




ACTIVITY  
REPORT  
2024-2025

Ma place est ici!  
I belong here!






ENGAGE STUDENTS  
IN LANGUAGE LEARNING  
CREATE ART OR CONNECT  
WITH COMMUNITY IN  
BOTH FRENCH AND  
ENGLISH  
INSPIRE STUDENTS  
TO THRIVE AS  
BILINGUAL  
QUEBECERS



THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE:  
CE PROJET EST FINANCÉ PAR LE :

Secrétariat aux relations  
avec les Québécois  
d'expression anglaise

Québec 



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In 2019, the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise (SRQEA) consulted English-speaking Quebecers and community representatives across the province. The results confirmed a persistent issue: many English speakers still feel a limited sense of belonging in Quebec.

To address this, the SRQEA funded six community-based organizations, including LEARN, to explore the causes and strengthen community connection. LEARN has received annual funding to this end ever since.

Originally launched as the *I Belong* project, LEARN shifted its focus in 2023 to explore how learning French as a second language can enhance students' sense of belonging. Now operating under the banner *Ma place est ici!*, the project supports students in Quebec's English schools in improving their French while deepening their connection to Quebec society.



# Project at a Glance

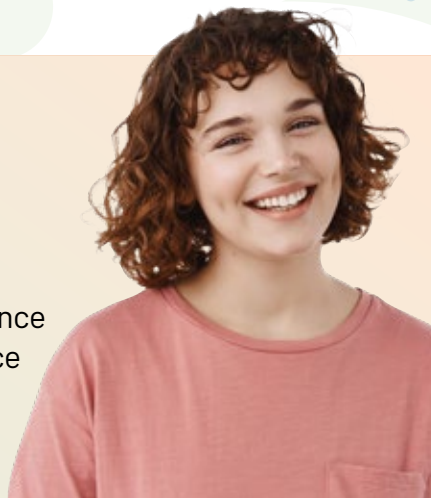
THIS SCHOOL YEAR, LEARN OFFERED SCHOOLS THREE UNIQUE AND EASY WAYS TO PARTICIPATE:

## OPTION 1

### Take Action

**BOOSTING FRENCH SKILLS  
WHILE MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

Students are engaged in a meaningful, hands-on learning experience that allows them to practice their French while making a difference in their community. What exactly students do is up to them and their teachers!

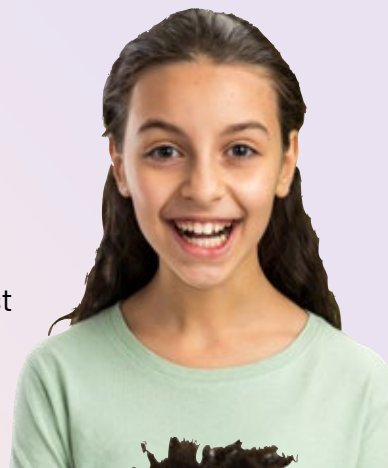


## OPTION 2

### Comic Zine

**DEVELOPPING FRENCH SKILLS  
WHILE MAKING ART**

Students create Comic Zines, either entirely in French or in both French and English, that explore their personal experiences and reasons for learning French. Teachers work with bilingual comic artist Laurence Dea Dionne or graphic novelist Scott MacLeod to guide students through the creative process over 3-7 weeks. The project culminates in a celebration showcasing the students' finished work.

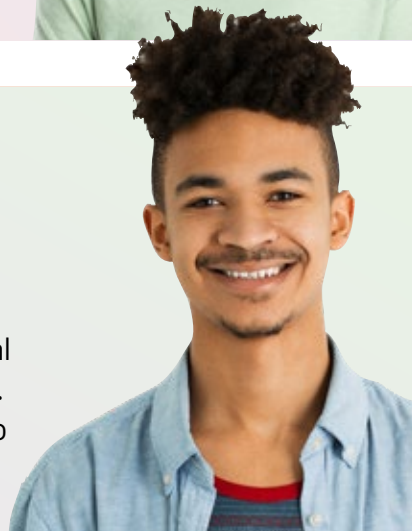


## OPTION 3

### Digital Storytelling

**STRENGTHENING FRENCH SKILLS  
ONE STORY AT A TIME**

Students create Digital Stories in French that explore their personal experiences and reasons for learning French as a second language. Teachers work with bilingual facilitators from Productions Oracle to guide students through the creative process over 3-7 weeks.



# Facts & figures

70+  
teachers



27  
English-language  
schools



65%  
of participating  
schools are members  
of the **CLC network**

1,196+  
students



41  
classrooms



5  
Quebec-based  
artists from  
ELAN

Digital  
12 stories  
PROJECTS

Take  
14 action  
PROJECTS

Comic-  
16 zines  
PROJECTS

## SOME TAKE ACTION PROJECTS:

- A bilingual *Mini-Leadership Camp* for primary school students, designed and led by high school youth
- A soccer league uniting English and French youth
- A bilingual theatre production exploring local history
- A *Cultural Caravan* improv group leading French-language workshops in local elementary schools
- Time capsules featuring local historic figures in both English and French
- A community-wide French Club
- Intergenerational connections – and more!

# The value of bilingualism and student connections to french

## POST-PROJECT INSIGHTS SHARED BY TEACHERS

*"What may have once felt like a classroom obligation took on new meaning as they communicated directly with [Seniors] whose lives had been shaped by the French language and Quebec culture...students experienced firsthand how language can bridge generations. It wasn't about perfect grammar or vocabulary; it was about being understood, and more importantly, about making others feel seen and valued."*

– Teacher, Pontiac High School at WQSB

*"By using French – for many as a second language – they not only practiced and strengthened their language skills but also deepened their personal connection to French culture."*

– Charlyne Labelle, Arundel Elementary School at SWLSB

*"Les élèves ont dû penser à leur bilinguisme de façon sérieuse pour la première fois de leur vie pour la plupart. Certains pensaient ne pas avoir une grande place pour le français dans leur vie, mais se sont rendus compte qu'ils interagissent en français plus souvent qu'ils ne le pensent. Même ceux qui ne parlent français qu'à l'école. J'ai vu de la fierté dans les yeux de plusieurs élèves qui ont l'occasion de parler français dans leur vie sportive ou parascolaire."*

– Karine Deschamps, Westpark Elementary at LBPSB

*"Students expressed pride in being bilingual and recognized the value of French as a second language. Many shared how learning French opened up new opportunities for communication and connection with others."*

– Brittanie Romito, Maple Grove Elementary School at LBPSB

*"[Students] were proud to be able to offer a bilingual environment to the younger participants, recognizing the value of fostering both linguistic and cultural inclusion.... The experience genuinely empowered them, helping them recognize their own growth in confidence, leadership skills, and bilingual communication. They became more aware of their ability to lead authentically in both French and English."*

– Fannie Marsh, Quebec High School at CQSB

*Bilingualism is like having a superpower.*  
SOPHIE, AGE 16

## WHEN REPORTING ON THE PROJECT, TEACHERS OVERWHELMINGLY AGREED THAT:

- Students are more engaged than usual during *Ma place est ici!* projects
- The involvement of artists and community members has a positive or very positive effect on student engagement
- *Ma place est ici!* projects provide students with a highly positive French Second Language learning experience

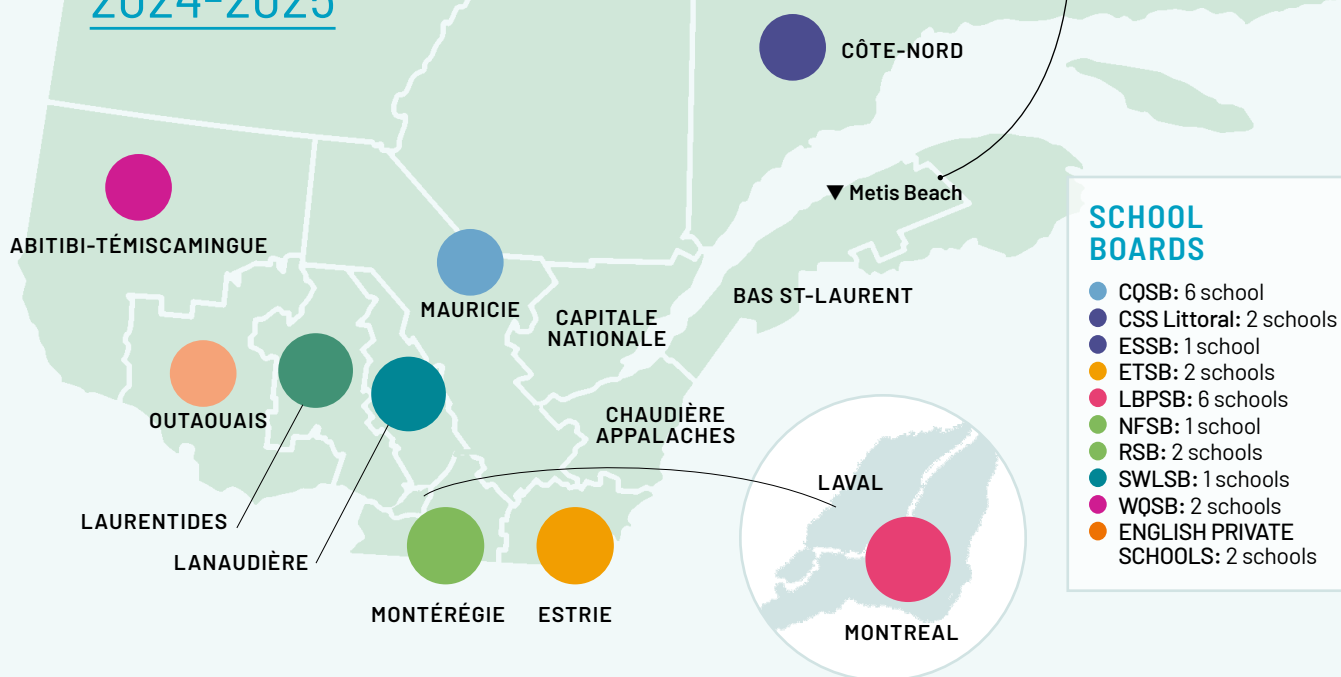
THIS SCHOOL YEAR, ARTISTS TRAVELED TO MÉTIS BEACH ON THE GASPÉ COAST AND TO NETAGAMIOU ON THE LOWER NORTH SHORE TO DELIVER IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS!

*“Corie’s visit to Netagamiou School was a remarkable experience for everyone involved!”*

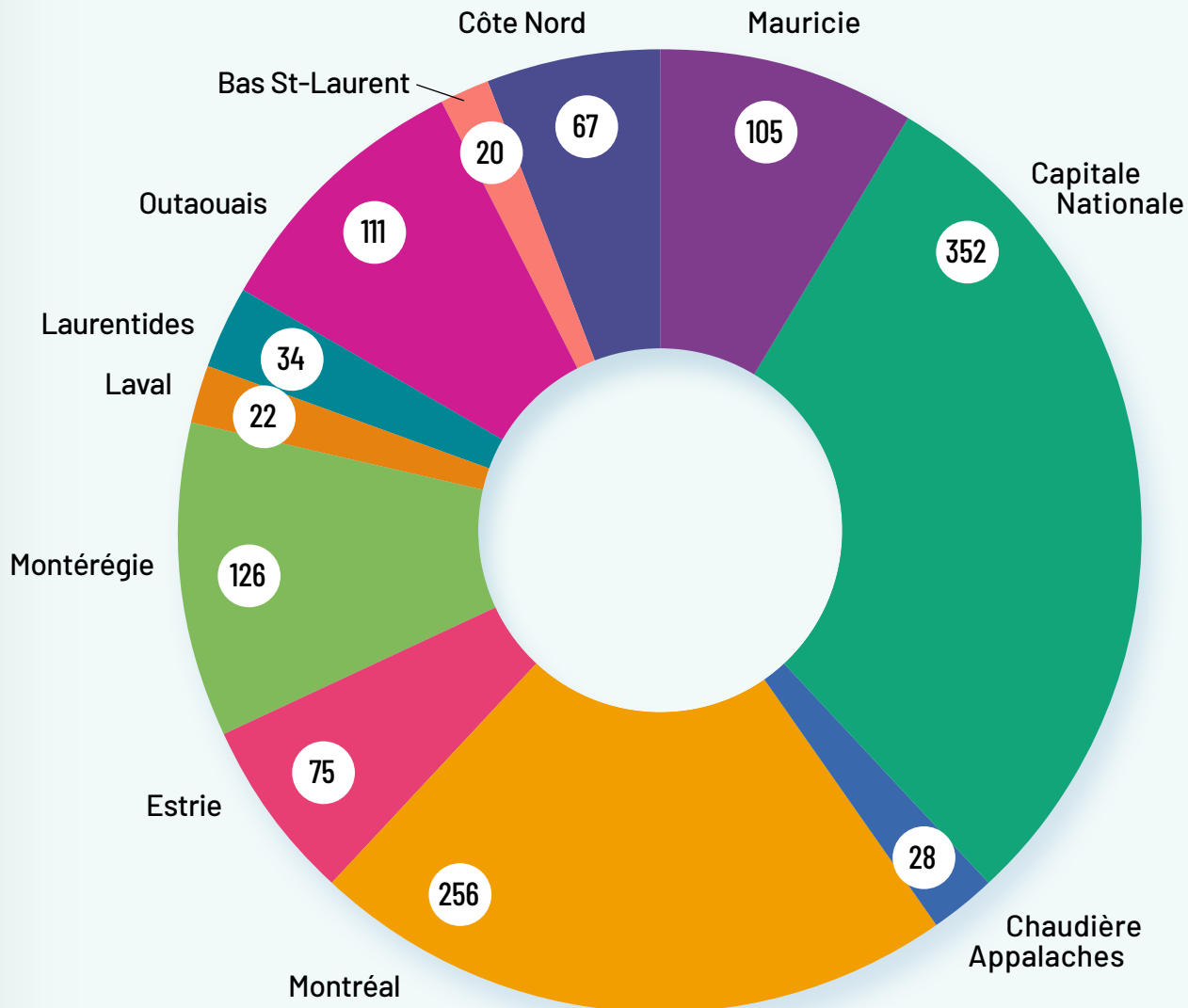
– Crystal Roswell,  
Community Development  
Agent at Netagamiou School



## PARTICIPATION 2024-2025



## STUDENT BY SCHOOL BOARD



## PROJECT RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS INCLUDED:

- Orientation sessions with LEARN
- Documents describing project steps and curriculum connections
- Question prompts for student reflection and discussion in elementary and high school contexts
- Four original video-based discussion prompts created by LEARN in collaboration with Y4Y
- Three video-based discussion prompts featured with permission from Canadian Parents for French





## A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

# Arundel Students Take Action with Theatre

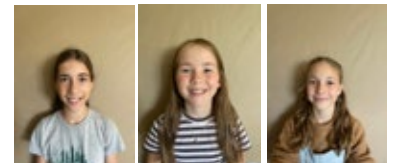
Every Thursday afternoon since January, a small but mighty group of grade six students gathered after school to rehearse a play that became much more than a performance. What started as a creative project for the **I Belong Here! Take Action** option, transformed into a celebration of language, community, and confidence.

One of 14 Take Action projects across Quebec, the 11 students from Arundel Elementary School's (SWLSB) Theatre Club worked with their teachers – Language Arts teacher, Charlyne Labelle and French teacher, Veronique Giraudon – to write and perform a play. Their production, *Il était une fois à Arundel*, tells the story of two cousins who discover an old photo album in their grandparents' attic and find themselves transported through time. Together, they explore iconic local landmarks and imagine key moments that helped shape Arundel, weaving a deep connection between memory, heritage, and imagination. "This play was meant to explore Arundel's past, but also to invite

### SYNOPSIS

CETTE ANNÉE, NOS JEUNES ARTISTES VOUS INVITENT À FAIRE UN VOYAGE À TRAVERS LE PASSÉ D'ARUNDEL. GRÂCE À LEUR CRÉATIVITÉ, ILS DONNERONT VIE À UNE HISTOIRE TOUCHANTE : CELLE DE DEUX COUSINES QUI, EN DÉCOUVRANT UN VIEIL ALBUM PHOTO DANS LE GRENIER DE LEURS GRANDS-PARENTS, SE RETROUVENT TRANSPORTÉES À TRAVERS LE TEMPS. ENSEMBLE, ELLES PARCOURENT LES LIEUX EMBLÉMATIQUES ET IMAGINENT DES MOMENTS MARQUANTS QUI ONT FAÇONNÉ NOTRE VILLAGE, TISSANT UN LIEN PROFOND ENTRE MÉMOIRE, PATRIMOINE ET IMAGINATION.

### LES COMÉDIENS



FÉLICITÉ MATHIEU

• Enfant

OCEAN JONES

• Enfant

AURELIA LINCEZ

• Grand-mère  
• Cliente  
• Ginette

the village's elders to watch so they feel like their story is not forgotten," said Labelle. "We're here for the history, not just the future."

***To develop the script, students went beyond the classroom, researching Arundel's history by visiting local stores, the library, post office, and having conversations with grandparents and elders.***

"The students discovered so much about Arundel that they didn't know through images and dialogue. It got them really excited about their small village," Labelle said. "They encounter these people in the community on a daily basis, but this project gave the students a relationship with them because they had to interact. The community was so kind and open to them."

Although Arundel is a predominantly English community, Labelle and Giraudon made a deliberate decision to write and perform the play in French, with a few English lines to honour the village's roots. The impact was transformative. "We have some students who have been struggling in French and had speaking parts in the play so they had to practice their lines," said Labelle. "It's been really great to watch them grow and get excited about speaking French throughout the planning and rehearsals."

The project also inspired French language use at home. One student who doesn't speak French with his parents began practicing his lines with them. "This project is encouraging French speaking at home because it's pushing them to learn their lines and want to be better," she said.

Coordinating an extracurricular project came with some challenges, but Labelle still encourages other educators to take on similar initiatives. "I think if educators have the opportunity to take part in a project like this, they should," she said. "The big challenge is that it demands a lot of extra work out of regular hours, but it's absolutely worth it."

The students performed their play for the school on April 25, followed by a public performance on Saturday, April 26. In the end, 75 community members, including Arundel's mayor, filled the school to support the students. It was a proud finale to a project built on hard work, heart, and transformation.

# Take Action







- LA TUQUE HIGH SCHOOL, LA TUQUE
- PONTIAC HIGH SCHOOL, SHAWVILLE
- ST PATRICK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PINCOURT

## EXPLORING IDENTITY THROUGH ART

# A Comic Zine Project on Bilingualism

*When high school teacher Rébéka Hudon was introduced to the I Belong Here! Comic Zine project, she immediately saw its potential to help her students explore bilingualism through creativity.*

Currently teaching Art and Ethics at A.S. Johnson Memorial High School (CQSB), Hudon had already experienced the project during her practicum at Alexander Galt Regional High School. So when Community Development Agent Robert Negron presented it again, she didn't hesitate to bring it to her 18 Secondary 4 and 5 students.

With the support of bilingual comic artist, Laurence Dea Dionne, Hudon and her students explored the topic of bilingualism, its challenges and frustrations, by transforming their personal stories into illustrated narratives. Dea Dionne led three class sessions, guiding students through the process of storyboarding, sketching, and inking.

Drawing on their own experiences with bilingualism, Dea Dionne connected with the students and encouraged Hudon to give them the freedom to fully explore the topic, even if their stories didn't lead to a happy ending. "Having worked with Laurence on this project during my practicum last year, I knew I had to bring them back to work with my students this year....They are lovely to work with. It's amazing to have a guest artist come in and break the usual routine and also teach art techniques that I don't know a lot about."

The small, rural setting of Hudon's school—with fewer than 100 students—shaped the themes in her students' zines. Though students attend an English school, most identify as Francophones who speak English, a common but often overlooked reality in many English schools across Quebec. Many students expressed concern that the French language is fading. "A lot of the projects focused on the negative side of bilingualism, which I found a little sad," Hudon said. "Some even made zines about me, since I insist they speak only English in class—I'm not a French Second Language teacher.... It just shows that no matter what side of the fence you're on, learning a language is hard."

Other students brought very different perspectives to the project. Hudon's immigrant students from the Philippines saw bilingualism through a more hopeful lens. These students are nearing the end of their two-year stay in





an English school permitted by the Quebec government. As a result, they will be required to transition to a French-language school next year. “For them, French is a source of anxiety,” said Hudon. “Their zines were about trying to learn French. They had a more positive view on the theme of bilingualism than my French-Canadian students who speak English.”

***Along with critical insights, moments of empathy and transformation emerged. Hudon recalled a powerful story from one secondary 5 student who moved to Thetford Mines from Montreal and struggled with French. “A classmate used to tease him about it, but at the end of the zine, the classmate told him he was proud of him for making the effort,” Hudon shared.***

For Hudon, the biggest transformation she saw in her students was their relationship with her. The project gave her the opportunity to connect with them through the many conversations about bilingualism they had throughout the process. “I really built a much stronger relationship with my students and I saw a positive difference in my classroom even if they didn’t [all] have a positive outlook towards bilingualism,” she said.

Being able to bring the *Ma place est ici!* project to her students this year was a full circle moment for Hudon, an opportunity she is thankful to LEARN for. “Working with Laurence was a gift....This project was a great way for me to take a step back and work on building deeper connections with my students....I really see the difference.”

## Comic Zine








- LAURENTIAN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, LACHUTE
- DRUMMONDVILLE ELEMENTARY, DRUMMONDVILLE
- TERRY FOX ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SAINT-HUBERT





-  HARRINGTON HARBOUR  
QUEBEC HIGH SCHOOL,  
QUEBEC CITY
-  ÉCOLE SECONDAIRE QHS,  
QUÉBEC
-  ÉCOLE PRIMAIRE  
WESTPARK,  
DOLLARD-DES-ORMEAUX





# Exploring Bilingualism Through Student-Led Digital Stories

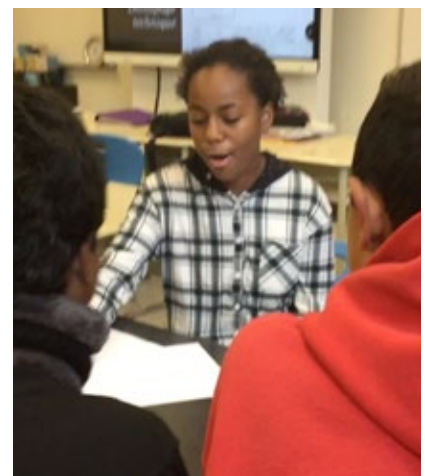
*It's no secret that in Quebec, getting students to speak French in a predominantly English school setting can be an uphill climb.*

For Megan Sawyer, a French teacher at Saint-Lambert International High School (RSB), incorporating the *I Belong Here! Digital Storytelling* option offered a refreshing shift from the sometimes-daunting task of encouraging consistent French communication in her classroom.

After discovering the initiative through her school's Community Development Agent (CDA), Annie Beauregard, Sawyer opted to have her Secondary 2 French as a Second Language (FSL) students participate in Digital Storytelling. Being one of 12 classes across the province participating in this option, Sawyer found a unique way to weave the overarching theme of bilingualism into the creative process.

She invited her students to explore how language can be a source of bullying and intimidation. While overall a successful topic, some students found it challenging to thoroughly explore the theme. "A few students veered more towards intimidation in general, rather than language-based intimidation," she said.

Under the guidance of Alyssa Kuzmarov from Productions Oracle and her assistant Quintin, the students spent three 80-minute periods learning filming and editing techniques, while working on iPads provided by the facilitators. "It



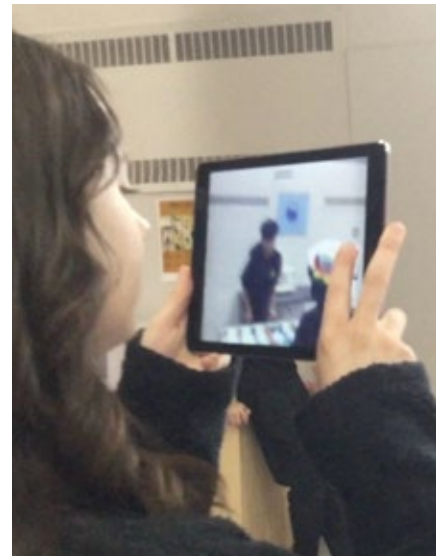
was really great working with Alyssa and her team who were super professional and very knowledgeable,” Sawyer said of her experience with Productions Oracle. “It’s a different sort of project, not something you typically do in school so that helped with participation.”

***Ahead of the class time spent filming, Sawyer dedicated a full period to discussing bilingualism and language-based intimidation, using part of the question guide provided by LEARN. One of the objectives of the I Belong Here! initiative is to boost confidence through opportunities to write and speak in French.***

“This project was definitely worthwhile for an FSL class because it made speaking French more interesting,” she said. “It was challenging getting them to speak in French, but in the end, being on camera really forced them to at least say a sentence or two.”

Looking ahead, Sawyer is eager to bring the project to her future FSL classes and recommends it to other educators. Though not without its challenges, the project sparked some meaningful dialogue, increased student confidence, and inspired more French speaking in the classroom. “When viewing the final versions of the videos they had produced, the students were very supportive of each other,” Sawyer said. “They were so proud of what they had done.”

# Digital Story Telling



# New and Noteworthy



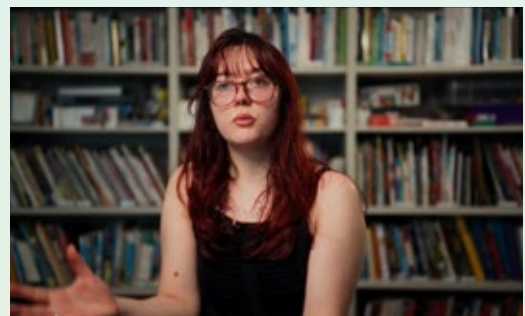
## RESEARCH STUDY

At LEARN's request, l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) is leading a study about the *I Belong here! / Ma place est ici!* initiative that seeks to:

- Better understand the value and impact of projects that connect language learning to real-world use within Quebec society and, more specifically, the perceived impact of the *I Belong here! / Ma place est ici!* project.
- Look at students' perspectives on the role of language in relation to their sense of belonging to Quebec society (based on publicly available data, including available artifacts of students' work and videos that recount students' experiences).
- Better understand the role and impact of artists and other members of the broader community in the classroom.

The study is being led by Dr. Valérie Amireault, who specializes in teaching French as a second language. Her research focuses on linguistic and social integration of newcomers as well as on the development of intercultural competence and identity in second language learning contexts.

Findings are anticipated to be published in July 2025.



## SHARING INSIGHTS FROM MA PLACE EST ICI! AT EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCES

This school year, LEARN and UQAM were selected to present workshops on the *Ma place est ici!* initiative at both the Leadership Committee for English Education in Quebec (LCEEQ) and the Association québécoise des enseignants de français langue seconde (AQEFLS) conferences.

"De riches discussions.  
Des projets inspirants.  
Des sources de réflexion  
et d'espoir."

"A beautiful example of what is  
amazing about living in Quebec  
and the possibilities and growth  
that being bilingual offer!"





- EXCERPTS FROM FEEDBACK PROVIDED ANONYMOUSLY TO CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS

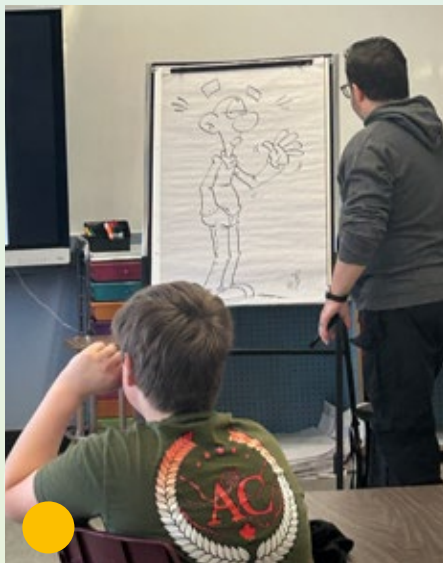


## MORE VIDEOS FEATURING YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE



Five new short videos featuring Anglophone youth talking about their use of French as a second language are being finalized this June! These videos will be featured in any future iterations of the *Ma place est ici!* project, as well as shared with French Second Language (FSL) teachers for use in Cycle 3 to Secondary 5 classrooms across the province.

-  PONTIAC HIGH SCHOOL, SHAWVILLE
-  MAPLE GROVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LACHINE
-  LAVAL JUNIOR ACADEMY, LAVAL
-  ST.WILLIBRORD ELEMENTARY, CHATEAUGUAY





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Ma place est ici* project is funded by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise, whose support has been instrumental in enabling this initiative.

The project was additionally supported by ELAN's ArtEd team, who works with LEARN to identify featured artists.

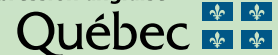
The success of LEARN's *Ma place est ici* project wouldn't have been possible without the leadership of participating teachers, community development agents and featured artists.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the students who embraced the challenge of creating original art pieces and taking action within their communities while expressing themselves in their second language. Their efforts are a testament to the power of bilingualism in fostering creativity and connection in our province.

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