

## SPECIAL ENGLISH EDITION FOR ADMINISTRATORS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear colleagues,

Although we have recently adopted a policy of producing a bilingual *Infolettre*, with articles published in the language in which they are submitted, we are exceptionally offering an entirely English version this month, to introduce provincial, district and school administrators to Intensive and Post Intensive French. This comes at the request of a number of our members, and we hope that you will find it informative.

In this edition, you will read general information about our programs, as well as dates and locations of various training sessions for educators throughout the summer.

We had a very busy year with the creation and launching of our new website, in both official languages, and we invite you to visit it at [www.intensivefrench.ca](http://www.intensivefrench.ca)

The information included in this newsletter represents but a sample of what you will find on the website, and we hope that this brief introduction will whet your appetite, and entice you to explore it further.

I take this opportunity to wish everyone a well-deserved restful and safe summer vacation, and hope you will come back refreshed in the fall.

Best regards,

Lyne J. Montsion,  
President, National Intensive French Steering Committee

## WHAT IS INTENSIVE FRENCH?

Until recently, there have been only two options for learning French as a second language in the school system in Canada, the regular French program, usually called 'Core French', and French Immersion. Now there is a third way, Intensive French.

It is a program offering students of all abilities, who are not enrolled in immersion programs, an effective way to learn to communicate spontaneously in French. It is a literacy-based approach, which means that students learn to speak, read and write in French. Grammar is acquired through use rather than learning rules. Students talk, read and write about themselves and their experiences, and are active in the classroom. Intensive French is different from immersion, however, because students do not learn any subject matter in French. It is different from Core French because French is the language of communication in the classroom. It is based on the **Neurolinguistic Approach** to second language learning.





## WHY INTENSIVE FRENCH?

Intensive French is an engaging, fun and effective way to achieve spontaneous communication in French. It is student-centred, project-based, and works as follows:

In Grade 5 or 6 (it can vary from one province/territory to another) students are immersed in the French language for the better part of the school day, **for one semester**, through a balanced literacy approach: speaking, reading and writing. Mathematics and possibly one other subject usually taught by a specialist (such as music or physical education, for example) **remain taught in English throughout the entire school year**. Apart from those, no teaching of actual subjects takes place during the Intensive semester, where students learn to communicate in French from the very beginning. This is made possible through teacher modelling and other very specific teaching strategies for which each Intensive French teacher receives formal training. The Intensive semester is usually the first semester, and the second semester returns to the regular school schedule. During the “non-Intensive” semester, students continue to receive French instruction for the regular number of hours prescribed by the provincial/territorial curriculum, but preferably in larger blocks of time 2 or 3 times per week, in order to continue using the neurolinguistic approach strategies. Intensive French is also called the Neurolinguistic Approach (NLA) because it is based on how the brain learns and processes languages, and the different kinds of memories activated in the brain. *Learn more by exploring the following sections of our website:* [Home](#), [Teachers](#) and [Approach](#) pages.

Students learn the language in a fun and stimulating environment, by exploring a number of themes related to their own interests, such as family, pets, pastimes, favourite foods, activities, etc. The pace and activities are varied. They work alone, in pairs or small groups, or in the whole classroom context. “Brain breaks”, songs and games are integrated in the course of the day.

## WHO WE ARE

The National Intensive French Steering Committee is a voluntary group of professionals involved in implementing and administrating Intensive French programs in their jurisdiction, at the provincial or territorial level, or at the school district level where there is no provincial coordination of the intensive French program. The committee also includes independent consultants who are trained in the Neurolinguistic Approach and have been involved implementing the program in schools.

Represented at our annual meeting in Ottawa in October 2015 were the following jurisdictions: Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Yukon, New Brunswick, The Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, Nunavut and Alberta.

## STUDENTS' TESTIMONIALS

“Intensive French is a way we can become bilingual faster.”

“It is a new way to learn French that is fun and has lots of things to do.”

“At first I was scared to start Intensive French. After just two weeks, I saw that it was okay to make mistakes and that people could still understand me. Now I like speaking French in front of people.”

## PARENTS' TESTIMONIALS

"It is a win-win situation. It is an experience they shouldn't miss."

"It is a wonderful opportunity. I want all of my children to have this experience. "

"It was very exciting for him to learn a new language, therefore, I believe it was a confidence builder."

"My son never wants to miss a day of school. He is having so much fun while learning so much."

"This experience has had a positive impact on the whole family. My daughter in Grade 3 wants to know everything her brother learns every day in IF so she can teach her classmates and my daughter in Grade 9 Core French comes to her brother to get help! You can imagine the effect this has had on his self-esteem."

## TRAINING SESSIONS FOR SUMMER 2016

***SEE OUR WEBSITE FOR ALL THE CONTACTS***

For registration fees and other information, please consult the relevant contacts.

**July 4th - 8th**, Niagara (ON), NLA for Immersion. Contact: [André Charlebois](#)

**July 11th - 15th**, Trois-Pistoles (QC), Sponsored by Western University (ON). Contact: [France Dupuis](#)

**July 25th - 29th**, Course for University FSL Profs, Trois-Pistoles (QC), Sponsored by Western University (ON). Contact: [France Dupuis](#)

**August 15th - 19th**, Saskatoon (SK). Contact [Linda Osborne](#)

**August 16th - 19th**, Yellowknife (NWT), Intensive and Post Intensive French Training. Contact: [Jean-Marie Mariez](#) or [David Macfarlane](#)

**August 22th - 26th**: Intensive French, Niagara (ON). Contact: [André Charlebois](#)

**Planning a training session of your own? Please visit our website for a list of qualified trainers.**



## FEATURE ARTICLE

### Use of the NLA to maintain and improve the learning of second languages in the aboriginal communities

By Joan Netten, PhD.

At the end of April, I had the privilege of giving a presentation on the Neurolinguistic Approach (NLA) in Montreal at the Colloquium for Aboriginals, held as part of the annual Conference of the Quebec Association of Teachers of French as a Second Language (AQEFLS).

The presentation, given in French, had three sections: an explanation of the traditional way of teaching second languages and the importance of the recent research in neurolinguistics in refining this conception; secondly, an examination of the main characteristics of the NLA and of some of the new teaching strategies developed to enable students to learn to communicate in a new language in a school situation, and thirdly, the reasons why this approach seems to be particularly successful, and suitable for aboriginal language learners. In the first part, the origins of the traditional, or grammar-translation method of teaching second languages, the context in which it was used, and the changes that have come about in both the goals of second language learning and the student population since its inception were outlined. Adjustments made to this method to modernize it in order to respond to the need for a more communicative approach were also examined. The results of these changes and consequent need for the development of a new paradigm as a basis for creating curriculum and teaching strategies to enable students to develop in a school situation the skills necessary to communicate in a second language were discussed. The importance of the role of recent research into the acquisition of a second language by those in the field of neurolinguistics in enabling us to find solutions to the lacunae of the traditional approach was emphasized, in particular, the existence of two 'grammars', an internal grammar that is developed non-consciously by using the language in authentic conversations, and an external grammar, that is developed consciously to enable students to write correctly was explained, both of which need to be developed in the classroom for students to learn to communicate.

In the second part of the presentation, the five basic principles of the NLA were explained: the need to create in the classroom the conditions for students to develop internal grammar as well as external grammar; the need to use a literacy approach to the teaching of FLS, which emphasizes skill development, with special emphasis on the sequence of skill development from oral, to reading to writing; the importance of projects in enabling students to develop internal grammar non-consciously; the need for language use in the classroom to be authentic; and the absolute necessity for the use of interactive teaching strategies. A number of teaching strategies were examined to illustrate the importance of oral development first for both accuracy and fluency in oral and written communication. The primacy of oral development and the influence of oral development on written production were demonstrated briefly.

The last part of the presentation was devoted to an examination of the educational advantages of using the NLA. **In general, students find the approach much more interesting. They are actively involved in their learning through discussions, presentations and projects. The activities are of interest to them; they are encouraged, and are able, to express their own point of view. The approach is not scholarly, but uses our natural innate abilities; there are no exercises and little learning of rules. The language is personalized, and students develop a sense of ownership of their language learning. In addition, due to the use of interactive teaching strategies and group work, there is an atmosphere of co-operation and social responsibility in the classroom, which students appreciate. Lastly and most important, at the end of the process the students are able to communicate effectively in French. These factors bring about two other important advantages of the**

**program; students' self-esteem increases with their ability to succeed and communicate, and as a result, motivation for learning increases.** Several of these characteristics are particularly important for the aboriginal learners, such as the role of the teacher as a facilitator of communication, the use of a literacy approach that encourages language use and skill development from oral to writing, the value placed on group work, the emphasis on authentic language use and practical applications of the learning in a co-operative and non-competitive atmosphere. Reference was made to the work done highlighting these aspects (Allain, Demers and Pelletier, 2011). The fact that language learning is anchored in reality, and in authentic conversational exchanges, is one of the important aspects that enable aboriginal learners to have greater success in school learning based on this approach.

As a result, many aboriginal communities from the Pacific Coast, to Atlantic Canada, including the large Mohawk community spanning Ontario, Quebec and the nearby north-eastern United States, as well as in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, are experimenting or initiating programs using the NLA to learn not only their indigenous languages, but also English and French as second languages. More information on these communities and the initiatives they have undertaken may be found on our website ([www.intensivefrench.ca](http://www.intensivefrench.ca)).

The presentation was an opportunity to meet and hear about several of these undertakings. It is our hope that we will be able to continue our dialogue with the indigenous groups, and that the use of the NLA will contribute substantially to the maintenance and advancement of the learning of the aboriginal languages in Canada.

