

# FREEDOM OF CHOICE AND EXCLUSION IN QUEBEC'S EDUCATION SYSTEM DURING THE YEARS 1945-1977

Two-year research project (2025-26) conducted by Guy Rex Rodgers  
funded by *Le Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois  
d'expression anglaise*

First preliminary report for the period January-November 2025

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If you wish to participate in this on-going study and share your story, contact  
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Or you can fill out the Quebec Schools Question survey at the link below  
<http://tiny.cc/QSQ>

## Reasons for this Research

In 1997, historian Robert Gagnon wrote an influential paper<sup>1</sup> entitled : *Pour en finir avec un mythe : le refus des écoles catholiques d'accepter les immigrants*<sup>2</sup>. Immigration, education and language have been controversial in Quebec since the 1960s. The percentage of immigrants students enrolled in French Catholic schools declined steeply between the 1930s and the 1970s. But why? Did immigrants increasingly reject French Catholic schools? Or did French Catholic schools increasingly reject immigrants? Researchers on this topic have consulted bureaucrats, administrators, historians and statisticians. No one has consulted parents and students. They are the primary focus of this research project.

Gagnon's paper presented 23 pages of evidence to 'prove' that allegations of Catholic schools refusing to accept immigrants were an outrageous 'myth.'

*« Cette idée que les communautés immigrantes ont choisi l'école anglaise parce que les écoles catholiques les refusaient est l'un des stéréotypes les plus **persistants des 20 dernières années**. C'est là un bel exemple de ces incantations qui, à force d'être **répétées ad nauseam**, acquièrent la force de la vérité à tel point qu'il ne vient plus à l'idée de s'interroger sur leur bien fondé.<sup>3</sup>»*  
**(Emphasis added)**

Let us briefly consider the context of Gagnon's indignation that affirmations of rejection had been made by immigrants *ad nauseam* **for the past 20 years**. Gagnon wrote his paper in 1997. What was happening 20 years earlier? Three governments passed increasingly coercive language laws in rapid succession: Bill 63 (1969), Bill 22 (1974) and Bill 101 (1977). All three of these laws were responses to the heated controversy in Quebec over the language of education and immigrants.

Bill 101 in particular – which became law 20 years before Gagnon wrote his paper – was based on the belief that immigrants had rejected Quebec's French language and culture *en masse*. It is not surprising that immigrants falsely accused of rejecting French Catholic schools would want it to be known that Quebec's French Catholic schools had rejected them. In 1997, if ex-students were still repeating this claim *ad nauseam*, it was because their story was (and still is in 2025) dismissed as a myth.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Gagnon. Le Bulletin d'histoire politique Volume 5, numéro 2, hiver 1997

<sup>2</sup> Busting a Myth: That Catholic Schools Refused to Accept Immigrants

<sup>3</sup> This idea that immigrant communities chose English schools because Catholic schools refused them is one of the most persistent stereotypes of the last 20 years. It is a fine example of those incantations which, by dint of being repeated *ad nauseam*, acquire the force of truth to such an extent that it no longer occurs to anyone to question their validity.

It is also noteworthy that Gagnon wrote his paper shortly after the 1995 referendum, one of the most polarising political events in Quebec history. The second referendum will be forever associated with Premier Jacques Parizeau's emotional outburst as he conceded that the majority of votes had not supported his dream of an independent Quebec. « *C'est vrai qu'on a été battu. Au fond, par quoi? Par l'argent et des votes ethniques, essentiellement.*<sup>4</sup>»

We will examine Gagnon's arguments and reasoning in this project's final report. At this interim stage, it is sufficient to note that Gagnon's paper made a strong case that French Catholic schools had no reason to refuse admission to 'ethnics.' The cornerstone of Gagnon's argument was that French Catholic schools were legally obliged to accept all students who requested admission. In rejecting immigrant students, French Catholic schools were breaking the law.

This all happened a long time ago, before the deconfessionalization of schools (1997), and before Bill 101 (1977). Why does it matter now? There are several reasons.

## 1. Irreconcilable Narratives

Gagnon claimed that no immigrant students were refused admission to French Catholic schools.

*« L'étude sérieuse des archives nous révèle des relations beaucoup plus complexes entre les écoles publiques catholiques et les communautés culturelles et, surtout, cette étude infirme totalement l'idée que les écoles **catholiques** ou **francophones** ont refusé les enfants des immigrants **catholiques** ou **non**.<sup>5</sup>» (Emphasis added)*

Gagnon claimed that no immigrants were rejected from Catholic schools. Ever. This is an extraordinary claim given that non-Catholics (eg Protestants) and non-Christians (eg Jews) were only admitted to Catholic schools under exceptional circumstances. Not a single Jewish student was turned away? Ever? As they say in the realm of science, 'extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.' During the course of this research project, we will examine Gagnon's evidence. Closely.

The immigrant version of the situation is different and more complex. No one

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<sup>4</sup> It's true we have been beaten, but by what? Essentially by money and the ethnic vote!

<sup>5</sup> A thorough examination of the archives reveals far more complex relationships between Catholic public schools and cultural communities, and, most importantly, this study completely refutes the notion that Catholic or Francophone schools refused the children of immigrants, whether Catholic or not.

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claims that all immigrants were denied admission to French Catholic schools. And no one denies that many immigrants preferred English schools. Families chose schools for different reasons, involving religion and language, as well as pragmatic factors such as proximity of the school to the family home and quality of education. However, some immigrants chose French Catholic schools and some of those were turned away. This experience was so frequent that it should not be controversial. Yet it is questioned and denied.

Which immigrants were most likely to prefer French Catholic schools? They were Catholic francophones and Catholic immigrants whose mother tongue was a romance language. The largest wave of immigration after the Second World War fit this profile. Italian immigrants had a complex relationship with Catholic Quebec. Many were surprised – and disturbed – to be turned away.

During the period under examination (1945-1977) non-Catholics (e.g. Protestant and Orthodox students) were less likely than Catholics to seek enrollment in Catholic schools, and they had a much higher probability of being denied admission. Non-Christians (e.g. Jewish or Muslim students) were least likely to seek enrollment in Catholic schools. The few who did were almost certain to be denied admission. This memory is widely shared among immigrants

Until 1977, parents in Quebec had four education options: French Catholic, English Protestant, English Catholic and French Protestant. Immigrants, historic Anglos and francophones-de-souche were free to choose the option(s) corresponding to their religion and language.<sup>6</sup> Catholic schools rarely enrolled non-Catholics, and French Catholic schools prioritized students who could speak French. Protestant schools were the most likely to enroll students of different religions and languages. Historian Gagnon offered a number of reasons for this. Protestant schools had more money, greater resources and offered better options for proceeding to higher education

Gagnon fully sympathised with immigrants and francophones-de-souche who exercised their legal right to enroll in English Protestant schools. Because he viewed English schools<sup>7</sup> as superior, Gagnon concluded that every immigrant, given free choice, would logically choose English schools. He also concluded,

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<sup>6</sup> Catholics were expected to attend Catholic schools and Protestants to attend Protestant schools. If a student of a different religion was accepted into a school, he or she was considered an 'outsider' and required to pay a special fee.

<sup>7</sup> Except Collèges Classiques, frequented by Quebec's francophone elite who could afford the fees.

with a puzzling leap of logic, that since no immigrants had a good reason to choose French Catholic schools they could not have been refused admission. This research presented here reaches a dramatically different conclusion: many Catholic students, most non-Catholic students, and almost all non-Christian students who tried to register in French Catholic schools were turned away.

## 2. The Saint-Léonard Riots (1968) and Subsequent Language Legislation

The Saint-Léonard Riots in 1968 are also remembered in conflicting narratives. The francophone majority in Quebec remembers them as a battle between French and English. Félix Rose's 2024 film *'La Bataille de Saint-Léonard'* perpetuated the narrative that immigrants rejected Quebec's French language and culture, and therefore, to avert disaster, the government of Quebec was compelled to impose strong language laws.

The Italian perspective is quite different. Most Italian immigrants sought education in French, English and Italian. The conflict in Saint-Leonard was about bilingual education, which was both legal and popular, versus unilingual French education, which was unpopular among Quebecers of all language groups, and has never been Quebec's chosen education model.

Christophe Chikli wrote a Master's Thesis<sup>8</sup> reviewing media coverage of the Saint-Léonard crisis from 1968 to 1970, which presents an unfiltered view of what politicians were saying and thinking as they struggled to formulate language laws: Bill 63 in 1969, Bill 22 in 1974 and Bill 101 in 1977.

René Lévesque, a Liberal MNA in the 1960s and later founder of the Parti Québécois<sup>9</sup>, never supported unilingualism or violence-prone advocates who stirred up trouble in Saint-Léonard.

*Pour sa part, René Levesque dénonça la L.I.S.<sup>10</sup> au cours de la crise de Saint-Léonard. Effectivement, il dénonça **l'imposition forcée de l'unilinguisme français** à Saint-Léonard. Pourtant souverainiste reconnu, il alla à l'encontre de bon nombre de ses collègues et de ses partisans proclamant des 1968 l'inefficacité de la L.I.S. et la dangerosité de son action pouvant conduire à des dérives.<sup>11 12</sup> (**Emphasis added**)*

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<sup>8</sup> Christophe Chikli Master's Thesis 2006 Université de Sherbrooke

<sup>9</sup> The Parti Québécois passed Bill 101 in 1977.

<sup>10</sup> The Mouvement d'intégration scolaire (MIS) became la Ligue d'intégration scolaire (LIS) in March 1969. Firebrand Raymond Lemieux was president of both.

<sup>11</sup> For his part, René Levesque denounced the L.I.S. during the Saint-Léonard crisis. Indeed, he denounced the forced imposition of French unilingualism in Saint-Léonard. Although a recognized sovereignist, he went against many of his colleagues and supporters who, since 1968, proclaimed the ineffectiveness of the L.I.S. and the danger of its actions, which could lead to violence.

<sup>12</sup> Le Devoir le 10 septembre 1968

Jean Lesage, who led the Liberal government during the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, accused the Union Nationale government of inaction regarding immigration and education, but also stated that the francophone majority's 'attitude' (toward immigrants) was part of the problem.

*Si les immigrants choisissent de s'intégrer à la minorité anglophone du Québec, a expliqué M. Lesage, cela est dû d'un part à l'inaction du gouvernement et aussi à cause de l' attitude des Québécois à leur égard.<sup>13 14 (Emphasis added)</sup>*

Paul Gerin-Lajoie, Minister de Education in Robert Bourassa's Liberal<sup>15</sup> government, supported the traditional right of parents to choose the school -- Catholic or Protestant, French or English -- that would provide their children with the best education.

*« I favor the freedom of choice of the language of instruction by the parents. If a family wishes to choose a French language school or an English language school that liberty must be respected.<sup>16</sup> »*

It is surprising now to hear a Minister of Education arguing that all parents, including immigrants, should be free to choose an English school. But why did Gerin-Lajoie also mention the freedom to choose a French Catholic school, unless that choice was restricted at the time?

Daniel Johnson, whose Union Nationale<sup>17</sup> government was the first to wrestle with an equitable solution for conflicting positions on immigration, education and language, expressed his views in *La Presse* on June 13, 1968, as the Saint-Léonard conflict was veering out of control.

*M Johnson a ensuite critiqué sévèrement une fois de plus, ce qui s'est fait jusqu'ici pour l'intégration des immigrants, particulièrement au niveau de la Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal (CÉCM). « Contrairement à ce qui s'est fait jusqu'ici, a dit le premier ministre, il faudra fournir aux immigrants l'occasion de s'intégrer au milieu français **volontairement**. Ils n'ont*

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<sup>13</sup> If immigrants choose to integrate into Quebec's English-speaking minority, Mr. Lesage explained, this is due in part to the government's inaction and also because of the attitude of Quebecers towards them.

<sup>14</sup> *La Presse* le 9 septembre 1968

<sup>15</sup> The Quebec Liberal Party passed Bill 22 in 1974.

<sup>16</sup> *The Gazette* 28 September 1968

<sup>17</sup> The Union National party passed Bill 63 in 1969.

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*jamais eu cette chance. Bien au contraire, la CÉCM et d'autres organismes ont **automatiquement rejeté tout ce qui n'était pas Canadien français catholiques** vers les écoles ou la langue d'instruction est l'anglais.<sup>18</sup>» (Emphasis added)*

This 'automatic rejection' is precisely what immigrants have been saying for 50 years.

### 3. Lessons For Today

Quebec is once again struggling with immigration in record numbers, and with the challenge of integrating foreign students. The Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) party has imposed strong new language legislation with Bill 96, which presumes that immigrants must be 'compelled' to integrate within Quebec society. The immigrant version of this story is quite different. Immigrants are more than willing to learn French but they also want to learn English. They want to live in *Québec Français*, but not in *Québec unilingue*. The battle now is the same as it was the in the 1960s: not French versus English but bilingualism (and multilingualism) versus unilingualism.

### 4. The Clock is Ticking

The final reason for conduction this research is that students who began their education in the 1940, 50s and 60s are now senior citizens. They have important stories and first-hand information to share. We need to speak to them now. It will be too late in 25 years.

## Purpose of the Interim Report

This interim report covers the first eleven months of a two-year project. In order to complete the research, we are looking for the following material:

1. Additional accounts of students who wished to attend French Catholic schools but were denied admission. This information is necessary to identify enrollment patterns. How did they vary over time, from region to region, and from parish to parish?

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18 Mr. Johnson once again severely criticized what had been done to date regarding immigrant integration, particularly at the Montreal Catholic School Commission (MCSC). "Contrary to what has been done so far," said the premier, "immigrants must be given the opportunity to integrate voluntarily into the French community. They have never had that chance. Quite the contrary, the MCSC and other organizations have automatically rejected everyone not French Canadian Catholic, and sent them to English schools."

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2. Additional accounts of students who wished to attend French Catholic schools and were successful. We want to test the theory that Catholics were most likely to be admitted, and non-Christians were the least likely. We want to speak to Catholics educated in French Catholic schools, and also non-Catholics. We would particularly like to speak to non-Christians educated in French Catholic schools. This group appears to be extremely rare.

3. Additional accounts of students who preferred to be educated at English Catholic or English Protestant schools. We want to better understand the motivations for choosing English schools.

4. A significant number of students moved from the English schools to the French schools<sup>19</sup> and vice versa. Did these shifts reflect dissatisfaction, or were they a pragmatic strategy to become bilingual in the absence of quality second-language instruction? In other cases, children were educated in one language if the other language was spoken at home. We want to understand these strategies.

5. Additional media coverage and documentation from the period that sheds light on this subject.

If you wish to participate in this on-going study and share your story, contact [guyrexrogers@gmail.com](mailto:guyrexrogers@gmail.com) or you can fill out the Quebec Schools Question survey at the link below <http://tiny.cc/QSQ>

## Overview of Student Experiences Based on Surveys and Interviews

The basic education model for Quebec after Confederation (1867) was a dual system of Catholic and Protestant schools. Quebec's education system also offered sub-sectors based on language (French and English), giving four options for public schools: French-Catholic with a smaller English-Catholic sector, and English-Protestant with a French-Protestant sector that only involved large numbers of students from the mid-1960s until 1997.

The basic model was simple for English-speaking Protestants. There is no record of an English-speaking Protestant denied admission to an English Protestant

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<sup>19</sup> However, remaining within the same religious school board, usually Catholic.

school. For French-speaking Catholics the system was also simple, although we have many examples of Catholics turned away from French Catholic schools.

The binary system was complicated for students who were not French Catholic or English Protestant. Take the example of an allophone<sup>20</sup> immigrant who tried to enroll at the neighbourhood school, which did not accept immigrants, particularly those who could not speak French. The immigrant family was directed to the local English school, which accepted allophones. However the English school was Protestant and did not accept Catholics, and the immigrant family was Catholic.

In a small town with only two schools -- one French Catholic and the other English Protestant -- what was an allophone, Catholic, immigrant family to do after being rejected by both schools? The family was utterly baffled until they learned that the English Protestant school would admit an immigrant student if the parents were willing to sign a form renouncing their Catholic religion. A standard form was available for this bureaucratic renunciation of faith.

The binary system was complicated for children of mixed marriages: one parent Catholic and the other Protestant. The Catholic Church permitted a Catholic to marry a Protestant provided that the Protestant spouse vowed that the children would be raised and educated as Catholics. Protestant schools were prepared to admit 'Catholic' children, when one parent was Protestant, if the family paid school taxes AND a special monthly compensation. The system was byzantine.

Quebec's education system became increasingly complicated for students who diverged further from the binary model. Immigrants who spoke languages other than French might or might not be accepted into French Catholic schools. If they were Catholic and living in Montreal<sup>21</sup>,

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I the undersigned, do hereby solemnly declare that for the educational purposes of my children, I hereby renounce the Roman Catholic religion.

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Sworn before me on \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Commissioner for Oaths

82. Form for the renunciation of the Roman Catholic religion [LBPSBA, standard form]

20 In Quebec, Allophone means 'speaking a language other than English or French'.

21 English Catholic schools were not available in small towns or some rural regions.

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they had the additional option of enrolling at an English Catholic school. We have found no examples of a Catholic immigrant turned away from an English Catholic school.

French-speaking Protestants were present in Nouvelle France and continued to exist in small numbers. When English Protestant schools began to offer immersion classes in the mid-60s, the French Protestant sector increased, and enrolled increasing numbers of students after Bill 101 came into effect, providing an alternative to the French-Catholic system. The French Protestant sector was particularly popular with non-Catholic francophones, e.g. Protestant immigrants from Haiti and Jewish or Muslim immigrants from the Maghreb. Thus far, we have only five interviews with ex-students from the French Protestant sector. We would like to interview more.

The French Catholic system was a logical choice for Catholic francophones or those who spoke a romance language. As noted above, the French Catholic system did accept some immigrants, although it is not clear why some immigrants were accepted while others were denied admission. Some parents 'fought like hell' and triumphed, while others 'begged and pleaded' yet were turned away. Was there a pattern that varied over time, or from parish to parish? Was acceptance or rejection determined by individual schools or principals? To elucidate this mystery, we need to speak to immigrants who were accepted into the French Catholic system prior to Bill 101. We have conducted a few interviews, but need more.

Evidence thus far collected corroborates the 'common knowledge' that Non-Catholics were most often obliged to enroll in English Protestant schools. This policy was not surprising for 'Protestants' (e.g. Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc) but it was sometimes surprising for Greek Orthodox or Russian Orthodox immigrants, who considered their religion to be closer to Catholicism than any Protestant denomination. We would like to interview non-Catholics who were admitted into the French-Catholic system.

During the early 20th century, as Robert Gagnon reported, there were conversations and experimental collaborations between Montreal's Jewish community and the French Catholic school commission. However, by 1903<sup>22</sup> the Jewish community and French Catholic schools had agreed to go their separate ways. The only Jewish students we have found who attempted to enroll in a French Catholic

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<sup>22</sup> The Quebec Education Act of 1903 designated Jews as 'honorary Protestants.' For most of the 20th century the Catholic School Commission of Montreal had almost no contact with the Jewish community.

school were French-speaking immigrants. None of the non-Christians who have participated in this research were accepted in a French Catholic school. We would like to interview non-Christians who were educated in the French Catholic system.

Many immigrants have reported that their experiences are largely unknown by their francophone-de-souche friends and colleagues. They also encounter skepticism from people who believe historian Robert Gagnon's claim that no immigrants were ever turned away from French Catholic schools. In order to make this bold claim, these skeptics must have abundant evidence of immigrants accepted by French Catholic schools. We request that they share names and contact information so that we can speak to these ex-students and document their experiences

## Reasons for Rejection From French Catholic Schools

Immigrants have often speculated about why they were not permitted to enroll in French Catholic schools. Was it a provincial law? The opposite is true. A provincial law<sup>23</sup> obliged ALL schools in Montreal to accept ALL students. Immigrants have speculated that they were turned away from French Catholic schools because of a directive from the Archbishop of Quebec. Robert Gagnon – in his *Histoire de la Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal* (Boréale 1996) and his influential paper *Pour en finir avec un mythe: le refus des écoles catholiques d'accepter les immigrants* (1997) – demonstrated that the Catholic Church and the Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal (CÉCM), were well aware of their responsibility to educate immigrants, and they developed policies and programs to attract them. Did immigrants fail to respond? Or did schools fail to implement official policies and programs? If so, why?

It was 'common knowledge' by the end of the Second World War that French Catholic schools would not accept non-Christians, hence they did not seek admission. Only non-Christians immigrants who were francophone or francophile attempted to enroll. One Jewish student in this study reported that her mother 'spoke excellent French' yet the daughter was turned away. In several cases, the Jewish families were francophone, but were turned away. In two other cases (one Jewish, one Muslim) the mothers had been educated by French nuns in their home countries and expected their children to be welcome in Quebec's Catholic schools. They were not admitted.

It was also 'common knowledge' among non-Catholics that they would not be

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<sup>23</sup> The Education Act was amended in 1870. « Le législateur précisera que les écoles des commissions scolaires protestante et catholique ne peuvent refuser un enfant qui réside sur le territoire de la municipalité scolaire de Montréal parce qu'il n'est pas catholique ou protestant. »

accepted in French Catholic schools. Nonetheless, some immigrants attempted to register. Two Orthodox students (one Greek, one Russian) believed their religion was almost identical to Catholicism. French Catholic schools rejected them as Protestants. Two other non-Catholics simply wanted to be educated in French. They were not admitted.

Michael D Behiels presented the demographic and political context of 20<sup>th</sup> century immigration in his book, *Quebec and the Question of Immigration: From Ethnocentrism to Ethno Pluralism 1900-1985* <sup>24</sup>. Behiels showed Quebec transforming from a French and British society (95.5% in 1901) to a pluralist society in 1971, with large communities of immigrants, particularly a Yiddish-speaking Jewish group and an Italian-speaking Catholic group.

	1901	percentage	1941	percentage	1971	percentage
French	230,067	63.9%	699,517	62.2%	1,115,625	59.0%
British	113,998	31.6%	273,370	24.5%	333,340	17.0%
Jewish	6,962	1.9%	63,898	5.7%	101,390	5.2%
Italian	2,102	0.6%	25,281	2.3%	148,725	7.6%
Other	7,201	2.0%	59,605	5.3%	219,372	11.2%

Montreal Population by ethnic group (from Behiels) “

*The Commission des Écoles Catholiques de Montreal (CÉCM) had two linguistic divisions, a majority one for French-Canadian Catholics and a minority one for anglophone Catholics - Irish, Scottish, English and increasingly after the turn of the century, Poles, Ukrainians and Italians. The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal attracted non-Catholic children because the language of instruction was English and the religious demands were few. On the other hand, **Catholic school officials actively dissuaded non-Catholic children from enrolling in their system** because they would threaten both the faith and the language of the French-Canadian children. (Emphasis added)*

<sup>24</sup> Canadian Historical Association 1991.

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*“Neither francophone nor anglophone community leaders wanted the provincial government to alter the dual ethnic and religious constitutional structure. Their respective unwillingness to come to terms with religious and ethnic pluralism set the pattern for nearly seven decades and contributed in no small measure to the linguistic and cultural crises of the 1970s and 80s.”<sup>25</sup>*

Catholics have responded to this research in large numbers. They were the one religious group that naturally expected to be accepted by Catholic schools. The choice of French or English schools has often been attributed to high-level political decision or economic strategies. In fact, immigrants often simply wanted to enroll their children in the school closest to their home. They wanted a neighbourhood school where their children could make friends.

Political and economic strategies have also been attributed to the fact that immigrants who successfully registered their children in French Catholic grade school later switched to English high school. The primary motivation reported by participants interviewed in this research was to ensure a high level of bilingualism because neither the English nor the French system offered good second-language instruction. A pragmatic solution was to learn French in elementary school, because French grammar is difficult, and then to learn English in high school. Other students we have interviewed chose to go directly to an English school.

Many Catholic students would have preferred to be educated at a French Catholic school, and were surprised or shocked to be turned away. There was no consistent reason. Sometimes it was because they were ‘immigrants’ or because they ‘did not speak French.’ Sometimes one parent was not Catholic or didn’t speak French and, although the other parent was Catholic and did speak French, the student was still not admitted. Reasons appear to be arbitrary and/or improvised.

In one case, the family was turned away ‘because the school was full and there was no room.’ This seems reasonable and benign, except that English schools were also crowded during the baby boom years, yet they managed to find room for students. It is impossible to imagine a French Catholic school telling a francophone family from Lac St-Jean, ‘The school is full. There is no room. You’ll have to enroll at the English school on the other side of town.’ But of course that never happened to francophones-de-souche. It only happened to immigrants.

## **Student Experiences - Thumbnail Profiles**

Between March and November 2025, more than 260 former students filled out an on-line survey and answered questions about their family’s language(s),

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Michael D. Behiels *Quebec and the Question of Immigration*

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religion(s), arrival in Quebec, the first year the student enrolled in school, if they had been accepted into the school of their choice, or not, and why. The survey questions can be seen here <http://tiny.cc/QSO>. A handful of survey responses were incomplete and could not be used.

The following thumbnail profiles are compiled from 120 survey results plus 140 respondents who also participated in interviews that ranged in length from 30 to 60 minutes. Some of the former students interviewed also signed a declaration to affirm the veracity of their experience. To evaluate the representivity of their experiences, we asked them two contextual questions.

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No**  
**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare /frequent /very common

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes / No**  
**If so, do you consider that experience to be** (underline one): rare /frequent /very common

Their answers reflect the 'common knowledge' in their various communities, which indicates how many other students would have shared these experiences.

We have listed responses chronologically so that student experiences can be compared from decade to decade. Significant social, cultural and political changes occurred between the 1930s and the 1980s. Little immigration occurred during the depression years (1930s) or war years (1939-45). Then an unparalleled wave of immigration began in the post-war years (1945-49) and continued into the 1950s. A baby boom began immediately after the war and continued until the mid-60s. This rapid population increase necessitated major investments in schools and teachers.

Quebec was also undergoing rapid social transformation during the 1960s because of the Quiet Revolution, as well as the FLQ Crisis (1963-70). Quebec created a Ministry of Education in 1964, then streamlined school boards, created regional (comprehensive/polyvalent) high schools, as well as the system of CEGEPS and a network of Université du Québec campuses. All of these changes profoundly impacted education.

After the Saint-Leonard Crisis of 1968, Quebec adopted a series of language laws: Bill 63 (1969) Bill 22 (1974), and Bill 101 (1977), which obliged immigrants to register to be educated at French schools. One side effect of Bill 101 was a rapid increase in French Protestant school enrollment. Bill 101 also caused a sharp decline in attendance at English schools: Protestant and Catholic. The final major change occurred in 1998 when education in Quebec switched from a

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denominational basis to linguistic school boards. The merger of Protestant and Catholic schools caused a major cultural shock.

Language, education and immigration have been sensitive issues in Quebec during the period studied by this research. In this first interim report, we will examine what happened. In the second interim report (January 2026) we will consider why it happened. In the final report (November 2026) we will evaluate how policies regarding language, education and immigration have been determined by these historical events, and how they have been interpreted.

**Abbreviations used in these thumbnails**

EPS English Protestant school(s)

ECS English Catholic school(s)

FPS French Protestant school(s)

FCS French Catholic school(s)

K kindergarten

HS high school

GM grandmother

GF grandfather

QC Quebec

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### Interpretation key for thumbnails

Former students who have signed a declaration are identified by their full name. Personal details of all other study participants have been limited to non-contentious facts. Former students who participated in an interview are identified by their initials. Those who only filled out the survey are identified by their first name, unless they desired full anonymity, in which case they are identified as Anonymous.

Former Students surveyed only – **first name**

**Mike** (*Name*)

**Ville-Émard** (*neighbourhood*) – **1936** (*year of birth*)

Italian (*community*)

Former Students surveyed and interviewed – **initials**

**SO** (*Name*)

**St Michel** (*neighbourhood*) – **1933** (*year of birth*) Indirect rejection (*rejection status*)

Former Students surveyed and interviewed, who signed a declaration – **full name**

**Gerry Turpin** (*Name*)

Declaration

**NDG** (*neighbourhood*) – **1937** (*year of birth*)

Yes rejected (*rejection status*)

## English Catholic School Thumbnails (129)

### 1930s Depression years – minimal immigration

**SO**

**Ville-Émard – 1933**

Indirect rejection

Polish GF arrived before First World War. GM followed after with SO's father in 1920s. Mother was also an immigrant educated in Poland. SO did K and G 1-2 in Polish (within a French girl's school) and then started ECS grade 3 at Holy Cross. SO remembers that even in 1930s, immigrants were expected to go to English school.

**Mike**

**Ville-Émard – 1936**

Italian

Yes rejected

They said the Italians cannot enter the French schooling. My older brothers were also refused to go to the French school system

**Gerry Turpin**

Declaration

**NDG – 1937**

Yes rejected

Father's ancestors arrived in Nouvelle France in 1684. GF could not support his family on the small farm near Quyon, so he moved to Alberta during the land-grant period of the 1880s. There were no French schools in southern Alberta so father became an English speaker. He returned to Quebec in the 1920s but found it difficult to reclaim his roots because he spoke little French. Mother arrived from England 1910 and was Protestant Anglican, spoke little French.

Father wanted his children to be educated in French. In 1935 he tried to enroll GT's sister at FCS but was told she should go to the ECS. When GT started school in 1943, father tried to enroll him at the French Catholic school, but was again denied admission, not because of religion (father was Catholic with deep roots in Quebec), but because of language: the family had been anglicised. The English Catholic school was for English-speakers.

### 1940s War years (1939-45) minimal immigration. Post-war – mass immigration begins.

**TC**

**Dorval – 1940**

Not rejected

GF from Ireland. Father born 1905, Montreal. Mother was Scotch immigrant via Ontario. Both Catholic. Lived in Strathmore area of Dorval, which was a very English

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town. École St Louis boys' school was 1/3 English and 2/3 French, segregated by floors. First two years of HS, travelled to Darcy McGee by commuter train. Then the family moved to west NDG when he was 13. TC acquired very little French in school but did so later in life.

**Angelo**

**Plateau – 1942**

Italian

Yes rejected

I expected to go to French school. My mother was told that children of immigrants were not accepted/wanted and told to leave.

**RS**

**Downtown eastside – 1942**

Yes rejected

Mother arrived from Czechoslovakia, age 14 in early 1930s. Father also from Czechoslovakia. They met and married in Quebec. They lived on Ste. Elizabeth Street, south of Ste. Catherine.

Mother took RS to the French school. Assumed that was where she would enroll. All the neighbourhood kids were francophones so she had learned to speak some French, no English.

Mother took her to the school and they went to a classroom. The teacher gave her weird looks. Mother was still standing at the door. The teacher spoke to the mother and said they had to leave, 'because children of immigrants were not allowed in francophone schools.' Then they moved to Park Ex and RS went to ECS.

**Sharon**

**Ville-Émard – 1943**

Italian

Not rejected

Parents chose Holy Cross Girls' School

**RL**

**Vinton – 1944**

Not rejected

Ancestors had been in Quebec many generations. One branch of the family went back to Normandy, giving RL a francophone family name. RL's mother spoke some French, his father none. The Pontiac region of West Quebec is predominantly English-speaking. RL enrolled at Vinton ECS because it was the only school in the village. RL continued in the English sector for HS at Campbell's Bay.

**BG****Ahuntsic – 1945**

Not rejected

Family arrived from Trinidad in 1954. Family specifically chose Montreal because it was largely French.

They were English-speaking Catholic so he attended St Rita's. Ahunstic was a bilingual area and he had a very positive educational experience. His best friend is a francophone who attended St Rita's. They spoke French and English together. BG has stayed in touch with most of his high school friends: they were a mixture of many ethnicities and are mostly bilingual or trilingual.

**MK****TMR – 1945**

Not rejected

Parents arrived from England 1949, with 3 children. Mother had done part of her education in France. Mother was Quaker. Father was Catholic, raised by Jesuits, and received a Pope's dispensation to marry a non-Catholic. Children to be raised as Catholics.

Eldest brother enrolled at French Catholic school in Outremont (Mont-Jesus-Marie) but he was dressed in British style and the other kids laughed at him, so he transferred to ECS.

MK initially enrolled at St-Joseph's (ECS) because it was close to home in TMR and she could walk. Then she went to Sacred Heart as boarder. Does not remember why parents chose ECS for her and younger brother.

Youngest sister started at FCS because it was close to home. They said, "On peut pas l'accepter." Mother said, "Pourquoi pas?" and they did not have an answer. Mother said, "J'insiste!" and they accepted young sister but 'francized' the spelling of her name. She had no problem being accepted. At Sacred Heart HS, the students were English and French who all mixed together. Bilingualism was encouraged on both sides.

**Kevin****Outremont - 1946**

Irish

Yes rejected

My mother was told could not go to french school "because I was not french".

**Attilio****NDG – 1946**

Italian

Yes rejected

St Raymond's French told us to go to the English St Raymond's.

**LB**

**Verdun – 1946**

Not rejected

Mother came from UK (1928). Father arrived from Cape Breton. Parents were English-speaking Catholics. Family chose St Willibrord's ECS (1-11) because it was the neighbourhood school. Education was very important for LB's mother but her stepfather didn't think higher education was necessary for girls. LB paid her own way to Marianopolis, which was still an all-girl school. (Loyola was boys only). LB became a teacher and taught English Second Language with a French schoolboard.

**LR**

**Saint Lambert – 1946**

Yes rejected

Father had deep francophone roots. Mother's family Irish-Scots from 1880s.

In Saint Lambert there were two schools for Catholics: École Saints-Anges for girls, with some classes for English students. Mother wanted to enroll LR in French section but was refused because mother didn't speak French. Father's language (French) didn't count. LR's husband is German and had to attend an English school. Most Italian friends tell the same story.

**Jean Wayland**

Declaration

**Pointe-aux-Trembles – 1946**

Yes and No

Father Franco-qubécois de-souche. Grand-parents were originally 'brother' and 'nun' but they 'both came out and married.' (Neither could boil water!) Father fought with Black Watch in Second World War. Mother immigrated from Lithuania and initially enrolled at FCS in Lachine (1933) but then sent to ECS. Parents met in Montreal. When JW was old enough to start school, family was living in Mercier/Hochelaga, near the tunnel. JW enrolled in ECS and bussed 25 minutes to Saint-Aloysius near Pie-IX.

By 4th grade, parents moved to Montréal-Est /Point-aux-Trembles. Mostly French but many English-speakers at Longue-Pointe Armoury. Anglos and Francos remained separate. JW enrolled at Saint-Marcel FCS. JW and brother were the only 'anglophones' and their French was not strong so they were directed to ECS for the following year (Napoleon Courtemanche). ECS was far away and they were bussed. JW still lives in Pointe-aux-Trembles, and is fluently bilingual but connected to local English-speaking community.

**Rocco Barbieri**  
**Plateau – 1946**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

Family were shepherds in central southern Italy. Life was tough. Parents married 1937 and had four children. RB, the youngest, born 1947. First country that offered a visa was Canada, 1949. Father came alone to get established. Wife and 4 children followed in 1950.

Closest school was Saint-Stanislas-de-Kostka so father took 3 older sons there. The three boys had just arrived and could not yet speak French, so the principal directed them to seek out an English school. There was another French school a little further away, and the father also tried there, but they also turned him down because the boys didn't speak French. Saint-Dominic's ECS was half an hour walk.

Boys learned English quickly and also learned French on the street.

In 1954 bought a duplex in Saint-Michel. RB enrolled at St-Brendan's. RB became a teacher and retired as an elementary school principal.

RB's uncle and his Italian wife sent their kids to a French Catholic school. RB is not sure how or why they were accepted.

**Maria**  
**Point St Charles – 1947**

Italian

Yes rejected

Just refused enrollment

**Antonio**  
**Rosemount – 1947**

Italian

Not rejected

We wanted to be educated in English

**CP**  
**Chabanel area – 1947**

Yes rejected

Father came from Italy in 1955. Mother and three sons followed in 1958 by boat. They lived on St-Urbain in Chabanel area. St-Simon-Apôtre school was a block away.

Fall of 58, father took them to the school to enroll. CP was 11. The father went to see the principal who said, 'Italians don't go to French school. They have to go to English school.' The nearest ECS was St-Rita's in Ahuntsic, a twenty minute bus ride. The recently emigrated family didn't question the 'rules.'

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**Vincenza**  
**Mile End – 1948** Italian Yes rejected

Yes with my older sister & later my younger brother. French school was closer but we were not able to register.

**Ilse Hellmans Sullivan**  
**NDG – 1948** Belgian Declaration  
Yes rejected

She already had French as her second language, coming from a Flemish boarding school in Brussels, Belgium. The family was Catholic so her mother took her to the closest French Catholic high school, but was told IHS had to go to the English school, although she did not speak any English.

**Domenica**  
**NDG – 1948** Italian Yes rejected

St Brendan's French school sent me to St Brendan's English school. They were not accepting Italians because we did not speak French

**Faustina Billotta**  
**St-Michel – 1948** Declaration  
Yes rejected

Followed her married sister from Italy at age 15. Sister thought there would be better opportunities in Quebec. FB already spoke French and expected to enroll at the French school, which was very close to their apartment. The school would not admit her because she was an immigrant. Although she knew no English, FB was forced to complete HS at an ECS. FB still speaks mostly French and wanted to be interviewed in French. More than 60 years later, she is still deeply disturbed that the FCS refused to admit her.

**Josephine**  
**Mile End – 1949** Italian Yes rejected

No place for Italians

**Mike**  
**Montreal North – 1949** Italian Not rejected

Chose English Catholic school so I could learn English.

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**MB****Baie-Comeau – 1949**

Not rejected

Father had deep French roots in QC but was adopted by an aunt in Rhode Island. Mother from NB. MB went to French kindergarten (one of the first in QC) then English elementary school. They did not have their own building until grade 4. They were a subsector of the French school board.

Then McCormick Memorial HS was built. Most English-speakers in B-C became highly bilingual.

**GS****Cartierville/Ahuntsic – 1949**

Not rejected

Parents francophones-de-souche who only spoke a smattering of English. Home language always French. Parents enrolled their two children in English to 'give them an inheritance.' There was an EPS closer, but parents wanted Catholic education. Montreal North was still farmland, mostly Francophone, but GS started learning English pre-school with neighbour child. St Rita's ECS was mostly Irish and Italian. Grades 4 and 5 bussed to Blessed Oliver Plunkett school corner O'Brian and Salaberry. There were so many kids (and a shortage of busses) that boys sat three per seat and girls sat on their knees. HS was Saint-Pius X, Rosemount. The school was also packed with students. GS became fully bilingual and able to work in both languages, as his parents had planned.

***1950s Post-war immigration accompanied by baby boom*****Angela****Griffintown – 1950**

Italian

Yes rejected

I was refused in the French school. We were landed immigrants and I could not speak French.

**Claire Ropeleski****Snowdon – 1950**

Declaration

Yes rejected

Parents arrived Quebec City 1949 from Hungary, via a DP camp in Germany. They were both Catholics who spoke Hungarian and German. Six months later relocated to Montreal, Decarie Boulevard in Snowdon. Most of the neighbourhood was English-speaking; little French heard. Catholics in the area attend Saint-Malachy's

church near Macdonald Park. Saint-Antonin church and school were near by corner Coolbrook and Snowdown. In 1955, mother tried to enroll CR in daycare at Protestant school (Royal Vale) but the school 'had no room' for Catholics. In 1956, mother took CR to enroll at Saint-Antonin (FCS) but 'there was not enough room' for CR. Mother later explained that the principal 'strongly suggested' Saint Malachy because Saint-Antonin was 'not equipped to teach French to immigrants.' CR remembers only two other immigrant children at Saint-Malachy, a Ukrainian and a Bosnian.

**Carlos**

**Tétreaultville – 1951**                      Brazilian                      Yes rejected

They said they could not teach a 6 yr old French.

**Lesia**

**Mile End – 1951**                      Ukranian                      Yes rejected

My parents were DPs from Ukraine

**James**

**Rosemont – 1951**                      English                      Not rejected

We spoke English – chose St Edmund of Canterbury

**Ted**

**Park Ex– 1951**                      Slovakian                      Not rejected

It was my mother's choice - St. Roch

**Maria**

**Mile-End – 1951**                      Italian                      Yes rejected

I remember only that I couldn't attend because they didn't have the means of educating Italian immigrants at that time and they told my father to go to the English school

**Annalisa**

**Ahuntsic – 1952**                      Italian                      Yes rejected

We were Catholic, but they didn't have room for us. We arrived in 1956 and we learned French and didn't know a single word of English, but were still sent by bus to St-Rita's.

**Anonymous**

**Ville Emard/Cote St.Paul – 1952**

Italian

Not directly rejected

There was a history in my community of Italian children not being accepted in French schools so my parents - like most of those in 1950 - chose English Catholic schools.

**CC**

**Villeray – 1952**

Yes rejected

Parents were Italian. Father arrived in 1957. Mother followed in 1958 with 3 children. Villeray neighbourhood was Italian and francophone. Little interaction with francophones. Common language of play was English.

When they arrived, CC was old enough to start school. Two elder siblings ( 12 and 14) had already started school in Italy. Parents wanted to enroll children at local FCS. Told the FCS did not take immigrants. CC wonders where that decision came from: school board? Or just local administration?

Three kids enrolled at Saint Brendan's #4 (annex), which was a mixed (boys and girls) school.

CC's brothers were 12 and 14 (the elder was 6 feet one). They were both put back to grade 2, so the elder brother found a job in a factory and dropped out of school. CC also had much older boys in her class during the first years of elementary.

Later CC met an Italian immigrant who had spent time in France first so the family all spoke French when they arrived in Quebec, but because they were immigrants they were turned away from the FCS and sent to ECS.

**Maria Prizio**

Declaration

**Ahuntsic – born 1952**

Yes and No

Parents Italian. Father first came to QC as landed immigrant in 1951. Returned to Italy a few times. Mother only agreed to leave Italy in 1962, with two children. MP born 1952 and brother 1959.

The family arrived in Quebec 1962, settled in Ahuntsic. MP had completed grade 5 in Italy. Parents enrolled her at école Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens but instead of grade 6, she was put back to grade 3. MP did not speak French. There was one other Italian girl at the school but she was not allowed to speak to MP, so there was no one to translate or explain. She was very unhappy, and would probably have failed grade 3 because she couldn't understand French and no one helped

her learn. Other kids made fun of her because she dressed and looked different. She cried every day and wanted to quit school. Her parents spoke to neighbours whose children were attending an English school. MP transferred to St Rita's where she I was only required to repeat grade 5. About 90% of the students were Italian immigrants so there was always somebody who could explain or translate. The school provided no language support. There was no 'classe d'accueil'. By the end of the year MP was doing well.

She ended up studying languages at McGill to teach French and Italian.

**Joe**

**Little Italy – 1953** Italian Yes rejected

They had reached their quota of immigrants

**Joseph**

**Park Ex- 1953** Hungarian Yes rejected

Spoke english at home. Too difficult to teach french, will fall behind.

**Tiziana**

**St Michel – 1953** Italian Yes rejected

Because we were immigrants

**Anonymous**

**Park Ex – 1953** Italian Indirectly rejected

Closest school was French but the French kids would make fun of us & calls us names! Went to St Francis of Assisi Annex.

**Leonardo**

**Ahuntsic – 1953** Italian Yes rejected

They looked at our last name, they thought it was French until my dad told them it was Italian. Then they sent me to English school.

**Luisa**

**Little Italy – 1954** Italian Not rejected

Our school was trilingual. We learned French English and Italian. Notre-dame de la defense

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**Anonymous**

**Ville-Émard – 1954**

Italian

Don't know

I don't know. I only spoke French and Italia but went to English school - St John Bosco

**Anonymous**

**Boucherville – 1954**

French

Yes rejected

My sisters were taken out of their classrooms and sent home. We were excommunicated by the local priest because my mother admitted to using contraceptives. We were French immigrants and non believers.

**Monika Boos**

**Côte-des-Neiges – 1954**

Declaration

Yes rejected

Parents arrived in 1954 from Yugoslavia via a decade in Austria. MB was born a few weeks after arriving in Quebec. They were sponsored in Canada by father's uncle. The family language was mostly German. Côte-des-Neiges was a diverse neighbourhood with a lot of children, and many spoke English. The choice of school for MB was based on proximity.

Parents wanted to register their daughter at the closest school, which was a French school – Saint-Pascal-Baylon. The school did not want to accept a German-speaking student, even if the family was Catholic. MB was sent to St Kevin's school, an ECS that was further from the home. As new immigrants, they did not question authority and followed instructions. Younger siblings followed into English Catholic system.

**Luisa Silvestro**

**Ahuntsic – 1954**

Declaration

Yes rejected

All four grandparents arrived from Italy before First World War. Parents were born in Montreal: mother 1918, father 1919. Both parents educated at trilingual schools, which were part of the French Catholic school board. Parents spoke mostly English at home, so wanted daughters educated in French to become fluently bilingual (they also transmitted Italian)

LS was enrolled in a French kindergarten. Her mother took her to La Visitation school for enrollment in grade 1. Despite the family's religion (Catholic) and the mother's proficiency in French, she was told to take her daughter to the ECS. Mother believed it was because she had an Italian name. LS's sister followed in the English Catholic system at St Rita's school in Ahuntsic.

**Piera Di Fruscia** Declaration  
**Rosemount – 1954** Yes rejected

Father arrived from Italy in 1956. Mother and 5 kids followed 1959. Mother took the school-age children to Ste Bernedette elementary school because it was the closest, and Catholic. Mother was told the school was too crowded (because of baby boom) so there was 'no room.' PF enrolled at Saint Finnarr ECS, which was also very crowded but made room for immigrants. Later JFK HS in Villeray

**Carole Verdone-Smith** Declaration  
**Villeray – 1954** Yes rejected

Parents Italian. Father born 1922, arrived QC 1926. Mother born Montreal 1923. Parents both educated at Madonna de la Difesa- Notre Dame de la Défense school in Little Italy- trilingual education. CVS spoke both French and English at home and with neighbourhood children on Waverly. (Also spoke Italian with paternal GM). Quebec-educated, bilingual parents expected to enroll their children at FCS but a nun said, « On accepte pas des immigrants ici. Y'a d'autres écoles pour vous autres. » The nun also said, « S'il y a d'autres familles comme la vôtre, dites leurs de ne pas perdre notre temps. » CVS and two siblings pursued education in English.

**Maria**  
**Plateau – 1955** Italian Yes rejected

Back in Italy my father was preparing my brother and I with French workbooks but in Quebec we were informed that we were not allowed to go to French schools.

**Maria**  
**Mile End – 1955** Italian Not rejected

Close to our first home here in Canada - Luke Callaghan

**Dan**  
**Point St-Charles – 1955** Polish Yes rejected

Immigrants were only admitted to English Catholic

**Anonymous**  
**Rosemount – 1955** Italian Yes rejected

No immigrants

**LQ**

**Chateauguay – 1955**

Yes and No

Father came from Dublin 1952. Mother's family had been in Quebec several generations. Parents were Irish Catholics who lived in Verdun then moved to Chateauguay. Parents enrolled her at Christ Roy FCS, where she stood out as bilingual with a 'foreign' name. During the FLQ crisis, the high school 'could not guarantee her safety' so after a delayed period out of school she enrolled at Howard Billings HS. LQ struggled to catch up on her written English

**Silvia**

**Cote-des-Neiges – 1956**

Italian

Yes rejected

My father was simply told at St. Pascal Baylon , "Monsieur, allez à l'autre école du quartier." Went to St. Kevin's Elementary

**Anonymous**

**Ville-Émard – 1956**

Italian

Yes rejected

Yes. We don't want immigrants in our school.

**Carmen**

**Little Italy – 1956**

Italian

Rejected indirectly

My parents were told by family members that the French Catholic schools were not accepting immigrants. Since father lived in France for a number of years and my mother learned French they would have preferred I attend French school. However, as other family members were refused my parents sent me to English Catholic.

**Gary Kaiserlian**

Declaration

**Park Ex – 1956**

Yes rejected

Family Armenian. Grandparents fled during the massacre 1915. Father was Orthodox and spoke 5 languages. Mother, who was Catholic, wanted son to be educated at a Catholic school and both parents preferred to have him educated in French, like them. Park Ex at the time had no FCS so GK enrolled at Barclay and he struggled at the English school. In 1964 family moved to Nouveau Bordeaux and there was a French school 1 block away. The neighbourhood FCS was La Dauversière elementary (now renamed Gilles-Vigneault). Although mother was Catholic and educated in French, the FCS would not enroll GK because his father was not Catholic.

Blessed Oliver Plunkett (ECS) school had no problem enrolling a student with a Catholic mother and Orthodox father.

HS Pius-X, most of the students Italian. GK retained childhood French and is fluently bilingual.

**Sabino Grassi** Declaration  
**Ahuntsic – 1956** Italian Yes rejected

Parents arrived from Italy in 1955. Father had worked in Belgium so he spoke French. Both parents learned French in Quebec and never really learned English. When parents tried to enroll SG at the local FCS they were told that Italians were not welcome and they were directed to the English system. SG learned excellent French at a bilingual school when they moved to Saint Leonard, but years later when he asked his mother, who spoke little English, why she had enrolled him in an English school, he was angry to learn he had been denied admission to a French school

**Anonymous**  
**St Michel – 1956** Italian Not rejected

Proximity to home – Georges Vanier school

**Josie**  
**Rosemont – 1956** Italian Yes rejected

We would have attended the French school but they declined my request to go to the closest school which was a French school.

**Anonymous**  
**St Michel – 1956** Italian Yes rejected

Because we are Italian

**Anonymous**  
**St Michel – 1956** Italian Yes rejected

You're Italian

**Franca Confente**  
**Mile End – 1956**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

Father came from Italy in mid-50s. Mother followed soon after. Parents married and lived in Mont Laurier, where FC and elder sister were born. Parents were totally francized. In the home, they listened to French radio and TV. Father was a lumberjack and contracted pleurisy so couldn't work as a lumberjack. Family moved to Montreal.

Mile End was quite French at the time. When sister was old enough for school (1960), father took her to the local French Catholic school. The school said, No. Father begged them to take his daughter who spoke French but no English. The official insisted that French schools did not take immigrant children. They had to enroll daughter at an English schools. FC also went to English Catholic school.

**Vincent Gabrielli**  
**NDG – 1956**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

Family came from Italy in 1962. Father had worked in Belgium so already spoke French. VG was born in 1956 so was old enough to enroll in grade 1. Newly immigrated father took him to the local French Catholic school but was told that immigrants had to attend the English Catholic school. As new immigrants, they did not question authority and followed instructions. Enrolled at Saint Raymond school. Parents spoke little English. It would have been easier for them if their sons had been educated in French. Parents later bought a house in LaSalle and VG attended LaSalle Catholics Comprehensive school then John Abbott college.

**Clementina Clerici**  
**NDG – 1956**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

Father arrived QC 1953, mother 1955. They were one of the last couples married by proxy, in October.

CC born 1956, brother 1962, sister 1972. Parents spoke French in Italy and Quebec. Both parents took her to the French Notre-Dame-de-Grâce school, but 'the places that they had were only for the French community.' (She only learned this year later.) So they went to St Augustine of Canterbury ECS, which was further away. An Irish aunt helped with English spelling. Stayed in English schools: Marymount then worked, then Concordia.

Wealthier friends sent their kids to Villa Maria private French school.

**Ralph Mastromonaco**  
**NDG – 1956**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

His parents just wanted to enroll him and older brother at the nearest (French Catholic) school. They were turned away and had to enroll at nearest English Catholic school. The ECS was a very positive experience. 'An accepting school will attract other students'.

RM subsequently received all his education in English but is fluently bilingual and works in both language as a lawyer. Has become an advocate for recognition that FCS pushed untold numbers of immigrant children into English schools. RM has presented a petition at the National Assembly, on behalf of Italian students turned away from FCS.

**Michael Gaug**  
**Longueuil – 1956**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

Mother's family from Hungary 1929. Four siblings born there. Mother born QC 1930. Father born in Romania 1928, arrived in QC 1932. Both parents educated at Saint-Louis-de-France school in a mixture of French, English and German. They went to English high school. Quebec-raised parents spoke French. They attended St-Jude's (French) church in Longueuil, and its associated school was very close to their home. Parents expected MG to be enrolled there.

The Curé decided he should attend the English school with other immigrants. During the baby boom years, new schools opened frequently obliging students to change schools several times. Then MacDonald-Cartier HS, which bussed students from as far away as Farnham. Too far from home to participate in social life. Then Champlain cecep, which merged formerly segregated Catholics and Protestants.

**Franca**  
**Lasalle – 1956**

Italian

Indirectly rejected

Parents were informed that I wouldn't be accepted so they didn't try to register me.

**Anonymous**  
**St Michel – 1957**

Italian

Not rejected

All our relatives and friends went there - St. Dorothy

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**Anonymous****Montreal North – 1957** Italian Yes rejected

My parents were immigrants and the French School was closer. So they chose the French school first but my parents were told to enroll my brother in the English school

**Isabella****Plateau – 1958** Italian Yes rejected

No immigrants

**Martin****Montreal North – 1958** Italian Yes rejected

All immigrants have to go to an English school

**Antonella****Mile-End- 1958** Italian Yes rejected

Parents are deceased so does not remember the details but the local French school sent them to an English school.

**Gerardo****St Michel – 1958** Italian Yes rejected

Children of immigrants. didn't speak French

**Claudia Ottaviano-Maheux****Ahuntsic – 1958** Declaration Yes rejected

Parents arrived in 1951. Mother directly from Italy, father had worked for 5 years in Paris. Her parents spoke French and Italian at home. Neighbour kids spoke French. Parents tried to enroll her older brother at local FCS in 1958, but were turned away. The family tried again for her in 1964 at St Simon Apôtre school. The administrator said, « Vous êtes des immigrants. Il faut aller à l'école anglaise. » COM enrolled at John Cabot and struggled to learn English in grade one, receiving zero assistance.

**FR****Chabanel area – 1958** Yes rejected

Father arrived from Italy in 1954, mother 1957. Father spoke French and wanted to

send son to French school. It seemed very natural and logical, although kids only spoke Italian. When it came time to register for school, FR was given a verbal test to make sure he could speak French, and failed the test. None of the immigrants in the neighbourhood – Italian, Polish, Ukrainian – passed the test and so none were accepted in the French school. All immigrants went to John Cabot ECS. FR struggled until grade 3 to learn English.

**Maria**

**St Michel – 1959** Italian Not rejected

English Catholic school was closest - St. Dorothy

**Anonymous**

**Park Ex – 1959** Italian Yes rejected

All they told me is that I wasn't accepted and had to register to an English school - Blessed Edmond Campion

**Antonietta**

**Little Italy – 1959** Italian Yes rejected

French school did not accept me. Did not speak French that was the reason.

**Nancy**

**Ahuntsic – 1959** Italian Yes rejected

I was not allowed. I didn't speak French or English.

**Anonymous**

**St Michel – 1959** Italian Yes rejected

My parent's had chosen to send us to French school. I was there the day my dad tried to register me, the lady at the front desk said, "Allez l'autre cote de la rue!" We went and they said, "Welcome"

**Anonymous**

**St Michel – 1959** Italian Yes rejected

Do not accept children of immigrants.

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**Anonymous**

**St Michel – 1959**

Italian

Yes rejected

We didn't have the right, cause my parents weren't born in Canada.

**VG**

**Villeray – 1959**

Indirectly rejected

Father arrived from Italy in 52, mother 53. They were married by proxy. Older sister born 58. VG 59, younger sister 65. The family would have preferred French school. Many Italians learned French at school in Italy. VG's mother integrated in French in QC and never learned English. VG only spoke French until older sister went to English school. "Everyone knew" that immigrants had to enroll in English schools in Quebec. Immigrants also wanted to learn English.

**LB**

**Tétreaultville – 1959**

Indirectly rejected

Most of the neighbourhood was English and Italian. Did not have a lot of social contact with francophones. Older cousins and neighbours had already been refused admission to FCS so he entered directly into English sector.

Enrolled at Saint Gerard's elementary school. HS in Rosemount then Marianopolis and McGill

**RM**

**Ville-Émard – 1959**

Yes rejected

Mother arrived from Italy in 1947 (age 13). Father arrived 1946 (age 18). They married 1955. Kids born 56, 59, 62. Kids played on the street in a mixture of languages: French, English and others.

Parents wanted children to go to French school but were told, 'no' because they were immigrants. It was laborious for parents to learn English to help their children with homework.

"Most Italian families would have preferred to send their kids to French schools. Immigrants were baffled to learn that immigrants were almost all sent to English schools. It is still a mystery how some Italians got accepted in French schools."

**Paul Esposito**  
**Ville-Émard – 1959**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

l'École Cœur-Immaculé-de-Marie was the closest to our home. Mother ran a daycare and many of the children spoke French so PE learned French as an infant.

Mother, who spoke mostly Italian, took a neighbour along to help communicate in French. PE learned later his mother was told the school had filled its quota of immigrant children and they suggested trying the English elementary school. St-John Bosco was further away from home.

PE could speak very little English and the teacher asked his mother what he watched on TV. Mostly French programs, so he started watching English TV.

The school provided no assistance to learn English, and PE's parents did not speak English, so he had to figure it out for himself. By the second semester, his English was at about the same level as the other kids and his marks were good.

**1960s Peak baby boom years, Quiet Revolution, FLQ, Saint-Leonard Crisis**

**Demetra Darsaklis**  
**St-Michel – 1960**

Yes rejected

Declaration

The biggest reason was that the school was very close to our home. My parents had not been in Quebec very long and did not understand that there were different schools for different religions and languages. They just wanted to enroll me at the neighbourhood school. My mother was probably accompanied to the school by one of her brothers who had been in Quebec longer and spoke more English.

My mother was told that I couldn't go to the school because we were not Catholic. Then she found out that all the other Greek kids in the neighbourhood had to go to Protestant schools. We were bussed all the way to Rosemont to Nesbitt school

**Roberto**  
**Petite Patrie – 1960**

Italian

Yes rejected

Was accepted, but my parents fought for the school to take me. We were not French. Italians should go to English school.

**Erminio**  
**NDG – 1960 Italian**

Indirectly rejected

Same school as siblings and cousins

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**Anonymous**  
**Mile-End- 1960** Portuguese Yes rejected  
They just told them that new immigrants had to go to english school. The French school was right next door to us and we were forced to walk further to go to english school.

**Anonymous**  
**Petite-Patrie – 1960** Italian Yes rejected  
There was no space in the French school

**Michael**  
**Outremont – 1960** English Yes rejected  
My older siblings were refused because we did not speak French

**Anonymous**  
**Laval de Rapides – 1960** Hungarian/Greek Not rejected  
The French school system was not adequate, and had many dropout rates. In high school I had English and French education. It was not my Mother Tongue and today I am grateful for being trilingual. It seemed as if the French leaders did not want the students to be bilingual, but to keep them knowing only one language.

**Michael Leclair** Declaration  
**Anjou – 1960** Yes and No  
I attended an English elementary school – Tara Hall in Ville d’Anjou. For high school, my parents thought a French high school would be a good idea.  
My mother, who was Catholic and spoke very good French, took me to the school (Saint-Jean-Baptiste-de-la-Salle) where we met with a nun, who was very nice and spoke to me slowly, but she quickly ascertained that I could not understand what she was saying. My mother became agitated with the conversation but I could not understand what she and the nun were saying to each other. After about 15 minutes we left, and the next day I started writing entrance exams for private English high schools.

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**RM****Dorval – 1960**

Not rejected

Both parents Italian, and all grandparents arrived early 20th century. Father (born 1928) and siblings (and cousins) educated in French in Dorval. Maternal GF chose English schools for mother and siblings. RM and sister enrolled in ECS. RM and French-educated cousins all trilingual.

**Teresa Picciano**

Declaration

**Mile End – 1960**

Yes rejected

Parents Italian. Father arrived 1958, sponsored by brother. Mother had been neighbour in Italy, came in 1959 to get married (1960). Living in Mile End, St-Dominique near St-Viateur. Most of the neighbours were immigrants and English was the public language but TP learned French with friends. Closest FCS (now Robert Gravel HS) was at corner of Fairmount. Mother took TP to the school and argued when they refused to enrol her daughter. She said, "Are you kidding me? Where am I going to send my daughter?" The school was a two-minute walk from the home, and the woman who took care of TP when her mother was working lived right across the street from the school. But the person at the school said, "Here it's strictly French. You're Italian. You're not coming to this school." Mother insisted, "She's going to learn French." TP was already speaking French from playing with francophone neighbours. The school did not relent.

The closest English Catholic school was Luke Callaghan (on Clarke Street), but it was full and there was no space for more students. So TP had to go to St Agnes on Henri-Julien. As a six-year-old, she had to walk about 6 blocks. Younger sister followed her to ECS.

**Irene Ioannoni**

Declaration

**Tétreaultville – 1961**

Indirectly rejected

Most of the neighbourhood was French and Italian but older cousins and neighbours had already been refused admission to FCS so she entered directly into English sector. However, her spoken French skills were very good because of social contacts. Later enrolled at Lawrence O'Toole ECS.

**Rosanna Bruni** Declaration  
**Tétreaultville – 1961** Yes rejected

Father arrived from Italy in 1955, mother 1956. Father had worked in Belgium so already knew French. Older brother, born in Italy, arrived age 3. French school was right across the street.

Brother was not admitted because he was an immigrant. ECS was farther away. RB and 2 other siblings followed brother in ECS.

'If Quebec had been smarter then, there'd be no problem with French today.'

**PD**  
**St-Michel – 1961** Not rejected

Mother arrived 1955 with brother from Sicily, father came in 1959 to marry mother. St-Michel neighbourhood was very francophone so she spoke French, no English. All her friends went to FCS. But father wanted her to go to English school because he had cousins in USA. Father wanted her to be able to speak with cousins but also wanted her to learn a third language because she already spoke Italian and French. She fought for FCS, but father won. St Dorothy ECS was just across the street.

**Pina**  
**Plateau – 1962** Italian Yes rejected

Parents were told the English school was for immigrants.

**Anna**  
**St Michel – 1962** Italian Indirectly rejected

We had just gotten here and my parents didn't speak the language so they were told to not even bother trying in the french system

**Anonymous**  
**Lachine – 1962** English Yes rejected

My parents said they looked into it and because we were not Catholic couldn't attend.

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**Anonymous**

**Rosemont – 1962**

Italian

Indirectly rejected

We were told not to bother with French because they didn't want immigrant kids.

**Mary**

**St Leonard – 1962**

Italian

Indirectly rejected

My older cousins tried to go to French school but were turned away, so my parents put my sisters and I in English school.

**Anonymous**

**Villeray – 1962**

Italian

Indirectly rejected

We had heard that immigrants had to go to English school

**FC**

**NDG – 1962**

Indirectly rejected

Maternal GF arrived 1949, GM and mother followed 1955. Father's family 1953. Father worked in construction and spoke French. The Parish priest was francophone. In the 1960s it was 'common knowledge' that Italians would attend ECS, but English education provided economic benefits so the ECS was a positive experience. The family was immersed in French culture and spoke Italian at home so the children became trilingual.

**Tony Spano**

Declaration

**Ahunstic/Saint-Michel – 1962**

Yes rejected

Parents Italian. Father arrived 1952. Returned to Italy to marry mother 1955, then both settled in Montreal. Parents worked in French. Many of the neighbours were Italian and the common language of play was mostly English because the kids spoke different Italian dialects. When eldest sister was school age (in Rosemount/Petite Patrie), parents took her to the FCS but they were directed across the street to the ECS, although the parents did not speak English.

By the time TS was born they had moved to Ahuntsic so parents tried to enroll him at the FCS. By now the father was very comfortable in French and insisted that his son be accepted in the FCS, Notre Dame de la Merci, which was close to home – and one of the reasons they had bought that house.

1968 was the year of the Saint-Leonard crisis and language politics were intense. When the father was told, 'Italians are not welcome here' 'there was a violent exchange' and the father had to be escorted out of the school. The ECS Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens was more than a mile away and 95% of the students were Italian.

**Rachel**

**St Michel – 1963** Italian Yes rejected  
Children of immigrants now allowed.

**Monique**

**Park Ex – 1963** Lebanese /Arabic Yes rejected  
No choice.

**Vicky**

**St Michel – 1963** Italian Yes rejected  
Because we were Italian

**Giuseppe**

**Park Ex – 1963** Italian Yes rejected  
Didn't speak French

**Rosie**

**NDG – 1964** Italian Yes rejected  
We were italian non speaking French

**Adriana**

**Lachine – 1964** Italian Yes rejected  
Yes my mom said immigrant children had to go to English schools and additionally because my brother had gone to English school 9 years earlier (also not by choice), I wasn't allowed to go to French school

**Gino Insogna**  
**Rosemount – 1964**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

All four grandparents arrived together from Italy in 1960. Parents married in Montreal in 1961. Their section of Rosemount was predominantly francophone so GI learned French playing with other kids. Also Hungarian and Ukrainian families. Still an Orthodox church and Byzantine Catholic church in the neighbourhood. Father took GI to Sainte-Bernadette-Soubirous school. He believed French was more difficult to learn than English, so French school would be better. Father was told, 'On n'accepte pas les Italiens ici.' That was that. GI's Italian friends and relatives were also refused admission to FCS. GI and brother enrolled at Saint-Finbarr, which was mainly Italian. GI is trilingual, and so are his children.

**CR**  
**LaSalle – 1965**

Not rejected

Parents Portuguese via India and Pakistan. Neighbourhood was mostly English and immigrants.

CR not sure why his parents enrolled him in English school. (Laurier MacDonald) They are deceased. CR loved his education. Higher education was encouraged. Went directly from HS (LaSalle Catholic) to Acadia University in Nova Scotia.

**Nina Gentile**  
**Villeray/Ahuntsic - 1965**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

We were living in Quebec so French was important. Also the French school was very close to home, just a block away. My older sister started school in 1955. Our father took her to the French school on the corner. They said, "We don't want immigrants here."

**Dominique Poletti**  
**Ville-Émard/Côte-Saint-Paul – 1966**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

Parents Italian. Father had lived in Australia for 12 years so spoke English very well. Parents arrived QC 1966. Settled in Ville-Émard. The neighbour kids were mostly francophone so DP learned French. Parents spoke little French. Closest school to home was Notre-Dame-du-Perpétuel-Secours. The mother took DP there and was told, 'No, no, you're immigrants.' The mother assured the administrator that DP spoke French, but the administrator insisted that immigrants should enroll at ECS. Holy Cross was farther away and DP spoke little English. The kindergarten teacher at Holy Cross told the mother, 'Your daughter would do much better at a French school.' Mother said, 'I know, but the French school didn't want her.'

**GS – re her two sons**

**TMR – 1966**

Yes and No

GS arrived in QC in 1971 with two infant boys. GS and husband were Italian. They went to USA in 1966. Husband earned PhD in USA then was hired to teach at École Polytechnique Montréal (although he spoke very little French, but quickly learned). Eldest son (born 1965) had completed grade one in English in USA. GS put him in ECS (1972) because he had started school in English, but enrolled younger son in private French kindergarten.

Moved to Glenmount/TMR (1973). Elder son went to Saint-Joseph ECS for grades 3-5. Youngest son accepted at Saint-Clément FCS and did well. Parents wanted to enroll eldest son at Saint-Clément for gr 6, although he spoke little French. The principal said, 'He will ruin the French of my students', and denied him admission. Father threatened to write a letter to Le Devoir, to let them know that his son was being denied admission to a French Catholic school – in 1975. The boy was given three months of private French tutoring and then was accepted at Saint-Clément. Both boys later went to Collège Notre Dame and pursued higher education in French.

**Mario**

**Tétreaultville – 1966**

Italian

Not rejected

I preferred French school, but my parents chose English and I believe the law 101 came in when I was young and was proud to know that English school had French subject starting from first grade where the French school had English subjects starting only in fifth grade.

**Maria**

**Pointe aux Trembles – 1966**

Italian

Yes rejected

I was anglophone and not baptized even though my mom was Quebecois and my father 2nd generation Italian.

**Anonymous**

**St-Michel – 1966**

Italian

Not rejected

Other Italian Catholic kids in the neighborhood went to St Dorothy's

**RF**

**Rosemount – 1966**

Not rejected

Father arrived from Italy in 1954, mother in 1963. The parents spoke French at home and so English was to be learned at school. Parents enrolled her at Edward Murphy school. Parents chose English school for practical purposes, particularly language acquisition. RF had never heard of students rejected from FCS prior to reading Ralph Mastro Monaco's articles

RF's husband's Italian family converted to a Protestant faith. He attended ECS elementary then EPS HS.

**Anonymous**

**St-Leonard – 1967**

Italian

Yes rejected

My parents tried since they found French was closer to Italian. Both schools shared a courtyard, they were asked to go to the other side to Dante where all Italians had to go. No excuses, just that it is the rule in Quebec.

**JT**

**Beaconsfield – 1967**

Not rejected

Mother German, father Canadian. (His mother was Franco-Manitoban so he was bilingual.) Parents met and married (early 60s) in USA. Moved to Beaconsfield 1972. Started school at St Paul's elementary (ECS) then moved to Saint-Anne-de-Bellevue and JT enrolled at École Saint-Georges (1975). Other Anglo kids were also attending the FCS, so that kids could learn a good quality of French. No fear of losing English. (JT also spoke German at home.)

**Angie**

**Montreal North – 1968**

Italian

Not rejected

My parents preferred us going to English Catholic school - St Alice

**Francesco**

**TMR – 1969**

Italian

Yes rejected

I was born in Rome, Italy automatically Catholic. I did my 1st grade in USA and for the principal of St. Clement I had no possession of the French language.

***1970s FLQ crisis, Bill 101, Comprehensive high schools, transition period***

**Tara**

**Montreal West – 1970**

Irish

Yes rejected

My mother is Protestant and my parents were divorced.

**Mary**

**Laval- 1971**

Italian

Yes and no

My parents were forced to send my sister to English school when she started in 1972. With me they were forcing them to send me to French but my parents fought against having 2 kids in different schools so I was not allowed to go to kindergarten and the law was changed that year for all siblings to be allowed to go to same language school.

**Nadia**

**St Leonard – 1973**

Italian

No, but parents yes

My parents were not allowed to go to a French school and that is why they enrolled me in an English school.

**Pamela**

**Laval – 1974**

English

Not rejected

My parents enrolled me in a French immersion program, however I despised going to school in grade 1. (Prince Charles Elementary School - French Immersion) French immersion was fairly new at that time. We were forbidden by our teacher to speak one word of English in the class. We were also forbidden to speak English on the school grounds. We had to hide behind the school in order to speak with our friends in English. If we were caught speaking English, the teacher taped our mouths shut in class. I cried everyday having to go to school. At the end of the year, my parents spoke with the principal (who did nothing about the situation with the teacher). My parents took me out of the immersion program and switched me to the English school close by. I was very happy at that point, I was only 6 years old, so now I was able to speak to my friends in English. I never cried after that. Unfortunately, I didn't get the French education that I would have had if I stayed in the French Immersion program.

**PD**

**Ste-Foy – 1974**

Not rejected

Parents educated in English, as were his older siblings. Father was Irish. Mother francophone. The family mostly spoke French at home. Anglos were a minority and exotic in the area.

Parents enrolled him in an ECS to acquire English, but then moved him to a private French high school, the only member of the family to receive part of his basic education in French. He stood out with an Anglo name, and because he 'code switched' with other bilinguals. Then English CEGEP St Lawrence (which brought together previously segregated Catholics and Protestants, and was 80% francophone), followed by Concordia, Université de Montréal and PhD at Université Laval.

**Teresa**

**Little Italy – 1975**

Italian

Not rejected

Parents decided- Notre-dame de la defense

**Franca**

**East Montreal – 1976**

Italian

No, but parents yes.

I went to English school because my parents were refused French Catholic school access.

**LG**

**LaSalle – 1978**

No, but mother yes

Mother arrived from Italy mid 50s, father early 60s. Mother was turned away from French school.

Father arrived later and by then immigrants didn't try to enroll in FCS.

LG went to Laurendeau-Dunton ECS. (attached to French school) Separate start times Eng- Fr students.

***Some taunting between Anglos and Francos. Bill 101 spray painted.***

***1980s first referendum***

**Sylvia**

**Saint-Léonard – 1989**

Italian

No, but parents Yes

My parents were not allowed because they were immigrants.

## English Protestant school Thumbnails (89)

### ***1930s Depression years – minimal immigration***

**Demetrios (Jim) Tjelios**  
**East Plateau – 1933**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

Father arrived in Quebec 1907. Returned to Greece in 1929 to marry Mother, who had gone to a French college (École Française de Calamari) in Thessaloniki. They returned to Montreal and lived on Sherbrooke east near Dorion.

Elder brother born 1930. When mother took him to local FCS in 1936, she was told that the school only accepted Catholics. Greeks paid taxes to the neutral board. Sister (born 1932) and DT (born 1933) followed to William Dawson EPS.

In the 1930s, many Greek children went to Socrates Greek school – for elementary. Others went to Protestant schools. DT not aware of any other Greeks who tried to enroll in FCS. After the Second World War, Greek schools expanded so Greek immigrants had several options. The Greek schools began adding more than 50% French instruction in the late 60s. DT married a Franco-Québécois Catholic and they sent their children to FCS. One child switched to Concordia for university, the other went to Université de Montréal.

**DT**

**Town of Mount Royal – 1939**

Not rejected

Before the Second World War they had been in Winnipeg. Family arrived from Ottawa 1952 where DT had finished elementary school.

Enrolled at Mount Royal High School in TMR, which was very English. Graduated from McGill 1961 and father said, 'Leave this province and don't come back.' Because of Quiet Revolution, father did not think there would be any jobs for anglophones. DT went to Western University then worked in Toronto until transferred back to Montreal in 1967.

### ***1940s War years (1939-45) minimal immigration. Post-war – mass immigration begins.***

**MP**

**Mile End – 1940**

Not rejected

Paternal GF left western Ukraine 1926 because of Stalin, and family followed 1929. MP's father was 22. Mother arrived at the same period, age 20. Parents met in

Montreal late 30s. Both parents spoke Ukrainian. Religion was Ukrainian Orthodox. Parents attended “Church of All Nations” on Amherst that was Ukrainian but more like Protestant Anglican than Catholic – “Believed everything except the Pope.’

Mile End neighbour very Jewish and it was a given that immigrants went to EPS. Bancroft on Saint-Urbain. Jewish mothers were deeply involved in the Home and Schools Association. They instilled in kids – You’re going to grow up to be something! Teachers were also very motivated. Immigrants felt that WASP Anglos considered them second class.

Attended the High School of Montreal in 1953. Students came from Point-Saint Charles, Rosemount, Saint-Henry and even Park-Ex and Montreal North. There were also some French-Canadian kids whose families had left or been expelled from Catholic Church. Most of the Jewish kids from Bancroft went to Baron Byng.

**Norman**

**Snowdon – 1941**

Jewish

Indirectly rejected

As Jews, my parents never considered Catholic School.

**Anonymous**

**Outremont – 1942**

Jewish

Not rejected

Went to nearest English school accepting Jewish Students.

**Miriam Zylberstein Byers**

**Mile End – 1943**

Declaration

Yes rejected

Family emigrated from Poland via France. Also spoke Russian.

MZB born 1943 and did first two years of school in France. When the family arrived in QC she was in grade 3 and had already spoke French – with a French accent. Family wanted to enroll her in local FCS but she was denied admission. They considered Marie-de-France private school but the cost was prohibitive.

She enrolled at Bancroft. Still has francophone colleagues who ask why she went to an English school and why she speaks French with European accent. Some do not believe she was not allowed to attend FCS.

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**David**  
**Verdun – 1944** English Not rejected  
Family was English Protestant - Woodland Elementary

**SS**  
**NDG – 1944** Not rejected  
Ancestors Irish and Scottish since 1803. Protestants. Some Gaelic-speaking Romans Catholics. Ancestors in Quebec City were bilingual. Several educated at l'Université Laval or Ursuline Convent. Positive attitude learning French and knowing Quebec history.  
Family had a business in NDG. SS attended Herbert Symonds elementary school. In Grade 4 moved to Morin Heights. Political and linguistic polarization in 1960s. Private HS in the Townships – Ste Helen's Anglican.

**HS**  
**Point Saint-Charles – 1945** Not rejected  
Mother's family came from Scotland late 1800s. Father's family from Wales. Father left school at age 9 to support his family. Mother never finished grade school.  
South of the railroad tracks was English, a mix of Protestant and Catholic. North of the tracks was French Catholic. Protestant kids went to Lorne school, English Catholics to Saint Gabriel's school and French Catholics to Saint-Charles school. Point Saint-Charles was a rough neighbourhood with a lot of fighting, mostly between English and French.  
HS later went to the High School of Montreal, which had students from as far away as Ville St Laurent and East End Montreal. None of his friends from the Point went there. He transferred to Verdun HS. Then went to Sir George Williams, which was an alienatingly different world of apparent wealth and affluence but also extraordinary diversity with kids from around the world.

**Harry**  
**Mile End – 1946**  
Jewish Yes rejected  
Because we were not Catholic. Spoke Yiddish and French. Went to Fairmount School

## **DC**

### **Ville St-Laurent – 1946**

Not rejected

Mother born in NB, during depression came to work with wealthy family. GF was from Britain. Father born in Granby.

Kindergarten at Elmgrove (brand new school) in Ville St-Laurent. Then redefined boundaries and attended Parkdale school. Both close to home. Neighbourhood houses built 1948, very new. Most of the fathers had been overseas during the war. Kids all played in English. No ECS in Ville St-Laurent until much later.

Saint Laurent HS very overcrowded because of baby boom. Church basements full of classes.

Malcolm Campbell High School built for grade 9. Many Armenians and kids commuting from West Island – eg Roxboro. Then Sir Winston Churchill built, and boundaries redefined for grades 10-11. SWC class was 70% Jewish. High quality of education at all schools. Students motivated to go to university, many the first in their family.

## **JE**

### **Arvida – 1946**

Not rejected

Mother related to Louis Hébert, 1660. Father came from Toronto in 1941. Parents met in Montreal. Father employed by Alcan so moved to Arvida. Very English-speaking neighbourhood (international roots) but the town was 90% French. Only French TV and radio, so JE became bilingual. Protestant school had grades 1- 11 then to Bishop's in Lennoxville.

## **AB**

### **Plateau – 1946**

Indirectly rejected

Mother escaped pogroms in Ukraine in early 1900s. Father's parents arrived around the same time but he was born in Quebec. Both parents Jewish. Both educated EPS. Father grew up among small Jewish community on Papineau, and became fluent in French. Parents married 1939. Daughter born 1943, AB born 1946.

Family living on Sherbrooke and Saint-Urbain. Heard from neighbours that Jews were not accepted at FCS. Did K at High School of Montreal (now FACE) and grade 1 at Devonshire. Then moved to Outremont for grade 2 at Alfred Joyce, grade 3-5 at Guy Drummond (now International school). Many of the students Jewish. Moved again to Côte-de-Neiges and went to Coronation school, grades 6 and 7. HS at Northmount, mostly Jewish at the time.

**KH****Outremont – 1947**

Not rejected

Family were DPs from Germany – via Norway. Parents spoke Yiddish, German and English.

First enrolled at Alfred Joyce, Outremont. Other Jewish families enrolled at English Protestant schools.

Soon moved to Monkland village NDG and attended Willingdon school grades 2 - 6. Later Monkland HS, quite a diverse group of students. Remembers bomb threats during FLQ years. Wagar only opened in grade 9, quite Jewish. And then McGill.

**GR****Park Extension – 1947**

Indirectly rejected

Mother's family arrived QC around 1910. Father's family came to Montreal 1920s via Alberta. Religion Jewish. It was 'common knowledge' back in the 20s and 30s only Protestant schools would take Jewish students.

In grade 2, he moved to Ville St. Laurent. St Laurent High School had elementary classes. In grade 4 bussed to Russel school in TMR. Grades 5-7 a new school built in Ville St. Laurent. Christian holidays plus Jewish kids had Jewish holidays.

GR's wife arrived in QC age 10 from Paris in 1960 but could not go to a FCS because she was Jewish. Many other friends had the same experience. One friend attended a French Protestant school in late 60s.

**TM****Pointe-Claire – 1947**

Not rejected

Parents arrived from Ontario 1959 when TB was 12. The choices were EPS or ECS. Most neighbours were from British Isles. No idea where the nearest FCS was located. Enrolled at Northview for a year, then John Rennie HS for two years then Lindsay Place opened and TB was there for three years. Then to Queens University.

**Anna Fuerstenberg**

Declaration

**Mile End – 1947**

Yes rejected

Family came from Poland (via refuge camp in Germany) in 1952. AF had brother 10 years older (now deceased). Parents spoke Polish, German, Yiddish and French. They lived on Hutchison near Villeneuve.

AF's parents wanted to enrol her in French school on Laurier, because it was a language they understood and therefore could communicate with teachers and help with homework. The school asked, 'Are you Jewish?' Mother replied, 'I don't think that's any of your business!' Mother later told AF, 'They were afraid we were communists.' AF – 'And we were! So they were right!'

Mother did not immediately take 'no' for an answer and tried to enroll AF at other FCS, unsuccessfully.

Finally enrolled at Bancroft, with many other immigrant students. Later Guy Drummond (Outremont). Then family moved to Côte-des-Neiges and attended Northmount HS. High evaluation of the Protestant education system. Then left Canada for adventures before attending UC Berkeley

## **GC**

**Coaticook – 1948**

Not rejected

Father's family arrived in 1803. Free Will Baptists who later converted to Anglicanism. Mother a Catholic francophone with roots back to Jacques Cartier. Father was injured in WWII and sent back to veteran's hospital in Saint-Anne-de-Bellevue. Mother, who had been raised in an orphanage, joined the Women's Auxiliary Core, was shipped to Alberta, learned English, then back to QC. Met at the hospital then met again in Coaticook after the war and fell in love.

GC's parents needed permission to marry in a Catholic church, under the condition that the children would be raised Catholic. Father believed that Protestant schools offered more education and less religion, so GC enrolled in EPS but the family attended French Catholic church.

GC did not have to renounce Catholic religion to attend EPS. The family paid taxes to the Protestant school and had 'droits acquis' to send children to Protestant school. Could not be refused. But also had to pay compensation of \$4.50 per month to admit a 'Catholic' child.

Jewish families also had the right to attend Protestant schools (as non-Catholics) and paid the same compensation, as non-Protestants.

## **EF**

**Mile End – 1948**

Indirectly rejected

Family arrived December 1956, escaped Hungarian Revolution. Family spoke Hungarian but father also spoke Yiddish, which was widely spoken in Montreal.

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Family joined uncle who left Hungary in 1948 and spent a few years in France, then came to Quebec because he spoke French but no English. Uncle suggested sending EF to FCS but other Jewish immigrants informed the family that only Catholics could attend French schools. EF also remembers parents talking about a special fee for non-Catholic students in Catholic schools, but no fee for Jews in Protestant schools.

EF initially enrolled at Barclay school, (grade 3) Park Ex, then family moved to Mile End near Park Ave and Bernard, and EF enrolled at Fairmount school (now Collège Française). Went to Baron Byng HS and failed French in grade 8, so had to repeat the entire year for being one mark short.

### **Ellen**

**Cote-Des-Neiges – 1949** English Yes rejected

We were not allowed to go to Catholic schools unless we were Catholic. The next choice was English Protestant which we had to attend and also had to go to a school that was closest to our house.

### **HA**

**Côte-des-Neiges – 1949** Not rejected

Maternal grandparents from New York circa 1900. Mother born QC, educated in EPS. Father from Berlin via DP camp in England and then held in an 'enemy aliens' camp on Ile au Noir (Richelieu River) during Second World War. Both parents Jewish, met and married after the war.

HA started at Logan (EPS) school. Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood very English plus immigrants. Then Westminster, which was 99% Jewish, and most were first generation immigrants. And then the new Wager HS with same kids as Westminster.

### **Mary Moroska**

Declaration

**Little Burgundy – 1949**

Yes rejected

Grandparents left Russia after the Revolution to live in France. Religion Russian Orthodox.

Parents educated in France and had French passports. They relocated to Morocco after WWII. MM born there in 1950. Family left Morocco after Independence was declared in 1956 and the country became unstable.

Arrived in Quebec 1957, living in Little Burgundy. The family spoke French so expected to enroll daughter at FCS. The family was not Catholic and parents were

not willing to “convert” or declare that their daughter would be raised as a Catholic. Turned away from FCS although Russian Orthodox and Catholicism are 99% the same.

MM enrolled at Royal Arthur in Little Burgundy, and then from grade 2 at Bedford school in Côte-Des-Neiges.

### ***1950s Post-war immigration accompanied by baby boom***

**Edward Stuart Rogers**  
**Côte-des-Neiges – 1950**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

Family came from England in September 1954. Father was a dedicated atheist and his mother an agnostic. Father lived on Darlington near the corner of Van Horne in Côte-des-Neiges. Father filled out the forms at the local French Catholic school, but he put down the family religion as ‘Methodist’ because his father was a Methodist minister. The school would not accept Protestants or non-Catholics.

ESR enrolled at Bedford school in 1955, but his father was stubborn and continued to try to get him into a French school, but kept hitting a brick wall until he had the revelation of putting him into a private French school. Father found a private school in Longueuil and it seemed like a good fit. ESR hit it off with the Head Master and was very enthusiastic so his father filled out the enrollment papers and ESR was supposed to start the next week. On Monday the school called and said, ‘We have to tell you we can’t accept him because he’s not Catholic.’ His father questioned decision this because it was a private school. Later his father thought it had something to do with subsidies from the government that were contingent on enrolling Catholic students, but they could never get to the bottom of why he was refused admission.

To circumvent this refusal, ESR’s father considered the option of allowing his son to become Catholic, although he was as an ardent atheist. ESR hesitated, and so they abandoned the idea. Then his father hired a tutor to teach him French a couple of times a week.

In 1956 Bedford was inundated with Hungarian Jews fleeing the Revolution, and Sephardics from the Maghreb after the Suez Crisis.

ESR went to Strathcona academy for grade 4-7. Then Bishop’s College.

**Judith****Mile End – 1951**

Hungarian

Yes rejected

My mother went to register my brother and me in French school but was turned away because we were Jewish. I believe we could have gone, if we had paid a monthly fee, but that was impossible as we were newly arrived Hungarian immigrants. Enrolled at Edward VII school

**John****Park Ex – 1951**

German

Indirectly rejected

My parents were told they would have to pay school fees of approx \$20 to \$25 per month. Enrolled at Bancroft.

**MB****Snowdon – 1951**

Not rejected

Paternal GPs came from Russia in 1912. Maternal GP escaped Pogroms early 1900s. Parents born in QC, Plateau area. Attended Jewish People's School on Van Horne near Westbury. It was part of PSBGM or followed curriculum. Snowdon area was predominantly Jewish. No thought of going to French Catholic school. Later went to Northmount then Sir George Williams University.

**George Contaxakis****Mile End – 1951**

Declaration

Yes rejected

Father and son arrived from Cairo, Egypt. Family was Greek Orthodox. GC was in grade 6. Father took him to College Français on Fairmount, and he was placed in grade 6. A few minutes later the principal came into the class, pointed at GC and asked, "Are you Catholic?" GC said, "No, I'm Orthodox." Then he said, "You're not allowed to be here." They did not know the Catholic school system did not accept Greek Orthodox students. Subsequently discovered that many non-Catholics were denied access to French Catholic schools.

**Marlene Jennings****Longueuil – 1951**

Declaration

Yes rejected

Maternal GM Belgian whose family arrived under Homesteaders Act (1880s). Maternal GF Franco-Manitoban with roots back to Louis Riel era, and prior to that in Nouvelle France. Mother and her cousins were francophone. Father was Black American from Alabama, arrived with temporary work visa for CN in 1944. Parents

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married in 1946 in Montreal. Parents used French as the family language. They wanted their children to be educated in French. They lived in Ville Jacques Cartier area of Longueuil. The neighbours were almost all francophone.

In the mid-50's, the mother attempted to enroll eldest daughter at the neighbourhood elementary French Catholic school but was refused because they were Anglican and not Catholic. Told she should go to the Protestant school instead. All five siblings followed to EPS and the home language became increasingly English.

### **Eva**

**Plateau – 1952** Hungarian Not rejected

Beth Jacob Academy (there was no French Jewish school) they accepted Jewish children of newly arrived Jewish refugees.

### **HM**

**Rosemount – 1952** Yes rejected

Mother's family pure laine francophone. Father Hungarian, orphaned age 10. Came to Canada by himself in 1950. Met mother at l'École des beaux-arts. Catholic mother was excommunicated for marrying a Protestant. Wanted enroll kids in French Protestant school but none available so they chose English Protestant school in Rosemount. Then moved to Ville D'Anjou, Dalkeith school. Then moved to St-Lambert/Préville. Grade 7 moved to Brossard and did 1 year in Préville/St.Lambert. Then parents put her into Villa Maria Catholic boarding school in 1965 as an antidote to teenage temptations.

### **CS**

**Westmount – 1952** Not rejected

Father's family arrived 1886. Mother arrived in Canada in 1926 and then in Montreal shortly after WWII. First school Roslyn, nearest public school. Father was a graduate. Very few francophones in Westmount.

Then Lakefield private boarding school in Ontario for 5 years then back to Westmount High. During first years of CEGEPs, Sir George Williams offered CEGEP courses in 1972. Continued his education in his 30s.

**VH****Le Moyne – 1952**

Yes rejected

Family moved to Quebec from Alberta and Ontario 1958. Heritage Scottish/Irish.

VH's mother approached the local school to enroll her, but the family was Protestant and in those days 'there was no mixing of Catholics and Protestants.' She was in St. Lambert elementary annex grade 3, then Prévile 4-6. Moved to NDG, Westmount HS grade 7-8. Brother went to Westhill. Then moved to Saint Bruno, grade 9, and grade 10-11 Prévile. Then father transferred to Toronto. VH returned to QC 2001.

**Johan Mady**

Declaration

**Lachute – 1952**

Yes rejected

Father was in Montreal during WWII then returned to Lebanon to marry. Parents came together in 1947. Family is Muslim, but her mother was educated in Lebanon by French nuns. Expected her children to be educated in French Catholic schools in QC. But not accepted, so the three children went to EPS because they were open to other religions. The family were the only Muslims in Lachute and probably the only 'ethnics.' Their neighbourhood in Lachute was mostly English.

For grade 11 new Laurentian Regional HS (half English and half French, but totally segregated). During first years of CEGEPs, McGill offered CEGEP courses in 1972. JM stayed at McGill for university.

Greek friend had same experience. Went into Protestant system because of religion.

**Anne****Cote-des-Neiges – 1953**

Jewish

Not rejected

Coronation Elementary closer to home.

**CG****Town of Mount Royal – 1954**

Indirectly rejected

Arrived from Cairo, Egypt in 1957. Family language was French. Religion was Jewish. Three siblings enrolled at Algonquin Protestant school in TMR. CG started grade 1 and learned English quickly. It was harder for older siblings to learn English in grades 3 and 6. Family would have preferred a French school but it was 'common knowledge' that Catholic schools did not take Jewish students.

Algonquin school was about 50% Jewish, Canadian born. Later went to TMR HS. Quality of education in Protestant system was excellent. Then went to McGill.

**DM**

**Pierrefonds – 1954**

Yes and No

Father's ancestors arrived in Gaspé from Channel Islands. Some were Huguenots not admitted to FCS and there were no FPS in the Gaspé. Her aunt remembers fights between English (Protestant) kids and French (Catholic) kids, who included René Levesque. Mother's parents from Scotland, but she was born in Quebec.

DB born in Pierrefonds, which was solidly Anglo and anglicized allophones. Most of the churches were Anglican and United. Not much Catholic (or French) presence. DM started school at Thorndale. HS John Rennie (Catholic HS was St Thomas) and McGill.

**Nicolette de Smit**

Declaration

**Lachine – 1954**

Yes rejected

Father back and forth between Dutch Indonesia and Holland. Mother was pure Dutch but had friends from Dutch Indonesia. Parents met in Holland. NDS born there. Only Dutch spoken. Mother was raised Catholic but not religious. Father nominally Protestant but not religious. Family with four children came to Montreal in 1962.

Initially lived in Lachine. NDS wanted to go to French school but because the family was not Catholic, she was not accepted. Mother had been raised Catholic but could not speak French. They discovered there was a French Protestant school (probably Peace Centennial) but it was too far from Lachine for an 8 year old to commute. ND has memories of liking the Frenchness of QC and resisting being sent to English school. Enrolled at Summerlea school Lachine. Learned English fairly quickly with little assistance. Moved to Pointe-Claire for grade 7. Brand new development. In HS she was a Francophile who took French-enriched courses. Then went to de Maisonneuve cegep (travelling from Pointe-Claire) but struggled with local French. Could understand professors but not students. So switched to Loyala, affiliated with UDM, then Concordia.

**Rachel Sinyor**

Declaration

**Côte-des-Neiges – 1954**

Yes rejected

Family arrived in 1964. RS was 10. Father was from Morocco and mother from Bulgaria. They lived in Israel prior to Quebec. The family spoke Hebrew and French, which was why they chose Montreal.

Parents went to register her at the local French school but were turned away because

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they were Jewish and not Catholic. Enrolled in Bedford school but learning English was a struggle. Parents couldn't help. Family moved to Chomedey and RS went to Souvenir school then Chomedey HS. Later Vanier and McGill.

Family had many Moroccan friends, who spoke primarily French, but were turned away from French Catholic schools and sent into the English Protestant system.

**Martin**

**Laval des Rapides – 1955** Dutch Yes rejected

Family history says because we were Protestant. After rejection, there was no other choice.

**Joel**

**Mile-End – 1955** Moroccan Yes, rejected

We spoke French, no English, but I was denied access to a French school because we are Jewish.

**Anonymous**

**Park Ex – 1956** Greek Yes rejected

Was not allowed to attend French Catholic school because we were Greek Orthodox.

**LL**

**NDG – 1956** Not rejected

Father born in Lachine. Grandparents were British and moved back to England, where the father later met a woman from France. They married in 53. LL born in England, then the family came to QC in 1957. Mother fluently bilingual.

They lived on the border of Westmount and then NDG. Grade 1 at Willingdon. Moved to Roxboro in 1963. Later Riverdale HS. LL only really learned French as an adult.

**MR**

**Trois-Rivières – 1956** Yes and No

Protestant parents came to QC from Ontario in 1953 for work at paper mill. The environment in Trois-Rivières was mostly French, plus a small Syrian community. Outside school, home and church, everything was French. When family first moved to Trois-Rivières, parents wanted MR to attend FCS but there would have been double school taxes. No FPS was available, so she enrolled in EPS.

The EPS and ECS (mostly Irish) were on the same street and kids shouted insults at one another.

Moved to St. Lambert in 1968. Saint-Lambert elementary then Chambly County High.

**SP**

**Mile End – 1956**

Indirectly rejected

Father came to Quebec first, mother and daughter followed a year later. She was born in QC

SP attended Greek school for a year, then Bancroft, close to home. Parents are deceased so cannot verify why they chose Protestant school, but it was 'common knowledge' that Greek orthodox students were not accepted into French Catholic schools. All the Greeks she knows went to Protestant schools, until Bill 101, then everything switched.

Most of the teachers at Bancroft were Jewish. Then went to Barclay and Montreal High School

**Carole Rentschler**

Declaration

**Ste-Therese – 1956**

Yes rejected

Father arrived from Germany in 1955. Mother arrived 1956. CR born 1957.

Father spoke German and English and quickly learned French. Mother spoke German and some English, no French. The family lived in a very French part of Ste-Therese so the children learned French playing on the street with neighbours. Father went to enroll CR at the local French school in 1962 but would not enroll her because the family was not Catholic. Directed them toward Protestant English school. Parents placed her in a private kindergarten to learn English and then she enrolled at McCaig elementary in Rosémere, which was the closest ECS but much further from home in Ste-Therese. When CR was 10 they moved to Rosémere, which had a large English-speaking community.

**Tim**

**Westmount – 1958**

English

Not rejected

Family English Protestant - Roslyn School then Westmount High

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**RB****Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue – 1958**

Not rejected

Father's parents came from England in 1920s. Mother's family came from Newfoundland when she was a child. Parents met at HS in Park Ex. After marriage relocated to Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue so father could study at Macdonald College to become a teacher. Neighbourhood half English, half French.

RB started school at Macdonald elementary (EPS).

1966 moved to Pointe-Claire. Northview elementary was a melting pot of kids who did not fit into FCS: Jewish, German, Italian, Finnish. Many WASPs, some Arabs. HS Lindsay Place.

**HB****Mile End – 1958**

Indirectly rejected

Father came from Greece in 1956. Mother followed in 1957 with infant son. HB born in Quebec 1958. Parents Greek Orthodox. Father spoke some English.

Brother enrolled at Socrates Greek school but did not do well so transferred to Edward VII (now école de l'Étincelle). HB started school at Edward VII.

Family moved to Chomedey and school was Crestview.

When they returned to Montreal, closest schools were Nazareth (ECS) and Bancroft (EPS). Parents were told by other Greek families that they could not send kids to Nazareth because it was Catholic.

They played in the parks with other kids who were Catholic. No hostility – just separate school systems. The shared language was English, even for francophones. Francophones used swimming pool on De Lorimier but Greeks went to New Bordeaux. Very strong Jewish presence, cordial relations, but did not play with them.

**LE****Courtland Park (Dorval) – 1958**

Not rejected

Father was a British Doctor, who arrived 1950. Mother came to Quebec from Ontario age 17 to study nursing. They met at Royal Vic. Cortland Park area very Anglo and white. Went to Dorval HS, French immersion. Then Bishop's College and Marianopolis.

**MM****Snowdon – 1958**

Not rejected

Parents arrived in 1949. Both parents had been in many parts of Europe during the Second World War. Father Catholic Polish and mother Lutheran Estonian but she converted to Catholicism. Father initially student in Slavic Studies at Université de Montréal. MAM enrolled at Notre Dame de Sion kindergarten but she was frightened by nuns, so parents enrolled her at Trafalgar (EPS) for grade 1. Father died so economic situation changed. To get into Westmount HS (EPS), she had to declare she was Protestant. Many of the students were Jewish. Then Dawson and Vanier then Concordia.

**Iwan****Franklin Centre – 1959**

Ukrainian

Not rejected

Closest available school, elder siblings already attending Franklin Elementary School

**Mary****Mile End – 1959**

Greek

Indirectly rejected

Parents were informed that Greek Orthodox children were not eligible for enrolment in Catholic School.

**PM****Rosemount – 1959**

Yes and No

Paternal GF visited QC 1898, returned to Italy. Came to QC 1909 with one son, wife followed in 1913 with two other sons. The Catholics kids went to a bilingual (Fr/Eng) school. Maternal GF born in England, arrived Toronto 1909.

1935 Italian Catholic GF became Pentecostal. Verbotten to attend FCS. Father went to William Dawson HS. Because family was Protestant, PM enrolled at Rosemount school. PM though her was attending the 'local school'. Only realized years later that Protestants and Catholics were completely segregated.

***1960s Peak baby boom years, Quiet Revolution, FLQ, Saint-Leonard Crisis*****Gail****Lennoxville – 1960**

English

Not rejected

Family all attended English school

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**Anonymous**

**Mile End – 1960**

Greek

Indirectly rejected

We were not French and not Catholic.

**Andy**

**Préville – 1960**

English

Yes rejected

Parents wanted French school; neighborhood French kids all went to Catholic school that rejected me. They sent me to neighborhood English Protestant school - Preville Elementary School

**Michael**

**Outremont – 1960**

English

Yes rejected

My older siblings were refused because we did not speak French.

**Anonymous**

**Laval de Rapides – 1960**

Hungarian/Greek

Not rejected

The French school system was not adequate, and had many dropout rates. In high school I had English and French education. Today I am grateful for being trilingual. It seemed as if the French leaders did not want the students to be bilingual, but to keep them knowing only one language.

**PN**

**Town of Mount Royal – 1960**

Not rejected

First ancestors arrived in Quebec City and Eastern Townships. Mother's family from USA – doctors. Baptists. Father's family Presbyterians. Enrolled at Carlyle ECS school, TMR. Right across the street. Later Champlain and Bishop's.

**JC**

**Town of Mount Royal – 1960**

Not rejected

Mother's family came from Ontario (from England many generations ago.) Father's family came from England in 1700s (Anglicans). Family was living in Town of Mount Royal. First school was Dunrae Gardens - EPS. There were many Greek and Armenian students, mostly bussed in from Park Ex. JC remembers FLQ bomb threats and many families leaving QC

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**DP**

**Ville St-Laurent – 1960**

Indirectly rejected

Mother arrived from NY to marry father in 1940. Father was born in Quebec. Both Jewish.

Started school at Garden Vale elementary in Ville St-Laurent for kindergarten. The family did not believe Jewish students could be accepted into Catholic schools so Protestant school was the only public choice. DD a bad experience with her teacher in grade 1 so switched to private Jewish school – Talmud Torah – for grades 1 - 4. Then Carlyle school in TMR grades 5 - 6.

**Lori**

**NDG- 1960**

English

Not rejected

We were English and Protestant so I went Sir Arthur Currie school.

**Donna**

**Laval West – 1961**

English

Indirectly rejected

I remember my mother saying it would have been expensive going to a different school board to which we did not pay taxes as one of the reasons we couldn't go to the French system.

**Mark**

**Chomedey – 1961**

Jewish

Not rejected

Parents chose private Jewish education - Talmud Torah.

**Debra**

**Outremont – 1961**

Jewish

Not rejected

Chose Guy Drummond (EPS) because I spoke English.

**SM**

**Chomedey – 1961**

Not rejected

GF arrived 1903. GM shortly after. Both from Armenia and Jewish. Chomedey had many Jewish students and they all attended Protestant school. Later on Western Laval HS and then Dawson.

**Betty Esperanza  
Chomedey – 1961**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

Father left Hungary in 1956 because of revolution. He was a Gypsy who later converted to Judaism. Mother came from France in 1959. She was Jewish. Parents met in Montreal and married 1960.

Mother was and very proud of her French Lycée education. She did not speak English and wanted BE to be educated in French. Family spoke French at home and their neighbours were almost all Québécois francophones.

Because mother was an immigrant from France, there were no complications with the enrolling BE at local FCS. When the school examined the enrollment papers, they saw that the mother listed her religion as Jewish. Years later she told BE that the school (École Saint-Paul) called a few days later to say they could no accept her enrollment because there was "not enough room" and that she should "go to the Protestant school." Mother would have accepted a French Protestant school but the only Protestant school in Chomedey was English. Mother complained about this to the francophone neighbours, who did not find the decision surprising. They said, « C'est comme ça. Vous êtes pas comme nous autres. » BE's mother was furious and could not believe it was possible in Quebec that her daughter would be forced to go to an English school. One neighbour helped her lodge a complaint but it changed nothing, so BE went to EPS along with four younger siblings. BE learned English but never lost her French. Also speaks Hungarian and Spanish.

**Penny  
Outremont – 1962**

English

Not rejected

Chose English Protestant school - Guy Drummond

**Anonymous  
Lachine – 1962 English**

Indirectly rejected

My parents said they looked into it and but we were not Catholic couldn't attend Catholic school.

**SC  
DDO – 1962**

Yes rejected

Mother Welsh, father East Indian. They met in UK, where SC was born. Family arrived in QC 1964. Father was Sikh and mother Anglican. Father spoke Urdu and English. Mother spoke Welsh and English.

Father was very keen on learning French and immediately took lessons, and wanted daughter to learn French and be fully integrated but it understood that FCS would not accept an English-speaking nominally Sikh immigrant.

Choose EPS Sunnydale. In grade four Northview opened a French immersion course so SC was bussed there. Later, many other schools created French immersion programs. Benefitted young siblings. HS Lindsay Place, then John Abbott and McGill.

**Karyn Zuidinga**

Declaration

**Préville – 1962 kindergarten**

Yes rejected

Family emigrated from Holland in 1958. Father spoke a little French and English. Older brother (now deceased) was taken to the FCS to enroll because the family was Catholic and the school was very close. The principal explained to them that they could not enroll at the school because they were not French. 'Immigrants don't ask questions. They just want to fit in.'

So they went to the English Protestant school – Préville elementary. The secretary told them Catholics could not attend the Protestant school unless they filled out a form renouncing their Catholic religion – which they did, because there was no other public option.

Politics intensified during the 70s and 80s. Half the people they knew left Quebec.

**HM**

**Quebec City – 1962**

Not rejected

Ancestors British and Anglican, in Quebec many generations. Initially in Montreal, but four generations in Quebec City. Parents decided to enroll HM (eldest of 3) in a FCS after a year in private French K. No problem being admitted, despite not being Catholic or francophone. Exempt from religious activities because she was 'la petite Protestante.' HM cannot remember another anglophone child at the school. HM never asked parents about why or how she was admitted to FCS.

However, after 2 years at Saint-Yves FCS, parents moved HM to EPS. The reason may have been that because of Bill 63, there was a concern about losing the eligibility right for English schools. Younger siblings enrolled directly in EPS. During the same years (early 70s), a wave of francophone children enrolled at English schools before it became illegal.

**Pamela**

**NDG – 1963**

English

Yes rejected

I was not Catholic, but my parents wanted me to learn French.

**JE**

**Two Mountains – 1963**

Yes rejected

Parents arrived from UK 1951. They chose QC because they wanted their four children to be bilingual. Eldest sister (b 1954) was taken to FCS for enrollment in grade 1. School run by nuns, who had no problem speaking English to parents. Told them that their daughter could not enroll in a Catholic school because the family was Protestant. "She will contaminate the other children." Father never forget the word 'contaminate'. He had grown up with friends of many different faiths so found this strange. Second siblings also enrolled in EPS. French training was terrible. Third sibling (b 61) enrolled an EPS but in grade 4 (1971 - after Bill 63) transferred to FCS. He had a hard time of it and the French school experiment was not successful so he switched back to English High School. JE went to new Mountain View school and was in the first immersion program (grade 5 – 1973). Steep learning curve but excelled. Immersion program at Lake of Two Mountains HS then did CEGEP at Brébeuf. French was quite good, after a lot of effort. Then McGill for undergraduate and Université Laval for Masters and PhD. 'By then my French was pretty good.'

**Jenny Kalantzis**

Declaration

**Park Ex – 1963**

Yes rejected

Mother arrived from Greece in 1956 with father and siblings. Father arrived in 1958. Parents married in 1959. Both Greek Orthodox. They were living in Park Ex when first daughter old enough for school. They wanted the nearest school, which was Mother Seton. Father took his daughter to the Catholic school but they only accepted Catholics.

She enrolled went to Barclay school EPS – followed by two siblings. Kids who lived north of Jarry went to Sinclair Laird school (now a bilingual school within EMSB).

For HS, JK went to William Hingston (opened 1972 to accommodate immigrants). It was the closest school to home and religion was irrelevant, although there was a priest and communion, but Non Catholic students did not have to participate. There were many other Greeks there, and a lot of Italian students. Elder sister started there in 1973, JK in 1976, and youngest sister 1978 (after Bill 101). It was a transition period. Before William Hingston opened, older cousins went to Baron Byng EPS) or Montreal High School EPS. One cousin was transferred from Baron

Byng to William Hingston for her last year of HS.

Family moved to South Shore, Greenfield Park and she enrolled at Centennial Regional HS. The school was more advanced than William Hingston.

## **KB**

### **Dorion Gardens – 1964**

Not rejected

Adopted family. Mother's family Irish Protestant, came during famine in 1840s via Townships. Father's family came around the same time.

Family living in Park Bel-Air on south side of 20. First school in Dorion Gardens on the north side of 20. Later Macdonald HS, John Abbott and Concordia.

## **KH**

### **Hudson – 1964**

Not rejected

Family emigrated from Germany in 1954. He attended Saturday German classes at John Rennie in a heritage program.

Kindergarten and grade 1 – Dorian Gardens. Then Mount Pleasant in Hudson grades 2-3 and Hudson High 4-6 for French Immersion. French Immersion was so popular in the 70s that it exceeded supply and many kids from Hudson had to be bussed to Dorian Gardens (now part of Vaudreuil-Dorion).

KH did 'inverted immersion' in high school: mostly French in Sec 1 then increasing amounts of English. There were many theories about best practices in second language instruction.

## **JT**

### **St Léonard – 1964**

Not rejected

Both sides of the family arrived from Italy in the 1920s. Mother born here but raised in an orphanage and educated in French by nuns then went to Holy Family English HS. Not sure why.

Father's family converted to Protestantism. Father's elementary school was Peace Centennial then Montreal HS and McGill. Mother also became Protestant.

Family living in St Léonard. Jérôme-Le Royer school board. All the other neighbourhood kids – mostly Italian – went to local Catholic schools. Many of the families were related. JT's family different because no relatives and Protestant. JT bussed to Mountrose school in Rosemount. French immersion grades 7 -8. Vanier and McGill.

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**RS****TMR – 1964**

Not rejected

Mother's family arrived from Ireland 1830s Lived around Huntingdon. Great grandparents spoke fluent French. When the family moved to Montreal, French and English Catholics had separate communities. Paternal GF (Catholic) arrived from Ireland 1901. Grandmother was a Baptist.

RS born in TMR – it was so English it could have been Rosedale. Other people on RS's street were senior executives from outside QC. They left en masse after PQ elected in 1976. Property values dropped 30% overnight. Francophones bought most of the houses.

RB started school at Carlyle (EPS) partly because it was close to home and partly because older sister started in FCS but RS's father had falling out with a priest so RS enrolled in EPS. In the PSBGM, other students were Anglo, Greek and Jewish

**Elizabeth****Snowdon – 1965**

Jewish

Yes rejected

Although we only spoke french (jewish immigrants from Morocco), we could not study in french as they were all catholic schools. They sent us to the English protestant schoolboard who take everyone.

**Matthias****Westmount – 1965**

English

Not rejected

Chose English Protestant school - The Priory

**Don****TMR – 1966**

English

Not rejected

Protestant Anglophone family with multi-generational ties to Quebec dating back to early 1800s.

**WT****Quebec City – 1966**

Indirectly rejected

Parental GF arrived from China alone during the Chinese Head Tax years – 1941. He got caught in the Exclusion Act and was separated from family until after the war. GF's children in China did not survive the war. GF adopted WT's father, who became a 'paper son' and arrived in Canada early 60s. Chinese immigrants had

restaurants or laundries, started in Vancouver and then spread east.

There were no Chinese women in Canada so father went back to China in 1965 to marry. WT born in Hong Kong 1966 en route back to Canada. GF opened restaurant in Quebec City for son and family. Chinese community largely isolated. Parents never really learned French. Chinese community was assisted by les sœurs missionnaires de l'Immaculé-Conception. They recommended that WT enroll at Holland school (EPS) because the family was not Catholic (although not Protestant either). WT knew Catholic Chinese immigrants who went to Saint-Patrick's (ECS). None enrolled at FCS.

WT later attended Quebec High and Saint Lawrence CEGEP. WT's French was strong enough to study at Université Laval but he could not get a stage in QC, so relocated to Montreal.

## **EP**

### **DDO – 1966**

Indirectly rejected

Father arrived from Greece 1964. Mother arrived 1965. Parents met and married 1966. EP born 1967 – Expo baby. Both parents spoke some English and basic French. DDO was quite diverse in the early 70s. Many people left after 1976.

There was no question of enrolling at FCS. It was understood that Catholic schools only accepted Catholics so she enrolled at EPS. However, her husband, also Greek Orthodox, did attend a FCS in Pierrefonds. His father was from Constantinople and had been educated in French.

## **Will**

### **Aylmer – 1967**

Scottish

Not rejected

Eardley Elementary

## **Kristina**

### **Hudson – 1968**

German

Indirectly rejected

Chose English Protestant school because we weren't Catholic or French.

## **CO**

### **Pierrefonds – 1968**

Not rejected

Father and GM arrived from Czechoslovakia after World War Two. Grew up poverty in Park Ex. Father spoke Bohemian, Polish and Russian, plus learned to speak both French and English perfectly.

Maternal GM from Moose Jaw and maternal GF an Acadian from Shediac. Parents met in Montreal.

CO was born in 1969 around the time of Bill 63. Brother born later and their mother was part of class action lawsuit to permit brother to enroll in English school. Parents worked in both English and French.

Family lived in Hudson. Only two choices: English Protestant or French Catholic. Parents thought CO had a better chance of learning both languages at the Protestant school.

## **PB**

**Préville – 1968** Not rejected

Paternal GGF came to Montreal from England. Paternal GM came from Delaware. Maternal GF and GM from Newfoundland. Both families lived in Verdun where parents met. Soon after his birth, they moved to Brossard and stayed until 1976. They were the only Anglo family in the neighbourhood and had little contact with francophone neighbours. Brossard did not yet have a lot of schools. PB had temporary expansion classrooms.

Both parents were working in Montreal. Housing prices dropped due to FLQ violence so family moved to NDG in 1976. A lot of Bill 101 graffiti. PB attended Willingdon elementary then Westmount HS. Then Dawson and Concordia.

## **Paul**

**NDG – 1969** Chinese Not rejected

English Protestant school was closest – Willingdon

## **Mary**

**Mile-End – 1969** Greek Yes, rejected

Yes because we were not Catholic we were Greek Orthodox. My parents wanted to send us there because Nazareth was a school right next to our house. Went to Bancroft.

## **Stavroula**

**Chomedey – 1969** Greek Yes, rejected

Parents wanted to enroll me at École Coursol but we were not Catholic so I went to Martinvale.

**1970s FLQ crisis, Bill 101, Comprehensive high schools, transition period**

**Helen**

**St. Lambert – 1972**

English

Not rejected

Chose English Protestant school - Preville Protestant Elementary School

**JB**

**Saint Hubert – 1974**

Not rejected

Mother from St Kitt via NY, arrived 66. Father from Barbados, 1967. They married and settled in St-Hubert. Community predominately francophone and white, a few Anglos and Haitians. She was allowed to enroll at Royal Charles elementary (EPS) post Bill 101, because her older brother was enrolled in an EPS pre Bill 101 (1971). HS Centennial Regional. Then Concordia.

**1980s first referendum – 1990s second referendum**

**LW – re son**

**Gatineau – 1997**

Yes rejected

Family is British, Anglican and has been in Canada since the 17th century. Have lived in the Ottawa valley for many generations, mostly in Ontario.

LW moved to Gatineau in 1989. When she had a child, she found a French babysitter so her son could become bilingual. Wanted to enroll son at FCS but wasn't allowed because the parents didn't speak French. LW explained the boy was learning French and that he had French-speaking ancestors, and she offered to hire a French tutor, but they still refused to enrol her son. She has no idea why. So they had to go to English school – eligible because parents educated in English in Canada.

## French Protestant School Thumbnails (5)

### **Post War**

#### **Michelle Serano St-Michel – 1951**

Declaration  
Yes rejected

Family left Algeria during the War of Liberation in 1957. Father had been interred by the French during Second World War and he would not emigrate to France. Parents chose Quebec because of French language. Family Jewish. MS had already been educated K- grade 2 in French.

Parents tried to enroll MS at FCS but they were not Catholics. The usual path for non-Catholic immigrants was EPS but MS did not speak English. Her parents quite upset until they found out about a French Protestant section in an EPS. MS attended there for grades 3-4. Peace Centennial opened for grade 5 (1960) and she enrolled her there and stayed to grade 7.

Moved to Rosemount. Went to Rosemount High EPS (1961-65) Parents could not understand English. MS went to Sir George Williams University – involved with Computer Centre revolt. Then Macdonald College to become teacher and eventually worked in the FPS. MS became a principal at École secondaire Van Horne. Students in 80s were Haitians, Moroccans, Vietnamese, Cambodians.

### **BD**

#### **Saint-Laurent – 1958**

Not rejected

Mother was a holocaust survivor but not practicing Jew. Father Italian Catholic but atheist. When father arrived in Quebec, he asked to be excommunicated from Catholic Church. Parents were also trailblazers in wanting to put their daughter in a French school. They did not want a Catholic school because mother had seen textbooks, of Italian cousins, and the books were too religious and narrowly Catholic. They preferred less religious Protestant schools, which were open to many faiths and belief systems. Father was on a Committee for Neutral Schools, along with Unitarian Church and Henry Morgentaler.

Only available FPS were de Maisonneuve and Peace Centennial. Closest to the home was Peace Centennial – a one hour bus ride In elementary school, the other students were Jewish, Jehovah's Witnesses, French from France, North African Muslims and some Indigenous. Teachers were Huguenots from Belgium and Moroccan Jews. Textbooks were from France.

Baron Byng was available for high school - it had a small French sector - but BD went

to EPS close to home – Malcom Campbell. French skills were well established. Then to Vanier and McGill.

## **VZ**

### **Villeray – 1965**

Yes rejected

Father arrived Quebec late 50s from Greece via Belgium. Returned to Greece to marry mother early 60s. Both were Greek Orthodox. Father spoke French, no English. VZ born 1965. She spoke Greek with parents, French with kids on the street and watched TV in English.

She was in French Kindergarten at Saint-Vincent-Ferrier, but it was full so had to go to a different school for grade 1 – École Hélène Boulée. VZ remembers going to the FCS with her mother (1971) and asking on the way home, 'What is Catholic? It was their first time I'd ever heard that word.' Later she understood that they were refused admission because they were not Catholic.

So VZ enrolled at the Peace Centennial FPS. Half of the day was in English and half was French. VZ had to take a bus to school and she was alone. No other neighbour kids going to FPS. Other students at Peace Centennial were Greek, Chinese, German, Austrian, Arab, and Italian, and some francophones, who were probably Protestants.

After moving to Park Ex VZ she enrolled at Barclay and was shocked at the lack of French. Barclay was 90% Greek. Some south Asians and some English. Then 1 year of French immersion at Elmgrove for grade 7. Then to a bilingual program at Malcolm Campbell HS (now an Armenian school). Graduated HS with bilingual certificate but teachers spoke 'international French' so in the work force VZ had to acquire 'Québec' French.

### ***Cusp of Bill 101***

VZ's Younger brother started school in 1976 in Park Ex and went to FCS: Barthelemy-Vimont. The immigrant kids (Greek, Korean) were enrolled in a special class. Parents signed a document to exempt them from Catechism.

VZ's brother acquired perfect French and married a francophone.

**AA**

**Montreal North – 1971**

Yes and No

Father came to Quebec 1969 and prepared an apartment, then returned to Italy to marry. Parents arrived 1970. Father was college educated assistant engineer. They arrived in the Révolution Tranquille, immediately after the Saint-Léonard crisis. Parents did not understand the rapidly shifting and complex politics. As Bill 101 was being written, there was a lot of confusion about which schools would be open or closed to which students.

The older children in the neighbourhood were attending Gerald McShane ECS, which was 2 minutes from AA's home. In August 1977, Bill 101 was adopted, making it illegal for immigrant children to attend English schools. AA started school in September and family was told she could not be admitted at Gerald McShane ECS. The primary motivation for wanting to go there was proximity.

AA was permitted to enroll in an English Protestant school – Maple Hill --and did first year in English. In an attempt to comply with Bill 101, the EPS created a French Classe d'accueil. (Same EPS school with French classes). There were 8 or 9 students in a multi-level Classe d'accueil.

Maple Hill was not allowed to continue offering French classes so after grade 2, AA was transferred to the French sector of Nesbitt school grades 3-4. English and French totally separate. Lot of tension French vs English. Ambiguous identity as 'French' students in an English school. One teacher was a passionate nationalist who stood on her desk and, 'Ici, \$%@, on parle en Français!'

Then AA transferred to an official French Protestant school, École de Maisonneuve on the Plateau for grade 5 and 6. It was a long way from Montreal North, and no school busses were available.

At this point, AA wanted to transfer to the local French Catholic high school, but she could not leave the Protestant system because she was registered as a Protestant (even though her family is Catholic). Then transferred to Ahuntsic FPS near Henri-Bourrassa Metro for grade 6. It was disturbing to be frequently

changing friends. AA was bounced from school to school in small French Protestant system and struggled to make friends or feel part of a community. She always felt outside the Italian community, which was divided into two groups: part in French Catholic schools and part in English Catholic schools. They had their shared cultural references.

Closest French Protestant HS was de Roberval behind Jean-Talon hospital (now Académie de Roberval). Students in 1980s were Haitian Protestants, Moroccan

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Jews, Greek Orthodox, and some other Italians. Some of the students identified as bilingual or trilingual but the school wanted activities such as yearbook to be exclusively French, which created tensions.

AA chose Champlain college, which required a lot of travel from Montreal North. She thought her speaking skills in English would be adequate, but struggled with writing and math in English. Then continued at Concordia.

## **SG**

### **Montreal North – 1971**

Not rejected

Father arrived from Italy late 60s, mother arrived 69. Married 1970.

Parents tried to enroll her at ECS Gerald McShane but she failed the English test. So enrolled at EPS. Maple Hill, which created French class with French teachers and classe d'accueil.

Then Nesbitt French sector grades 3-4. All subjects taught in French. Then FPS Maisonneuve grades 5-6.

Then Roberval HS FPS. Fight with administration over yearbook that students wanted bilingual but school wanted in French only. Graduated with bilingual certificate diploma. Then Vanier and Concordia.

Happy to have acquired high level of French but would have preferred that results and benefits would have been explained rather than imposed.

## French Catholic School Thumbnails (18)

### **Post War**

#### **NP**

##### **Villeray – 1942**

Not rejected but

Grandparents arrived 1880s from Italy. Parents both born in Montreal and educated at FCS Villeray (école Notre-Dame-du-Saint-Rosaire) Area was still farmland pre St-Léonard (Jean Talon near De Lorimier. (Rossland) By 1940s area was still sparsely populated: 90% francophone – 10% Italian. Older cousins had been educated at French schools: perhaps Notre-Dame-du-Saint-Rosaire (Jarry and St-Hubert) or Saint-Bernardin (Jarry and St-Michel).

NP enrolled at Saint-Barthélemy (FCS) No other Italians at this school. She was picked on, denigrated as 'la maudite Italienne' and became so depressed that she had to be taken out of school in May. (NP's father had also been picked on at school because he was Italian and quit school after grade five.)

NP was a very good student and the teachers were ready to pass her to grade 2, but she switched to ECS. NP had to redo grade 1 because she knew little English but was happy at the new school: Saint-Dominic. The students there were highly diverse. NP does not remember how she learned English. There was no classe d'accueil. She just picked it up.

HS Holy Names. NP retained strong French skills, spoken with family and cousins.

#### **RT**

##### **Côte-des-Neiges – 1943**

Not rejected

Both parents born in Quebec. Grandparents arrived from Italy 1920s. RT's older sisters were educated in English but brother was in French system for grade school then switched to English HS.

When RT started grade school, family was living in CDN. He enrolled at Saint-Pascal-Baylon, the closest school to home. Neighbourhood was 100% French. RT considered himself French Canadian until ethnic nationalism emerged. Then English-speakers and Italians were the problem. Family moved to Town of Mount Royal. At the time, no French high school in TMR but an English high school was available. His father sent him to a FCS on the Plateau. For HS, father looked into a private French school. RT interviewed at Collège Brébeuf but he was not 'private school' material so he finished grade 12 in FCS (public) on the Plateau. There were very few Italians and immigrants at this high school, all French de souche. Some

students were afraid of RT because they were ignorant of his Italian background, culture and culinary habits.

RT was accepted at McGill, despite weak English. He wanted to study pure science, which was stronger at English universities. He got his MBA at McGill, which at the time was the only university in Quebec offering one in his discipline. He obtained a PhD from a USA university and over the years taught at many universities, including UQAM.

## **LR**

### **Hochelaga – 1948**

Not rejected

Both parents francophone-de-souche. Both Catholics. Father spoke English quite well. All of the other students at FCS were francophone-de-souche but there were English and Irish families in the neighbourhood. They had their own churches and schools. LR's next door neighbours were English Catholic and quite friendly. Catholics and Protestants did not mix.

## **Dida Berku**

Declaration

### **Côte-des-Neiges – 1951**

Yes rejected

Parents Romanian, married in 1947, then escaped communist Romania and lived in Austria, where she was born in 1951. Came to Quebec 1953.

Her parents were both Jewish but her mother was educated at Notre-Dame de Sion by nuns, and in French. Wanted to send her children to French school. A FCS was right across the street on Dupuis. The school said, 'We can't admit you because you are immigrants and you're Jewish.' Parents did not want EPS and so they chose a French private school – Collège Marie de France. Parents initially earned low salaries but scraped together the money (a month's salary) for a French private school. DB remembers only four non-Catholics in the entire school. The rest (hundreds) were francophones-de-souche.

Went to Wagar HS in CSL, many immigrants, then McGill.

## **AC**

### **Mile End – 1953**

Not rejected but

Born in France. Italian Father spoke French. He had also been a prisoner of war in Ethiopia by the British army and felt some animosity toward English-speakers. He came to Quebec in 1952. Mother and 3 children followed from Italy in 1959. The parents got their daughter into FCS (for girls) but she was the only immigrant. A nun

pulled her braids and called her a stupide Italienne so she only stayed 2 and a half weeks then switched to ECS.

Her two brothers also quit the FCS for boys and switched to ECS.

## **FL**

### **Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue – 1957**

Both parents francophone-de-souche. Father grew up in Saint-Anne, mother in Pointe-Claire. Family lived in francophone section of Saint-Anne. FL remembers snowball fights with Anglos kids. FL's parents valued education, although neither had completed grade 9. FL attended École primaire Saint-Georges and was teased by boys from wealthier families because of his working class origins. Later Collège Marguerite-Bourgeoys cécep, then l'École des hautes études commerciales (HEC).

## **LG**

### **Laval-des-Rapides – 1958**

Not rejected

Mother was Acadienne arrived Montreal 1950s. Father was franco-ontarian with deep roots in Quebec. He came to Montreal to study at Université de Montréal. Parents bought a house in Laval-des-Rapides to raise six children. LDR still had large undeveloped areas of forests and fields. LG remembers only a couple of immigrants at school. There was an English family on the street and those children went to the 'English' school but LG does not know if they were Protestant or Catholic. LG always had an interest in language and became fluently bilingual.

## **MV**

### **CND – 1958**

Not rejected

Father was Dutch Protestant. Mother Dutch Catholic born in London and educated by French nuns in Wales. Parents met in Halifax. Married 1951. Then moved to Montreal. Older brothers enrolled at St-Kevin's, which was across the street from home, but mother wanted daughter to be educated by nuns (as she had been) so enrolled MV at Notre-Dame-des-Neiges. No problem getting in because mother was Catholic and spoke French, although MV only spoke minimal French from French Summer Camp. The problem at NDDN was that no English was taught. Parents wanted children to be bilingual.

Because father was Protestant, MN switched to Iona EPS but retained good French skills. Older two brothers stayed in ECS.

HS Northmount then Vanier, Concordia and McGill. Married Franco-québécois.

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MV's mother taught at English elementary school (FCS) in the pre-Bill 101 period and half the kids were Italian or other immigrants who did not speak English at first. They could speak French but were not allowed to attend FCS.

## **MM**

### **Pierrefonds – 1958**

Not rejected

Mother old stock francophone from Abitibi and Quebec City. Mother moved to MTL as a teenager.

Paternal grandparents pre war from Italy. Settled in NDG and raised 6 kids there, ECS. GM never learned to speak English or French. GF spoke English better than French. Mother wanted kids to be educated in French because they spoke English at home. Parents were both Catholic and mother was Francophone-de-souche so MM was accepted at Monseigneur Deschamps school, which was closest.

MM changed schools four times during elementary years because of new schools being built for baby boomers, and redistribution. At one point, the three siblings went to different schools.

During FLQ crisis some friction for being different – she was called l'Anglaise. Politics ended some friendships. After high school went to Europe for a year and then Ottawa University.

## **1960s**

## **CB**

### **Ahuntsic- 1960**

Not rejected

Both parents francophone-de-souche. Father's roots go back to 1600s. Four children : 2 boys, 2 girls. Peek of the baby boom when CB started school (first 4 years) in an Annexe on Gouin Boulevard, part of école de la Visitation. Ahuntsic at the time was just starting to develop. Henri-Bourassa Boulevard was still under construction. The other students at the school were 'middle-class, white, Catholic and francophone'. There were a few Italian and Portuguese students but they spoke French and were not considered immigrants. The Italian families in the neighbourhood who spoke English were outsiders and there was regular friction with them. CB became reasonably bilingual in high school and later increased her second language skills working in bilingual environments.

## YC

### Plateau – 1961

Not rejected

Parents were exiled from Korea for anti-American, anti-Imperialist sentiments during Korean War and then lived in Japan. Parents loved French literature, although they did not speak French. The French factor made them want to emigrate to Quebec in winter 1966. YC was initially enrolled in a Classe d'accueil at a Protestant school on the Plateau.

Parents knew a Korean Catholic priest who also came to Quebec. He was probably a university friend of the father and took the family under his wing. The family lived near Chinatown at first and knew that most Chinese children were enrolled at EPS but YC's father wanted his children to learn French.

Got YC enrolled at Cherrier school FCS on the Plateau. (1967) He was the only Asian or non de-souche. His family was not Catholic. After first YC participated in catechism but when parents understood it was part of a religious training they had him removed, and YC sat in the Director's office during catechism.

YC's elementary school years 1967-73. Then HS years were 73-78. His Sec IV was in 1977 which coincided with Bill 101 and arrival of diaspora Haitians and Vietnamese Boat People at his school. YC's father was anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist. He voted for the PQ in 73 and 76, but then he was given a hard time because he could barely speak French. Father did not vote Oui in 1980.

### *Transition Period to Bill 101*

## RC

### Plateau – 1970

Not rejected

Family came from Japan 1967. Parents spoke Korean and Japanese and a little English. Father also spoke a small amount of French. They were Buddhist, but only nominally.

When RC was old enough for school, the family was living on Bleury near Place des Arts. Her three older brothers were already in FCS. RC enrolled at Jean-Jacques Olier (Roy and De Bullion) in 1976. She participated in catechism for two years and it was only in grade 3 at confirmation that she – and the other students - discovered she was not Catholic. She thought she would be expelled (as non-Catholic) but it was already 1978 and Bill 101 was in effect. (She does not know how her older brothers were permitted to remain in FCS. RC put me in contact with her brother YC.)

She discovered later that Jean-Jacques Olier was the first multi-ethnic FCS. The

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Plateau at the time was working class rather than bourgeois. She remembers so many Portuguese students that she thought they were typically Québécois. RC had a Greek friend at the FCS. In grade 4, the boat people arrived from Vietnam. Prior to that, she was the only Asian at school plus two Chinese boys. She knew that most Asians went to English school because they were not allowed in FCS. The director of Jean-Jacques Olier was instrumental in opening it up to multi-ethnic students and he received prizes. RC had a positive experience with school because so many other students were immigrants.

HS was *Émile-Nelligan*. It was a very violent school that closed under cloudy circumstances early 80s. RC changed school district to Outremont and attended Paul Gérin Lajoie in Sec III. The school was 'very rich and white' although there were a few other Asians. Her English was inferior to the Francophone students and she struggled with it, but her French was excellent. She went to St-Laurent cegep and UdeM.

## **DS**

### **Longueuil – 1963**

Not rejected

Parents both francophone-de-souche. Mother grew up in St-Henri, father in Montreal's old Red Light district (demolished 1960s). The Ville Jacques Cartier area of Longueuil was a new development and quite poor, as described by Pierre Vallières. The FCS was largely francophone-de souche and working class. There was a lot of resentment in the 70s toward the 'rich Anglos' of St. Lambert. It was a political gesture to refuse to learn or speak English.

## **SM**

### **Chomedey – 1963**

Not rejected

Parents met in Alberta (mother's home), then lived in Cape Breton (father's home) then transferred to Montréal 1970. Lived in Chomedey. SM enrolled at Souvenir elementary (EPS) that SM remembers as a 'bilingual Jewish school.' Most of the students were Jewish plus 5% Greek. Parents were unilingual but the school was bilingual and introduced SM to French. Sephardic immigrants spoke French.

Moved to Hudson for grade 2. Enrolled at FCS – école St-Thomas (1972). SM remembers the directrice (a nun) was confused why a unilingual Anglo would want to enroll his son at a French school. She explained to that SM had the right to attend English school, which would be better because his French was weak. Father explained that for his children to understand the culture of Quebec, they needed to learn the language. The directrice was also confused why a Protestant would want

to enroll at a Catholic school. SM and his sister were admitted and stayed to grade 6. There were a couple of other immigrant students, but they were an anomaly.

Then École secondaire de Rigaud FCS (1977) – which only had sec I and II. SM switched to Hudson HS EPS (1978-82). Father was disappointed that he switched from French to English but second language instruction was poor so SM could not write or spell properly in English. Then John Abbott and Concordia.

## **LP**

### **Outremont – 1966**

Not rejected

Parents both francophone-de-souche. Paternal GF was doctor in Quebec City. Maternal GF worked in logging in the Outaouais. Parents and grandparents all bilingual. LP enrolled at Collège Stanislas, private FCS. Most of the other students were from middle class or well-to-do francophone families, plus immigrants from Europe. (Three premiers of Quebec studied at Stanislas – Phillip Couillard, Jacques Parizeau and Daniel Johnson jr – as well as many other francophone notables, and Ivan Doroschuk, singer of Men Without Hats.) LP graduated fluently bilingual.

Outremont had a significant Jewish population, and a large Greek population concentrated along Park Avenue. Immigrants attended EPS. LP does not recall friction with immigrants but they mostly kept to themselves.

## **CS**

### **Lachine – 1967**

Not rejected

Paternal grandparents emigrated from Germany with father in 1951. Lived in BC. (Note, father born 1944 so received most of his elementary education in Canada). Father came to Montreal in 1967. Mother's maternal GM ancestors Franco-québécois since late 1700s. Maternal GF Irish 'white lace' pre-famine mixed with post-famine fur-traders. GM did not speak English and GF did not speak French. They married and had 3 children, including CS's mother. CS's parents met in 1967, Expo year. Father's German family agnostic Lutheran. Mother's family Catholic.

CS had basic French when enrolled at French K and continued in FCS – Victor-Thérien. There were many immigrants at the school (1973-80). Second language instruction (English) in FCS was pitiful. Speaking English was frowned on at school, even though everyone did it, even kids with francophone names. CS graduated elementary school 1980. Remembers a lot of linguistic tension and Yes and No pins. CS was allowed to switch to ECS – Queen of Angels Academy – because of father's education in English. Then John Abbott and McGill.

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**MC – re her children****NDG – 1970s**

Not rejected

She came to QC from Ontario (born in England) in 1971 as an adult. Her husband, born in Egypt, was employed at École Polytechnique. He did not speak French and three other recruits did not speak French. Seemed that École Polytechnique was trying to diversify, or open up to fresh thoughts. Husband struggled to learn French and teach in French, which he but eventually mastered.

Their children were 3 and 1 when they arrived in Montreal. Family was Catholic. Parents wanted to enroll eldest daughter at FCS in 1973. Some question about going to French schools.

Had heard that English-speakers could not enroll at FCS but no trouble having her admitted to École Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. Neighbours, also Catholic, with older children were already enrolled there. MC remembers that maybe 25% of students were anglophones.

Eldest daughter spoke no French when she started K but stuck it out. Second daughter had some French prep before school. Young son went into classe d'accueil age 4. All three children switched to English HS and CEGEP but son switched back to École Polytechnique. He is occasionally criticized for speaking French with an English accent.

**SP****Murdochville – 1973**

Not rejected

British parents arrived in 1969 with contract in northern Quebec. Both parents spoke French.

SP started school the year after Bill 101. Parents did not expect to stay in Quebec so they saw an opportunity for daughters to learn French. Initially the school did not want an English student for kindergarten. The obstacle to taking non-Francophone students was the difficulty of integration. Mother convinced the nun at École St Paul FCS that the girls would learn French quickly. By Christmas SP could speak French.

For grade 5 moved to Rouyn-Noranda. Stayed in French system 5-6 plus Sec 1-2. Older waves of immigrants, eg Poles, were all in English system.

Then boarding school in Sherbrooke to learn written English (sec 3-5) plus mother tongue French and then 1 year at McGill, 1 year at Université de Laval, then Concordia.

## Declarations– Students rejected by French Catholic Schools

### Interim Report to November 30, 2025

Many of the former students who shared stories of rejection wanted to make a public declaration of the facts of their case: when they started school, where they were living, and how they were rejected. In some cases the rejection was simply ‘how the system worked’ and it was only later they realized the consequences. In other cases, the rejection was profoundly traumatic, and aggravated by a lifetime of being misrepresented and disbelieved.

Name	year of birth	neighbourhood	country of origin
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Reason for rejection

#### Catholic (29)

<b>Gerald Turpin</b>	1937	NDG	England/Canada
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The English Catholic school was for English-speakers.

<b>Ilse Hellemans Sullivan</b>	1941	NDG	Belgium
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We spoke French, and not English, but the French school told my mother that we should enroll at the English school.

<b>Rocco Barbieri</b>	1946	Plateau	Italy
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We could not speak French.

<b>Jean Racine Wayland</b>	1947	Pointe-aux-Trembles	Quebec/Lithuania
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We were allowed to enroll in the school. My father was a francophone Catholic, but my brother and I were the only ‘anglophones’ in the school and our French was not very strong. The school recommended that we go to the English school, so we did.

<b>Faustina Bilotta</b>	1948	St Michel	Italy
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Je parlais français, mais l’école française a dit, « On n’accepte pas les immigrants. Vous devez aller à l’école anglaise. » J’avais 15 ans et il fallait terminer mes études secondaires dans une langue que je ne connaissais pas.

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**Claire Ropeleski**                      1950                      Snowdon                      Hungary  
The French school 'strongly suggested' the English school because they were 'not equipped to teach French to immigrants'.

**Maria Prizio**                      1952                      Ahunstsic                      Italy  
I arrived in Quebec after completing grade five in Italy and was admitted to French school but was put back to grade three and given no assistance to learn French, so I enrolled at an English school where other Italian students could translate and explain.

**Monika Boos**                      1954                      Côte-des-Neiges                      Yugoslavia  
Immigrants go to the English school.

**Piera De Fruscia**                      1954                      St Michel                      Italy  
There was no room for us.

**Carole Verdone-Smith**                      1954                      Villeray                      Italy  
A Nun said, « On accepte pas des immigrants ici. Y'a d'autres écoles pour vous autres. »  
« S'il y a d'autres familles comme la vôtre, dites leurs de ne pas perdre notre temps. »  
My aunts who married French Canadian men had no problem getting their kids into French schools. My cousins with Italian names went to English schools.

**Franca Confente**                      1956                      Mile End                      Italy  
French schools did not take immigrants.

**Clementina Clerici**                      1956                      St Henri                      Italy  
French schools only take French students, not immigrants.

**Vincent Gabrielli**                      1956                      NDG                      Italy  
Immigrants had to attend the English school.

<b>Ralph Mastromonaco</b>	1956	NDG	Italy
Immigrants should attend English school.			
<b>Gary Kaiserlian</b>	1956	Park-Ex	Armenia
My mother was Catholic, but because my father was not Catholic the school would not enroll me.			
<b>Sabino Gassi</b>	1956	Ahuntsic	Italy
My parents were told, 'Italians are not welcome.'			
<b>Michael Gaug</b>	1957	Longueuil	Germany
Allophones were not allowed to enroll in French schools, even though we were parishioners at a French church.			
<b>Claudia Ottaviano-Maheux</b>	1959	Ahuntsic	Italy
Vous êtes des immigrants. Il faut aller à l'école anglais.			
<b>Teresa Picciano</b>	1960	Mile End	Italy
Only francophones accepted – No Italians.			
<b>Rosanna Bruni</b>	1960	Tétraultville	Italy
Italians not allowed.			
<b>Michael Leclair</b>	1960	Anjou	Quebec/Italy
My mother told me years later that she had wanted to enroll me at the French high school so that I could learn French but the school would not take me because I didn't know enough French.			
<b>Luisa Silvestro</b>	1960	Ahuntsic	Italy
Even though both my parents were born in Montreal, educated at trilingual schools, and spoke French, we were considered immigrants and told to enroll at the English school.			

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**Paul Esposito**                      1960                      Ville-Émard                      Italy

They had already filled their quota of immigrants.

**Irene Ioannoni**                      1961                      Tétraultville                      Italy

1) French schools were over capacity and 2) did not accept students who couldn't speak French.

**Tony Spano**                      1962                      St-Michel                      Italy

Italians not welcome here.

**Gino Insogna**                      1964                      Rosemount                      Italy

On n'accepte pas les Italiens ici.

**Karyn Zuidinga**                      1964                      Brossard                      Netherlands

French schools could not accept students who did not speak French

**Nina Gentile**                      1965                      Villeray                      Italy

They said, "We don't want immigrants here."

**Dominique Poletti**                      1966                      Ville-Émard                      Italy

My mother was told, 'No, no, you're immigrants.' It didn't matter that I could speak French.

### **Non-Catholic Christians**

**Dimitros (Jim) Tjelios**                      1936                      East Plateau Greek Orthodox - Greece

My mother was educated at l'École Française de Calamari in Thessaloniki, but Catholic schools in Montreal only accepted Catholics.

**Edward Stuart Rogers**                      1946                      Snowdon                      Methodist/atheist - England

Catholic school would not admit a Protestant. My father also tried to enroll me at a French private school but they would not admit me because I was not a Catholic.

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**Mary Moroska**      1950      Little Burgundy      Russian Orthodox – Morocco  
My parents were born in France and had French passports. I was born in Morocco and did grade one at a French school. I was given a choice to convert to Catholicism or go to an English Protestant school.

**Marlene Jennings**      1951      Longueuil      Anglican – Manitoba/Alabama  
My mother was half Belgian and half Franco-Manitoban. Our home language was French but Protestants could not enroll at French Catholic schools.

**George Contaxakis**      1951      Mile End      Greek Orthodox - Egypt  
My family could speak French and we believed Catholics and Orthodox were very similar, but the Catholic school considered us Protestants.

**Nicolette de Smit**      1954      Lachine      Dutch Agnostic  
Although my mother was nominally a Catholic, she did not speak French, and my father was an agnostic Protestant so we were told to enrol at the Protestant school.

**Carole Rentshler**      1957      Ste-Therese-de-Blainville      German Protestant  
The French Catholic school, which was close to home, would not accept Protestants.

**Demetra Darsaklis**      1960      St Michel      Greek Orthodox – Greece  
My mother was told that I couldn't go to the school because we were not Catholic. Later on (1974) I wanted to transfer to John F Kennedy and it was not a problem to enroll at a Catholic high school.

**Jenny Kalantzis**      1964      Park Ex      Greek Orthodox - Greece  
The local Catholic school only accepted Catholics.

### **Non-Christians**

**Miriam Zylberstein Byers**      1943      Mile End      Jewish - Poland  
We arrived from Paris, where I had completed grades 1 and 2. Public Catholic schools in Quebec would not accept Jews and we could not afford a private school.

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**Anna Fuerstenberg**      1947      Mile End      Jewish – Poland  
My parents both spoke excellent French but Catholic schools did not accept refugees.

**Michelle Serano**      1949      St Michel      Jewish – Algeria  
My parents were both French-speakers and I had already received three years of education in French but Quebec Catholic schools would not accept a Jewish student so I enrolled at a French Protestant school.

**Dida Berku**      1951      Côte-des-Neiges      Jewish – Romania  
My mother received a classical French education in Romania at Notre-Dame de Sion, but Quebec Catholic schools did not accept Jewish students so my parents scraped together the money for a private French school.

**Johan Mady**      1952      Lachute      Muslim – Lebanon  
My mother was educated in Lebanon by French nuns but Quebec Catholic schools only accepted Catholics.

**Rachel Sinyor**      1954      Côte-des-Neiges      Jewish – Morocco and Bulgaria  
My parents both spoke French, which was why they chose Montreal, but Catholic schools did not accept Jewish students.

**Betty Esperanza**      1961      Chomedey      Jewish – France/ Hungary  
My mother was French and proud of her Lycée education, but she was Jewish and the French Catholic school would not admit me.

## Declaration by Former Student – Gerry Turpin

<b>Name:</b>	Gerry Turpin
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Mother, yes. Father had deep roots in Quebec
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	Mother 1910 from England. Father returned to Quebec from Alberta 1920s.
Were you born in Quebec?	Yes
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	N/A
What was your family's country of origin?	Mother, England - Father, Canada
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	English
What was the family religion(s)?	Father – Catholic, Mother – Anglican
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1937
<b>First year of Education in Quebec:</b> (grade 1)	1943
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?</b>	Yes

Signature *Gerald Turpin*

Date 08/10/25

### **What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My father's ancestors arrived in Nouvelle France in 1684. My grandfather could not support his family on the small farm near Quyon, so he moved to Alberta during the land-grant period of the 1880s. There were no French schools in southern Alberta so my father became an English speaker. He returned to Quebec in the 1920s but found it difficult to reclaim his roots because he spoke little French. He wanted his children to be educated in French.

### **Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

We were in NDG when my elder sister and I started school. 5130 Clanranald Ave.

### **How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

In 1935 my father tried to enroll my sister but was told she should go to the English Catholic school. When I started school in 1943, he tried to enroll me at the French Catholic school, but was again denied admission.

### **What reason was given to deny you admission?**

The English Catholic school was for English-speakers.

### **Which school accepted you?**

The English side of école St. Antonin/St. Antonin school

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**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** Yes  
**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

In later life, I met many other Catholic immigrants who had had a similar experience of being sent to an English Catholic school.

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** No  
**If so, do you consider that experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

Since I have circulated almost exclusively in the English speaking community people were not surprised to hear about my experiences. Almost to a person they had a similar experience or knew of someone who had had a similar experience.

The 1930s and 40s were years of religious polarization. When my family moved to Dorval, which was then a French village, there was no English Catholic church so we went to the French Catholic church. The priest believed we were Protestant because we spoke English and denied us communion. Fortunately our francophone neighbours defended us and we attended the French church.

### Declaration by Former Student Ilse Hellmans Sullivan

**Name:** Ilse Hellemans Sullivan

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1954  
Were you born in Quebec? No  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? 1954  
What was your family's country of origin? Belgium  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Flemish, French some English and German  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth:** 1941  
**First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 5)** 1954  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature Ilse Sullivan Date Dec 3/25

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

The major reason for choosing a French Catholic school was proximity – it was the closest.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

King Edward Street in NDG.

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

Our family was Catholic and we spoke French as a second language. My mother expected the school to admit me and my younger brother (born 1944).

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

The French school told my mother that we should enroll at the English school. I do not recall that any particular reason was given.

**Which school accepted you?**

Saint Augustine. Neither my younger brother nor I could speak English so our parents started speaking English at home to help us learn the language. Later on, I became a teacher in the English Catholic sector.

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? No**

**If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common**  
I never really talked to anyone about this. We thought this was something that only happened to us. It was only later when I came across articles by the Lawyer Ralph Mastromonaco that I realized other immigrants had also been sent to English schools. It still seems very illogical that French schools should have turned away immigrants who wanted to be educated in French.

Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.

I have never had occasion to talk about this experience. My brother married a francophone and she has always found it impossible to believe that a French school would not accept us, and sent us to an English school.

### Declaration by Former Student - Rocco Barbieri

Name: Rocco Barbieri

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? Father 1949, mother and 4 kids 1950  
Were you born in Quebec? No  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? 1950  
What was your family's country of origin? Italy  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Italian  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

Year of Birth: 1947  
First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1) 1952  
Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school? Yes, my 3 older brothers were

Signature  Date 2025/10/24

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school?**  
The closest school was French Catholic and only a block from our home.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**  
We were on the Plateau. (5243 rue Garnier)

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school?**  
My father took my three older brothers to the nearest French school: Saint-Stanislas-de-Kostka

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

*I was still not of school age in 1950 when my mom and three older brothers arrived in Canada. None of us could speak French yet, so when my father tried to register my brothers, they were rejected for that reason. There was another French school a little further away, and my father also tried there, but they also turned us down for the same reason. My father was then advised to try at an English school (St. Dominic) and luckily they were accepted there.  
Our great uncle and sponsor, whose children were born in Montreal in the 40's, sent his kids to French Catholic school where they were accepted with no problems. All of us cousins became tri-lingual anyway.*

**Which school accepted you?**  
My three brothers enrolled at St-Dominic, which was half an hour from our home. That was also my first school.

Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.

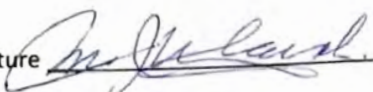
*Over the years Bill 101 has often been the subject of vigorous debates in many of my social interactions. Whenever those discussions involved Francophones, and I attested to the fact that we were initially rebuffed in our attempt to register in a French sector school, the reaction was always surprise. I sometimes wonder if, despite the fact that CECM policy may have permitted the registration of new Catholic immigrants to French Catholic schools, local administrators in the French sector may have taken it upon themselves, for whatever reason, to simply refer these students to the English Catholic schools within their own school board.*

Declaration by Former Student – Jean Racine Wayland

Name: Jean Racine Wayland

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Father francophone with deep roots  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? Mother's parents arrived in 1930s  
Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? N/A  
What was your family's country of origin? Mother from Lithuania  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Mother's parents spoke Lithuanian  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

Year of Birth: 1947  
First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1) 1952  
Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school? Yes, but I was allowed to attend for a few months.

Signature 

Date OCTOBER 24, 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school?**

Initially my parents wanted me to attend an English Catholic school. My father was educated in French but believed English provided more opportunities. My mother started at a French school in 1933 but she spoke no French at the time and during the first year transferred to an English school. When I started school, we <sup>are</sup> living in East-End Mercier, and the nearest English Catholic school was near Pie IX, a 25-minute bus ride away.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

When I was in grade 4, my parents moved to Pointe-aux-Trembles

COURTARD STREET

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school?**

When we moved to Pointe-aux-Trembles, my parents enrolled me at Saint-Marcel school, along with my younger brother. We stayed there three or four months but the school was not equipped to teach us the level of French we needed so they advised us to switch to the English Catholic school, which was much further away.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

We were allowed to enroll in the school. My father was a francophone Catholic, but my brother and I were the only 'anglophones' in the school and our French was not very strong. The school recommended that we go to the English school.

**Which school accepted you?**

It was Napoleon Courtemanche School in Montreal East. Although a boys' French School, it had the English classes to grade 7.  
Later I went to Holy Names High where I finished high school.

Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

Yes. Friends of ours from India tried to put their youngest son in a French School close to home but was refused because he did not speak enough French. Also, we know of an Italian friend who was obliged to go to the English system because he didn't speak French.

Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

The ones I know have been in the last 10 years and have been integrated in the French School system.

The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.


When I have spoken about it, most people have not been surprised. English was the working language in the business industry. The French people just brushed it off as it did not affect them personally.

## Déclaration d'un ancien élève du système d'éducation québécois

**Nom:** Faustina Bilotta

Vos parents étaient-ils des immigrants de première génération ? s/o  
Si oui, en quelle année sont-ils arrivés au Québec? Ma sœur aînée est arrivée en 1958  
Êtes-vous né(e) au Québec? Non  
Sinon, en quelle année êtes-vous arrivé(e) au Québec 1963, avec statut d'étudiante  
Quel était le pays d'origine de votre famille ? Italie  
Quelles langues votre famille parlait-elle à son arrivée ? Je parlais Italien et français de base (études de deuxième langue)  
Quelle(s) était (étaient) la(les) religion(s) de la famille ? Catholique

**Année de naissance :** 1948  
**Première année d'études au Québec :** 1963  
**L'admission dans une école catholique française vous a-t-elle été refusée ?** Oui

Signature 

Date 2025-08-01

### Quelles étaient les raisons pour vous inscrire dans une école catholique française ?

Je parlais un peu français car j'avais étudié le français en Italie comme 2e langue. De plus, j'étais catholique et l'école était juste près de mon logement.

### Où viviez-vous à l'époque ? (Quartier et rue)

St-Michel entre la 8e avenue et Legendre.

### Comment vos parents ont-ils tenté de vous inscrire dans une école catholique française ?

Ma sœur aînée s'est présentée à l'école pour m'inscrire.

### Quelles raisons ont été invoquées pour refuser votre admission ?

La raison était « On n'accepte pas les immigrants. Vous devez aller à l'école anglaise. » Ce n'était que plus tard que ma sœur m'a confié que j'avais été refusée parce que j'étais immigrante. Ça été un choc vraiment énorme et ça me dérange encore aujourd'hui, plus de 60 ans plus tard !

### Quelle école vous a accepté(e) ?

L'école anglaise était beaucoup plus loin. J'avais 15 ans et il fallait terminer mes études secondaires dans une langue que je ne connaissais pas.

**Connaissez-vous d'autres étudiants italiens qui souhaitaient suivre un enseignement en français, mais qui ont été refusés ?** Oui

**Si oui, considérez-vous que votre expérience était** (soulignez une option) : rare / fréquente / très courante

Très, très courante. C'était le seul choix que l'on avait.

**Connaissez-vous d'autres élèves italiens admis dans des écoles catholiques françaises ?** Non  
Si oui, considérez-vous que cette expérience était (soulignez une option) : rare / fréquente / très courante

**La question de l'éducation au Québec avant la loi 101 était très controversée. Votre expérience a-t-elle déjà surpris quelqu'un ou suscité le scepticisme ? Si oui, veuillez la décrire.**

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Au fil des ans, j'ai souvent partagé l'expérience que j'ai vécue en me faisant refuser à l'école francophone avant la loi 101. Presque tous ceux à qui j'ai raconté mon expérience refusent d'admettre catégoriquement cette réalité, niant obstinément que nous avons vécu cette discrimination. Encore à ce jour, la majorité persiste en affirmant que les immigrants avaient le choix entre l'école française et l'école anglaise, et qu'ils ont choisi d'aller à l'école anglaise librement.

Ils refusent toujours de dialoguer et même de prendre le temps de vérifier les faits réels et historiques. Pourquoi ? Possiblement par faute de connaissance des problèmes auxquels les immigrants ont été confrontés lors des années avant la loi 101. Malheureusement, cette mésinformation persiste encore aujourd'hui par une grande majorité de Québécois qui se catégorisent de « souche ».

Encore à ce jour, à chaque fois que ce discours fait surface, je me sens insultée, en tant qu'être humain, en tant que personne qui a contribué économiquement et culturellement à enrichir la culture québécoise. Je peux vous confirmer avec assurance que plusieurs immigrants italiens et autres immigrants issus de cette époque partagent le même sentiment.

En fait, la communauté italienne, malgré les refus et les traitements discriminatoires reçus au fil des ans, a été l'une des communautés qui s'est le mieux intégrée avec une participation active à l'enrichissement du Québec, nombreux ceux qui sont devenus d'influents médecins, scientifiques, bâtisseurs, professeurs, artistes et bien plus.

Nous croyons que le temps est mûr pour que le gouvernement du Québec reconnaisse cette discrimination que nous avons subi et qu'il présente des excuses officielles. Beaucoup se posent cette question dans la communauté italienne : comment se fait-il que le gouvernement du Québec n'ait pris aucune action pour aider les immigrants à s'intégrer dans le réseau francophone, malgré le fait que plusieurs auraient aimé suivre ce chemin ?

C'est une réalité qui n'est pas facile à reconnaître mais qui est tout de même un fait historique incontournable et important, qui a eu des répercussions importantes sur la prolifération de l'anglais parmi les communautés immigrantes de cette époque. Dommage qu'il n'y pas eu autant d'acharnement que nous vivons aujourd'hui pour l'application de la loi 101, car les conséquences de cette discrimination se font sentir clairement.

**Declaration by Former Student – Claire Bodo Ropeleski**

**Name:** Claire Bodo Ropeleski

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1949  
Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? N/a  
What was your family's country of origin? Hungary  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Hungarian and German  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth:** 1950  
**First year of Education in Quebec :** (grade 1) 1956  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature C. Bodo Ropeleski Date Oct 17/25

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

We were living in Quebec and they thought I should learn French

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

Decarie Boulevard in Snowdon

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

First my mother tried to enroll me in the ~~French~~ kindergarten program at Royal Vale, but I was not allowed to because our family was Catholic. For grade 1, she took me to St Antonin Catholic school, which was near out home.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

After my mother spoke to the principal, she was disappointed to learn that the school had 'no room' for me. Years later my mother told me that that the principal 'strongly suggested' she take me to St Malachy's because the French school was 'not equipped to teach French to immigrants.'

**Which school accepted you?**

I enrolled at St Malachy's and was one of just three immigrants in grade one.

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?**

Yes / No  No

If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools ?**

Yes / No  No

If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

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**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe .**

I have met many francophones who do not know that immigrants were not allowed into the French Catholic system back in those days. And they often did not empathize with the immigrant experience because it was so different from what they knew.

## Declaration by Former Student - Maria Prizio

<b>Name:</b>	Maria Prizio
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	Father, 1951; mother and two children 1962
Were you born in Quebec?	No
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	1962
What was your family's country of origin?	Italy
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	Italian
What was the family religion(s)?	Catholic
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1952
<b>First year of Education in Quebec:</b> (grade 5)	1962
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?</b>	No, but it was not a good experience <i>and I had to leave + go to English school.</i>
Signature <u>Maria Prizio</u>	Date <u>Oct. 29, 2025</u>

### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?

The closest school was French. The nearest English school was much further away.

### Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)

Ahuntsic

### How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?

They enrolled me at école Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens.

### What reason was given to deny you admission?

I was admitted to the school but I did not speak French. I had completed grade five in Italy but they put me back into grade 3. There was one other Italian girl at the school but she was not allowed to speak to me, so there was no one to translate or explain. I was very unhappy, and would probably have failed grade 3 because I couldn't understand French and no one helped me learn.

### Which school accepted you?

My parents spoke to neighbours whose children were attending an English school. I transferred to St Rita's where I was only required to repeat grade 5. About 90% of the students were Italian immigrants so there was always somebody who could explain or translate. The school provided no language support. There was no 'classe d'accueil'. By the end of the year I was doing well. I ended up studying languages at McGill to teach French and Italian.

Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes /  No  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes /  No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.


*Many have been surprised. They cannot believe that this actually happened.*

## Declaration by Former Student in Quebec's Education System

**Name:** Monika Boos

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1954  
Were you born in Quebec? yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? n/a  
What was your family's country of origin? Yugoslavia via Austria  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Yugoslavian and German  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth:** 1954  
**First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)** 1960  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature  Date 

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**  
St Pascal's was the nearest school to our home.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**  
Côte-des-Neiges near Barclay and Plamondon

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**  
My mother took me to the school to enroll me in grade 1.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**  
My mother was told that immigrants should go the English Catholic school. She did not question the decision. My life would have been very different if I had been allowed to attend the French school. My younger siblings also attended English schools.

**Which school accepted you?**  
St-Kevin's (English Catholic)

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** No  
**If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common**  
I do not know any other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied.  
Unfortunately never had a conversation with anyone on this topic.)

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** No  
**If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common**  
I do not know any immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic School.

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**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

I did have a conversation with someone who could not believe that I and my siblings were not accepted into French School when my parents wanted to sign us up for school.

**Declaration by Former Student Piera Di Fruscia**

**Name:** Piera Di Fruscia

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? Father arrived 1956. Mother and 5 children followed in 1959.

Were you born in Quebec? No  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? 1959  
What was your family's country of origin? Italy  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Italian  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth:** 1954  
**First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)** 1960  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature 

Date August 15, 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My parents did not understand that Quebec had different schools for Catholics, Protestants, francophones and anglophones. They wanted to enroll us in the closest school, which was Sainte Bernadette, a French Catholic school. It was walking distance.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

St Michel

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My mother joined my father in Montreal, and brought five children. She went to Sainte Bernadette to enroll her four school-age children.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

She was told there was no room for us.

**Which school accepted you?**

St Finnbar (13<sup>th</sup> and Bélanger) English Catholic. St Finnbar was also packed – up to 45 students per class - but they made room for us.

**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No**

If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?**

Yes / No

If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

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**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

\_\_\_ Yes, they are very surprised.

\_ Some comments were, why not build more schools like the English were doing. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Declaration by Former Student - Carole Verdone-Smith

<b>Name:</b>	Carole Verdone-Smith
Were your parents first generation immigrants? If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	Mother was born in Quebec, 1923. Father born Italy 1922, arrived in Quebec 1926.
Were you born in Quebec? If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec	Yes n/a
What was your family's country of origin?	Italy
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	My parents spoke Italian but were both educated in bilingual schools in Quebec.
What was the family religion(s)?	Catholic
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1954
<b>First year of Education in Quebec:</b> (grade 1)	1960
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school?</b>	Yes

Signature 

Date Sept. 29, 2025

### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?

My parents both attended bilingual schools: Notre Dame de la Défense (Girls school) and St Phillipe de Bénézzi (Boys school) – both near the Italian Parish, near the Jean Talon Market. They wanted me and my older brother to be educated at the neighbourhood French Catholic school.

### Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)

My dad had bought a duplex on Waverly St, between Liège and Guizot, one of the first ones built on that street.

### How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school?

I was to start elementary school in 1960 – I remember being all dressed up in my Sunday best; mom and I went to St. André Apôtre, a local French school on St. Laurent near Crémazie, well within walking distance from our house. My parents were hoping to enroll me in that school because it was in our neighbourhood. French was not a problem. At home we spoke to my dad in English (he worked at CP most of his life) and spoke to mom in French.

### What reason was given to deny you admission?

We went into an office, a nun asked us in and inquired why we were there. My mom expressed her wish that I attend the French Catholic school. The nun looked appalled and said "*On accepte pas des immigrants ici, y'a d'autres écoles pour vous autres*" – and that was it. We were shown the door, with an outgoing statement "*...s'il y a d'autres familles comme la vôtre, dites leurs de ne pas perdre notre temps*".

**Which school accepted you?**

My parents brought me to Notre Dame de la Défense and did my enrolment there – it was perfect. It was a bilingual school, courses in French in the morning, courses in English in the afternoon. The only problem was that it was far from the neighbourhood and at the time, most families did not have a car; if they did, the moms either did not drive or were taking care of other younger kids at home. My mom, along with many parents in the neighbourhood, organized a school bus route for all the kids in the area and on the other side of St Laurent, to get to the two schools: Notre Dame de la Défense for girls and St Phillippe de Bénézzi for boys. The schools were very cooperative and thus began our daily treks to and from school. I still remember the bus route, street by street!

**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** No  
Although I am sure many who attended my elementary school had a similar experience.

**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** Yes

My two male cousins who lived in the same duplex, did go to the French elementary school St. André Apôtre, after their mom refused to leave the office until they agreed to enroll them!

**If so, do you consider that experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

It is not a story that comes up very often but when I do retell it, most are surprised. Some are skeptical, asking “Why would Quebec be turning away children wanting a French education?”

My mother (maiden name “Bramucci”) came from a family of 11 kids (7 sisters and 4 brothers) – most of the sisters married French Canadian men, with French last names. Getting them enrolled in a French Catholic school was not a problem when their last names were Lavigne, Lagüe, Guilbeault, Tourangeau...it is interesting to note that her brothers, who had the Bramucci name, had most of their kids attend English schools. I do not know the individual stories of how they chose schools.

### Declaration by Former Student Franca Confente

**Name:** Franca Confente

Were your parents first generation immigrants?  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? Yes  
Father, early 50s. Mother followed soon after.

Were you born in Quebec?  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? Yes in Mont Laurier

What was your family's country of origin? N/A

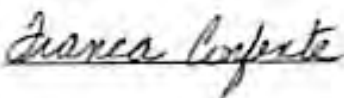
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Italian

What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth** 1956

**First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)** 1962

**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school?** Yes

Signature 

Date August 20, 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school?**  
When my parents were married, they lived in Mont Laurier, where my older sister and I were born. My father worked in French and we listened to French radio and TV in the home.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**  
The Mile End near Bernard and Saint-Urbain.

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school?**  
When my sister was old enough for school (1960), our father took her to the local French Catholic school.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**  
The school said, No. My father begged them to take his daughter who spoke French but no English. The official insisted that French schools did not take immigrant children. They had to enroll her at an English school. I also enrolled at a English Catholic school two years later.

**Which school accepted you?**  
Luke Callaghan girl's school

**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** Yes / No  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** Yes / No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

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Very much so, I have been criticized for not going to a French school. I have been told that the immigrants preferred English education. When I explained my situation some are shocked and some don't believe me. One person told me that he knew a lot of people in the education field and was going to research what I said. He came back with an apology. I feel I was treated as a second class citizen as a child by the Church and the government. I am being punished again now for speaking a language that was forced upon me.

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**Declaration by Former Student Clementina Clerici**

**Name:** Clementina  
Clerici

Were your parents first generation immigrants?

Yes

If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?

Father 1953, Mother  
1955.

Were you born in Quebec?

Yes

If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec

N/A

What was your family's country of origin?

Italy

Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?

Italian and SOME  
French

What was the family religion(s)?

Catholic

**Year of Birth:**

1956

**First year of Education in Quebec:** (grade 1)

1962

**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?**

Yes

Signature  Date \_\_2025  
08 31 \_\_\_\_\_

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

We were Catholic and my parents spoke SOME French. They ALSO wanted me to learn French.

**Where was your family living at the time? Walnut Street St Henri (street and neighbourhood)**

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

They took me to the local French Catholic school – Notre Dame de Grâce.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

Years later my parents told me that the places in the school were only for the French community, not for immigrants.

**Which school accepted you?**

St Augustine de Canterbury, which was further from our home. My parents didn't speak English. An Irish aunt helped me with English spelling. My younger siblings also entered the English Catholic system.

**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No**

**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one):  
rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes / No**

**If so, do you consider that experience to be** (underline one):  
rare / frequent / very common

UNLESS IN PRIVATE SCHOOL

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

Friends of parents who were well off sent their daughters to French private school IN NDG  
Thank you for allowing me to voice my opinion.

Firstly, I understand why it is of great importance to be strong in defending one's language; however, we all feel the same about the pending possibilities of losing our own language or in long term trading one language for another.

Quebec is a versatile province, we have the possibility of being multi linguistic, like many European countries, I hope this can change.

Sincerely,  
Clementina Clerici

## Declaration by Former Student in Quebec's Education System

**Name:** Vincent Gabrielli

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1962  
Were you born in Quebec? No, I was born in Italy  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? 1962  
What was your family's country of origin? Italy  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Italian. My father also spoke French because he had worked in Belgium  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth:** 1956  
**First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)** 1962  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature: Vincenzo Gabrielli

Date: Aug 13, 2025

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### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?

My father had worked in Belgium and spoke French. He thought it would be easier for his children to learn French than English.

### Where was your family living at the time?

We lived in NDG on Belgrave near Upper Lachine Road.

### How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?

My father wanted to enroll me in a French school when we arrived in Quebec in 1962.

### What reasons was given to deny you admission?

My father was told that immigrants had to attend the English Catholic school.

### Which school accepted you?

Saint Raymond school NDG. I failed grade one and had to repeat it because I did not know English.

### Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes

If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

### Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French and were accepted? No

If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

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**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

Yes, mostly French-speaking family members. They have said they are happy that the government has fixed this problem.

**Declaration by Former Student in Quebec's Education System**

**Name:** Ralph Mastromonaco

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1953 , father, 1955 mother.  
Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? N/A  
What was your family's country of origin? Italy  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Italian  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth:** 1956

**First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)** 1962

**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature 

Date July 14/25

**What were your family's reasons for enrolling you in French Catholic school ?**

It was the closest school. It was Catholic.

**Where was your family living at the time?**

NDG – Saint Monica

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My mother took my elder brother and me to the school to enroll us.

**What reasons was given to deny you admission?**

My mother was told that Italian immigrants should attend English (Catholic) school.

**Which school accepted you?**

Saint-Monica NDG (English Catholic)

**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?**

If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French and were accepted?**

If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have you experienced scepticism or denial of your experience? If so, please describe.**

Comments at cegep / university: I attended English language post secondary institutions. This topic came up with other students who had the same experience with French Catholic schools.

Comments during professional career – In speaking with francophone colleagues about this experience most react with surprise that this would have occurred.

Comments since raising exclusion as a public issue (3 types of response) The reactions I have received have been:

- 1- appreciation for writing articles and social media posts **from people of my generation** who also experienced being excluded from French catholic schools who received the reaction from Francophones who refused to believe that this happened ;
- 2- 2- Appreciation for writing articles and social media posts **from people of younger generations** who had no idea that this occurred and gained a better insight into the origins of the language debate in Québec;
- 3- 3- **from politicians, pundits and the media in general**- silence and a reluctance to react either for or against this issue that I take to as an intentional decision to avoid responding to advocacy that challenges a politically convenient narrative that is considered by status quo defenders to be irrefutable conventional wisdom on the origins of the language issue in Québec.

Reactions to Petition – From those who lived this experience support.

Reactions to op eds in La Presse and Le Devoir – Overwhelmingly supportive from those who identify with the English-speaking communities of Québec. From the Francophone readership there has been expressions of support mixed with strong expressions of denial that this happened and labelling the author to be engaging in “Québec bashing” as well as expressions that dismiss the advocacy as being much ado about nothing other than what may have been a few unintentional anecdotal experiences.

Other thoughts

The point of this advocacy is to foster a more robust consideration of the true historical origins of the French language issue in Québec. Specifically, to challenge the reductive narratives that frame the French language issues as an adversarial conflict that targets identifiable social groupings ( English speaking Québécois and immigrants) as the threat that needs to be addressed in order to promote French language equity in Québec.

The state of the French language in the late 1960’s and 1970’s was a far more textured public policy issue than what politicians and language activists framed it to be. As stated in my May 2025 Gazette article, social choices made by Québec society explains much of what was happening to the French language. It was and remains reductive to look for someone to “blame” for the challenges to the French language.

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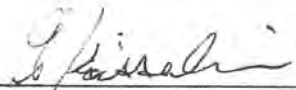
The ultimate goal of this advocacy is to attempt a more objective view of what happened in the post world war 2 era and after some 50 years since the passing of the Charter of the French Language to shift the crafting of language legislation and policies from away from an adversarial approach to finally embrace a collaborative approach that assumes that all Québécois share the goal of promoting the vitality of the French language.

In 2025 it is not about the “why” of our language laws and policies that is questioned.

We need to shift the focus to the “how” of securing French language endurance that when not done properly can challenge, unnecessarily, our social cohesion.

## Declaration by Former Student – Gary Kaiserlian

<b>Name:</b>	Gary Kaiserlian
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	Canada 1961, Quebec 1962.
Were you born in Quebec?	No
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	1962
What was your family's country of origin?	Armenian via Egypt
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	Armenian and French
What was the family religion(s)?	Mother Catholic, Father Orthodox
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1955
<b>First year of Education in Quebec:</b> (grade 1)	1962
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?</b>	Yes

Signature 

Date Sep-30-2025

### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?

My grandparents fled from Armenia prior to the massacre (1915) and relocated to Egypt. My parents were both born in Egypt and educated in French. I attended a French-language kindergarten in Egypt before coming to Canada. We lived briefly in Saskatchewan but my father spoke very little English so we came to Quebec in 1962.

### Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)

We initially lived in Park Extension and there were no French schools there so I enrolled at Barclay (English Protestant) school. I struggled at the English school.

In 1965 we moved to Nouveau Bordeaux and there was a French school 1 block away

### How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?

My mother, who was Catholic, wanted me to be educated at a Catholic school and both parents preferred to have me educated in French, like them. The neighbourhood French Catholic school was La Dauversière elementary (now renamed Gilles-Vigneault).

### What reason was given to deny you admission?

Because my father was not Catholic the school would not enroll me.

### Which school accepted you?

The English Catholic school (Blessed Oliver Plunkett) had no problem enrolling a student with a Catholic mother and Orthodox father.

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**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** Yes

**If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one):** rare / frequent / very common

Only knew of one other immigrant student in my circle of friends and he also was denied French schooling. Later I discovered that Italian classmates had the same experience but it was not something we talked about when we were students.

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** No

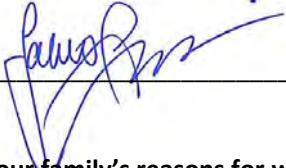
**If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one):** rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

Never talked much about my experiences with friends when in grade school or high school. Went straight to work after high school and only discovered that it was more common than I had thought when I read Ralph Mastro Monaco's articles in The Montreal Gazette and on his Facebook posts in the last few years.

## Declaration by Former Student - Sabino Grassi

<b>Name:</b>	Sabino Grassi
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	Father 1952, Mother 1954
Were you born in Quebec?	Yes
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec	N/A
What was your family's country of origin?	Italy
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	Italian, and a little French
What was the family religion(s)?	Catholic
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1956
<b>First year of Education in Quebec:</b> (grade 1)	1962
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?</b>	Yes

Signature 

Date: December 12, 2025

### **What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My father had worked in Belgium so he already knew some French. Both my parents learned French in Quebec. They wanted me to go to a French school so they could communicate with teachers and help with homework.

### **Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

Ahuntsic near Sauvé and Saint-Denis.

### **How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

Both my parents went to the local French church to enroll me.

### **What reason was given to deny you admission?**

My parents were told, 'Italians are not welcome'.

### **Which school accepted you?**

I enrolled at St Edgar's. Most of the other students were Italian. We moved to Saint-Leonard when I was in grade 4 and the school taught English but also a very high level of French, that has served me well all my life.

### **Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes**

**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

I never talked about this matter, or even thought about it, until I was a young adult. One day I was wondering why my mother, who spoke French and never really learned English, put me in an English school. That was when I learned she tried to enroll me in a French school but was told they wouldn't take Italians. My parents were rejected on the spot and told the only place for Italians was in an English school. And that was it. I still remember feeling intense anger. I was furious that people rejected my parents that way.

**Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? No**  
**If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common**

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

I never heard anybody talk about being rejected from a French school when I was young. My parents never talked about it. Like most immigrants, they just did what they were told without questioning. My mother said the English school was very welcoming.

After talking to my mother, I initially I assumed it was just our family and that everyone else had chosen to go to English schools. That was my first incorrect conclusion. So I didn't rush out to check with other people. I was just trying to deal with the anger about the way my parents were treated. It was only later that it occurred to me that the same thing might have happened to others.

So I started asking other people. That was in the 90s. And I realized – this is not just me. The more I was asking other people, the more I was seeing it was almost consistently everybody in our circle. After a few years of hearing other stories, I wanted to find out why it happened. I assumed that someone gave an order and I wanted to expose it. This was the early 2000s. I thought maybe I can find a directive at the Montreal school board. I thought if I found a smoking gun I could report it to the Gazette and La Presse.

That led me to go to the offices of the CÉCM – the Catholic school board. They were very welcoming, but I didn't tell them what my agenda was. They showed me where all the old minutes of meetings were kept, and they let me look through them. I went there several times over the next few weeks. It was hard to find minutes relative to this point, but eventually I got to minutes dealing with Italian students. One meeting in particular was the smoking gun, but not what I expected. The board chairman asked the other board members, "Why all these Italians were choosing to go to English school? We should get to the bottom of this." And nobody around the table had an answer for him. That was shocking for me because the people running the school commission did not know what was going on. There was clearly somebody giving orders somewhere because my family and so many others had the same experience, but the school commission was clueless to that fact. I could only concluded the orders were given at the local level by the school directors. That was the only explanation that fit.

I wrote an article about what I found and reported it exactly that way. I sent the article to both the Gazette and La Presse. La Presse didn't even answer me although I called many times, but the Gazette picked it up. They were fascinated by the article and printed a full page feature.\* After that, I heard from many more people who had the same experience and they were proud that I had exposed it publically. I could reassure people that dozens of others had the same experience and they were not alone. There was many silos of stories that started to connect but nobody had the time or the money to bring it all together so the story went quiet until Ralph Mastro Monaco started writing about it a couple of years ago. Now people are talking about it and it is time for public recognition of what happened.

**\*[Echoes of rejection](#); Bill 60 has a historical parallel in the way French-language schools rejected Italian children in my youth**

Montreal Gazette, Friday, February 21, 2014

## Declaration by Former Student in Quebec's Education System

**Name:** Michael Gaug

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Mother born here; elder siblings born in Hungary. Father born in Rumania.

If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1929 & 1932

Were you born in Quebec? Yes

If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? N/A

What was your family's country of origin? Mother Hungary, Father Rumania

Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? German, Hungarian, Rumanian

My parents were educated at Saint-Louis-de-France school in a mixture of German, English and French. They went to English Catholic high school.

What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth:** 1957

**First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)** 1962

**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature 

Date 21 July 2025

### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?

We often attended St-Jude's (French) church on Tiffin Road in neighbouring Ville Jacques Cartier, as it (and its associated school) was closer to our home than our parish of St-Georges. There were no English Catholic Schools or Churches. My mother thought St. Jude's would be appropriate because it was close by, and that enrolment there would ensure the integration into Québec society that she and my father had not achieved. My younger brother was allowed to enrol in the French kindergarten of St-Georges Parish because the English system did not yet have room for one.

### Where was your family living at the time?

We lived in Montreal South (which merged with Longueuil in 1961) in the parish of St-Georges Church, located near Ste-Hélène and Desaulniers. We were near Taschereau Blvd, which was the border between Montreal South and Ville Jacques Cartier, and Tiffin Road, which was the boundary between Ville Jacques Cartier and St-Lambert.

### How did your parents attempt to enrol you in a French Catholic school ?

In early spring 1962, when I was 4, the Curé of St-Georges Parish visited us on his annual fund-raising mission. After chatting with me, he told my mum that I should be in school, in spite of being a year underage, and that he would take care of my enrolment in the fall. St Jude's parish had a Catholic school, and my mother hoped he would enrol me there.

### What reason was given to deny you admission?

St-Jude's was out of the question because it was not our parish, but in any case, the Curé explained that allophone and anglophone Catholics were not enrolled in French Schools but were rather hosted in

unused classrooms in existing French Catholic Schools. They were taught in English and remained administratively distinct from the rest of the school. We were segregated from the other students. I attended different schools in grades 1 and 2, and then the new English Catholic school, St-Clare's, from grade 3 on. My younger brother, after a year in French kindergarten, was transferred to St-Clare's for grade 1. He was shattered that he was the only child in his class not allowed to continue. He felt he had been singled out because 'something is wrong with me' which instilled a negative attitude toward school. In both cases, our mother was disappointed that we could not attend the French school that was more established and closer to home.

**Which school accepted you?**

Notre Dame des Écoles 1962

École Catherine Primot 1963

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?**  Yes  No  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** Yes /  No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

I have yet to meet a Francophone who believes my account on first hearing. The most common reaction is that I was too young to understand what actually happened, and that my parents, being immigrants, misunderstood their options.

Ironically, Francophones who went to English Catholic Schools were even more adamant that my experience was not credible. After all, if they were allowed to go to English School, than clearly the reciprocal option was permitted for Allophone/Anglophones. So my enrolment must have been by choice.

During the mid to late 1970s, after the first Parti-Québécois electoral win and the run up to the 1980 referendum, I was deeply immersed in Francophone culture. The topic of Québec nationalism was ever-present and grievances against anglophones/allophones were frequently aired. Whenever I attempted to explain that allophones were not as a whole against the french culture, nor were we trying to destroy it, I was held up as an example of the injustices they faced. My family of immigrants, I was told, came to Québec, and in spite of it being a French province, started a business in English, sent their children to English Schools, and assimilated into the English Culture. I tried to explain that in my case this was completely false; my parents small fabrication shop had Allophone and Francophone employees, I was forced to go to Anglophone Schools, and that it was their own leaders that had contributed to this division - and used it to advance their own interests. This was never taken seriously.

Myths and Legends are soothing. They create a cultural narrative that justifies our behaviour - and they die hard.

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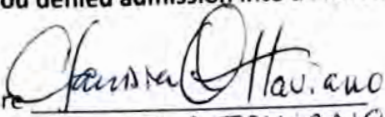
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## Declaration by Former Student in Quebec's Education System

Name: Claudia Ottaviano-Maheux

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1951  
Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? N/A  
What was your family's country of origin? Italy  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Italian and French  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

Year of Birth: 1959  
First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1) 1964  
Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school? Yes

Signature:   
CLAUDIA OTTAVIANO

Date: July 20, 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My father had lived 5 years in Paris France & so, our family spoke French and Italian at home. We were French speaking & Catholic so it seemed natural to enroll me in French school.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**  
Ahuntsic

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My parents tried to enroll my elder brother in 1958, but he was sent to the English school. They tried again for me in 1964. My mother took me to the administration office and asked to enroll me.

**What reasons was given to deny you admission?**

They said, « Vous etes des immigrants. Il faut aller à l'école anglaise. »

**Which school accepted you?**

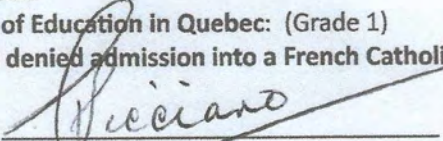
John Cabot Elementary School – Ahuntsic. I'll never forget the first day at school. I didn't know a word of English and I didn't know anybody. I cried like a crazy kid.

**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes**  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? No**  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.

### Declaration by Former Student - Teresa Picciano

<b>Name:</b>	Teresa Picciano
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	Father 1958, Mother 1959
Were you born in Quebec?	Yes
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	N/A
What was your family's country of origin?	Italy
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	Italian
What was the family religion(s)?	Catholic
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1960
<b>First year of Education in Quebec: (Grade 1)</b>	1965
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?</b>	Yes
Signature 	Date October 22, 2025

#### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enroll you in French Catholic school ?

The French school was very close to where we lived. A block away.

#### Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)

In the Mile End district, at 5340 St Dominique between Maguire and Saint-Viateur.

#### How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?

My mother took me to the French school on St Dominique, at the corner of Fairmount. (It is now Robert Gravel high school)

#### What reason was given to deny you admission?

The person in charge told my mother I would have to enroll at an English school. My mother argued with them. "Are you kidding me? Where am I going to send my daughter?" The school was a two-minute walk from our home, and the woman who took care of me when my mother was working lived right across the street from my home and a two minute walk from the french school. But the person at the school said, "Here it's strictly French. You're Italian. You must attend English school; You're not coming to this school." My mother said, "She wants to learn French." I was already speaking French from playing with francophone neighbours. But, we were refused.

#### Which school accepted you?

The closest English Catholic school was Luke Callaghan (on Clarke Street or St Laurent entrance), but it was full and there was no space for more students. So I had to go to St Agnes on Henri-Julien near St Denis. As a six-year-old I had to walk about 6 blocks, alone. When I started there, I only spoke Italian and French but not much English.

Then for grade three, I was relocated temporarily to Luke Callaghan. I had to move even farther for grade four and onwards. My mother said, "Send her to the French school," because it was closer. But I was relocated to Nazareth on Jeanne Mance street till the 6th grade. Then transferred for 7th grade etc.

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**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes**  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? No**  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

I never discussed with french quebecers cause it would start debates etc.

However, everyone that was English would speak of not being allowed French entry to schools or denied French education. It would come up in conversations if asked etc.

### Declaration by Former Student Rosanna Bruni

**Name:** Rosanna Bruni

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? Father arrived 1954, mother followed in 1955 with son.

Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? N/A  
What was your family's country of origin? Italy  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Italian. Father had lived in Belgium so also spoke French.

What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth:** 1960  
**First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)** 1966  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature 

Date Aug 13, 2025

#### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?

We were living in Tétreaultville, which was quite French. Father spoke French.

#### Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)

Tétreaultville

#### How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?

My older brother was born in Italy and arrived in Quebec age 3. My parents took him to be enrolled at the local French school, which was across the street, but he was not allowed to register. The English school was further away. My parents were concerned for his safety but a neighbour's daughter walked my brother to school. Our parents enrolled all three children in English schools.

#### What reason was given to deny you admission?

#### Which school accepted you?

St Lawrence O'Toole. Tétreaultville. It was much further from our home.

#### Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No

If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

#### Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes / No

If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

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**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

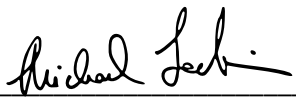
When I shared my family's story, French-speaking friends reacted with disbelief, unable to fathom that such things could happen. However, other immigrants met my words with quiet recognition. They had walked through similar trials themselves, and so my account did not shock them, it merely echoed experiences they already knew too well.

## Declaration by Former Student Michael Leclair

**Name:** Michael Leclair

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Father no, mother yes.  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? Mother's parents arrived 1920.  
Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? N/A  
What was your family's country of origin? Father Québécois, Mother Italian  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Father spoke English and some French,  
Mother spoke Italian, English and French  
What was the family religion(s)? Father Protestant, Mother Catholic.

**Year of Birth:** 1960  
**First year of Education in Quebec:** (grade 1) 1966  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school?** Yes, for high school.

Signature 

Date \_\_December 9, 2025

### **What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

The language spoken at home was English. I attended an English elementary school – Tara Hall in Ville d'Anjou. For high school, my parents thought a French high school would be a good idea.

### **Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

We were living in Anjou.

### **How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My mother, who was Catholic and spoke very good French, took me to the school (Saint-Jean-Baptiste-de-la-Salle) where we met with a nun, who was very nice and spoke to me slowly, but she quickly ascertained that I could not understand what she was saying. My mother became agitated with the conversation but I could not understand what she and the nun were saying to each other. After about 15 minutes we left, and the next day I started writing entrance exams for private English high schools.

### **What reason was given to deny you admission?**

My mother told me years later that she had wanted to enroll me at the French high school so that I could learn French but the school would not take me because I didn't know enough French.

### **Which school accepted you?**

I was accepted at Selwyn House.

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**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No**  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes / No**  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

I haven't really told anyone except for you. But certainly, other Italian family members experienced the same treatment.

### Declaration by Former Student

**Name:** LUISA SILVESTRO

Were your parents first generation immigrants?

No. My maternal and paternal grandparents immigrated from Italy in 1914.

If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?

Both my parents were born in Montreal.

Were you born in Quebec?

Yes

If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?

N/A

What was your family's country of origin?

My parents were born in Canada but of Italian descent

Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?

My parents who were born in Montreal spoke English French and Italian. Their parents, who were immigrants spoke Italian

What was the family religion(s)?

Catholic

**Year of Birth:**

1960

**First year of Education in Quebec:** (kindergarten)

1965-66

**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?**

Yes for Grade 1 in 1966

Signature Luisa Silvestro Date August 7, 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My mother spoke excellent fluent French and wanted her children to be educated in a French grade school. Since I had completed a year in French kindergarten (1965-66), my parents wanted to enroll me at the neighbourhood French Catholic school - La Visitation. They believed we should be bilingual.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

Pothier Street, Ahuntsic

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school?**

My mother and father were born in Montreal (mother 1919 and Father 1918) and were educated in trilingual schools (English, French and Italian) at the time that were imposed on them for children of Italian immigrants. They both were fluent in French and English. We were Catholic and spoke English at home but we all spoke French. They strongly believed their children should be bilingual, able to read and write in both English and French.

My mother brought me to enroll at a French school named La Visitation, a school nearest to our home.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

As soon as my mother explained in her excellent French to the person responsible for enrollment at La Visitation school, this person immediately refused to enroll me and told my mother to register me in an English-language school for immigrants. I believe this person assumed she was an immigrant because my mother had an Italian last name. The fact that my mother was born in Canada and spoke French

fluently was of no consequence to this person. My mother was incensed and refused to pursue the matter further, not wanting to enroll her daughter in a school that was already showing major signs of prejudice.

**Which school accepted you?**

The English language St Rita's School in Ahuntsic.

**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common**

**Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common**

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

I still feel I was short-changed by not being allowed to enroll at the French school La Visitation, despite being born in Quebec and having attended a French kindergarten. My mother, who spoke excellent French, was upset that I was denied a French education and deeply unsettled by the discriminatory way she was treated by the person she spoke to at the school.

My parents wanted both of their children to be fully bilingual. The lack of a strong education in French created a lifelong disadvantage and limited my employment opportunities. I took night courses at the Université de Montréal to improve my French, but my writing skills were never as strong as they would have been had I attended a French school, as my parents had intended.

I eventually worked in the French education sector, teaching English as a second language. Some of my colleagues, especially those who were not of Italian or those of ethnic backgrounds who had immigrated more recently and who had easily attended French school themselves, did not believe that I had been told I couldn't enroll in French school. Even one of my closest friends of many years still refuses to believe that I was denied the right to a French education simply because of my last name and assumptions made about my mother's background. Their disbelief has often made the experience feel even more isolating and painful.

**Declaration by Former Student - Paul Esposito**

**Name:** Paul Esposito

Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	Father, mid-50s; mother 1959.
Were you born in Quebec?	Yes
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	N/A
What was your family's country of origin?	Italy
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	Italian
What was the family religion(s)?	Catholic
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1960
<b>First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)</b>	1966
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school?</b>	Yes

Signature  Date December 8, 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school?**

The French school was the closest to our home. My mother ran a daycare and many of the children spoke French so I learned French as an infant. Both my parents found French easier to learn than English so the local French school was the best choice.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

In Ville-Émard on Hadley near Springland.

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school?**

My mother took a neighbour along to help communicate in French at l'École Coeur-Immaculé-de-Marie.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

I remember the adults talking, and the person from the school shaking their head. I learned later my mother was told there was no room. They had filled their quota of immigrant children and suggested we try the English elementary school Holy Cross or St-John Bosco.

**Which school accepted you?**

I was accepted at St-John Bosco, which was further away from our home. I could speak very little English and the teacher asked my mother what I watched on TV. I mostly watched French programs like Bobino et Bobinette but after that I started watching shows like The Friendly Giant and Mister Dressup.

My parents wanted me to succeed and were concerned when I would get a D. The school provided no assistance to learn English so I had to figure it out for myself. By the second semester, my English was at about the same level as the other kids and my marks were good.

I also attended Saturday schools to learn Italian. I also had a good foundation in French so I am trilingual.

Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.

Francophone friends and acquaintances were generally skeptical. Whereas, when I had shared my experience with my classmates at Dawson College during a class/course "Quebec, Evolution or Revolution", the teaching professor explained to me and the class that this was a general practice during the 60's. The French Catholic Church had a strong influence on Catholic schools and their curriculum and it was their attempt to maintain the purity of the French language and culture.

### Declaration by Former Student Irene Ioannoni

<b>Name:</b>	Irene Ioannoni
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	Mother 1957, father 1958
Were you born in Quebec?	Yes
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	N/A
What was your family's country of origin?	Italy
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	Italian
What was the family religion(s)?	Catholic
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1961
<b>First year of Education in Quebec:</b> (grade 1)	1967
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school?</b>	Yes ..See below. French Catholic school was not considered an option since there would be automatic refusal.

Signature I. Ioannoni

Date 19-08-2025

#### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school?

My parents did not seek out French Catholic schooling for me or my two younger siblings. It was well established that I would be refused. English had already become the language of education chosen by older siblings, older relatives and older immigrant friends in the neighbourhood I grew up in. English had already become the social and dinner table language of communication within this younger generation of immigrant children. These choices began taking shape as far back as 10 years (circa 1955) before I was eligible for primary school.

The refusal of immigrant students by the French Catholic school system began in the early to mid fifties in my neighbourhood. Two reasons were given; French primary schools were already over capacity; secondly French schools did not accept immigrant children that did not speak the French language because they would slow down French speaking classes. These families were openly invited to go see the nearest English Catholic or Protestant schools. The English Catholic schools accepted everyone, with few exceptions. Even the many Francophones who chose at that time English education.

The English Catholic schools attended in the mid fifties included Lawrence O'Toole Elementary, Saint Gerald's Elementary on rue Hochelaga, Saint Dominics and Cardinal Newman Highschool. In 1967 I attended Lawrence O'Toole Elementary on Taillon grades 1,2 &3, Lawrence O'Toole Elementary on Bilodeau grades 4,5 &6, Saint Gerald's Elementary grade 7 and subsequently Monsignor Harold Doran Highschool. In general, high school required travel by city bus. I think most of or perhaps all the above-mentioned schools no longer exist.

This did not mean we ignored the French language. We (young generation along with our immigrant parents) mastered the French language thanks to Quebecois friends and neighbours which abounded in the neighbourhood I grew up in.

**Where was your family living at the time?** (street and neighbourhood)

Rue Paul Pau, Tetreaultville, Montreal

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school?**

They did not try enrolling me in French Catholic school since by the time I was eligible to enter primary school, it was well established I would be refused. English had become the adopted language of education and communication between the younger immigrant generation.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

N/A

**Which school accepted you?**

Lawrence O'Toole Elementary School on Taillon Street (no longer exists)

**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No**  
**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare (they did not seek it since automatic refusal was guaranteed)

**Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? No**  
**If so, do you consider that experience to be** (underline one): rare

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

Yes, surprised and not aware. Especially people living outside the neighborhoods where most immigrant families settled. The general thought being that immigrant children chose English over French with both options being equally available to us. French education was in fact not available for us nor were the French schools actively seeking to enroll immigrant children. In conversation with individuals, they are generally surprised but are equally impressed with the level of integration I achieved. The diversity in language is seen as a contributor to my success. They wish they would have had been exposed to better English language education.

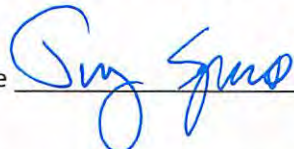
As the controversial debate continues today in the political domain to justify ramping up additional restrictions, pre-Bill 101 children are made to feel they contributed to a cultural problem of today. No one is countering this politically motivated narrative.

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### Declaration by Former Student - Tony Spano

<b>Name:</b>	Tony Spano
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	1955
Were you born in Quebec?	Yes
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	N/a
What was your family's country of origin?	Italy
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	Italian
What was the family religion(s)?	Catholic
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1962
<b>First year of Education in Quebec:</b> (grade 1)	1968
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?</b>	Yes

Signature 

Date October 11, 2025

#### **What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My parents were Catholic immigrants who were working in French so they wanted their kids to go to the local French school.

#### **Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

My father bought a house in 1962 on Des Prairies corner Charland near the Miron Quarry on the edge of St Michel.

#### **How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

Seven years earlier (1961) my father tried to enrol my oldest sister in a French Catholic school in Ahuntsic but they told her to go to the English Catholic school. My second sister followed.

Because we had bought a house in a new neighbourhood, and by this time my father spoke French very well, he wanted to enroll me at the local French Catholic school – Notre Dame de la Merci. When the school refused, my father became angry and was escorted out of the school.

#### **What reason was given to deny you admission?**

My father was told that the school would not accept me because 'Italians are not welcome here.'

#### **Which school accepted you?**

École Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens, which was more than a mile from our home.

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Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

Yes, younger people have never heard that prior to Bill 101, many immigrants were not allowed to attend French Catholic schools.

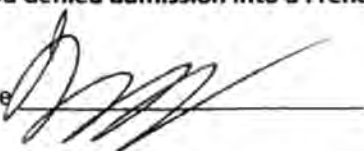
When I started school in 1968, language politics were intense. There was a lot of animosity toward kids going to English schools, even if it wasn't our choice to be there, so there was no incentive to learn French.

I had to work hard later in life to achieve a high of French for professional purposes.

### Declaration by Former Student - Gino Insogna

<b>Name:</b>	Gino Insogna
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	1960
Were you born in Quebec?	Yes
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	N/a
What was your family's country of origin?	Italy
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	Italian
What was the family religion(s)?	Catholic
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1964
<b>First year of Education in Quebec:</b> (grade 1)	1970
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?</b>	Yes

Signature



Date

Oct. 7, 2025

#### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?

We were living in Rosemount. Most of the neighbours were francophone so I learned French playing hockey. My parents thought French was harder to learn than English. They knew that other Italians had been sent to English schools, but they wanted me to go to a French school.

#### Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)

Rosemount

#### How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?

My father went to the local St Bernadette de Soubirous.

#### What reason was given to deny you admission?

He was told, « On n'accepte pas les Italiens ici. » That was that.

#### Which school accepted you?

St Finnbar.

Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?  Yes / No  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?  Yes / No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

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**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

I often tell my story to "les quebécois de souche", and they don't believe me.

They often say, "mais voyons donc".

My reply to them is, "Why do you think so many Italians, Greeks, Ukrainians, etc... speak English more than French"

In the end, I'm trilingual, and so are my children.

## Declaration by Former Student in Quebec's Education System

**Name:** Karen Zuidinga  
Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1958 or 59  
Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? n/a  
What was your family's country of origin? Holland  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Dutch. My father spoke a little English & French  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth:** 1964 (?)  
**First year of Education in Quebec:** (grade 1) 1969  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** My older brother was denied directly, so the same decision applied to me.

Signature  Date \_\_\_\_\_

### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in a French Catholic school ?

The French Catholic school was three blocks from our house. My brother was first to attend school.

### Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)

Brossard, Perrier Street

### How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?

My mother, who spoke very little French, took my older brother to the neighbourhood Catholic school.

### What reasons was given to deny you admission?

They were told the school could not accept my brother because he did not speak French. They were told to go to the English school in St. Lambert (Preville Elementary), but it was Protestant and my family was Catholic, so my brother could not be admitted there unless they renounced their religion. There was no English Catholic school in Brossard. My brother was admitted to the English Protestant school when our parents signed a form renouncing the Catholic religion.

### Which school accepted you?

Preville Elementary School (St Lambert)

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** No

**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

Until I spoke to you I didn't realize that the other families in my neighbourhood had likely experienced similar dynamics.

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** No

**If so, do you consider that experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have you ever experienced scepticism about your experience, or denial ? If so, please describe.**

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I stopped talking about it because of the consistent denial/skepticism I experienced. I felt like the Quebecois people I was talking to felt like I was “the enemy” or “making excuses” for my poor French. On the immigrant family side, we simply didn’t talk about it (to my recollection). We lived outside of French Society and Culture but we didn’t have our own as we also weren’t part of the established English-speaking culture in Quebec. As immigrant families we each were socialized within our own cultural communities (e.g. Jewish community, Italian community, etc).

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### Declaration by Former Student Nina Gentile

**Name:** Nina Gentile

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? Mother 1959, Father 1960.  
Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? N/a  
What was your family's country of origin? Italy  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Italian  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth:** 1965  
**First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)** 1971  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** My older sister (born 1960)

Signature 

Date Nov. 26 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enroll you in French Catholic school ?**

We were living in Quebec so my parents thought that French was important for us to learn. Since Italian is a latin language it has some similarities to French, which would have been a more natural transition than English. Also the French school was very close to home, just a block away.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

Villeray/Ahuntsic

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My older sister started school in 1965. Our father took her to the French school on the corner to inquire about the registration process.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

They said, "We don't want immigrants here."

**Which school accepted you?**

My sister went to Our Lady of Charity. I went to the same school. It was a kilometer away and we had to cross Metropolitan Boulevard. We also walked home for lunch and back.

**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes**

**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

We knew many other kids, including cousins, who went to English schools because they had been turned us all away from French schools.

**Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? No**

**If so, do you consider that experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

Not aware of any others.

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**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

When I am asked why I mainly speak English, as do most people of my generation, I have to explain that, back in those days, immigrants were not welcomed in the French school boards. Everyone is always surprised we were denied access to French schools and told to go and register at the English School Board. Hence the fact that English is the primary language of my generation.

**Declaration by Former Student - Dominique Poletti**

**Name:**

Dominique Poletti

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1966  
Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? n/a  
What was your family's country of origin? Italy  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Italian, and father spoke English  
What was the family religion(s)? Catholic

**Year of Birth:**

1966

**First year of Education in Quebec:** (grade 1)

1971

**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?**

Yes

Signature



Date

6 Nov 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

Notre Dame du Perpétuel Secours was near our home. I had learned French playing with other kids in the neighbourhood so my parents wanted me to go to the local school.

**Where was your family living at the time?** (street and neighbourhood)

Ville-Émard

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My mother, who did not speak much French, took me to the school.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

My mother was told, 'No, no, you're immigrants.' It didn't matter that I could speak French.

**Which school accepted you?**

I enrolled at Holy Cross, although I hardly knew any English. A teacher said to my mother, 'Your daughter would do much better at a French school.' But the French school would not enroll me. By the end of the year my English was up to par. I was always academically very strong in French.

**Do you know other Italian students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes**  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other Italian students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? No**  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

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**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

Yes I had a conversation very recently with someone as I had discussed with you who was dumbfounded that I was speaking English to him. He actually accused me (as an Anglo) of not wanting to live in French...accept the province is French etc.  
But prior to this I have had multiple conversation with French Quebecers and most really believe we just refused to go to French school.

Just look at any provincial body, unless they are 100% Québécois or first language French, they simply don't get the job. Gaz Metropolitan hired some Italian immigrants because they were only ones applying for the dirty jobs...

Italian immigrants were second class citizens in the eyes of the French Canadian, hence the issues that exploded later.

Police force SPVM in Montreal was the same. They hired rarely an anglo person, or less an immigrant, unless there was a dire need...example....an Italian-speaking cop educated in English schools got the job because they were used as bait to break into Mafia circles...listen in on calls etc. because the French cop naturally understood nothing of the going-ons.


**Declaration by Former Student– Dimitrios Tjelios**

**Name:** Dimitrios (Jim) Tjelios

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? Mother arrived 1929. Father had been in Quebec since 1907

Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? N/A  
What was your family's country of origin? Greece  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Greek, and my mother spoke French.  
What was the family religion(s)? Orthodox

**Year of Birth:** 1933  
**First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)** 1939  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** My elder brother.

Signature 

Date Nov. 13 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My father lived in Quebec since 1907 and appreciated the importance of both French and English. My mom had gone to a French college (École Française de Calamari) in Thessaloniki.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

We were living near Sherbrooke East and Dorion.

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My older brother (born 1930) was the first to reach age in 1936 so our mother took him to enroll at the local French Catholic school.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

Our mother told us the Catholic school didn't take non-Catholic kids. And that was that. My sister (born 1932) and I followed our brother to Protestant schools.

**Which school accepted you?**

William Dawson Protestant school.

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** No  
**If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common**

The reason our mother wanted us to enroll at a French school was that she spoke and wrote French very well. It would have been easier for her to help us with homework in French.

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**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? No**  
**If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common**

All the other Greeks I knew went to Protestant schools, or to Socrates elementary school and then to Protestant high schools.

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

I have many French Canadian friends who wouldn't believe me when I told them that I was not allowed to go to a French Catholic school.

### Declaration by Former Student – Edward Stuart Rogers

**Name:** Edward Stuart Rogers

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1954  
Were you born in Quebec? No  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? 1954, Canada; 1955, Quebec.  
What was your family's country of origin? England  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? English  
What was the family religion(s)? Father atheist, mother agnostic.

**Year of Birth:** 1946  
**First year of Education in Quebec:** (grade 4) 1956  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature 

Date Oct 12, 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My father thought we were in Quebec and I already knew English, so I should learn French.

**Where was your family living at the time?** (street and neighbourhood)

We lived on Darlington near the corner of Van Horne in Côte-des-Neiges.

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My father filled out the forms at the local French Catholic school, but he put down the family religion as 'Methodist' because his father was a Methodist minister.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

The school would not accept Protestants or non-Catholics.

**Which school accepted you?**

I enrolled at Bedford school but my father was stubborn and continued to try to get me into a French school, but kept hitting a brick wall until he had the revelation of putting me into a private French school. We found a private school in Longueuil and it seemed like a good fit. I hit it off with the Head Master and was very enthusiastic so my father filled out the enrollment papers and I was supposed to start the next week. On Monday the school called and said, 'We have to tell you we can't accept him because he's not Catholic.' My father questioned decision this because it was a private school. Later my father thought it had something to do with subsidies from the government that were contingent on enrolling Catholic students, but we could never get to the bottom of why I was refused admission. To circumvent this refusal, my father considered the option of allowing me to become Catholic, although he was as ardent atheist. I hesitated, and so we abandoned the idea. Then my father hired a tutor to teach me French a couple of times a week.

Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes/No  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes/No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.

ALSO TEACHERS IN THE PROTESTANT SYSTEM WERE NOT TO BE CATHOLIC WHICH RESTRICTED OUR LEARNING OPPORTUNITY TO PICK UP FRENCH.

FRANCOPHONE FRIENDS AND FAMILY WERE ASTONISHED WITH MY DIFFICULTY WITH ENROLLMENT IN THE FRANCOPHONE SYSTEM AT THAT TIME

## Declaration by Former Student in Quebec's Education System

**Name:** Mary Moroska

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1957  
Were you born in Quebec? No  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? 1957  
What was your family's country of origin? Russia but we arrived in Quebec with French passports\*\*\*\*  
*Parents born in France. I was born in Morocco. Grandparents born in Russia*

Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? French and Russian  
What was the family religion(s)? Russian Orthodox

**Year of Birth:** 1950  
**First year of Education in Quebec:** (grade 1) 1957  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school?** Yes

Signature *M. Moroska* Date 2025-07-22

### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school?

*My grandparents fled the Russian Revolution for France where they lived until after WW2. My parents were born and raised in France and went to the local French school. They moved to Morocco after the war and worked for the American Army because they learned English in school. My initial year of education in Morocco was in French.*

### Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)

*Rue Coursol in Little Burgundy*

### How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school?

*There were 2 schools almost facing each other not far from where we lived. So, they went to the French school to register me so that I could continue my education. My parents thought it would be the same system they had grown up in.*

**What reason was given to deny you admission?** *We were not Catholic and my parents were not willing to "convert" or declare that I would be raised as a Catholic.*

### Which school accepted you?

*Royal Arthur in Little Burgundy briefly, and then from grade 2 at Bedford school in Côte-Des-Neiges.*

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** Yes.  
**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / ***very common***

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**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? No**  
**If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common**

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

*As a working adult, even today, I am constantly meeting people who assumed that we chose to go to English schools and would not believe my story.*

*Often, they are amazed at my facility in speaking French. To quote: "Wow, your French is amazing for an immigrant / Anglophone".*

**Declaration by Former Student – Marlene Jennings**



**Name:** Marlene Jennings

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?  
Mother Franco-Manitoban 1940

Father from Alabama

1944

Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec n/a

What was your family’s country of origin?  
Mother, Canadian; Father American

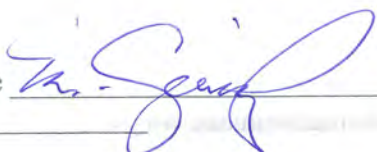
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?  
Mother French & English, Father English

What was the family religion(s)?  
Anglican

**Year of Birth:** 1951

**First year of Education in Quebec:** (grade 1)  
1957

**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?**  
Yes

Signature 

Date 04-11-2025

**What were your family’s reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My mother, Gilberte Garand, was half Belgian and half Franco-Manitoban. My father, Preston Jennings, was Black American from Alabama. I was born in 1951 after three older siblings. The language at home was French. Even my father, Preston Jennings, had acquired sufficient French working as a Sleeping Car Porter for CP, that he understood us when we spoke to him in French.

My parents used French as the family language. They wanted their children to be educated in French.

**Where was your family living at the time?** (street and neighbourhood)

**The Ville Jacques Cartier area of Longueuil. The neighbours were almost all francophone.**

(2) (scribble)

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

In the mid-50's my mother when school started, attempted to enroll my eldest sister Yvonne at the neighbourhood elementary French Catholic school and was refused. She was told that as we were not Catholics, admission was refused and she should go to the Protestant school instead. So that's what my mother did.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

When the school found out she was Anglican, they sent her and my brother to the Protestant school, which was English and ~~two~~ <sup>one and a half</sup> miles from our home. There were no school busses, so we had to walk.

**Which school accepted you?**

My sister Yvonne, then Preston Jr. and then Shirley were each enrolled in William White Elementary School, one after another, and then me. This school was <sup>5 + 1/2</sup> one mile away and there were no school buses at that time, so we had to walk there every day, sunny, rain, snow.

French continued to be our home language until Shirley, had enough difficulties learning English that she had to repeat her first grade. Our mother wasn't happy and decided to begin speaking English at home instead of French hoping to ensure all her younger children wouldn't experience the same difficulties that Shirley had. The impact this change in home language was profound. The four eldest children retained some of their French but the four youngest only learned and spoke English. Because we lived in a francophone neighborhood (Ville Jacques Cartier - now part of Longueuil Agglomeration), they did pick up a bit of French but not enough to be able to live, study or work in French.

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** Yes / No

**If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one):**  
rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted**

in French Catholic schools? Yes / No

If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one):

rare / frequent / very common

3

The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.

Most express surprise. They do not wish to believe or accept that the "linguistic divide" is due in part to the actions of the francophone majority & their institutions. A significant part! That decision by the French Catholic school to deny admission to my sister Yvonne had lasting and major impacts. It denied eight children the right to be educated in French and denied our Quebec society eight intelligent francophone children their right to be an integral part of the francophone majority, as it did the future generations of those eight children!

Declaration by Former Student in Quebec's Education System

**school**

**Name:** George Contaxakis

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes. I emigrated with my father  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? October 1962  
Were you born in Quebec? No  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? October 1962  
What was your family's country of origin? Egypt  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Greek, Arabic, English, French.  
What was the family religion(s)? Greek Orthodox

**Year of Birth:** 1951

**First year of Education in Quebec:** (grade 6) 1962

**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school?** Yes

Signature  Date Aug 14/2026

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school?**

My family was well-educated and by the time they graduated 12<sup>th</sup> grade they all spoke Greek, Arabic, English and French in that order (and some members spoke Italian).

**Where was your family living at the time?**

On Park Avenue near Bernard .

**How did your parents attempt to enrol you in a French Catholic school ?**

My father took me to the reception at College Français on Fairmount corner Esplanade, and I was placed in grade 6.

**What reasons was given to deny you admission?**

A few minutes after I was placed in the grade 6 class – something that I will never forget – the principal came into the class, pointed at me and asked, "Are you Catholic?" I said, "No, I'm Orthodox." Then he said, "You're not allowed to be here." I asked why. "He said, "You're not Catholic." I told him, "I'm Orthodox. We're the same thing." He said, "You're not allowed to be here," and escorted me out. The Pope and the Greek Orthodox Archbishop are very close, but I couldn't argue with him. We did not know the Catholic school system did not accept Greek Orthodox students.

**Which school accepted you?**

Protestant schools: Bancroft and then Baron Byng.

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** Yes

**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** No

**If so, do you consider that experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

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**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

Yes, mostly French Canadians.

My experience is that the French Canadian Catholic hierarchy kept their people away from other religions: Orthodox, Protestants, Judaism. French Canadians have NOT been exposed to THE truth that other religions were excluded. I believe this exclusion was done so that the Catholic Church could dominate and control their people.

### Declaration by Former Student Nicolette de Smit

**Name:** Nicolette de Smit

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Not exactly; my father had a two-year contract at ICAO, a United Nations organization in Montreal. It later became a permanent position.

If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1962

Were you born in Quebec? No

If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? 1962

What was your family's country of origin? Holland

Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Dutch. Father spoke several languages.

What was the family religion(s)? Mother raised Catholic, father born Protestant. Neither was religious.

**Year of Birth:** 1954

**First year of Education in Quebec:** (grade 3) 1962

**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature



Date: 2025-08-20

#### **What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

When my father accepted the position at ICAO, and I learned that we were moving to Canada, I was not happy. Although I was only eight years old, I had strong opinions. When I understood that Montreal was a francophone city, I felt happy that it would still be "like living in Europe".

When we arrived in Montreal, I made friends with the children in the neighbourhood, who were francophone. I started to learn French, as well as some English, and wanted to go to the local French school to be with my friends. My parents were fine with my decision. However, this turned out to be impossible (see below).

Although I was forced to go to an English Protestant school, I remained a "Francophile". I excelled at French in school, and took as many of my high school subjects as possible in "French Immersion". I was appalled at all the English signs throughout Montreal, and as a teenager supported friends who were part of the Separatist movement, including some who were detained during the FLQ crisis.

After high school, although my family was living in Pointe-Claire by that time, I enrolled in CEGEP de Maisonneuve. My first choice had been CEGEP de Vieux Montreal, but I was refused since I didn't come from the francophone school system. It was a long commute, and it was even more difficult to bridge the considerable gap between the French I learned in English schools and the French I needed to study and socialize in a French CEGEP. I realized that I was not as bilingual as I thought I was, despite speaking better French than anyone I knew in the English school system. I returned to the English stream for the rest of my college and university education.

**Where was your family living at the time?** (street and neighbourhood)

37<sup>th</sup> Street in Lachine when we first came to Montreal, Pointe Claire after my father's ICAO position became permanent.

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My father made inquiries at his place of work. He learned that only Catholic children could be admitted to French schools. He located a small French Protestant school in the Outremont area that was used by some of the children of his colleagues. However, there was no way for me to get there, since I was only eight years old, and there was no public transportation available. So, we settled on the closest English Protestant school.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

The school would not enroll me because I not Catholic. My mother was nominally Catholic, but she spoke no French nor English, and was not involved in making any arrangements. I was also taken aback when I learned from my friends how much time they spent learning catechism. They showed me their schoolbooks, full of religious questions and answers they had to learn by memory. I'd been traumatized by some religious beliefs a friend in Holland (who went to Catholic school there) had explained to me, so I was not a fan of Catholicism.

**Which school accepted you?**

Summerlea School in Lachine.

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** No

**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common (not sure)

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** Yes.

Later, I learned that some of my Italian colleagues at work had attended French Catholic Schools in the East End of Montreal.

**If so, do you consider that experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

I learned that some Italian immigrants opted to send their children to French schools. Religion was not a factor in their case. However, I also learned that fights between French and Italian students were common in some schools. Some colleagues switched to English Catholic school due to these conflicts.

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

I worked as a social worker in the public system for many years, and dealt mostly with youth. All the "101 kids" who were (unhappily in many cases) forced to attend French schools, were surprised to hear that I had fought to go to French school, but was refused.

Declaration by Former Student Carole Rentschler

Name:	Carole Rentschler
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	1956
Were you born in Quebec?	Yes
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	N/A
What was your family's country of origin?	Germany
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	German, father spoke English
What was the family religion(s)?	Protestant
Year of Birth:	1957
First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)	1962
Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?	Yes

Signature 

Date Aug 14, 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

We were living in very French part of Ste-Thérèse. I spoke German and had already learned some French playing with two girls on my street. My father wanted to enroll me in the same French school as the other kids.

**Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

Ste-Thérèse-de-Blainville

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My father tried to enroll me at the local French Catholic school.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

He was told I could not be admitted because we were not Catholic.

**Which school accepted you?**

After enrolling me in private kindergarten to learn English, I was accepted into McCaig elementary, Rosemère, the closest English school to where we lived.

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** yes  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.

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From 1987 to 2011 I lived in French regions of Quebec (Alma, Rimouski). French speaking Quebecers were always amazed to hear that I was unable to attend French school, sometimes not even really believing me when I told them the reason and point out that there are many children that were in the same position for various reason (immigrants, religion).

## Declaration by Former Student Demetra Darsaklis

<b>Name:</b>	Demetra Darsaklis
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	1958
Were you born in Quebec?	Yes
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	N/A
What was your family's country of origin?	Greece
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	Greek
What was the family religion(s)?	Greek Orthodox
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1960
<b>First year of Education in Quebec:</b> (grade 1)	1966
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?</b>	Yes

Signature  Date 22/4/2025

### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?

The biggest reason was that the school was very close to our home. My mother told me later that she thought that French was a harder language to learn than English, so it should be studied at school and English could be learned on the street.

**Where was your family living at the time?** (street and neighbourhood)  
St Michel on 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Robert and Denis-Papin.

### How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?

My parents had not been in Quebec very long and did not understand that there were different schools for different religions and languages. They just wanted to enroll me at the neighbourhood school, which was at the corner of St-Michel and Denis-Papin. My mother was probably accompanied to the school by one of her brothers who had been in Quebec longer and spoke more English.

### What reason was given to deny you admission?

My mother was told that I couldn't go to the school because we were not Catholic. Then she found out that all the other Greek kids in the neighbourhood had to go to Protestant schools. We were bussed all the way to Rosemont to Nesbitt school. There were not many Protestant schools on the east side of town. Many of our Greek friends and relatives were living in Park Ex where they had Protestant schools.

### Which school accepted you?

I had to take a bus all the way to Nesbitt school in Rosemount. Later on I went to Rosemont high school but one year I wanted to transfer to John F Kennedy Catholic high school because some of my Italian friends were there. By that time (1974) it was not a problem to enroll at a Catholic high school. I was not allowed to take the religious class but I didn't want to anyway! At that time, there were about 50 other students at JFK who were not Catholic.

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** Yes/ No  
**If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common**

Most Greeks knew they were supposed to go to Protestant schools.

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** Yes / No  
**If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common**

It was not so unusual, at least for high school in the mid-70s, just before Bill 101.

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

Yes, mainly on social media. Many times when this subject comes up, francophones can't believe this was happening back in the early 60s. Of course there are newcomers in Quebec today who get shocked when this is explained to them. That prior to Bill 101, if you weren't Catholic you were not accepted in the French school system. I am not upset in any form that I attended my education in the English system, because I was exposed to many different cultures from all walks of life. Which made me a better person in accepting everyone in society.

### Declaration by Former Student in Quebec's Education System

**Name:** Miriam Zylherstein Byers

Were your parents first generation immigrants? yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? - 1951  
Were you born in Quebec? -no  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? -1951  
What was your family's country of origin? -Poland  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Yiddish, Polish, Russian and French  
What was the family religion(s)? Jewish

**Year of Birth:** -1943  
**First year of Education in Quebec. (grade 3)** - 1951  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature Miriam Zylherstein Byers Date Aug 14, 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

We arrived from Paris, France where I had gone to school. My parents took me to the local school which was French which is what they would have done in France. They were not aware that there were different school systems.

**Where was your family living at the time?**

They were living on St. Dominique and St. Viateur

**How did your parents attempt to enrol you in a French Catholic school ?**

My father went to the school office and asked to unroll his daughter.

**What reasons was given to deny you admission?**

My father was told that since we were Jewish and not Catholic I could not go to that school. I had been at school in Paris and so the priest told my father to take me to Marie de France which was much too expensive for recent immigrants or else to go to the Protestant School.

**Which school accepted you?**

Bancroft a Protestant school in the Mile End

**Do you know other Jewish students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?**

No, I don't know other people's personal experience but there were many Jewish immigrants in my classes and they all found themselves in the Protestant/English system.

**If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one):** very common

**Do you know other Jewish students who were accepted? No**

**If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one):** rare / frequent / very common

The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe

The only people who are surprised and skeptical are French Canadians. Because my French is very good and I speak with a European accent I am often asked why I am an English speaker. I respond that I was rejected by the French education system at the time which forced me to become an anglophone. The whole situation seems incomprehensible to most Quebecois. No one seems to want to think about it since it clashes with their belief that the immigrants rejected the French community and not vice versa.

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## Declaration by Former Student in Quebec's Education System

**Name:** Anna Fuerstenberg

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1952  
Were you born in Quebec? No  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? 1952  
What was your family's country of origin? Poland (via Germany)  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Polish, French, (which others ?)  
What was the family religion(s)? Jewish

**Year of Birth:** 1947  
**First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)** 1953  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature 

Date 

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### What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?

Both my parents had a good Polish education spoke French and loved French literature. My mother's French was impeccable.

**Where was your family living at the time?** Hutchison and Villeneuve.

### How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?

They took my older brother to be enrolled at the local French Catholic school.

### What reasons was given to deny you admission?

My parents were told that French Catholic schools did not accept refugees.

### Which school accepted you?

Bancroft (English Protestant) in the Mile End.

**Do you know other Jewish students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** Yes /

No

**If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one):** rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other Jewish students were accepted in French Catholic schools?**

Yes / No

**If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one):** rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have you ever experienced scepticism or denial of your experience? If so, please describe.**

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When I was teaching at Marguerite de la Jammerais, my high school students refused to believe that immigrants and refugees were denied enrollment in French Catholic schools. This was ironic because When I discovered that the school library had no English dictionaries and NO English books, I offered a hundred of my own books to the school.

They refused them saying it would just take the school priest too long to read them all and pass judgement as to their subject matter being appropriate for teen aged girls.

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**Declaration by Former Student – Michelle Serano**

<b>Name:</b>	Michelle Serano
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	1957
Were you born in Quebec?	No
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec	1957
What was your family's country of origin?	Algeria
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	French
What was the family religion(s)?	Jewish
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1949
<b>First year of Education in Quebec:</b> (grade 4)	1957
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?</b>	Yes

Signature *Michelle Serano*

Date October 6<sup>th</sup> 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My parents were both French-speakers. I had already received 3 years of French education in Algeria. We did not speak English.

**Where was your family living at the time?**

Ville St-Michel.

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

They wanted to enroll me at the local French Catholic school.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

The school did not accept students who were not Catholic, certainly not Jewish students.

**Which school accepted you?**

My parents found out about a French Protestant school (Peace Centennial) and enrolled me there.

**Do you know other Jewish students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes**

**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other Jewish students who were accepted? No**

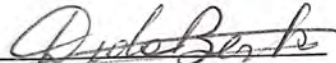
**If so, do you consider that experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

Yes, many people know nothing about how closed French Catholic schools were. And some do not believe it ever happened.

Declaration by Former Student Dida Berku

Name:	Dida Berku
Were your parents first generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	1953
Were you born in Quebec?	No, Austria
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	1953
What was your family's country of origin?	Romania via Austria
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	Romanian, German and French
What was the family religion(s)?	Jewish
Year of Birth:	1951
First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1)	1957
Were you denied admission into a public French Catholic school ?	Yes

Signature 

Date August 25 2025

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My mother, although she was Jewish, was educated in Romania at Notre-Dame de Sion, so she had a classical French education. She wanted to send me to a French public school in Montreal.

**Where was your family living at the time?**

On Dupuis in Côte-des-Neiges, right in front of the French public school.

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My mother took me to the local public French public school.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

My mother was told they did not accept Jewish students.

**Which school accepted you?**

My parents sent me too a private French School – Collège Marie de France. It was a huge sacrifice for them to afford the fees, it was \$400 a year and they were making combined salary of \$400 a month. But they really wanted me to be educated in French.

**Do you know other Jewish students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes**

If so, do you consider your experience to be not too common.

**Do you know other Jewish students who were accepted to French private school? yes**

If so, do you consider that experience to be quite rare.

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

After graduating from elementary school at College Marie de France I went to Wagar High, an EMSB English public high school. The majority of students in my class were children of first generation immigrants and Holocaust survivors. Not one of my classmates knew French. In fact, very, very few of the hundreds of kids in the school knew any French at all. Very often, I was correcting the teacher. I got 100% in my matric exams in French. I went on to work at Expo 67 and many other jobs and went to McGill law school where French was of course very useful.

In 1978, for my first legal job, I joined a law firm in social law, Services Juridiques St Louis on rue St Hubert. I was the only Jewish female lawyer in Montreal east of Parc Avenue. But I was very comfortable because my French was fluent and I could service my clients and plead before the courts in both languages. I practiced law and in 1990 I was first elected to city council in Côte-Saint-Luc.

In 2001, during the merger of all cities on the island of Montreal I became the Leader of the Majority during the Tremblay administration, something I could never have done without my fluency in French. So overall, I'm very grateful to my parents for making the sacrifices they made in order to allow me to live and work in French. Most of my peers did not have that opportunity. The government should recognize that it is their own failure in education that led to the absence of French in the lives of many immigrants and allophones.

My own children were educated in three languages. English, French and Hebrew and my grandchildren also benefit from the same opportunity. Knowing more than one language is always a benefit.

I once met an MP of the Bloc Québécois who refused to recognize what I experienced. He insisted that the Quebec education system never discriminated against allophones and non-Catholics. Its time that the government actually recognize and I would say apologize to the thousands of immigrants who were denied access to French public school in the 50s and well into the 60's.

Declaration by Former Student in Quebec's Education System

Name: Johan Mady

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? Father early 40s, both 1947  
Were you born in Quebec? yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? n/a  
What was your family's country of origin? Lebanon  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Arabic and French, some English  
What was the family religion(s)? Muslim

Year of Birth: 1952  
First year of Education in Quebec: (grade 1) 1958  
Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school? Yes

Signature Johan Mady Date July 18, 2025

What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school?  
My mother was educated in Lebanon in French by nuns. We were in Quebec.

Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)  
Lachute.

How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school?  
My parents wanted their children (my elder brother, me and younger sibling) to be educated in French. They probably went to the closest Catholic school in the Town of Mount Royal to register my older brother.

What reasons was given to deny you admission?  
We were not Catholic.

Which school accepted you?  
Lachute High School (grades 1-11) (Protestant)

Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools? Yes / No  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.

② Mady, Johan

Most people were unaware of the situation and most were surprised that we were not allowed to attend French schools. Particularly with the opposite happening at the moment.

Declaration by Former Student Rachel Sinyor

**Name:** Rachel Sinyor  
Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes.  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? 1964  
Were you born in Quebec? No  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? 1964  
What was your family's country of origin? My father was from Morocco and my mother from Bulgaria. They lived in Israel prior to Quebec  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Bulgarian, French and Hebrew.  
What was the family religion(s)? Jewish.  
**Year of Birth:** 1954  
**First year of Education in Quebec:** (grade 5) 1964  
**Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature Rachel Sinyor

Date Aug 26/25

**What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My parents were both French-speaking, which is why they chose Montreal. I had been studying in Hebrew in Israel and they wanted me to learn French in Quebec.

**Where was your family living at the time?**

Côte-des-Neiges. Then we moved to Chomedey, Laval.

**How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

They went to the school and were told they could not enroll me.

**What reason was given to deny you admission?**

We were not Catholic. We are Jewish.

**Which school accepted you?**

Bedford school in Côte-des-Neiges. My parents watched TV in French so it was a slow process for me to learn English for school. It would have been easier in French.

**Do you know other Jewish students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / ~~No~~**  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other Jewish students who were accepted? Yes / \_\_\_\_\_ No- NO**  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common  
rare

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**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.**

We had many Moroccan friends who spoke French and wanted to enroll in French schools, but were not admitted.

When the subject of eligibility to enroll my children in English school became an issue, my husband and I were ready to leave Quebec.

Many French Canadians were surprised to hear that we were turned away from a French education due to religion.

### Declaration by Former Student - Betty Esperanza

<b>Name:</b>	Betty Esperanza Grosz
Were your parents first-generation immigrants?	Yes
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec?	Father, 1956, from Hungary, Mother, 1959, from France
Were you born in Quebec?	Yes
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec?	n/a
What was your family's country of origin?	Hungary and France
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival?	Hungarian, French and Spanish
What was the family religion(s)?	Mother Jewish. Father was a gypsy who later became Jewish
<b>Year of Birth:</b>	1961
<b>First year of Education in Quebec:</b> (grade 1)	1967
<b>Were you denied admission into a French Catholic school?</b>	Yes

Signature *Betty Esperanza*

Date September 30, 2025

#### **What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My mother was French and very proud of her Lycée education. She did not speak English and wanted me to be educated in French. We spoke French and Hungarian at home, and our neighbours were almost all Québécois francophones.

#### **Where was your family living at the time?**

Laval, on the east side of Chomedey.

#### **How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My mother went to the school to fill out the registration papers. Because she was an immigrant from France, there were no complications with the enrollment.

#### **What reason was given to deny you admission?**

When the school examined the enrollment papers, they saw that my mother listed her religion as Jewish. Years later, she told me that the school (École St Paul) called a few days later to say they could not accept my enrollment because there was "not enough room" and that I should "go to the Protestant school." She would have accepted a French Protestant school, but the only Protestant school in Chomedey was English. She complained about this to our francophone neighbours, who did not find the decision surprising. They said, « C'est comme ça. Vous n'êtes pas comme nous autres. » My mother was furious and could not believe it was possible in Quebec that her daughter would be forced to go to an English school. One neighbour helped her complain, but it changed nothing, so I went to an English Protestant school along with my four younger siblings.

**Which school accepted you?**

I went to Souvenir Elementary School, which was almost entirely a school for immigrants, then, Western Laval High School, then Vanier.

**Do you know other Jewish students who wanted to be educated in French but were denied? Yes / No**  
If so, do you consider your experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / very common **A couple were from France.**

**Do you know other Jewish students who were accepted? / No**  
If so, do you consider that experience to be (underline one): rare / frequent / **I met Jewish students who were also French from France in my protestant high school, where I was grouped as Jewish accordingly. Sidenote: I always found this odd, as I identified myself as Franco-Hungarian, but religion was the criterion to identify our origins at that time.**

**The subject of education in Quebec prior to Bill 101 is highly controversial. Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical? If so, please describe.** Many French Canadians are often surprised—almost shocked—to learn this part of history, as if it had somehow been erased from their collective memory. Throughout my life, I’ve had to explain my accent and the “linguistic parasites” in my speech to French colleagues, and I still find myself doing it today. Younger generations under 40 tend to be more open and willing to listen, but older generations often remain in denial. I have never met a Boomer or Gen X French Canadian who truly acknowledged or understood this history. It feels as though they lived in a bubble back then—and, in many ways, still do—unable to fully grasp that this happened.

In 2006, my employer told me my French wasn’t sufficient. Instead of letting that discourage me, I enrolled in McGill’s French Proficiency program. What was meant to take three years, I completed in just one year. Because of my high level of progress, I was exempt from the additional two years and graduated in the top 10% of my class. One of my teachers even told me that, in her eyes, I was French—and my exam results were proof of it.

## Declaration by Former Student – Jenny Kalantzis

**Name:** Jenny Kalantzis

Were your parents first generation immigrants? Yes  
If yes, what year did they arrive in Quebec? Mother 1956, father 1958  
Were you born in Quebec? Yes  
If not, what year did you arrive in Quebec? N/a  
What was your family's country of origin? Greece  
Which languages did your family speak upon arrival? Greek  
What was the family religion(s)? Greek Orthodox

**Year of Birth:** 1964  
**First year of Education in Quebec:** (grade 1) 1969  
**Were you denied admission into a Catholic school ?** Yes

Signature *Jenny Kalantzis*

Date *October 9, 2025*

### **What were your family's reasons for wanting to enrol you in French Catholic school ?**

My parents were new immigrants who mostly wanted their kids to go to the nearest school, which was the Catholic school Mother Seton.

### **Where was your family living at the time? (street and neighbourhood)**

We were living in Park Extension.

### **How did your parents attempt to enroll you in a French Catholic school ?**

My father took my elder sister to the Catholic school.

### **What reason was given to deny you admission?**

Our family was Greek Orthodox and Mother Seton only accepted Catholics.

### **Which school accepted you?**

My sister and I went to Barclay school.

For high school, I went to William Hingston Catholic High School (opened 1972 to accommodate waves of immigrants). There were a lot of Italian students. Later we moved to Greenfield Park and I went to Centennial Regional school.

**Do you know other immigrants who wanted to be educated in French but were denied?** Yes  
**If so, do you consider your experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

**Do you know other immigrant students who were accepted in French Catholic schools?** No  
**If so, do you consider that experience to be** (underline one): rare / frequent / very common

### **Have people subsequently been surprised to hear about your experience, or skeptical?**

I haven't discussed anything with my circle.

## Freedom of Choice and Exclusion in Quebec’s Education System During the Years 1945-1977

This interim report was produced by Guy Rex Rodgers in collaboration with ELAN. A second interim report will be released in January 2026, a third interim report about language acquisition in July 2026, and the final report in November 2026.

My interest in this research was stimulated in 2020 during a documentary film project about waves of immigration into Quebec. Several participants interviewed in the wave that arrived between 1945 and 1970 mentioned being turned away from French Catholic schools. The waves of immigration project produced a 6-episode TV series for MATv, a one-hour TV special for CBC, and a feature-length documentary film with assistance from the National Film Board of Canada.

*What We Choose To Remember* can be seen on YouTube.

<https://whatwechoosetoremember.ca/>



When I toured *What We Choose To Remember* from 2022 to 2024 to 55 communities around Quebec, many people who attended screenings mentioned that they were also denied admission to French Catholic schools. Most of them reported that their experience was widely unknown and often disbelieved. This is an important piece of contemporary history that needed to be investigated. *Le Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise* agreed, and they provided funding for this two-year project.

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This project is funded by

This project is supported by

