

Steven: The real reason I don't feel Quebecois is because they always tend to put a label on immigrants. For example, I have dreads. It will be harder for me to find a job than a Quebecois - not even a Quebecois that's comes from here because I come from here too. Just the fact that you are Quebecois and white. It's like you have more value than an immigrant.

Rose-Eva (hosting): Hello and Welcome to the Unheard Youth Podcast. My name is Rose-Eva Forgues-Jenkins and you're listening to the Unheard Youth Podcast.

Welcome to our first French episode! If you're not a French speaker, now is the time to bring up the French translations that are provided on our website [unheardyouth.ca](http://unheardyouth.ca) to read along.

This podcast is created at the Centre for Race and Culture in Edmonton, Alberta. We're featuring the voices of newcomer youth voices in Canada.

The title of this episode is: I Don't Feel Quebecois. This title is inspired from the conversations that we recorded with the youth at College Ahuntsic in Montreal. At the beginning of this episode, you heard some words by Steven. Steven and the other youths have a lot to say about the subjects of identity, migration and belonging. They also talk about the stereotype of what a typical Quebecois person looks like, and some of the lesser Quebec history.

In the episode, you'll hear more from Steven and the other students at College Ahuntsic. But first, some statistics about the city of Montreal.

The city of Montreal has a population of over 1.6 million people. In 2011, 23% of this population were immigrants. Immigrants make up 11% of the province of Québec.

But do these newcomers feel represented in Quebec?

To find an answer to this question we visited College Ahuntsic in Montreal to find out what the students had to say. Two different groups of students has an exchange on the themes of migration, identity, and belonging. You'll hear from the first group in this episode, and the second group in the next one.

Jean-Yves Sylvestre is a social worker at College Ahuntsic, and facilitated these conversations. Jean-Yves knows the students very well, and did an excellent job.

In this conversation, you'll hear what the students had to say about being Quebecois, and whether they feel Quebecois or not.

Jean-Yves: Hi, my name is Jean-Yves I'm a technician in social worker in College Ahuntsic. I am ??? years old. I'm a man of a certain age (laughter) And I was born in Quebec, now the question is do I see myself as a Quebecois? My answer would be negative. I will be talk about it later why that is but I don't perceive myself as a Quebecois. So, I'm passing the mic to Anne.

Anne: Hi, my name Anne. I'm not of a certain age. I'm relatively young. I am, not to say Quebecois, actually, I live in Quebec. I'm Canadian. My dad is from British Columbia and it's in

that culture that I was raised. Now, in Quebec, I live in a neighborhood that is more ethnically diverse than most people in Quebec. So, this fact can change my perception on the cultural identity in Quebec.

Julie: Okay so I'm Julie, I'm going to say my age. I'm 20 years old, I'm about to turn 21 years old. I'm still a student. And I'm also born here, in Quebec. Sorry I was going to say in Canada. And do I see myself as a Quebecois? For me, it's going to be a no. If people ask me what ethnicity I am, it depends where I am.

Anne Sophie: Hi, my name is Anne-Sophie, I'm 20 years old. I'm still a student. About the question if I see myself as a Quebecois. It's also negative for me. I don't really consider myself as a Quebecois. And if you were ask me what ethnicity I consider myself it's Haitian. And that's what it is.

Mike: I'm Mike. To answer the question, if I consider myself as a Quebecois, honestly, I don't have a clear idea of what is to be a Quebecois. I don't think I'm in a good place to answer to the question. I think it would be better for me to answer that question after the discussion, when the perception of what is a Quebecois will be more clear.

Jean-Yves: So, if I want to be clearer on the perception or the impression... it's more an impression. Do you have the impression that you are part this culture? Do you have the impression that you are represented by the images or perception from people here? Are you a part of the projects for the future here?

Mike: I found that there are projects that could represented me but those projects are not exposed to the world enough. Because in Montreal, it's more multicultural but Montreal it's not only the Quebec. Quebec is more than that. So, in Quebec, as much as it is multicultural in Montreal, there's a lot more white people in the north of Quebec, but if we go higher, there's Inuit that are in Quebec. So it depends on what we want to look at, it depends what we want to see.

Steven: So, my name is Steven. To start off, I'm born in Quebec, I grew up here. I always lived here. But to answer the question if I feel Quebecois, it will be negative for me too. Because where I grew up, its more in a multi-cultural neighbourhood where the most of the people are immigrants. And I think my culture, the music I'm listening to, the movies I'm watching, everything that I do, the sports that I play, doesn't have any connection to Quebec culture. For example, I play basketball, I also play a lot of soccer. But the majority of Quebecois plays to hockey. Even Quebec series, like the movies and tv shows, I don't connect to it. I was born here and yes I grew up here. But I don't feel like a Quebecois.

Marie: So, I'm Marie. I wasn't born here. I was born in Haiti. But I've been here for a long time.

Jean-Yves: Wait. Just to be clear. How old were you when you came here?

Marie: I was one year old.

Jean-Yves: But why is it important for you to say that you were born in Haiti? Because you came here when you were one year old.

Marie: Because, I feel more associated to Haitian culture even though I grew up here. And it's also that I went to private school with mostly quote unquote "white" people, Quebecois and even despite this, I feel more Haitian than Quebecois.

Jean-Yves: So, despite the fact that you went to private school, in places that where the community was more Caucasian/Quebecois. For you, you feel more attached to the Haitian community.

Marie: Yes.

Jennifer: So, my name is Jennifer. I'm 18 years old. I was born in Quebec. Do I feel Quebecois? Not at all. I lived in Laval and they say Laval is a city for white people but in the neighborhood I grew up in there was always Arabic people and black people. So, I don't really feel Quebecois and I can't say that I know their culture because it's not the case. So, no I'm not Quebecois.

Jean-Yves: Okay. Wow. Listen, I'm going to say something that will maybe offend you. I would've never thought that at your age, because I have a child of your age, that for you the integration would be hard for you. That you wouldn't be seen as Quebecois. I must admit that I have a lot of difficulty with the fact that you don't see yourselves as Quebecois. But what makes that in your life made you feel that way and we are talking about an average of people between the age of 18 and 25 years old? And now, for me, I'm older, I'm past my thirties and forties. Back in the day we talked a lot about integration. We fought so that we could fit in. We wanted to be part of the system here. In terms of unemployment, it was a problem for the black community and the Indigenous communities. But nowadays, I work in high schools, in elementary schools, I currently work in a college. Schools are now much more mixed. The communities are more connecting. Neighborhoods are more diverse than before. In Montreal, it's very hard to find one community in one neighborhood. It's really easy to find many cultures. For example, in the 90's. I wasn't going to HOSHELAGA, HOSHELA-MAISONNEUVE was for the "pure" Quebecois. So, we were not going there. Nowadays, we have an African community very present in HOSHELAGA, a Haitian community very present in HOSHELAGA. So, more and more community's from around the world. The CEGEP Maisonneuve is a CEGEP really diverse with many different cultures. And now you are telling me today, Jean-Yves, we don't feel Quebecois. Why is that? What makes, now you are the second generation of Quebecois here born in Quebec. Those with parents--

Julie: We are not Quebecois.

Jean-Yves: Sorry?

Julie: We are not Quebecois.

Jean-Yves: But why? It's easy to say that you are not. But there's a reason why you don't feel like... Now he (Steven) talked about culture, music, movies. That would be a part of it, that's true. You are right. But there's more than that. Because in schools, for me -- I'm going to tell a short story and then I'm going to stop talking so much. But when I was in CEGEP, I had culture shock. I come from Haitian environment in the 90s I went to a school, we were 90% Haitian. I get to the CEGEP, Maisonneuve, and then I walk into class: I was the only black person. Out of 30. I turned around and left. So I had a shock. But you guys, you don't experience that. There are black, Arabic, all sorts of people in classes now! But what is it that doesn't make you feel Quebecois?

Julie: Well earlier I was talking about how I say what nationality I am depending on where I am. For instance if I'm in Quebec I will say that I'm of Haitian origin, and if I happen to be in Haiti, I would say that I'm Canadian. Just because both sides will never accept me for the nationality I want to say that I am. Here in Quebec the reason why I say that I am not Quebecois: when I was little & when my mom immigrated here because she's born in Haiti, she landed in St-Michel and often I would go to Montreal North with my godmother, it was her that took care of me while my mom would go to work. So, I have always been in that zone but I was never outside and I never looked at others based on the colour of their skin. Growing up I moved to Laval but in it was St-Francois. And in St-Francois, there is a big majority of different cultures so like for me there was no difference, a person was a person, you're white, okay so what? You are black, okay so what? If you are bad person, you are a bad one and if you are good one, you are one. Until when I was in primary school, my mom decided to move because that part of St-Francois was starting to have more problems so my mom decided to move completely on the other side of Laval like at the opposite end, in Laval west. Where I did primary school and one of the things they told was 'Return in your country' I was like 'super but I'm in my country. I didn't understand why people would say that because I was in my country? And he was like return to your country anyways. I'm like... Okay, that's clear, the message went through. Until now, what he said really affected me, there's always comments towards me... The individual won't ever see me as myself but only as the colour of my skin. Weirdly, yesterday, I commented to my sister that every time a Caucasian person that approach me, especially when they learn that I'm Haitian. The first two things they're going to talk to me about is fried pork (Haitian meal) [laughter]

Jean Yves: I understand

Julie: We're laughing but if you knew I was going to say that it's probably because it happens to you too. The first thing they're going to say is "fried pork is so good!" and I'm like "oh really!? I don't even eat it". And the second thing is about the fact that I'm lighter. I'm black but not black enough. And then I'm always trying to explain that Haitian people comes in different shades. You can find them completely white and you can find them completely dark. And there's no connection added to that blah blah blah.

Jean-Yves: Okay, so you always have to explain your origins?

Julie: Exactly

Jean-Yves: Yet, you are born in Quebec.

Julie: I'm born in Quebec

Jean-Yves: Wow. What would be the incident that determined how you no longer feel perceived as Quebecois? Because you've all gone through some incidents. Because for you not to feel Quebecois, it must be because you experienced something. For me, it was the language. You know I can talk Quebecois too. [imitation of stereotypical Quebecois accent different than Jean-Yves's regular voice] ... Well, I can do it. And I worked in a...we called it a shop, but it's a factory. I'm in a factory, the guy comes along and says:

"hey, Jean-Yves, you speak so well... you speak well, you speak French well enough. We understand you clearly. We understand everything that you're saying. Where did you learn to how to talk like that?" Well... I was born here. He says "Wait, say Robert". I said "Robert." He

said “(French slang for “damn”) even Robert you can say it properly. You don’t say Robert (Haitian accent with a rolled R), you say Robert (without the rolled R).” I said “Yeah, what does it have to do with anything?” He said “No, no, no, the majority of Haitian people say Robert (imitates a Haitian accent).” I said “okay...” and he said “(French slang for “damn) you are integrated.” That was my introduction...

This has been the way that I’ve been perceived. Despite the fact that I wanted to fit in and be a part of the community, the perception they have of me as always been the Haitian guy who rolls his R’s. You’re the one that doesn’t roll your R’s... What was the incident that you experienced that made you feel like you weren’t a part of the province of Quebec? That made you feel left out of the project of Quebec? That you were not from here?

Anne-Sophie: Seriously, is not a personal experience, it’s more what I’ve seen in the newspaper. I think it was a match that Jean Pascal had and he won his first game. The newspapers were saying something along the lines of “our Quebecois boxer, who is from Quebec has won the game blah blah blah”... And then when he lost a game, he was a Haitian man from Haiti who lost a game. So, I asked myself, why are they quick to change roles when he loses? But when he wins, he’s Quebecois.

Jean-Yves: So, what we can observe is that what is negative, there will be a tendency for this to condemned, erased and brought back to the original culture. But if you have positive actions, there’ll be a tendency to attach this to the dominant culture.

Anne-Sophie: And another thing, I’m a person who really like to change my hair style, I always have a different style. One time, in one of my past relationships, every week I would come over with a different hair style, and his grandmother said “hey, you always have a different hair style, is it your real hair? Is it your real hair? Can I touch it? Can I...?” Seriously, I think it’s annoying, because I wouldn’t go to my boyfriend’s grandmother hair and be like “Is it your real hair? Is it really white?” Like... No. You don’t do that. And I think they allowed themselves to reproduce our style. The way we dress, they are taking our colors, our hair styles. But when we are doing it, people have tendency to put a negative connotation to it. But if it’s someone of another colour, like a white person or whatever, it’s okay. She did it the right way, it’s really pretty. But on us, if I came in with a big afro tomorrow then I’m ratchet. I have box braids, I’m ratchet. A white girl does it and she’s fine. I don’t know...I don’t feel the need to enter in a culture that doesn’t appreciate me.

Jean-Yves: Yeah

Mike: For me, everywhere that I go, I get asked if I sell drugs. I don’t see why I should be seen as a drug dealer by the way that I act because...

Jean-Yves: It’s not the way that you act, because they don’t know you. It’s the way that you’re dressed. So, because of the way that you’re dressed, you’re judged and associated with a way of acting or a way of being. So, because you are dressed this way, you must be a drug dealer. But what does it mean?

Mike: Well it means, not that I’m different but it’s like a label that is stuck onto me. So, wherever I go, however I act, whatever I do. When I say to people that I’m studying in health science, they don’t believe me. They say no, you are studying in selling drugs (laughs).

Jean-Yves: But it's an excellent point that you are bringing up because you know that at some point, and it's sad what I'm going to say. But if you want to progress in the field of health sciences, there's going to have to be a point where you have to change your clothing style.

Mike: Why do I have to do that?

Jean-Yves: Because for them, you have to adapt yourself to their style. Because if you are different, you won't be able to progress to the next levels. Trust me, even at the college level, I have students that experience that. In specific programs or in general programs...they won't say it but the way they are going to act with you, that's what's going to happen.

Marie: For me, I don't have a specific experience but it's just when I was younger and other kids were talking about their weekend or their vacation it was never things that I would do. For example, they went to my grand-mothers chalet and went skiing. But being Haitian, I won't go skiing necessarily. I know... it's just that I don't feel associated to those things. Like did you ever go to Lac-Saint-Jean? For me, when I go to vacation, I don't think about going to Lac-Saint-Jean. It's just to show you that my mentality and theirs are not really the same. So it wasn't really an incident...I don't know how to explain it, it was just something that makes me feel like I can't relate.

Anne: For me, first of all, I just want to mention to everyone listening that I am the only one who's not a person of colour. I'm white, but like I said before I consider myself...I adhere more to Canadian values rather than Quebecois. Why? Because for me I think Quebec has an identity problem as a community. I think it's an identity that is based on kind of an oppositional syndrome where we... well not we because I don't include myself in it, but they feel they have to protect their identity that's like...you know a little bit piecemeal because the history of Quebec is quite recent. To protect their identity is to be against everything that could be contrary to it. In the end, they are like declaring war on every little thing that doesn't fit in because Quebecois identity is not strong enough to defend itself and I also think that's why racism is so embedded in Quebecois culture. It's because it's an oppositional syndrome to oppose everything that's not "us", to protect the small things that we have. It's also maybe that here in Quebec is the only place in North America where we fully speak French, they maybe feel threatened by other cultures and that's why they are acting the way they are. But at the same time, it really really doesn't justify it. There's a difference between explaining and justifying and I think that in Canada we have a different presence in the world and in North America too. We are different from the United States too but we aren't oppositional to it. And that's what makes the beauty of Canada, is that Canada knows and assumes its diversity. But I don't think that the Quebecois are like this.

Steven: Well... to tell an anecdote. The reason why I say I'm not Quebecois, is not question of... yes, earlier I talked about culture, music, movies, but the Quebecois also listen, for example, to English music and watch American movies. But the real reason I don't feel Quebecois is because, just like Mike said earlier, they always tend to put a label on immigrants. And I'm not only talking about black people, Arabic people too. For example, I have dreads. It will be harder for me to find a job than a Quebecois. Not even a Quebecois that's comes from here because I come from here too. Just the fact that you are Quebecois, white. It's like you have more value than an immigrant. For me, in my youth when I was 16 years old it was hard to find a job when I was sending out resumes. However, I did a lot of internships, a lot of things, I helped a lot people but it was volunteering because I didn't have job experience. Nobody wanted to hire

me and every time they would say “you don’t have enough work experience for us to hire you”. But I thought to myself “if I don’t have experience, give me experience. How do you want me to have experience if you don’t give me experience?” Later, I found a job and all that. But I have a Quebecois friend and his resume wasn’t as complete as mine, he didn’t have any job experience just like me but they choose him. I think it’s always because of appearance. I found a job now, and how I succeeded in getting that job is because I sent my application in online. And I don’t have an accent. Well, I don’t have a Creole accent because I’m not born in Haiti. But I’m Haitian and I consider myself Haitian. So when they interviewed me over the phone, I didn’t speak like a Haitian so they didn’t know I was black. And I think that’s why when I showed up to the job – they hired me over the phone and when I showed up they had no choice because they had already told me that I had been hired. But the mistake that I used to make is that I would show up and give my resume in person. They were already putting a label on me. So I’m sure they didn’t even give my resume to the manager. They were just waiting for me to go so that they could put my resume in the garbage. That’s it. There are many anecdotes like that end up making me feel like I’m not Quebecois.

Jean-Yves: So for a lot of you - do you have one culture or two cultures? Julie you were saying earlier that when you’re in Haiti, you don’t say that you’re Quebecois, you say that you’re Canadian. And when you’re here you’re Haitian. Anne-Sophie, do you have two cultures? How do you perceive yourself here when we talk about cultures? Do you only have one?

Anne-Sophie: Well for me personally, I would say that I have two. I’m Haitian Canadian.

Julie: I said ish. Because, like I said earlier, people usually see me, most of the time actually, as my skin colour. So I don’t want say Haitian-Canadian because they’ll think that I’m a mix. So I say that I’m 100% Haitian, or I say one half Haitian one half Haitian so that they’ll fully understand that I’m Haitian.

Jean Yves: There were celebrations for the 375th.

Anne Sophie: I don’t know what that is

Jean-Yves: the 375<sup>th</sup> was for the city of Montreal. So the celebrations were all about the city of Montreal, the togetherness of Montreal, the cultures, the different cultures...

Julie: Which cultures??

Anne Sophie : That’s the thing, you have to be precise in what you say.

Jean-Yves: No, I’m very precise! But go ahead, I’m listening

Anne-Sophie: Listen. Personally, I’ve never heard of the Montreal 375<sup>th</sup>. If I was being celebrated, maybe I would have gone. Maybe I would have been aware, but I had no idea.

Obviously, for the Quebecois, the only Haitian songs you’re going to hear at Quebecois festivals are “La Compagnie Créole” (La Compagnie Créole is a popular French pop band from French Guiana and the French West Indies. They originally started singing in Creole but quickly adopted French as their main language) That’s all it is. If it’s not La Compagnie Créole there’s nothing else. They don’t try and learn. Personally, if you don’t try and learn about my culture, why should I learn about yours?

In history class, do we have classes on Rosa Parks? Or things like that? Do we have classes about that? They don't talk to us about that. Most of the time they say, "oh, we don't have time to get into that topic because we're going to focus on what happened in Quebec blah blah blah". But what my ancestors did isn't important?

Jean-Yves: I don't want to cut you off, but I just wanted to give you the reality. There's Mathieu da Costa who accompanied Christopher Columbus when they came here.

Anne-Sophie: But see I didn't even know that!

Jean-Yves: Exactly, we don't talk about those people. He was black and an interpreter. He played a major role. But we never talk about those people or...I forget the name. Can someone look up: first black woman slave executed?

Anne: Marie-Joseph Angélique?

Jean-Yves : Yes, Marie-Joseph Angélique! We never talk about that when it comes to talking about Quebec history. I find it unfortunate. So maybe that's why we don't feel involved. I know, I'm teaching you some things today, I know. But that's why we don't feel involved. And yet, there are figures who exist and that are an integral part of the story of Canada and Quebec. But why are we not talking about it? I don't know. But I can understand that we don't feel integrated. And we don't feel like we belong.

Julie: How can you feel like Quebecois on a land that's been stolen? It's like how someone told me when I was younger, "Go back to your country". And you? I don't know where you're supposed to go back to, but go back too. They're in a hurry to make us feel like we shouldn't be there. Anyways, all the negative sentiments that there are towards us, but we'll never forget Indigenous people. And I don't think I'll say that, yes I'm Canadian and I won't say Quebecois because like, I really don't feel Quebecois. But what about Indigenous people? I'll never forget them and I'll never say that I am Quebecois and that this territory belongs to me because sincerely, I'll never forget my ancestors just like I'll never forget the ancestors that were here before.

Jean-Yves: True, there were people who were there even before the French got here. And sorry, before I was saying Christopher Columbus with Mathieu da Costa. Sorry, it was Samuel de Champlain. So, Samuel de Champlain was accompanied by Mathieu da Costa who was his interpreter, therefore a pillar. We talk about Samuel de Champlain but we don't talk about Mathieu da Costa, who was black.

Rose-Eva (hosting): This brings us to the end of the conversation with students at College Ahuntsic in Montreal. The title of this episode is "Je me sens pas Quebecois /I don't feel Quebecois"

As someone who only visits Quebec on occasion, I learned a lot from these discussions. Quebec has its own culture, but I think that the words of these students are relevant for everyone in Canada.

We've reached the end of this episode of the Unheard youth podcast. I'd like to thank the students for their generosity in sharing their story. I'd also like to thank our facilitator, Jean-Yves Sylvestre.

We would also like to thank our funders, friends and partners at CJSR 88.5 FM and the Edmonton Community Foundation.

This project has been made possible in part by the Government of Canada. Ce Project a ete rendu possible en partie grace au gouvernement du Canada.

Thank you to Chivengi for providing the music featured in this podcast

We would also like to recognize the territories on which these recordings took place. Montreal is the traditional territory of Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mohawk which are also known as the Kanien'hehaka. We would also like to note that Montreal is known as Tiotia:ke in the language of Kanien'kehá:ka.

This episode has been produced by me, Rose-Eva Forgues-Jenkins at the Centre for Race and Culture. The Centre for Race and Culture acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 Territory, traditional homelands for many Indigenous peoples including Nehiyaw, Sauteaux, Niitsitapi, Metis, Dene, and Nakota. We pay our respects to the ancestors past and present who call this land home.