

Speaking in English at the Jeux de la francophonie

Description

At the Jeux de la francophonie canadienne in Moncton, it was impossible to walk without hearing young people speak in English. A trend that surprises many.

Jessie Bélanger-Bisson, from the Quebec delegation, hears a lot of young people speaking in English at the Jeux de la francophonie. "When people communicate with other delegations, they make an effort to speak in French, but when you meet a delegation talking to each other, they will tend to return to their habits and speak in English" She explains.

Something that is grieving Gaston Létourneau, Newfoundland and Labrador's Chief of Mission.

It is not normal. It is of value that we hear English because it is the Games of the Canadian Francophonie. It's a real issue, but we often push it behind us and we do not want to believe it.

Gaston Létourneau, Chief of Mission of Newfoundland and Labrador

The presence of Anglophones

But he said it is also important to integrate Anglophones. His delegation includes many young English-speaking immersion students. This is a way for Gaston Létourneau to allow Francophones in Newfoundland and Labrador to form complete teams and be able to participate.



Gaston Létourneau is the Head of Mission of the Newfoundland and Labrador Delegation. Photo: Radio-Canada

On the other hand, from the bus trip, participants from Newfoundland and Labrador tended to speak in English, even French speakers, says Gaston Létourneau. A trend that he quickly wanted to break. “On the second or third day, the wave began to change. I saw young people who were much more comfortable expressing themselves in French. ”

This is not the case for all delegations. Janica Chevarie of Nova Scotia is English speaking and admits to having spoken a lot in English during the Games. “I have spoken both languages as well. It has not really changed, it’s been constant all week, “she says.

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Janica Chevarie plays volleyball for the Nova Scotia delegation. Photo: Radio-Canada

The role of the slogan

On Friday morning, Sophie Durocher, a [columnist at the Journal de Montréal](#), insisted against the slogan “Right fiers”. “I understand that French in Canada is not the same everywhere and that each province has its peculiarities that must be promoted. But as soon as we decide to celebrate the French fact, we have to be logical. For me, a bilingual slogan for the Jeux de la francophonie is like having a congress of vegetarians and the slogan “Vive la viande”.

We do not celebrate Canadian culture and bilingualism, we celebrate the Francophonie.

Sophie Durocher

She knows the organizers’ response to criticism. But she does not think that using the way young people speak is an argument. “We are saying that faulty expressions must be celebrated just because that is how young people are talking. It has its charm, but that does not mean that we should make it our official slogan. To formalize it, is to say to anglophones that we have so little confidence in our language that we need English to express what we have to say.”

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- [Are young people “right proud”?](#)
- [“Right fiers”, the new slogan for the Moncton-Dieppe Canadian Francophone Games](#)

Sophie Durocher even thinks that the slogan justifies the use of English on the site of the Games. “We are told that we are here to celebrate French, but we use an English word. This is a truly contradictory message.”

No consensus among participants

Almost all Francophones outside Quebec met on the site do not agree with this statement of Sophie Durocher. But Abigayle Fleming, who is anglophone, is convinced that this has an important influence.

I think if the slogan were completely in French, we would speak more in French than in English.

Abigayle Fleming

She is a member of the Newfoundland and Labrador delegation and has had a discussion with her head of mission, Gaston Létourneau, on language insecurity. Since then, she has been trying to speak only in French during the Games, but has observed that many people continue to speak in English. “It’s the Jeux de la francophonie, I’m here to learn French, not English, so you have to speak French.”

As for Quebeckers, many do not understand the slogan. They learned to accept it during the week, but

remain skeptical. “I have still not understood the principle of this slogan, but I imagine it shows the differences in the living environments of everyone,” says Jessie Bélanger-Bisson.

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Jessie Bélanger-Bisson plays volleyball for the Quebec delegation. Photo: Radio-Canada

Justin Johnson of the French Canadian Youth Federation is convinced that the slogan does not encourage young people to speak in English. The organizers of the 2017 Canadian Francophone Games chose not to answer Radio-Canada's questions and Sophie Durocher's comments.

<http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1045342/jeux-francophonie-canadienne-anglais-francais-bilingue-slogan-right-fiers>

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