



Inter-regional Interpreters Bank, 1998-1999

The population of the Montreal Urban Community

The territory of the Montreal Urban Community (MUC) is made up of 29 municipalities occupying a surface area of 496 km² (approximately 190 miles²). During the 1996 census, it had a population of 1,808,188 residents and represented 25% of the entire population of Quebec.

The Montreal population differs from the rest of Quebec by its great diversity.

	Montreal	Rest of Quebec
Ethnic origin other than French, English and Canadian	37%	5%
Immigrants	26%	4 %
Mother tongue other than French or English	25%	4%

More specifically:

- ❑ 116,000 immigrated between 1991 and 1996,
- ❑ 33,500 non-permanent residents live on MUC territory,
- ❑ 53,500 inhabitants cannot carry on a conversation in French or English.

Montreal, like any other cosmopolitan metropolis, must deal with linguistic diversity on a daily basis.

Ten languages cover 70% of the needs of these 53,500 people. With only one exception, no language has more than 5,000 speakers who are unable to carry on a conversation in French or English. In most cases, fewer than 1,000 people who speak a same language will need the services of an interpreter.

This represents quite a challenge when it comes to coordinating interpretation services.

The context for setting up the Inter-regional Interpreters Bank

The Government of Quebec adopted French as the province's official language in 1974. The legislation nevertheless ensures access to education and health and social services in English for English speakers.

In order to guarantee equal access to immigrants who are not familiar enough with the host society's language and culture, the *Régie régionale de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal-Centre* (Montreal-Centre Regional Board) created the Inter-

regional Interpreters Bank (hereafter Bank) at the request of two Quebec Government departments: the Department of Health Services and Social Services, and the Department of International Affairs, Immigration and Cultural Communities.

An Act Respecting Health Services and Social Services furthermore provides for rules that must be applied with regard to access to services (L.R.Q., c S-4.2):

In order to make it possible to fulfill these objectives, this Act sets out a way of organizing human, material and financial resources to:

- *take into account the particular geographic, linguistic, socio-cultural, ethno-cultural and socio-economic characteristics of each region; (art. 2.5)*
- *promote, resources permitting, access to health services and social services on the part of people from different cultural communities in their own language; (art. 2.7)*

The Montreal-Centre Regional Board

The Regional Board administers, on behalf of the Department of Health Services and Social Services, all health and social service programs provided directly to the MUC population by some 160 institutions and 446 community organizations.

In 1998-1999, the Regional Board confirmed gross operating budgets for the institutions totaling \$3,247,469,080. and allocated 50 million dollars worth of grants to community organizations.

Access for cultural communities

The Regional Board has incorporated access for ethno-cultural communities in all of its recent endeavours. It drew up its first access plan in 1990, which it revised in 1997.

The 1997 plan has four major guidelines:

1. Set up programs and measures that provide for approaches that adapt to the specific cultural needs of the various clientele.
2. Take down barriers and limits to access by supporting inter-cultural training, information and interpretation, notably the Inter-regional Interpreters Bank.
3. Develop a partnership with the community organizations of ethno-cultural communities.
4. Develop a greater understanding of ethno-cultural communities and promote research on how to improve practices.

The Cultural Interpreter

The cultural interpreter is a skilled professional who transmits all of the information expressed by verbal and nonverbal communication in strict confidentiality.

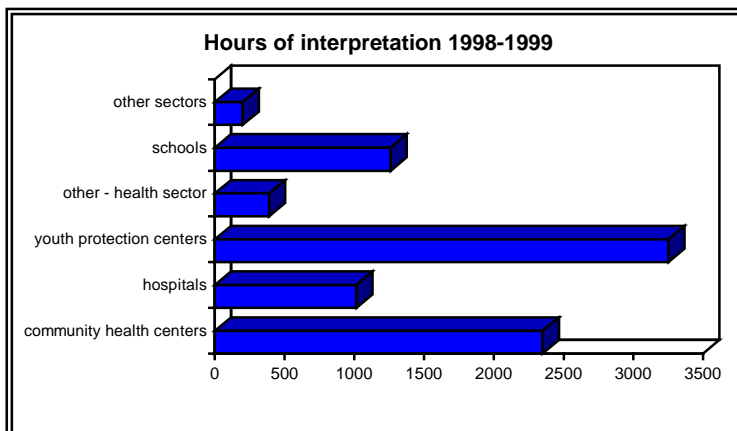
The interpreter helps the client and the professional understand each other's cultural values, concepts and practices, from a neutral position and in a vocabulary that is adapted to the people he or she is interpreting for.

The interpreter's greatest asset is not only his or her knowledge, but also the ability to bridge two cultures.

The Inter-regional Interpreters Bank: Noteworthy facts for 1998-1999

Some figures:

- ✓ 4,950 requests for service, i.e. a 49% increase compared to the previous year.
- ✓ 8,645 hours of interpretation, i.e. a 46% increase.
- ✓ \$29,462.¹ worth of written translation.
- ✓ 41 service languages. Ten languages represent 75% of interpretation hours. Here are the most frequent, in decreasing order of importance: Spanish, Bengali, Russian, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Turkish, Tamil, Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin...) Punjabi, Arabic.
- ✓ 74 interpreters and translators. A single one earned \$20,900. in fees and three others earned over \$10,000. The average income is \$2,854. and the median is \$1,380.
- ✓ 159 institutions and schools received services and paid \$211,000. in fees to the Bank.
- ✓ 80% of services are requested by Montreal institutions, 15% by schools and the rest by northern and southern suburbs.

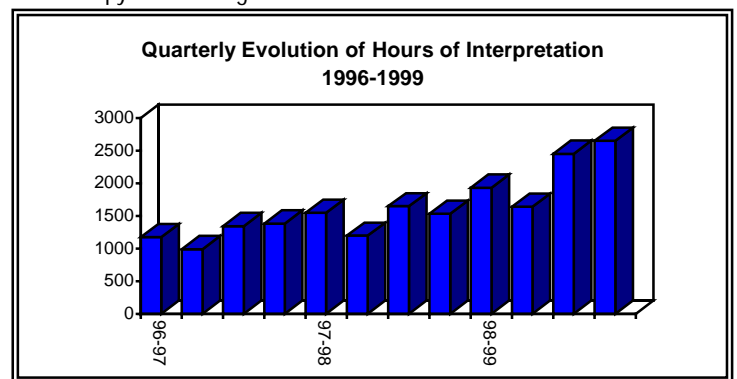


Collaborations:

- ✓ Renewal of the agreement with the Department of Education in the context of supporting *L'École montréalaise* (Montreal Schools).
- ✓ Cooperation with *Santé Québec's* survey on the health of ethno-cultural communities: validation of questionnaire translation into 4 languages.

Influence:

- ✓ Co-organizer of the 2nd International Conference *A Critical Link - Interpreters in the Community*, held in Vancouver, May 1998.
- ✓ Presentation in Vancouver of: *The cultural interpreter: an appreciated professional: A study on interpreting services: client, health care worker and interpreter points of view.*
- ✓ Presentation of *The Inter-regional Interpreter Bank in Montreal: Improving Access to Public Services in 50 Languages* at the International Conference *Preparing Together for the 21st century*, held in Edmonton, July 1998.
- ✓ In October, 100 or so people participated in *Bilan du congrès de Vancouver : l'interprétation en milieu social (Account of the Vancouver Conference: Interpreters in the Community).*
- ✓ Regular presentations for medical, social work, occupational therapy and nursing students at Montreal Universities.



Projects:

- ✓ 1999-2000, support measures for interpretation in the hospital context, backed by the Regional Board.
- ✓ January 2000, a micro-program at the Université de Montréal for cultural interpreters.
- ✓ May 2001, Montreal will host the 3rd International Convention on Interpretation in the social services sector.

To find out more:

- ✓ « Des voix pour l'avenir, 1993-1996. Bilan d'une expérience réussie », December 1996. Available in English under the title: "Giving voice to our future: the inter-regional interpreters bank, 1993-1996. Portrait of a successful experience".
- ✓ « Plan régional d'accessibilité aux communautés ethnoculturelles 1997-1999 » (Regional Plan for access on the part of ethno-cultural communities), March 1997.
- ✓ « L'interprète culturel : un professionnel apprécié. Étude sur les services d'interprétation : le point de vue des clients, des intervenants, des interprètes », November 1997. Syntheses in French and English under the following title: "The cultural interpreter: an appreciated professional: A study on interpreting services: client, health care worker and interpreter points of view".

Available in the Documentation Department: ☎ (514) 286-5604

¹ Canadian dollars