

Canadian Parents for French RE: 40th Anniversary celebration

BURNABY CHAPTER

How wonderful to be looking back to 40 years ago and the very beginnings of Canadian Parents for French in Canada. It was October of 1977 when I first connected with an amazing group of parents, who gathered from across Canada in Ottawa, under the auspices of the then Commissioner of Official Languages, Keith Spicer!

At that first foundational conference, we parents found that we had so much in common. We all had the desire and determination that our children should have the benefit of an educational success story called “French Immersion”. The other thing we shared in common was encountering reluctance from our local elected School Boards in embracing the concept.

It was easy to establish a Burnaby Chapter of Canadian Parents for French upon my return from this Ottawa CPF Conference because we already had a core group of parents. We had founded the Burnaby French Language Playschool two years earlier, in 1975, and we had already been actively lobbying our School Board to provide our children with the same French Immersion educational opportunity that was being offered to children in the neighbouring School Districts of Vancouver and Coquitlam.

CPF has provided information and research support to parents and children over the years. We car-pooled and networked and fund-raised and worked together on activities like Cultural Days, Concours d’Art Oratoire, Puppet Shows, Les Castors (a branch of Scouts Canada), and many other activities in French to enhance the children’s French language acquisition skills.

Many of those pioneering parents, like my husband and I, are grateful for the level of French that our children acquired. It has had a significant impact on their careers. And in addition, many of us now have grandchildren who are enrolled in French Immersion, indicating endorsement. Last week I had lunch with some of the “French” parents and we shared some of the stories of the beginnings, the Playschool, the School Board meetings, the carpooling, the Fun Fairs, the class Graduations, the Scholarship Fund we established and so much more.

The friendships that were formed during those early days are still strong 40 years later!

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