



HUGO HUANG-LESAGE ET AMY HUANG

"Thanks to the resources of the FPFM, I really feel like I'm part of the Francophone community. This is essential for exogamous families like mine."

photo: Marta Guerrero

THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF *parents*

When the SFM adopted its *Shared Framework 2001-2050: Expanding Francophone Space in Manitoba*, nearly 70% of youth in the Franco-Manitoban community were from exogamous couples, and less than 16% of them spoke French.

In the transmission of a language, parents have a key role to play.

How has the community helped them?

BY CAMILLE HARPER

The Fédération des parents de la francophonie manitobaine (FPFM) is the voice and support organization for parents of young children in Manitoba's Francophone community.

The Executive Director of the FPFM, Brigitte L'Heureux, emphasizes the importance of the role of parents: "From the FPFM's perspective, we see that both parents, regardless of their language, contribute to their child's development, including their language development. The more families feel included in the Francophonie and the more their children are exposed to French, the more likely they are to speak the language and be ready for kindergarten in French.

"In exogamous couples, it is important that parents feel supported and equipped to encourage their child's French-language development. It is important to show them that it is feasible for them, with tools and support, to contribute to the transmission of French to their children. Many Anglophone parents are looking for Francophone spaces for their children that respect them as Anglophone parents."

With this in mind, in 2013, the FPFM developed fact sheets for exogamous families: *Grandir en français - De la naissance à 24 mois* (Growing Up in French - From Birth to 24 Months), *Grandir en français - De 2 à 5 ans* (Growing Up in French - From 2 to 5 Years), *Identité Francophone - L'identité, c'est vivre une culture et la célébrer* (Francophone Identity - It Means Living and Celebrating a Culture) and *Couples mixtes - Quand un seul des parents parle le français* (Mixed Couples - When Only One Parent Speaks French),

as well as videos about the advantages of speaking French to your young child in Manitoba. (1)

Brigitte L'Heureux says: 'Exogamy is the reality of families in our Francophone community in Manitoba today, and it was already true in 2001.

"We must embrace this reality rather than ignore it. If we don't include the English-speaking spouse or partner in our home, we run the risk that the whole

family will go somewhere else where everyone feels included. Often it is in the English-speaking community."

The organization that represents Francophone parents has also developed its communication strategies. Brigitte L'Heureux: "We have made our advertising bilingual so that English-speaking parents can also understand the content of our programming. However, our programs are still delivered in French."

In addition, a new position supporting francization and multilingual families has just been posted in January 2020. "We saw that there was a lack of tools and cohesion in our services. The person we hire will develop tools for families, but also for educators and family daycare centres.

"We see many challenges in francization in Francophone daycares today. It is important to take stock of what already exists and what is needed, and to think about how to fill in the gaps. There is always more to be done to expand the Francophone space."



photo: Marta Guerrero

BRIGITTE L'HEUREUX

Director,

Fédération des parents de la francophonie manitobaine.

(1) (1) These fact sheets and videos are available at <http://www.lafpm.com/nos-services/outils-pour-parents/>