



FÉDÉRATION
PROVINCIALE
DES COMITÉS
DE PARENTS
DU MANITOBA

Identifying, Welcoming, and Accompanying Parents of Francophone Children

A Systemic Approach - Starting at Birth

Fédération provinciale des comités de parents du Manitoba
&
Child Care Coalition of Manitoba

September, 2009



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Fédération provinciale des comités de parents du Manitoba (FPCP)
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Préface

La Coalition des services de garde à l'enfance du Manitoba est un organisme d'éducation publique et de soutien. Fondée en 1993 et incorporée en 2007, elle représente un large éventail de groupes et de personnes. La Coalition réunit présentement 55 organismes membres, entre autres des parents, des syndicats, des groupes de femmes, ainsi que la communauté des services de garde, les éducatrices et éducateurs, les chercheurs et le mouvement de justice sociale. Notre but est la création d'un système de services intégrés sans but lucratif et de haute qualité, pleinement accessible, financé par les fonds publics, fournissant au personnel de garde un salaire convenable et de bonnes conditions de travail.

Cette étude est un résultat du projet 2008-2009 de la Coalition manitobaine pour les services de garde à l'enfance, intitulé *Promotion de la sécurité économique et de la conciliation famille-travail pour les femmes manitobaines du milieu rural et du Nord*, financé par l'organisme Condition féminine Canada. Ce rapport, ainsi que le projet dans son ensemble, constitue une suite et un complément aux études précédentes sur l'impact social et économique des services de garde, incluant les services offerts dans les communautés franco-manitobaines. Nous avons démontré qu'un système universel de services de garde peut favoriser le développement économique local tout en renforçant la sécurité économique de la femme et en réduisant le conflit travail-famille, en particulier dans les communautés rurales et du Nord — en plus de soutenir le développement de l'enfant en milieu d'apprentissage et de garde.



Preface

The Child Care Coalition of Manitoba is a public education and advocacy organization, established in 1993. We are a broadly-based coalition of groups and individuals, incorporated in 2007. The Coalition currently has over 55 group memberships—including parents, the labour movement, women's groups, the childcare community, educators and researchers, and organizations committed to social justice, among others. Our goal is a fully accessible, publicly funded, non-profit system of comprehensive and high quality childcare, with worthy wages and good working conditions for childcare staff.

This report is one product of the Child Care Coalition's 2008-2009 action project (Promoting Economic Security and Work-Family Balance for Rural and Northern Women in Manitoba), funded by Status of Women Canada Women's Program. This paper and the larger action project build on our previous social and economic impact studies of childcare, including childcare services in Franco-Manitoban communities. We have shown that a universal childcare system can promote local economic development while simultaneously enhancing women's economic security and reducing work-family conflict, particularly for rural and northern communities—in addition to supporting the children who participate in early learning and care settings.

Executive Summary

Background

This study was developed for the Fédération provinciale des comités de parents du Manitoba (FPCP) through a Child Care Coalition of Manitoba project funded by the Status of Women Canada. The purpose was to assess childcare services in francophone settings. However, the FPCP's mission goes beyond the issue of childcare services: its strategies are aimed not only at developing the offer of services, but also at building up demand, given the huge challenge language shifts pose for francophone families living in minority situations.

The direction the project was given made it possible to document the needs of parents of francophone children in the area of childcare, among others. Those needs centred on the shortage of spaces, facilities, and childcare practitioners, as well as on improving communications, especially with non-francophone parents. It was learned that parents of francophone children were doubly penalized by the lack of services.

The priority of the study remained examining solutions to ensure there was a general demand for French-language services even before the need for childcare arose. It was found that not only were francophone parents poorly served, they were poorly informed and, even worse, they were not even identified as potential clients of French-language services. We therefore looked for ways to identify parents and then inform them about French-language services right from pregnancy. The following outcomes were being sought: that families be made to feel welcome and accompanied by early childhood and family centres and that young children be given access to French-language childcare facilities, to later be enrolled in francophone schools.

Surveys and Consultations

Two processes were set up for gathering data: a survey (a French version and an English one) to be distributed over the Internet to childcare centres and to early childhood and family centres; then focus groups to reach target clientele, i.e., various categories of parents (immigrant, exogenous, rural parents, parents of children with additional support needs).

A second survey aimed at women was conducted to gather data on the benefits they derived from French-language childcare. Various consultations were held and a strategy group was created to share ideas on the direction the main recommendations should take. Lastly, a consultation was held with the Accueil francophone, a support organization for French-speaking immigrants in Manitoba.

The on-line survey, a general one, was distributed to 15 childcare and early childhood and family centres. A total of 48 surveys were filled out and returned, mostly by e-mail. The second survey on childcare was distributed to six centres and generated 25 responses.

Main Observations

The respondents: 90% of respondents were women; two thirds were francophone spouses, even though the surveys were distributed in both official languages; communicating with the anglophone spouse in an exogamous couple constitutes the main challenge to identifying francophone families and including them in French-language services.

Identifying parents: Up until now, identification has been piecemeal and improvised; there was a huge discrepancy between the real-life experience of respondents and the sought-after ideal; 80% of respondents recommended that the health system identify parents of francophone children during the perinatal period; there was a consensus that finding childcare services represents a second major opportunity; having been used successfully within the community in dealing with immigration, a systemic approach is the one being advocated.

Welcoming parents: The beginning of the period when children learn to socialize would be the perfect time to welcome their parents; this should be done first in person, then through technology and the media; the information conveyed about community services should be varied and in both official languages.

Accompanying and including parents: Non-francophone parents felt left out of the information loop and the decision-making process; they sensed they were not welcome to French-language facilities; the shortage of French-language childcare facilities and of spaces within these facilities resulted in a number of children being registered in English-language facilities; when some of these children are later enrolled in francophone schools, they are subjected to a disruption of social and institutional continuity; this is even harder on children with additional support needs due to the further challenges including these children presents.

Women's Appreciation of Childcare Services: Childcare services clearly play a crucial role in the area of quality of life and work-life balance; women still do not have enough time for themselves due to other factors; childcare services are considered an asset for the social inclusion of the whole family; it is still hard to find a French-language facility close to work or home; female respondents want improved communications with educators for mutual support in the best interests of the children.

Recommendations

A total of ten recommendations were made, the main ones being:

- That the FPCP and its early childhood partners, along with the Conseil communauté en santé and its health care partners, come together to set up a provincial front-line strategy for the systemic identification of parents of francophone children starting at birth.
- That the FPCP and its early childhood partners, including the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba, work together to establish a provincial strategy to fine-tune the systemic identification of parents of francophone children upon their enrolment in a childcare facility.
- That the FPCP involve the francophone community's main organizations and services in developing complete and concise documentation, in both languages, on

the front-line services available in French for parents of young children; and that this material be given wide public exposure in English.

- That the government of Manitoba see to it immediately that an adequately-funded early childhood and family centre be set up in each of the DSFM's elementary schools.
- That the government of Manitoba immediately create new childcare spaces to fully meet the demand of parents of francophone children, including children with additional support needs.

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Introduction

Acadian researcher Rodrigue Landry used to say: “Tell me where you live and I’ll tell you if your children will speak French!” In other words, the linguistic vitality of various francophone minority communities can be quantified and is fairly predictable. Each community therefore has an assimilation curve that has been documented over the past 50 years and from which it would be very hard to escape. This does not, however, prevent them from devising ways to influence fate.

Attempts by Manitoba’s francophones to handle the ever-present problem of language shift have taken on various forms over the years. At first, it was through family and parish institutions, then through public and private education, that Franco-Manitobans had succeeded in ensuring historical continuity for a century. From the mid-1900s, however, the strategy was altered to include more arts and culture, then came political and economic action, along with lobbying for legal rights. And so it was that by the end of the 20th century, they had created a whole multitude of services, organizations, and institutions covering the entire range of collective development instruments.

It has always been recognized that children are the future, but there has not always been awareness of how important it is to invest early and massively in children’s lives. At the beginning of the 21st century, Manitoba’s francophones, like others, began to get involved in early childhood development. Studies have confirmed that, although the signs are not necessarily obvious in the first months, young children learn at lightening speed, setting the stage for a lifetime of personal development.

This new direction in strategies comes about at a time when the majority of Manitoba’s francophone couples are exogamous. The fact that one of the parents was an anglophone had an impact on the choice of language to be spoken in the home. This situation was such that, in many instances, these parents waited until their children started childcare or school to become concerned with their children’s language skills. Unfortunately, by then it was often too late, given that the brain’s malleability with regard to acquiring languages (and children can learn a number of them!) reaches its peak before school age.

That is how the need to welcome parents in French during the perinatal period emerged. It also became vital to find ways to accompany them in their choice of languages, cultures, and identities, and include them in the francophone community’s programs, services, and institutions, particularly in French-language childcare services.

This study grew from concerns about welcoming and accompanying parents. Right now, only one out of every two francophone children is enrolled in a French-language school. And if historical determinism is to be overcome, it is this trend that has to be turned around. If it is too late by the time the children start school, then reaching these children when they start childcare is a step in the right direction. There is some consensus that it is crucial that the intervention take place right from the perinatal period, but solutions are still lacking.

1. Mission of the Fédération

The mission of the Fédération provinciale des comités de parents du Manitoba (FPCP) is to support francophone parents in their roles as having primary responsibility for the overall development of their children, especially in building a sense of identity. It therefore includes parent councils, along with boards of directors of parental support groups and childcare centres. The FPCP also has a category of members made up of professionals from childcare and early childhood services.

The FPCP is therefore the community organization that develops French-language childcare services. As a member of the Coalition francophone de la petite enfance, alongside the government agency Healthy Child Manitoba, the Société franco-manitobaine and the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, the FPCP takes an active part in developing childcare services and Early Childhood and Family Centres (ECFC). These centres include, among others, francophone parental support groups, resource centres, and nursery schools. They are also new places where parents can be welcomed and accompanied.

In 2008, the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba approached the FPCP to conduct a qualitative study on French-language childcare services in the province. The aim was to see, thanks to funding from Status of Women Canada, to what degree these services offered women a better quality of life, including a healthier work-family balance, among others.

The shortage of childcare spaces
doubly penalizes francophone families.

Since the mandate of the FPCP goes well beyond the francophone childcare system, it asked that the broader concern for including families right from birth through the programs and services available in French be added to the terms of reference of the study. Thus the FPCP would be able to answer the following question: Do the current programs and services, particularly childcare and early childhood development services, make it possible to include families and improve the quality of life of francophone women?

As it turns out, the quality of services offered in French to parents of francophone children is even more of a problem than services for anglophones. Demand for French-language services far outstrips supply. For instance, the shortage of childcare spaces doubly penalizes francophone families. As the findings of the study will show, the quality of life of francophone women and children is often jeopardized. Consequently, families are at a greater risk of being assimilated into an anglophone environment, thus depriving the children of the bilingualism benefits to which they are entitled.

2. Terms of Reference for the Study

The immediate outcome expected from this study is a better knowledge of the conditions needed to welcome and include, right from the perinatal period, parents of francophone children, especially the mothers whether or not they know or even can understand French. Full participation of families in Manitoba's francophonie right from the perinatal period is the end result being sought. Therefore, the study will include strategies to be implemented to:

- Systemically identify and welcome parents of francophone children during the perinatal period,
- Improve living conditions, especially for mothers of young children, and
- Ensure that parents are accompanied in the health care, childcare, educational, and socializing programs and services available in French, and include them socially in the francophone community.

Why is it that the FPCP, its members, and partners want the parents of young francophone children to be part of the francophone community? And why should these parents want to be part of the francophone community?

Clearly, the very *raison-d'être* for the whole of community-based organizations is to offer quality programs and services to give members of the linguistic minority the opportunity to live their lives fully in French. Concerns about the numbers of French speakers stem from the fact that these numbers are generally shrinking as is shown by Census of Canada figures every five years. Other indicators show that language loss is the inevitable result of cultural assimilation.

Language shifts result in the steady loss of potential clients for francophone organizations and institutions. This drop in numbers threatens the historic continuity of the francophone community. Over the long term, it could deprive the official language minority of its status and rights.

Thus, the FPCP finds itself on the front lines in the struggle for continuity. Its clientele, parents of francophone children and the local organizations representing them, can make a huge difference. FPCP members want an increase in the number of French-speakers (parents and children) to maintain and raise the quality of services available. They want a bright future and strong sense of identity for the children.

The fact that the number of exogamous families is on the rise is both a threat and an opportunity. It is a threat because, in everyday life, the home language for exogamous families is English in 85% of cases. But, according to studies by researcher Rodrigue Landry, exogamy is still a much-overlooked potential for development. If all exogamous couples chose French as the language spoken at home, there would be more French-speakers than if French was limited to endogamous families. That is because, according to Landry, the director of Université de Moncton's Institut canadien de recherche sur les minorités linguistiques, children of exogamous families whose home language is French are perfectly bilingual.

The fact remains that neither the health of organizations and institutions nor statistics and language rights are convincing enough reasons for parents pursuing quality of life. A number of parents do not see the benefits derived from all the extra effort needed to speak French in Manitoba. Some do not want to be a part of this minority group, seen as being activist or even intolerant, at times meeting with hostility, as shown by the comments of some of the respondents in the study.

A call for reason will be needed to convince the new generations and the non-francophone spouses to become part of something that is vital to them. There is no shortage of arguments and it was often the anglophone parents in focus groups who raised them.

Why limit yourself to just one language when you have the opportunity to learn two? Especially when these two languages open social, cultural, and economic doors to professional and personal development. Today's society is witnessing an unprecedented expansion of the creative class: these are individuals who are self-employed, practicing a creative trade, with increased social, linguistic, and economic mobility. These are inquisitive people who are committed to life-long learning and continued technological adaptation. Starting out in life with two languages is a gateway to this universe.

The decision to identify oneself as a parent of a francophone child is part of a parent's many responsibilities. Since imperfection is human, parents may well be ignorant of the existence of the francophone community, or if they are aware of it, they may have some reservations about wanting to be part of it. Some members of the focus group mentioned their good intentions when they made their decisions, but there was no information or event to initiate the identification process. Being in the survival mode that is the lot of all new parents, they simply went with the flow, which meant integrating into the anglophone community.

Need we be reminded that, under the terms of section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, anglophone parents of francophone children acquire the constitutional right to have their children educated in a minority language institution? This fact does not seem to be appreciated by the francophone community when anglophone parents are excluded from activities in French, regardless of their intentions and abilities.

In short, parents are responsible for making choices and taking one or more steps to reach out to the francophone community. The community, with its organizations and institutions, has a responsibility as well: it also needs to seize the initiative and reach out to the parents. The aim of this study is not to educate parents, but to identify the environmental conditions needed to broaden the range of choices and gateways into the francophone community.

3. Methodology

Two processes were put in place to gather data on identifying, welcoming, accompanying, and including parents: a survey (a French version and an English one) to be distributed over the Internet to institutionalized childcare centres and to early childhood and family centres (ECFCs); then focus groups to reach target clientele, i.e., various categories of parents. A second survey aimed exclusively at women was conducted to gather specific data on the benefits they derive from childcare services. Lastly, consultations were held and a strategy group was created to share ideas on the direction the main recommendations should take.

The on-line survey—a general one—was sent to 15 childcare centres and ECFCs. A total of 48 surveys were filled out and returned, most of them by e-mail. The second survey on childcare services was distributed by six childcare centres and generated 25 responses.

A total of four focus groups were held, with the following clientele:

- Immigrant women attending early childhood college programs,
- Exogamous partners included in rural francophone communities,
- Urban exogamous partners whose inclusion had not been successful, and
- Parents of children with additional support needs (ASN).

The data collection made it possible to ask questions about how important childcare services were for parents. The answers and comments proved to be significant given how crucial childcare services were to the systemic approach recommended by the study. Other questions dealt with knowledge of children's and parents' rights. In the view of the FPCP, raising awareness of rights was an important factor in assuming parental responsibilities: it often made a difference in the degree of commitment.

Comments proved to be significant given how pivotal childcare services were to the systemic identification strategy.

A summary of the data on the current state of childcare services and on the mechanisms to welcome and accompany parents was made based on the Manitoba section of La Commission nationale des parents francophones' second *Early Childhood in Canada's Francophone Minority Communities: A Transformative Analysis* (2009). Titled *The Best Is ... the Future!*, this study was based on national data gathered in 2008.

Though not part of the initial plan, consultations were also held with community leaders. For instance, a meeting with the executive director of the Accueil francophone (a service for immigrants and refugees) made it possible to identify the conditions that combined to position this organization in provincial and federal immigration departments' strategies for welcoming immigrants.

An exploratory meeting also took place with the executive director of the Conseil communauté en santé du Manitoba (CCS) to gain a better understanding of the environment in which French-language programs and services were being delivered by the province's regional health authorities.

These consultations gave rise to a strategy meeting with a group of community and government leaders directly concerned with the conclusions of the study. The Fédération provinciale des comités de parents, the Coalition francophone de la petite enfance, the Conseil communauté en santé, the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine and Healthy Child Manitoba were among the groups represented. The outcome being sought here was a validation of the study's direction by the community.

The study had major constraints. First, the survey did not meet general research standards and its value remains qualitative. Findings from the focus groups and the strategy group were given the same weight: they represent the enlightened opinions of professionals and people who are directly concerned.

4. Definitions

In order to facilitate common understanding, the following definitions provide meanings of the main terms used in this document.

Systemic approach: a system's response (such as health care system or education system) integrated with a government jurisdictional responsibility and achieved through a universal active offer that meets public service standards.

Welcoming and accompanying parents: set of approaches, strategies, programs, and services in place to support parents of francophone children.

Parent of a francophone child: inclusive term that acknowledges that one can be a parent of a francophone child without being a francophone oneself, providing the choice is made jointly with the francophone partner.

Young francophone child: child under the age of six with French as a first or second language, or as one of his or her first languages.

Child with additional support needs (ASN): new term used with special needs children, aimed at promoting the inclusion of all children.

Identifying: the process of making oneself known or recognized by another person, group, community, or government as a potential recipient of programs and services.

Welcoming: the act of acknowledging people in person and letting them know that it is hoped and expected that they will be present and actively participating.

Accompanying: the act of assisting people through undertakings (public services, housing, employment, childcare) that would help them become more familiar with a new environment.

Inclusion: the result of belonging to a family, group, or community beyond formal or structural integration.

Exogamy: state of a couple in which one partner is ethnoculturally different from the other.

Endogamy: state of a couple in which both partners share the same ethnocultural origin.

Early childhood and family centre (ECFC): site offering integrated, intersectoral services, established in a francophone minority community, dedicated to the child's overall development and to accompanying parents and families.

Early childhood development (ECD): set of approaches, strategies, programs, and services in place to promote the child's overall development.

Child's overall development: set of conditions affecting a young child's development, particularly bonding with the parent; physical, social, and emotional health; sensory stimulation for pleasure and the optimal development of the brain; confidence and curiosity for learning, creativity, and expression.

Childcare service: Institutional or family service that enables parents to leave their children, temporarily or on a regular basis, with a competent person (who may or may not be a family member) or with professional childcare educators.

5. Background

The current situation for welcoming and accompanying parents of francophone children in Manitoba, including childcare and family support services, was documented in 2009 by the second early childhood environmental analysis done by the Commission nationale des parents francophones. This study drew on the broad strategies of the national policy framework developed by the Table nationale en développement de la petite enfance francophone en milieu minoritaire (2007). The following are highlights of the study's findings for Manitoba.

Services, Programs, and Tools Available During the Perinatal Period

Health and Social Services: Prevention and Promotion
<p>Prenatal courses; Thematic workshops on pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding; Information on or promoting healthy lifestyle choices for parents (nutrition, smoking, accident prevention, child development, fetal alcohol syndrome); Early screening and referral services for at-risk children and parents; Birthing centres (hospital); Health support during pregnancy; Information kit on available French-language services; Awareness packages (<i>Francophone aux couches</i>, a kit for new parents; <i>Sacs du CRÉE</i> kits; the DSFM's <i>Sacs dès la naissance</i>); Guides (Health Canada or others); Provincial programs related to childbirth (home visits by nurses); Prenatal Benefit Program; Programs such as Healthy Child; <i>Bébés, parents et gazouillements</i> Early childhood and family centres (ECFC); Family literacy; <i>Toi, moi et la Mère l'Oie</i>.</p> <p>* The services being offered in the six ECFCs are entirely in French target children, parents, and educators on a continuing basis. More than 4,250 parents and children used the programs and services in 2007-08 * The <i>Bébés, parents et gazouillements</i> program targets pregnant women and mothers with babies under one year old. It is offered entirely in French. More than 81 parents used this service in 2007. * Home visits are carried out entirely in French. Some twenty parents used this service in 2007. * Counselling/guidance for pregnant students offered entirely in French, as required. Some twenty students have availed themselves of this service.</p>

ECD Programs and Services

Service	Number	Population served
Institutional (community) or independent	2	247

childcare facilities		
Licensed family childcare homes	24	196
Institutional (school) childcare facilities	13	382
Childcare facilities for special needs children	2	
Nursery schools administered by a board of directors made up of parents	17	328
Kindergartens	20	390
Early childhood and family centres	6	
Centres de ressources éducatives à l'enfance (CRÉE)	1	

Assisting and Accompanying Parents

Overseen by	Services
Members of the Coalition francophone de la petite enfance du Manitoba	<p>Nursery schools located in DSFM schools. Childcare facilities located in DSFM schools. A francophone family resource centre where users can avail themselves of the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A lending service for printed and audio-visual materials—about 15,000 items in the CRÉE collection (games, software, books). - More than 81 parents have used this service in 2007. - Data banks of francophone childcare centres; - Monthly activity calendars sent to the 279 member families of the urban CRÉE and to the 178 member families in the rural areas. - Home visits for new parents, distributing <i>Sacs du CRÉE</i> (welcome and information kits). - Evening talks—Thematic workshops on parenting skills—<i>Toi, Moi et la Mère l'Oie</i> and a French song and nursery rhyme learning session for parents and children from 0 to 4 years old. - Story Time. - Family activities (community celebrations, CRÉE and Mini-CRÉE open houses, movies in French). - Meeting room/playroom for parents and children. - Free computer and Internet access.

ECD Challenges in Manitoba

Childcare and other services	<p>Inadequate funding Shortage of qualified francophone staff—tied to the poor wages being offered people with two years of postsecondary training Dire lack of infrastructure and spaces Nonexistence of funding per child between 0 and 5 years of age as there is for school age children</p>
Early childhood and family centres (ECFC)	<p>Lack of infrastructure Need for information and awareness Shortage of qualified staff New family recruitment New programs</p>

Renewal of play and educational materials Research on the effectiveness of programs in minority settings Research on the impact of ECFCs on school readiness levels

Conclusions of the Environmental Analysis

In concluding her analysis, consultant Nicole Lafrenière-Davis proposed five broad national courses of action for welcoming and accompanying parents:

- Developing a national strategic framework for welcoming and supporting parents;
- Holding a national survey on parents' needs;
- Holding a national assessment of the place assigned to parents;
- Strengthening links with other parent networks; and
- Increasing knowledge about welcoming and supporting parents.

This study therefore contributes to increasing knowledge about welcoming and supporting parents and about the needs of parents, particularly in institutional settings (childcare services and ECFCs). Developing a systemic approach to identify parents of young children would be a first for French-language communities.

6. Data, Observations, and Courses of Action

A. Respondents

A total of 48 people answered the survey distributed to some 300 parents.

Question	Francophone parent	Anglophone parent	Total
1. Setting	Rural 8 Urban 24 Total = 32	Rural 12 Urban 4 Total = 16	20 28 48
2. Average age of respondents	37 (1957 to 1982)	36 (1947 to 1984)	36,5 (1947 to 1984)
3. Gender	4 M/28 F	2 M/14 F	6 M/42 F
4. Number of children			
- 1 child	6 families	1 family	7
- 2 children	20 families	5 families	25
- 3 children	3 families	8 families	11
- 4 children	3 families	2 families	4
	Total = 65 children Average: 2.0	Total = 39 children Average: 2.7	104 2.4
5. Children's ages			
- 0 to 1 year old	14	8	22
- 2 years old	11	6	17
- 3 years old	11	7	18
- 4 years old	8	6	14
- 5 years old	0	2	2
6. Family status			
- endogamous	12	0	12
- exogamous and exogamous immigrants	18	12	30
- anglophone	2	4	6
7. Employment status			
- maternity leave	2	1	3
- full-time parent	9	6	15
- part-time job	9	2	11
- full-time job	9	5	14
- self-employed	3	4	7
- retired		1	1

Observations

- Almost two thirds of respondents (30 out of 48) were spouses in an exogamous couple. This ratio is proportional to the exogamy rate in the province.
- Women's opinions predominated, with almost 90% (42 out of 48) of respondents being women, which is indicative of how duties are generally shared between parents of young children.

- Twice as many francophone parents as anglophone parents responded to the survey. As for the francophone respondents, the majority were the francophone partners in exogamous couples. This outcome is clearly consistent with anglophones' comments in the last part of the survey, in which they stated they generally felt less involved.
- It was noted that in the rural areas, anglophone respondents were more numerous, while in the urban area, there were more francophone respondents. This outcome may be a sign that there is more inclusion of anglophone parents in rural settings given the sense of community that exists there. The focus group held in a rural area with exogamous parents confirmed this theory.

Courses of Action

- 1- It can already be foreseen that solutions for the urban area may not be the same as those for the rural areas. The sense of community differs greatly from one area to another, and it is no doubt true that closer ties can be woven among residents of rural areas. There is more anonymity in the city, making social approaches more difficult, while structured responses through the various service systems in place are easier.
- 2- It seems that within a couple, it is the woman who takes on the most responsibilities regarding young children: solutions should take into account the involvement of women here.
- 3- The responses indicate that anglophone parents of francophone children are the main challenge to families' being included into the francophone community. Given the predominance of exogamy among parents of young francophone children in Manitoba, this would be the most important group to be identified by any strategy aimed at increasing the number of participating families.

B. Identifying Parents

The following are the answers to the multiple-choice questions. Respondents' comments are also summarized in Appendix A.

Question	Francophone parents	Anglophone parents	Total
8. How did you learn about the francophone community?			
- Born here	23	7	30
- Education system	2	6	8
- Immigration system	1		1
- My spouse	2	3	5
- Health system			
- Early childhood centre			
- Childcare centre		2	2
- Publicity	3		3
- Workplace	2		2

- Other	1 community's reputation	1 friends 1 library	
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9. What was your initial contact with the francophone community?

- My parents	20	7	27
- My education	8	6	14
- My spouse	2	2	4
- Immigration Department			
- Prenatal courses			
- Birth of child			
- Doctor's office			
- Parental support group			
- ECD centre		1	1
- Childcare			
- Community group	1 military		1
- Other (<i>please specify</i>)	2 school		2
	1 church	1 government	4
	1 work	1 friends	

10. What is the ideal moment to identify parents of francophone children?

- Prenatal courses	15	7	22
- Birth of child	4	5	9
- Postnatal support	9		9
- Childcare/ECD centre	4	6	10
- School	2		2
- Other (<i>please specify</i>)	3 after moving		3

11. Who should be doing the initial identification?

- Parent council	2	6	8
- Literacy group	1	2	3
- Francophone school	11	6	17
- Community health service	13	5	18
- Medical clinic			
- Provincial department	5		5
- Immigration service	4	1	5
- Other (<i>please specify</i>)	2	1	3
	1 employer		1
	1 federal department		1

Observations

- The great majority of respondents were born in the community or had a partner of Franco-Manitoban origin. Thus, natives of the area “fell into the magic potion” as babies and their life experiences were a continuation of those of their parents, as is the case with their children.
- The parents who were of most interest to us were those who, whether or not they grew up in a family of francophone origin, had not been given the gift of a sense of continuous belonging, for whatever reason. Once they were adults, they were faced

with having to make a choice when they became parents. More often than not, if they and their spouse were anglophones, they were not aware of the opportunities open to them and their children. Responses to Question 9 clearly showed that these parents were identified in a piecemeal and ad hoc way: for some it was through school or advertising, for others it was through a friend or the library.

- Responses to Question 9 showed that childcare was not a factor in parent identification. Either access was too limited or the decisions about language were made at some other time.
- There was a huge gap between what respondents were being given and what they hoped for, indicating major changes in the environment. The continuity of inclusion from family or community can no longer be counted on as in the past: 40 respondents suggested that identification take place during the perinatal period (pregnancy, childbirth, and postnatal support). The second biggest group wanted childcare services or the ECFCs to be where this identification should now take place.
- According to the focus group made up of immigrant women, for the past few years this group has been made to feel particularly welcome due to the role the organization Accueil francophone has been playing in partnership with the federal and provincial departments of immigration. It was the experience of a number of immigrant families that efforts were made to welcome them upon their arrival in the province.

Courses of Action

- 4- At the outset, respondents set the groundwork for the approach to be used to identify parents; this approach came up again in the recommendations. By consensus, the perinatal period was clearly vital, for it is known that it is during this time that basic decisions are made, including those on the language to be used in the children's care, services and learning, which will be maintained thereafter. However, a second systemic window opened up when choosing a childcare service or family participation in an ECFC.
- 5- This two-part approach was also advanced by the three focus groups and in consultations with experts, including the director of the Accueil francophone.
- 6- The broad range of answers to the question of who was responsible for taking the initiative showed that identification could be the result of a huge community and government undertaking.
- 7- Who should identify parents? Respondents gave this mandate to the health care system 23 times (community services and medical clinics) and to the education system 17 times. The answers here no doubt led to the conclusion that this initiative was not coordinated at the moment, and if it was to succeed, it should be systemic.

C. Welcoming Parents

The following are the answers to the multiple-choice questions. Respondents' comments are also summarized in Appendix A.

Question	Francophone Parents	Anglophone Parents	Total
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12. When did you actually decide to participate or seek inclusion in the francophone community?

- Prenatal courses	8		8
- Birth of child		3	3
- Postnatal support	2		2
- Parental support group	8	3	11
- ECD centre	4	1	5
- Childcare	4	4	8
- Other (<i>please specify</i>)	1 school	1 upon marrying	2
	5 since childhood	2 since childhood	7
		2 upon moving into the community	2

13. How should the first contact be made?

- In person	16	5	21
- Via publicity	12	4	16
- By mail	8	7	15
- Internet	10	2	12

14. What messages should be conveyed?

- General information	23	8	31
- Available services	26	15	41
- Meeting places	19	6	25
- Institutions	4	1	5

16. What services should be initially offered?

- Health	9	5	14
- ECD centre	14	6	20
- Childcare	15	8	23
- Education	15	7	22
- Justice	1		1
- Arts and culture	11	2	13
- Economic development	2		2
- All of the above	15	4	19
- Other (<i>please specify</i>)	1 media		1
	2 sport activities		2
	1 libraries		1
	1 businesses		1

15. These messages should be available in which language?

- French	6	2	8
- English			
- Both languages	26	14	40

Observations

- Exercising or implementing the choice to be part of the francophone community came about at various times in the lives of respondents. Basically, there were three different groups: those who were born into the community and had never questioned their role in it (7 respondents), those who made the decision during the perinatal period (13 respondents), and the larger group of parents who became involved during the socializing period of parental support groups, childcare and resource services (24).
- Once this choice was expressed, respondents expected a response from the community in various forms: first in person, then through advertising and the mail, with the Internet coming in fourth.
- Respondents wanted to be provided with general information about the community, the services available and the contact points, but information on the institutions was not a priority.
- Respondents sought a broad range of information on the services available, beginning with health care, socializing, childcare, early childhood development, and educational services. They also sought information on arts and culture.
- It was no surprise that respondents wanted this information to be presented in both languages, given the high rate of exogamy in this sampling. At the focus groups, the frustration of anglophone partners of exogamous couples was clearly expressed.

Courses of Action

- 8- Respondents gave us three very clear courses of action here: 1- continuity in an individual's participation in community life starting at childhood; 2- failing this continuity, activating a choice during the perinatal period; and 3- failing a choice during the perinatal period, activating a choice during the child's socialization, through an integrated child and family service such as child care.
- 9- More francophone than anglophone parents wanted the personal approach, which might require a more cautious and less engaging approach with regard to the anglophone parent.
- 10- A multi-faceted communication strategy could be set up, but a demand from francophone parents to be contacted in person and a demand from anglophone parents more geared to written information is to be expected.
- 11- According to the comments received, the variety of the information is more important than the volume. Only one respondent claimed not to want any information being able to find the right information as the need arose. In short, when

welcoming parents, do not flood them with information and keep the details for the accompanying phase.

D. Accompanying and Including Parents

Accompanying and including parents were combined for the purposes of this study, given the small number of answers received. It is possible that the terms were not explained well enough. The following are the responses to the multiple-choice questions.

Question	Francophone Parents	Anglophone Parents	Total
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17. What programs and services could enhance your situation as a parent of a francophone child?

- Health promotion	18	2	20
- Education	23	14	37
- Identity building	15	2	17
- Literacy	7	8	15
- Justice promotion	4		4
- Employment	5	2	7
- Other (<i>please specify</i>)	1 nutrition 1 pairing off with a buddy		1 1

18. Did francophone childcare or ECD centres enhance your quality of life as a family?

- Not applicable	6	6	12
- Very much	17	7	24
- More than less	8	2	10
- Less than more	1	1	2
- Not at all	0	0	0

19. Did francophone childcare or ECD centres help you return to the labour force?

- Not applicable	6	7	13
- Very much	14	5	19
- More than less	3	1	4
- Less than more	3		3
- Not at all	6	3	9

20. Are you aware of children's rights under the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations, 1989)?

- Yes	8	3	11
- No	12	6	18
- More or less	12	7	19

21. Are you aware of your rights as parents to French-language education under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Canada, 1982)?

- Yes	12	3	15
- No	12	5	17
- More or less	8	8	16

Observations

- According to the comments received through the survey and focus groups, the need to be accompanied was often event-driven, for instance for immigrants and new parents when they chose to become part of the francophone community.
- There were specific issues with the various groups of parents: immigrants had accompaniment and inclusion issues; anglophone parents, especially in the urban area, experienced identification and inclusion issues; exogamous couples had specific accompaniment issues in the area of cultural identity; endogamous parents also required support in the area of welcoming and accompanying, especially when they were given the impression that they were no longer part of the community; and lastly, parents of children with additional support needs (ASN), along with their children and the rest of the family, were having to deal with inclusion issues.
- It was made very clear in the focus group that parents of francophone ASN children accepted from the outset that they would not be able to find any francophones among the professionals they needed (medical specialists, speech-language pathologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists), with few exceptions. Should the parents manage to find French-language childcare, chances were that the educator looking after the child was not adequately trained.
- Comments from the surveys brought out anglophone parents' perceptions that they were not welcome to the schools, school activities, parents' meetings and community events held in French; they felt left out of the circle of parents who knew each other and spoke French to each other. They had the impression that the school and community wanted their child, but that they themselves were not part of the package, being left out of the loop for sharing information and decision-making. In short, there was a deficiency in the area of identification of parents of francophone children, but there were also challenges in the area of attitudes towards including anglophone parents.
- In the focus groups, the lack of information on their rights and their context, particularly those in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, came out clearly. There was always a debate about the best way for their children to become bilingual, some of them being convinced that immersion was ideal.
- The programs seen as being most relevant remained, in order of importance: education, health promotion, building a sense of identity, and literacy.
- Childcare remained an essential tool for quality family life in general and for returning to the labour market, but access to French-language services was very limited. For instance, two couples in the focus group had been given this reply to their application: your child will be in school long before there is a space for him/her here!

- Not being able to find service in French often leads to the child being enrolled in an immersion school connected to an English-language childcare centre. Should the parents subsequently decide to enroll their children in a French-language school, there is a disruption in the area of inclusion since the children must leave one social environment to become part of another.
- Changing the environment between childcare and school was even more problematic for ASN children, as they found it more difficult to be included from the outset. As one mother stated, the other children and the adults at the childcare came to respect and appreciate her daughter; the process would have to be started all over again with an entirely different group when the child began going to a school close to the family home.
- The issue of respite was raised concerning quality of life for parents of ASN children. The *Respite* program run by the Child Development Clinic at the Winnipeg Children's Hospital is poorly funded, therefore it is not being promoted and a mother would have to be "at the end of her rope" before she was ever told about it.

Courses of Action

- 12- Anglophone parents in exogamous couples wanted information from the school division to be in their language. Some were choosing immersion for that very reason. These parents demanded to be acknowledged and to be kept informed accordingly.
- 13- Parents were more or less informed about children's rights and their rights as parents. They would like more relevant public education.
- 14- The visibility of activities in French was often a problem. One had to be part of some kind of network, or subscribe to *La Liberté*, or listen to French-language radio, because there was not enough visibility in the English-language media and no public advertising to initiate participation.
- 15- Respondents pointed out that they needed constant, up-to-date information on all activities and resources. The Société franco-manitobaine's 233-ALLÔ service would seem to be unknown to them as it was not mentioned either in the surveys or by the focus groups. Does it play a role as liaison? If not, who does?
- 16- How can children be welcomed and their anglophone parents as well? How can the anglophone parent be convinced that they are not being sought out merely for statistical purposes, but for their presence and participation in the community? Could the debate on the role of anglophone parents be put back on the table?
- 17- The matter of introductory French courses came up once again: parents wanted these courses to be available everywhere, free of charge, and widely promoted among parents of francophone children.

- 18- Anglophone parents wanted policies concerning their participation to be developed and made known so that they could be made to feel welcome in activities held by childcare centres, ECFCs, parental support groups, and francophone schools.
- 19- The complexity of French-language services must take into account the anglophone element, for instance in health and education: in French for the children and in both languages for the parents.
- 20- In order to adequately accompany parents of ASN children, it would be important to put the emphasis on training specialized educators for the francophone childcare network.

E. Women's Appreciation of Childcare Services

Following is data on the 25 women who answered:

- 14 of them were from the urban area, compared to 11 from the rural areas;
- The average age of the women was 25;
- Nine of them had one child; ten had two;
- The average age of the children in childcare was two years old;
- 12 of the women were part of exogamous couples, while seven were in endogamous unions;
- 12 were working full time, three were on extended maternity leave, two were working part time, one was a student, and one was self-employed.

The following are the women's answers to the multiple-choice questions. Respondents' comments are also summarized in Appendix A. Note that the childcare services in question were institutional, not home-based.

How do childcare services enhance your quality of life?

	Not really	Somewhat	Yes
1. Childcare provides an opportunity to go out of my home.	3	5	11
2. Childcare provides me with time for myself.	6	6	7
3. Childcare enhances social inclusion for me and my family.	3	8	8
4. Childcare helps me know and appreciate my child even more.	3	9	7
5. Childcare helps to recognize and appreciate my child's special needs.	1	7	11
6. Childcare offers new learning opportunities for my child.		3	16
7. Childcare offers new social opportunities for my child.		1	18
8. Childcare offers new nutrition opportunities for my child.	4	4	11
9. Childcare offers new disciplinary opportunities for my child.	4	6	9
10. Childcare offers new attachment opportunities for my	2	5	12

child.			
11. Childcare services communicate well with me about my child.		7	12
12. Operating hours are convenient for me and my family.		2	17

Observations

- Generally speaking, it was noted that childcare services greatly enhanced the quality of life of women, especially since they offered a complement and variety to the care provided in the home, particularly in the areas of social and learning opportunities, and to a lesser degree, relative to nutrition and appreciating children's specific needs.
- Almost all respondents stated that they were satisfied with the childcare service hours of operation and a good majority of them appreciated the communication procedures, as well as the bonding and disciplinary opportunities.
- Although childcare services seemed to give mothers opportunities for free time, they were not a cure-all, women still did not have enough time for themselves, no doubt due to the piling on of duties (family and work).
- It was also noted that women relied heavily on childcare services to make their families' social inclusion easier. This proved to be very important for parents of ASN children: without the childcare and its inclusiveness, the socialization of these children would for the most part be delayed and therefore impaired.
- One note about the inclusion of ASN children that had consequences on the way parents were accompanied: it sometimes happened that inclusion policies were applied uniformly, which did not always meet the immediate needs of the child. According to one of the mothers, there were times when inclusion was applied inappropriately, for instance, when her child needed to rest or have some alone time. This mother would have liked to be consulted more. This was a matter of accompanying parents: communication with educators on this subject was sometimes tense, whereas she should be supported in order to put the child's well-being first.
- Another example of accompanying parents was raised regarding the food being served in childcare centres. Mothers would like to know more about what is on the menu, but communications are such that the subject is not dealt with openly.
- Lastly, women were not really relying on childcare services to get to know their children better and appreciate them more. One could conclude that a child's mother considers that she is the person who knows the child best and appreciates him or her the most: in this way, childcare services can complement her relationship with the child, but does not play a fundamental role.

Courses of Action

- 21- In the area of accompaniment, everyone wanted communications between parents and childcare practitioners to be open and honest. The very content and frequency of

the communications could be the subject of regular exchanges and evaluations from both sides. The approach put forward in successful practices aims for co-accompaniment, i.e., parents are in the best position to appreciate the needs of their children. Parents asked that this reality be further appreciated.

22- Parents and institutions could share thoughts and ideas to explore the mutual accompaniment approach. It would be in everyone's interests if parents' contributions and those of childcare parishioners were perceived as being complementary with a view to serving the children's best interests.

How do childcare services help in reconciling work and family life?

	Not really	Somewhat	Yes
1. I can work well knowing my child is in good hands		3	16
2. I can work well knowing the morning and afternoon transitions will go well.		6	13
3. I can be late sometimes and I will be accommodated.	1	6	12
4. I can work well knowing emergencies will be well taken care of.		4	15
5. Childcare services make it easy for me to get back to work or look for a job.		4	15
6. Childcare services are located near my workplace.	5	4	10
7. Childcare allows me to go on with my career plans.		2	17
8. Childcare services allow me to make more work income.		3	16
9. Childcare fees are appropriate and reasonable.	1	5	13
10. My boss and colleagues are more flexible because I use childcare services.	3	5	11
11. My clients are more flexible because I use childcare services.	5	2	7
12. Childcare provides me with a sense of balance and well-being.		7	12

Observations

- The survey made it possible to appreciate the importance for women of childcare services in terms of work-family balance: childcare gave women the opportunity to pursue a career plan and increase their incomes by decreasing the amount of time spent at home following childbirth, as the respondents pointed out.
- For any parent, knowing that their child was in good hands was a fundamental condition to practicing a trade or profession, and to be able to concentrate fully in the workplace.
- The only fly in the ointment for this group of respondents was the challenge of finding childcare services close to the workplace, so as to be able to rush to their

child's side should the need arise, which was bound to happen. This would seem to be even more of a challenge for francophone mothers given the limited number of French-language childcares, especially in the city. For francophone mothers of ASN children, this was a major concern given the urgency of their needs in some cases.

- Along those same lines, the challenge was even greater, if not insurmountable, for parents of children with additional support needs (ASN). Waiting lists in institutional childcare centres were long and if these mothers did not want to leave their child in a family childcare home, they had no other option but to stay home, which was detrimental to their career progress and income. Against all odds, the parents of one such child mentioned in an interview that they had been lucky enough to find francophone childcare while, in most cases, ASN children ended up in anglophone childcare.

Courses of Action

- Once again, it was not only the shortage of spaces that was being lamented, but also the dearth of French-language services. The lack of institutional childcare centres was still a hurdle for language continuity and was one of the reasons francophone schools were losing pupils to the anglophone system. The shortage of childcare spaces also hindered work-family balance.
- In addition to creating new centres along with new spaces in existing centres, the province needs to find ways to enhance training capabilities for the occupation of childcare educator and improve working conditions (including wage scales) to make the career more appealing to aspiring educators.
- The province should also provide additional support to childcare centres that take in ASN children. Moreover, training for specialized educators in this field should be given more support

7. The Systemic Approach

The first two recommendations of this study centre on the key issue of identifying parents of young francophone children during the perinatal period, as requested by the respondents and focus groups, as well as in keeping with the proposal validated by the leaders strategy group. The very first focus group held was with immigrant women who, from the very outset, made it clear that systemic identification had made welcoming them into the community and accompanying them easier.

This finding led to consultations with the executive director of the Accueil francophone, a community organization accredited by the federal and provincial Departments of Immigration. This confirmed that a systemic approach was feasible since a precedent with governments had been established.

Immigrants

Created by the Société franco-manitobaine, the Accueil francophone is an umbrella organization with eight employees who see to welcoming, accompanying (housing, jobs, and services), pairing off and coordinating immigrants. After consulting the community on immigration, the SFM managed to convince the federal and provincial departments of Immigration to fund this service for immigrants who are identified as being francophones.

The Accueil is recognized by government departments on the same footing as other community organizations dedicated to aiding immigrants. The organization has produced brochures to promote its services: maps of the city and its French-speaking areas, lists of services and programs available in French. Be they political refugees or economic immigrants, newcomers were identified based on the provisions of the *Official Languages Act*. They were sent letters of welcome from both departments and given information packages on the organization's services. It was then up to the immigrants to contact the organization to be met upon their arrival at the airport, for instance.

Typically, after the initial welcome, immigrants are taken in hand by the Accueil staff who arrange for short-term housing, then they are accompanied on a daily basis to look for permanent housing, jobs, and all kinds of services such as childcare and schools. From the moment the immigrants settle here, they are encouraged to become independent while the Accueil remains a contact should the need arise.

According to the Accueil's executive director, Bintou Sacko, there are two windows of opportunity to systemically identify parents of young francophone children. The first, along the lines of the consensus that came out of the surveys and focus groups, was identification during the perinatal period. The second, in her opinion, would be the provincial childcare system.

The Health Care System

A first consultation with the executive director of the Conseil communauté en santé du Manitoba (CCS) revealed a convergence regarding the need and intention to systemically identify parents of francophone children. The continuation and development of health care

facilities and institutions, and consequently businesses and careers in French, are at stake. Having the identification take place within the health care system is welcomed by the CCS that acknowledged that health is the obligatory first contact for parents.

Moreover, from the population health angle, the role language plays in quality care is key, not only for parents, but also for children. In this way, the family approach is a successful practice at the promotion level, as well as in prevention and early childhood development.

In Manitoba, health care services are a provincial responsibility, although funding is shared with the federal government. Delivery of services is administered by regional authorities, which are responsible for adapting programs and services to the specific needs of the localities and populations. Overseen by the French Language Services Policy, the eight Regional Health Authorities (RHA) located in areas where there are pockets of francophones are involved in French-language services. The Authorities have province-wide responsibilities regarding health standards, statistics, and citizenship.

The RHAs, along with Child and Family Services Authorities, are represented on the board of the CCS—the official representative of the francophone community in matters of health and social services with the provincial government. The CCS can make recommendations on policy to provincial departments, boards, and regional authorities. With all its contacts in the institutional and professional world, the CCS is, from the outset, a key player in developing a systemic approach to identifying parents of francophone children. The CCS also presides over the Réseau provincial de collaboration with Health and Social Services, of which the Fédération provinciale des comités de parents and the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine are members.

Identifying parents of francophone children could take place at a key point in the normal process of statutory identification before or after giving birth. In its simplest form, it could be an addition to forms currently administered by hospital staff. This identification would trigger the distribution of literature providing specific information on how parents could contact a front-line service.

Should developing such an identification procedure be done within a political process or an administrative one? In other words, if it is to be systemic, should the Department of Health be approached, or should it be the Regional Health Authorities? In order to answer these questions and begin an exploration on process, the appropriate partners must first be brought together.

The Childcare System

According to Bintou Sacko at the Accueil francophone, family childcare homes and institutional childcare centres could be called upon to distribute basic information on the services and programs available within the community. This avenue could be explored with this survey's funder, the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba.

Another partner in the project would be the Bilingual Service Centre of St. Boniface. In 2009, the Centre put out a directory of family-based and institutional childcares in Riel Ward for Manitoba Family Services.

With these partners and others, the terms and conditions for proper identification within the childcare system would need to be defined. For instance, entitled parents registering a francophone child would be actively informed of the linguistic choices available to them—not only in the area of childcare—and would receive referral services if needed. They could make the initial contact themselves or agree to be contacted by the appropriate service.

8. Recommendations

1- IDENTIFICATION: That the FPCP and its early childhood partners, along with the Conseil communauté en santé and its health care partners, come together to set up a provincial front-line strategy for the systemic identification of parents of francophone children starting at birth.

2- IDENTIFICATION: That the FPCP and its early childhood partners, including the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba, work together to establish a provincial strategy to fine-tune the systemic identification of parents of francophone children upon their enrolment in a childcare facility.

3- WELCOMING: That the FPCP involve the francophone community's main organizations and services in developing complete and concise documentation, in both languages, on the front-line services available in French for parents of young children; and that this material be given wide public exposure in English.

4- WELCOMING: That the Société franco-manitobaine open a public dialogue on the role anglophone parents of francophone children have to play within the community along the lines of what was done on the role of the immigrant population, in order to develop a public awareness plan.

5- ACCOMPANYING: That the FPCP and its partners in the Coalition de la petite enfance involve the francophone community in mandating early childhood and family centres as the leading service for welcoming and accompanying parents of francophone children.

6- ACCOMPANYING: That the government of Manitoba see to it immediately that an adequately-funded early childhood and family centre be set up in each of the DSFM's elementary schools.

7- INCLUSION: That the government of Manitoba immediately create new childcare spaces to fully meet the demand of parents of francophone children, including children with additional support needs.

8 - INCLUSION: That francophone systems (school, childcare, ECFC) formally acknowledge anglophone parents of francophone children and entitled persons, develop policies on the proper welcome and participation of these parents within the services (such as school and after-school activities) and actively promote these policies with the public.

Conclusion

Historic continuity has compelled Manitoba's francophones to invest early and massively in its children. The time has come to go one step further by systemically identifying, accompanying, and including families.

Developing a systemic approach is a societal issue. This can be done at several levels: political, administrative, and community. The approach could be framed by an increased awareness of the role of exogamous families and non-francophone parents, for the hurdles may reside more in the mindsets than in the structures.

The welcome Manitoba's francophones have been given immigrants is a positive experience on which can be built the welcoming of our non-francophone neighbours and parents. It is essential to the development of the francophone community that anglophone parents of francophone children be acknowledged and welcomed as rights holders. Welcoming and accompanying them is both an asset and an opportunity.

Nevertheless, the importance and impact of systems and structures must not be underestimated. It is urgent for the government of Manitoba to create new childcare spaces to meet the demand. It must also adequately fund early childhood and family centres in every elementary school in the DSFM immediately. It is a matter of exercising constitutional rights.

The Fédération des parents, with its ties to parents of francophone children and its mission regarding parent councils, child care, and early childhood and family centres, is exceptionally well positioned to carry out the recommendations of this study.

Appendix A—Summary of Survey Respondents’ Comments

The following is the gist of the written comments submitted by respondents.

23. In your opinion, what is the best way to identify the parent of a francophone child?

Endogamous parents <i>[Translation]</i>	Exogamous parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through forms to be filled out at the hospital or at home (Regional Health Authority home visits); or something like the Welcome Wagon, but in French (company that offers product samples, coupons, would be an excellent way to publicize francophone activities, services, etc., in the community). - Doctor, public health nurse, and midwife x 7. - Through a questionnaire filled out at the medical clinic we go to or, at worse, at the hospital at the time of birth... even if it is not a francophone clinic or the doctor is not a francophone. - Pamphlets from the doctor. - Prenatal courses in French. - Groups like <i>Bébé et gazouillements</i>. - Advertising in the media, such as <i>La Liberté</i>. x 3 - Federal census. - Be given the information at the hospital when the child is born. - French-language health and pediatric services. - Questionnaire at the hospital x 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools x 2 - Prenatal classes - Preschool - Survey at birth of child - Have health care workers ask these questions on their input questionnaires. - At the time of birth perhaps implement a registry, with the birth certificate

24. In a general way, what could be done to enhance the welcoming of parents of a Francophone child?

Endogamous parents <i>[Translation]</i>	Exogamous parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An open, welcoming, well organized community. - Once parents are identified as being francophones, follow-ups could be done by phone, e-mail, regular mail: circulate the community calendar through 233-ALLÔ—an excellent source of information on activities/resources for children /parents, families. - The environment, get to know other francophones and the availability of services in French across Manitoba. - Personal contact. - More childcare centres for very young children. - Mothers’ groups... and FATHERS’ GROUPS... and GROUPS for anglophone parents who want to become part of their children’s francophone culture! - Continue to offer activities in French through the ECFCs and the City of Winnipeg. - Explain the importance of the French fact to francophone immigrants to discourage them from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More publicity x 2 - More contact with parents x 2 - General info about what the schools have to offer and family activities - Maintain contact and offer French resources - Make sure they understand and that the organization is ready to help them be part of their child’s francophone life - Have information and resources available, include info on educational options, care.... Also contact info for resources for agencies such as Alliance Française or Canadian Parents for French or provincial organizations. - I was met by someone from Le CRÉE which was really nice only because I

<p>sending their children to anglophone childcares and schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshops on health, support for parents with babies (parent support groups like Healthy Start) - More spaces in francophone childcare centres (especially for infants). - More publicity. - There was WAY TOO MUCH information in the welcome package!!! With two small children at home, we didn't want to spend our time reading everything we were given. Most of the information we received went straight into our recycling bin. - French courses for non-francophone parents. - I like what the CREE is doing. Broaden the Welcome Wagon idea to have all the organizations get together to put on a fair. - Links between parents, welcoming committees and frequent contacts. - A system of pairing families for sharing and friendship (between rural and urban or newcomers with local families). - The CREE should bring the information to the homes. - Carry out an annual survey to identify newcomers to the community and take the first steps with them. - Integrating into the community is up to the parents. 	<p>was involved with Mini-Francophone. They offered many useful resources that my children and I could benefit from.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make everyone feel the same... - More info on the Internet.
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25. Generally, what could be done to ensure these parents are included in the social or community life?

<p style="text-align: center;">Endogamous parents <i>[Translation]</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Exogamous parents</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be paired off with someone who can answer all my questions. - Continue to keep us informed about the activities, resources available, as mentioned in Question 24. - Ask parents to fill out surveys after certain activities—feedback on what parents want. - Easy access to French-language services. Give parents a chance to become involved and integrated into a group. - Give parents lots of resources, approach them first (don't wait for them to come looking for the information resources), some kind of welcome package. - Offer services and activities in French and give parents a warm welcome. - Invite them to concerts, Mini-Francophones, educational evenings on nutrition, health, what to expect. - Give them some place where they can share experiences with other parents like themselves through parent support groups and offer activities in French to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More French activities: soccer, games, reading, music, numbers, other languages. - That we be contacted personally and invited to events that we feel comfortable with although we understand and speak little French. - General info going home to the parents so that we know what is going on. - Personal contact! - More activities for the entire family. x 2 - Include English parents more. - More parental support groups! x 2 - Ensure that I have access to information in a timely fashion and that someone is willing to translate if need be. - Encourage other groups to be more inclusive. - Offer more activities/classes in French through City of Winnipeg programs (such as Leisure Guide Activities) so we

<p>make living in French as a minority a normal thing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage them to play an active role in the community. - Early childhood and family centres, cultural events other than the Festival du Voyageur, events for preschool children since most of the activities are part of the school system. - Clear, structured, inviting opportunities to volunteer in the schools, ECFCs, or childcare centres if there are no other centres of francophone life. - Keep parents informed of events. - Welcome Wagon. - Newcomers find the presence of cliques rather intimidating. - Anglophone parents also have to be made to feel welcome in the schools. 	<p>have more options for us and our children. The few classes that are offered really fill up quickly and there are not as many options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome Wagon, offer to any help needed, encouragement for both parents.
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26. Generally, what can be done to accompany these parents in a better way?

<p style="text-align: center;">Endogamous parents <i>[Translation]</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Exogamous parents</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information on everyday services (groceries, libraries). - Convenient choices: for instance, the DSFM takes nursery school registrations in April while Winnipeg does this in February: the francophone program has to be promoted at the same time as the anglophone program so we can make informed decisions. - Lots of resources and services in French (including recreational and sport activities). - Create bonds of friendship with other parents who are in the same situation. - Offer activities in French and make French-language resources accessible. - It is my firm belief that the key here is to offer more francophone childcare spaces. - Ensure that activities are offered in French. I live in a bilingual community where a number of parents are francophones but their children are in immersion so most of the activities in town are in English. If I could participate in French, I would. - Early childhood centres with an array of services. - A community has to be built based on the people who have children in school; there is nothing else here to bring us together, not even a cultural committee, just those who meet at the school. I would like staff that believe in the importance of schools to be hired for this purpose (to build a cultural identity and sense of belonging to the community) or a resource person who sees the school as the centre of the francophone community. - More parent support groups. - More childcare centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More communication - We are an anglophone family with French roots who went through the immersion system; our child will be attending a français school: is our child considered francophone? - Make them feel welcome, provide contact through email and/or publicity; have child support agencies display info in both languages (clinics, med offices) Create a monitored blog, website with FAQ and links. - More resources and activities. - Subsidize French classes for spouses who want to raise their child in French. - Make materials available for the parents to fill out or read to be in French and English so if the one parent is absent, the other parent can take over, also to make that parent feel part of the program. - My experience is: teach French when kids are 1 to 5 years old. Your French community will grow! The kids are sponges at that period. Be open to English parents. Offer courses to parents who really want to learn French: you can do that if you want to make French strong in Manitoba.

27. Is there something you would like to add?

<p style="text-align: center;">Endogamous parents <i>[Translation]</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Exogamous parents</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It's hard to find the information we need in French, it's easier and faster to find English-language services. - The greatest challenge is to see someone taking part in an event for the first time, and once there, if they are introduced to peers and feel comfortable and accepted, they'll want to take part in other things. - I live in a bilingual Canada and it's frustrating to always have to identify oneself as a francophone... It seems I always have to make a fuss to get services in French, and it always ends with: <i>"But do you speak English?"</i> - It's important for parent support groups and activities in French to be accessible of all francophones in Manitoba, not only those who live in Winnipeg. The number of participants should not dictate the activities; it is well known that the numbers aren't always there, but the interest often is. - Access to quality childcare services that are more flexible (part-time spaces or spaces accessible to people working night shifts) and increased number of spaces for children under the age of two. Family childcare homes can't keep up and don't have a fair system in place to deal with the demand. - I prefer going out to get the information I need when I need it, rather than being swamped when I don't want any. - My husband is from England but was educated wholly in French in Quebec for 6 years. I am the product of French immersion in NB. So we don't know if we are francophones, but our sons go to French-language nursery school! - New francophones in a community are not lost sheep. If the francophone community is alive, they will want to participate. I think French-language services are generally of higher quality. If we remain friendly and don't judge anglophones, our numbers will start to climb - It is important to encourage anglophone parents to approach the school and speak to teachers in their own language. - There are many parents who speak French but are not comfortable with being identified as francophones... They need to be approached. - As an immigrant, I would have like to be given a welcome booklet explaining in detail things that the locals take for granted here. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very happy with the education provided. - More equity and exposure might help other families feel more welcome as their customs match those of people from their own geographic area. When we lived outside of Canada, we, as a family and our children were welcomed into the French culture with little prejudice. - If the Anglophone parent was to feel part of the child's education it would probably become an inspiration to take part in learning French to accompany their child. - I got into the French community by accident! Someone was very inclusive and open, and doors were opened for us. I will always be grateful to them. My French was limited, but now I am quite fluent and my kids speak perfect French. The 'miracle' happened at childcare (Christine-L'Espérance)!

What women would like to see in childcare services

[Text in italics was originally in French]

<p>How can childcare services enhance your quality of life even more?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Lower fees.</i> - <i>There needs to be more money to increase staff and the number of spaces: the waiting lists are too long!</i> - <i>Since the childcare provides lunches, I would like to know what they are eating!</i>
<p>How can childcare services help even more in reconciling work and family life?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Part-time spaces so I can work part time and spend more time with my children</i> - <i>More flexibility for families like ours that need childcare on a part-time or occasional basis.</i>
<p>More comments?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I like the way the children are involved and encouraged, the food served is always healthy, my children are always well greeted, they are always in a good mood.</i> - <i>Staff is very good. I like the way the childcare makes it easy for my family to be included in the francophone community.</i> - <i>My town has an incredible team that provides exceptional care to children.</i> - <i>I am happy with our choice!</i> - <i>I can go out to work now, my son can get used to other people.</i> - <i>My son is in nursery school, which gives him a change of pace during the week so he can learn new things and play with his friends; this enables me to spend some time alone with my one-year-old daughter.</i> - <i>I am happy to be able to leave my son in a place where he is happy and well looked after.</i> - <i>I like the new lunch program.</i>

APPENDIX B – Excerpts from *The Best Is... The Future!*

Early Childhood in Canada's Communities in Which Francophones Are in the Minority: A Transformative Analysis (Commission nationale des parents francophones, 2009)

4.3 Welcoming and accompanying parents

Background

In 2007, the Commission nationale des parents francophones (CNPf) included in its strategic plan a component on welcoming and accompanying parents, which it defined as a capacitating intervention that makes parents accountable under a cultural diversity and intersectoral partnership approach. The CNPF, the key player on the national stage in regard to the Francophone parents' network, has established strategic alliances with Europe and Quebec to supplement its analysis of the best courses of action to take in this area. An overview of the literature on welcoming and accompanying parents showed the introduction of new concepts such as “parentality,” “coeducation of children” and “interdependence between the well-being of parents and the well-being of children,” which the CNPF would like to have more widely used.

The purpose of the questions put to the respondents in each jurisdiction was to check the level of knowledge—mainly in the education sector—in regard to supporting and accompanying parents, the programs in this area offered by the health and social services sectors having been described in section 4.2 on ECD programs and services.

We were interested in identifying the best practices at several levels by asking questions about the following subjects:

- the continuum of services offered,
- the parent clients: exogamous, endogamous, immigrant parents, parents of special needs children,
- the types of tools and materials used to welcome and accompany parents,
- the assessment of parents' needs,
- the methods for communicating with parents,
- the involvement of parents as partners,
- the involvement of parents in the governance of preschool programs, and
- the assessment of programs, tools and mechanisms for welcoming and accompanying parents

General findings

It is not clear why the information is so scattered. Nonetheless, we compiled data according to the type of question in order to illustrate, through these examples, the current situation in regard to supporting and accompanying parents. The details can be found in the provincial and territorial tables on the CNPF Web site.

The service continuum

In many provinces and territories, namely Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, partnerships among community organizations such as parent associations and school boards have led to the provision of educational resources for parents in resource centres. They can borrow books, toys and videos. Some of these centres also offer theme-specific workshops for parents, for instance on how to prepare children for school, family literacy sessions and francization. There are often directories on French language services and support kits.

The clients

Parents in exogamous families

The Northwest Territories' school board provides parents in exogamous families pamphlets on services and books in English. In the Yukon, they are given support kits and invited to dinner meetings. A one-week francization camp is offered for New Brunswick's exogamous parents by the school boards in partnership with other community organizations. Francization, Alpha family and support programs are also available.

Immigrant parents

In the Yukon, newcomers—often immigrant families—are supported with information kits on French language services. In British Columbia, the school board and the Ministry of Education run a program to assist immigrant parents. Alberta had support structures for immigrant parents.

Parents of special needs children

We obtained very little information on how school boards welcome and accompany these parents. The NWT school board mentioned books and pamphlets, as well as professional support by an educationist and a speech pathologist. British Columbia's school board also offers this type of assistance. In New Brunswick, the school boards offer parents learning kits. In Ontario, parents receive a service guide for children experiencing difficulties.

Types of tools and materials

In general, school boards reported that they had developed—often in cooperation with other Francophone community organizations—kits, guides and brochures to inform parents. They often have different kinds of workshops. Interested readers could contact the organizations in charge of these activities to inquire about the kinds of materials they use.

Assessing parents' needs

The only reference we found to the needs of parents was in New Brunswick. Respondents reported that the Réseau de la petite enfance francophone addresses the needs, weaknesses and concerns of today's parents. However, there is no indication of how the Réseau does this. The results of New Brunswick's March 2009 Forum des citoyens should have some

information about the different needs of today's families, for use in the development of a family policy.

Communicating with parents

We collected very little information about the different ways of communicating with parents. The territories indicate that they had some measures, such as registration forms, activities and one-on-one meetings. In the Yukon, there are family suppers, plays and Christmas concerts to encourage parents to participate.

Participation by parents

Our goal was to determine how school boards encouraged parents to participate as true partners in their young children's education, including how parents were invited to take part in school governance. Once again, there were very few responses. Essentially, we received descriptions of activities in which parents are used as volunteers for outings, to prepare snacks, for fundraising or community dinners. The NWT indicated that school trustees have to be parents. In Nunavut, parents are represented on the school board.

Assessment of tools, workshops and programs

In New Brunswick, the above-mentioned francization camp was assessed. The participants confirmed that they felt better equipped. The family literacy program was also assessed, and the results are now available. We do not have any other information about assessments.

Courses of action

Given the importance of parents in helping their children achieve their full potential in the use of the French language, culture and identity and the shortage of information in our survey on how parents are supported and guided, we find that this area needs to be addressed immediately. The courses of action target the CNPF, school boards and partners of the Table nationale sur le développement de la petite enfance.

The CNPF

Course of action No. 6: A strategic framework on welcoming and accompanying parents: a very good direction.

La CNPF is the appropriate organization for taking on the responsibility for developing a national strategic framework for supporting parentality. The framework will have to be based on the recognition of the rights and needs of parents, and will have to reflect an understanding of the new concepts related to welcoming and accompanying parents.

Discussion

The timing of the decision by the Commission nationale des parents francophones to develop a national strategic framework on welcoming and accompanying parents was excellent. The CNPF's leadership in the development of the *National Framework for*

Collaboration on ECD indicates that the Commission will achieve the ultimate goal of the proposed strategic framework: “[translation] *To mobilize a far-reaching effort to collaborate in the development and implementation of interventions that encourage the commitment of Canada’s Francophone and Acadian parents, and the cooperation of partners and public organizations in the application of support and accompaniment for parentality.*”

Course of action No. 7: A survey of the needs of parents

The working group on strategy No. 4 should update its proposal for a survey to determine the level of knowledge of parents about ECD and the choices they have to make to ensure their children’s cultural and linguistic development. The survey must also ask parents what they would like from the community to help them assume their responsibilities.

Discussion

There is information about the needs of parents and the required conditions for the community to welcome and accompany parents. The purpose of the research project by *Invest in Kids* was to better understand and analyze the required conditions for parents to be and feel better supported by their community. Although the project did not target Francophone parents, the report on Phase 1 provides the following key observations:

- parents yearn to be welcomed, valued, recognized and supported in their role as parents, both by and within the community,
- there is a significant gap between what is actually available and what they expect and need,
- parents rarely have a say in the development of policies and programs, even though they know what they want and what they need,
- parents have the impression that they are left to manage on their own before their children start school, and
- we have to create a “community culture” that is conducive to supporting parents and their children.

The *Invest in Kids* organization would be an interesting resource for the working group on strategy No. 4. Moreover, parents are the only ones who can express their wishes about the policies and programs that can treat them with respect, validate them and give them an opportunity to speak up. They are the only ones who can describe to us the gap between what they hope for and what they are getting. It would be particularly important to get the perspective of parents in exogamous families and immigrant families and of parents of special needs children.

Course of action No. 8: Strengthen links with other parent movements

The CNPF should strengthen existing links and create new ones with other parent networks in Canada and abroad.

Discussion

The CNPF can draw on its intersectoral experience with the *National Framework for Collaboration on ECD* and the leadership it showed in its development—and which must continue—and keep assessing the concept of welcoming and accompanying parents by looking into what is being done elsewhere. Certain cultural and linguistic dimensions call for a specific look at the initiatives introduced by these other associations, but significant lessons can be learned from closer links between parents. An overview of a few Web sites shows that there is a great deal of information about several dimensions of the concept, including a few attempts to develop a framework in this regard.

The school boards:

Course of action No. 9: An assessment of the place of parents.

French language school boards should initiate an assessment of the place they assign to parents. The main player in this activity should be the parents themselves.

Discussion

As previously indicated, there are many reasons for the shortage of information about the concept of welcoming and accompanying parents. Whatever these may be, school boards should ask themselves how they see the role of parents, the type of relationship they have with them, and the environment they create to support them. They must assess the programs they set up to inform them and encourage their participation, in order to give them a voice in every decision that touches on the education of their children. Once again, the Canadian and foreign experiences with the involvement of parents in education must be explored. The school boards will not be able to provide advice on the concept of welcoming and accompanying parents if they do not know what parents want and the realities they face. This means setting aside their prejudices, involving them in their analyses, and listening to them.

The Table nationale sur le DPE

Course of action No. 10: Increasing our knowledge about welcoming and accompanying parents

This area will have to be given priority in the implementation of the strategy on the development and sharing of knowledge in the Table's National Framework on Collaboration.

Discussion

We are starting to see the results of the studies of the impact of parent support programs on early learning and childhood development. We even have a few results from studies of programs offered in Francophone communities. But we have very little information about the impact of programs to welcome and accompany parents on the parents themselves or on the level of knowledge of the key ECD partners about the new concepts related to parentality

or the practical application of these concepts. Since the working group on the strategy for the development and sharing of knowledge of the Table nationale is starting to look into the priorities for ECD research in communities in which Francophones are in the minority, the timing is just right for proposing that they include programs for welcoming and accompanying parents.