

Background Information about Yukon's Francophone Community

- French-speaking people have been in the Yukon for more than 170 years. Some of the familiar names:
 - Émilie Tremblay, the first white woman to climb the Chilkoot Trail in the late 1800s
 - Joseph Ladue, a Klondike pioneer and another Chilkoot climber
- Association franco-yukonnaise (AFY) was created in 1982 to improve the quality of life for Francophones in Yukon. It is the officially recognized voice of the Francophone community.
- AFY worked to set up institutions for the Francophone community including:
 - École Émilie-Tremblay, a French school officially recognized in 1988
 - La Garderie du petit cheval blanc, a French daycare established in 1990
 - Centre de la francophonie, which opened in 2001
- The Legislative Assembly passed the Yukon *Languages Act* in 1988, stipulating:
 - People have the right to receive services from government head or central offices in English or in French
 - French may be used in the legislature and the courts
 - All Yukon laws are to be in English and in French
- Canada and Yukon signed the *Canada-Yukon Language Agreement* in 1988, in which Canada agreed to cover the costs of French language services.
- In 1988, the Government of Yukon created the Bureau of French Language Services to assist government departments and corporations in providing services in French.
- In April 2006, the government changed the Bureau of French Language Services to the Directorate of French Language Services, providing its own minister and elevating its status within the government.

The Francophone Presence in the Yukon

In Yukon, as elsewhere in the country, the French-Canadian and Métis voyageurs played a key role in the fur trade conducted by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) during the 19th century.

In 1874, a Francophone trader named François-Xavier Mercier, along with his partner Jack McQuesten, built the Fort Reliance trading post near the mouth of the Klondike River and eventually managed to go head-to-head with the HBC's commercial monopoly.

During the Klondike Gold Rush, at the end of the 19th century, Francophones were already well established in the area. They played an essential role in the establishment and development of new communities in Yukon, including Dawson City and Mayo. Many landmarks throughout the territory bear names testifying to a rich Francophone presence.

Large and affluent at the turn of last century, the Francophone community blended into the English population over the years. In the early 1980s, the Francophone community's efforts finally led to the establishment of essential services to sustain its language and culture.

A Growing Community

Yukon's Francophone community includes 1,245 persons with French as their first spoken official language. Although Francophones live everywhere in Yukon, the greatest concentration is found in Whitehorse and the surrounding areas. This distribution closely reflects that of the population as a whole. Francophones account for 4 percent of the population of Whitehorse, about the same percentage as in the whole territory. Furthermore, 11.7 percent of all residents of Yukon can speak French. Taking into account a continuous proportional growth of the French-speaking population, the future of French in Yukon looks promising.

*(Source: Francophone Community Profile of Yukon, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne (FCFA) du Canada
Sources for statistical data: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census)*

Franco-Yukon Flag—1986

The Franco-Yukon flag is blue, white and gold. The blue represents the Francophonie and the Yukon's crystalline azure sky. The white represents the pristine snows of winter above the 60th parallel. The gold line recalls the Yukon's Gold Rush history and symbolizes the path of Yukon Francophones as they have enriched the cultural, economic and social development of the territory since 1874.

The graphic element evokes the sky, the innumerable mountains of the Yukon and the dynamism of the Yukon Francophone community.

"This unique flag brings together the vibrant Yukon Francophone community. The colours of the flag recall the richness of French history and its many contributions to Yukon society. The ascending forms suggest the beauty of northern landscapes and the path of the Yukon Francophonie" says Cécile Girard, who created the flag in 1986.