THE HISTORICAL DIVERSITY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBEC AS A PUBLIC PROJECT: A PRELIMINARY STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Lorraine O'Donnell is coordinator-researcher of the Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network, a joint initiative of Concordia University's School of Extended Learning (Montreal) and the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities (Moncton). Lorraine has a graduate diploma in Community Economic Development from Concordia University and a Ph.D. in History from McGill University, where she did a thesis on post-Confederation Canadian women's history. Before assuming her current position, she worked for over a decade in community-based research projects, with a specialization in history and heritage projects. Most recently, she was guest curator of the McCord Museum's "Being Irish O'Québec" exhibit.

ABSTRACT

This article considers in preliminary and cursory fashion the question of the historical diversity of English-speaking Quebec outside of Montreal as a "public project" and analyses it strategically using the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) technique. Strengths include resources such as excellent sector workers, sound infrastructure, good research institutions and tools, and strong products including projects and historical information. Weaknesses include discontinuity in the community sector infrastructure, uneven coverage of different group histories, and information gaps. Opportunities include recent Quebec government initiatives making public room for cultural communities. Threats include the politicized socio-political environment and chronic underfunding.

The socially crucial question of whether or not a minority group feels that it belongs in the majority society will inevitably bring up other questions of the history of the group, and how it has related to the majority over time.

As coordinator-researcher of the Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network (QUESCREN), with a background in the worlds of academic and community history, I was pleased to be invited to explore such questions as they pertained to Quebec's official language minority community. This chance arose when the Association of Canadian Studies requested that I organize a panel entitled "Historical Diversity of English-Speaking Quebec" at its *Integration and Belonging in Quebec's English-Speaking Community Symposium* held on October 14, 2009 in Sherbrooke, Quebec.

The focus of the symposium was on the province outside of Montreal. And, as the panel and symposium titles indicate, the questions were further complicated by their focus on the ethno-cultural communities that together comprise the larger Quebec English-speaking community. The task at hand was therefore to explore ways that small, sometimes tiny English-speaking ethno-cultural groups had integrated and belonged in Quebec

society. The present article presents how I used this forum to try and carry out the task.

My overall approach in organizing the panel was to bring attention to both formal scholarly studies and grassroots community initiatives. Four highly qualified colleagues accepted my invitation to participate. They were: Louisa Blair, author of a ground-breaking popular history of Quebec City's English-speaking communities—people of English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Greek, American, African, Chinese, Jewish, Italian, German, Ukranian, Hungarian, Polish, Armenian, Russian, Kazakh, Indian and Lebanese origin—and founder of a community group that sponsors African refugees, many of them English-speakers; Patrick Donovan, a Ph.D. student in history, consultant in heritage projects and past interim director of the Morrin Centre, Quebec City's English-language cultural centre; Simon Jolivet, a post-doctoral researcher in history and specialist of Quebec's Irish communities; and Rod Macleod, past president of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network and co-author of an important work on the history of Quebec's (English-speaking) Protestant school boards and communities. Their presentations are described elsewhere in this journal; suffice to say here that these colleagues ably communicated some of the breadth and depth of knowledge and projects covering that rich, complex, inter-twined assemblage of ethnic, "racial" and cultural (sub-) communities that use English, whether as their mother tongue or first official language, and that together make up what we call Quebec's official language minority community.

For my part, I used the opportunity of the panel to step back and consider the efforts of the panelists and their peers collectively and as a "public project:" that is, a combined effort to uncover, describe and communicate the historical diversity of English-speaking Quebec outside of Montreal through publicly-accessible initiatives such as publications, research events, exhibits, and so on. My approach was analytic and strategic; I asked, how is the project viewed, resourced, and presented in the public space of Quebec? What are some policy questions to consider?

To do so, I carried out a brief Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. This strategic planning tool was developed in the 1960s for business applications but other sectors now use it as a "comprehensive way of assessing the positive and negative forces within and without" an organization or project, including community-based ones. I based the analysis on information I have gleaned throughout my career, not new research. It was a small step: preliminary and partial, but nonetheless useful, in what eventually should be a larger process involving field research and broad participation from across the sector. What follows is a summary of my findings.

STRENGTHS

In a SWOT analysis, the term "strengths" refers to positive internal factors of the organization or project under study. There are some remarkable strengths within the collective, public project to uncover and share the historical diversity of English-speaking Quebec outside of Montreal.

First, the project has strong ***resources***. Outstanding among these are *human resources*. Scores of highly qualified individuals are dedicating their work or volunteer hours to it, including academics, independent scholars, and workers in community organizations and government heritage and cultural department offices. They cannot be listed here but many names are available through the bibliographies and websites mentioned below.

Another strength is *infrastructure resources.* These include dozens of *community groups* devoted specifically to the history and heritage of Quebec's English-speaking communities in all their diversity. Many are members of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN). It provides leadership, coordination, support and advocacy and carries out its own activities including publishing and organizing conferences. Two of the latter were on diversity. There are also *government resources* including federal offices and programs and federally-funded institutions that together provide funds, research and other resources, including the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, Canadian Heritage, and the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities. The Quebec government provides support through programs such as one to fund physical infrastructure which has been used to help renovate the above-mentioned Morrin Centre, among other sites, and special activities such as some recent Conseil des relations interculturelles research initiatives. QUESCREN for its part collaborates with QAHN and other partners on research events, projects and publications.

An element of this solid infrastructure is effective access to knowledge. They include a wealth of *research institutions* open to the public, including, among many others, the Eastern Townships Research Centre in Sherbrooke. There are also useful *research tools* available. Most valuable are Brendan O'Donnell's bibliographies of sources on English-speaking Quebec. Their extensive "ethnic studies" and "regional studies" sections, divided into many ethnic and geographical subsections, list mainly histories.

The second main strength of the public project being considered are its ***products***. These include include

thousands of *publications*, itemized in the above-mentioned bibliographies. There are also many *projects*. Unfortunately, to my knowledge they have not been comprehensively listed, although QAHN's publications list many of them. The projects vary in scope and function but generally speaking they gather and publicly share information. Mentioning three with which I have personally been involved will give a sense of their variety: the 2006 QAHN "Prospecting for Heritage" project produced comprehensive lists of resources including publications, institutions, people and sites related to the history and heritage of English-speaking communities in four Quebec regions; the 2008 Shalom Quebec project produced online and three-dimensional exhibits and research materials on the history of Quebec City's Jewish community; and the McCord Museum's 2009 "Being Irish O'Quebec" exhibit assembled hundreds of artifacts previously scattered in dozens of private homes and public institutions.

These good resources and products represent a solid foundation on which to build.

WEAKNESSES

At the same time, the public project to uncover and share the historical diversity of English-speaking Quebec outside of Montreal has some internal weaknesses to consider. Listing key weaknesses can help the people involved in the project in setting priorities.

The ***resources*** have weaknesses. One is at the level of organization: there is a need for more contact and coordination between efforts carried out between the community and academic research sectors. Many more are due to a "threat" mentioned below: inadequate funding. Serious negative effects I have observed in the community sector include a precarious work environment leading to high staff turnover, with concomitant loss of knowledge and expertise, and gaps in the coverage and continuity of the work these institutions carry out. One example among many is the QAHN "Prospecting for Heritage" project, which was not extended and thus covers just four Quebec regions.

Related, but not limited in cause to under-funding are weaknesses in the project ***products***. One is that the *publications and projects* available in Quebec's public space do not cover the various ethno-cultural groups evenly. Whereas there are several exhibits and publications on Irish and the Jews, for instance, other groups have received no attention at all. Beyond the availability of external resources, this probably points to differing levels of organization, capacities and interest levels of the communities themselves, and of differing interest levels on the part of researchers.

There are also gaps and weaknesses in the way the publications and projects do cover their subjects. Most exhibits focus on ethno-cultural community "contributions." This is natural enough, given that they are often produced in collaboration with the communities themselves, but it results in less attention being paid to other equally important historical realities, such as problems within the communities or in inter-community relations. Within the *historiography*, the focus tends to be on the historical experience of specific ethno-cultural groups. While these do often discuss positive and negative interactions between the group in question and others, including the majority population, there have been relatively few studies looking specifically at the question of inter-group dynamics, or making cross-cultural historical comparisons. There is also no comprehensive study weaving together the histories of all the different English-speaking communities across the province.

OPPORTUNITIES

The history-heritage milieu is fortunate to have some valuable external opportunities. A remarkable one is the growing openness in Quebec society to consider and debate the place of citizens and traditions outside the old-stock Francophone culture of French-Canadian origin. Probably the best-known site for debate was the 2008 Bouchard-Taylor Commission involving extensive province-wide public hearings. While the commission did not focus on the English-speaking population, its report recognized that the latter "is fully experiencing Québec's ethnocultural diversity." It also recommended the creation of an oral history program to obtain immigrants' stories; the report notes, "[t]he resulting oral data bank would be accessible to researchers and the general public and would be a valuable addition to our historical heritage." Another site is Quebec's Ethics and Religious Culture program. It aims to allow children to "learn about elements of other religious traditions present in Québec grow and develop in a society in which different values and beliefs coexist."

These provincial government initiatives, and the debates which have arisen over them, represent opportunities for bringing public attention and, it is to be hoped, public resources to uncovering and sharing information about the historical diversity of English-speaking Quebec. In order to do so effectively, those involved in the public project to project to uncover this history can benefit from another opportunity: the growing body of *theory and analysis* on the broader question of Anglophone Quebec identity and sense of belonging.

THREATS

In a SWOT analysis, the term "threats" refers to external barriers or challenges. The public project under consideration, to uncover and share the historical diversity of English-speaking Quebec, is "threatened" at two levels. One is the complex and challenging socio-political environment in which the project resides. Passions and politics sometimes inflame discussions touching on the historical and current place of the "English" in Quebec. As just one example, I would point to the heated debates over the plan to have a historical re-enactment commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Quebec in 1759 on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City. The battle was between the French and English armies, although as some of the people weighing in on the debate pointed out, in fact the latter also included other ethno-cultural groups including Scots. The debate was not always reasonable and the re-enactment plans were scuttled.

Secondly, as noted above, the community-based heritage sector including Anglophone Quebec heritage organizations is under-funded. Witness the recent campaign of the Gaspesian British Heritage Village in New Richmond for funding, to take just one example. Its supporters argued, "[t]his site has importance historically, linguistically, culturally and environmentally; is seriously underfunded compared with the significance the village holds in its core communities; and, is a symbol of cross-cultural outreach."

These and other challenges point back to opportunities for people involved in promoting the public project of historical diversity of English-speaking Quebec. We can organize, lobby government and otherwise make claim on public attention and resources. In doing so, it would be helpful for us to benefit from international approaches to interculturality, such as European efforts to promote "intercultural history education" which gives "majority-minority dynamics a more prominent place in historical education." A recent workshop on the subject gave the German case as an example: "German society in the past fifty years has been substantially transformed by a large number of immigrants. History education in Germany therefore needs to examine these migration processes as well as address children and youths whose families do not have a mainstream German experience."

CONCLUSION

It is helpful to step back and approach the question of the historical diversity of Quebec's English-speaking communities strategically, considering it as a public project with internal strengths and weaknesses and subject to external opportunities and barriers. The present article, while preliminary and superficial, nonetheless affords those of us working or interested in the field a clearer view of areas we can allow to flourish and areas requiring work.

Together, people interested in the project can enrich the public understanding of the history of not just English-speaking Quebec but of the province as a whole, and thus, of how the linguistic minority and its component ethno-cultural groups belong in Quebec. This will require work and imagination. To quote literary scholar Gregory Reid,

Perhaps what the Anglo-Québécois case best demonstrates is what philosopher Charles Taylor, himself an English Quebecer who has upheld Quebec's right to defend its collective cultural interests, calls the need for "'deep diversity,' in which a plurality of ways of belonging would also be acknowledged and accepted." In fact there are no immediate, viable options other than the ongoing need for invention.

REFERENCES

Note: all websites were consulted in January 2010.

[1] Blair, Louisa. 2005. *The Anglos: the hidden face of Quebec City.* Québec: Editions Sylvain Harvey. For the list of the ethnic origins of today's English-speaking population in the city, see volume 2, p. 94; some of the ethnicities are mentioned elsewhere in the books. Note that even this long list is not comprehensive.

[2] This group is called the Noella Project. For information, see http://209.160.3.218/noella_project.htm.

[3] www.morrin.org.

[4] See Jolivet, Simon. 2008. *Les deux questions irlandaises du Quebec, 1898-1921 : des considerations canadiennes-francaises et irlando-catholiques*. Thesis (Ph.D.), Department of History, Concordia University.

[5] Roderick MacLeod & Mary Anne Poutanen. 2004. *A Meeting of the People: School Boards and Protestant Communities in Quebec, 1801-1998*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

[6] For this work, I drew on a SWOT analysis I did for a project to list heritage resources on English-speaking communities in in four regions of Quebec: "Prospecting for Heritage: Project Report." Quebec City: Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, March 20, 2006 (available at the QAHN offices; see www.qahn.org), and two earlier presentations I have made on the subject: one as invited participant, session on "Telling the History of the Cultural Communities in Québec," organized by the Conseil des relations interculturelles (Quebec), at the Association for Canadian Studies annual conference, Quebec City, October 24, 2008; the other entitled "Sharing Authority through Community-Building History: A Study of Recent Heritage Projects within Quebec's English-speaking communities," paper presented at the "Sharing Authority: Building Community-University Alliances through Oral History, Digital Storytelling and Collaboration" conference, February 8, 2008, Concordia University, Montreal.

[7] Kuang-cheng Wang, "A process view of SWOT analysis," Proceedings of the 51st Annual Meeting of the International Society for the System Sciences, Tokyo, August 5-10, 2007. Available at http://journals.isss.org/index.php/proceedings51st/issue/view/7 .

[8] Val Renault, contributor and Jerry Schultz, editor, " SWOT Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats," Part B, Chapter 3, Section 14 in the University of Kansas, "Community Tool Box," an online resource available at http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/section_1049.htm.

[9] For information, see www.qahn.org. Especially valuable is QAHN's monthly magazine, the *Quebec Heritage News*, available online. The diversity conferences were The 2007 Montreal Mosaic Heritage Summit and the 2008 Roots Quebec Heritage Summit; for information, see the "Documents" section of the QAHN website.

[10] For instance, there is historical information in the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages report " Vitality Indicators for Official Language Minority Communities 2: The English-Speaking Communities in Quebec (June 2008)," available online at www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/html/etudes_studies_e.php#OLMC.

[11] Canadian Heritage funds many heritage groups including some of their research activities.

[12] Research carried out by the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities occasionally touches on the question of the history of Quebec's English-speaking communities. For instance, see Annie Pilote and Sandra Bolduc, "L'école de langue anglaise au Québec : Bilan des connaissances et nouveaux enjeux. Document d'interprétation rétrospectif (phase 1)," Research report prepared for the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, October 2007, available online at the CIRLM website: www.icrml.ca.

[13] This is the "Aide aux immobilisations – Biens et équipements culturels" program. For information, see www.formulaire.gouv.qc.ca/cgi/affiche_doc.cgi?dossier=9971&table=0.

[14] The Conseil des relations interculturelles (Quebec) has been represented at recent Association for Canadian Studies research events, for instance, and organized a panel on "Telling the History of the Cultural Communities in Québec" at the Association for Canadian Studies annual conference, Quebec City, October 24, 2008.

[15] For general information on QUESCREN see www.concordia.quescren.ca.

[16] Brendan O'Donnell, P*rinted Sources for the Study of English-Speaking Quebec: An Annotated Bibliography of Works Printed before 1980* (Lennoxville, Quebec: Eastern Townships Research Centre Series Number 2, Bishop's University, 1985); *Sources for the Study of English-Speaking Quebec: An Annotated Bibliography of Works Published between 1980 and 1990 / Sources pour l'étude du Québec d'expression anglaise: Bibliographie annotée d'ouvrages produits de 1980 à 1990* (Lennoxville, Quebec: Eastern Townships Research Centre of Bishop's University, 1992); *Sources for the study of English-speaking Quebec Volume 3: An annotated bibliography of works published between 1990 and 2008 / Sources pour l'étude du Québec d'expression anglaise Volume 3: Bibliographie annotée d'ouvrages produits de 1990 à 2008* (Montreal: Concordia University, Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities and Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network, 2009). Note: volumes 1 and 2 can be ordered at www.etrc.ca and volume 3 is available through the Concordia University bookstore at http://web2.concordia.ca/Bookstore/.

[17] The four regions covered were Lower Saint Lawrence, Gaspé, North Shore and the Mauricie.

[18] For information, see www.shalomquebec.org.

[19] On display at the McCord Museum 2009 to 2010. For information, see www.mccord-museum.qc.ca.

[20] Note that QAHN is in preliminary discussions with the Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network to develop more such links.

[21] For instance, I am unaware of publications or projects that look at the English-speaking Philipinos of Quebec City.

[22] This was the subject of several lively "behind the scenes" discussions between the curators, museum staff, community sponsors and expert advisory committee in the creation of the "Being Irish O'Quebec" exhibit.

[23] Many studies of the Quebec Irish look at inter-group relations. See, for example, Wayne Timbers, "Britannique et irlandaise : l'identité ethnique et démographique des Irlandais protestants et la formation d'une communauté à Montréal, 1834-1860". Unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 2002.

[24] A few studies of inter-group dynamics are listed in Brendan O'Donnell, *Sources for the study of English-speaking Quebec Volume 3* in the section "Sociology: English-French Relations."

[25] There are some broad histories, but these do not focus on bringing the different histories together. See, for example, Ronald Rudin, *The Forgotten Quebecers: A History of English-Speaking Quebec, 1759-1980* (Quebec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1985) and Ray Baillie and Diana Baillie's "Imprints" series: *Imprints: Discovering the Historic Face of English Quebec* (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 2001); *Imprints II: Discovering the Historic Face of English Quebec—The Eastern Townships* (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 2002) and *Imprints III: Discovering the Historic Face of English Quebec: Quebec City & Environs, Saguenay, North Shore, Gaspé* (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 2004).

[26] Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, Québec (Province). Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences. *Building the future: A time for reconciliation: Report,* 2008, pp. 34, 258. Available online at www.accommodements.qc.ca/documentation/rapports/rapport-final-integral-en.pdf.j

[27] Quebec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport website, page on Quebec's Ethics and Religious Culture program, https://www7.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DC/ECR/index_en.php.

[28] Several such studies are listed in Brendan O'Donnell's bibliographies, *op. cit.*, especially in the "Sociology" sections.

[29] See Neil Reynolds, "Great Scots, Plains of Abraham really did pay off," *Globe and Mail*, 20 February 2009; "Simon" [blogger], "Steven Harper and the Plains of Abraham, blog of Feb. 13, 2009, available online at http://montrealsimon.blogspot.com.

[30] Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, *HeritageLine* [newsletter], February 27, 2009. Available online at www.qahn.org/uploads/qahn_document.docFile/HeritageLine%20Master%20List%2020090327.pdf.

[31] Source: "Intercultural History Learning in Poland, Germany, and Ukraine:Transcending the boundaries of the nation state in a time of migration and social change." Workshop by Anna Augustyn, Anne Frank Zentrum Berlin, 9th Annual Young SIETAR Congress, October 21, 2007. See http://de.federaleurope.org/fileadmin/files_youngsietar/documents/YS_Congress2007/Workshops_and_speakers_presentations.pdf.

[31] Gregory Reid, "Constructing English Quebec Ethnicity: Colleen Curran's *Something Drastic* and Josée Legault's *L'invention d'une minorité : Les Anglos-Québécois*,"*Post Identity* 1, 2 (Summer 1998), p. 81. Reid is citing Charles Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill Queen's UP, 1993), p. 183.