

Education Summit: A Giant Step Forward (Translated using Google Translate)

Description

Walls carpeted with children's drawings, naive shapes with bright colors. Sitting on a tiny chair disguised as a loveseat, it is easily taken for a giant.

But now a toddler comes to talk to me. (Let's call him Jacques, since I have no right to appoint a child without parental permission).

I sit almost at ground level. It's right in the eyes that Jacques looks at me. From the top of his three apples he asks me: "What's your name? ... And then, right beside him, his girlfriend, Julie (fictitious name) ... "You have to speak French! "

There, I grasped three things.

The first is a certainty. One day, this little piece of cabbage will live up to the adult world. The second is a question. Will he speak to me in French? Not sure. And the third, an observation. Of these two small native French speakers, only Julie already values her mother tongue.

It's the early childhood universe as I saw it at Rideau River School in Kemptville, Ontario, about 50 kilometers from Ottawa. Here, we dedicate ourselves to the growth of the child and his culture, which we want francophone for life.

This brings us to the Education Summit of the National Federation of Francophone School Boards. It has just come to an end. It took place in three cities: Moncton, Ottawa and Edmonton.

There was a lot of talk about identity building. The child will become adult, but will he remain francophone? Will he desert his community at the same time as his original culture? These questions, among many others, point to the challenge posed by the future of French in the country.

"Jean-Luc Racine, Director General of the French National Commission for French-Speaking Parents (CNPF), is very important in early childhood. That is where we must start, he is categorical.

Monique Boudreau, executive director of the New Brunswick French-speaking School District, is convinced that both infants and school-aged children should be looked after. "Early childhood starts from scratch."

But the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* does not do that. The right to education in the language of the minority only begins at the elementary level in Canada.

Yet it is well before the first book of reading that one makes his own words heard from the cradle.

At the Rideau River School, Myriam Quimpère, an early childhood educator, is aware of this. Originally from the francophone village of Kedgwick in New Brunswick, she also lived in Quebec City. She is thus able to perceive the contrast between the child who lives in French at all ages and in all places, and

the one who enjoys English in the municipal park.

Already at the age of four or five, the embarrassment began. "Pride is not always there in children. It must be developed. It's easier when the child is young. "

It is therefore necessary to start with nurseries, pre-kindergartens, kindergartens according to Jean-Luc Racine and Monique Boudreau. Then, we must live in community, adds Quimpère. Now, the community includes everyone, including the newborn that is carried in his arms.

If we stick to our *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* , the linguistic life would only begin at six years. In fact, it's six years late.

The federal government will spend \$ 7 billion in ten years. A good opening according to the CNPF, which deplores, however, the lukewarmness of "certain provinces".

Too bad, but no wonder. We are used to two-tier bilingualism, federal and provincial.

It would be nice if there was only one, the largest. Our chances would be better for Jacques and Julie to converse in unison when we will no longer be giants in their universe ... Before everything goes to legend.

<https://www.francopresse.ca/2017/05/11/sommet-de-leducation-un-pas-de-geant-a-franchir/>

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