
by

Gabrielle Rogers

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Supervisor: Sasha Mullally, PhD, History

Examining Board: Lisa Todd, PhD, Department of History, Chair Funké Aladejebi, PhD, Department of History Alan Sears, PhD, Department of Education

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This report examines the social history of French immersion in New Brunswick. It uses statistical evidence from the provincial Department of Education as a complement to oral interviews to describe the birth and growth of immersion programming in Canada’s only bilingual province. Provincial education for French immersion is situated within the broader scope of emerging national and provincial bilingualism and bilingual identity. It also considers the regional perspective. The growing immersion program was at times in conflict with the spirit of Louis J. Robichaud-era policies such as the Program for Equal Opportunity. It also speaks to the growth and evolution of institutional and personal bilingualism in the province.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................... ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...................................................................................................... iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................ iv

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................... v

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................ 1

LITERATURE REVIEW .......................................................................................................... 11

FEDERAL BILINGUALISM: Government and Parental Activism .................................... 33

NEW BRUNSWICK: The Only Bilingual Province ............................................................... 46

LIMITATIONS TO ACCESS ................................................................................................. 60

CONCLUSION ...................................................................................................................... 86

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................................... 90

APPENDIX I: Interview Guide ............................................................................................ 95

APPENDIX II: Information Letter to Research Participants ............................................ 96

APPENDIX: III: Curriculum Vitae
LIST OF FIGURES

1 Districts in New Brunswick with French Immersion programs, 1970-1990 ..........55
2 First Year of French Immersion in New Brunswick Districts ....................59
3 Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1991-1992) ..........................................................62
4 Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1987-1988) ..........................................................62
5 Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1987-1988) ..........................................................62
6 Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1984-1985) ..........................................................63
7 Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1983-1984) ..........................................................63
8 Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1982-1983) ..........................................................63
9 Instructional Time Spent in French in Grade 7 Early and Late Immersion Classes, Expressed in Percentage of Total Instruction Time .................67
INTRODUCTION

2019 is the 50th anniversary of both official bilingualism and French immersion in New Brunswick. The education program remains a political, pedagogical, and social touchstone. Change is nonetheless constant. The entry point for early French immersion was changed back to Grade one in 2017 after the 2008 decision to move the entry point to Grade three. Education Minister Dominic Cardy released a survey in February of 2019 angling for a move back to Grade 3, citing teacher qualifications and staffing.¹ French immersion, and Cardy’s survey, have been the topic of seven CBC articles in the month since the survey was released and much public uproar has followed. The survey and Cardy’s comments on immersion are widely contested on social media and among educators and parents. The Auditor-General and the New Brunswick Teacher’s Association have also criticised the plan.² French immersion has been a contentious issue since its inception, and programs have always been in a state of flux.

This report argues that, among Canadian provinces, New Brunswick had a particular relationship with French second language learning, especially French immersion, and with bilingualism broadly construed. Institutional bilingualism refers to a government or other institution that is able to operate in both languages but not necessarily having all members be bilingual. Personal bilingualism refers to an individual who is able to function in two or more languages. While Canada became

² Ibid.
institutionally bilingual in the latter half of the twentieth century, New Brunswick was becoming institutionally bilingual and fostering personal bilingualism at the same time. The province invested heavily to produce bilingual citizens, and many New Brunswickers chose to become bilingual and to have their children become bilingual. This report uses regionally specific, and largely unexploited, quantitative data from the Department of Education to understand some of the institutional ways the bilingual project unfolded in the latter half of the twentieth century. Statistical information and qualitative material, in the form of oral histories with individuals involved with the program across several years and in several provincial regions, combine with these data to create both an institutional and personal portrayal of the beginnings of immersion in New Brunswick. This report will supplement an already rich field of pedagogical work on French immersion by introducing a historical perspective on French immersion in New Brunswick. It will also assess the impact Canadian Parents for French has had on the development of French immersion, suggesting that active parental involvement propelled the program into schools across the province.

This study is situated primarily as a work of social history but one which intersects with public policy and education theory. Immersion cannot be understood historically without understanding the governmental regulations put in place to allow and monitor the program, and without an understanding of how the program operated at the school level and how it affected students. French immersion is a multi-faceted program. To understand it historically, one needs to move beyond the ever-present question: “Does it work?” In historicizing French immersion, this report pulls apart and then recombines the many facets of the program to understand its provincial history. No
one to date has examined the regional differences in French immersion access in New Brunswick over the decades that followed the province becoming bilingual. To understand why New Brunswick was an incubator for immersion it is essential to present its regional differences. In New Brunswick access to programming, and programming itself, differed markedly. I also contend that strong parental support made New Brunswick one of the provinces in Canada with the highest percentage of student uptake in French immersion, and this parental engagement lay at the heart of its relationship with bilingualism. Canadian Parents for French served as a voluntary advocacy organisation to promote the establishment and expansion of the program across regions, providing a constant in an otherwise varied landscape for access.

New Brunswick had its own Official Languages Act (OLA) in 1969 which created the first and only officially bilingual province within Canadian federalism and set the stage for the expansion of French immersion. The OLA was created in response to the federal Official Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism of 1963, New Brunswick was the only province to instate official bilingual status following publication of the Commission’s report. The New Brunswick Official Languages Act was intimately connected with Louis J. Robichaud’s Program of Equal Opportunity (PEO) where New Brunswick pushed towards modernity by ameliorating the civil service, the regional distribution of service, and access to language rights. One of the tools to promote language rights was language immersion in the primary and secondary school system. The provincial government wrote the Immersion Policy after several districts had already implemented such programs, and updated it several times in response to public advocacy and in a way that forced discussion of linguistic identity in
the province. Linguistic identity in New Brunswick had generally been applied to either Anglophones or Acadian Francophones.

Despite the momentum of the PEO, and a large proportion of engaged parents, efforts to enhance French language education produced opposition. There were those in the province, mostly Anglophones, who felt the programs were too costly, and some who were anti-French or anti-Francophone. In New Brunswick, there was significant backlash against the growing public presence of Francophones in the provincial government and institutions. More specifically, the education profession was divided. The New Brunswick Teachers’ Association was very critical of French immersion, stating in a 1978 brief that it was a risk for its members, fearing that job competition could become unfair as many teachers were unilingual Anglophones, unable to teach immersion classes. This inconsistency between the education administration and the union support complicated the availability of French education in New Brunswick.3

While New Brunswick is small geographically and demographically, it can also be seen as an experimental laboratory for the larger Canadian political upheavals that unfolded over the long 1960s, especially with regards to language rights and minority groups’ access to service. I examine the evolution of the Official Languages Act, both federally and provincially, as a key signifier of the change that produced a context for increased language learning. This report will then trace French immersion’s history through the policy documents that pushed it forward, as well as the relationship between

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the education policies the government presented and how the policy decisions affected regional populations.

Policy makers and individual stakeholders asked many questions about how to be bilingual, and what it would mean. The question was asked and somewhat answered by the implementation of the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission and the Official Languages Act, in both Canada and, on a smaller scale, in New Brunswick. In the 1960s, bilingualism was a privilege of some Anglophones and a burden of many Francophones. Yet, New Brunswick’s relationship with the notion of “linguistic identity” moves along a sliding scale from anglophone to francophone. After passage of the Act, more and more Anglophones began investing in the project of a bilingual future, as opposed to the project belonging exclusively to New Brunswick Francophones. In the “laboratory province,” the provincial government made an effort to track French immersion with collections of data on the program. New Brunswick was aware that French immersion was important from the moment official bilingualism became policy.

French immersion did encounter challenges. The program has not always been open and available to all students. As we shall see, if low performing students and rural students have had access to French immersion, it was most likely limited. In fact, many rural areas did not have access to the program at all. The regional analysis in this report will discuss the impact of the divide in French immersion programming between the urban centres and as offered in rural New Brunswick. It will interrogate the reasons why officials did not roll out French immersion equitably across the province, even at a time
when the government was focused on improving equality of access for the education of rural communities to balance consistent inequality of programming from previous decades. By focussing on immersion, as opposed to the other ways where rural communities were disadvantaged and lacked “equal opportunity,” this report assesses in concrete terms the government’s focus on and commitment to a bilingual future. While it was clear that parents wanted immersion as an opportunity for their children as much as many other promised services, their ability to access these opportunities were limited.

**EARLY FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS**

The ancestor of French immersion was an initiative at a private Toronto French School, inaugurated in 1962 as an initiative to produce more bilingual Anglophones, while the first program of modern French immersion began in Quebec in 1965. The most significant distinction between early programs and the larger later programs was the institutional context: public immersion programs were available to students in the public system, while early programs were offered at private schools. Modern Canadian immersion was in line with regular curricula and functioned with other public programs which democratised, to an extent, the program. Defined as an intensive public education program intended for non-native French speakers, administrators have usually divided French immersion into two program groups: early French immersion, where French language education begins before grade 4, and late French immersion, where French language education begins around grade 6.

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Under the Canadian Constitution, education is a provincially-administered service. New Brunswick made second-language classes mandatory in 1965. This was an essential step in education reform, along with the election of Louis J. Robichaud in 1960 and the following Byrne Commission. Anglophone residents of New Brunswick now had access to French language instruction, and minority Francophones had some protection of their language rights.\(^6\) A crucial expansion of second language learning first came when French immersion came to New Brunswick in 1969, with a primary school class in Moncton.\(^7\) The program has grown and, currently, there are 128 schools offering French immersion in the province. Of these schools, most offer early French immersion. Currently, French immersion continues into high school and students take Humanities courses in French, and may enroll in Science, Math, and electives after grade 10 in French, depending on teacher availability and student interest.

While French immersion targeted non-native French speakers, in New Brunswick it was situated alongside a stable and demographically significant Francophone population. New Brunswick’s public education system has undergone significant upheaval in the second half of the twentieth century to serve both linguistic groups. In 1955, The MacKenzie Report began the process of equalizing education by providing uniform rates of taxation to benefit underfunded jurisdictions under the government of Premier Hugh John Flemming.\(^8\) The Robichaud government continued the process with the implementation of the Byrne Commission in 1963 which led to the

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\(^7\) Edwards, “French Immersion in New Brunswick,” 51.
Program of Equal Opportunity (PEO). This program consolidated 422 school districts into 33 new districts. The program also allowed new districts to hire their own staff and become much more autonomous. The MacLeod-Pinet Report, commissioned under the Richard Hatfield government in 1973, further modernised the education system by introducing a new formula to allocate funding to schools depending on the number of students and their grade level. These changes helped produce a climate where French immersion could be implemented based on demand and the ability to offer the program in a particular region.

At the federal and provincial levels, second language education received large funding packages. Ottawa approved spending to fund minority-language education and second language education for majority language speakers for a five-year period in 1970 as a result of the federal Official Languages in Education Program. This funding would assist the provinces by alleviating some of the costs of establishing and maintaining minority or second language education programs. The funding packages lasted until 1984 and provided over one billion dollars to create and maintain minority and second language education. Maintaining minority language education was intended to strengthen bilingualism by reducing assimilation of minority Official Language speakers.

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9 These are the numbered districts used in my report.
10 The school districts were reduced into the current 7 districts in 2012. They are Anglophone districts North, East, West, and South, as well as Francophone Nord-Est, Nord-Ouest and Sud.
13 Hayday, Marshall, and Abel, "Worlds Apart in Acadie," 239.
New Brunswick Francophones, mostly Acadians, have been the French-speakers least likely to lose their language outside of Quebec. In the 1970s, the rate of conversion (linguistic assimilation) was around 8% in New Brunswick, while it was around 35% in Nova Scotia.\textsuperscript{14} There was a clear support for bilingualism in the province evident by the significant number of parents who enrolled their children in French language learning programs. New Brunswick had the highest numbers of French language learners outside of Quebec during the 1970s.\textsuperscript{15} New Brunswick parents were aware of the economic advantage bilinguals maintained in the modernising workforce. Bilingual Anglophones outside of Quebec often earned a higher salary, almost regardless of whether they actually used French frequently at work.\textsuperscript{16}

New Brunswick led other provinces, and modelled how jurisdictions with Francophone minorities might increase bilingualism and enhance social equity through language education. Nova Scotia also had a significant population of Francophones, mostly Acadians. French immersion showed the willingness of Anglophone-majority parents to bring French into their homes by investing the formative years of their children’s’ education into a language learning program. This is illustrated by the provincial activities of the important national advocacy organization, Canadian Parents for French.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 240-241.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 254-255.
Canadian Parents for French (CPF), was founded in 1977 by activist parents in collaboration with Keith Spicer, the first federal Commissioner of Official Languages for Canada. A member-based advocacy group encouraging the development of bilingualism to benefit their children, they sought to initiate and maintain French-language education of Anglophone children in Canada. The organisation has published written material, and provided support for their parent members by providing resources and organisation aid. Much of the literature produced by CPF is highly curated and students’ testimonials are often platitudes that do not capture the complexity of French immersion. However, CPF collected large amounts of statistical and anecdotal information about early stages of the program, such as snippets from students such as this: “We’re really lucky we’ve had French immersion,” said Donna Birkett, a grade 9 immersion student in a book promoting the program. “We’ll always have more choices, more opportunities because of it. There are so many benefits.”

Published in a recruitment book published by Canadian Parents for French, Donna’s quotation is deployed to entice parents, and present the benefits of immersion. But, such quotations were limited in depth and detail about the specific benefits. Canadian Parents for French would often focus on how immersion worked, and make general statements highlighting the positive outcomes. While this style of literature served as effective promotional material, it did not make an effort to adequately represent the difficulties student could encounter in immersion, or the exclusions experienced by families who could not access immersion.

Nonetheless, parental advocacy was in many ways responsible for the expansion of immersion, due to how extensively and vigourously Canadian Parents for French used their literature to lobby government officials. Learning French was portrayed in their literature as a key to an emerging bilingual society and workforce. CPF produced mountains of literature on immersion, much of it written by respected academics. But, their message was that parents (constituents) who chose immersion, and in many cases, fought for it. They were the first major publisher of information surrounding immersion and played a role in shaping and marshalling research about immersion that was making its way out of academia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly work on French immersion from 1965 until recent years mostly focuses on the program’s effectiveness and best practices relating to second-language pedagogy. Early work was largely published by CPF and served as research and promotional material. This work is often research-based pedagogy and focuses on student performance, motivation, and retention. Generally put, much immersion research has explored how immersion works. In contrast, very little work has been done on the history of French immersion in New Brunswick. To begin, this report draws from the work of academics such as education scholar Viviane Edwards, who wrote an overview of French immersion in New Brunswick focusing on early policy decisions.

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18 For research of this type, see Martine Pellerin, Callie Mady, Sylvie Roy, Merrill Swain, and Sharon Lapkin.
and provides a skeleton for key information such as regional programs’ starting dates. It also engages the work of bilingualism scholar Matthew Hayday, who presents a useful understanding of language politics in Canada in the latter half of the 20th century. Hayday has written extensively about Canadian bilingualism and federal language politics, for this argument he often uses examples from New Brunswick to better situate the provincial-federal relationship of bilingualism. Piecing together works by Edwards and Hayday allows this report to have a provincial and federal policy background. Yet, Hayday does not provide extensive regional variation in his discussion of New Brunswick and often focuses on larger federal ideas. Edwards provides a good summary of the early years of immersion, and offers insight as a bureaucratic insider, but is limited in regard to time and depth of analysis. In addition to historicizing French immersion and to show how policy surrounding French immersion has changed over time, this report also considers region as a category of analysis, and pays attention to the role played by Canadian Parents for French. By considering region and advocacy in relation to access, I will show how the change in scale of the program was significant for the development of New Brunswick bilingualism.

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In this way, this report builds on other scholarly works that have examined this evolution in other, and larger, contexts. There is a robust historical literature dealing with 20th century education in Canada. Much of this work focuses on the teachers, the policy choices, or the functioning of school. Paul Axelrod has written many publications relating to education policy and the evolution of Canadian schooling such as, *The Promise of Schooling: Education in Canada, 1800-1914*. Douglas O. Baldwin edited a comprehensive text covering many years of Canadian education and pedagogical development, *Teachers, Students, and Pedagogy: Selected Readings and Documents in the History of Canadian Education*. This education history text describes how various groups of Canadians experienced education through curriculum changes, policy changes, as well as the experience of many Canadian teachers. Baldwin illustrates through his collection the effect curriculum decisions could have on students’ economic and social situations, similar to the rhetoric surrounding the possibility of advancement immersion offered. The history of education in New Brunswick province is growing. Koral LaVorgna dealt with difference in education amongst various ethnic groups in 19th century New Brunswick in her 1995 Master’s thesis21 and later in her PhD dissertation.22 We learn how inequality was rampant in provincial education during the first half of the 20th century and can better understand how significant the changes in the Robichaud years were, compared to the previous education backdrop.

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Education history reveals the process of teaching and learning in the past. Much of this work focuses on Ontario and Quebec; however, many institutional similarities warrant comparison with New Brunswick. In *Inventing Secondary Education: The Rise of the High School in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, R.D. Gidney and W.P.J. Millar describe and discuss the important policy decisions that led to the creation of high schools in that province, and evaluate the effects these decisions had on schooling and students. They argue that the chief bureaucrat in provincial education and the architect of the residential schooling system, Egerton Ryerson (1803-1882), at first envisioned a system that would have separated students by gender and disadvantaged low-income students. This vision shifted due to a variety of parental and community pressures for more inclusive schooling. Because “schools [were] institutions that promoted both social mobility and social reproduction,” they were institutions of critical importance to the communities they served. Turning their attention to the twentieth century in *How Schools Worked: Public Education in Canada, 1900–1940*, Gidney and Millar continue their analysis, providing an accessible overview of how Anglophone Canadians were schooled. They discuss many issues of access and modernisation as they appeared in the first half of the twentieth century in English Canada, building on reforms made in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Schools began reaching greater and greater numbers of students from an increasing variety of backgrounds. Gidney and Millar present the lived experience of students and teachers, but also administrative and financial information made possible for the first time by the widespread publication of

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policy sources. This book features examples from across the Maritimes, some from New Brunswick, and a few from Fredericton and Moncton. Although the New Brunswick cities are not studied in isolation, they are present in the construction of other arguments and help to build the foundation of a changing educational system. Much of Gidney and Millar’s focus is on a period of modernisation, my work extends this period into the latter half of the 20th century and continues to show how education in New Brunswick changed with time to become more modern and in touch with federal ideas.

The gaps in work on immersion are offset by a growing body of historical work on Canadian bilingualism. Scholars such as Matthew Hayday focus on how and why Canada has moved towards bilingualism in the twentieth century. His book, *So They Want Us to Learn French: Promoting and Opposing Bilingualism in English-Speaking Canada*, examines individual bilingualism as opposed to institutional bilingualism (although they are presented as interconnected). Hayday presents the support and opposition for bilingualism in English Canada, looking at community organisations, such as CPF, and how they affect the spread and acceptance of bilingualism. He also presents the work of anti-bilingualism organisations and actors across Canada who sought to limit second language acquisition. Much of Hayday’s work focuses on the social implications of bilingualism, but does not present as much detail in the ways these implications vary regionally. Hayday also does not spend significant amounts of time studying areas that were underserved by immersion programs. This report addresses the social implications of immersion and bilingualism, but does so in a way that highlights regional disparity. Rather than focusing on how bilingualism was sold to the Canadian
public, I also discuss how this sales pitch met the reality of communities in New Brunswick.

This work contributes to the history of education, New Brunswick social history and public policy, and will be useful to education theorists writing on language acquisition by highlighting an intersection between the fields of research that have previously not been in conversation. The history of French immersion in New Brunswick cannot be understood outside of a regional analysis, one that acknowledges the limitations of access of various groups in different parts of New Brunswick.

Region is an important category of analysis for historians of education, who are increasingly producing works that examine the complexities of special education and heritage language programming in a variety of contexts, ones that are influences by the communities within which they are embedded. Most of these contexts are urban. Paul Axelrod and James Ellis, for instance, examine special education, and examine how policy change affected the authority parents in different contexts exercised and maintained in the education system. 24 Ellis and Axelrod show how the urban environment in Toronto provided an effective context for heritage language programs in the latter part of the 20th century due to the diversifying linguistic makeup of the city. The heritage language programs, which encourage the development of a non-official language, were often debated in the context of Canadian linguistic identity. As Jim Cummins argues, these programs were often seen as an impediment to connecting with

24 Jason Ellis and Paul Axelrod, “Continuity and Change in Special Education Policy Development in Toronto Public Schools, 1945 to the present,” Teachers College Record 118, no. 2 (February 2016): 1-42.
either official language community, even though these opportunities made students feel better about their plural and often non-European identities and more accepted in the school environment.\textsuperscript{25} In the introduction of a special issue of the \textit{Canadian Modern Language Review}, Duff and Li show how Canada has not met heritage language, or Indigenous language, conservation with the same enthusiasm as official language instruction.\textsuperscript{26} French immersion, often promoted as a way to bridge cultural gaps, maintained a conception of Canadian linguistic culture that was bilingual only. Indeed, both in New Brunswick and elsewhere in Canada, French immersion benefitted from the long institutional connections, both for funding and governmental support, forged by organisations such as Canadian Parents for French.

In 1979, the national branch of Canadian Parents for French published their first book, \textit{So You Want Your Child to Learn French!} This book collected essays from many authors on a variety of topics related to French immersion in order to make several persuasive arguments for French language learning, including a discussion of the social factors of French immersion, as well as the importance of Core French, and Pre-school French.\textsuperscript{27} CPF’s second book, \textit{French Immersion: the Trial Balloon that Flew} was published in 1983. This book was part guidebook for parents and students, and part reassurance for parents who were nervous about the development of their children. Both books were written mostly by scholars. This publication has been reprinted several times.

\textsuperscript{27} Beth Mlacak and Elaine Isabelle, eds., \textit{So You Want Your Child to Learn French!} (Ottawa: Canadian Parents for French, 1979).
times, including an updated second edition in 1990. Subtitled “a handbook for parents,” the volume addresses themes of bilingualism, in-class social settings, cognitive development, and CPF organisation. Reading CPF material critically is key to make use of their extensive publications, but also to understand how their books served as an extension of the promotional, and sometimes propagandist, nature of the organisation.

CPF began with a membership spanning all 10 provinces, but it’s challenging to tell exactly how far reaching readership was. The book begins by encouraging parents: “[r]esearch now bears out what committed parents have always felt, that the bilingual child is the enriched child, the fortunate child, and it may not be long before the answer most often heard to the question ‘Why bilingualism?’ is ‘Why not?’”28 Bilingual education could help parents “better” their children, an argument designed to appeal to educated, upper-middle class parents. In much CPF literature, bilingualism is synonymous with enrichment and opportunity; there was little time spent analysing cognitive benefits of language acquisition, or how French immersion might benefit children who are struggling academically, or in their lives outside of school. Often, wealthy, educated mothers have been the most likely to participate in their children’s schooling.29 This messaging reflects the orientation of early public opinion surveys of parents of French immersion students in New Brunswick, where most parents cited a

desire to be bilingual, economic advancement, and the importance of a rounded education as main motivators for enrolling their children in the program.\(^{30}\)

CPF’s annual publication, *The State of Immersion*, offers demographic information on French immersion students, geographic distribution of programs, and provides tools for parents engaged in maintaining and promoting Immersion programs. Providing valuable demographic information on the population of French immersion students over time, it contains strategies used to recruit potential French immersion parents.

My approach also uses a methodology that combines policy documents, quantitative information and interviews from subjects who experienced the program in different times and regions in New Brunswick. This positioning, and these sources, shed new light on the topic. Matthew Hayday’s work has largely dealt with the differences in minority language and second language learning programs. In a 2002 article where he summarizes the differences between New Brunswick’s and Nova Scotia’s approaches to bilingualism, he observes while New Brunswick maintained a greater demographic strength of the Francophone community is the province allowed it to develop and maintain French-language education programs more effectively than their Nova Scotian counterparts. These NB communities comprise at least 20% more of the overall population and are in regions that tended to have lower rates of assimilation in the late 20th century.\(^{31}\) The significant political gains made by Francophones in the 1960s as a


result of the PEO were not paralleled in Nova Scotia. While an informal Acadian school system was tolerated in Nova Scotia, it was not until 1976 that there was a French immersion program in the province.\textsuperscript{32} Hayday presented a strong comparison of the provinces, highlighting that New Brunswickers embraced the opportunity for Anglophone students to learn French in greater numbers and more quickly than in the neighbouring province, while Nova Scotian parents and administrators were much slower in their adoption of the program in the officially unilingual province. Additionally, the policy context in the provinces varied significantly. It might bear stating the obvious, that Nova Scotia did not introduce an Official Languages Act and has maintained a smaller population of Francophones. In the last half of the 1980s, when French immersion was available in almost all school boards in New Brunswick, Canadian Parents for French Nova Scotia was still pushing a fledgling program out of its nest. The regionally specific analysis in this report highlights just how broadly immersion was entering the provincial education lexicon in New Brunswick. Entering the new decade with 10 immersion programs, Nova Scotia was far behind New Brunswick.\textsuperscript{33}

Canadian Parents for French, while a national organization, had provincial branches, formed to best represent their regions. Provinces could also produce their own materials, ranging from small recruitment pamphlets to full length books. These provincial documents give insight into how CPF wanted French immersion to be represented in each jurisdiction, and the differences are illuminating. For instance, CPF

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 243.
\textsuperscript{33} Hayday, Marshall, and Abel, "Worlds Apart in Acadie," 256.
Nova Scotia’s 40th anniversary booklet was published in 2017. The booklet gives district level information on student populations and dates of program implementation in various cities. According to CPF, schools in Cape Breton and Halifax began French immersion programs in 1977, but Cape Breton suspended the program between 1979 and 1986.34 The 1977 student population in French immersion programs throughout Nova Scotia was only 130 students,35 whereas in the 1976-1977 school year there were 2473 immersion students in New Brunswick.36 In fact, most Nova Scotian school boards did not pilot the program until the late 1990s, at a time when immersion was already widely available throughout New Brunswick. Although New Brunswick was significantly smaller in population, it rolled out a more fulsome immersion program. Even when comparing these two neighbouring Maritime provinces, jurisdictions who shared many economic, social, and political contexts, the language learning context was vastly different. The differing linguistic contexts in situations that were otherwise fairly similar highlights the relationship between bilingualism and immersion.

French immersion programs were important for the maintenance of bilingualism for both Francophones and Anglophones, both across Canada and in New Brunswick. CPF’s readership was mostly Anglophone parents seeking to have bilingual children. Their encouragement for Anglophones to become bilingual would benefit Francophones, especially those in minority areas. An increasingly bilingual workforce

35 Ibid., 11.
means that there was greater access to services in French, helping minority Francophones live more of their lives in French. New Brunswick political economist Donald Savoie, an advocate for both Acadians and the advancement of New Brunswick, observed an increase in the number of bilingual Anglophones he encountered over his lifetime. Widespread French language learning programs slowly transferred some of the burden of bilingualism from Francophones to Anglophones, the latter who often become political allies in preserving the language and cultural interests of Acadian populations. Young Anglophones felt that “bilingualism was ‘was not a dream, but a project.’ Today, he added, we have ‘a bridge between anglophones [sic] and Acadia, while in the past the bridge was only one way – only Acadians would walk across it.’”37 For Savoie, more New Brunswick Anglophones were seeing bilingualism as a project they, or their children, should undertake. This was opposed to the common pattern of Francophones becoming bilingual by necessity for economic advantage, such as access to the job market outside of peninsular New Brunswick. French immersion gave Anglophones the language skills access to bilingual positions, inside and outside of government. For Anglophones, bilingualism was, and still is, a personal investment.

Focusing instead on the acquisition of advantage for a specific group, many scholars focus the power relationships that influence social language dynamics. Language acquisition exists within a power dynamic and, as mentioned, French immersion has long been seen as an elite program for wealthy families. This perception,

true or not, continues to affect the prestige associated with learning a language. However, not all language learning is equal. “Linguistic capital,” as described by Tara Yosso, refers to the relative power of languages. Dominant languages and groups will hold onto their power by limiting access of other groups to infrastructure and culture elitism. This affects how speakers of any one language interact with each other. The phenomenon of linguistic capital has also been studied by scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa, who examined language-power politics from the perspective of the disadvantaged group (dialectal Spanish speakers), there is much less work examining second-language acquisition by the dominant linguistic-cultural group, in Canada, Anglophones. Maxwell Yalden, a former Commissioner of Official Languages, acknowledged the relationships of power and linguistic diversity in Canada between both official languages, stating “the struggle to define Ourselves linguistically is an ongoing one and, if sometimes bitter, a healthy one; and there is less social danger in the long run in tolerance and understanding of linguistic differences than in specious uniformity.” Yalden cites increased education in French for Anglophones as a measure to maintain bilingualism and linguistic minority communities. This would help create an environment where the responsibility of bilingualism can be shared at a federal level. This report addresses the issue of linguistic capital by discussing the separation of French immersion and Francophone education systems in an officially bilingual province. In so doing, it analyses the different power relationships presented in language

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40 Ibid., 48.
acquisition, be that English or French, in this late decades of 20th century New Brunswick.

This is reflected in Viviane Edwards’ aforementioned master’s thesis, which provided the first systematic overview of French immersion in the province. Edwards later went on to write extensively on the development of curricula and best practices in French immersion, and as an education scholar, Edwards’ work maintains a pedagogical approach and her presentation of French immersion history offers a high-level evolution of the program, with a strong focus on government policy. Examining the earliest years of French immersion Edwards documents the growth of programs and the evolution of curricula. She demonstrates the urban beginnings of immersion and highlights the internal working of the Minister of Education. But the implications of French immersion in the social history of New Brunswick remain unexplored. While my report draws from her important research, I situate this in broader discussions about the social impact of CPF and the efficacy of French immersion advocacy, the regional distribution of services and the implications of this regionalism, and how the history of French immersion relates to the history of bilingualism in New Brunswick.

Bilingualism was a central component of the PEO, but the connection between bilingualism and education is not discussed in Robichaud-era focused work. In Louis Robichaud, A Decade of Power, Della M.M. Stanley describes some educational reforms brought forth by Robichaud’s government, but it takes an administrative perspective, and fails to examine French second language learning. As Clay Merrithee’s work argues, education reforms under Louis J. Robichaud enacted essential
structural changes that enabled his government to usher in a modernised education system. Merrithew’s political history approach does not consider French immersion beyond a cursory mention, nor does it examine efforts by Anglophones to become bilingual, both omissions maintaining the narrative that the responsibility of bilingualism is on the shoulders of Francophones. But, we learn how part of the impact of French immersion was the partial transition of responsibility to be bilingual from all Francophones to some Anglophones as well, which is part of the educational change ushered in by PEO.

As above, Hayday has used French immersion as an example of positive social and political movements in the province of New Brunswick. In the book *Mobilizations, Protests, and Engagements: Canadian Perspectives on Social Movements*, co-written with Marie Hammond-Callaghan, the authors examine the 1980s fight over immersion in Sackville, New Brunswick. In this case, parents battled the district administration to extend and maintain the French immersion program in their District 14 schools (now part of Anglophone School District - East). Hayday and Hammond-Callaghan situate parental engagement in the context of federal movements for bilingualism arguing that parents organising for French immersion was both a grassroots movement and a movement orchestrated by individuals deeply connected to the larger political system.

As one of the few texts to examine CPF and their advocacy for bilingual education, it

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offers important background for this report. However, I will assess what factors made immersion more or less accessible for other regions in a province that only two decades previous became officially bilingual. The *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* (1963-1969) brought forth recommendations that affirmed parents’ right to decide the language of instruction of their children. This affirmation was a precursor to section 23 of the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which asserts the right to educate one’s children in the official language of the parent. These landmark documents maintain that the power of choice resides with the parents, and not the state. The entrenchment of language and culture rights of minority linguistic communities provided a foothold for parents seeking French immersion education, as it became possible to argue that the parents of a child had the right to make decisions about where their child ended up in the public school system. The new possibilities of asserting education rights gave community activists a more credible voice. I assert that it is important to acknowledge that official bilingualism began in the same time period as immersion, making it important to understand which governmental actions produced the climate for bilingualism.

**METHODOLOGY**

This report relies on the combination of oral histories and statistical documents from the Department of Education. The primary source material used in this analysis

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44 This applies to parents who are native speakers of the minority language in a majority context, parents who were educated in the minority language but do not retain it, or parents who began the education of another child in the minority language and wish to continue with their other children.
includes the French immersion statistics documents from the Department of Education, which began collecting district level information annually from 1976 until 1993 when district consolidation occurred. Individual surveys conducted by each school with an immersion program, revealed the uptake of French immersion and provided important data about students and classes in each district: student population, class sizes, time spent in French in each grade level and class. The data also differentiated between early and late immersion.

These sources allow for an analysis of regional variations in the roll out and impact of French immersion, by extracting and recombining the collected data to look at FI in multiple districts, rural and urban. Although the publication dates did not cover the implementation years of French immersion in New Brunswick, these materials allow historians to assess the growth of the program over a critical window of expansion and consolidation, especially for rural areas.

The enrollment data provide a table that gives the starting year for all immersion programs in the province, right up until 1992. The publications include summary data such as totals for how many immersion classes existed in the province as well as how many early and late immersion students were enrolled. The documents are mostly comprised of information from individual schools, however there is also a section of additional statistical information from the compiler at the beginning. What is included varies slightly from year to year and provides several fascinating insights into the early
programs. All years of the publication included a summary of enrollment in each district from the 1976-1977 school year until the year of the publication.

Utilizing start dates provided by the Department of Education, I bring together and compare these to regional FI start dates from Viviane Edwards’ thesis, the only source to track enrollments before 1976. Bringing these data together enables me to analyse and identify historical trends in the regional implementation of programs. While this method offers new possibilities for the interpretation of French immersion history in New Brunswick, these numbers are not without their limitations. Firstly, the French Immersion Statistics publication series ends in the early 1990s. This is likely because the school districts were reorganised and consolidated into fewer, larger districts at that time. Pinpointing start dates was challenging because, after the reorganisation in the 1990s, some districts that did not have access to immersion would appear to have access to programs simply by merging into a district that already had the program in a larger population center. Access to educational institutions in Canada was not even across all regions and all demographic groups. For many Canadians, having access to a variety of services was a problem for much of 20th century.

While the data collection was partially standardised and the forms distributed to the schools were all the same, schools interpreted the survey fields differently and filled them out in slightly idiosyncratic ways. Sometimes school officials left notes in margins about how time spent in French could vary from student to student due to student course

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45 Some of the more interesting data is included in one year only, such as the inclusion of a gender breakdown in the 1983-1984 issue, or total student population numbers by district in the 1991-1992 version, allowing for a comparison of relative popularity of the program by district.
selection, for example a high school student could choose to take Biology in French, if available. Sometimes schools stated which classes were a combined class, either across level such as a grade 7/8 split, or combined early and late immersion in one grade level. In the cases where split classes were not noted, it was usually possible to gauge class structure from teaching assignments and student numbers. Additionally, the documents did not include class lists with student names, making some calculations of high school enrollments challenging. Many high schools did not list what subjects French immersion teachers are teaching, and it was possible that students saw the same teacher more than once a day. At times, this lack of specificity makes it difficult to see where split classes occurred; a high school teacher could teach several different groups of students in a day whereas an elementary teacher will almost always only see their own class. As much as the Department of Education’s statistics provide an opportunity to chart regional implementation patterns for French immersion, they require additional analysis to be used accurately.

Yet, as sources these data are underutilized, and rich. For instance, the documents provided many additional details pertaining to the working conditions of immersion teachers, the likelihood of immersion programs having split classes, and the choice of high school students to stay in immersion classes or to join the English stream. They would be useful for future scholars interrogating different elements of French

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46 For example, at D.L. MacLaren School in Chatham, one teacher is listed as teaching Grades 2 and 3, each grade with an enrollment of 12 and 14 students respectively. But, these classes claim to offer 96.5% of content instruction in French. The only way for this to be possible is if these grades were in a combined class. Classes comprised of early and late French immersion students had the class list separated by up to 15 pages of text.
immersion history. First and last names of teachers were included in these documents, allowing a future researcher to interview participants in early programs.\textsuperscript{47}

For the purposes of adding qualitative information to these quantitative sources, I interviewed parents, former students, and current and former teachers all with a connection to immersion from several areas in New Brunswick. I conducted five semi-directed interviews in 2018, where I posed questions from an interview guide designed to seek out the participants’ experiences with provincial immersion programs, their perception of how the programs operated, as well as their thoughts about and their relationship to bilingualism, generally. The participants are all connected to my own social and professional networks through my own work in education or by referral after I produced a website, using ArcGIS storymapping, to show the regional growth of immersion in New Brunswick during the 1960s through 1980s.\textsuperscript{48} After initial contact with potential participants through the site, I requested an interview with them to discuss their relationships with immersion. I sought out individuals with a direct relationship with immersion as parents, students, or teachers. The sample is limited because it does not extend outside my own personal and professional network. Nonetheless, respondents are drawn from different regions across New Brunswick.

All subjects were also aware of my own subject positioning as an immersion graduate from outside New Brunswick and my position as current immersion teacher in

\textsuperscript{47} In this report, I will not be using the names of teachers in this work to help preserve anonymity in the future. It would be challenging to know to what extent all teachers were aware their employment data was being made available to the public after collection.

Feminist oral historians Sanchia deSouza and Jyothsna Latha Belliappa discuss the potential pitfalls of interviewing teachers as a researcher who is associated with education, for myself, a current teacher. They present the usefulness of self-disclosure in conversation with participants to foster closeness and trust. Many immersion teachers are protective of immersion, and nervous about being trapped by an outsider; my situation as an immersion graduate and current immersion teacher helps inform my participants of my own positionality. I believe that much of the trust I was able to build was due to my attachment to immersion. This attachment helped me build my credentials as someone with an interest in the program, and as an ally not seeking to “trap” my participants. However, deSouza and Belliappa also caution researchers to handle these relationships carefully, because the closeness felt by participants can push them to give the researcher too much trust. In an effort to maintain the trust given to me by my participants I have made an effort to edit their interview transcriptions to assure that they remain as anonymous as possible both by eliminating direct identifying information and by limiting avenues to identify them by contextual information.

The interviews thus provide insight into the lived experiences of French immersion from several New Brunswickers. Most experienced the program as students; some participants also experienced immersion as teachers, as was the case for two subjects. Participants one and two are parents of a child who entered into French immersion.

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49 The interview process was approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of New Brunswick in compliance with the Tri-Council standards, and, in accordance with that approval process, all transcripts have been edited to maintain anonymity.
immersion in a major city in the early 1970s. One parent is a Francophone and the other is an Allophone who immigrated to Canada as a teenager. Both are bilingual. Participant Three experienced French immersion in Northwestern New Brunswick as a student and is from an exogamous (French-English) home, they are an immersion teacher today. Participant Four was the teacher of the first class of immersion students in the same Northwestern town, and is a bilingual Francophone. Participant Five experienced French immersion in a town outside a major city and is an immersion teacher today. All subjects maintain a high opinion of immersion today, which could create biases when they recount their own histories of their experiences.

While these interviewees are a small and comprise a demographically homogenous group, the interviews are a useful tool to assess the perceptions of immersion and the experiences of participants in the early program. Time between the events under investigation and the interview allows former students and teachers to reflect on French immersion learning experiences as present day adults. While this distance is unavoidable for my research, it does present methodological limitations. In her work interviewing women teachers, Kristina R. Llewellyn acknowledges that the teachers she interviewed would often provide edited responses to her interview questions to retell their experiences as having “happy endings.”

Llewellyn contends that it is necessary to let interview participants to share their experience as they perceive

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it but also the role of the historian to further analyse the interviews in connection with broader theory and discourse.\textsuperscript{52}

Combining quantitative and qualitative research methods has often been underutilised when discussing immersion policies in previous academic work. Qualitative sources from the CPF combine well, however, with French immersion statistics from the provincial government. Many CPF documents used testimonials from students to offer interested parents a quick look at the benefits of immersion, however these testimonials have been heavily edited to present a simplistic version of immersion’s benefits. For instance, “Jennifer,” a Grade 2 student, enthuses in one CPF promotional book how immersion means “[y]ou learn two languages and you can talk to your friends in French.”\textsuperscript{53} While charming, her quotation offers only a narrow, reductive view of what can be a complex learning environment. And scholarship has not filled in these gaps; there has been little research on the history of personal experiences with French immersion. Yet, many students who were involved in immersion in the 1970s and 1980s can be interviewed as adults to seek out their recollections of the program. Interviews with adults allow for both depth and retrospection which can create a more developed opinion of the experience of immersion than can be delivered in a one line sound bite.

\textbf{FEDERAL BILINGUALISM: GOVERNMENT AND PARENTAL ACTIVISM}

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{53} Lapkin, Swain, and Argue. \textit{French Immersion: The Trial Balloon That Flew}, 12.
French immersion in Canada is often presented as an ideal path toward Canadian bilingualism. The 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in Canada saw massive political and social change, especially in terms of language politics. The Quiet Revolution modernised and redefined Quebecois identity while the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B&B Commission) shaped many national policies. The B&B Commission was fundamental in securing significant government investment in French immersion, along with investment in minority language education. The Official Languages Act created the position of Official Languages Commissioner, the first being Keith Spicer. These factors affected French immersion’s initial support and the implementation while also situating the program as a national event.

Before analysing the experiences of New Brunswickers in FI, it is important to examine and discuss the federal framework that created an active period of Canadian bilingualism and second language learning, which would rapidly influence New Brunswick and the expansion of French immersion. I begin by presenting and briefly explaining the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and the Official Languages Act, focusing on the ramifications the OLA brought about for second language funding. Then, I examine the role of Canadian Parents for French will be situated within the promotion of language through cultural benefit.

The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B&B Commission) was a federal commission which, from 1963 to 1969, investigated the state of linguistic

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55 Ibid., 31.
relations in Canada and made suggestions to better preserve minority language and culture. During the Commission years, officials traversed the country to seek out the opinions and needs of minority linguistic communities, such as New Brunswick Francophones. Interviewees included influential Acadians, such as Reverend Clément Cormier, a founding figure of Université de Moncton.\(^\text{56}\) The commission was essential in making sweeping reforms to provincial and federal language policy. The final year of the B&B Commission also marked the year New Brunswick became officially bilingual under Louis J. Robichaud’s Liberal government. Robichaud chose to not submit a brief to the B&B Commission as it was too contentious a topic at that time.\(^\text{57}\)

However, First Nations advocacy groups did submit briefs to the Commission with the goal of lobbying in favour of a trilingual country and the recognition of Indigenous cultures on par with French and English. This proposition was not accepted by the government, keeping Indigenous linguistic cultures in an unequal position.\(^\text{58}\) The B&B Commission instead investigated how the private and public sector promoted bilingualism, the state of bilingualism within the federal government, and the opportunities that existed for Canadians to become bilingual. The Commission released an initial report in 1965, a more in-depth report in 1967, followed by six books in five volumes through to 1970. The third section of the Commission’s mandate, promoting


\(^{57}\) Ibid., 20.

opportunities for individual bilingualism, is the most relevant to this report and would lay much of the groundwork for the funding and promotion of French immersion.

It is important to establish how government officials saw bilingualism to understand why French immersion and other forms of second language learning were seen as viable, to contextualise views of bilingualism and to set pedagogical goals. The 1967 Report defines individual bilingualism as:

In practice, people who are considered bilingual know, more or less, two languages. We know that complete bilingualism—the equal command of two languages—is rare and perhaps impossible. Generally, the bilingual people one meets combine a knowledge of their mother tongue with a more or less extensive and active knowledge of the second language. This definition acknowledges that most bilingual speakers have one native language, which is often stronger, and a second language that is often weaker. The bilingualism mentioned is one of practicality and function, not mastery. The cornerstone of language is communication; bilingual individuals are able to communicate, with a certain degree of ability, with more people. The individual bilingualism laid out by the B&B Commission is one where speakers have a moderate competency in both languages which facilitates communication. The Commission itself doubted the likelihood of creating many “perfect” bilingual individuals. Bilingualism and Biculturalism also meant the representative presence of Anglophones and Francophones in voluntary associations, meaning that culturally bilingual Canadians would have a deeper

community tie to both groups, also meaning that the government acknowledged the importance of the cultural component to language. This acknowledgement extended only to French and English, stating in the final report that “the life of English and French cultures required the safeguarding of the English and French languages, in the case of multicultural groups, the culture of their forebears could be preserved even when the language was no longer spoken.” Thus the B&B Commission, and the Official Languages Act, would not protect other linguistic groups.

As described above, the B&B Commission led to the adoption of the federal Official Languages Act of 1969, which created the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. The OLA provided a legal backbone to realize some of the suggestions made in the B&B Commission. The Commissioner of Official Languages would be tasked with ensuring the promotion and maintenance of both French and English. The OLA committed to “fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.” Privileging the use of both English and French is cause to privilege the acquisition of both English and French. The OLA and the B&B Commission’s findings and commitments enabled Canadian Parents for French, a bilingualism advocacy organisation, to campaign successfully for special federal funding for French language learning programs.

Bilingual schools began as a form of permissive teaching where some courses in some regions were permitted to be taught in French. In Moncton, the Vanier High

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62 Official Languages Act, Revised Statutes of Canada 1985, part 7, sec. 41.1B.
School began as a bilingual school intended for Francophone students in 1963. This school, however, was not a French immersion school, as most students were native French speakers who had no other access to public French language education. The intention of a bilingual school was not for all participants to become bilingual; it was for Francophones to become bilingual by necessity, and for Anglophones to have the option to learn French. The Department of Education split in 1974 to offer governance to Francophone and Anglophone sectors separately. It was not until 1976 that the provincial Official Languages Act was expanded to give all New Brunswickers the right to education in their native official language. Anglophones in major population centres, such as Moncton, were dissatisfied with the upcoming end of bilingual schooling. To avoid the loss of all French-language education, the first French immersion program began in Moncton in 1969. This was only 4 years after the initial pilot project in St. Lambert, Quebec. A model of duality within the Department of Education replaced bilingual schooling, where Francophones were not permitted their own schools, to maintain their language and culture. A model of duality meant separate Francophone and Anglophone districts and a dual track system within the Anglophone Sector containing French immersion and English-only (Core French/English Prime).

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65 Ibid., 206.
67 Dual Track in the French immersion context refers to a school where both immersion and non-immersion students are taught in the same building.
This evolution paralleled the evolution in other parts of Canada, although New Brunswick advanced more quickly than most provinces down the road to bilingualism.

New Brunswick had the second highest percentage of bilingual individuals after Quebec in 1961, the census year used by the B&B Commission. Bilingual New Brunswickers represented 19% of the province, with another 19% being unilingual Francophones and 62% being unilingual Anglophones. The census does not separate bilingual Anglophones from bilingual Francophones, although numbers can be estimated when the previously mentioned figures are compared to the one-third Francophone, two-third Anglophone breakdown of the province. We can extrapolate that approximately 10% of the bilingual people in this statistic are bilingual Francophones and approximately 9% are bilingual Anglophones. There were likely some bilingual Anglophones, however most bilingual New Brunswickers were and are Francophones. By 1961, most New Brunswickers had access to French second language classes for several years. Although the suggested emphasis was on oral development of a working language, 90% of the marks attributed to students were based on reading and writing. 1960s pedagogy emphasized the audio-lingual approach, which was often realised in classrooms by tapes or short videos being played so that students could hear French being spoken and then repeat target phrases. This method did not stress formal grammar acquisition, creating a logical gap between the instructional methods and evaluation in second language acquisition. The second language requirement, in place

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68 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, Book I, 38.
69 Ibid., 38-39.
70 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, Book II, 325.
71 Ibid., 325.
at most universities in Canada up until the 1960s, motivated many post-secondary bound Anglophone students to learn French, until this requirement began to disappear nationwide.\textsuperscript{72}

Implementing new programs, especially programs as expansive as French immersion required a large sum of funding to launch. Recommendations 26 and 27 of the B&B Commission encouraged the federal government to provide funding for minority language education programs. This program also encouraged the funding of second language acquisition programs, such as French immersion, and also funded bursaries and gave financial aid to students and public-sector teachers who wished to improve their second language abilities.\textsuperscript{73} The additional funding was provided to offset the start-up costs of implementing minority and second language education, due to the costs for materials in French and other expenses often being greater.\textsuperscript{74} However, the funds set to be given to second language programs were at a lower rate than minority native language education programs.\textsuperscript{75} Second language programs do not have the same infrastructure costs as minority language programs, which could require the building of new schools along with the costs of hiring teachers and buying materials. The 1970 proposal for the Bilingualism in Education Program offered 9\% of minority language

\textsuperscript{73} Hayday, "Canada’s Bilingual Education Revolution," 30.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{75} Hayday, “Bilingual Today, United Tomorrow,” 92.
cost per student plus 1.5% for administrative costs. Second language programs would also receive funding from BEP at a rate of 5% of cost per student.\textsuperscript{76}

Looking beyond the Francophone and Anglophone binary structures an inclusive discussion of bilingualism that seeks to find all stakeholders. Defining New Brunswick as an Anglophone/Francophone province missed the individuals who were Allophones, who were multilingual, or who were anywhere on the linguistic spectrum outside of the purely Francophone/Anglophone binary. Structuring bilingualism within a pluralistic framework offers more space to redefine and to challenge traditional notions of linguistic groupings.

\textbf{CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH}

French immersion related research is often focused on whether or not French immersion can produce “fully” bilingual graduates. However, as we’ve seen, even the B&B Commission defines bilingualism mostly as being a strong working knowledge of a second language, and not as mastery of the second language. The research presented in CPF’s handbook \textit{So You Want Your Child to Learn French!} responded to fears parents may have, such as the levels of English proficiency that students can expect in French immersion, and mastery of content as well as language.\textsuperscript{77} However, CPF presented the cultural component of learning a language with much less detail as the cognitive component.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 117-118.

\textsuperscript{77} Merrill Swain, “What does Research Say About Immersion Education?” in \textit{So You Want Your Child to Learn French!}, eds., Beth Milacak and Elaine Isabelle (Ottawa: Canadian Parents for French, 1979), 22.
The CFP engaged in and tried to influence a process of culturally selecting how French immersion students will speak French. Students unavoidably learned a regional or dialectal form of French from their instructors, the pedagogical material used in class, and the media content consumed by the students. As a progenitor of French immersion in Canada, the privately-run Toronto French School (TFS) opened in 1962 with the intention to give students access to a better quality of French than the Ontario provincial school system provided. The TFS was very popular with parents seeking to make their children bilingual. The TFS rejected Quebecois textbooks as poor quality materials, and instead taught classical literature from French authors, and sought to produce students who would be able to obtain the Baccalaureate Français.78 Although the founder, Harry Giles, and later principal of the school, believed himself to be “a Canadian nationalist,”79 he did not support the acquisition of French that was culturally Canadian. And this was hardly the only example. In the earliest French immersion program at the Margaret Pendleby Elementary School in St. Lambert, the first two teachers were European.80 Some Francophones saw the selection of French immersion as elitism, rather than evidence of a true desire for bilingualism and biculturalism.81 The B&B Commission sought to maintain and preserve French-Canadian language and culture, not any other form of linguistic diversity within or outside of Canada. The preservation of Canadian French did not extend to immigrant Francophones, or other linguistic

78 Matthew Hayday, So They Want Us to Learn French: Promoting and Opposing Bilingualism in English-Speaking Canada (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2015), 41.
79 Ibid., 41.
minorities. Although some parents of second language learners interpret any bilingualism as feeding biculturalism or even multiculturalism, this shows a misunderstanding of the relationship between culture and language, and ignores the capital given to various cultural groups, in this case European French, which was given priority over any form of Canadian French.

In the 1960s, Toronto’s Glendon College, the original campus of York University, made an effort to become a training ground for the new class of public servants by offering a quality education in both official languages.\(^{82}\) The students at the college became engaged in bilingual activism by hosting Quebecois intellectuals for speeches that aimed to make students aware of contemporary language issues.\(^{83}\) Political figures like René Lévesque spoke to the students of the necessity to open a conversation between provinces, even in the context of separation.\(^{84}\)

The students were mostly Anglophones, and most seemed sensitive to the cultural contexts behind their education. One student critiqued the default Parisian elitism of the curriculum, stating “I don’t like the way it’s taught here” and argued that Glendon should seek bilingualism through the creation of a “French atmosphere” through recruiting more Francophones and encouraging student exchanges with Quebec.\(^{85}\) Despite strong support from many students and political figures, mandatory French was skirted in 1971 with the adoption of an English-only stream as well as an

\(^{83}\) Trepanier and Englebert, “The ‘Bilingual Incubator’,” 31.
\(^{84}\) Ibid., 33.
\(^{85}\) Trepanier and Englebert, “The ‘Bilingual Incubator’,” 35.
optional bilingual stream.\textsuperscript{86} The students at Glendon shared some opinions with the early parent advocates of French language acquisition in schools, stating that they did not feel the French they were able to learn was adequate for their lives. However, the Glendon students preferred learning a Quebecois French over Parisian French, which set them apart from early school-age programs such as the Toronto French School.\textsuperscript{87} The active political engagement of students, common in the 1960s, fostered a social awareness of linguistic rights with students seeing learning Quebecois French as a way of maintaining solidarity with their Francophone counterparts.

Canadian Parents for French was in line with this political, cultural and educational orientation of French second language learning. CPF consistently emphasized the cultural richness of learning French, the travel opportunities made available through both CPF, personal comfort in both official languages, and the importance to Canadian identity. Students in French immersion were much more likely to cite cultural diversity as reasons why they liked Canada than non-French immersion students.\textsuperscript{88} It is however difficult to measure the extent to which the students were exposed to cultures outside the dominant French (Quebec or France) and English cultures. It is also difficult to measure whether students understood what cultural diversity meant in a Canadian context, or if they were, to some extent repeating the standard selling points of bilingualism that successfully reinforced Canadian linguistic culture as being exclusively French and English. Canadian Parents for French included

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 36.
cultural elements as positives to learning French in their handbook *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* These elements are: positive views of other cultures, mostly French Canadian, and opportunities for travel to Quebec to experience a new culture.

Culture, as presented in early promotional literature, was very close to policies of official bilingualism, with little emphasis on other cultural groups, even within the global Francophone community. Nowhere in their manual for parents does CPF inform parents of the pluralistic character of the Francophonie reaching as far as Tunisia, Senegal, and Vietnam. Learning French allowed parents to have their child enter into contact with another culture in a controlled, white environment. CPF has drawn popular criticism for being an elitist institution representing an elitist program. This criticism has tended, and continues to be the topic of informal critique usually reserved for a social setting. However, some scholars such as Pierre Calvé have critiqued the French immersion program, in one 1986 newspaper interview describing its practices as "snobbishness."91

Canadian Parents for French put years and thousands of dollars into shedding their image as an elite program. They did this partly to combat critics of French immersion who disputed the program as a bastion of private schooling in the public sector; they also did this partly because of a real portrait of early French immersion populations. Some early programs screened candidates for suitability, meaning

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90 Elaine Isabelle, “Franco Fun” in *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!, eds., Beth Mlacak and Elaine Isabelle* (Ottawa: Canadian Parents for French, 1979), 115.

academic performance in early elementary schooling. Rather than provide support for children requiring extra tools and services in French immersion, these children were instead often pushed into English-only or Core streams. Issues of access to French immersion will be addressed more fully later on in this report.

Canada’s federal relationship with bilingualism changed drastically after 1960. Federal policies regulating access to service, notably education, were becoming stronger and solidifying the rights of minority language speakers. After the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism created the road map, the Official Languages Act made certain federal guarantees. The funding that was secured for second language learning programs made it possible for French immersion to expand rapidly and to encourage a nation-wide lobbying group, Canadian Parents for French. The following section will present the context particular to New Brunswick and how these federal ideas came to shape provincial policy-making.

**NEW BRUNSWICK: The Only Bilingual Province**

After 1969, New Brunswick became the only formally bilingual province in Canada. Yet, it was already home to many bilingual individuals. The transition to an institutional structure that bolstered personal bilingualism came quickly. This section explains why New Brunswick was a very early adopter of French immersion, it also examines how the province expanded bilingualism through public school programming.

New Brunswick is, and has been, different than other Canadian provinces for both demographic and political reasons. Generally, the province’s population has been,
for most of the 20th century, around one third Francophone and two thirds Anglophone. While Ontario has more Francophones by population, New Brunswick is home to the highest density of minority Francophones in Canada.92

Key policy items demonstrate the political and educational contexts that helped situate New Brunswick’s approach to bilingualism, such as the provincial Official Languages Act of 1969, the program of Equal Opportunity, the expansion of minority language education, and several versions of Policy 501 (the Immersion Policy) and French Immersion Statistics from the Department of Education. While the Program of Equal Opportunity has inspired extensive scholarly interest, the legislative record of the era, a record that outlines the changing educational landscape, has not attracted attention. The changing landscape is also revealed in enrollment data captured by each district across the province, by grade level, and by individual school, which reveals the growing demand for French immersion in 1970s and 1980s. This growth suggests that the emerging language landscape in New Brunswick over these decades reflected the larger landscape of bilingualism in Canada, but in a large scale pattern of growth unique to the province.

THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT AND THE PROGRAM FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

In 1960, the election of young Acadian Premier, Louis J. Robichaud ushered the nation movement towards duality, including the B&B Commission, and the Official Languages Act, into New Brunswick. Robichaud was a reformer who sought to

modernize New Brunswick. His Program for Equal Opportunity sought to level economic disparity between rural, mostly Francophone, and urban, mostly Anglophone, regions. To advance his reforms, the government struck a provincial Royal Commission on Finance and Municipal Taxation, also known as the Byrne Commission, in 1962. Its goal was to evaluate as many aspects of municipal financial and structural issues as possible to improve governmental efficiency and equality of services for New Brunswickers. This included fostering greater congruence between municipal and provincial structures. The commissioners easily identified problems in New Brunswick municipalities. Municipal tax structure was based largely on property taxes with some additional revenue added from the provincial government to the municipalities. This structure meant that densely-populated, and often wealthier urban centers were able to meet the education, health care and public service needs of their constituents, while poorer rural regions struggled to do so.

Another major hurdle to educational equality was the structure of school boards. Prior to Robichaud’s reforms, schools were managed municipally. Teachers were paid uneven salaries based on the wealth of the community in which they worked. Robichaud knew in 1960 that in one county there could be many opportunities for education and advancement and just across the county line young people could be without any such opportunity. A key recommendation of the Byrne Commission was to have a centralised certification and curriculum system with provincially run school districts.

94 Ibid., 125.
Teachers across the province would teach the same curriculum for the same salary. In a 1965 speech, Robichaud enumerated the elements of and caveats within his new legislation, saying “Although the Province will assume full responsibility for the provision of basic curricula of elementary and secondary education, supplementation by local school boards will be possible under certain conditions.” Giving the province the responsibility to plan curriculum, while allowing school boards the ability to offer additional programming would eventually make French immersion programs not only possible, but would oblige the government to become involved. Appointing teachers remained a local decision, and an exception to this centralization trend.97

Schools in New Brunswick had not seen this scale of reform since the Common Schools Act of 1871, legislation that first established how public schools operated.98 The recommendations suggested school districts be reduced from 422 districts down to around 6099 and teachers’ salaries be based off a provincial grid. Comparable teachers, in terms of education and experience, in Neguac would make the same wage as teachers in Fredericton.100 Teachers were no longer financially disadvantaged for working in rural regions.

Addressing core issues of government inefficiency was a challenging task that would require a complete overhaul of the tax structure, eliminating the link between a county’s wealth and their quality of education. Nonetheless, the report’s architects

97 Stanley, Louis Robichaud, 126.
99 The final reduction was from 422 to 33.
submitted it to the Premier in February of 1964 and released it to the public two days after being submitted. The program’s opponents criticised its sweeping changes, calling it “a centralising scheme.”

Just as the B&B Commission opened the door for the federal Official Languages Act, the province of New Brunswick would see the PEO usher in change. In 1965 the Robichaud government released the “White Paper on the Responsibilities of Government” signalling they were ready to implement the Byrne Commission’s findings. The provincial government introduced 130 bills and repealed 40 old laws, essentially reshaping all public services and propelling New Brunswick towards the 21st century in one push. A new Schools Act reduced the number of school districts from 60 to 33, down even further than the initially proposed changes in PEO. The official enactment of these changes set the final building blocks for the expansion of individual bilingualism.

The proposed changes were not universally supported across the province. While both Francophone and Anglophone rural regions saw the advantages offered to them in terms of better access to education and a fairer tax structure, there was opposition from the New Brunswick Teachers’ Association (NBTA). They were

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101 Stanley, Louis Robichaud, 129.
103 Stanley, Louis Robichaud, 137-138.
105 Stanley, Louis Robichaud, 140.
106 Ibid., 149.
concerned that centralisation would negatively affect teachers’ freedom in the classroom and that equalised salaries could compel teachers in wealthy areas to leave the province. The NBTA opposition was not shared by l’Association des Instituteurs Acadiens (AIA), who realised the potential for gains in Acadian schools. Acadians communities welcomed the opportunity to improve many of their social institutions and structures.107 Nonetheless, the AIA were concerned with potential government meddling in teacher hiring.108 Opposition came from R.J. Love, a former Dean of Education at the University of New Brunswick, who argued that a centralising plan would even out programs for better and for worse by decreasing the effectiveness of regions with strong programs like in Saint John.109 Certainly, the reduction of the number of school districts and the efforts for standardisation in curriculum and in teachers’ qualifications improve the experience for students. Urban centers were able to employ teachers with appropriate certification whereas poor rural areas in some cases had a teaching staff where almost half of teachers were not certified.110 While certification was not the lone mark of a good teacher, it served to maintain a professional standard in an important and provincially regulated field. Opening the École Normale in Moncton allowed Francophone teachers to have access to professional education in their language, which would help rectify the imbalance of professionalization in the province. Opening a French teacher training program in Moncton also helped meet the growing demands from young Acadians to have access to improved post-secondary in their own

107 Belliveau, “Acadian New Brunswick’s Ambivalent Leap into the Canadian Liberal Order,” 70.
108 Stanley, Louis Robichaud, 155.
These initiatives would later benefit French immersion programs, which needed qualified French speaking teachers to function. Efforts to divide the system into Francophone and Anglophone districts were complex. Some Anglophone New Brunswickers wanted to prevent separate Acadian schools for Francophone students and some Anglophone parents would lose their access to passive second language education by sending their children to Francophone-majority schools.¹¹²

French immersion thus came to New Brunswick in a time of rapid, sweeping, and unevenly supported educational reform. The reduced size of school districts and the investment in public school infrastructure gave the fledgling program an advantage. Piloting a program in 422 individually administered districts would be a herculean undertaking, trying the program in 33 districts that were becoming increasingly centralised looked bright.

The last years of Louis J. Robichaud’s productive leadership cemented such changes to the education system, helping the provincial government convince many parents in New Brunswick of the importance of French as a second language. The B&B Commission recommended provinces be given funding packages to encourage minority language education. Robichaud did not approve of the structure and did not want to extend any control over education to the federal government. Instead, he believed that funding packages should not be explicitly directed at any program, leaving the province free to administrate its spending as the provincial government saw fit.¹¹³

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¹¹¹ Belliveau, “Acadian New Brunswick’s Ambivalent Leap into the Canadian Liberal Order,” 76.
¹¹² Stanley, Louis Robichaud, 160.
¹¹³ Stanley, Louis Robichaud, 181.
proposed structure would maintain provincial authority over educational matters, but it would also have made the path CPF took to ensure funding for French immersion much more challenging as they often used their national structure to put pressure on provincial politicians. They had a consistent ally in the federal Commissioner of Official Languages who would speak on the behalf of second language learning programs. With this structure, they would not have been able to effectively appeal to municipal, provincial, and federal bodies at once for direct investment.

Following an Official Languages motion in 1968, New Brunswick would become the first officially bilingual province in 1969 with their own Official Languages Act. Robichaud was able to frame the province becoming bilingual both as a boon to Francophones and Anglophones. The province embraced national goals of bilingualism while also making structural changes from within to make such social advances possible. In the decade prior to the launch of the first New Brunswick immersion programs, Acadians made significant political and social gains that furthered their representation as a significant entity in New Brunswick life. Young parents observing the political shift in their towns, cities, and province and were prepared to enroll their children into a program offering the opportunity to become increasingly bilingual to meet the needs of an increasingly bilingual province.

114 Ibid., 189.
115 Belliveau, “Acadian New Brunswick’s Ambivalent Leap into the Canadian Liberal Order,” 76.
ADOPTION OF IMMERSION PROGRAMS

Building an infrastructure for French immersion across the province ultimately took decades to accomplish. While immersion caught on quickly in New Brunswick as a whole, there were many school districts that dragged their feet. The first immersion program opened in Moncton in 1969, and was a program explicitly designed for non-native speakers. The program continued to grow across the province in the following decades branching out of urban centres and into more rural, Anglophone areas.

The first decade and a half of French immersion in New Brunswick showed a meteoric rise in the number of FI programs as its popularity gained steadily across the province. Out of the 27 districts possible, by 1986, 22 districts were offering a form of French immersion. These 27 districts were the Anglophone, or mixed districts. Francophone districts never offered a form of immersion. The graph below shows the consistent rise of immersion programs, from only two by 1970 growing to 22 in 1990.

Between 1985 and 1990, it seemed that the annual number of new immersion programs levelled off, following the consistent annual rise from the decade previous. This does not indicate that immersion was necessarily losing popularity, but that immersion had already caught on in almost all Anglophone districts. The apparent plateau in growth from 1985-1990 is deceiving because Hillsborough began a program in 1986, however Edmundston ended their program in 1987 resulting in a net gain of zero. Edmundston ending their program was the only time in all years where a district

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116 Although there were classes in Saint John in 1968 that functioned as a kind of immersion course of study, these were more closely aligned with the bilingual schooling model where Francophones and Anglophones are integrated into the same school. In a bilingual education model all students learn both official languages with access to their own institutions.
ended an immersion program, and it ended after a gradual decrease in student population. This is possibly the result of a 1980s court case on Francophone students’ ability to access immersion, a case I will describe and discuss in following section.

Regional expansion shows that immersion was not only a phenomenon for the large cities in the province. It expanded rapidly in cities, but saw sustained steady expansion throughout rural areas of the province in districts such as Minto, Dalhousie, and St. Stephen. Immersion was not experiencing a fad lifecycle, it was becoming clear that it was emerging as an essential part of education in New Brunswick.

![Figure 1: Districts in New Brunswick with French Immersion programs, 1970-1990](image)

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117 New Brunswick, *French Immersion Statistics* (Fredericton, 1992), 4-5.
The five districts that did not have a French immersion program over these years were Boiestown, Grand Manan, Harvey, Florenceville, and Perth-Andover. These were predominantly rural, Anglophone districts. Conversely, the first districts to adopt French immersion programs were, in order, Moncton (1969), Saint John (Francophone program in 1968 that converted into immersion), Sackville and Fredericton (both 1973), and Bathurst and Petitcodiac (both 1974). The three major cities were included due to the size of their population, they were the most likely to have enough parents to fill a French immersion class. Moncton was the home to a growing number of Francophones, who created and accelerated demand for French-language services. Sackville, while small in population, was also the home of Mount Allison University, and many professors and university administrators. For a small center, it had a significant population of highly educated parents who were famously willing to fight for their children’s’ access to French immersion programs. Bathurst was part of a bilingual district and home to a significant Anglophone population in a mostly Francophone region, making the economic demand for French speakers strong. The most surprising early adopter was Petitcodiac, a rural Anglophone area. Until the mid-1980s, Petitcodiac maintained a small but consistently growing population of immersion students with numbers similar to Sackville. The Petitcodiac district’s strongest population of immersion students was located in Salisbury, a small community approximately 25 kilometers from Moncton. It was most likely the proximity to the

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118 Ibid., 4-5.
large bilingual center that encouraged the growth of French immersion in the Petitcodiac district, specifically in Salisbury due to its proximity to Moncton.

This strongly suggests that a substantial portion of the provincial population desired to become bilingual and encouraged bilingualism in their own families. The rapid growth of French immersion in New Brunswick was particular to the province, there has been a higher proportion of students enrolled in the program in New Brunswick than anywhere else in Canada from 1977 until 1987, excluding Quebec. Indeed, New Brunswick was a leader in piloting French immersion during the first decades after the educators in Quebec developed the program. The high enrollment seen in New Brunswick did not, as we have seen, encompass all parts of New Brunswick equally, especially in rural centres. The discrepancies in enrollment will be evaluated later in the next section further underscore regional differences and the urban/rural split that occurred. However enrollment in immersion was consistently higher in urban centers and programs were available sooner in urban centers.

The legislative framework built by the provincial Official Languages Act and the Program for Equal Opportunity gave bilingualism both a foundation and a reason for supporting immersion programs. The development of French immersion in New Brunswick largely built on federal and provincial efforts to bolster individual and institutional bilingualism across the country. French immersion’s rapid rise in New Brunswick was thus exemplary of the new Canadian identity that was beginning to

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embrace selective plurality. The many changes the PEO brought to education system in New Brunswick sparked creativity and willingness to experiment with new programs. This experimental environment was reflected in the many updates made to the Immersion Policy within the first two decades of the program. The following table shows the year when immersion began in each district in New Brunswick. The spread of the dates indicates that while the program rose rapidly in popularity, it did not begin evenly across the province. The cities listed are the central location of the district. French immersion arriving in a district did not mean it arrived all schools in all cities and towns in the district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District region</th>
<th>District Number</th>
<th>First year of French Immersion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saint John</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moncton</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredericton</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sackville</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathurst</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petitcodiac</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbellton</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

122 The Saint John program began as a Francophone program that gradually became an immersion program for Anglophones.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chatham</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minto</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rexton</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodstock</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmundston</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Falls</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oromocto</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nackawic</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalhousie</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Stephen</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sussex</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. George</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillsborough</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boiestown</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florenceville</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Manan</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth-Andover</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: First Year of French Immersion in New Brunswick Districts

The start dates of immersion programs in various locations reveal several regional patterns. The first areas to have immersion programs were the three largest cities. After the major cities, immersion spread to suburban areas, such as Salisbury in the Petitcodiac district and Hampton, as well as centers with large Francophone populations, Campbellton and Bathurst. Most of the districts that were last to develop an immersion program, and those who did have an immersion program before the consolidation of the 1990s were rural Anglophone areas. Some of the districts listed were exceptional. Bathurst was designated as a bilingual district, which does not change the start date, however during the 1970s bilingual districts gradually shifted to become
Francophone districts with overlapping Anglophone districts. Edmundston was the only district to end French immersion in the 1968-1992 timeline, ending the program in 1987. Edmundston had very low enrollment in immersion from 1981-1982 until the 1987-1988 school year. The implementation of immersion was often the result of a demand from the community. Whether rural New Brunswickers had little desire for immersion is unclear, however they were generally the last to have access to the program possibly due to the parents’ lessened ability to forcibly advocate for their students, due to their lack of political clout.

LIMITATIONS TO ACCESS

Although French immersion had the potential to benefit New Brunswick as a whole, it had barriers to access for both individual students and entire communities. French immersion was sometimes contentious for constituencies from both linguistic communities. Local challenges affected French immersion programs in various ways. An example of this was a lottery system for French immersion enrollment in some oversubscribed areas, and cases where French immersion did not respond to the needs of a local, unique linguistic groups. As described above, combining quantitative data and qualitative findings from oral histories provides a new and more comprehensive perspective of French immersion adoption across New Brunswick. Indeed, describing the uneven adoption of French immersion critiques the program in light of the goals and objectives of the Program for Equal Opportunity. Many rural areas in New Brunswick did not have access to immersion until much later than the urban, or urban adjacent, areas. When they did gain access, the programs were often much more inconsistent.
In addition to significant regional variation, early immersion programs also varied with regard to the amount of French students experienced. Immersion Policy documents did not mandate how much time needed to be spent in the target language for a program to be considered “immersion,” but they did capture the cut-offs for receiving immersion funding: 40% class time spent in French for less funding or 60% class time spent in French for more funding. As a result, the amount of time students were spending in French varied from district to district, and in some cases from school to school. The following tables recombine French Immersion Statistics documents over multiple years in order to document the amount of time spent in French in different programs, by district and by grade. The data is from Saint John, Moncton, Fredericton, Grand Falls, and Newcastle; these areas have been chosen because they all maintained an early immersion program during the decade studied and are geographically spread around New Brunswick. Moncton and Grand Falls have significant populations of Francophones, while the other three districts are home to strong Anglophone majorities. The tables represent time spent in French for early immersion, for Grades 1 through 5. The percentages reported for time on task becomes much less consistent as students age/advance through elementary grades. While this makes a researcher curious about high school immersion programming, evaluating high school immersion would require far too much guesswork as students select many of their own courses due to option classes and courses that are offered in both languages, presenting too many variables for this analysis. Middle year programming was also very inconsistent across the province in terms of their organization and program delivery. Instructional time in French varied significantly from school to school, but sometimes even class to class. Not all areas
offered both late and early immersion, or they were offered inconsistently. But, to
provide insight into FI during middle years of schooling, I provide a table on Grade 7 FI.

<table>
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<td>Grade 1</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>95</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>80</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>77.5*</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1991-1992)\(^{123}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1987-1988</th>
<th>District 15 (Moncton)</th>
<th>District 20 (Saint John)</th>
<th>District 26 (Fredericton)</th>
<th>District 8 (Newcastle)</th>
<th>District 50 (Grand Falls)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>94.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
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<td>90</td>
<td>95.9*</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>87.5*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>85.5*</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1987-1988)\(^{124}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1986-1987</th>
<th>District 15 (Moncton)</th>
<th>District 20 (Saint John)</th>
<th>District 26 (Fredericton)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>93</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>Grade 3</td>
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<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>92</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1986-1987)\(^{125}\)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>District 15 (Moncton)</th>
<th>District 20 (Saint John)</th>
<th>District 26 (Fredericton)</th>
<th>District 8 (Newcastle)</th>
<th>District 50 (Grand Falls)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>82.4</td>
</tr>
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<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>96</td>
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<tr>
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<td>74</td>
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<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>74</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6: Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1984-1985)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>District 15 (Moncton)</th>
<th>District 20 (Saint John)</th>
<th>District 26 (Fredericton)</th>
<th>District 8 (Newcastle)</th>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 7: Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1983-1984)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>District 15 (Moncton)</th>
<th>District 20 (Saint John)</th>
<th>District 26 (Fredericton)</th>
<th>District 8 (Newcastle)</th>
<th>District 50 (Grand Falls)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8: Time Spent in French in Elementary Classes, Percentage of Instructional Time (1982-1983)**

From Figures 3 through 8, we see how all districts seemed to give the most time in French to the youngest students. Having either a whole day, or the vast majority of the

day, in French was an asset to successfully launch the second language acquisition process. While the tables measure instructional time this does not mean students are only exposed to French in the school day. There are several reasons why the amount of time spent in French would have decreased unevenly as students advanced through the grades. At some point, often in Grade 4, students began English language classes. Unfortunately, the documents do not specify how much of the day was spent with the classroom teacher and how much of this time was spent with other subject specialists. For example, we do not know if students were taught gym, art, or music by a teacher other than their classroom teacher. They may have had that class in English if the specialists did not speak French.

In major cities, the immersion programs offered differed. Although Saint John consistently had a smaller population of immersion students, it did offer a high percentage of time in French. Saint John reduced instructional time in French earlier than Moncton did, changing in Grade 3, but maintained higher levels of time in the target language in Grade 5. Saint John was also very consistent in its program until the last two school years presented when it changed the percentage of time in French for all grades two years in a row. It also saw the reduction of time on task across all grades in 1991-1992.

Fredericton experienced constant change throughout these years. The capital city of New Brunswick had a relatively high population of FI students, it saw the greatest reduction in dedicated time for its immersion programs, with whole years being cut toward the end of the decade. Fredericton started 1982 with the most “time on task” in
French amongst all grade levels: 100% in French from Grade 1-3 and then 88% in French until Grade 5. Fredericton’s program experienced constant changes however, and ended the decade with immersion starting only in Grade 4, with 90% time in French. 90% time in French would be high for a Grade 4 class that had been taking French immersion since Grade 1, however, it is the lowest level for an elementary entry point. It is noteworthy that the three largest cities are located in regions with the strongest immersion programs, at least in terms of time on task. The cities had time to build up a critical mass of student enrollment to ensure the program would have enough student demand to be stable. With the exception of Fredericton, the cities were also very stable in terms of the structure offered, again likely due to the large amounts of students in immersion throughout the city.

Newcastle and Grand Falls, both of which were much smaller population centres, experienced the most change. While Moncton had 22.5129 Grade 1 classes in 1991-1992, Newcastle had two, and Grand Falls had one. Although both Newcastle and Grand Falls saw the growth of their immersion programs, they maintained smaller student populations than the larger cities. Rural districts also did not have the same populations of teachers as larger districts, making it more challenging to guarantee access to specialists such as music or gym teachers, and even more challenging to have access to such specialists who spoke French.

Instruction time in French for middle year students across the province varied widely. In the 1982-1983 school year, late immersion students entering Grade seven in

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129 0.5 indicates a split class.
the 13 districts that offered the late entry program could receive as much as 80% of their instructional time in French, the case in seven of the districts offering late immersion, or as little as 60% of their time in French in Minto. All districts together averaged 76% time spent in French. For students entering Grade seven after an early immersion program, they could receive as much as 75% of their instructional time in French in Saint John or as little as 33.3% in Petitcodiac. The amount of time in French varied, but does demonstrate a rural/urban split. The biggest difference between urban and rural centres is the stability of FI programs’ structures. Urban centres such as Moncton and Saint John maintained a consistent amount of time in French throughout the period covered. Fredericton was a slight outlier from other urban centres as it fluctuated time in French while the other two cities did not.

The variation experienced in the middle years of the program was in contrast to the early year programs. While early years were often the most regimented in terms of instructional time in French, there was less consistency moving into middle years. Rural areas experienced the widest disparity of time in French. The following table captures data concerning the middle year programs in New Brunswick districts offering Grade seven immersion from six separate school years spanning nearly a decade. The information is drawn from the averages of time spent in French at each school and each class offering Grade seven, expressed in percentage and separated by entry point. As shown, it was fairly common to see differences in time spent in French within a district. Occasionally, there were differences within a single school. Comparison within a district shows change and continuity over time, comparison within a year shows change and continuity over regions.
The above table includes information that presents both immersion streams, all districts offering immersion and a decade of school years. Immediately apparent is the variation of Grade seven immersion; few areas maintain a consistent amount of time

131 “E” represents early immersion and “L” represents late immersion. Asterisks represent where there were inconsistent percentages from within one district and the numbers were averaged. Dashes are used when there was no Grade 7 immersion.
in French and those amounts vary greatly area to area. Following the enrollments and time in French for Grade 7, for instance, we observe how inconsistently French immersion was carried through into the middle years of schooling. With few exceptions, Grade seven was the entry point into late immersion. Yet, comparing the data from the above table with what we know about early immersion statistics, it is evident that early immersion students benefitted from fairly consistent time in French and late immersion students did not. The three main cities showed 80% of time spent in French for late immersion students, likely a reflection of the variety of optional courses middle level students followed. 80% of instructional time in French would allow, roughly, for all classes in French except English Language Arts. However, late immersion students in Rexton in 1991-1992 would only have been receiving 34% of their day in French. While the difference between receiving 80% and 75% instruction in French is less significant, reducing time in the target language by more than half for a group of students puts them at a disadvantage in terms of language acquisition.

From 1982 to 1992, rural students were more obviously disadvantaged. The students receiving only 40% instruction in French in late immersion in District 14 were the students attending school in Port Elgin, a rural community approximately 35 km from Sackville. Sackville was a small, mostly rural centre, but was a university town with many wealthy and educated parents. As a result they maintained a strong immersion program. Nackawic, also a rural community, experienced a reduction of time spent in French, down to 20% after four years. On the other hand, Newcastle

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132 Sackville had a Grade 5 entry point for several years.
experienced an increase of time in French of by 24% in a similar time frame. The interest in French immersion was present in rural communities, as expressed by consistent enrollments, however the program could not maintain stable program offering in rural areas across the province. Offering multiple entry points across New Brunswick allowed rural communities with limited resources the ability to choose a program that was most effective for them. However, they often were not able to consistently maintain the same amount of French instruction in that program. As a result, rural students were more likely to either have less time in French during the day, or a more uncertain program that could change from year to year. Rural areas were also much more likely to only have one entry point, not offering both late and early immersion, which meant that parents had fewer chances to opt into the program. Even in rural areas that were able to maintain a program, the programs were either limited or unstable when compared to urban districts. The stark disparity in access ran counter to the spirit of PEO, a flagship New Brunswick program of the era, which sought to reduce the unequal access to opportunities, including education opportunities, between urban and rural areas.

While rural French immersion programs struggled to meet the needs of their communities, some regions experienced challenges because they were both rural and culturally distinct areas. Northwestern New Brunswick is a region that is both culturally and demographically distinct when compared to other areas in the province. The mostly rural region is home to a large population of Francophones and Anglophones, many of whom are personally bilingual. The region witnessed tension over French immersion in these decades. For instance, in the early 1980s when the French immersion program began in one bilingual town, conflict emerged over ethno-linguistic lines. One
interviewee, a former student who was in the first immersion class in the town and another from a teacher who taught the same class, described how the rural school district did not meet the needs of the community. The town was home to many individuals who don’t fit neatly into the categories of completely Anglophone or completely Francophone. Identifying who was able to enter into immersion meant deciding which children were second language learners: a significant challenge in an area with many bilingual children.133 Both interview participants from the Northwestern town remain supportive of French immersion. Both also stressed that their town was bilingual and regional bilingualism affected how immersion functioned. Participant Three, who was a student in the first FI class, remembered tension when they started school: “there was a lot of polarity in the community between the English and the French, which has since dissipated. But at the time the Francophones in the area didn’t believe that children should go into immersion, they figured they should go into French or English and there should be no in between.”134 According to Participant Three, most children in early immersion classes had one Francophone parent and one Anglophone parent and as such felt they had a different relationship with language than children from a unilingual home. This was fairly common in the region. Participant Three remembered thinking as a child that “everyone was like us” and did not learn that bilingualism in the rest of New Brunswick was very different from the Northwest until visiting other cities and seeing how inflexible people were in their language, compared to their hometown. For similar

134 Participant Three, interview by author, Fredericton, August 8, 2018.
exogamous families, having access to education that felt like a linguistic compromise was a benefit of immersion.

Having a more complex clientele meant that classrooms in the Northwest were different than the demography in other New Brunswick classrooms. The fourth participant was a teacher in the first immersion class and carried on teaching for many years in the town. Participant Four, recalled that classrooms were full of students with some French already, and that “a lot of parents put [children] in immersion but they could already speak French.” These were children who grew up in a bilingual home. Participant Three remembers that there was a requirement that “you had to have one parent who was an Anglophone to qualify. […] I think it also depended on what language you spoke at home.” As above, the 1982 version of Policy 501 stipulated that the immersion program was intended for second language learners. However, the demographic reality of Northwestern New Brunswick made identifying which children should speak French or English much more challenging than elsewhere. The town where Participants Three and Four lived functioned bilingually and Participant Four described how cultural life for children involved moving between French and English. They explained, “[l]et’s say they would join gymnastics and the teacher was French teacher [sic], well the kid would learn how to speak French. But if they joined hockey and the hockey coach was English well they spoke English. It was not a cultural thing. Language was to communicate.” In a town where children were likely to have family

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135 Participant Four, interview by author, Fredericton, August 14, 2018.
136 Participant Three, interview by author, Fredericton, August 8, 2018.
137 Participant Four, interview by author, Fredericton, August 14, 2018.
members from both linguistic groups and have constant exposure to both languages, matching the child to one linguistic group could be difficult. Participant Four identifies as Francophone, but not Acadian, identifying more strongly with the region than any other cultural identity. Participant Three, on the other hand, identifies as bilingual and bicultural.

Cultural and linguistic hybridity fed into individual families’ education decisions. In their interview, Participant Three stressed that immersion was the educational option that best reflected their family, and their linguistic and cultural identity. They also stressed the human element of language and briefly mentioned enhanced employment options, but focused on language as a means of interaction.

Language acquisition is seen as a lifelong process, mainly to facilitate social connection: “you might see that someday I might meet a beautiful French man or French woman, you know that might come in handy at the hockey rink.” Connecting to a hypothetical, and very New Brunswick, love story, town residents explain the functionality of bilingualism is a form of community organisation. The idea of institutional bilingualism and personal bilingualism can be extended to include a community model of bilingualism. Community bilingualism was in no way factored into the policy decisions on immersion. In this region of New Brunswick, bilingualism inserts itself into the community identity, as well as its functional practices.

New Brunswick’s Northwest did not always experience unity on such issues. In District 50, based in Grand Falls, there was a legal challenge to the operational

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138 Participant Three, interview by author, Fredericton, August 8, 2018.
bilingualism of the region in the early 1980s. Despite the sentiment from many community members that French immersion provided a method of education that reflected the students’ linguistic and cultural identity, a court ruling in 1983 determined that parents had the right to place their children in Francophone or Anglophone schools if “the child has significant competence in the language of instruction in the school system selected for him or her.”139 This ruling attempted to provide a solution to the problem of having many students who are functional in both languages. However, it did not define “significant competence.” The Department of Education’s Annual Report issued for the year following also referenced the ruling on immersion, “There is no parental right to register a student who is ‘able to function’ in one language; this would be a breach of the student’s right to instruction within his means on the one hand, and, on the other, would run counter to Policy Statement No. 501, quoted above, and to plain common sense.”140

The Deputy Minister realised at the time that this “ruling is a significant one in the development of education in the province as it relates to the language of instruction.”141 The Minister did not assess the linguistic needs of communities when creating immersion, despite the promotion of immersion as a way to build bridges between linguistic communities. The system did not reflect the realities in the Northwest and through many years there were always students in French immersion who did not fit neatly into easily defined linguistic groups. Describing the actual makeup of immersion

140 New Brunswick, 132nd Annual Report, 5.
141 Ibid., 5.
classes, rather than the intended unilingual Anglophone population, Participant Four said: “I had about I would say one third completely English, one third bilingual… you know when I saw bilingual it might not have been perfect but bilingual, they could understand, and the other third, well my gosh they should have been in the French school but the parents wanted them there.”

The court ruling was thus designed to prevent students with any level of functional French from entering the Anglophone system; this made the French immersion program less able to respond to the needs to this community in Northwestern New Brunswick as opposed to a more Francophone community.

Although French immersion was designed to be a powerful tool for social inclusion, producing bilingual young people for no additional cost to families, in some parts of New Brunswick it fell short of the mark. This was despite the strong uptake overall in the province, which otherwise led the country in FI adoption. While the limitations of the program were often unintentional, they occurred and disproportionately affected rural New Brunswickers. French immersion began on a small scale, but needed a large reach to produce a significant number of bilingual citizens. Immersion grew consistently in its first decades and did spread rapidly outside of the major cities, but the spread was inconsistent in both the quality of the program offered and the distribution through the regions of the province.

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142 Participant Four, interview by author, Fredericton, August 14, 2018.
POLICY 501: THE IMMERSION POLICY

Policy 501 was essential to the spread and organisational structure of French immersion programs in New Brunswick. This policy followed the many educational reforms of the PEO. It highlighted, with more clarity in each version, how immersion should operate and be funded allowing for an attempt at standardisation. It was adopted in January of 1977 and it was updated often until the fourth version of the policy in April of 1983. Four updates to the policy in five years indicated a concentrated effort by the Department of Education to adapt policy to best fit the new program into the structures already present in New Brunswick. The Department of Education adopted the first Policy 501 as part of Section 6 of the Schools Act on January 6th, 1977. The three pages of legislation defines French immersion, the implementation of the programme, planning, financing, and evaluation. This policy came into place almost eight years after the first official French immersion class in New Brunswick began in Moncton and after many districts had begun implementing the program. In many ways, it was a reactive and descriptive document as well as a prescriptive document, as many districts were already operating French immersion programs prior to its adoption. Creating a clear vision of how immersion should be funded and organised meant that the Department of Education saw immersion as a long term program with the possibility to expand. Studying the earliest documents elucidates the goals and perceptions of the earliest program from the perception of the Department of Education. Immersion regulations were cobbled together from program structures that had been operating in some cities for the better part of a decade. Analysing the earliest version of Policy 501 alongside the French immersion statistics from 1976 until 1992, clarifies the relationship between
districts and the Department of Education in the period, one where immersion programs expanded in a variety of educational contexts within the province.

The early years of French immersion, the Department of Education redrew districts in line with the objectives of the PEO. As Viviane Edwards outlines, the province struggled to decide “how French is too French” over these years of early FI implementation. Writing close to the events, and observing them as coordinator of the second language branch of the department of education, Edwards describes difficulties in some regions, such as the complex and sometimes tense linguistic community in Grand Falls.143 Edwards argues “that language in New Brunswick is a continuum starting from unilingual English on one side and moving through various degrees of competency in French through bilingualism and then to unilingual French on the other side.”144 But in establishing this scale, she does not recognize the cultural element of bilingualism in New Brunswick, although she does discuss the complex linguistic situation of mixed couples who speak one or both languages to their children.

Nowhere in the policy documents is the term “French immersion” used. Although all immersion programs were French immersion, the Policy did not mandate French immersion, as long as the program referred to immersion education in an official language. Since Francophone education focused on language maintenance as a pillar of linguistic rights, “English immersion” has never existed in New Brunswick. Although Edwards discusses the policies, she does not thoroughly dissect how their wording

impacted the program. In 1977, Policy 501 defined immersion classes as “An alternate approach to learning the second official language, the Immersion programme is one which involves the use of the second official language as medium of instruction for all or any number of subjects other than the teaching of the mother tongue of the student.”\textsuperscript{145}

In fact, the most important section of the first Policy 501 is the unclear wording surrounding the implementation of programs. The sentence that sets out the guideline for implementation reads: “School districts may implement Immersion classes if a sufficient number of parents in the district request this type of education for their children.”\textsuperscript{146} In other words, this policy did not force school districts to adopt immersion classes under any circumstance. It stated that a district “may implement Immersion classes” but did not give parents who wanted access to immersion any legal footing to acquire it under the Schools Act. Districts had a way out of offering immersion because of the use of the term “sufficient,” a qualifier which does not specify exactly how many parents were needed to start a program. The 1977 policy was permissive of immersion, but it did not entitle parents to immersion education.

On July 1, 1980, the provincial government passed three significant changes to Policy 501 to clarify the program definitions and funding structure. The province outlined a clear funding structure, provided concrete definition of immersion including starting points, and most importantly, changed the wording surrounding implementation.

\textsuperscript{145} New Brunswick, Department of Education, \textit{The Immersion Policy (501)}, Fredericton, 1977, 1.  
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 2.
At this juncture, the Department of Education included clear definitions explaining that immersion has two streams, Early Immersion and Late Immersion. Early Immersion began in Grade one and Late Immersion began in Grade seven. The changes to these sections allowed for a more standardised version of immersion, which allowed the province more control over the program.

The funding structure called for a tiered system, separating districts who had more or fewer than 1000 immersion students. The weighting factor meant that one immersion student would count towards more per-student funding than one English-stream student for government spending. Districts with more than 1000 immersion students received a 0.06 weighting for all immersion students. This meant a slight increase in funding. However, the costs were shared with the federal government, which underwrote nine percent of per capita funding for students, while still allowing requests for more general funding to get programs started. The Department of Education divided funding in districts with fewer than 1000 immersion students. Higher levels of funding were available to districts where students spent over 60% of their instructional time in French and for the first 50 students enrolled in a district. Having a higher level of funding and an initial bump for the first students in a district helped small or rural districts better meet the needs of their students.

With this revision, the government made a significant change to the implementation process. The 1981 version of Policy 501 stipulated that “A school board


shall implement an Immersion programme when there is a sufficient interest to ensure that Immersion classes are of comparable size to other classes in the district at that level of instruction." More specific wording surrounding how many parents needed to express interest in immersion clarified, both for parent advocates and for the school districts, how much room they would have to forcefully advocate for their children’s access to immersion.

The lobbying of the Sackville chapter of Canadian Parents for French drove this change. In Sackville there was only one French immersion class per year prior to 1981, yet because there were many more parents interested in French immersion than there were spaces available, parents became dissatisfied that they could not freely enroll their children in the program. The situation in Sackville in the early 1980s was an early mention of disagreement with a lottery system, which severely limited families’ access to immersion. CPF members lobbied their school board in the first years of the decade, which did not accommodate their demands. They then began to protest and lobby Richard Hatfield’s provincial government. Eventually, they successfully lobbied the government to update Policy 501 to allow parents legal recourse if they wanted French immersion for their children. The new version also specified the number of students required for a program to run. For instance, if the parents of 30 students going into Grade 7 are interested in immersion, then that was enough to push the district to begin a program. In the case of 50 interested parents, the board would be required to

151 Ibid., 154-155.
make two classes. In the coming years, the Department of Education would continue to change the policy to better meet the needs of the New Brunswick education system and parental demands.

In 1981, the Department also amended Schools Act to limit school boards offering second language programs to non-native speakers, essentially meaning that Francophone students must have access to Francophone schools.152 And, the Department of Education updated Policy 501 again over 1982 and 1983. The 1982 version of Policy 501 redefined the goals for immersion: “to develop in pupils a high degree of proficiency in their second official language.”153 This version changed the structure for implementation again, adding that a district “shall implement an Immersion Program at one of the two entrance levels should such classes be possible. The board may implement Immersion Programs at both entrance levels (Year 1 and Year 7) […].”154 Over the 1982-1983 school year, of the 17 districts offering immersion, nine offered only one entry point.155 This update still forced school boards to implement immersion, but it did not force them to implement both early and late immersion programs.

In this way, the evolution of Policy 501 highlights both the evolution of French immersion in New Brunswick and reveals the ways the government reacted to a heterogeneous educational landscape. The earliest version of the policy showed the

154 Ibid., 2.
Department of Education’s attempt to bring some regulation into an unregulated program. The previous iterations of Policy 501 showed attempts to bring additional specificity, to define key terms, and to clearly lay out funding structures. While this policy was not the only force shaping immersion, its variation showed the government response to a popular, expanding program.

The growing demand for French immersion in 1970s and 1980s reflected a changing language landscape in New Brunswick. New Brunswick was both particularly engaged in its adoption of bilingualism, and a leader in the Canadian context. New Brunswick also distinguished itself from other Maritime Provinces, such as Nova Scotia, with regards to its early and strong commitment to French language education. Nova Scotia, though a populous province, did not have an immersion program until seven years after New Brunswick began. By the time there was one program in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick had ten. Anglophone New Brunswickers were searching for a solution to the perceived bilingualism problem, and many believed that French immersion was a large part of the solution.

“ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES”: FRENCH IMMERSION AND THE LOTTERY SYSTEM

French immersion was a publicly-funded program inside of the public school system. It was theoretically open to any family seeking language education for their child. However, some families’ access relied on sheer chance. In a situation where many

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parents wanted to enroll their children in FI, but only a set number of classes were available, some districts used a lottery system to determine who would and would not access the program. Parents who were interested in placing their child in immersion would put their name on a list that would be collected by the school or district and a class would be composed at random by lottery, whose method changed from place to place. In 1970, during his last year in office, Louis Robichaud’s government introduced a small change to the Schools Act allowing districts to place students in classrooms and schools judged most appropriate. While this was most applicable to students with divergent needs, who were often in special education programs, this policy placed the lottery systems well within the powers of school districts to deploy in the case of FI.

In 1982, the Department of Education issued a document explaining how students could be selected for local programs. Though FI had been present in the provincial school system for 13 years by this time, the document provided guidelines for how districts should accommodate high demands for French immersion that outmatched seats available. This meant that, for over a decade, school boards had been left to their own devices to decide how immersion classes would be formed. For early immersion, the policy cautioned against using “a selection of students based on intellectual capacity,” however when addressing the late entry point, if an underperforming child “requests admission to an immersion class, a conference between the teacher, the principal, the parents and the child should be held at which time the child’s past

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158 Stanley, Louis Robichaud, 204.
performance is discussed and the concerns of the teacher are presented.”¹⁶⁰ Despite advising against using intellectual or scholarly achievement to determine the early entry, late entry implicitly suggested the opposite. Policymakers agreed that the ultimate decision to enroll students should remain in the hands of the parents. Yet, the final section of the guidelines explain: “If the numbers still exceed an acceptable class size, district authorities are then advised to reduce numbers through a random selection of students.”¹⁶¹ Randomisation did not privilege certain students over others based on ability, but it did create a restricted program in a public system. This is not exactly “leaving it up to parents.”

For these interconnected reasons, the goals of the Program for Equal Opportunity were inconsistent with the provincial programs for FI, and by extension, the bilingual agenda of the Robichaud government. Such goals could never be achieved by an education system that randomly selected or denied students the opportunity to access an enriching curriculum. French immersion, which grew exponentially as the PEO rolled out, simply did not meet the goal of provincial equality of access. There was no provincial directive to implement a lottery system, instead, it was implemented in some districts but not in others. Due to how unevenly the process was used, it is still difficult to determine precisely how widespread its use was. But it was widespread enough to disadvantage some rural students in several regions of the province.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.
¹⁶¹ New Brunswick, Department of Education, Guidelines: Selection of Students for Immersion Classes.
The Department of Education did not mandate the lottery system for all districts, only permitted the system for districts that chose it. The Department did not record the extent of the lottery system’s application. For this reason, interviews provide additional insight into the lottery system. One interviewee, who was enrolled in the immersion program as a child in a suburban area outside of a major city in New Brunswick, was chosen to participate in the program and stressed throughout their interview that they felt “lucky” but also felt disapproval at how the selection process for the program operated. They were in a district where interested parents put their names into a lottery and then a class was composed of the winners. As Participant Five recalled:

Well for myself in the lottery system I had no idea being as young as I was at that- I guess what was going on even in hindsight I feel lucky. I was lucky that my name was drawn. […] I don’t know if it was the best way to do it in a way and the fact that it’s only offered at certain schools or certain zones […].

The interviewee grew up in a culturally heterogeneous family where they were exposed to two languages and two language cultures before learning French. They repeated how lucky they felt to have been chosen for the program following each question relating to the lottery system. They also stated that their siblings were not subject to the lottery system because the family moved to a district without such a system. On the other hand, Participants One and Two, who are a married couple, enrolled their child in immersion in another major city in the 1970s did not recall any barrier to entry, such as a lottery

162 Participant Five, interview by author, Fredericton, August 8, 2018.
The system was regional, but where it existed, it delimited access to FI significantly.

The historical record of the lottery system in New Brunswick is limited; because it was not used uniformly across the province, the exact method deployed for each district is unclear. I learned of the policy only after discussing it with an interviewee who had experienced it as a child. Yet, the process of choosing candidates for immersion through a lottery system seems to have been common in places across Canada where the demand for the program could not be met in the district. This was often the case in the Greater Toronto area. Stories from other parts of Canada are fairly common, where a low supply of immersion teachers limited access. Yet, the lottery system of access to French immersion has not be studied as a historical barrier to FI access in any Canadian context.

Northwestern New Brunswick, the rural gap, and the lottery system illustrate how different the experience in immersion was depending on where families lived. There was no one experience of French immersion in New Brunswick, as there is no one bilingualism in New Brunswick. The regional variation across the province forces a nuanced and detailed approach to second language learning efforts. Equality of access to language education gives all children the option to develop language skills that allow them to participate more fully in a bilingual country, and certainly in the bilingual province of New Brunswick. Whether we adopt a national or provincial lens, French

163 Participants One and Two, interview by author, Fredericton, July 30, 2017.
immersion was the clearest path to bilingualism for Anglophones and should not have been limited to Anglophones of a specific region.

CONCLUSION

When French immersion came to New Brunswick in 1969, it coincided with essential changes to both the national and provincial goals for bilingualism. The provincial climate was receptive to a program that would build up personal bilingualism to meet the challenges of institutional bilingualism. In New Brunswick, the context of Equal Opportunity welcomed an opportunity to create high numbers of individuals conversant, and fluent, in both French and English.

The political and social context just prior to, and surrounding, the expansion of immersion was one of both official bilingualism and personal bilingualism. Official bilingualism helped to create a climate of valorisation for Anglophones who learned French. Many unilingual Anglophones would begin learning French or send their children to learn French in the decades to follow. The Official Languages Act created an essential ally of the immersion system while the Commissioner of Official Languages would secure funding for early programs. Canadian Parents for French would use this office to appeal on behalf of immersion programs and to encourage federal funding for education, a provincial dossier.

This report also highlights the expedient way New Brunswick adopted French immersion, and the indissoluble link between provincial politics and program implementation. Official bilingualism in New Brunswick was part of the massive
reforms of the Program of Equal Opportunity, a program that coincided with the implementation of French immersion. The popularity of FI in the province reflected the rapid evolution of New Brunswick as a bilingual province; French immersion would shape education in New Brunswick for years. Unlike the Program for Equal Opportunity, the government did not initially push immersion. FI enthusiasm and program expansion was driven by interested parents and programming was not regulated until 1977, years after the first program began in 1969. Attempts to prescribe what the program should be encountered many difficulties regarding what parents were entitled to, and who the clientele of immersion should be.

Regionally, French immersion access and time in French programming was inconsistent. Many areas did not have programs, or when they did they were less stable. Many rural regions did not have both early and late programs and did not have a consistent program year to year. Despite the efforts to centralise the program with Policy 501, and the eventual implementation of a curriculum, programs could have vastly different amounts of instructional time spent in French. Although the PEO evened much of the overall disparity in access to provincial services between rural and urban regions, French immersion was an outlier. Many New Brunswickers faced limitations when trying to enroll their children in the program. A variety of communities with complex language identities and rural areas experienced limitations as a result of an incompatibility between immersion and the linguistic complexity of New Brunswick. The many experiences of immersion, captured in oral interviews, reflect the strong regional sensibility of the province. This section presented the essential case studies of Northwestern New Brunswick and the lottery system of enrollment. Both of which
represent strong inconsistencies between the spirit of the Program Equal Opportunity that surrounded immersion and the actual program.

There is much scope for future research on French immersion, both in New Brunswick and elsewhere in Canada, especially in other areas of the country where cultural bilingualism co-existed with a desire to improve personal bilingualism. New Brunswick’s Northwest integrated a casual bilingualism into the lives of residents, but was one form of bilingualism among many others. Bilingualism in New Brunswick was, and is, heterogeneous. Basing conceptions of bilingualism on the experiences of Francophones who are bilingual, often by necessity, is important, but does not include multilinguals, bilinguals who speak English or French and another language, bilingual individuals who speak very little or understand some of another language, and individuals who have lost their second language. This conception of linguistic diversity is more modern and more representative of the actual linguistic makeup of Canada. The historical analysis of immersion must be reflective of the linguistic complexity that has always existed to better inform the discussion of multilingualism.

In the last few questions of each interview, I asked each participant where they thought the next 50 years of immersion and bilingualism will go. Their answers were varied, but tended towards increased inclusivity in bilingualism. One participant stated in the New Brunswick context that “culture evolves so bilingualism needs to evolve.” Bilingualism in New Brunswick began opening itself up to many Anglophones with the expansion of immersion, and with an increased learner population, not only does the

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165 Participant Five, interview by author, Fredericton, August 8, 2018.
French immersion program look different in terms of scale and reach of the program, but so do the bilingual individuals it turns out as the New Brunswick student population becomes more diverse. One participant, who is also now an immersion teacher, agrees, “I think we’ve gotta [sic] continue going down the same road. I think we have to, I think we need to be more gentle in our approach, more respectful in our approach, less militant and more conciliatory, this is our province we are a bilingual province but we are also a multicultural province.” With this participant’s vision of immersion, the program becomes changeable, dynamic, and adaptable to the current climate of the province.

Bilingualism is an essential piece of New Brunswick’s social and political fabric. Policy decisions affecting schools have a generational effect, influencing the parents, their children, and then their children’s children later on when each makes school choices. By examining the social implications of French immersion in New Brunswick my work sheds light on the linguistic relationships of power that still exist in New Brunswick today. It is important to trace the genesis of a program that is, deeply linked to the student experience. New Brunswick public schools continue to produce citizens with often fierce opinions on French immersion and linguistic duality in Canada’s only officially bilingual province. Immersion is essential in scaffolding the evolving practices of official bilingualism. Whether or not each New Brunswicker is bilingual, New Brunswick is.

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166 Participant Three, interview by author, Fredericton, August 8, 2018.
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Participant Four. Interview by Gabrielle Rogers, Fredericton, New Brunswick, August 14, 2018.

Participant Five. Interview by Gabrielle Rogers, Fredericton, New Brunswick, August 8, 2018.


**Secondary Sources – Books and Theses**


**Secondary Sources - Articles**


Ellis, Jason and Paul Axelrod. “Continuity and Change in Special Education Policy Development in Toronto Public Schools, 1945 to the present.” *Teachers College Record* 118, no. 2 (February, 2016): 1-42.


**Secondary Sources - Media**


APPENDIX I
Interview Guide

- Describe your relationship to language. For example, languages spoken at home, languages your parents speak but were not transmitted.
- Describe the French Immersion you or your child participated in, ie. Early, late, mixed.
- Why did you or your child enter into the program?
- What were the requirements or process to enter? For example: ability test, lottery draw
- How did you or your child feel about French Immersion upon entering the program?
  - Why did you or your child choose to continue in the program?
- Do you remember how French Immersion was perceived when you or your child began in the program?
  - Do you feel that perception has changed?
- What do you think the missions of early FI programs were?
  - Did you feel the missions were accomplished?
- What did you know about the state of bilingualism and/or multiculturalism in New Brunswick and/or Canada when you or your child began in the program?
- Did you or would you put your children into French Immersion after experiencing the program?
- What do you think the long term effects of French Immersion are on your own bilingualism?
- Do you think French Immersion was more or less important in New Brunswick? Why?
I am a current Master’s of Arts candidate in History at the University of New Brunswick studying early French Immersion in New Brunswick. My research focuses on the disparity in access to the program, bilingualism in New Brunswick within the wider Canadian context of multiculturalism, and the development of the French Immersion program. I am a current teacher in Anglophone West School District and went through French Immersion as a student myself. My aim is to further understand the historical significance of the program through a variety lenses.

You are invited to participate in an interview that I will use to further my research. The interview will be either over the phone, Skype, or in person. If you consent to being recorded I will record, if not I will take notes. I will ask questions relating to your experience with French Immersion and ask broader questions about your experiences within the context of New Brunswick bilingualism. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. You may end the interview at any time for any reason. You may withdraw your interview from my research. I will aim to publish my research. Your name will not appear in any published material. I will not include information such as the names of schools attended or information that would directly identify you or your children, if applicable. You will not be paid for your participation as this research is not funded by the University of New Brunswick or other organisation.

If you consent to participate at this time to an interview for this purposes outlined above, please sign and date below. If you consent to participating please email me a signed copy of the form at grogers@unb.ca or call me at 506-232-3455 to arrange an alternate method of returning the form.

This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board of the University of New Brunswick and is on file as REB 2018-097. This project is being supervised by Dr. Sasha Mullally (sasham@unb.ca). Questions or concerns can be addressed to myself, Dr. Mullally, or Dr. Steven Turner, Chair of the UNBF Research Ethics Board (turner@unb.ca).

Gabrielle Rogers,

MA Candidate

University of New Brunswick
Name of participant: ________________________________
Signature: ________________________________
Date: ________________________________
APPENDIX III
CURRICULUM VITAE

Gabrielle Rogers

Education

Publications
None

Conference Presentations