.5 Interviews

Ethnographic interviewing employs questions designed to discover the cultural meanings people have learned. It allows the researcher to observe what is done in the community and gain a deeper understanding of local issues and what people think and have to say on a number of topics relevant to the proposed research. In-depth interviews were conducted to understand the importance of French-language education and the role of a French school in the community. Such researchers as Spradley (1980a), Spradley (1979) and Ely et al. (1991) distinguish between formal and informal interviewing. The difference between them is that the informal interview occurs when one asks someone a question during participant observation when time is available and the atmosphere is amicable. Formal interviews are usually more planned and occur at an appointed time and results from specific request to hold the interview, so there is a chance to talk without being disturbed and in greater depth.

For the formal interviews, I chose participants through ‘snowball sampling’: informants suggested other possible participants. Given that l’École Des Quatre-Vents is a
small environment (fewer than 100 students), snowball sampling was adequate for the purpose of this research. In the course of this fieldwork seventeen formal interviews (30-50 minutes each) were conducted among adults, starting with francophone teachers who later recommended other teachers and parents who could provide useful information for this research. All interviewees were women as all the teachers were women, and they recommended other women as potential informants. Thus, among interviewees were four teachers and five administrative and support staff members of l'École Des Quatre Vents in the age range from twenty-five to sixty years old. Five staff members of this school are originally from Québec, two are from New Brunswick and two are from the Peace River region. The occupation of four interviewed parents in the field of education as well. Three other parents were from various occupational fields. The age range of parents was from twenty-five to fifty years old. Five of the parents are francophones from Alberta; one is from a French community of Saskatchewan and one is from Québec. One more interviewee was a local young francophone teacher from immersion school. Informal interviews occurred during the observations with key informants and other community members who showed interest in the research and joined in conversation. The Informed consent form and Interview protocol are presented in Appendices I and II on pages 124 -128 of this work. No formal interviews were conducted with children.

3.3.6. Informed Consent

Before conducting any interview, a written consent was obtained from participants. The main task for me was to establish and develop sincere relationships, based on trust, respect and friendliness. As for the time and place of the interviews, this was discussed with all participants. In order that the participants would feel secure and comfortable, I followed
their suggestions as to place and especially time. Oral permission was obtained for the recording of interviews and participants were fully informed of their rights in the research. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research or interview at any time. Every possible effort was made to review interview results with participants before using them for analysis.

3.4 Data treatment

Analysis of the data obtained from participant observation, questionnaires and interviews was done by immersion analysis as described by Marshall and Rossman (2006: 158) as reading and rereading of the data so that I could become familiar with the data. The number of people who responded to the questionnaires was counted and was used to support the findings according to the groups: nine(9) from the teachers of l’École Des Quatre Vents, twelve(12) from francophone parents, and eight(8) questionnaires from immersion school teachers or teacher assistants. All seventeen interviews were transcribed and then read and reread in order to find common themes to answer research questions. Initially, all original quotes from the interviewed participants were presented in French with English translations that followed in the body of the text of Chapter Four. After a thorough discussion with committee members it was decided to present the original French quotes as to make the discussion of the results more concise.

The next chapter will highlight the understanding of French culture by francophones of the Peace River region. Referring to the theory of symbolic interactionism it will shed light on the meaning of French culture and how it is constructed. Chapter Four will also cover the discussion about the school’s and francophone teachers’ role in promoting a French language and identity. A separate section will be dedicated to the role and influence of
extracurricular activities in promoting French language and culture among young generations in a minority milieu. Such questions as obstacles in promoting French language and culture and the future of the Peace River francophone community will be presented and discussed.
Chapter Four

Results

This chapter will present information obtained from participant observation, interviews and questionnaires. Data from interviews will be supported by an anonymous identification of a participant (a teacher or a parent or just a member of a French community of Peace River and the region). Information from questionnaires will be presented in numbers (how many of participants agreed or disagreed on particular statements). I believe this way of presenting my data will help the reader better understand the findings and conclusions of this research.

4.1 Culture as a subject to teach

In the course of studying the French-speaking community of Peace River, I addressed the notion of culture as it is one of the main focus areas in anthropological studies. This study pursued the goal of understanding whether French schools could be an effective tool in promoting French culture and language in the minority context of Northern Alberta, Canada. Another aim was to learn from community members their understanding of culture as a concept and what francophone culture in particular consists of. Participants mentioned in their interviews that culture is a means of communication - the common, shared spoken language together with traditions, holiday celebrations, habits, beliefs, common values and identity that have been acquired and experienced by a certain group of individuals from birth and throughout life. Culture is a way of life that includes heritage, music, literature, theatre, sense of humour, fashion, eating habits and other things people do together and share. According to symbolic interactionism, culture is a part of the social activity (Blumer 1980; Mead 1934, 1964; Mains 1984; Prus 2007; Tavory and Timmermans 2009), where meanings
of cultural objects and practices appear from the language and through interaction. If one compares a definition of culture given by participants to the one given in the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism of Canada, it is possible to find things in common:

“… Culture is a way of being, thinking and feeling; individuals are united by a common tongue, and sharing the same customs, habits, and experiences (Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism 1967:xxx).”

The understanding and perception of culture by people in the community under study reflect the main notions of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1967). People are united by common and shared language, traditions and experiences. A way of life has also been stressed by individuals as a part of culture. For example, in this study participants were asked to characterize and define francophone culture in particular to see if it differs from other cultures, for example anglophone.

4.2 La baguette et le fromage

For the majority of the interviewed participants, francophone culture is the way of living one’s life and communicating in French. It is a group of people that has the same values, beliefs and expressions that are different from others. Though even within la francophonie there could be variations or cultural peculiarities of the region, francophone culture is everything that is done or given in French - music, dance, folklore, books, different history, ways of celebrating holidays like Christmas with la réveillon on the 24th of December, preparing particular meals, other francophone holidays like St. Jean Baptiste, St. Catherine Days and local festivals. It is also a sense coming together as a family, being together. But is it different from any other culture? If yes, then what is specific to
francophone culture? These were the questions asked in the interviews. Comparing francophone culture to other cultures of the region or province or country, participants’ opinions varied. The two main opinions were polarized. There are those who stand for differences between French culture and English culture and those who believe that they have much in common nowadays. There are those who think that francophone culture in Alberta is very different from the Québécois culture and those who believe they are similar.

In comparing French culture to anglophone culture some differences were identified in music and dancing styles; some people pointed out that francophone culture has a strong sense of belonging to a family; family events and holidays are very important. This was pointed out by a young local francophone teacher. Francophone people are very dedicated to their families and a very typical way to spend some time together is sitting around the table in the kitchen, whereas anglophones prefer to socialize in the living-room1. Another difference between anglophones and francophones is in music and dancing. Culturally active francophone said that anglophones prefer country or rock music, but francophones prefer traditional music with accordion or violins2.

The majority pointed out a different way of celebrating Christmas and of course celebrating francophone holidays or festivals that anglophones do not celebrate: St. Catherine, St. Jean Baptiste, Le Carnaval d’hiver, le Carnaval du Miel. At the same time,

1 « parce qu’il y avait tellement un sens de famille … ils [les anglophones] vivaient pas trop ça, puis des traditions, à Noël ou Mardi Gras ou à Pâques … c’est des traditions de fête où on se rencontre, qui est beaucoup basé sur la religion …vraiment des rencontres familiales; des gens qui vont s’asseoir autour de la table pour jaser, c’est des francophones souvent, si tu vas dans leurs maisons on va s’asseoir autour de la table dans la cuisine, c’est rare qu’on s’assoie dans le salon, c’est drôle… »

2 « … je pense, que oui, qu’il y a une petite différence. C’est comme je parle de danse, la danse c’est traditionnelle, mais … les anglophones ici …, il y avait de plus du country, ou plus de gens qui aiment du rock - plus de gens vont aux éclats, puis si tu prends la musique traditionnelle francophone c’est plus « La Bottine Souriante », puis l’accordéon, puis les violons… »

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there was an opinion that anglophone and francophone culture in the region are similar and there are not many differences. One of the FFL school's employees said that francophone culture is not different from anglophone culture because there are more anglophones in the region. Hence, the dominant culture may influence one's cultural traditions. It attests to the idea that assimilation does take place in the region and francophone culture is influenced by anglophone traditions and way of life.

The main opinion about francophone culture in Peace River and in Québec is the differences between the two. In many regions Québécois are not exposed to an anglophone majority, they constitute francophone majority and there are more opportunities to live in French – public schools have zero English\(^3\) said a young educator of l'École Des Quatre Vents; all the films, mass media and literature is in French. Therefore, they live in a different reality. A young teacher and an active member of the francophone community of Peace River said that Québécois never lived as a minority. The Québécois do not know the history of Alberta and disagreements within the Franco-Albertan community which is good as it makes Québécois's perception of francophone culture and reality of the Northern Alberta different\(^4\).

Differences appear to be even on the linguistic level, French is different in Québec compared to other provinces of Canada as there are different dialects, regionalisms and accents. It is not a different language as francophones in Canada are able to communicate and understand each other, but vocabulary may undergo some changes depending on the environment. Therefore, it is possible to believe that francophone culture in the Peace River

\(^3\) "C'est que tu n'as pas le droit de parler en anglais du tout à l'école, c'est vraiment zéro."

\(^4\) « Il y a une différente réalité, les Québécois ont jamais vécu comme minoritaire, donc eux ils arrivent ici tout nouveau sans connaître l'histoire de la place, des fois c'est positif qu'ils ne connaissent pas l'histoire, parce qu'en connaissant l'histoire on sait que les francophones c'est des chickans... »
region is a mixture of different francophone cultural backgrounds. It depends on when the first francophone pioneers came to the region, from where, and what culture, tradition and language peculiarities they brought either at the beginning of the century when Falher was established or in the 1950s when St. Isidore was founded. Some ancestors came from Québec but they brought a variety of traditions, as even within Québec francophonie can be different.

A young Québécois teacher and cultural activist said that the reality depends on whether you are coming from a rural community or a big city. Even in Québec this reality and cultural environment could be different. Nevertheless, some local francophones pointed out that there are some similarities between French culture in Québec and in Alberta. Thus, a young local francophone teacher noted that there are no huge differences in francophone culture here and in Québec. There are similar traditions; values and things are done the same way that sometimes surprises Québécois coming to the Peace River region, as they observe some old Québécois traditions. Thus, there might be only slight differences.

Hence, it is possible to presume that francophone culture of the Peace River region is a mix of several cultural heritages. It combines Québécois culture and customs from people who came to the region either in the 1910s or 1930s or 1950s. It merged with some local traditions, the history of the province’s development, and anglophone assimilation and influence in the area. Besides, the present francophone culture is influenced by exogamous marriages not only with anglophones, but with cultures such as German, Mexican, Ukrainian and others. Therefore, francophone culture undergoes changes but at the same time tries to

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5 « Moi, j’ai connu la réalité urbaine du Québec qui est différente de la réalité francophone rurale du Québec aussi. Je pense cela dépend vraiment de l’environnement.»

6 « ...groupes francophones dans l’Alberta, c’est pareil aussi donc c’est très, c’est très similaire, je ne vois pas tellement une très grande différence ... un Québécois qui arrive, qui va dans la région est toujours surpris par les fêtes qu’ont des francophones ici ... »

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keep roots, background and language that unite French-speakers. The francophone culture of Northern Alberta has been symbolically constructed by different francophone groups, education and other social organizations like l'ACFA (l'Association Canadienne-Française de l'Alberta), and through interactions that reflect symbolic intreactionism theory.

At the same time, if culture is a way of life with common traditions, habits and experiences, I as a researcher decided to find a deeper meaning of this notion. I asked participants if culture can be taught and transmitted, and if 'yes', where, by whom and how. Some interviewees pointed out that it is possible to teach and transmit culture through activities, games, and eating habits by families, schools and grand-parents. My interviewees also mentioned that it might be possible to teach culture, for example, to teach students Russian, Japanese or Italian culture and traditions. It can be even possible to expose them to some realities through field trips to Québec or France to experience French culture there. Nevertheless, many interviewees, especially teachers, underscored that it is very unlikely for people to know or understand the target culture one hundred percent. It might be possible to teach the theory behind culture, but not culture per se. A young teacher from an immersion school and an active participant in francophone events in the region said that it is possible to transmit the theory of culture. According to this interviewee, it is possible to teach different theoretical aspects of culture through projects, to explain cultural differences. In theory, one can read a book about any culture, study it, but it is not possible to teach and learn culture per se. Hand in hand with this remark goes an observation of an educator and one of the FFL school's administration members who said that it is possible to explain, show students

7 « Je pense que tu peux la transmettre, ... Je pense que tu peux enseigner la théorie de la culture, comme un projet sociale, qu'on fait pour que les élèves trouvent les différences. On sait que le peuple italien fait ça, mais est-ce qu'on le sait vraiment ? - Non. En théorie ou dans un livre qu'on a lu ça pourrait ressembler à quelque chose comme ça, mais non, tu ne peux pas l'enseigner. »
what it means to be a francophone, in other words, they might not understand culture one hundred percent. The central opinion of community members that comes out clearly from interviews is that it is not possible to teach a person "how to live culture". All participants indicated that culture should be lived and experienced. From birth a person acquires knowledge of the environment and experiences culture starting with one's family. Then it is acquired and learned from the broader community, friends, social events, and throughout one's schooling where typical activities, celebrations, holidays, music, and food could be offered to students to experience. One of the FFL school's administrators said that it is not possible to teach how to live culture. A young francophone teacher has a similar opinion - it is not possible to teach [culture], one can transmit it, live it and give the taste of living the culture and it could be transmitted by parents, grand-parents, friends, school, and cultural societies.

A parent and a teacher agreed that culture is experienced during life and it is not possible to teach it in a classroom. Culture should be lived at all times, culture is a life itself. Another FFL school's administrator supports the same opinion - is it necessary to live in order to teach. A mother and an active participant in francophone life of the region said that culture is transmitted from birth. Culture consists of traditions, activities like Carnaval, Noël and other French events at schools or at home.

8 « ... on peut à montrer trop aux élèves c'est quoi « être francophone ». Est-ce qu'ils vont apprécier ça à cent pour-cent ? - Je ne le crois pas. »

9 « On ne peut pas leur à enseigner vivre une culture ... Tu peux la transmettre, la vivre est donner le goût de la vivre, il faut que tu passes l'expérience ... ». 

10 « ...tu ne peux pas l'enseigner, tu peux la transmettre, la vives, donner le goût de la vivre. ... Tout le monde peut la transmettre - les parents, les grands-parents, comme les amis, comme la famille, comme l'école, comme les groups sociaux et culturelles... »
The importance of living culture has been stressed repeatedly through interviews and one of the places where culture could be lived and experienced apart from family is school. For minority groups, school is the best place where children can be exposed to their native culture to the full, especially if English dominates in all other spheres of life. One of the school’s administrators remarked in the interview that FFL schools remain the main means of sustaining and promoting French culture to future generations because French is not just a subject in the curriculum, but a language of communication during the whole day from eight in the morning till three thirty in the afternoon. It is at school that children live their culture and learn how to live in French through every day activities, learning through every minute of the day\textsuperscript{11}.

4.3 Status of the francophone culture (valued or not; increased or decreased)

According to Bailey (1985) and Couture (2001), there is no tendency that French language and culture will disappear drastically. Besides, the state and provincial legislation seem to be more supportive nowadays to francophone culture and language. This research examined the question of whether the status of francophone culture has increased or decreased or whether French culture and language is more valued than in the past in the Peace River region. The opinions gained through interviews differed. Some participants were very positive about changes and many respondents pointed out that francophone culture is valued in the region and its status is higher nowadays than it was before. According to one of the administrators of the school, the advancement in promoting French language and culture compared to the past twenty years has been huge. Owing to the fact that deputies and

\textsuperscript{11} « C’est pour ça l’école francophone la fait « vivre » parce que c’est de huit heure à trois heure et demi, c’est cent pour-cent en français, puis des fois c’est planifié, des fois ce n’est pas planifié, des fois c’est juste la récré … C’est tout ce qui se passe à toutes les minutes, a toutes les heures … »
ministers stood by French language, francophones of Alberta have more language rights. There was an enormous amount of work done by teachers, parents and grand-parents to achieve the present state of francophone culture and the right to speak and educate future generations in French. A young francophone activist, a teacher from an immersion school points out that francophone culture is more valued in the region than before. Francophone culture has become more open, at the school level at least, due to the multiculturalism of the region. Attitudes towards French-speakers have changed; some respondents said there is no shyness to speak French as there was before. A young active francophone teacher thinks that there are no negative attitudes towards French as there was when she was a teenager.

Teenagers of the 1990s were very often embarrassed to speak French in public, but not any more; francophones in the region today do not perceive that there is negative attitude towards them. A young mother in her thirties and one of the school’s staff members believes that there is no timidity to speak French. Even while shopping there are many people speaking French, and other people are more aware of a francophone presence in the region.

One of the reasons could be the multiculturalism of the region; society is more open to the francophonie at educational level. In the broader public, speaking French is considered

12 « ... si tu la compares à d’autres régions je dirais que – oui. La langue et la culture francophones sont très valorisées ici dans cette région ... Moi, je dirais qu’il y a eu beaucoup d’avances en ce moment et ces derniers 20 ans. C’est sur, avec tout, l’éducation, le droit d’éducation francophone en Alberta, les ministres, les députés qui vont parler en français à la législature maintenant qu’ils ont le droit. On a la journée de la francophonie. Tu n’as pas vu ça 20 ans dans le passé en Alberta, ...Tous ont fait un énorme, grand, grand travail : les enseignants, les grands-parents ... ont fait beaucoup de travail. »

13 « Moi, je dirais que c’est plus valorisé, ... Je pense c’est plus ouvert, oui, je dirais que c’est plus ouvert, même au niveau des écoles... je dirais que c’est amélioré ... Peut-être aussi à cause du multiculturalisme dans la région ... »

14 « ... les gens me regardent puis ils disent ... « ah, freaking French are you” ... [maintenant] j’ai pas l’impression-là du tout, mais quand j’étais jeune ça nous génait. On était géné des fois de parler français en public ... »

15 « Oui, beaucoup je trouve. Mais je trouve que le monde en savent beaucoup plus, qu’ils ne sont pas génés, puis quand ils vont au magasin il y a beaucoup de gens qui parle Français, puis qui sont pas génés de le parler, puis qui veulent le mettre en pratique, je trouve ça vraiment spécial! »
to be an advantage in instrumental orientation to learning French as also indicates Cloutier’s (1995) research among French minority students on their attitudes and motivations on learning English as a second language. The presence of a FFL school in Peace River is a very positive sign, showing respect and recognition of minority rights to practice their cultural traditions and language. Besides, the region of Peace River is considered to be very open to different cultures. A woman and a teacher from the immersion school said that there has been a francophone school in Peace River since her family came to the region; there is also the winter Carnival and other activities in the cultural centre of St. Isidore. There have been positive changes in the region - the local French schools board, Conseil Scolaire du Nord-Ouest #1, has three FFL schools that did not exist when parents of a young francophone teacher were growing up in the region. French language and culture are protected by the law and that is why they are more valued nowadays.

At the same time, not everybody feels that the broader public is very open to francophone culture. It was pointed out by one of the interviewees that French culture and language are very much valued in the region mostly by francophones and it is only due to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the bylaws. French language and culture have more recognition in society because the official status allows francophones to practice and live their culture. Another interviewee, a teacher from the FFL school said that the French language and culture are protected by the law and that is why they are more valued nowadays.

16 "... je crois, c'est plus valorisé, parce que depuis qu'on est arrivé, on a maintenu une école francophone à Rivière-la-Paix, ce qu'on n'avait pas, avant, quand je suis arrivée. Alors dans ce sens-là, ça c'est meilleur ... puis les activités francophones, par exemple, le Carnaval au centre culturelle [au St. Isidore, AB] avec le club Barbar et tout cela, ça existe encore ...

17 "... je pense que c'est assez valorisée la même façon, ... on a maintenant un conseil scolaire francophone qu'on n'avait pas quand mes parents étaient jeunes, on a trois écoles francophones dans le conseil scolaire, ... les droits des francophones sont protégés, qui dans le passé n'étaient pas protégés, ... c'est intéressant de ce côté, puis la langue française est respectée et protégée...

18 "... le statut fédéral qui dit qu'on a le droit a une éducation francophone, ... c'est à cause de la Chartre qu'on a ce droit, mais les Ukrainiens devrait l'avoir aussi, ... il y a une concentration Allemande ici, donc ils devront
language and culture are valued by a certain percentage of the population. There are some people in Peace River that are proud to be French and to speak this language. It is valued by the francophone community of Peace River as was noted by a young local francophone and a teacher of the school.\(^19\)

Though some interviewees mentioned positive opinions to French language in the Peace River region, others mentioned negative reactions to the French-speaking culture in the region. According to another francophone woman, and school staff member, French language and culture are not always valued and have even become less esteemed by the general public. According to this interviewee there are still negative reactions to the French-speaking culture in the region. The dominance of English is very obvious at the service level and in the broader society which prefers to speak English in all spheres of every day life.\(^20\) Others said that even among francophones it is not necessarily valued. Thus, some participants believed that the status of French language and culture has changed with English dominance and the assimilation of francophone culture. According to one of the school’s staff members, francophone culture is not always valued. The world learns English because this language is globally considered easier than others; sports and other activities are mostly in English and not all are proud of being French.\(^21\) Another FFL school’s employee said that French

\(^{19}\) « Je crois que c’est valorisé par quelque monde, la communauté francophone, comme un pourcentage qui est fier ... je pense que oui, peut-être pas dans tout la communauté de Rivière-la-Paix mais à travers la communauté francophone c’est valorisée – oui. »

\(^{20}\) « Pas partout, je pense pas qu’elles sont valorisées partout, ... c’est ... valorisé dans notre petite communauté, mais dans la région générale, je ne pense pas nécessairement. Il y a beaucoup de réactions je pense, ... comme à Peace River ... il y a quand même la réaction pas toujours positive. »

\(^{21}\) « Pas toujours, pas toujours. Mais je trouve que le monde apprenne que l’anglais premièremenent est facile ... et puis c’est souvent vers l’anglais, comme les sports c’est tout en anglais, n’importe quoi que tu fais dans la communauté c’est beaucoup en anglais, ... c’est comme, pas tout le monde est fiers d’être francophone. »
language and culture are not always valued even by certain francophones, which is unfortunate. One of the parents pointed out that there are more people speaking English. Even in some francophone families where both parents are French, children prefer to speak English\textsuperscript{22}.

Some people in Peace River still doubt the French culture and language is valued enough to survive. The majority of my interviewees believe that there is much that has been done in the society to keep and promote it. There is no fear to speak French and to present oneself as a francophone. It is possible to live in French and experience this language and culture in FFL schools and communities. These advantages were not available for many generations when the French language was out of favour and legislation, as well as the broader public, was hostile to this culture. Nevertheless, francophones were able to survive and preserve their identity and language. It is possible to preserve French culture with the right kind of promotion and attitude. It depends on the family. According to a francophone woman, a teacher from the immersion school and a mother, there are many of francophones who understand but will not speak French. In the family of this woman it was obligatory to speak French and she is making the same effort with her children to speak French. Without an effort francophones or any other minority group will likely assimilate to the dominant culture\textsuperscript{23}.

\textsuperscript{22} « ...ça a changé gros parce que je trouve qu’il y a beaucoup du monde qui parle seulement en anglais, j’ai des amis que leurs parents sont deux francophones et leurs enfants parlent seulement anglais... »

\textsuperscript{23} « ... ma famille, mes parents nous obligeaient à toujours parler en français à la maison et je fais la même chose avec mes enfants. Alors c’est un effort et je pense qu’il y a beaucoup de personnes qui réalisent pas qu’on doit faire un effort pour garder une langue. Si on ne fait pas l’effort on est une minorité, alors on va devenir anglophone si on n’a pas d’effort. »

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According to the interview data of my research, there are many positive changes in the status of French language and culture. It is recognized officially by law and there are FFL schools that have their aim to preserve the culture and language and promote it among francophones and in a broader anglophone public. Francophones are not shy to speak their language and search for different public services that are possible to get in French. For example, many times I was able to hear French speech while being at the till of the store, talking to a post office worker. It is also necessary to recognize that family plays a very important role in preserving language. As the French proverb says, “si tu veux – tu peux”, with the legislation in favour of French language and culture, it depends on the desires and efforts of francophones to promote their culture and practice their French language.

My questionnaires also revealed that French culture and language are appreciated and valued in the Peace River region to a certain extent. Opinions of francophone teachers, teachers from immersion schools, and francophone parents are close to each other. Fifteen respondents out of twenty-nine believe that the status of French language, culture and education has improved. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents (twenty-six out of twenty-nine) believe that promotion should not be put aside and forgotten. The transmission of French culture and language to present and future generations is important to continue in order to prevent the ‘decline of francophones in the region’. The majority of parents consider that it is still necessary to promote French language and culture in the region of Peace River and according to my questionnaires ten out of twelve parents think that it would be a great loss if the French language disappeared from the region. Teachers from immersion and FFL schools in their interviews drew attention to the fact that French language and culture are important to both francophone and anglophone communities in the region and to the
necessity of continuing promotion of French language education indicating that the French language was a part of society and should be respected.

Overall, French language and culture in the region of Peace River have improved in status but it is still important to continue promoting so that the language can be more appreciated and valued in the region and in the province. As Aunger (1993) and Landry et al. (2006) said a FFL school can be a very useful place to promote and live French culture, to improve French language status and to transmit French heritage and its values, because students of these schools are more likely to acquire competence in French language. The Peace River region seems fortunate to have l’École Des Quatre Vents as well as l’École Héritage that provide services to the French-speaking community.

4.4 Francophone Education, Teachers and Schools

The importance of FFL schools in defining and preserving French language and culture in the minority has been stressed through observations and interviews with community members. There are various techniques teachers use to create a francophone atmosphere at school. In this regard, francophone teachers are exposed to more responsibilities – they are not just teachers of certain subjects, they become agents of socialization and models of cultural transmission. This role of school and teacher is more prominent in a minority context because of related challenges of minority language acquisition. The survival of the French language in an overwhelmingly English-speaking majority milieu is not guaranteed. There exists a sense of uncertainty among French parents and teachers as to whether their children will speak French. Such questions do not arise in English language schools or among English-speaking parents as to whether their children will speak English because it is a dominant language. That is why in a linguistic minority context greater importance of
teachers and schools is often emphasized as being central to the maintenance of the language. This echoes Gérin-Lajoie’s (2006) and Roy’s (2006) examination of French teachers’ identity in their daily work as agents of linguistic and cultural reproduction in the minority context. Gérin-Lajoie (2006) asks how the life histories of teachers working in the French-speaking minority context influence the way they understand their job. By encouraging students to fully live their lives and communicate their ideas favouring French background, promoting their identity and developing a sense of belonging to the community, francophone teachers are charged with double duties - teaching and facilitating students’ francophone identity formation. They teach language in classrooms; their personal examples can facilitate integration of students into the French-language community and help them acquire a French-speaking identity.

Daily observation and examination of how teachers teach culture and incorporate French identity on a day-to-day basis suggest that if students have a chance to observe that their teachers and their families behave in a confident manner and are not afraid to express themselves in French, students are more able to acknowledge and follow this life pattern with self-assurance and dignity. This was brought up by one interviewed parent, a francophone woman and a teacher, that francophone teachers can transmit culture. Francophone teachers may come from different provinces of Canada – East or West – and have some differences from Albertan French culture; nevertheless, they are francophones and possess knowledge of this culture and they can help students to identify themselves as francophones because it is their culture and language. It also can teach them the differences among francophone sub-
cultures. It seems necessary to help students articulate their identity correctly and better understand what it means being French in a minority context, as was studied by Annie Pilote (2006) in a New-Brunswick FFL school community.

The importance of FFL schools and the role of teachers were evident during interviews when participants were talking about their decisions to enroll children in a FFL school. According to the teachers of l'École Des Quatre Vents and parents, who have their children in this school, the main reason to choose a French school is to ensure that children will continue speaking and living in French. The majority of interviewed teachers and parents believe that in an immersion school the focus is more on the ability to speak French fluently and increase one’s chances of finding employment. A young francophone teacher from immersion school said that immersion schools give students French language knowledge but that these students live English culture. In FFL schools, the aim is to live and share common culture and values; French language is more valued there than in immersion schools. One of the FFL school’s employees and a mother pointed out that in immersion school one can learn French language, but life at school is all in English. Another francophone woman and a teacher from the immersion school remarked that in an immersion school the goal is “to speak a language” and not to live culture. French immersion programs and French as a first language (FFL) programs are different. In an immersion schools students do not “live” the francophone culture.

24 « les professeurs [peuvent enseigner ou transmettre la culture]... ça peut être la culture francophone de l’Ouest ou de l’Est ; la culture francophone d’où vient le professeur ... parce qu’on a tous nos différences dans notre culture, même si on est francophone, alors je pense que c’est à l’élève de s’identifier avec ce qu’il est. Un francophone du Québec peut s’identifier avec un francophone de l’Alberta. Alor [un enseignant du Québec] peut lui enseigner les différences... »

25 « ... une école francophone a pour but de partager la culture, la valorisation de la langue et beaucoup plus. Je pense que dans une école immersion le focus est plus sur l’employabilité, après l’école je veux être bilingue, j’ai une meilleur chance d’avoir un emploi, c’est vivre en Canada ... »

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A French as a first language school is the place to keep and preserve not only the French language, but culture and values as well, while living in an anglophone majority. In FFL schools, students have more possibilities to learn and understand their past and heritage and obtain the sense of belonging to the francophonie of Canada and Alberta in particular. In order to do so, l’École Des Quatre Vents and its staff use a variety of activities that keep students socialized into francophone culture. Participant observation allowed observing that during the week of the francophonie in 2008, students were engaged in identity construction activities. In one of these activities, story-telling, children had to learn and then retell the story of the lives of their ancestors, what it was like for them growing up and going to school. And, learn how they used to spend their free time and what activities they used to have, what games they used to play, etcetera. These actions were very efficient. Teachers encouraged students to learn more about grand-parents and their backgrounds in order to connect past, present and future. By questioning their parents or grandparents students were able to learn that there is much in common among all generations. For example, children today like in the past like playing hide and seek, riding bicycles, playing outdoor games.

In addition, some classes were involved in creating a Family tree to introduce their families, parents, grand-parents and other ancestors or relatives. This activity attracted children’s attention and interest towards genealogy and the importance of it. By creating family trees, students were able to learn more about their ancestors and understand their French heritage, that they are connected to French-speaking communities all over Canada and maybe even France. Through this activity teachers stressed the importance of the past to students and used this activity to promote and to celebrate their French identity.
In FFL schools students learn francophone activities in order to live their culture. A young francophone woman and an immersion teacher noted in the interview that in FFL schools students have a better understanding of French history and those stages they have been through that make them francophones of present. As this woman pointed out, such organizations as *La Francophonie Jeunesse* in Alberta also provide opportunities for francophone students to participate in various francophone provincial activities that help them to remain francophones\(^{26}\). Another woman and a teacher herself pointed out in the interview that attending a FFL school gives students more chances to maintain and practice French. Another interviewed mother and a local francophone woman who had raised several children in the community remarked that she and her husband wanted that their children live the French culture and experience.

Furthermore, in a smaller school like l’École Des Quatre Vents in Peace River, students have better services and have more chances to receive extra help and attention from teachers. One of the school’s employees said that the services are good and there is much one-on-one instruction in smaller rather than larger schools\(^{27}\). Another young francophone teacher also noted that it is easier to provide extra help for students in a smaller school.

For many interviewed parents, an FFL school is the preference because it is a place where their children can continue learning and speaking French, and at the same time, understand that it is their first language, the language of their parents or grandparents. One of

\(^{26}\) «...dans une école francophone... tu as une meilleure compréhension de l’histoire francophone, de toutes les étapes qu’on a surmonté pour arriver au point où nous sommes aujourd’hui. À une école francophone tu peux participer à plein d’activités francophones provinciales; Moi j’ai beaucoup travaillé avec la [Francophonie Jeunesse en Alberta] quand j’étais à l’école, j’ai fait beaucoup d’activités avec Francophonie Jeunesse, puis, moi, je voudrais que mes enfants participent à ça, à ces activités, pour moi donc c’était dû à la participation à Francophonie Jeunesse et d’autres activités francophones, qu’on a fait que je suis encore francophone aujourd’hui.»

\(^{27}\) «...On a une petite école ici, puis le service est bon, parce qu’il y a beaucoup d’un à un, il y beaucoup de services, qui sont mieux dans les petites écoles que dans les grandes écoles»
the school’s support staff members and a mother pointed out that a FFL school is the best gift she could ever give her children as it helps them to learn the mother tongue of the family. Another francophone woman mentioned in the interview that her desire was that her child continues speaking French and knows that it is his first language. Another parent said that she chose a FFL school for her children because it was the best place for them to learn, understand and live in French. It develops a habit of speaking French and living its culture. Another teacher in an immersion school pointed out that her wish is to have French as a first language for her children as it is her first language as well as the first language of her parents and grand-parents. It was important for this interviewee to continue keeping her native language and to transmit it to future generation.

In order to create a francophone atmosphere different means were used in promoting the French language at l’École Des Quatre Vents. For example, observations allowed me to see various posters about francophone holidays or celebrations, or children’s projects; scientific or language posters (see figures 2.0, 2.1 on page 77).

28 « Moi, je trouve que c’est un cadeau que j’ai donné à mes enfants, montrer la langue, ma langue maternelle puis la langue maternelle à mon mari, qu’ils puissent communiquer avec leurs grands-parents … »
29 « … pour garder notre langue, je veux que mes enfants aient le français comme langue première … pour moi le français devrait être leur langue, leur première langue, comme c’était ma première langue et la première langue de mes parents et mes grands-parents.»
To celebrate a francophone week in March 2008, students created panels that represented the francophone past, present and future. Figures 2.0 and 2.1 are very meaningful to this research. Grades five and six students reproduced the past of the French culture in Alberta. The central part of the picture is dedicated to Alberta’s Francophone Flag. It signifies that students value and are proud of their background and that they are being taught about French culture, and francophones’ role in establishing the country of Canada. In the course of social studies, grade 5 students study provincial legislation and linguistic rights (Harding and Sears 2009). Certain information is given on the creation of
l’ACFA (Association Canadienne-Française de l’Alberta) and the struggle for FFL schools in the province. This complies with paragraph 5.2 of the Social Studies curriculum of French program according to the Government of Alberta Education (Alberta Education). The Francophone flag itself reflects the history of francophones in the province and the wild rose and the field of blue in the upper right corner represents the province. White represents la francophonie, blue and white stripes represent the waters and roads travelled throughout the province by francophone explorers and colonists. The presence of the fleur-de-lis in a field of blue is in reference to Québec, but in the large historical context it is particularly associated with the French monarchy. This symbol is believed to have been introduced by Jacques Cartier on his first voyage to the new continent in 1534. The central position of the flag in the drawing denotes that French history and heritage are still important for present francophone students. It means that they associate themselves with the francophonie of the country. Moreover, it stresses the fur trade. The grade five and six Social Studies curriculum contains information on how the first French settlements in Québec and Ontario were involved in the fur trade with First Nations (Harding and Sears 2009). Due to francophone immigrants from Québec, agriculture and farming became very important in Alberta and one of the best agricultural regions in the country. According to Gilles Boileau (2003), the Catholic Church was trying to consolidate its position in the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and therefore the intelligentsia of Québec was encouraged to travel west to discover the fertile land of the prairies and establish the parishes. The first mention of the region of Peace River in the cadastre goes back to around 1905 and 1910; the first Canadiens-français came here around 1912 forming the main four settlements of that time - McLennan, Donnelly, Falher and
GirouxF ville. The presence of francophones in the province of Alberta goes back to the beginning of the last century. Their role and contribution to the progress of the western territories' formation is important and should not be forgotten.

At the bottom of figure 2.0 on page 77 there are cultivated wheat fields as on the Coat of Arms of Alberta. This represents the province, but also appears to stress the role of francophone farmers and their contribution to the wheat industry in Alberta and to its prosperity. Another part of the picture is dedicated to education. Children depicted the classroom with the students and the teacher giving the lesson. For example, the word ‘bonjour’ on the board underlines the use of French language as a language of instruction and accentuates its value to the students.

Figure 2.1 on page 77 represents a drawing that was made by grade three and four students. They presented a global view on the future of French culture and language in the world. Thus, the presence of a globe in the center of the picture and the fleur-de-lis just in the middle of the earth appears very symbolic. It stands for the idea that French language and culture are spread worldwide as human figures around the globe represent different countries of the world that have French language as the main or second official language. The status of French in the world therefore is described by this drawing as international. Students depicted sixteen French-speaking countries out of fifty-six member states and fourteen state-observers over the world, that are part of the International Francophone Organization - Organization International de la Francophonie (OIF, 2008). Nevertheless, it seems that the number of countries in this case does not matter. What matters is the idea of French language and culture connecting people all over the world. It is also meaningful that students are aware of the fact that the French language is widespread and spoken by many other nations. For
example, though people from Congo or Ruanda may have different identities from French Canadians or French people of France there is still something in common between them – the means of expression – the language. Canada as a country with more than six million francophones (Statistic Canada, 2009) must use every opportunity to promote and encourage its population to preserve this unique culture through bylaws, mass media and education.

Another poster, (see figure 2.2 on page 81) goes hand in hand with the notion of French language as an international language and an official language of many countries. This poster depicts different races using French language as a language of communication. This emphasizes that many people all over the world can speak French. In addition, the content of the poster is correct grammar and speech. This and many similar posters contained the wrong and the right variant of some widely used and at the same time often confused phrases. The sentence that is presented on this poster shows a typical English language influence on French. In this case it is the phrase ‘I have just turned 12’. The anglicism or word-to-word translation would be ‘J’ai juste tourné 12’ as it is shown on the picture, but this would mean something completely different in French. The French verb ‘tourner’ means to turn round, to spin or to twirl, and the word ‘juste’ means to be just, thus if one translates the phrase ‘J’ai juste tourné 12’ back into English one would have the following ‘I have turned round 12 and just’, which makes no sense.
Direct English language influence is evident and by these types of posters teachers try to draw children’s attention to the importance of studying and learning French language anglicisms. In this regard, a poem of gratitude appeared very significant (see figure 2.3):

Merci papa, merci maman!
J’aime l’école des Quatre-Vents.
J’apprends à lire et à écrire en français.
J’apprends à rire et à m’amuser en français.
J’apprends à compter et à penser en français.
J’apprends à m’ouvrir aux autres.
J’apprends à connecter avec mon identité.
J’apprends à valoriser ma bilinguïté.
J’apprends à faire partie d’une francophonie qui Vit ici à Peace River, en Alberta et partout ailleurs dans le monde.
Merci madame la directrice et merci à tout le personnel!

Children thank their parents, the principal and other personnel of the school for giving them a chance to read and to write, to laugh and to enjoy, to count and to think in French, to be open to others, to be attached to their identity, to value their bilingualism and a sense of belonging to the French community of Peace River, Alberta and the world. In this way, the school promotes itself to students, parents and the community as a place where French culture, language and heritage can be preserved and displayed to the fullest. It creates an atmosphere of trust and care. The mention of bilingualism ‘J’apprends à valoriser ma bilinguïté’ stresses the idea that francophones, living in an anglophone society, become fluent bilinguals. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind and clarify to students that bilingualism is not their sole identity or ethnicity, because, as Landry et al. (2006) justly remarked, if bilingual identity is present among young francophones in Canada in a minority situation, it can become a vital part of a French community, thus, weaken francophone identity and vitality of younger generations. They may speak two or more languages, but that is just the result of other language influences, dominance or learning. The word bilingual in Latin means two languages, where *bi* stands for ‘two’ and *lingua* stands for ‘language, tongue’. Bilingualism does not make one’s identity dual. For example, I was born and raised in Russia and still perceive myself as a Russian, I speak Russian and identify myself as a Russian person. Although I also speak English and French this fact does not make me English or French or Russian English or Russian French. The knowledge of several languages makes me a multilingual person, but it does not make my identity multilingual. In Canada, French people became a minority and many of them were born and raised in an anglophone majority. Nevertheless, if they are raised with the idea
that they are French, if they are educated in their native language and involved in francophone celebrations and traditions, this should form their French identity. Fluency in English or bilingualism will not become their second identity. Thirteen out of seventeen interviewees in this study identified themselves as ‘Francophone’ or ‘Français’. Three of these specified being ‘Canadienne Française’, one being ‘Brayonne’ – coming from a small French community in New Brunswick, and one as being ‘Franco-Albertaine’. Four others identified themselves solemnly as ‘Franco-Albertaines’. None of them mentioned having a bilingual identity. All of them have ties to francophone culture with some specification – they are Albertan French or Canadian French.

Analysing French language promotion in l’École Des Quatre Vent in Peace River, last two lines from the poem of gratitude, mentioned on page 81, attracts specific attention:

‘J’apprends à faire partie d’une francophonie qui
Vit ici à Peace River, en Alberta et partout ailleurs dans le monde.’

These lines may be translated as follows: I learn to be a part of the francophonie that is alive here in Peace River, in Alberta and in other places in the world. The interesting point here is that after naming the town and the province authors do not mention the country before referring to the world. This jump might reflect perception of identity – francophone of the world. In other words, it seems to be a promotion of language and culture from a global point of view. French culture is a part of a bigger world and being a francophone one is perceived as belonging not only to the minority francophone group of the region but to the francophonie of the world. This creates a different feeling of belonging and even kinship.

Through observations is became obvious that the school’s library is another place of indirect language and identity promotion. In promoting French literacy and good language
skills, the school’s library is a very good source for teachers, students and their parents. There are educational books, films, music disks, and guides for the parents, innovative materials for education, and different games and plays in French. These learning tools help students to absorb French culture and language. Even if some students tend to speak English from time to time, they can come and read the posters in French which encourage them to practice the French language.

To some extent, education is the focus of my discussion and my research. It seems to be one of the best ways to support French speakers in their desire to preserve and transmit their heritage, history, and identity. For new generations, it also appears to be important to develop confidence. Being French should not be advantageous or disadvantageous in their future; it is their identity, their sense of belonging to a certain ethnic group. According to Herberg (1989) and Yinger (1994), the notion of ‘belonging’ to a certain group is based on perception of common origin, sharing and practicing common activities. In regard to this, FFL schools and teachers are in charge of teaching curriculum, developing and transmitting the taste for French culture and language. The role of teachers is also to be models for their students, possess francophone identity and transmit it to students by everyday communication. Through communication among teachers, students and parents, francophone culture acquires meaning to them and they behave in a way to preserve and transmit it to future generations, which, according to Jewett (2006) and Mains (1984), reflects symbolic interactionism. In francophone communities, sociocultural identities are constructed and cultural objects develop meaning through communication. A mother and one of the FFL school’s administrators noted in the interview that it was important to transmit a “taste” for
living culture in French; if a teacher feels at ease in this culture he or she shall transmit it automatically to students.

Another mother and a teacher in immersion school remarked that teachers have to speak well, write well and feel proud to be a francophone and thus transmit the taste for the francophone culture. It is important that teachers remain good models of francophone culture for their students. Another mother noted that the role of the school is to inform students of their culture and make it more precise. One of the school’s administrators said that teachers in FFL schools can give good knowledge of culture, language, good accent and other things to make students understand what it means to be a francophone and later they will feel good visiting their grand-parents and have the feeling of ‘being among their people’, ‘being French’.

According to survey questionnaires, nine out of nine francophone teachers believed that French-speaking teachers are important role models for children in encouraging the use of French language. The majority of them also believed that education in a FFL school is ideal for French language and culture promotion and that FFL schools are essential for French language promotion. Some teachers believed that FFL schools are charged with the responsibility of creating the right atmosphere for students to learn French and to use it on an every day basis at schools as not all homes speak one hundred percent French. In fact, only ten out of twelve parents said that French is the language that is spoken in the families; only ten out of twelve strongly agreed that the family is central to maintaining the French

30 « C'est être un modèle. Pour donner la culture, la langue, le bon accent, et tout ça ... ils [les enfants] vont comprendre qu'est-ce que c'est, puis ils vont avoir ce petit sentiment-là à l'intérieur quand ils vont visiter [les grands-parents] 'ah oui, c'est chez nous, 'c'est en français' ... ça goûte bon. Puis si être bien dans qui on est, puis être fier.»
language in Alberta. In a family it is sometimes not possible to maintain a completely French environment, and answers of parents from my research echo Landry’s et al. (2006) statement that French language education remains the ideal tool for promoting French language and culture. French schools are essential in promoting French language and French-speaking teachers are important role models for children in encouraging the use of French. Also, all parents pointed out that their children either attend or will attend a French school in order to be socialized in a French-speaking community. Schools are given more responsibility to form the French identity of students as it is becoming difficult to sustain a francophone identity within some families, especially exogamous families, as according to Aunger (1993), exogamy lead to language shift. A francophone teacher from an immersion school and a mother of some students from the FFL school noted in her interview that francophone activities, music, concerts, even francophone cuisine can help in promoting the French language and culture. To this end, l’École Des Quatre Vents used various activities, for instance a lip-sing contest that was dedicated to French music and songs to which I was invited. Students were invited to participate in the contest. This activity helped students and their parents, who were welcomed to attend and support their children, becoming familiar with contemporary French music and singers themselves. The overall idea was to plunge students into French musical culture and maintain French language use.

Among other activities that I observed during my participant observation at the school were a theatre play from British Columbia, a magician, a scientific station and a lecture from ASTER Fondation Familiale Trittier - La Station Scientifique du Bas-Saint Laurent. The

31 "... d'être modèle évidemment de la langue parlée et écrite, mais aussi un modèle de comment qu'on vit dans cette culture. Je sais que l'école est très bonne en faisant des activités francophones, la cuisine française par exemple, ou la musique, les concerts. ... ils [les parents] trouvent que c'est à l'école vraiment à garder et promouvoir la langue et ceci parce que c'est moins en moins [français] dans la maison ... »
lecture about the Solar System and the Universe was given in French. Through this activity students were exposed to new information given in French, and also to the fact that the French language is not only the language of school or their homes. Being French and speaking French, students can be successful in the future careers. There are plenty of possibilities to continue their education in French after elementary school, even pursue different careers in French at various Universities in Canada and apply this education in various occupational fields. According to Deveau et al. (2004), only two people out of five prefer to educate their children only in French. Besides, in Bouchard (1994), one reads that in the francophone community of the Peace River region there were some who held the opinion that French schooling and French language learning would become an obstacle at the University level as students would have a hard time translating scientific and technical terminology from English to French (Bouchard 1994:72). Nowadays, it is clear that learning French can contribute to a successful career in the future. This point was demonstrated by the scientific presentation at l’École Des Quatre Vents. It is necessary to educate and to invite parents to such presentations and reveal that there should be no reason to assume that such subjects as mathematics or science should be taught in English, otherwise francophone children would be disadvantaged in the future. Thus, the French school of Peace River strives to reassure parents and students that francophone education makes a positive difference.

Among other ways of French language and culture promotion l’École Des Quatre Vents welcomed theatre shows. Thus, the “Theatre 16” from British Columbia was making a tour in Alberta with the play “Des Flocons pour Alice” for students from French immersion and FFL schools. Théâtre la Seizième in Vancouver, British Columbia, was founded in 1989 to serve the francophone community of Western Canada through various cultural,
educational and other social events. They travel throughout Western Canada and provide their services in French to hundreds of smaller francophone communities.

The play gave students an opportunity to notice that the French language is alive in Canada and is actively used by different people and in different spheres and jobs. In April 2008, l’École des Quatre Vents was invited by a neighbouring elementary school to meet the Ballet Dance Group from Calgary. The presentation was made for students to promote dancing and future careers and also to expose the young generation to art and culture. Though the presentation was mostly in English, the terms that were used for the ballet techniques came from French and are used all over the world – *plier*, *demi-plier*, *pirouette*, *fouettet* and many others. Children from the FFL school were able to recognize them and even gave a translation and explanation of their meanings that created feelings of self-confidence. The striking thing was that teachers and some of the students from l’École Des Quatre Vents used French in their conversations. Francophone students naturally spoke to each other and their teachers only in French. Even after the presentation, in the foyer, children spoke French amongst themselves in spite of being in an anglophone school. According to Bouchard (1994), this would never have happened in the Peace River region the 1990s. Although the Canadian Constitution and FFL schools were already established, the feeling of embarrassment from being a francophone made students speak only English in public and made them very concerned about what language they spoke. From the 1990s to 2000s there seems to have been significant changes in behaviour and mentality of younger generations, and now they are not embarrassed or ashamed to speak French among anglophones.
In this regard, the role of francophone teachers is remarkable as they create and model behaviour and attitudes towards their native culture and language. They respect anglophones by addressing them in English, but at the same time, speak French whenever possible among themselves and with students. These attitudes were reinforced again when l’École Des Quatre Vents hosted a magician Marc Tardif from Québec, who gave a fabulous presentation with a number of different tricks and amusements. He involved some students and parents in the show, which had a profound effect and afterwards students were discussing and sharing their impressions enthusiastically. It demonstrates that the French culture and language are alive and can be successfully applied in different careers in the future. All these events testify to the idea that FFL schools dedicate much time to various curricular and extracurricular activities to promote the French culture. According to one of the support staff of the FFL school, the role of a French school is very big.

The school is expected to create occasions to learn French and to use it every day in the school. The role of schools and teachers is also to do as much as possible to offer their students cultural experiences in French, to make them know their culture and understand it. The following was pointed out in the interview by a young teacher and a local francophone woman - it is necessary to offer as many cultural experiences in French as possible that will help students to realise that there are other francophones in the world. It is necessary to live in French and promote this culture. Another teacher, originally from Québec and now an activist of the local francophone community, said that it is important to speak French and even outside of school, participate in the community life. Thus, teachers have to teach and

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32 « D’offrir au tant que possible des expériences francophones, des expériences culturelles en français, ... tu vas ouvrir leurs yeux au fait qu’il y a d’autres francophones aussi. C’est ça, à vivre des expériences culturelles en français, c’est la meilleure façon de transmettre et promouvoir la culture. »
create a French environment, and at the same time outside of the school and classrooms they have to participate in the community activities. Through their lives, behaviour and attitude they have to show students that it is possible to live their lives in French every day. The minority status almost forces teachers to work more on organizing and participating in different francophone events in order to live their culture and plunge their students into the French-speaking environment.

For example, in the francophone community of Peace River, l’École Des Quatre Vents usually dedicates a special day to celebrate Noël with students and their parents. It usually takes place at school a few weekends before Christmas. In December 2008, l’École Des Quatre Vents organized a big event that engaged all grades. I observed students sang Christmas carols in French and English, and then a New Year’s play “La forêt enchanté” was shown in French with students from different grades participating. It was also an occasion to taste francophone cuisine.

*Le Carnaval* in Saint Isidore, Alberta, is another example. The hamlet of St. Isidore is situated 14.6 km south-east of Peace River, with a population of approximately three hundred people (Discover the Peace Country 2009). This community was established in the mid 1950s as a small catholic parish by the families that arrived from Québec. Boileau (2003), notes that the pioneer families coming from Québec were aiming to establish a community that would be based on family, faith and language. Thus, in order to keep and transmit the French identity, the community of St. Isidore of that time placed an emphasis on faith that was based on language and beliefs through which people were brought up and educated.

33 « ... mais premièrement parler le français ... puis de faire connaître la culture francophone et faire connaître ce que c'est en français, ... le rôle c'est en dehors de l'école aussi de participer dans la communauté puis de faire certain que le français soit être vivant ... »
According to Boileau (2003), francophones of Peace River and the region were able to form a strong community and though it a minority group on a larger provincial scale, it is a well-known homogeneous group in the region.

St. Isidore’s winter Carnival is held every year during the long weekend of February - Family Day - an official holiday in Alberta. St. Isidore’s community involves many volunteers to organize and host the winter Carnival that usually starts three to four days before the weekends. This holiday is very popular and attracts many of francophones from the region, province and even Québec. At the same time, according to Bouchard (1994), advertising of the winter Festival for the broader community in English testifies to the idea that *Carnaval d’hiver* in St. Isidore is becoming more bilingual as well as other French community celebrations of the region. For example, *Falher Festival du Miel* became “Falher Honey Festival” or *la Foire Agrocie* became “The Smoky River Agricultural Fair” Bouchard (1994:64). Nevertheless, through personal observations it is possible to say that *Carnaval d’hiver* in St. Isidore, remains a huge francophone event.

The usual annual activities include a snow sculpture contest; maple toffee on the snow is very popular among youngsters as well as among older people; sleigh rides are organized for the students to experience an unforgettable ride in the woods towards an open glade where a fire is made and everybody is gathered around it to listen to French folk music and fairy-tales; log sawing is very entertaining for students; tobogganing, ‘equilibrium’ and ‘labyrinth’ activities are also very popular. Children play tug-of-war and other team games for amusement and for physical activity and every single activity is in French. Live entertainment for students and the community include traditional dancing where children and adults may also learn some typical French folk dance movements. The dancing features *Plein*
Soleil - a traditional French dancing group of St. Isidore. Winter Carnival hosts not only local artists, but also dance troupes on tour, theatre groups and musicians that come from Alberta, other provinces and Québec. During the festival, a traditional dinner consisting of ‘pâte à la viande’, ‘fèves au lard’, ‘salade’ and ‘tarte à sucre’ is usually offered for all the community. The main purpose of these activities and Carnival itself is to bring community members together, and to give them an opportunity to meet and enjoy a variety of activities. These events help to maintain their culture, language and traditions as well as transmit them to future generations by showing that their ethnicity and French-speaking identity is alive and dynamic.

It is very significant that the French Cultural Centre in St. Isidore organizes such events for the community and engages younger generations. Carnival activities are usually very much loved by the community members, especially by children. Thus, after the trip to St. Isidore’s Winter Carnival in 2009 students of l’École Des Quatre Vents said that they adore the Carnival. On the question of what they like most they said ‘tout’, which means ‘everything’ but then they were more specific - they like the trip itself as it takes about twenty minutes to drive from Peace River to St. Isidore. They like to participate in all the activities – playing football, tobogganing, dancing, riding on the sleigh and of course they love the toffee. They said that during Carnival they can celebrate francophonie. On the question of why they find it important some students from grade three and four said that they are francophones and they are proud to be francophones because not many people speak French and they do.

Therefore, FFL schools can be an effective means of sustaining, developing and promoting French language and culture to the younger generations and also to contemporary
teenagers, parents, future parents and other community members through different cultural events and activities. These schools demonstrate to students that their culture and identity are alive and that it is possible to be francophone and keep their ethnic peculiarity even in anglophone society.

In this regard, the role of teachers in FFL schools is very important. A mother and a francophone teacher in immersion school noted in the interview that francophone teachers have to be very much engaged in community life and transmit their pride to be French to students. A young teacher in her thirties and a mother said that teachers have to show the importance of la francophonie and make them live in a francophone milieu. A young support staff member of the FFL school and a community life activist said that teachers can explain to students that it is possible to be different and live the way they want to. The role of the teachers is to give all necessary tools or means in order to continue living in French.

Therefore, teachers are charged with the responsibility of not only to teach the subject, but to reflect cultural reality and even stand for the national or state ideas. Canada is portrayed as a bilingual country and FFL schools draw upon the idea of a bilingual state coast to coast. Teachers are fulfilling the task of constructing francophone culture through education and experiences that become a symbolic act of communication in French among anglophones. This is discussed in the studies of Mead (1934; 1964), Blumer (1986), Jewett (2006), Mains (1984) and Prus (2007) about symbolic interactionism where cultural objects acquire meaning and attitudes towards them through communication.

34 « ...je pense qu’il y a des gens qui pensent que ce n’est pas cool d’être francophone parce que tout le monde est anglophone, ... mais ils [les enseignants] leur montrent juste qu’on peut être différent et vivre très bien ...fait que le rôle des enseignants, je pense, c’est plus à donner ... donner tous les outils nécessaires qu’on a besoin pour continuer dans la vie... »
The educational system can provide an excellent foundation of knowledge and culture promotion. French as first language schools in a minority context do have more cultural and linguistic challenges. They have to follow the curriculum, but also make francophone culture more obvious to their students, make them live their culture, speak their language not only at school but if possible with their friends, at home, and in public and be proud of it. Teachers in this regard, transmit the interest in language and culture, the sense of belonging to a francophone group and pride in their heritage by speaking French and educating students in different subjects, and by organizing, participating and involving students in various events, celebrations and projects. In order to do so, l’École Des Quatre Vents collaborates with the Conseil Scolaire Francophone du Nord #1. The school has a cultural coordinator specifically for extracurricular activities and other teachers are greatly involved in all events and celebrations that are organized either by the school or by the community.

4.5 Extracurricular activities as a means of promotion

In order to find an opinion about the extracurricular activities and their effect in promoting French language and culture I proposed to work with pupils to stage a French-language play in order to evaluate how students see and value their language and culture both prior to the activity and after it. I looked at whether extracurricular activities influence how students learn in the classroom and if the school could be an effective tool in promoting identity, culture and a sense of community belonging. According to survey questionnaire results, 7 out of 9 (77.7 percent) francophone teachers strongly agree that after school activities facilitate French language and culture promotion; 8 out of 9 (88.8 percent) also strongly agree that French-language extracurricular activities help in retaining and defining French-speaking identity. Such activities help children in developing self-esteem and a sense
of belonging to French community and heritage. I introduced the following project: *Extracurricular activities as a means of promoting French language culture - Creative Writing and Drama Presentation of a French Fairy-tale as a means of promoting French language and French heritage.*

I worked with students in order to promote French culture and language, while also studying the effectiveness of the project as a means of promoting culture and identity. A French classic fairy-tale by Charles Perrault "*Le Chat Botté*" was chosen. It was expected that students of French Canadian schools were familiar with writers of France, as many Russians are. That is why it was decided that the students, teachers and researcher would be mutually interested in adopting a famous fairytale as a play production. According to Handler (1988), Carpenter (1979) and Théberge (2006), literature and folklore are part of the cultural heritage of any nation or culture; thus this project could be one of the ways of promoting French culture and heritage.

The project consisted of several steps. An agreement to work on the project was achieved with teachers and later on the students were introduced to it. The pre-project anonymous questionnaires (see Appendix III on page 131) were distributed to grades three to six for future evaluation, but readings of the fairytale were done with grades one to six. Students from all grades were asked to draw illustrations for it. At the same time, grades five and six were asked to come up with a continuation of the story, or some sort of extension. In other words, children were involved in a free writing activity in which they could practice their written language skills in French while using their creativity. Readings were done by the researcher, but in grades five and six some students volunteered to read. Most children
were very fluent in French and their reading was good. At the end of each reading session I confirmed that students understood the plot.

After the readings, rehearsals and decoration work started with the students that wished to participate. Overcoming several issues – shortage of rehearsing time, willingness to make a full commitment to practicing, memorizing the text – the rehearsals during recreations continued steadily. The reminder that parents would come to the presentation made students a bit more serious. On June 12th, 2008, during the school-family-community picnic, the fairytale show was presented. It went well and was warmly received by the audience. At the end of the event, I accepted congratulations and warm words from the teachers and parents. They thought that the activity went well and enjoyed the presentation because the decorations were very beautiful and bright, and because the students were amusing and adorable even if they stumbled on some lines.

Finally, the after-project questionnaires were distributed to those students who participated (Appendix IV on page 132). It was done for further analysis, evaluation and comparison of children’s opinions about French-language extracurricular activities and its impact on French culture perception. To crown it all, the researcher came to each class to express gratitude to all students for their participation, and presented each student with an edited book "Le Chat Botté" containing their drawings and also continuations of the story. Most of them were excited to have a book with their drawings. All students were pleased and thanked me in return.

According to pre-project questionnaires, 21 out of 28 (75 percent) students had a positive attitude toward French. Being an outsider to Canadian francophone communities, I expected this number to be higher as students are coming from the francophone community.
This percentage testifies that there are obstacles in the community that prevent French language use; some of them could be exogamous marriages or anglophone influence. Thus, 21 out of 28 (75 percent) students do not watch TV in French; most likely they watch it in English. One of the mothers said in the interview that it is a challenge for francophone students to live in minority as many things that children like (TV, radio, music, journals) are in English and the only place to identify themselves as francophones is at school or home 35.

The English language is an inevitable part of a francophone student’s daily life. According to questionnaires, English is used by 6 out of 28 students (21.4 percent) during recreation and by 9 out of 28 (32.1 percent) at home. French is used by 3 out of 28 (10.7 percent) during recreation time and by 5 out of 28 (17.8 percent) at home. The remaining students indicated that they used both languages during recreation and at home. These numbers testify to the idea that French language should be promoted and that various projects or events could help. Therefore, creative writing and drama presentation of the fairytale “Le Chat Botté” seemed to be an effective tool of promoting culture today. The following table of students’ pre-project and after-project questionnaires summarizes the results. The results of pre-project questionnaires are based on twenty-eight respondents, whereas after-project questionnaires are based on thirteen students actually participating in the activity.

35 "Le défi : on est une minorité, alors la majorité est anglophone, alors la musique populaire, la radio, les magasins, tout ça dans notre région est anglophone ... alors l’école est vraiment la seule place où ils [les enfants] peuvent s’identifier comme francophone, ou à la maison. Beaucoup des choses qu’ils aiment ça se fait en anglais, ils écoutent la musique anglophone, ils regardent la télé anglophone, alors c’est ça le défi.”
**Table 1** Results of the children's pre-project and after-project survey questionnaires.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Pre-project (28 students)</th>
<th>After-project (13 students)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Would you like to participate in a play or fairy-tale in French?</td>
<td>17/28 (60.7%) would like to participate in the play in French</td>
<td>10/13 (76.9%) liked being in the play produced in French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you think it will be interesting to stage a drama play or fairytale in French?</td>
<td>18/28 (64.3%) it will be interesting to make a play in French</td>
<td>10/13 (76.92%) it would be interesting to have more cultural activates in French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Will it be difficult for you?</td>
<td>8/28 (10.7%) it will not be difficult for them</td>
<td>6/13 (46.15%) it was not difficult to participate and appear on the stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Will it be interesting for you?</td>
<td>18/28 (64.3%) it will be interesting</td>
<td>7/13 (53.84%) liked the rehearsals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8/13 (61.53%) adored working on the play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10/13 (76.9%) it was inspiring to participate and appear on the stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11/13 (84.6%) liked all the preparations - costume making, decorations and other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Will it help you to speak French better?</td>
<td>11/28 (39.3%) this activity would help them speak French better</td>
<td>9/13 (69.23%) learned more new words during this activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7/13 (53.84%) learned more about French literature, writers, characters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The conclusion from this table is the following: for most students the activity was successful, children liked participating, and they learned something new about French culture. After the activity 7 out of 13 (53.84 percent) pointed that they liked the rehearsals. Moreover 8 out of 13 (61.53 percent) responded that they adored working on the play, 10 out of 13 (76.9 percent) pointed that it was inspiring to participate and appear on the stage, 11 out of 13 (84.6 percent) responded that they enjoyed all preparations - costumes making, decorations and other. It is interesting to note that in line #5 – 11 out of 28 (39.3 percent) of students ‘before’ the activity responded that this activity would help them speak French better.
better, but it turned out that 9 out of 13 (69.23 percent) respondents indicated that they learned new words and 7 out of 13 (53.84 percent) learned more about French literature, writers and characters. These numbers indicate that students found something new and valuable about their culture and language. Their personal attitude while getting ready for the show and their concerns about costumes and decoration, suggest that this project was valuable to most of them. Even before this play was done some students from different grades approached me and asked if I would come back in autumn and do another play with them. Therefore, it may have produced a positive impact on their personalities, French identity and a sense of belonging to francophonie. It suggests that schools can be a means of promoting culture and language, and that extracurricular activities can be used as a tool to achieve this.

The importance of exposing children to different cultural events is further supported by francophone teachers who underline that it is necessary to make it obvious that francophone culture is present in the region and that it is possible to live and to communicate French culture in different spheres of life. It is possible to sing, watch films, and read books in French. This was pointed out in the interview by one of the FFL school's administrators. The task of francophone teachers is to assure students that in the community where they live, there are people that speak French and they can be found everywhere, among different services of the town. The aim of field trips and activities is to demonstrate to students that a francophone community does exist in Peace River, and that people can provide services in French at the police station, post office, and fire department. This teaches them not to be shy

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36 On behalf of the research, communication with all school staff members, parents and students was and continues only in French language.
to use their native language among anglophones\textsuperscript{37}. A young teacher from Québec pointed out in the interview some other opportunities. There is a library in St. Isidore’s Cultural Francophone centre that ensures that cultural activities are being held in French. There is a French club and they try to show French movies. There is also a francophone radio station in Falher, and a winter Carnival in St. Isidore\textsuperscript{38}. These activities and clubs could be characterized as markers of belonging to the French community, which reveals symbolic interactionism. It is important that French speakers of the region could gather together in such places as French clubs or during a winter Carnival where they can identify themselves as French.

As for extracurricular activities, young and active francophone teachers noted in the interview that they are very good methods for transmission of language and culture. Extracurricular activities can promote the status of language. Activities and extracurricular activities in any FFL school could be various – sport, drama or visual art or theatre. It does not matter what kind of activity is offered; the most important thing is that these activities gather and unite francophones\textsuperscript{39}. Thus, according to the interview data, cultural activities at

\textsuperscript{37} « ...Qu’est-ce qu’on fait à l’école? On essaye de la faire vivre [en offrant le plus d’activités possibles] à nos élèves en français ... À l’école c’est qu’on veut qu’ils voient que ça existe en français aussi. Oui tu peux être un chanteur en français, oui on peut voir des films fait en français, oui tu peux lire un livre [en français]. On a amené nos élèves visiter les pompiers puis on va demander aux pompiers s’il y a des francophones puis les pompiers francophones sont là! Les jeunes, ils regardent que les pompiers ne parlent pas qu’en anglais. Puis quand on fait ces visites-là, on s’assure qu’il y a quelqu’un qui parle français pour que les jeunes puissent voir qu’il y a un pompier qui parle français, qu’il y a un policier qui parle français, que la madame au bureau de poste qu’elle parle français! Donc nous autres on veut leur montrer qu’on parle français dans la communauté. »

\textsuperscript{38} « ... il y a une bibliothèque en français à St-Isidore, le Centre Culturel à St-Isidore nous assure qu’il y a des activités en français. Pour les adultes il y a un bar en français, souvent on essaye d’avoir la projection de film en français quand c’est possible. Il y a la radio qui vient de Falher en Français, ensuite il y a le Carnaval ... »

\textsuperscript{39} « ... je pense c’est [activités culturels parascolaires] une bonne méthode aussi, pour pouvoir transmettre [la culture et la langue]. » « Je pense qu’avec toutes les activités qu’on fait dans une année, tout donnée par les francophones qui viennent de partout, qu’on peut se rencontrer. Des activités différentes, ça peut être l’art dramatique, ça peut être les arts visuels, ça peut être du théâtre, n’importe quelle l’activité, mais ça fait qu’ils se rencontrent. »

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school or after school can encourage students to speak French and feel comfortable and proud of it. Even though the anglophone majority may not understand French, there are people that have French as their first language and culture. One of the FFL school’s support staff members, a mother, said in the interview that francophone activities can encourage students to speak French and to communicate with others. For example, there is a volleyball team in Peace River, in which students speak French. This shows to the others [anglophones] that even if they [anglophones] do not understand French, this language is alive in the region.

Through cultural activities, students as well as parents and community members live and learn their culture and understand it better. One of the FFL school’s administrators pointed out in her interview that by living culture you learn it; the more you live your culture the better you know it. Eleven out of twelve (91.7 percent) of parents agreed in the questionnaires that after-school activities facilitate French language and culture promotion. The same is true about French-language extracurricular activities that can help in retaining and defining French-speaking identity. All 12 out of 12 (100 percent) parents in Peace River whose children attend l’École Des Quatre Vents agreed that French-language extracurricular activities help children in developing their self-esteem and a sense of belonging to a French community and heritage. One participant, a mother and a teacher from immersion school said in the interview that educational activities in French support the French language. Speaking French does not mean one has an understanding of the culture. Parents also brought in their

40 « Je pense si c’est une activité française, ça les [enfants] encourage de parler français, d’interroger avec d’autres en français. Oui, parce que ça [les activités parascolaires] les [enfants] encourage à vivre en français ; l’équipe de ballon volant à l’école, eux autres ils s’entraînent en français, comme équipe, ils se parlent en français. Ça montre aux autres aussi que ‘oui, je suis fier d’être francophone même si vous autres ne comprenaient pas nous autres, on parle, puis c’est correct, on est différent, c’est correct. »
interviews that cultural activities give their children more opportunities to live the French culture. Cultural activities help francophones meet other francophones, provide opportunities to speak French and find pleasure in it. This was brought up by some parents in interviews. For example, one of the mothers pointed out that various activities in French help to celebrate francophone identity and encourage people to breathe this culture and enjoy it.

Cultural activities either at school or outside of school help in learning and knowing culture more deeply. They assure that children will be able to speak French even after school, which will help in developing positive attitudes towards francophonie and also reveal that the French language is not restricted only to schools but can be spoken in a bigger world. This was noted in the interview by one mother and by another francophone woman who have their children in a FFL school. The role of extracurricular activities is to help students live the francophone culture; the more activities one has the better. One of the parents also underlined that it was important for children to know where they are from and who they are. Hence, extracurricular activities after school can revive interest in students learning French.

Another francophone woman, a teacher in immersion school and a mother said in her interview that cultural dance, francophone music and cultural activities can help in cultural transmission and understanding of language. The same francophone woman noted that all cultural or extracurricular activities help students to view their culture positively. Students

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41 « ... c’est ça que vous la vivez. Sans les activités dans les cours de français vous pouvez parler autant de français que vous voulez, mais ça ne veut pas dire que tu as une compréhension de la culture parce que tu parle la langue. [Les activités culturels parascolaires] donnent une autre occasion de vivre ... »

42 « ... oui, parce que ça donne une chance à être capable de se servir de la langue française, quand on rencontre d’autres personnes francophones qui parlent le français ... Oui, d’avoir du plaisir en français, ça fait aimer plus le français je pense, c’est que ça leur donne plus l’identité d’être francophone et de vivre et avoir du plaisir en français. »

43 « ... je crois que oui, c’est important d’où on vient, comprendre qui nous sommes et dans ce sens-là, oui. Mais, absolument ! Promouvoir certainement [les activités parascolaires], parce que si on peut intéresser les enfants à quelque chose en français après l’école en ce moment-là on va les avancer.»

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can see that the French language is used not only at school or at home, but even outside of these institutions, there are other activities that could be done in French.\textsuperscript{44}

The same opinion is shared by teachers in immersion schools and the broader community. In the questionnaires they responded that extracurricular cultural events can help in promoting culture and language, forming francophone identity. For example, 5 out of 8 (71.4 percent) of teachers from immersion schools strongly agreed that it can improve students' self-esteem and develop a feeling of belonging to a French community and heritage; 6 out of 8 (85.7 percent) strongly agreed that French-language extracurricular activities help in retaining and defining a French-speaking identity and 6 out of 8 (85.7 percent) strongly agreed that after school activities facilitate French language and promote the culture.

Extracurricular activities seem to play an important part in any school as they involve younger generations in different aspects of social life and society in general. For minority groups, these events appear to be even more valuable in order to sustain their community, culture and traditions.

Thus, my research supports what other research (Bertrand 2004, Carpenter 1979, Gérin-Lajoie 2001, Gérin-Lajoie, Douglas and Roy 2002, Handler 1988, Théberge 2006) has demonstrated. Schools can be a means of promoting culture and language, and extracurricular activities can be used as a tool to achieve this. Curriculum as well as extracurricular activities can and must promote culture. Through these means, children can obtain a positive perception of their culture and identity, and gain a deeper understanding of

\textsuperscript{44} « Alors oui, toutes ces choses je pense aident à l'élève à voir que le français n'est pas juste à l'école ou pas juste à la maison, que on peut l'utiliser en dehors de l'école que il y a d'autres activités qu'ils peuvent faire en français.»
their belonging to the community. French schools and teachers may help students to see that they can be proud of their culture and language and use it freely not only at school, but in other situations as well. Concerts, presentations, drama, and visits to local services introduce students to francophones of the community that can communicate in French. These events will make francophone students confident and proud of their native language, culture and heritage and also make the anglophone public aware of its existence.

According to Lynch and McConatha (2006), culture as a part of social reality is nothing but a set of symbols or objects with certain meanings that have been developed through communications and interpretations by people. Thus, various francophone cultural events will make students of the Peace River region understand and accept the meaning of cultural objects, language and heritage, interpret them and react to them with confidence and pride. It will also help them identify themselves as francophones.

4.6 Obstacles

In spite of different methods that are used by the francophone community of Peace River to promote and preserve their language and culture, many participants of this study pointed out in their interviews some obstacles that prevent or hinder these efforts. The main obstacle in promoting French language is the francophone population itself as was pointed out by a young active francophone teacher. Often anglophones will support francophones when they want to organize a francophone event or group as they understand the idea of a distinct culture, but certain francophones will oppose to the idea in order not to identify themselves as different from the majority. One of the FFL school's administrators makes

45 "Les obstacles, c'est les gens, c'est les francophones eux-mêmes. Quand les francophones veulent faire quelque chose de francophone, les anglophones en général, vont le supporter, ils comprennent l'idée d'une
the following observation that people do not want to be different from others. In choosing non-francophone schools, some parents bring a contradictory opinion about francophone education by pointing out that immersion schools could be enough for children to learn and be fluent in the French language. Some parents are afraid that it would underline their marginal ‘different from others’ status. Thus, understanding of FFL schools and education by some people in the broader community is a challenge for those members that try to work towards promotion and maintenance of the francophone culture in the region.

This participant underlined that FFL schools are different from anglophone schools – the French-speaking community and schools have different habits and traditions, and what is more important, among the anglophone majority they have a culture and language that they have to preserve. Anglophone schools do not work towards preservation of their culture and language as they are a majority, and dominate the region. French language is often sacrificed to English not because a francophone does not want to be different but out of politeness when there are people present who do not speak French. One culturally active francophone and teacher said that if one person does not understand French, bilingual francophones switch to English and this could be observed in staff rooms of schools. By speaking two languages and switching from one language to another francophones sacrifice their language, but this

46 « C’est les obstacles que je trouve, c’est les gens qui ne voient pas l’importance de promouvoir, de faire la promotion [de la langue, de la culture] de poursuivre à faire ça. Il y a des francophones dans la région qui ne veulent pas que leurs enfants parlent français, oui, il y en a qui disent « gars, moi je veux juste qu’il parle le français, je veux rien d’autre, donc je vais le mettre en immersion », ces gens, ils sont forts, puis ils donnent le message contradictoire à ce que nous autres ont dit. Donc, ça c’est un défi, c’est essayer de faire voir à ces gens, que, ils ont fait un choix, puis c’est correct, mais ça ne veut pas dire que ceux qui choisissent l’éducation francophone n’ont pas fait le bon choix. Il y des bons choix pour tout le monde, puis il faut vivre avec le choix qu’on fait. Parce qu’on est différent et une école francophone ce n’est pas une école anglophone, et on ne fonctionnera pas comme une école anglophone. On a des habitudes, on a des coutumes, on a une culture à préserver, puis ce n’est pas ce que les anglophones font. »

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constant sacrifice can lead to francophones not practicing their native language which in turn can lead to assimilation.  

Another obstacle is the number of francophones in the region and lack of interest in francophone activities. Not many francophones stay in the region and many leave Peace River, going to the bigger centres for education or employment. A young local francophone teacher noted that the francophone population is not very big compared with the anglophone majority and it may prevent French language and culture retention. A mother and a teacher from an immersion school pointed out that it will be difficult to attract young people to francophone things as there are not enough francophones to do this.

According to the survey questionnaires from my research, in total 3 out of 8 (37.5 percent) teachers from immersion schools, 4 out of 12 (33.3 percent) parents from the francophone community and 2 out of 7 (28.6 percent) of teachers from the FFL school believe that the number of francophones in the region is declining and it is not possible to do anything about it. Therefore, the assumption that the francophone population is decreasing in the region has certain grounds, and it is one of the obstacles in the process of promotion and maintenance of French culture and language in the region. Besides, lack of interest among francophones in organizing, participating and actively supporting their cultural activities prevents promotion of francophone education. It is an obstacle when teachers try to maintain the culture in the region. A young local francophone teacher noted in her interview that Francophone activities are probably not valued as they were before because society has

47 « La majorité est francophone, parle français, … quand une personne ne comprend pas, la langue, va changer. Nous, parce qu’on parle deux langues, on change, et c’est remarquable dans le staff room, … Il y a des gens, qui si on parlait en français, puis que un anglophone rentrerait, toute la conversation devrait changer en anglais. Je pense qu’ils ne veulent pas rendre les autres mal à l’aise. … Donc on veut se sacrifier, mais si on se sacrifie toujours. … Il a y des conséquences … »

48 Two of the respondents skipped this question.
become more global\textsuperscript{49}. Another young mother pointed out that in order to support francophones it is necessary to make an effort and actively participate in events. Usually the same volunteers organize francophone activities. Often, and at a certain point, they do not feel appreciated; they feel tired of organizing events over and over again\textsuperscript{50}.

This unwillingness could be illustrated by the results from the play that was performed with students from l'École Des Quatre Vents. On the one hand, the project was successful and had a positive impact on students’ perception of French culture and language. On the other hand, some of the results from the survey questionnaires emphasize that there is not much interest among other students. For example, after the project, 4 out of 13 (30.76 percent) students responded that they do not know whether they learned something new about French literature, 3 out of 13 (23.1 percent) responded that they did not learn (find) any new words during the readings and rehearsals. These figures made me think that extracurricular activities may entertain but may not always produce an impact on children’s perception of their language and culture. At the same time, reading sessions indicated that many students, even from grades five and six did not always understand certain parts of the story and needed explanation of new, unfamiliar words or phrases. Thus, there is always something to learn and it was a bit of an exaggeration to say that there was nothing new for them to learn from the activity. It means that there will be always somebody who is ready to learn and participate in events and activities in order to find interesting facts about their own culture; others may be reluctant to participate or may be inattentive or uninterested in

\textsuperscript{49} « ... Les obstacles : un manque d'intérêt d'avoir participer ou d'organiser des activités francophones, peut-être une manque de valeur ce n'est plus une valeur comme ça l'était, puisque on est aussi devenu une population, une société où ... on est beaucoup plus global maintenant. »

\textsuperscript{50} « Oui, parce que ça demande de l'effort, puis la participation des gens pour organiser [des activités], puis c'est toujours les mêmes personnes qui les organisent, qui veulent le faire, donc après un moment, ces personnes sont fatiguées de toujours organiser des choses. »
learning something new about their culture, language and heritage. One young teacher and an active member of the francophone community of Peace River pointed out that there is, and probably always will be some disagreement among francophones about their culture and language. Some will fight and stand up for their culture and activities; others will sacrifice their language in order not to be different from anglophones, for example. Some obstacles remain among francophones themselves.

One more impediment for the francophone community of the Peace River region is its remote location, which limits access to bigger towns and cities that provide a variety of francophone activities and services in French. There are plenty of activities in the region, in Falher, in Jean Côté, but because of the distance, they are not always accessible, as it was noted in the interview by a young francophone mother. Even bigger cities like Edmonton, which is a five hour drive from Peace River, does not provide many choices in such things as music CDs or books in French, and they are often more expensive than in Montréal, for example. This was noted by a teacher from an immersion school and by a parent. Being a minority there are more challenges for students during extracurricular activities such as sports. A young teacher coming from Québec noted in her interview that it was difficult to have sport teams for francophone children because there are simply not enough children that speak French to form a sport’s team. A local francophone woman and a parent remarked that the environment is anglophone. When children are small they tend to speak more French, but

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51 « Un problème, c’est la distance,... Des fois ce n’est pas toujours disponible et facile. Alors, on a plusieurs idées, des activités [à Falher, Jean Côté, etc.] mais encore à cause de la distance ce n’est pas nécessairement toujours accessible. »

52 « Si je veux me trouver un livre en français, je dois passer par l’internet ou encore descendre à Edmonton qui est en longue distance, c’est quand même 5 heures de route,... puis c’est difficile à trouver des disques de musique, même à Edmonton, car sélection n’est pas très grande. Mais ce problème c’est que c’est tout à gros prix. Ce n’est pas comme à Montréal qu’on a qu’aller à la bouquinerie puis trouver un livre pas cher. »

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later on, observing adults speaking English there might be a tendency to switch into English as well. A young mother coming from Québec noted that living in a minority reality is always an obstacle as children are bombarded by anglophone influence (games are one example) or this is quite difficult for francophones to organize big sport event in French as they will not be able to attract enough interested francophones. Thus, on a linguistic level francophone sport events are not competitive with anglophone ones. In the mass media, most shows and films are in English. There are plenty of possibilities in music, theatre or sports, but the majority are in English as noted by a francophone woman, a parent and a teacher.

Consequently, the francophone community of Peace River has a minority status and faces many difficulties and obstacles in their efforts to preserve culture and language; therefore, it is still necessary to promote French culture in the region. This can be done through organizing and participating in different francophone holidays, celebrations and festivals and also through education. French as first language schools and their services in the region are a great advantage and achievement for francophone families and their children. They make it is possible to preserve French language, transmit francophone culture and form francophone identity in younger generations.

4.7 Future of the French-speaking community

By examining achievements and difficulties of the French-speaking community of the region, my interviewees and I and my interviewees tried to predict the future of

53 « L'environnement je crois bien que c'est vraiment fort anglais, puis je pense qu'on les parle beaucoup en français quand ils sont jeunes, mais ensuite quand ils regardent dans les entours ils voient les adultes qui parlent beaucoup en anglais »

54 « Alors mes enfants jouent beaucoup de sports et ils vont souvent voir des films souvent mais c'est en anglais, alors c'est difficile d'être en compétition avec ces activités anglophones parce que il y en a beaucoup. Alors on peut faire la danse, le théâtre, on fait des sports, mais tout est en anglais. »

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francophones in Peace River. The majority of the interviewed participants were optimistic about the future of the francophone community in Peace River. There are already positive changes – two FFL schools (l’École Des Quatre Vents and l’École Heritage) in the region and the possibility of acquiring francophone education from kindergarten till grade twelve. Students may then enter Universities and faculties that are available in different cities and provinces. There are young francophones and Québécois that come to the region and establish themselves, starting their families and participating in cultural events of the region. Teachers in FFL schools note that they meet young students at school that are ready to stand up for the *francophonie* to the end. Thus, one FFL school administrator noted that it was three or four active parents who stood up for francophone ideas and for the province to guarantee French linguistic rights and at present there are students who are ready to continue these achievements. A young teacher coming from Québec said that there is a future, there are services that were not available before and now they will help to preserve the language. Another young local francophone teacher remarked that people from Québec who arrive in the region are open to the local francophone culture that has been established here. Québécois do not want to change it, but they want to become a part of it.

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55 « Je suis très positive. On a encore des gens qui sont, qui veulent avoir du français, qui veulent poursuivre [la culture] ... C’était avec trois ou quatre parents forts, puis qui ont dit on veut ça, puis c’était trois ou quatre parents-là se sont battu pour la province. Puis il y a encore des trois-quatre élèves que je vois dans ma classe qui veulent aller jusqu’au bout. ... Il y a de l’avenir ... »

56 « ... maintenant il y en a trois [écoles] dans la région. Donc c’est sûr qu’il y a un avenir. ... il y a des services qui sont offerts aussi qu’il y avait pas autrefois, donc je pense que ces gens tiennent vraiment à garder leur langue. »

57 « ... Je vois un nombre de gens qui arrivent dans la communauté qui sont Québécois, puis qui sont ouverts à la culture francophone qui est déjà établie ici, qui ne viennent pas pour essayer de la changer ou de la former comme leur communauté francophone au Québec ou ailleurs, mais qui sont vraiment prêts à s’ouvrir à la culture qui est déjà établi, donc oui, je suis très positive ... »
Thus, the francophone community is being revived in the region and there are people that want to live their lives in French that are ready to make an effort to support French culture. One of the FFL school’s staff members is very positive. She said that there are many young people who want to come back, start their families and this will help the French language to regain a stronger position.

It will take time to heighten the status of the francophone community and people, but it is gaining its place among the anglophone population due to the FFL school board and also L’ACFA (Association Canadienne Française d’Alberta) that stands for sound integration and promotion of French language and culture, as was pointed out by one of the francophone activists and a teacher. The visibility can ensure that French culture and language survives and that it is necessary to speak French in public more often.58

A francophone woman and a parent said that it might take some time, but there is hope that the francophone community has a future in the region. It was also pointed out by a local francophone teacher that to her amazement young francophones from the region, that left after graduating, have started coming back and establishing their families. More francophones have decided to live their lives in French because they value French language and culture59. One of the parents and a teacher from immersion school said that French culture is going to be maintained because this community is a little bit closed but also

58 « Je suis optimiste parce que cette année, conseil intègre aux activités anglophones existantes. … parce que je pense que c’est la, c’est la vision, c’est la visibilité qui va assurer à continuer. Il faut qu’en public on se parle en français plus. »
59 « Oui je suis assez positive. … Oui, je suis positive, parce que je suis émerveillée par le montant de gens, de personnes, qui étaient dans ma classe au secondaire en douzième année, sont revenues dans la région, puis qui commencent à avoir des familles, qui décident de vivre leurs vies en français, qui décident que c’est une valeur, donc je suis très positive … »
because the children of the francophone community often come back and stay in the community\textsuperscript{60}.

The presence of FFL schools in the region and the desire of parents to send their children to these schools will sustain French language and culture in Peace River and can ensure a positive future for the French-speaking community. Many parents hope and rely on it, and through education, students can acquire a better knowledge of French and also feel at ease speaking French in public. One parent hopes for the best; if FFL schools stay in the region, if parents continue encouraging their children to speak French, then there is future.

A woman, a parent and a teacher believes that the presence of FFL schools leads the francophone community in a very good direction. According to the data of this study a francophone education gives plenty of possibilities for present students. They can be taught in a francophone environment from kindergarten till grade twelve and this is a great achievement. They learn how to value their language, culture and heritage. Another advantage is that francophone students feel at ease and fluent in French as well as English, as they are taught this language at schools as well. Moreover, they are not embarrassed anymore to speak French\textsuperscript{61}. Thus, according to participants of this study the future of the francophone community of the Peace River region is promising.

\textsuperscript{60} « Dans la région, je crois, ça va se maintenir parce que comme j’ai dit [la communauté] est un peu fermé, mais ce qui est bien en même temps, parce que souvent les enfants reviennent et restent dans la communauté. »

\textsuperscript{61} « Oui, je pense que c’est de plus en plus [mieux]. De plus, qu’on a une école francophone ici, on a l’école francophone à Falher. Ici on a la maternelle à la sixième année, ensuite nos élèves peuvent aller de la septième à douze [l’école Héritage à Falher]. C’est la bonne direction, ça fait quand même huit ans qu’on a une école ici et ça fait de vingt ans à Falher, alors je pense que cela aide déjà beaucoup. Quand je parle aux jeunes qui ont fréquenté ces écoles-là, je peux voir la différence dans leur langue, je peux voir qu’ils sont très à l’aise à parler en français, puis ne sont pas gênés de parler en français et peuvent aussi bien parler en anglais. Alors oui, je pense que c’est positive. »
From the previous discussion, the following is evident: the French culture and language of the Peace River region has become a mix of Québécois culture from early, middle and late twentieth century, together with the influence of assimilation and intercultural marriages. According to Lynch and McConatha (2006), social reality is nothing, but a set of symbols that have certain meanings to them, thus, the social reality of the francophones of Peace River is socially constructed. It consists of events that have certain meanings to francophones and they act upon them according to these meanings, which becomes symbolic. For example, language and cultural practices at school and during community activities are assigned particular meanings, such as preservation, transmission and retention of francophone culture and language. In this case, FFL schools and teachers play an important role; they act as agents and tools of resocialization of younger generations, they promote positive meanings and attitudes towards francophone culture and language and through interaction they develop positive meanings of francophone identity. People "establish social structure and culture, and they maintain social organizations" (Mains 1984:206). Thus, the francophones of Peace River symbolically construct their culture. Teachers in this regard are the models who transmit language, culture and a sense of belonging to a francophone group. Curricular, as well as extracurricular francophone activities are another example of social construction through which certain symbols could be assigned to French language and culture. Cultural activities and legislation amendments towards supporting francophone culture in Canada have improved the status of this culture and language. There have been positive changes in society that allow francophones to sustain their culture, language and heritage through education, cultural events and the state bylaw of two official languages.
The theory of symbolic interactionism helps in understanding the peculiarities of French culture in the Peace River region. Thus, French language in this research acquires dual symbolism; as a language in its pure sense French is a set of symbols through which people communicate. French is also symbolic because is used by francophones in the anglophone majority which distinguishes French-speakers from any other group. According to Mead (1964), people's actions are dictated by the meanings of things and change through communication. Therefore, French language and culture acquire certain meanings to francophones and to anglophones of the region. These meanings have been developing throughout the history of Northern Alberta, along with certain attitudes.
Chapter Five  
Conclusion and Discussion

This ethnographic research took place in the French-speaking communities of the Peace River region in Alberta. It is a regional centre providing French education services to the francophone population of Peace River and neighbouring towns and villages where French-speakers constitute a certain majority.

Language is defined as a mark of our belonging to a certain group or as Mead (1964) puts it, as a set of symbols which is used by a certain group of people. It plays a differentiating role and is often at the very heart of conflict between majority and minority groups. Language is also studied as a central element of identity construction. Therefore, the main questions of my research were: 1) have French as first language (FFL) schools succeeded in promoting a positive attitude towards French language and culture among francophones as well as among anglophones in the Peace River region? 2) Could an elementary FFL school be an effective tool in promoting and constructing French identity and a sense of belonging to a French-speaking community? Along with these questions I had additional questions: 3) what is culture? 4) Can it be taught? Besides this, in the applied part of this study I formulated the following hypothesis: education and extracurricular activities can help in culture and identity promotion.

This study revealed that FFL schools of the Peace River region, Alberta, with the help of legislation in favour of French language school instruction, have produced a positive effect among francophones and anglophones of the region towards French language and culture.
According to Prokop (1989), at different periods of time, schools in Alberta were the main tool of either assimilation or of identity promotion. For example, according to Bouchard (1994), francophones of Peace River in the 1990s were obliged to speak English and assimilation seemed inevitable, “young francophones almost exclusively speak English, even if they know French, because they are more at ease speaking in English” (Bouchard 1994:129). Nevertheless, my recent research gives a more positive perspective. The status of French language and culture in the Peace River region has been rising. It has acquired a more advantageous position and has become more valued by francophones and also accepted by many anglophones of the region. Francophones are able to live their culture and use their language through FFL schools, and through activities that are being organized and promoted in the community by schools, boards and public associations. Their aim is to preserve culture and language and promote it among francophones as well as in the broader anglophone public. These acts acquire a symbolic character for the francophone culture in a minority context.

According to symbolic interactionism theory (Blumer 1980, 1986; Lynch and McConatha 2006; Mains 1984; Mead 1934, 1964; Prus 2007), francophone culture of Peace River is socially constructed and maintained by such social organizations as Conseil Francophone du Nord-Ouest #1, FFL schools of the region, and through social events, organized by francophones. By maintaining and preserving French language and culture at schools and during social events, French-speakers can define and preserve their identity. Schools, where minority language and culture can be transmitted, become a privileged place where ethnic identity can be built and culture reproduced.
Thus, an elementary FFL school can be an effective tool in promoting and constructing French identity and a sense of belonging to a French-speaking community. French as first language schools in the Peace River region become a representation of symbolic interaction where it is possible to promote language and culture, teach cultural values and beliefs and develop a sense of belonging to the francophone community of the region and to the global francophonie. Francophone teachers help develop confidence in new generations. Being French should not be considered as advantageous or disadvantageous in their future. It is necessary to reinforce that being French is the identity of the students and their being. It is important to stress to students and adults that they belong to a group of people by sharing common heritage, culture, language. Through education, it is possible to acquire knowledge about ancestors and about the world. At schools and in classrooms it is possible to transmit culture and language and help to form identity. Therefore, staff members of l'École Des Quatre Vents use various means of French language promotion, such as posters, announcements, and oral reminders in French. They organize cultural events during the school year, such as Christmas celebrations, the winter Carnival, celebrations of the French language week, story-telling about francophone ancestors, and various contests. Teachers invite theatrical groups and individuals to come and through entertainment reinforce students’ awareness and understanding of their French identity. These interactions become symbolic as community members communicating in French assign certain meanings to French cultural practices and demonstrate certain attitudes and behaviour toward these practices and experiences.

The main purpose of these activities is to bring community members together and to meet and enjoy a variety of events and shows, through which it is possible to maintain
francophone culture and heritage as well as transmit it to the future generations. These activities accomplish cultural transmission by showing Western French identity as alive and dynamic, the elements that are unique about this culture, that French is spoken by hundreds of people in the town of Peace River and thousands of people in the larger area and that there is something in French culture people can be proud of. It is important that people have the right to live and to experience their culture to the fullest and to speak their language without any embarrassment but with dignity and pride. This reflects the dual symbolism of a French language because it is a set of symbols and a tool for expressing oneself and forming identity. Through various events it is necessary to stress that though most francophones of the region are bilingual, their identity is French. It is vital to keep in mind and clarify to students that bilingualism is not their identity or ethnicity. They may speak two or more languages, but it is doubtful they will have two identities. This reflects the statement from the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1967) about culture: “culture to the group is rather what personality is to the individual: it is rare for a person to have two personalities or two styles of living at the same time” (RCBB1967:xxxii). Consequently, teachers should emphasize that learning and speaking two or many languages is good from the point of bilingualism but it does not make one’s identity bilingual.

In regard to culture and language promotion, all the participants of this research pointed out the positive effect of extracurricular cultural activities that could be offered to students at FFL schools or after school. These activities give them an opportunity to use their language in different situations and throughout different events, not only during class hours. According to Carpenter (1979), cultural traits can be preserved in music, dance, paintings, stories, myths and plays. Theatre can combine these forms and can help in transmitting
culture and language, shaping identity and promoting a sense of belonging to the community. Handler (1988) and Théberge (2006) believe that school theatre classes and extracurricular activities can help in promoting French language, traditions and customs, and retaining and defining French-speaking identity. Participation in such activities may motivate children to learn their ‘mother tongue’ and to cherish their culture and identity. It can develop their sense of belonging to the francophonie and reinforce their competence and self-esteem.

Thus, my hypothesis that education and extracurricular activities in a francophone minority context can help in cultural promotion is true. Cultural activities at FFL schools or outside the classroom can encourage students to speak French and feel comfortable being francophones. They motivate students to learn and know their culture in a more profound way, and help them develop a positive attitude towards the francophonie and French culture, which is the culture and identity of the students. Cultural activities in French, which are proposed to students and larger francophone families in the Peace River region, can help to transmit and improve language skills and can create a positive attitude, thus demonstrate that French-speaking culture is alive in the region and that it is possible to live that culture and articulate it.

In addition, students pointed out that participating in extracurricular activities made them less timid. Activities in French are very much needed. They demand efforts from community members, but in order to maintain and sustain French culture and language in the region and transmit its values to future generations, these activities are necessary. Through personal experience, working with the students of l’École Des Quatre Vents it became obvious that most of them enjoyed extracurricular cultural activities and that these activities made it possible for them to learn more about French language and culture.
In regard to the question of defining culture, the following explanation was given by the participants of this study: culture is the means of communications, the common, shared spoken language together with traditions, holiday celebrations, habits, beliefs, common values and identity that have been acquired and experienced by a certain group of individuals from birth and throughout life. Culture is a way of life that includes heritage, music, literature, theatre, sense of humour, fashion, eating habits and other things people do together and share. This repeats the core points that have been identified in the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism of Canada in 1967. People are united by a common tongue, by traditions and by experience.

Therefore, in order to teach culture it should be lived or experienced, as it was conveyed by my interviewees of the francophone community of Peace River. It is possible to teach the theory of culture, certain aspects of culture, differences and similarities, but the main opinion of the interviewed francophones was that culture should be lived, and FFL schools, apart from families, can help children in experiencing and living French culture through instructional time and extracurricular activities.

Recommendations

In order to effectively carry out these practices these are my recommendations:

1. My research suggests that FFL schools in anglophone milieu can be an effective tool in promoting a positive attitude to French language and identity. However, financial and technical as well as professional development support for teachers and school would improve the work of FFL schools.

2. In my observations it became clear that different francophone activities, such as le Carnaval, theatrical or scientific presentation that were organized by teachers of l'École
Des Quatre Vents, francophone parents and a school board produced a positive effect on French language use among students. It is recommended that FFL schools continue collaborative work in the community in order to remedy the loss of language experienced as a result of assimilation and to keep French language and culture alive in the Peace River region.

3. To reinforce French language use and a positive culture identity among students of l'École Des Quatre Vents in Peace River and other FFL schools in the region it would be important to continue to organize extracurricular activities such as: drama presentations, sport events, French holidays celebrations in order to encourage children use French language outside the classroom and reinforce a positive identity and strong self-esteem. If possible, it is recommended that more time be dedicated to the organization and practice of such activities. At least 30 minutes a day, twice or three times a week, depending on when the activity will be, is a good amount of time.

4. My research suggests that teachers of FFL schools are the models of French language and identity; therefore, French teachers must be proactive to ensure that they use proper French words in their conversations at school. I observed that sometimes English words were working their way into the conversations, perhaps unconsciously. Thus, additional training or workshops in French language vocabulary could be recommended to francophone teachers. Professional development subsidies usually are provided by Alberta Education to French teachers for improvement of their teaching, techniques and strategies (Alberta Education).

5. I observed relatively positive ties between the francophones communities of the region. There is a will among French speakers to attend various cultural events, but sometimes
time and distance make it difficult. It is recommended that French-speakers continue to find ways of better coordinating their efforts to maximize the participation of all French-speakers from the entire region in St. Isidore’s Carnaval, or Falher’s Honey Festival or Jean Coté’s celebrations.

According to Deveau et al. (2004), Roy (2006), Gérin-Lajoie (2006), the role of FFL schools today is essential in the protection, promotion and reproduction of French language and culture. This research revealed that with effort, francophones of the Peace River region can sustain their culture and language and prevent assimilation. It could be worked towards integration with the anglophone majority and other communities while retaining their rights to freedom of expression and cultural practices.

The objectives set out in this research have been achieved. Francophone education plays a significant role in French language and culture promotion in a Western minority context. The present study also has added to the body of knowledge about the general role of francophone education in Canada. The research finding of the present works is that the Peace River region, Alberta which is a minority francophone milieu was able to sustain French language and culture. The future of French-speaking community of Peace River, Alberta, in Western Canada seems positive. However, there are still some obstacles facing this francophone community - the anglophone majority, the tendency to speak more English than French, the distance from bigger centres and the availability of French-speaking services in town as well as various disagreements among francophones.
Appendices

Appendix I Information Sheet and Consent Form

Appendix II Interview Protocol (Protocole d’Interview)

Appendix III Pre-project questionnaires for children

Appendix IV After-project questionnaires for children

Appendix V Questionnaires for the adults (teachers from a FFL school)

Appendix VI Questionnaires for adults (teachers from an immersion school)

Appendix VII Questionnaires for adults (francophone parents)
Appendix I Information Sheet and Consent Form

Applying Anthropology to the Research and Promotion of French-speaking Minority Communities in Western Canada

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Chair of Anthropological Program
Associate Professor
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Telephone: 1-250-960-5643
Fax: 1-250-960-5545
E-mail: michel@unbc.ca

Title of project: “Studying Minority Francophone Culture and Community In Western Canada”: Applying Anthropology and Education to the Research of French-speaking Communities in Western Canada.

Type of project: Thesis

Purpose of Research: I, Natalya Veresovaya, the graduate student at UNBC, am conducting the present research project in order to better understand the history and the anthropology of the French-speaking communities of Northern Alberta (the Peace River Region). The purpose is to understand the present state of the French language and culture in these regions and the role that French-language education has played in maintaining the language and

62 Information and Consent forms were available to the participants in French
building community. The research aims to better understand those social and cultural factors that help to maintain the French language and promote its use in the community. To better understand the process of language use, this project will equally be conducting ethnographic research on the region and seeking to write a comprehensive historical ethnography of the French-speaking communities of Western Canada in British Columbia and Alberta.

**Potential Risks and Benefits:** Though there are no physical or medical risks involved in the project, there may be personal and social risks. Some of the information discussed might be of a personal nature and could cause some embarrassment if revealed to the researcher or the larger public. Though the researcher will be working to ensure confidentiality and will consult with research participants whether they want to use their words in publication, there is a slight risk that there will still be some information revealed that might cause social discomfort. However, the research will provide important benefits as it will shed light on the community and the memories of the research participants will be recorded for future generations.

**Selection of respondents and nature of participation:** You have been chosen as a participant of this research because of your connection to the project. For the for the questionnaires and interviews the respondents will be chosen either at random from the larger community (parents, school staff, other community members etc.) or based on an identification of community members that play a crucial role in French-language education in the region (school principal, school board members, etc.). Participants in the research will be solicited for interviews or for filling out questionnaires. This research will also require the gathering of information in schools, notably in having pupils complete a short questionnaire. You will be asked to dedicate some time to Natalya Veresovaya for the participation in the interview or group discussion. The participants will be asked to complete the anonymous questionnaires.

The nature of the participation in the research is voluntary and the respondents and the participants will have rights to withdraw at any time, or have their children withdraw from the participation. This right will be mentioned in the consent form before the participants signs it.

**Anonymity and confidentiality:** Natalya Veresovaya assures you that information that will be given in questionnaires and interviews will be confidential and anonymous. The content will be used only for the publication of the thesis or in the academic scientific journals. The names and personality of the participants will be coded and all the data provided will be done with complete anonymity and confidentiality. The identity of participants will only be disclosed with their consent and participants will be given an opportunity to read the material prior to publication and will have the right to have any material in which they are cited removed from the publication.

The information from the questionnaires will be also treated in a way to respect anonymity and confidentiality.

**Keeping the data:** All the gathered data (tapes, questionnaires, transcriptions, notes and other) will be kept in a secure place till the Master's Thesis Defense of Natalya Veresovaya.
Who will have access to respondents' responses: The access to the participants’ responses and data will only have the researcher, Natalya Veresovaya – the graduate student at UNBC, a questioned or interviewed participant and possibly the supervisor, Dr. Michel Bouchard Chair of Anthropology, Associate Professor of Anthropology.

How information is stored and for how long: Pertaining to the research data, all recordings of interviews will be stored securely on the Social Sciences Lab server at UNBC with a restricted access to it only by Natalya Veresovaya and possibly supervisor. All other data collected as a part of this research will be kept in a safe location of the researcher’s private residence with the limited access to it by the researcher and possibly the supervisor. This information will be kept confidential (unless indicated otherwise by a research participant) and stored indefinitely. If warranted, this information may be transferred to a municipal or provincial archive for future safekeeping if deemed of historical interest.

Freedom of participation and freedom to withdraw from the research: You participation in the research is volunteer and thus you are free to refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time, and/or refuse to answer some questions, without any consequences. If you choose to withdraw from the research, the information that was gathered will be given back to you or erased and not figure in the research and its publication.

If the question arise or in order to obtain more information on the project or to get copies of research results and publications, please contact Dr. Michel Bouchard (Associate Professor Anthropology Program) or the researcher Natalya Veresovaya with the contact information provided here at the beginning.

Should problems arise, concerns and complaints should be directed to the Vice President Research at UNBC, Tel: 1-250-960-5820.
For the ethical aspects of this research you could address to the Research Ethic Board, UNBC, 3333 University Way, Prince George, BC, V2N 4Z9. Tel: 1-250-960-5746

The consent form will be attached to this information sheet. You will be asked to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to each question and you will be asked to approve you participation in the project orally before the interview. You consent will be recorded before the interview itself.

Signatures: I have read and understood the information sheet and I certify that I was able to ask any question concerning the project and got the satisfied answers. I certify that I had time to read the information and think it over. I understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time.

I sign and accept the participation in the research.
This is a consent form for the participant of the project. Answer 'yes' or 'no' orally.

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Appendix II Interview Protocol (Protocole d’Interview)

Projet: La thèse de la Maîtrise «Étudiant la Culture et la Communauté Française minoritaire du Canada de l’Ouest»: une analyse anthropologique et pédagogique de la communauté francophone de l’Ouest du Canada.

Le temps d’Interview: 

La date: 

La place: 

Interviewer: Natalya Veresovaya, une étudiante de la deuxième cycle de UNBC

Interviewé: 

Position de l’interviewé: 

a) Le but de la recherche est de mener cette recherche pour obtenir une plus profondément compréhension d’histoire et d’anthropologie de la communauté francophones du Nord de l’Alberta (la région de Rivière-la-Paix au Canada). Le but de la recherche est de comprendre l’état actuel de la langue et de la culture Françaises de ces régions et le rôle de l’éducation de la langue française afin de maintenir ce langage et le sentiment d’appartenance à cette communauté. Le chercheur veut avoir une meilleure compréhension des facteurs culturels et sociaux qui aident à maintenir le français de même qu’à promouvoir son usage à l’intérieur de la communauté. Afin de mieux comprendre le processus de l’usage de la langue, ce projet effectuera une histoire orale sur la région étudiée et cherchera à écrire une ethnographie historique compréhensive des communautés francophones de l’ouest du Canada, plus précisément en Alberta. La recherche poursuit de comprendre quoi est le rôle des écoles et d’enseignement Français dans la sauvegarde et la protection de la langue et la culture Françaises et comment est leurs rôle dans la promotion une identité francophone. Cette recherche ne regardera pas seulement sur le rôle des écoles pendant les classes, mais va aussi évaluer comment les activités créatives complémentaires promeuvent la culture Française et peuvent être un moyen effectif dans une promotion positive d’identité et de le sens d’appartenance à une communauté francophone.

b) Bien qu’il n’y ait pas de risques physiques ou médicaux possibles dans cette recherche, il y a des risques personnels et sociaux. Certain l’information discutée peut être de caractère personnel et peut causer un embarras pour la personne si elle est révélée au chercheur ou au grand public. Bien que l’équipe de recherche travaillera afin d’assurer la confidentialité et consultera les participants lorsqu’elle utilisera leur discours dans une éventuelle publication, il y a un mince risque qu’une partie de l’information révélée puisse causer un inconfort social. Toutefois, cette recherche apportera d’importants bénéfices puisqu’elle valorisera les communautés. De plus, les souvenirs des participants seront enregistrés au bénéfice des générations d’avenir.

c) Les identités des participants seront découverts s’ils donnent leurs permissions ; les participants auront l’opportunité de lire les écrits avant qu’ils soient publiés et auront le droit de retirer du texte tous les passages dans lesquels ils sont cités. Pour chaque questionnaire, toute information recueillie sera traitée avec un souci permanent de respecter l’anonymat et la confidentialité. tous les enregistrements des entrevues seront gardés en sécurité dans le serveur du Laboratoire des Sciences Sociales d’UNBC. Seulement le chercheur ainsi que ses assistants de recherche auront accès aux enregistrements et autres données recueillies lors de cette recherche. L’information sera gardée confidentielle et conservée indéfiniment, à moins qu’un participant de la recherche n’en indique le contraire. Si garantie, l’information pourra
être transférée aux archives municipales ou provinciales s’il est jugé qu’il en sera plus sécuritaire pour l’intérêt historique.

Les questions (pour les informants principaux – les gardes, les professeurs, les parents et d’autres membres de la communauté):

1. Est-ce que vous êtes natif de la région de Rivière-la-Paix?
2. Où êtes-vous né? Si vous êtes né dans la région, votre famille est originaire d’où et quand est-ce qu’elle est venue s’établir dans la région?
3. Où avez-vous grandi et où avez-vous fréquenté l’école?
4. Quelle était la langue d’instruction à votre école?
5. Quelle langue avez-vous parlé à la maison quand vous étiez enfant?
6. Vos parents, étaient (sont)-ils tous les deux francophones?
7. Quelle était leur langue d’instruction à l’école? Ont-ils fréquenté une école française?
8. Quelle langue parlez-vous à la maison maintenant?
9. Quelle est votre identité?
10. Est-ce que votre identité est différente de celle de vos parents?
11. Que sera-t-elle, pensez-vous, l’identité de vos enfants?
12. Croyez-vous qu’il y a une communauté francophone ici en région?
13. Est-ce que vous participez à la vie communautaire d’une communauté francophone? Si oui, pour vous quelle est votre communauté francophone?
14. La culture et la langue française en région, sont-elles valorisées dans la région?
15. Est-ce que le statut de la langue et de la culture Françaises ont changé selon vous dans la région de Rivière-la-Paix? (Est-ce que la langue et la culture sont plus ou moins valorisées qu’auparavant, notamment lorsque vos parents grandissaient?)
16. C’est quoi la culture pour vous?
17. Qu’est-ce c’est la culture francophone pour vous?
18. La culture francophone ici en région est-elle différente des autres cultures dans la province et dans le pays? Pourquoi? Est-ce que la culture francophone en région est différente de la culture québécoise?
19. [Question pour les parents] Pourquoi avez-vous choisi d’inscrire vos enfants à une école francophone?
20. [Question pour les enseignants] Selon vous, pourquoi les parents inscrivent-ils leurs enfants à une école francophone?
21. Quels sont les défis pour les enfants qui étudient dans une école francophone?
22. Peut-on enseigner la culture? Si oui, où et comment et par qui?
23. L’éducation, peut-elle améliorer le statut linguistique de la langue et la culture Françaises ici en région?
24. Quels sont les rôles de l’école francophone et les professeurs qui y enseignent dans la promotion et de la transmission de la langue et de la culture?
25. Est-ce que les activités culturelles peuvent promouvoir le statut de la langue Française ? (télévision, théâtre, music, sport)?
26. Les activités culturelles complémentaires, peuvent-elles aider transmettre la langue et la culture Françaises aux générations futures?
27. Quelles étaient les activités culturelles complémentaires proposées aux étudiants dans le passé?
28. Qu’est-ce qu’on fait ici en région pour promouvoir et préserver la langue et la culture Françaises?
29. Quels sont les obstacles qui empêchent ou entravent ces efforts?
30. Qu’est-ce qu’on peut faire davantage pour sauvegarder la langue et la culture en région?
31. [Question pour les parents] Quels sont les plus grands défis que vous devez affronter pour assurer que vos enfants vont maintenir leur langue et culture dans l’avenir?
32. [Question pour les enseignants] Quels sont les plus grands défis que vous devez affronter en tant qu’enseignant pour assurer que vos élèves vont maintenir leur langue et culture dans l’avenir?
33. Selon vous, quel est l’avenir de la communauté francophone de la région? (Alberta)? Est-ce que vous êtes optimiste de l’avenir de la langue et la culture en région? Pourquoi?
34. Qu’est-ce qu’on peut faire davantage pour promouvoir une attitude vis-à-vis de la culture et la langue Françaises ici en région et dans la province et le pays?
### Appendix III Pre-project questionnaires for children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Oui</th>
<th>Non</th>
<th>Je ne sais pas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Aimes-tu étudier en Français?</td>
<td>21/28 (75%)</td>
<td>3/28 (10.7%)</td>
<td>4/28 (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 personne n’a pas répondu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Aimes-tu lire en Français?</td>
<td>17/28 (60.7%)</td>
<td>6/28 (21.4%)</td>
<td>5/28 (17.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 personne n’a pas répondu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Aimes-tu chanter en Français?</td>
<td>9/28 (32.1%)</td>
<td>14/28 (50%)</td>
<td>5/28 (17.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 personne n’a pas répondu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Regardes-tu la télé en Français?</td>
<td>5/28 (17.8%)</td>
<td>21/28 (75%)</td>
<td>2/28 (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 personne n’a pas répondu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Quelle est ta matière ou leçon préférée à l’école?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math – 4 – 18% (seulement); Science – 1 – 4.5%; 3 – 13.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etudes Social – 1 – 4.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Physique – 6 – 27.3%; Education Physique – 3 – 13.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art – 1 – 4.5%; 2 – 9.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliothèque – 2 – 9.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Quelle langue parles-tu pendant la récréation ?</td>
<td><em>3</em> Français 10.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>6</em> Anglais 21.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>19</em> Anglais et Français 67.85%</td>
<td><em>Autre</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Quelle langue parles-tu à la maison?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>5</em> Français 17.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>9</em> Anglais 32.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>14</em> Anglais et Français 50%</td>
<td><em>Autre</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Voudrais-tu participer dans une pièce ou conte en Français?</td>
<td>17/28 (60.7%)</td>
<td>4/28 (17.3%)</td>
<td>7/28 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Penses-tu que ce serait intéressant à mettre en scène une pièce de théâtre ou un conte en Français?</td>
<td>18/28 (64.3%)</td>
<td>3/28 (10.7%)</td>
<td>7/25 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Est-ce que ce serait difficile pour toi?</td>
<td>3/28 (10.7%)</td>
<td>16/28 (57.14%)</td>
<td>9/28 (32.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Est-ce que ce serait intéressant pour toi?</td>
<td>18/28 (64.3%)</td>
<td>4/28 (14.3%)</td>
<td>6/28 (21.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Est-ce que ce t’aidera à mieux parler Français?</td>
<td>11/28 (39.3%)</td>
<td>4/28 (14.3%)</td>
<td>13/28 (46.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix IV After –project questionnaires for children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Oui</th>
<th>Non</th>
<th>Je ne sais pas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. J’ai bien aimé participer dans la production d’une pièce de théâtre (ou d’un conte) en français.</td>
<td>10/13 (76.9%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3/13 (23.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. J’ai adoré travailler sur cette pièce de théâtre (ou conte).</td>
<td>8/13 (61.53%)</td>
<td>2/13 (5.4%)</td>
<td>3/13 (23.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. J’ai bien aimé les répétitions de la pièce de théâtre ou conte?</td>
<td>7/13 (53.84%)</td>
<td>4/13 (30.76%)</td>
<td>2/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. J’aimais toutes les préparations pour la pièce de théâtre (ou conte) notamment la création des costumes, des décorations, et ainsi de suite).</td>
<td>11/13 (84.6%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2/13 (15.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. C’était inspirant de participer dans une pièce de théâtre (ou conte) et paraître sur la scène.</td>
<td>10/13 (76.92%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3/13 (23.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. J’ai appris beaucoup de nouveaux mots pendant cette activité (pendant la lecture et les pratiques).</td>
<td>9/13 (69.23%)</td>
<td>3/13 (23.1%)</td>
<td>1/13 (7.69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. En participant dans une pièce de théâtre (ou conte) française, j’ai appris plus sur la littérature et les écrivains français et trouvé les personnages de la littérature française très intéressants.</td>
<td>7/13 (53.84%)</td>
<td>2/13 (15.4%)</td>
<td>4/13 (30.76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. J’aidais les autres élèves pendant les préparations et pendant les présentations.</td>
<td>9/13 (69.23%)</td>
<td>2/13 (15.4%)</td>
<td>2/13 (15.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Mes amis m’aident pendant les répétitions.</td>
<td>7/13 (53.84%)</td>
<td>3/13 (23.1%)</td>
<td>3/13 (23.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. C’était difficile pour moi de prendre part dans cette activité (préparations pour la pièce de théâtre ou le conte) et apparaître sur scène.</td>
<td>5/13 (38.46%)</td>
<td>6/13 (46.15%)</td>
<td>2/13 (15.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Après avoir participé dans cette pièce de théâtre, je voudrais avoir plus d’activités culturelles en français</td>
<td>10/13 (76.92%)</td>
<td>1/13 (7.69%)</td>
<td>2/13 (15.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Les répétitions pour la pièce de théâtre et l’apparition sur la scène m’ont aidée à être moins timide et plus attentif aux camarades.</td>
<td>7/13 (53.84%)</td>
<td>2/13 (15.4%)</td>
<td>4/13 (30.76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Les répétitions et l’apparition sur la scène m’ont aidé à être plus créatif dans mes autres classes à l’école</td>
<td>5/13 (38.5%)</td>
<td>3/13 (23.1%)</td>
<td>5/13 (38.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix V Questionnaires for the adults (teachers from a FFL school, based on 9 respondents)\textsuperscript{63}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions/Assertions</th>
<th>Ce n'ai pas juste</th>
<th>Pas juste avec modération</th>
<th>En peu contre</th>
<th>Neutre</th>
<th>En peu d'accord</th>
<th>Juste avec modération</th>
<th>C'est juste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) La langue et la culture Françaises ne sont pas appréciées en Alberta.</td>
<td>3/9 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/9 (44.4%)</td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) La langue et la culture françaises ont un statut plus élevé maintenant que dans le passé</td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2/9 (22.2%)</td>
<td>2/9 (22.2%)</td>
<td>4/9 (44.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) C’est nécessaire de promouvoir la culture et la langue Françaises dans la région de Rivière-la-Paix</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td>7/9 (77.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Le nombre des francophones diminue et il n’est pas possible d’arrêter ce déclin</td>
<td>4/7 (57.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Ce serait désolant si la langue Française disparaissait dans la région.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9/9 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) La langue Française est la langue dont je parle à la maison avec ma famille.</td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8/9 (88.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) C’est difficile de maintenir la langue Française à la maison quand les deux parents ne parlent pas le Français.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2/9 (22.2%)</td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td>6/9 (66.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) La famille est l’endroit principal pour maintenir la langue Française en Alberta.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td>3/9 (33.3%)</td>
<td>5/9 (55.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Une éducation dans une école francophone est un moyen idéal pour promouvoir la langue et la culture Françaises.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2/9 (22.2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7/9 (77.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Les écoles Françaises sont nécessaires pour promouvoir la langue Française.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2/9 (22.2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7/9 (77.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Les professeurs francophones sont un excellent modèle pour les enfants en les encourageant à utiliser la langue Française.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9/9 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{63} One person skipped statements # 14 and 22
Two people skipped statements # 4.
### Appendix V (continuation) Questionnaires for the adults (teachers from a FFL school, based on 9 respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions/ Assertions</th>
<th>Ce n'ai pas juste</th>
<th>Pas juste avec modération</th>
<th>En peu contre</th>
<th>Neutre</th>
<th>En peu d'accord</th>
<th>Juste avec modération</th>
<th>C'est juste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12) Mes enfants fréquenteront une école francophone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Je veux que mes enfants fréquentent une école francophone à cause que c'est essentiel pour s'assurer qu'ils vont parler en Français.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) L'école francophone est la meilleure place pour garder l'identité francophone chez les enfants.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) Mes enfants auront des difficultés à l'avenir s'ils fréquentent une école francophone.</td>
<td>8/9 (88.9%)</td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) Mes enfants auront des difficultés à poursuivre une éducation postsecondaire s'ils fréquentent une école francophone.</td>
<td>8/9 (88.9%)</td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) Les élèves dans une école francophone ont plus de succès scolaire que leurs camarades dans une école qui n'est pas francophone</td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td>4/9 (44.4%)</td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2/9 (22.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18) Je crois que mes enfants auront plus d'opportunités à l'avenir s'ils étudieront dans une école francophone.</td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td>1/9 (11.1%)</td>
<td>6/9 (66.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19) Les arts sont essentiels dans la promotion de la langue, la culture et l'identité Françaises.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20) Les activités parascolaires aident à la promotion de la langue et la culture Françaises.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21) Les activités parascolaires créatives en Français aident à préserver et définir l'identité francophone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22) Je crois que les activités parascolaires aident aux enfants à développer un sentiment d'appartenance à une communauté francophone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendix VI Questionnaires for adults (teachers from an immersion school, based on 8 respondents)\(^6^4\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions/ Assertions</th>
<th>Ce n'ai pas juste</th>
<th>Pas juste avec modération</th>
<th>En peu contre</th>
<th>Neutre</th>
<th>En peu d'accord</th>
<th>Juste avec modération</th>
<th>C'est juste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) La langue et la culture Françaises ne sont pas appréciées en Alberta.</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td>3/8 (37.5%)</td>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>2/8 (25%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) La langue et la culture françaises ont un statut plus élevé maintenant que dans le passé</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>3/8 (37.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) C'est nécessaire de promouvoir la culture et la langue Françaises dans la région de Rivière-la-Paix</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td>6/8 (75%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Le nombre des francophones diminue et il n'est pas possible d'arrêter ce déclin</td>
<td>3/8 (37.5%)</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Ce serait désolant si la langue Française disparaissait dans la région.</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6/7 (85.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) La langue Française est la langue dont je parle à la maison avec ma famille.</td>
<td>3/8 (37.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2/8 (25%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) C'est difficile de maintenir la langue Française à la maison quand les deux parents ne parlent pas le Français.</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2/7 (28.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/7 (57.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) La famille est l'endroit principal pour maintenir la langue Française en Alberta.</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3/8 (37.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/8 (37.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Une éducation dans une école francophone est un moyen idéal pour promouvoir la langue et la culture Françaises.</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2/7 (28.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/7 (57.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Les écoles Françaises sont nécessaires pour promouvoir la langue Française.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/8 (37.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Les professeurs francophones sont un excellent modèle pour les enfants en les encourageant à utiliser la langue Française.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/8 (37.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{64}\) One person skipped statements # 5, 7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22
Two people skipped statements # 16, 18.
Appendix VI (continuation) Questionnaires for adults (teachers from an immersion school, based on 8 respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions/Assertions</th>
<th>Ce n'ai pas juste</th>
<th>Pas juste avec modération</th>
<th>En peu contre</th>
<th>Neutre</th>
<th>En peu d'accord</th>
<th>Juste avec modération</th>
<th>C'est juste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12) Mes enfants fréquenteront une école francophone.</td>
<td>3/7 (42.8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Je veux que mes enfants fréquentent une école francophone à cause que c’est essentiel pour s’assurer qu’ils vont parler en Français.</td>
<td>3/7 (42.8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) L’école francophone est la meilleure place pour garder l’identité francophone chez les enfants.</td>
<td>2/8 (25%)</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1/8 (12.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2/8 (25%)</td>
<td>2/8 (25%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) Mes enfants auront des difficultés à l’avenir s’ils fréquentent une école francophone.</td>
<td>6/8 (85.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) Mes enfants auront des difficultés à poursuivre une éducation postsecondaire s’ils fréquenteront une école francophone.</td>
<td>6/6 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) Les élèves dans une école francophone ont plus de succès scolaire que leurs camarades dans une école qui n’est pas francophone</td>
<td>2/7 (28.6%)</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td>2/7 (28.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18) Je crois que mes enfants auront plus d’opportunités à l’avenir s’ils étudieront dans une école francophone.</td>
<td>1/6 (16.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>2/6 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1/6 (16.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19) Les arts sont essentiels dans la promotion de la langue, la culture et l’identité Françaises.</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>2/7 (28.6%)</td>
<td>4/7 (57.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20) Les activités parascolaires aident à la promotion de la langue et la culture Françaises.</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/7 (85.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21) Les activités parascolaires créatives en Francais aident à préserver et définir l’identité francophone.</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/7 (85.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22) Je crois que les activités parascolaires aident aux enfants à développer un sentiment d’appartenance à une communauté francophone.</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>1/7 (14.3%)</td>
<td>5/7 (71.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix VII Questionnaires for adults (Francophone parents, based on 12 respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions/Assertions</th>
<th>Ce n'ai pas juste</th>
<th>Pas juste avec modération</th>
<th>En peu contre</th>
<th>Neutre</th>
<th>En peu d'accord</th>
<th>Juste avec modération</th>
<th>C'est juste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) La langue et la culture Françaises ne sont pas appréciées en Alberta.</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td>2/12 (16.7%)</td>
<td>3/12 (25%)</td>
<td>2/12 (16.7%)</td>
<td>3/12 (25%)</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) La langue et la culture françaises ont un statut plus élevé maintenant que dans le passé</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td>2/12 (16.7%)</td>
<td>3/12 (25%)</td>
<td>3/12 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) C'est nécessaire de promouvoir la culture et la langue Françaises dans la région de Rivièr-la-Paix</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Le nombre des francophones diminue et il n'est pas possible d'arrêter ce déclin</td>
<td>3/12 (25%)</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td>2/12 (16.7%)</td>
<td>2/12 (16.7%)</td>
<td>2/12 (16.7%)</td>
<td>2/12 (16.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Ce serait désolant si la langue Française disparaissait dans la région.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2/12 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) La langue Française est la langue dont je parle à la maison avec ma famille.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) C'est difficile de maintenir la langue Française à la maison quand les deux parents ne parlent pas le Français.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) La famille est l'endroit principal pour maintenir la langue Française en Alberta.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Une éducation dans une école francophone est un moyen idéal pour promouvoir la langue et la culture Françaises.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9/12 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Les écoles Françaises sont nécessaires pour promouvoir la langue Française.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Les professeurs francophones sont un excellent modèle pour les enfants en les encourageant à utiliser la langue Française.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Appendix VII (continuation) Questionnaires for adults (francophone parents, based on 12 respondents)

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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>12) Mes enfants fréquenteront une école francophone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Je veux que mes enfants fréquentent une école francophone à cause que c'est essentiel pour s'assurer qu'ils vont parler en Français.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) L'école francophone est la meilleure place pour garder l'identité francophone chez les enfants.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) Mes enfants auront des difficultés à l'avenir s'ils fréquentent une école francophone.</td>
<td>10/12 (83.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) Mes enfants auront des difficultés à poursuivre une éducation postsecondaire s'ils fréquentent une école francophone.</td>
<td>8/12 (66.7%)</td>
<td>3/12 (25%)</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) Les élèves dans une école francophone ont plus de succès scolaire que leurs camarades dans une école qui n'est pas francophone.</td>
<td>3/12 (25%)</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18) Je crois que mes enfants auront plus d'opportunités à l'avenir s'ils étudieront dans une école francophone.</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td>2/12 (16.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td>7/12 (58.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19) Les arts sont essentiels dans la promotion de la langue, la culture et l'identité Françaises.</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/13 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20) Les activités parascolaires aident à la promotion de la langue et la culture Françaises.</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/12 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21) Les activités parascolaires créatives en Français aident à préserver et définir l'identité francophone.</td>
<td>1/12 (8.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9/12 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22) Je crois que les activités parascolaires aident aux enfants à développer un sentiment d'appartenance à une communauté francophone.</td>
<td>2/12 (16.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10/12 (83.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Allard, Réal  

Allaire, Gratien  

Aunger, A. Edmund  

Bailey A. Donald  

Balthazar, Louis  

Bastarache, Michel  

Bastarache, Michel  

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Bernard, Roger  

Bernard, Roger  

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