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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION IN CANADA AND THE PRESENT ROLE OF ATIO

Translation and interpretation are two related professions whose origins go back to the very beginnings of Canadian history. Interpretation as such actually began with Jacques Cartier. During his very first voyage to Canada, in 1534, the famous discoverer had to deal with the Indians of Gaspé and Baie des Chaleurs, and the earliest editions of the accounts of his voyages included short glossaries of the language used by the natives. In addition, during his first voyage, Cartier recruited two Indians, Taïnoagny and Demagaya, took them to France to learn French and brought them back to Canada in 1535. These two Indians became his interpreters in his dealings with the Indians of Stadacona. Subsequently, several other Indians were taken to France, to learn French, and brought back to Canada to serve as interpreters along the St. Lawrence Valley.

Throughout the French Regime, many missionaries established glossaries and grammars which have not yet all been inventoried, although some of these original manuscripts are still to be found in the archives, in Quebec City or in Ottawa.

With the end of the French Regime in 1760, Canadians were no longer mainly concerned with the Indian languages, but rather with English. As early as 1764, the first newspaper published in Canada, *The Quebec Gazette*, was bilingual.

In 1842, when the Jesuits returned to Canada, they once again became interested in the Indian languages, which several of them spoke and knew well. The most distinguished of these Jesuit linguists was Father Joseph Richard, who died a few years ago in Toronto, at the age of 101. It appears that he left many manuscripts with the English-speaking Jesuit community in Toronto.

Many Canadian writers, at some time in their careers, practised the profession of translator or interpreter. François-Xavier Garneau and Louis Fréchet are among the most illustrious of these pioneers. One might also add the name of Pamphile LeMay, whose translation, in alexandrines, of Longfellow's *Evangeline* remains famous.

With very few exceptions, all their successors, whether they were poets, prose-writers, essayists, historians or newspapermen, had experience in translation bureaus, at one time or another, especially in Ottawa where the French and English languages have had equal status in Parliament since Confederation. Thus a whole host of Canadian writers have worked in Ottawa translation bureaus: Alfred Garneau, son of the historian, Benjamin Sulte, William Chapman, Louvigny de Montigny, Jules Fournier, Alonzo Cinq-Mars, Edouard Chauvin, Alfred Desrochers, Eva Sénécal, together with Paul Morin, in Montreal, and Rosaire Dion-Lévesque, who translated Whitman, in the United States.

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION IN CANADA

The professions of translator and interpreter have therefore a long and highly respectable tradition in Canada.

Nevertheless, before 1920, no real attempt had been made to give these two professions any organizational structure. At a founding meeting held on November 10, 1920, in the Ottawa Public Library, Mr. Louis d'Ornano, then a translator with the Navy Department, invited all federal civil servants in Ottawa using the French language "... to join in the founding of a professional association"; of 130 persons who were invited, 72 applied for membership. Mr. d'Ornano secured the active co-operation of Mr. Arthur Beauchesne, then Assistant Clerk in the House of Commons, of Mr. Jobson Paradis, translator and Chief of Publications in the Mines Department, and of Mr. Jules Tremblay, Assistant Chief of the French Journal in the House of Commons and who, in 1910, had been secretary of the famous *Ecole littéraire de Montréal*.

The "Association technologique de langue française d'Ottawa" (such was the name given to the professional group in 1920) was thus born. Among the founding members were some who are prominent in Canadian history, for instance, Gustave Lanctôt, the famous historian, Francis-J. Audet, a scholarly archivist, Rodolphe Girard, a prominent novelist of his day, Joseph de la Broquerie-Taché, Parliamentary Librarian, Louvigny de Montigny, author and former member of the *Ecole littéraire de Montréal*, and finally, Léon Gérin, one of the first sociologists in Canada. Many other names could be added to this list.

Between 1921 and 1962, the "Association technologique de langue française d'Ottawa" operated more as a group concerned with the quality of language than as a professional organization, although this does not mean that its role was negligible or its work superficial. Quite the contrary. The "Association technologique de langue française d'Ottawa" spared no effort to improve the quality of both official languages through lectures, and particularly through the publication of numerous glossaries which gradually came into wide use throughout the country.

Incorporated on March 2, 1921, by Letters Patent issued by the Government of Ontario, the "Association technologique de langue française d'Ottawa" became the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO) by supplementary Letters Patent on September 10, 1962.

The Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario decided, a few years ago, that it should re-organize along more strictly professional lines.

The period 1962-69 has been one of rapid change for ATIO, and under the firm leadership and unswerving steadfastness of its Council, the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario has been resolutely working towards official recognition of the professions of translator and interpreter through a private bill which it is hoped will be passed by the

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION IN CANADA

Ontario Legislature in 1970 – the year which will mark our fiftieth anniversary.

Until it is granted official and legal recognition as a professional body by the Ontario Legislature, the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO) remains the sole organization representing the professions of translator and interpreter in Ontario. For this reason, ATIO feels justified in expecting the support of all translators and interpreters practising in Ontario and, more particularly, the granting of official recognition by Queen's Park, in the very near future.

Source : *Annuaire de l'Association des traducteurs et interprètes de l'Ontario*, Ottawa, 1971, p. 50, 52, 54.