

Stephanie: For real, I hope that one day in the future, that the Quebecois children that are from origin X will feel Quebecois, because that's what we want. That's the point of this discussion, it's not just to be like, "Oh I don't want to be Quebecois". It's that we want to be integrated correctly, without discrimination, without stereotypes. At the end of the day we need to find a way for everyone to feel integrated

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 our second French episode! If you're not a French speaker, now is the time to bring up the French translations on our website unheardyouth.ca so that you can 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.

This episode is entitled: Feeling integrated. We got this inspiration for this title from the conversations that we recorded with the youth at the College Ahuntsic in Montreal. At the beginning of the episode, you heard from Stephanie. In this episode, you're hearing more from Stephanie and the other students at the college had to say on the subject of integration in Quebec.

In the last episode, we talked a bit about the statistics on immigration within Quebec, and we heard from the first group. In this episode, you'll hear what the second group has to say. Once again, social worker Jean-Yves Sylvestre will facilitate the discussion. We'll hear what the students had to say about representations of minorities in the media, and in Quebecois celebrations.

Florange : I'm Florange, I'm 17 years old and I'm a student at College Ahuntsic . My mom is Haitian and my dad is Irish but I mostly lived with my mom. So, I consider myself more Haitian. If you ask me what I am, I'll say that I'm Haitian. So that's that.

Nathalie: My name is Nathalie. I'm 21 years old. I've only been in Quebec for 4 years. But actually I was born here. When I was 7 years old, my parents decided to go back in Syria to live there. It was their preference and it was better for them. I lived in Syria for 10 years. I forgot my French but when the war started, my parents decided to come back here. That's why I have an accent. My French is not too perfect. You might notice some mistakes but yeah... and it's my first session here in college Ahuntsic.

Érika: Hi, my name is Érika. I was born here. So technically, I'm Quebecois because I'm born here but my mom is from Nicaragua and my dad from Panama. At home I speak Spanish, of course, at school French but yeah. For everything that's concerning my identity, I don't consider myself as Quebecois. I have no affinity to Quebecois culture except for small details like poutine, which I love. Besides that, I can't say that I consider myself as Quebecois.

Stephanie: So, I'm Stephanie. I'm 17 years old. I go to Ahuntsic and I'm in the paralegal program. I would like to be a lawyer one day. My backgrounds are... my mom is born in Haiti and my dad is born here but both of his parents are Haitians. So, how I feel... well, I don't feel Quebecois, like most of people here. I don't know how to explain it but all my life, when you ask

me what nationality I am or where you're from for example, I'll say that I'm from here. And most of them are like, no, no, what are your origins? Okay... so it's not enough for you, if I tell you that I'm from here? I have to give you a little more because I'm not the colour of a typical white Quebecois francophone?

Jean-Yves: Because they automatically ask you, no, no, no, wait, wait-

Stephanie: What's your background originally?

Jean-Yves: What's your origin because that's not possible?

Stephanie: It's not possible!... so I'm like "okay well I'm Haitian... I don't know what else to tell you"

Jean-Yves: How did you feel when you went through that experience?

Stephanie: Seriously, I did respond that but at the same time if I respond and say that I'm Quebecois, they will find a way for me to say that I'm Haitian. So, I feel left out. Left out of the Quebecois community. Because they don't search to see if you are born here. They search to see if you are born somewhere else. Or what ethnicity you are because... I don't know why, but it's disappointing.

Jean-Yves: So, they are trying to create a difference. You can't be part of us, because you are different. Florange?

Florange: I'm born here

Jean-Yves: Do you feel Quebecois?

Florange: No. Not really, no. I'm not Quebecois.

Jean-Yves: That's shocking. Really, that shocks me.

Florange: Why?

Jean-Yves: I'm going to find young people who are going to say that they are Quebecois. Young black people. I'm sure about that. It's going to happen. And I would want to know the difference between them that feel Quebecois and your group who doesn't feel Quebecois. It makes me feel very sad but at the same time, if I don't even feel Quebecois...I can understand. Go on, why?

Florange: Well, it's more because I have my own perception of what is a Quebecois and I don't associate myself to one of them.

Jean-Yves: Hold on. A perception. You just touch an important point. What is the perception of a Quebecois for you?

Florange: For me, a Quebecois it's a Quebecois "de souche" (a concept that can be roughly translated to being an "old-stock" Quebecois). If he talks to you, he's going to talk with a good old Quebecois accent.

Jean-Yves: So, the language.

Florange: He's white (laughs). You know?

Jean-Yves: When they say "loh loh" (a Quebecois slang word for "now, now"). "How's it going, ouain"? (said in a traditional Quebecois accent)

Florange: Yeah, it bothers me.

Jean-Yves: But I have the accent, I can speak Quebecois.

Florange: Yeah, I know, but you are more like a chameleon, just like my mother. When she answers the phone, she seems like a good Quebecois. For real. One day I called and I didn't even recognize her.

Jean-Yves: Wow

Florange: It was that bad. I was like "mom?". But when they see her in real life, they are like "Oh, I didn't know. I thought that you were... white". They are just shocked when they see her. She's really like a chameleon. I can't be like that. I don't feel comfortable to do that. If you don't understand the way that I talk, well then you don't understand the way that I talk. That's it. But I don't like to change the way that I talk, so that someone else can understand what I'm saying...

Jean-Yves: Or to feel accepted. And maybe this is where there's the clash between the generations, because maybe I'm the same generation as your mom. And I'll probably explain why, maybe, but first I want to hear what Nathalie has to say about the question, if she's Quebecois or not.

Nathalie: Honestly, no. Especially because it's only been 4 years that I'm in Quebec. Even though I'm born here, if a Quebecois person were to ask me where I'm from, I won't say Quebecois because I feel like they would laugh in my face. Because, like I said, it's only been 4 years that I'm here and he's going to recognize my accent. Because my accent is not a Quebecois accent. Yeah, so the accent and the way that I look, I give off the impression that I'm Arabic.

Jean-Yves: So?

Nathalie: No, but I mean that I just can't consider myself as a Quebecois.

Florange: Okay, so when I was talking about culture before it's more like... So I have my best friend. In my group of friends, she's the only one who's white. And she's my best friend. I'm always at her house. So, I know how it is at her house. I know the mentality of her parents and everything. And it's VERY different compared to my house. Because I live with my grandparents, they from Haiti. If I go outside with pants that have holes in them, they're going to say "Where are you going with those pants? Did you find them in the street?"

Jean-Yves: By the way, I really agree with them.

Florange: No!

Jean-Yves: You can't buy pants with holes in them!

Florange: Yes, it's the style!

Jean-Yves: No, but you buy pants with a hole in it? What's the point?

Florange: It's fashionable right now!

Jean-Yves: I don't get it. Anyways, I'm not going into it.

Florange: So, anyways. Yes, she argues with her parents and everything but the way she talks to them, oh my God. If I talk to my mom the way that she does... Oh! She's going to send me back to Haiti!(laughs) Even though I wasn't born over there. So, I see that and I'm like its no, that doesn't work. It's not the same thing, not the same situation, we don't live the same way. I can't say that I'm Quebecoise because I know that she's a real Quebecoise. I walk into her house, it smells like Quebecois and you know it. At my place it's really not the same. I bring a Quebecois person to my house it's... Before even going through the door, in front of the door, I'll say "Look. You have to give everyone two kisses on the cheek, on the left and then the right. Or else they won't like you" and after that I'm going to hear about it for months they're going to be telling me "she's not respectful, this and that". You have to go in and you have to greet everyone properly, kisses on the left and right-

Jean-Yves: There are cultural codes to be respected.

Florange: Exactly. And sometimes, it's things that they don't have, so then...

Jean-Yves: We won't go into generalizing. It's just different.

Florange: Okay, it's different. It's not the same thing. They have things that are different. So one time I went over to their place, there was a family get together so I went as well. I arrived and I said hi by greeting everyone with cheek kisses. And at one point they we like why are you greeting everyone? I was like well... it's out of politeness & that's how I was taught!

Jean-Yves: Let's go with someone else that had an experience that made them be like...you understood that oh! No

Nathalie: Actually, I haven't had much experience because again, I haven't been here for a long time but I'm going out with a guy who is half-Colombian half-Portuguese but he lived here his whole life so we can consider him a Quebecois. So one time-

Jean-Yves: Can I ask you a question?

Nathalie: yeah

Jean-Yves: do you think he considers himself as Quebecois?

Nathalie: no, not at all!

Jean-Yves: wow

Nathalie: Anyway, he was telling his friend who is Quebecois "I'm dating a Syrian girl and all that, and she hasn't been here for very long". The first thing she said was "oh my God she's Syrian?! She's a refugee?" The word that she used was "refugees are dirty terrorists". He told me that because he was angry. He was like, "that's not even true. If you met her... it's not even like that" I mean, I don't really know how to express myself in French. So when I met her, she said "oh my God, you don't look Syrian, you don't look like a refugee". I was like, first off, I'm not a refugee, I was born here. And there's nothing wrong with Arabic people or Syrian people. We are humans just like you. So, it really broke my heart because it's like she attacked my ethnicity.

And since then, in general, I never ever ever said that I was Quebecoise. I'll say, yes, I'm born here, but I'm originally from Syria and I lived there.

Jean-Yves: What shocks me in what you said, like you said it's been 4 years that you are here. And yet I see you, taking part, and I see you the way that you're dressed and for me wow, you fit in. And this is where I talk about the idealized stereotype. What do you have to look like to be accepted as one of them?

Nathalie: That's it

Jean-Yves: Anyways, we'll come back to that but this is something that you experienced-

Nathalie: Yes, that was the most upsetting

Jean-Yves: That's what make you realize-

Nathalie: No, I'm not a Quebecoise.

Jean-Yves: -I'm not part of this. That's really sad.

Érika: Honestly, when I was young, I never realized the differences because I used to live in St-Léonard which is mostly Italians who are Anglophone and who go to English schools. And for everyone else there was a bit of everything, but there were lots immigrants so I went to a school where there were a lot of Arabic people- that's an example. And then I moved in Riviere-des-Prairies. Again, they were a lot of Italians and Haitians. In high school, there were mostly Haitians. 80% of the students were Haitians. But I didn't notice. The moment I arrived at College Ahuntsic, I got into my program, correctional intervention, which is more like the police program and social worker program, we find mostly Quebecois. There's a lot of group work to do. And the Quebecois will work together. And who's left to make the other groups? The others are only immigrants. This is when I really realized... I even went to an internship in a small town 2 hours outside of Montreal. I go inside a Tim Hortons and I felt like everyone was looking at me. And for context, I'm not black. I'm not black and yet they looked at me like I was...

Jean-Yes: E.T

Érika: Yeah, like an alien. It's really in my program that I realized that I'm not Quebecois. I don't talk like them, we don't have the same mentality, I don't have the same perceptions, even the way they act is different. And that's when I said, yeah, I'm not Quebecoise.

Stephanie: I was in a group home for about 12 months I think. It was the first that I was with young people. We were here for multiple reasons. I tried to integrate myself; I think we were 2 black girls and 2 white girls. And it was mixed; there were boys in the foster home. And...you know, you have your own issues and the other also have their own issues...and it's like it never ends. There was a time where I had a friend of mine, we used to share the same room, she has darker skin than me. And me you know...I pass. Like you could say "oh, you are mixed? Half Spanish half Quebecois?" I get a bit of everything, so people never guess that I'm full Haitian. So I pass, but my friend is also Haitian and she's dark. So both of us had problems with the two Quebecois girls for reasons that I don't even remember. So it got out of hand and we started to have a little fight. And the woman that watched over us at night was a little old Quebecois woman. The first thing that she does after we explained that the girls are bothering us and we would like them to stop. She doesn't say "of no problem I'm going to fix it". She did nothing

until the fight got out of hand then she calls the police. But, as soon as the police hear that there's a fight at a group home and there's girls that are fighting for them it's like there's blood everywhere and everything. She calls and says "I have two girls...". "Well madam what are the ethnicities?" "Well there's two black girls that are fighting two white girls, and it's total chaos!". When they came, there was four officers! Two girls who are fighting, there's not even blood, there's nothing. We had stopped. The four police officers get there. There were two girls and two guys. The two male officers came towards us. The two female officers barely talked to the two girls. She even asks them if they were okay, then they ask the old woman what happened. The two male officers told us, because my friend was 18 years old, "listen next time I could bring you in prison for what you're doing because you are touching minors". I said "but wait, you don't even want to know what happened or anything?" He's like "no, no it's under control". I insisted saying that you don't know what happen, you talk to her and you when you came to us you talk about the reasons that we are here and the fact that we are not allowed to hit people. I was like "but sir, you haven't even taken the time to know what happened? You talked to the old woman, you didn't even talk to the other girls, you came directly to us, asked tons of questions "why are you here? Blah blah blah. What's happening? You know you're not allowed to hit" I said but, "those girls hit us just as much as I hit them. At first, I didn't hit them, it's because the other girl came over and started to hit me first. So in terms of self-defence I did it. For me, I felt like-

Jean-Yves: It's then that you felt, yeah

Stephanie: ... do I really matter that much? So, I was thinking, I guess we're the bad ones. The first thing that a police officer is going to see is that there's two black people, we have to know what happened, is it them?

Jean-Yves: You know what really affects me in your story is that you warn the lady before it happened.

Stephanie: I know, I told her before so she could have talked to the two girls, for them to calm down and then tell them-

Jean-Yves: Even when the police officer came, what she should have said is to the police officer that there was a warning and yet they kept going. What should have been said is, and yet that's if they see you as a Quebecois, "listen there was a warning, the other girls provoked them and they are the one who's started it...

Stephanie: ... And that's how the fight started. But she calls and said "there two girls who are beatin" Whoah... can we? And the thing that really sucks is that I'm Haitian and I know that I'm Haitian. But when folks look at me, they think that I'm half something else. So, the police officer barely talked to me, but he talked more to my 18 year old black friend to know what was going on. That's upsetting because it won't affect me as much as it will affect her. I can't do anything and it really won't affect me because I'm a little more light skinned than others. So yeah...

Jean-Yves: Go Florange

Florange: Earlier we were talking about politics and everything. You know "Québec Solidaire" they posted an advertisement with that black woman. Am I the only one who was really mad about it? Because underneath it's written "a dental service for everybody" and on the picture, it's a black woman with a gold chain and gap teeth. STOP! REALLY?! It made me upset. For real, the first time I saw the poster, I stopped and I was so taken aback that I stayed like this (mouth

open). I was shook. I was like what? Stop! I went to check and they were saying that more than 1 person out of 4 doesn't visit the dentist but with a picture of a black woman. What are they saying? That we, black people, don't go to the dentist? That we don't have a good dental hygiene? We have old teeth? I don't understand.

Jean-Yves: No, but we have beautiful white teeth.

Florange: Exactly! Exactly, I saw that and I was like come on, stop it. I was so mad. And the worst is that they try... Yes, with a group of people. No, on the poster there is one black girl with gap teeth. That's the picture. Now I'm telling myself that they try to show that they accepted everyone but the way they are doing it, it's upsetting.

Jean-Yves: Second question: Representation in media. Do you feel that there's a presence? So there are black people on television. Do you feel that they look like you? Do you feel a connection with black folks who are in television, in the radio? Do you feel that connection?

Stephanie: First of all, I've let go of TVA Nouvelle (Quebecois TV channel). It's been a while, for real. I tried but now it became a thing. I can't listen to the radio or TVA Nouvelle. It gives me anxiety because I tell myself wait...in all of Quebec, in all of Montreal, I'm sure there many people who are either black, or Arabic, or Chinese, etc. that want to be TV reporters or want to be journalists but it's impossible. And I'm thinking that there isn't one person that passed the audition at TVA? Not one? And that's something that I don't understand. And that's the problem it's that- when it comes to representing us, they play dumb. I saw a show where they talk about racism, and the host is a white lady who acts like she doesn't know what racism is. She talks to a black guy and asks "can you explain to me what racism is?" like if it's ... They have to stop doing this. And they always ask if we are represented the good way. They already know and know it pretty well.

Jean-Yves: Do you think that television represents you?

Nathalie: No, it really doesn't. Because I want to say something. Like if I watch TVA, especially in reference to Syria. What appears on the television, it's really not what's happening in Syria. And I'm not a Syrian who's listening to what their parents are telling them. I lived through the war. I know exactly what's happening over there. On television it's really the opposite. They blame one side, but there's a lot more to it than that. They are not really trying to truly understand what's happening. I don't like to watch it because it's really whatever.

Érika: I think it's even worse for the Haitian community or just the black community because at least they tried to represent you a little even if they doing it badly. At least they'll try. For me, I'm 100% Latina, there's nothing, it's just-

Jean-Yves: Wait, there's not one person from your community?

Érika: Personally, I don't even watch television. Everything that's from here, no. My parents installed channels that are from the United States because here, there's really nothing-

Jean-Yves: -that represents you

Érika: Zero.

Jean-Yves: That's hard. Talking about all that. The 24th of July it's the celebration of Quebec. Do you celebrate St-Jean?

Florange: Honestly, I don't go. But sometimes...

Jean-Yves: Do you feel connected to that celebration?

Florange: No, if I go it's just to turn up.

Jean-Yves: Turn up. Celebrate.

Florange: Yeah, celebrate. That's it. I don't go because... The first time that I went, I didn't even know what it was about, that it was a celebration of this or that. I was told that all of my friends were going so, I went. That's it.

Jean-Yves: So, for you there's not that pressure or importance in taking part? It's not a celebration that represents you?

Florange: No. I go because everybody is there. Just to chill.

Stephanie: Like for her, it's not a celebration that will make me absolutely want to go. I'm not going to call up my friends and be like "let's go, let's go guys!" But I saw a video pretty that was very shocking.

Jean-Yves: Yes, go ahead you can talk about it. I haven't talked about it yet.

Stephanie: There's few Quebecois, I'm not going to generalize everybody but if you want to integrate people of colour, you need to integrate them really really well. And be careful because what I saw at the celebration of the St-Jean Baptiste... that was awful. You see white women singing with charisma. They're so joyful! And who do you see pushing trolleys? Four black men!!

Jean-Yves: So, there were 4 black men who were pushing allegorical trolleys. While there were white women who were dancing, with men who were dancing...

Stephanie: Yeah, but to put them in front, doing something dancing...

Jean-Yves: It upset me too.

Stephanie: They didn't think about it sooner for two seconds? Like, "Okay guys, 4 black men pushing the trolley... I don't think that's going to work". No, no, no and sometimes I wonder if they even think before doing something.

Jean-Yves: So, I'm going to ask a question. But it's a very good question that you're asking. But I'll come back to it. But you know, maybe it's on the level of integration. Because for them, we are not present, we don't exist, so they allow themselves certain things.

Nathalie: I went to integration classes and the teacher normally has to explain what Saint-Jean is about. Let me tell you that I still don't understand what it is about. Because now I know it's a celebration for the Quebecois but I don't know what it is about. And I really don't want to celebrate it because I don't consider myself as Quebecoise, so it's not very important for me.

Jean-Yves: Wow. Érika?

Érika: It's funny that she went before me because even me that was born here, who always lived here, couldn't really tell you what St-Jean is about. I don't adhere to that at all. Maybe they explained to me when I was little, in elementary school, but even then, like I said I used to live in

places where the majority of people were immigrants. So, I never had a good explanation of what is Saint-Jean. Now am I going to celebrate it? Like, Florange said, yes, I'm going to celebrate it with my friends, I'll invited some friends over and have a good time but otherwise, the Saint-Jean doesn't mean anything to me. It doesn't affect me in any way.

Jean-Yves: Last question. You might have kids later, okay? Have a family. And you might do that here. The question is this: When you have kids, would you want them to see themselves as Quebecois? Or is it more important that they see themselves as their original culture? I have kids of my own and it makes me sad to know that they don't see themselves as Quebecois. Why? Because they are born here. I pay my taxes; my parents pay their taxes. Its saddens me that I don't fit in that mold where I'm one on them, you know?... When you talk about the perception of the stereotypical Quebecois person, the "old stock" white person that talks in a Quebecois accent. It saddens me because we should see much more inclusion, many more people who are a part of it. We know that Montreal is not Quebec, because in Montreal, we don't have that problem. And yet, you explain a lot of situations that happen in Montreal. So I'm coming back to my question, if your kids see themselves as Quebecois, would it be a problem?

Érika: Personally, no. It doesn't bother me if they are comfortable to say that they're Quebecois that they're born in Quebec. It doesn't bother me, as long as they respect my culture, the values that I've learned, my background and everything. If they accept it and respect it, it doesn't bother me. If you're comfortable to say that you are Quebecois, it doesn't bother me. At the end of the day, they are born here. I am born here. So, I have no problem.

Nathalie: I agree what Erika just said. I'm born here, my children will be born here. It won't bother me if they consider themselves to be Quebecois, but I want them to respect my culture, my values. So, no I don't have a problem with them saying I'm a Quebecois or Quebecoise.

Florange: I also don't have any problem with them saying they are Quebecois but if they come home and start talking with a Quebecois accent, it'll bother me. I'll say look I'm going to talk to you in Creole...

Jean-Yves: Okay, so if I talk to you like this (imitates Quebecois accent) and I'm your son...

Florange: No, no, no! My mom talks to me like that and I tell her "Stop talking like that! I don't know who you're talking to, but it's not me." My children will come home and they're going to talk to me correctly. With a good French. It's like little Haitians who don't speak Creole. It saddens me. It bothers me.

Jean-Yves: Go ahead Stephanie, we are finishing with you.

Stephanie: Okay, I'll be quick. Like the other girls, they all had really good points. And it's the same with me. If my child feels Quebecois and people around him are integrating him, I'll be really happy. To know that my children feel comfortable and good, and I hope for that too. For real, I hope that one day in the future, that the Quebecois children that are from origin X will feel Quebecois, because that's what we want. That's the point of this discussion, it's not just to be like, "Oh I don't want to be Quebecois". It's that we want to be integrated correctly, without discrimination, without stereotypes. You know? There are no colours. We are all born here. We are just born in different hospitals. That's it. It wouldn't bother me. My mom once told me that when I used to live in Blainville, I used to have a little Quebecois accent. And she said, Stephanie...! Very gently, she said "I would like you to speak French". And well, now I do and

all that. But that they keep the values that their parents instilled in them, and also to add the values from Quebec. Quebec is not bad because some people are all like “yuck, you celebrate Saint-Jean Baptiste? Ewww”. No... You are born here. You don't have a choice. At the end...at the end of the day we need to find a way for everyone to feel integrated.

Jean-Yves: I can't say better than that.

Rose-Eva (hosting): This brings us to the end of the conversation with students at College Ahunstsic in Montreal.

The title of this episode is “Se sentir Integrer/feeling integrated”

Thank you so much to the students for sharing their stories. This helps us understand more about the everyday lives of newcomer in Canada. This also helps us reflect more profoundly on the reality of integration in Quebec, and what this could look like in the future.

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.

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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, Saulteaux, Niitsitapi, Metis, Dene, and Nakota. We pay our respects to the ancestors past and present who call this land home.