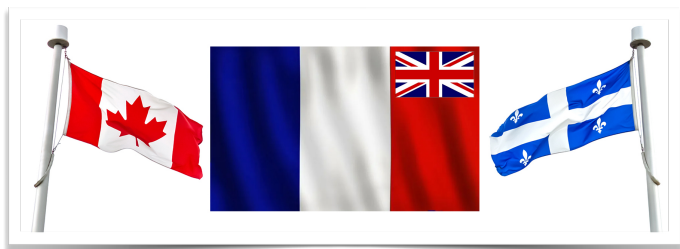


# Confessions of a French Canadian lifeguard



I am a French Canadian who speaks and writes in both official languages. However, I'm a mixed breed. I imagine my DNA looking like two combined flags, the main flag consisting of three vertical stripes; blue, white, and red, the "**Tricolore**," with an insert of the **Union Jack** sitting in the upper right-hand corner! To surmise, my mother's mother was what they refer to as a "British War Bride." She was from Sussex, England, and fell in love with my French Canadian grandfather, a military captain during WW2. They were wed in England and emigrated to Canada when the war ended. And on my father's side, my grandparents were French Canadian, so I'm 3/4's French and 1/4 English!



## I'm a Frog, you're a Frog, Kiss me!

With a French last name like "Franc," my English-speaking peers in school called me a "**Frog**," which was obviously hurtful. Conversely, my French Canadian friends, who heard me speak English, called me "**la tête carré**," suggesting that Brits have "square-shaped" heads, which also hurt. I remember thinking, "**I don't belong to either side**." And as kids (and even adults), we all want and need to feel that we *belong*.

This past year, with divorce turning my life upside down, I was lost and searching for a place where I could find comfort. That's when I discovered and became hooked on French radio, specifically **107.3 ICI MUSIQUE** on **Radio Canada**. What a treasure I found! Beyond my incredible appreciation for the quality and vast repertoire of music they serve up, I am equally in awe of the disk jockeys' command of the French language, which is without compare. I've always considered myself fluent in both languages, but there is fluent, and then there is fluent! In Québec, for those who live here, you know that spoken French can vary enormously, depending on region, education, and many other factors. I believe I fall in the middle to upper class because of how well and easily I can express myself in French. These D.J.s, however, are in the top 1% in terms of their command of the language. Their sentences are always beautifully structured, filled with an excellent vocabulary, and delivered without effort—no pauses or hums or haws. Just perfectly spoken French, which for me, is **music to my ears**.

## Je me souviens

Speaking of French Canadians, I had the pleasure of meeting one (of very few, I am told) at the pool a few weeks ago. A very old gentleman using a walker approached me as I was sitting in the spa corner of the pool. I was there around 1 p.m., which is unusual for me. I could see he wanted to speak with me, so I stood up and lent him an ear. When he realized that I spoke French, he was relieved! He asked me if I came to the pool regularly. I answered, "*No, unfortunately, I never come at the same time, and it also depends on the day.*" He explained that he used to come to the pool accompanied but that his swimming partner had passed away. So I said, "*Ahhh, it's a question of safety, not swimming alone...*" he replied, "Yes." He then added that he had not found a French-speaking resident who could take his friend's place. So he asked me if I would be his new partner! How courageous of him to ask, I thought. He said that whenever I intended to use the pool, to call him and that he would come at the same time. Imagine. I watched as he slowly scribbled his name, phone, and apartment number on a napkin and handed it to me. **I had just met 96-year-old Mr. Alban Roy!**



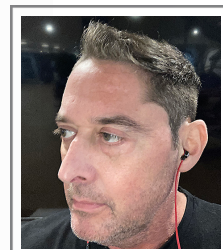
Having been a lifeguard, I'm used to watching over others whenever I'm in or near a body of water. Even though I am not physically capable of doing all the things a lifeguard can do, I can watch over this gentleman while I'm in the pool and assist him should he need it. He's quite physically challenged, so to make the effort required to prepare for getting into the water, do the exercises, and then take the time he needs to get changed is quite inspiring. He can barely walk up the steps to exit the pool. His back is severely bent forward, making it impossible for him to look up. After our 2nd swim, I told him I write for the Village News and would like to write an article about us. He was delighted!

## SONG OF THE MONTH:

**"Jolie Louise" - By Daniel Lanois**

[https://bit.ly/jolie\\_louise](https://bit.ly/jolie_louise)

From the Album *Acadie*, named the 20th greatest Canadian album of all time, this song has bilingual lyrics that evoke what it's like to be an English-speaking French Canadian living in Québec.



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