



CPF-British Columbia & Yukon

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Stronger Together

By Glyn Lewis Chapter Support and Community Outreach Officer

Last August the British Columbia Government eliminated the \$110 million Annual Facilities Grant (AFG), a financial envelope which had been distributed to school districts for capital expenses. This loss of funding, as well as other downloaded education costs such as negotiated wage increases, had placed a significant financial burden on school districts across the province. Because of this, districts were left scrambling to find cost cutting measures that would result in balanced budgets for the 2010 – 2011 school year. In an effort to cut costs, a number of school districts began looking at consolidating French immersion programs. In one school district, SD#27 Cariboo-Chilcotin, the administration went so far as to propose a budget that would see the entire French immersion program eliminated.

In response, the BC School Trustees Association, the BC Language

Coordinators Association, the BC Teacher's Federation and others voiced grave concerns over the impact of these cuts. Canadian Parents for French – BC & Yukon, joined by some of these stakeholders, launched a campaign calling on the provincial government to re-instate the \$110 million AFG.

In communities from Nanaimo to Prince George, French second language parent volunteers got organized and began writing letters and making phone calls to their local Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). The message was clear and targeted: the Annual Facilities Grant cut is hurting the quality and accessibility of educational programming in our province. It was clear that parent volunteers at the community level were flexing their civic muscle. The Branch followed up with a joint media

release which was carbon copied to the Ministry of Education.

On Tuesday, March 2nd, the provincial government presented its 2010-2011 budget, which included the re-instatement of the AFG through March 2011. CPF BC & Yukon is optimistic that this re-instated funding will alleviate some of the budget shortfall pressures, which nearly all districts are experiencing.

This challenging episode was a valuable reminder that French immersion is not considered a core educational service and that it is incumbent on Canadian Parents for French BC & Yukon to continually ensure there is appropriate pressure on local decision makers to provide all students equitable access to quality educational programming in both of our Official Languages.



Glyn Lewis on the front lines, organizing.

Thank You for the Opportunity

"CPF is an example of the unique citizen participation that makes Canada work."

– John Ralston Saul

After nearly two years with the Canadian Parents for French - BC & Yukon Branch, I am sad to announce that I will be leaving the organization to pursue post-graduate studies and travel opportunities.

When my parents registered me (against my will, I might add) in the Late French Immersion in Burnaby 15 years ago, I never imagined that I would one day find myself advocating

for other students to have those same French language opportunities. I feel greatly indebted to my parents, and to all of you, for providing me with the opportunity to support laudable community-based French second language organizing efforts.

At every CPF Chapter meeting, I have found myself in awe by dedicated parent volunteers who are willing to commit their free time to supporting quality and accessible second language learning opportunities for all young students. At every school trustee meeting where 40, 50, or even 100

Continued on page 2

Stronger Together *continued*

parents were in attendance to support the creation of a new French immersion program or the preservation of an existing program, I have found myself inspired by citizens who believe in their power to create positive change in their community. This has been incredible journey for me, and a once in a lifetime learning experience about who we are as Canadians.

I would also like to express a special thank you to the chapter

volunteers, the Branch Board of Directors, and the incredible staff, past and present, here in the office: Nancy Taylor, Robert Rothon, Dimitry Morales, Erika Rosales, and Robin Steudel.

Thank you all for everything you do to support a more bilingual, a more understanding, and a more united Canada.

À la prochaine,
Glyn Lewis

Rebates and Related News

CPF has been very lucky compared to other organisations in maintaining its funding at a time where governments are running deficits and looking to save through program cuts. Lucky but not scot-free. Our 2009 annual report stated that while the new Official Languages in Education Protocol (OLEP) between British Columbia and Canadian Heritage, effective August 2009, renewed CPF-BC & Yukon's socio-cultural funding (\$380,000) until 2013, it also eliminated the annual \$65,000 grant under the previous OLEP to promote French immersion. In practical terms, this meant having to find new ways of paying for member outreach and support as of March 2010.

One way was to lower costs, which we have done in this year's budgetary exercise. Another was to restructure the position, which we have done as well. A third way would have been to increase overall revenues by decreasing BC & Yukon membership rebates from their current level of 80% to the national average of 65%. After much discussion, it was decided to maintain rebates at 80% throughout the year, including the fall membership drive when, taking last year as an example, 50% of our members joined or renewed. The membership drive will continue to feature great prizes as recruitment inducements.

Speaking of rebates, from now on, CPF membership fees collected from School District #93 parents will come back to Chapters as rebates. SD#93 is the Francophone School District, the only one with a BC-wide mandate under which it operates 38 regional schools. In the past, 90% of the membership fees collected from SD#93 parents went to the Branch, which in turn dedicated the money to partner support. This year, after noticing a substantial increase in SD#93 memberships, we decided it was only fair to allocate these membership rebates to CPF Chapters where a SD#93 school is located, a common practice in other CPF Branches. This, we hope, will result in closer partnerships between French Second Language and French First Language school communities.

Incidentally, did you know that SD#93 has its own parent-led organization? It is called the *Fédération de parents francophones de la Colombie-Britannique*, and its local parent committees function like a cross between a PAC and a CPF Chapter. Chapters with SD#93 schools in their area will want to be mindful of its existence when actively recruiting new members in their community or communities.

CPF-BC & Yukon 2009-2010

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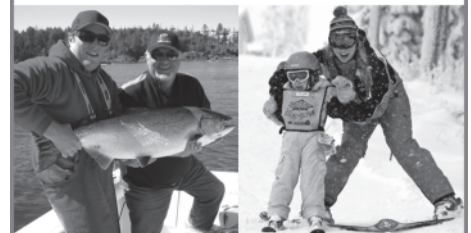
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Your Board@Work

By some standards, CPF is a big organisation. Certainly, it has a substantial national membership (approximately 25,000), with our Branch accounting for over a third of it. Because these numbers are so large, and our annual BC-Yukon annual membership drives so successful, we may be tempted to take for granted the value of a CPF membership.

We shouldn't.

A CPF membership is valuable because it gives members:

1. Access to information highlighting French Second Language (FSL) opportunities;
2. Financial support through Chapter rebates (80%) and socio-cultural and other funds for Chapter and Branch initiatives that create local FSL social, cultural, and academic opportunities; and
3. Support of regional, provincial, and national advocacy for accessible, quality French second language learning opportunities.

Practically speaking, this means Concours, family french camps, tutoring services, film nights, travel subsidies, Carnaval, Bilingualism Rocks! and a host of other socio-cultural activities. It means the highest membership rebates in the country. It means Branch staff helping members with local advocacy initiatives through person-to-person support, tools like

petition forms and letter templates, and on the ground strategies and tactics. It means your Board meeting with Federal and BC ministers and senior staff for advocacy purposes. It means the best CPF website in the country, Chapter, Branch and National newsletters, an electronic Chapter Representative Update (CRU), and much, much more.

A CPF membership puts you in contact with like-minded people in your community, across BC & Yukon and throughout the country. By telephone and email, in online forums, at face-to-face meetings including Branch and National annual general meetings, CPF members share experiences, give and obtain support or simply enjoy realizing there are people like you who also believe in investing in their children's future by supporting one of the best school programs ever devised in Canada.

For these reasons, your Board – who, like you, are CPF parents or French immersion graduates – works hard to ensure that the value of a CPF membership never decreases. Among other measures, we have asked staff to make a greater effort to communicate to the membership our successful advocacy initiatives for quality and accessible FSL opportunities at a district, provincial and national levels – after all, these are the results of your financial and moral support.

One of the things the Branch Board – or the board of any organisation, for that matter - can do to add value is to improve governance. So, in March we undertook a review of our bylaws. Many of you may remember that in 2008, at the request of the National Board of Directors of CPF, the BC & Yukon Branch adopted the national bylaws as its own. After living with them for a while, we began to see the need to bring them in line with our provincial Societies Act, to adapt them to the realities of large and small chapters alike, and to make them available in clearer, more user-friendly language. Finally, having changed one bylaw last year, we wanted to avoid a piecemeal approach and present the membership with a new set by the next AGM. We hope that the results will exceed everyone's expectations.

Finally, the Board can only be as good as the membership wants it to be. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you'll see a call for Board nominations. There will be considerable Board turnover this year, so please consider applying. The BC & Yukon Branch needs the skills, talents and passion for FSL learning opportunities for children that you already bring to your Chapter. In the meantime, we thank you for your support, and wish you and your families a satisfying end to the school year and a wonderful summer.

– Debra Pool

ERRATUM



In our previous newsletter, we featured an article in French by Isabelle Côté on early second language learning, translated by Elizabeth Barbeau. Despite our best efforts at proofing, we overlooked an inaccuracy in the original text (corrected in the translation) concerning the *Pomme d'Api* preschool. It is not, as readers Abbey Westbury and Susan Ankeman quickly wrote us to point out, the only French immersion preschool in Vancouver. Our apologies for this mistake. We direct readers to the CPF website where a list of French language preschools is available: <http://bit.ly/frenchpreschool>

All day Kindergarten

By Robert Rotheron, Executive Director, Canadian Parents for French, BC & Yukon Branch

"I was thrilled to be on the ground floor of such an exciting program."

Christianne O'Brien,
Pioneering Vancouver French
Immersion Kindergarten Teacher

British Columbia is implementing all-day kindergarten this coming school year and the next. While it is too early to tell what impact it will have on French Second Language (FSL) programs – French immersion (FI) in particular – the fact that it is a key element in the provincial government's overall early childhood development strategy certainly warrants our interest. We begin with a bit of history by presenting an interview with Christianne O'Brien, who taught Vancouver's first Early French immersion (EFI) kindergarten class in 1973. Born and raised in the French speaking part of Switzerland where she did her studies, specializing in early childhood education, Christianne taught at Vancouver's École Bilingue for 14 years before transferring to the West Vancouver School Board, where she presently teaches all-day kindergarten.

Q *Do you know why the Vancouver School Board decided to open an EFI kindergarten?*

I believe that it was in response to parent's demands and lobbying that the VSB decided to open their first classes of EFI in September 1973. Also, the newly appointed superintendent was from Québec and probably keen to implement the program in Vancouver. The political climate played, I think, an important role as well, not forgetting the popularity of Pierre Trudeau at the time.

I had been teaching French in private schools in Vancouver, and that's probably where I heard about this new program. So, in the spring of '73, I applied for the job, and was asked to take the responsibility of "Head Teacher". Organisation, location and resources were pretty much in place on

opening day. We also had the help of a coordinator of modern languages at the school board office.

Q *What was your reaction to being hired for this new endeavour?*

I was thrilled to be on the ground floor of such an exciting program. Obviously, it would be a challenge, as we did not have experience in that domain. Coming from Switzerland where we have four national languages and where everyone is bilingual, so to speak, this initiative did not particularly surprise me. But as an educator, and although I knew the benefits of teaching a new language to five year olds, Immersion was something completely new to me.

Q *How many children did you have in the first year of the program?*

I was hired for the kindergarten classes, 30 students in the morning and 30 in the afternoon!! In addition, two teachers were hired for the grade one EFI classes, 30 students in each also. All classes were housed at the McKecknie Annex in South Grandville as a one-track FI school. The principal of McKecknie was in charge of our program and regularly spent time on site. We also had a great and experienced secretary that was a fantastic administrator's assistant. We grew there until we reached grade three, if my memory is correct, and then transferred to what is now L'École Bilingue.

I do not have any specific memories of the first day, but I do remember spending many hours in August, with my new colleagues, making the classes and the school attractive and welcoming.

Q *Where did you find the French language resources needed for your classes? Did you have to improvise any?*

The modern languages coordinator from the board was most helpful in finding resources and inviting key educators such as Mrs Prefontaine, author of the "le sablier" method of reading readiness,

for professional development. Also, we were able to stay in close contact with coordinators and colleagues from the Coquitlam school board, where French Immersion had started before us. And yes, we spent many hours in the first years creating materials and finding new resources.

Q *Based on your practical experience in the classroom, what are your thoughts on all-day kindergarten?*

There is no doubt in my mind that all-day kindergarten in FI will give the students great benefits. With the ever growing demand of our curriculum, that extension of time spent in school gives these five year olds a chance to experiment and digest what has been taught in the morning. It will provide them with the opportunity to experiment and learn through exploration and play. In FI, the children will have the chance to hear the language and communicate with the adult in a more relaxed and playful manner. For the teacher, it is the perfect opportunity to live the language with the children as they set the tables for lunch, choose an activity or share a book and grow with stimulation. There is no doubt that the afternoon has to be structured. Structure and routines give students the security they do not find in the language.

We do tend to hurry our young students and ask them to endlessly "perform". It is through guided playing that the children will make connections between school activities and real life situations.

Q *Do you have any last thoughts to share with our readers?*

Now, in the eve of my career and at the door to my retirement, I feel proud of the success FI is enjoying in BC and the advantages we are able to give students to be bilingual citizens. Much of the credit has to be given to CPF for their ongoing support.

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Profiles in Education Reporting

Niki Hope, reporter with
The Record of New Westminster

By Robert Rothon, Executive Director, Canadian Parents for French, BC & Yukon Branch

Everyone has strong views on education, a reflection no doubt of the importance we place on children and on the quality of education to which we believe they are entitled. One forum for individuals – teachers, parents, trustees and educators – to express themselves is *The Time Out Corner*, a blog hosted by Niki Hope, education reporter for New Westminster's *The Record*. In our ongoing series of interviews with education reporters working in BC and the Yukon, we put the following questions to Ms Hope.

Q Tell us a bit about your background and how it led you to writing about '... education, parenting a toddler and any other relative topic that can manage to muster its way in-between,' as stated on your blog heading.

I cover education for *The Record*, so writing a blog that focuses on education made sense. As for the parenting part, I am the mother of a three-year-old, so I thought that experience might lend itself to the topic of parenting.

As for what can muster its way in-between, frankly, not much has.

In fact, the New West education beat is hearty enough to hold the bulk of my attention. I rarely get a chance to write anything on my blog that isn't education-specific. In terms of my career, during journalism school I landed an internship at the *North Shore News* in 2003 and never left. I was a general-assignment reporter for about four years at the *News* before I made the move to *The Record* in 2007.



The **Time Out Corner** may be found at:

<http://communities.canada.com/VANNET/blogs/timeoutcorner/default.aspx>

Q How long have you been writing your blog?

I've been writing the blog since September 2008. It was *The Record* editor who "suggested" we start blogs. It was something I avoided for as long as possible, but, to my surprise, I actually enjoy hosting the blog.

Q What is the relationship between your blog and the hard copy edition of *The Record* in terms of content and readership?

There is a strong relationship, I would say. For example, even today someone left a comment on my blog about a story I wrote for the paper. Also, I sometimes grab story ideas from comments, though I still follow up on the information the way I would with any tip.

Q How would you qualify your relationship with people who comment on your blog?

Interesting question...My editor, Pat Tracy, calls the blogs a "conversation," and I would say this pretty much sums up my relationship with those who comment. I could go on and on about comments because there has been a number of issues – specifically the question of anonymity and whether it breeds nastiness (yes, it does). I will say this: I definitely enjoy reading the majority of the comments (even those I disagree with).

Q What issues have dominated your blog? Are there any that regularly elicit a strong reader response?

The stories that seem to garner the strongest response usually have something to do with the school district's capital project – a plan to build three new schools in New Westminster, including an elementary school, middle school and high school. Since 2003, the district has been trying to get the high school built. The latest hurdle is due to the fact that the high school was built over an old cemetery. It's a complicated and fascinating story, but the basic just of it is that the construction of a replacement high school is on hold until the school district determines where it can build the school.

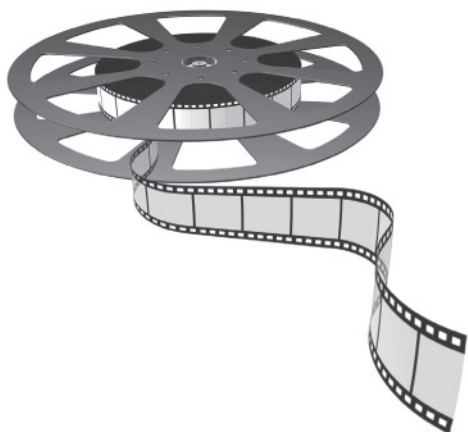
Q Based on your postings and the comments they attract, what would you say is the state of French Second Language learning programs in New Westminster?

There seems to be a strong demand for French immersion programs in New Westminster. I can't say I've heard much dissent from local parents about the French language programs themselves.

Q Any last thoughts to share with our readers?

In terms of the blog, I will say that I've been surprised at how much I enjoy hosting it, and that's mainly because of the sustained interest from the community, which I appreciate.

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Canadian Parents for French BC & Yukon Branch is seeking interested and enthusiastic CPF members to join our Branch Board of Directors. Directors are elected for either one or two-year terms and are responsible for supporting the organization's strategic goals and objectives.

Board Director positions are voluntary and travel is required. Reasonable travel expenses are reimbursed. The Board of Directors meets in person at least four times a year; other meetings occur by teleconference.

You may nominate yourself or someone you know, with their permission.
All candidates must apply by sending a cover letter and résumé to:



Brittany Harris bharris@cpf.bc.ca

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#623 – 409 Granville St.,
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Deadline for applications is 31 May 2010.

I would consider being on the Board

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Second shot at French

By Robert Rotheron, Executive Director, Canadian Parents for French, BC & Yukon Branch

People call the CPF-BC & Yukon Branch office every day with requests: where can they find a French tutor for their child; do we have any research on French immersion and special needs; how do I register my child in French immersion; what do we think of Mandarin immersion (almost always a reporter, this one.) Staff does its best to answer, and generally does a pretty good job of it. But a telephone call from Chilliwack Times reporter Cornelia Naylor some weeks ago really threw us for a loop. Could we comment, she wanted to know, on the school district's new introductory grade 11 French course? No we could not, we answered, because this was the first time we had heard about it. She obligingly explained that the department head of international studies at Chilliwack Secondary, Kevin Sigaty, had obtained permission to from the School District for a new French course designed for students who dropped French in their early years - a sort of second shot at French. Her article appeared a few days later (<http://www2.canada.com/chilliwacktimes/news/story.html?id=fa823ed7-7f0d-466d-99e5-cda66bfda372>) and on the strength of it, we decided to interview Kevin Sigaty.

Q Can you describe the course and its purpose?

Introductory French is a course intended for senior students who have not taken French in Middle School. Students attending our 7-9 middle schools have many elective choices in grade 8 and 9. In fact, our largest feeder school also offers Spanish as an elective. Many students opt not to take French 9 and discover only later that they will need French for a future post-secondary program or career. Some also come to view learning French as interesting and fun only after having abandoned it in middle school. Introductory French will provide these students with an opportunity for a second chance after having made the tragic mistake of dropping French in middle school.

Q What prompted you to conceive this course?

Mostly student demand. I have had many students over the years ask to take French 10 from me even though they had never taken French 8 or 9. This prompted me to conduct an informal survey last year, asking students who dropped French why they did. Many students indicated that there were not enough spaces in their timetable, or they didn't fully appreciate how important French was. A lot of students also said that they would take an introductory course if it were offered.

Q This is a Board/Authority approved course. Tell us a bit about the process necessary to obtain approval.

One has to submit a course proposal specifying the intent of this course as well as its structure. I had to make the case that Introductory French was a viable course that would meet student demand. The most important part of the submission was the course design explaining the outcomes that students were expected to meet. The course proposal is reviewed by the District Curriculum and Instruction Committee, who would then explain the course to the school board and recommend (or not) its approval. Once approved, it becomes listed on the BAA website.

Q Did your course design require much preliminary research?

Fortunately, I did not have to re-invent the wheel when I designed Introductory French. The Ministry of Education has curriculum guides for several Introductory 11 languages courses (such as Spanish), which I was able to integrate with existing lower level French curricula. I hope to be able to use the very successful Introductory Spanish course as a model to help me implement Introductory French.

Q What kind of relationship will your course have with existing FSL programmes?

I probably won't know exactly how that's going to go until next year when I teach it for the first time. I teach the other French 10, 11 and 12 courses at my school, so I should be able to integrate the new course smoothly into the program. The consistency of the teacher should help.

Q Is this really a second chance course? Will it truly provide a student with an opportunity to revisit a decision they made years before?

I think this could very well be a serious second chance for students who missed out on French the first time around. The fact that they have chosen the course says something about their new attitude toward the language. If I can tap into that attitude, they can truly be successful in the language. Even as late as grade 12 in a semestered school, a student taking Intro French in September could choose to go on to the next level in February. I firmly believe that students deliberately choosing to learn a second language can achieve a lot in that language.

Q How successful do you anticipate this course being?

I think it will work quite well. If the students find the class meaningful and progress in the language, word will get around—hopefully leading to even more taking the course the following year.

Q To end, what would be a best outcome scenario for a student who takes your course? Postsecondary French?

Yes. I think that is very possible—attitude is a huge factor in second language learning. If I can encourage the students to love learning and speaking French, who knows how far they can go?

Gone Like the Wind

By Anthony Chen, CPF Olympic and Paralympic Blogger

My six weeks with CPF went by like the blowing wind. I had a great time. My job as an Olympic and Paralympic blogger encouraged me to live the Olympic dream. I visited many venues and attended as many events as I could. Here are my thoughts about what I experienced.

I've always dreamed of working in a downtown office. This job gave me a taste of that. I love to walk the streets of downtown, seeing people in suits striding along with a slice of pizza in their hand during lunch. They look so busy and professional. I admire them and hope to be one of them one day.

I think I visited more pavilions and attractions than any of my friends. Lots of them envied me for getting such a great job and told me how lucky I was. I proudly agreed. One of my favorite places was the O Zone in Richmond, where I attended two concerts by some awesome bands and got to see some beautiful fireworks! I loved watching big screen hockey at Live City Yaletown with hundreds of other screaming Canadian fans. I also had lots of fun at Coquitlam's *Festival du Bois* handing out candy to children and giving out information about CPF with other volunteers from the wonderful TriCities Chapter. I never knew there was such a big Francophone community in Coquitlam! We volunteers encouraged a lot of parents to enroll their children in French immersion by telling them about the advantages of being bilingual. I think parents are slowly realizing the importance of being bilingual, since knowing another language provides you with some great future opportunities.

I changed some of my habits during these six weeks. I started to buy a newspaper every day, spending an hour reading the local news or the Olympic sections to keep myself updated. CTV, TSN, Sportsnet RDS

and CBC news became my family's favorite television channels as soon as I got home. Whenever I heard that Canada got another medal, it would make me so proud to be Canadian. I learned to organize my time and to stop procrastinating: For example, when I was riding on the bus or skytrain, I would be thinking about what task I had to accomplish and I would start planning.

I think I've also improved a little in my English language writing. Even though I've been in Canada for almost nine years, my English grammar isn't that developed since I spent ten years in China before coming to Canada, and six of my nine years in this country in Montreal studying French. Thanks to Dimitry and Robert, who patiently corrected my articles and gently pointed out my mistakes, little by little my English grammar improved. Coming up with original and funny titles for my blog also got easier. When I first started to write my blog, I wouldn't dare play around with words since I was not used to the blog writing style. So, I would stick to an essay format. As I got used to the style, I tried to show my creativity and my sense of humor by playing around with words and sentences. My thinking can be a mix of four different languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, French and English. This can sometimes be confusing. For this reason, I always had a translation website opened when I was writing. It helped me when I could only remember a word in any of my languages except English.

I think being fluent in both official languages of Canada has given me lots of opportunities since I've arrived in Vancouver. It allowed me to participate in the CPF-BC & Yukon *Concours d'art oratoire* provincial finals at SFU Surrey, which was an amazing experience. Winning and

then being able to represent BC at the national finals in Ottawa was like living the perfect dream you never expected to have. Being bilingual also gained me some wonderful work experience with CPF. My other form of bilingualism has also been useful, but in a different way. Being able to speak Cantonese and Mandarin has become common in China in the last 40 years. Cantonese is a dialect spoken mainly in the southern province of Guangdong. Mandarin is the most commonly spoken language in China. I'm considered to be a native Cantonese speaker since I speak Cantonese at home and had to learn Mandarin at school. Learning Mandarin is a must if you want to live in China, but



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Cantonese seems to be more useful in Vancouver since there's a larger population of Cantonese speakers.

Finally, I couldn't have got the job done without the help of Robert and Dimitry. They helped me correct my blog, gave me ideas on what to write about and offered me some very useful advice whenever I needed it. Even though Dimitry was always busy, he still found the time to look at my blogs and to patiently talk to me about them. He even made a button for me that said "Official CPF Olympic

Blogger". I was so touched by it. Robert was very kind as my editor. He came up with some creative suggestions for titles, words and sentences. He also gave me some

suggestions on how to improve my writing. I am very grateful to them both, and their kindness will forever stay engraved in my heart.

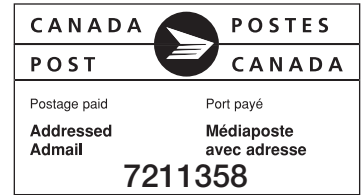


Anthony Chen, a former Concours winner, was hired by the BC & Yukon Branch to keep a near-daily blog during the Olympics and Paralympics. His posts are archived on our website. At the end of his stint with us, we asked our multilingual (French, English, Mandarin and Cantonese) blogger to write about his experiences. CPF wishes to thank the Government of Canada (Young Canada Works) for its financial support.

**Concours
winners** 

Please visit www.cpf.bc.ca for a full listing of Concours winners.

Veuillez consulter www.cpf.bc.ca pour une liste complète des gagnants du Concours d'art oratoire de cette année.



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