

Three marvelous weeks with FSL teachers from all over Canada – UBC’s Institut de Français à Québec

by Lori Thompson, Fredericton High School

This summer I had two goals: travel to an exciting city and attend a French language institute. I googled “French camp for teachers” to see where other Canadian FSL teachers go to polish their language skills. I noticed a three-week institute in Québec City offered through the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) French Centre. This institute invites teachers from BC, across Canada and the United States, to meet in this historical and unforgettable city to improve language skills and immerse in a Francophone community! I decided to attend their institute so I could meet other teachers from across Canada and learn in a city I love!

What made UBC’s institute truly unique was its location. Housed for the last 25 years at Mérici College (located next to The Battlefields Park and the Plains of Abraham), this location puts participants in the heart of Québec City. Surrounding the college is a thriving community of professionals, families and small businesses. My daily routine to get groceries or a morning coffee gave me a chance to meet local residents, immerse quickly in my new surroundings, and start communicating entirely in French. What an adventure!

The program was outstanding. The teaching staff provided an excellent curriculum and schedule of events that included a blend of classroom instruction, cultural lessons, songs, dance, improvisation, outings, celebrations, and French film. Not limited to the classroom, we were transported to Québec’s most beautiful scenic/historical areas. We visited

Québec’s oldest churches; toured a provincial museum housing Québec’s best artists; celebrated the maple syrup trade and traditions of the Quebecois; took in Montmorency Falls; and, completed a treasure hunt through Québec’s oldest business districts. There was never a dull moment. We were promised an immersion of the language and culture and we got it.

On a personal note, it was also nice to find some time on my own after a long school year. During down time, many participants took in the 10-day summer music festival (Festival d’été du Québec – FÉQ). It was surreal to have attended so many concerts including Sheryl Crow, Sting/Peter Gabriel, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Duran Duran, and Francophone bands like Coeur de Pirate! No one could be found in their apartments in the evenings: you were out or enjoying the “5 à 7” hosted outside the dorms by participants and program teachers. It was magical.

In the end, I returned home with a number of new approaches and fun activities for FSL teachers in my school. Having a chance to meet and live with teachers from all over the country was unique and special. This program did more than meet my professional interests and goals - it re-energized and re-ignited my love of French language and culture. I left feeling on top of the world!

Now that’s great summer PD.

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