

French Classes Gave Me Confidence:

So why aren't they more accessible for Canadian students?



Photo courtesy of: Canadian Parents For French

From a young age, learning French had a positive impact on Ruhi Kalia's life.

Her experience with the transformative power of the French language, not only in academia but throughout her life and career, has been profound.

Unfortunately, the barriers Canadians face to learning in French continue to compound, and access to these learning opportunities is limited. For those who have the opportunity to learn French, the rewards are incredible.

We caught up with Ruhi to learn more about her experience with the French language and the valuable personal and professional growth that she attributes to these learnings. She shares how French has opened her up to opportunities,

her views on the limitations facing French education, and her vision for the future of French as a Second Language learning in Canada.

Ruhi's Story

Ruhi's journey with French began early on. In the first grade, her parents decided to enroll her in the Core French program at her elementary school. She continued her French studies through high school and carried on to the University of Ottawa, where she achieved a Bachelor of Arts in French.

Throughout Ruhi's grade school studies, she benefited from the support of a French tutor, who practiced the language with her once a week from the first grade until she graduated high school.

"She went on to become a French teacher." Ruhi shares, "So I would say that's inspired me quite a bit and given me the confidence to be able to communicate in French."

Recently completing her undergraduate studies, Ruhi has set her sights on continuing to give back to the community by teaching French. This fall, she will begin a Bachelor of Education at the University of Ottawa, with a goal of teaching kindergarten to grade six in French as a Second Language.

"French has been a huge part of my life, and when I was younger, I wasn't really sure how useful it would be for me. Once I was in high school, I realized that it's given me a lot of opportunities that I might not have had if I didn't know this amazing language." Ruhi shares.



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She goes on to explain how a volunteer opportunity with Canadian Parents for French translated into tutoring roles and ultimately an employee position as Virtual Program Coordinator, where she oversees the French tutoring program and volunteer teams.

"French has played a huge role – it's given me a lot of different volunteer and career opportunities. And now, when I go on to become a teacher, I'll be able to teach French too!"

Building Foundational Skills; Creating Valuable Opportunities

"It's so much fun to learn another language!" Ruhi exclaims as she discusses the skills she has acquired from French, "I really enjoy being able to communicate in a different language with so many people. It gave me a lot of confidence [growing up], and now being able to actually go out there and use my French [at work] – It's been an amazing experience."

Stepping out of her comfort zone, better expressing herself, learning new study techniques, immersing herself in the French culture, and generally becoming more sociable are all skills she attributes to her French education.

Her goal as a French teacher? To make a difference in the lives of children and inspire them to continue to practice their French throughout their lives.

Barriers to French Language Learning in Canada

Reflecting on her time working with Canadian Parents for French, Ruhi emphasizes her growing understanding of the accessibility barriers to learning French in Canada.

"Even in our tutoring program, a lot of the parents will say that their kids don't have French classes in their schools anymore. It's not part of their curriculum." She explains, "It's so important to be able to learn French because it's another language we speak here in Canada. It opens up so many different opportunities that people wouldn't have without that language and the skill set that comes along with learning French."

Ruhi shares the impact of empowering children to explore new languages, "From what I've seen, the kids in our program, they're always super excited and enthusiastic about learning the language when they get that opportunity."

If it were up to Ruhi, everyone would have the opportunity to access French learning resources and education.

"It's so important to encourage students, especially when they're quite young, and teach them all the benefits that you can get from [French], especially later on in life." 🍁 CSC

Our mission at Canadian Parents for French (CPF)

is to continue supporting French language ambassadors like Ruhi, and to increase access to French education across the country so that more students can experience the positive impact of bilingualism on their lives. To learn more about CPF's mission, visit <https://cpf.ca/>



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