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Francophone community celebrated

Events mark 10th anniversary of provincial recognition

Alisha Morrissey, The Telegram

Bonne fête à la communauté francophone. Friday marked the 10th anniversary of the province's day of recognition of the francophone community in Newfoundland and Labrador.

To celebrate the day, Premier Danny Williams was on hand to raise the French Newfoundland and Labrador flag.

The event, attended by French community leaders, featured speakers and a performance by La Rose des Vents.

Williams and Francophone Affairs Minister Susan Sullivan both commented on the province's commitment to the community, both financially in terms of spending to keep the community vibrant, and culturally.

"There's 3,500 French souls in this province. The term was used today that they're surrounded by a sea of English," Williams said.

"There is a strong French presence in the hearts and minds of Newfoundland and Labrador and we would certainly welcome more francophones."

Sullivan delivered her remarks in both French and English.

She spoke about knowing first-hand the benefits of being bilingual and the tenacity of the French community to survive in an English-speaking society.

"It's appropriate we set aside a day to reflect," she said.

This year also marks the 10th anniversary of the creation of the francophone school board, the 25th anniversary of the Gaboteur newspaper and the 25th anniversary of the first raising of the French flag in Mainland.

There are five French-first language schools in this province.

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ILLUS: Students and guests gather at Confederation Building Thursday for an event to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the provincial government's recognition of the province's francophone community. - Photo by Alisha Morrissey/The Telegram