

Une Élève Parle



A Student Speaks

Rachel St. Laurent is a Grade 10 student at École Héritage, a Francophone school in Falher, Alberta, established in 1988 because of section 23 rights in Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms (see below). Rachel lives in Saint-Isidore, a Francophone community near Peace River. Francophones in Alberta belong to one of Canada’s **official language minorities**.

official language minority: a group that speaks one of Canada’s official languages (English or French) and that does not make up the majority population of a province or territory

I have attended a Francophone school ever since I was in kindergarten. My whole family is Francophone. I think it’s important to go to a Francophone school because it shows my community that I’m really trying to be involved in French.

I want to keep my French language my whole life, and to pass it on to my kids. I think it’s important, both for myself and for my community, to keep my French and to show it off. It shows people that everybody’s different, and nobody’s better than somebody else just because they speak another language.

French is the first language for just about everybody in Saint-Isidore. When I’m done with school, I’m planning to become a hairdresser. My friends and I want to own our own company. So it will be really useful to speak both French and English. I feel lucky to be bilingual.

I sometimes worry about losing my French. It takes effort to speak French in everyday life, because in Alberta almost everyone speaks English.



WHAT’S A FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL?

Rachel’s school, École Héritage, is one of 26 Francophone schools in Alberta. Francophone schools and school boards are a right of Alberta’s Francophone minority under section 23 of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms, just as Anglophone schools are a right of the Anglophone minority in Québec.

Francophone schools provide instruction for Francophone students — students whose first language is French. They are different from French immersion schools, which teach French to students whose first language is not French.

Francophone schools affirm the identity of Francophone students, their families and their communities.



How do Rachel’s rights as a Francophone affect her quality of life?



How does Rachel represent the concerns of a minority-language speaker?