

Visibility and Media Relations

Who speaks for CPF?

- The National President (or her/his designate) is the chief spokesperson for the National association.
- The National President (or her/his designate) handles everything to do with issues, opinions, and policies of the National association.
- The National Executive Director, as designated, handles media queries relating to the substance of FSL education in Canada, and factual matters relating to CPF.

Branch and chapter responsibilities follow suit.

National concerns

All activities taken at the national level must concern topics that are national in scope (of interest or concern to more than one province or territory or relating to another National organization or a national medium).

The National President and Executive Director must be aware at all times of any media relations activities undertaken at the national level.

Responses to the media

- Items in national publications call for a national response. The following types of publications are considered national: *Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, *Chatelaine*, *L'Actualité*, *La Presse*, *Canadian Living*, etc.
- Items in provincial publications require a provincial response with national consultation if necessary
- Items in local publications require local response with provincial input and reference to national information where appropriate
- If an article refers to a local situation, it is considered local, but if a general point is being made the matter could, in certain circumstances, be considered provincial or national

Alerting the network

- While limiting itself to items that fall within its jurisdiction, the branch should advise local chapters of and involve them in any publicity or public relations activities which may affect them
- The branch keeps a record of all newspaper clippings, interview, workshops, displays and other PR activities
- Each branch and local chapter should provide the National office with copies of all press clippings, press releases, pamphlets, brochures, newsletters, newsheets, etc.
- CPF - National will provide current national information and suitable resources for media relations to CPF branches (and chapters where appropriate)

Media relations

Mention of CPF in the media means reaching a much wider audience with information about our goals and our activities. Following are some very basic guidelines:

Be prepared

- Gather and maintain a list of information about local newspapers (including weeklies), editors' and reporters' names, and addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, deadlines
- Follow the same procedures for local radio and television stations
- Don't forget those free community newspapers, radio bulletin boards, and cablevision information Boards
- Don't forget the French-language media such as Radio-Canada
- Try to give about ten days' (smaller papers)/ three days' (large dailies) advance notice for special events or news conferences, then follow up with a phone call
- Beware the pitfalls of just giving your information to selected media, especially in smaller communities; you can create resentment

The news release or announcement

See sample media release

Format

- Use letterhead paper to identify who is sending the release
- Use a headline to summarise the main point of the release
- After the headline, clearly date the release and list a release date or time. "For immediate release" is the simplest
- Use one side of paper only. Indicate at the end of the first page if there is a second page.
- Indicate the end of the release by typing "-30-" beneath the final paragraph and in the centre of the page
- Double-space the release, to leave plenty of room for an editor's notations
- Identify a local contact person who will be available to handle any questions. Put the name and phone number of your contact at the end after "for further information:" If possible, include both day and evening numbers: if necessary indicate specific times when he/she is available. Phone numbers are always better than email addresses

Content

- Prepare your information regarding the event or issue in a succinct, straightforward, complete fashion. Put the most important facts first
- Ensure that your title captures local interest
- In the first paragraph, try to answer the 5 W's: Who, What, When, Where and Why. Try to be factual without being dull
- Make the release as short and snappy as possible. Feed the media catchy numbers and lines. Sell your story!
- Full first name or two initials and a surname, and title should identify all persons mentioned in a release where applicable
- Aim at including a quotation in at least one paragraph. Make sure it sounds like a real quote

Photographs

- If your event involves children and/or action, call the photo editor; photographers, especially with smaller papers, are always looking for pictures, particularly on the weekends
- If you are including photographs of children in your publicity, ensure that they cannot be identified
- Media love community events, especially on weekends

Helpful hints

- In your file of information on the various media in your area include details of previous contacts made: date, topic, person contacted, any coverage given
- Nothing is “off the record”: - if you don’t want the reporter to print what you say, don’t say it
- Be prepared to explain why you think your story is of interest to their audience
- Historical and background material should be available for reporters – don’t assume they have it on file! (Have it on hand for the reporters who call or show up. Prepare the information in point form, with titles to make details easy to find)
- Approach media in a positive, upbeat fashion. They should be your allies. Make them call you and come back
- Speak slowly
- Smile!
- If you don’t have the answer or complete answer to a question because you have not yet discussed it with your Executive, don’t be afraid to say so
- Keep saying the same message. Prepare key lines and facts to use during the interview
- Thank the reporters. If the story was well done – send an email. If it wasn’t – send a constructive email!
- Invite people to get involved. Leave contact information

Remember that you are competing with a number of events, each of which is vying for media time and attention. We serve our cause better when we understand media problems and constraints.

Never question an editorial decision not to cover an event and never badger an editor. Remember: you want to establish good links with the media over the long as well as the short term. The best way to do that is to assist them to do their job efficiently through your proficiency.

Advertisements

Sometimes an advertisement – even in your own newsletter – is a more appropriate method of promoting a CPF service or activity than an article.

Whether the advertisement is placed in a public newspaper, your CPF newsletter, or a school newsheet, you can make it more effective by following these guidelines:

- **Keep it short.** Keep headlines to six words or less, lists to ten items or less. If you must provide a lot of detail, include it in small type – those who want more information will go on to read it, but first you must catch their attention
- **Make it interesting.** Involve the reader. Use the active rather than the passive tense: “Camp Schedule Announced” is much more interesting than “Summer Camp Means Fun in French!”
- **Include a picture or graphic.** If using a photograph be sure it is clear and simple (no more than one or two people). Ask the branch office for the latest information on illustrations or symbols representing CPF. The (POTL) graphic is available from CPF-SK for you to use. There is also a great deal of “public domain” clipart available
- **Focus attention.** Make one key word in your headline larger, or place your graphic to bring the eye to the main message. And remember: all emphasis is no emphasis – use bold lettering for headlines, prices and phone numbers only
- **Be careful with fonts.** Never use a fancy font as body text. Don’t use more than three or four fonts in a single ad. Don’t use all capitals for anything but a short headline. Make sure your ad is easy to read
- **Don’t be afraid of white space:** an uncrowded ad is easier to read. Be careful with borders. Consider putting a simple box around the ad to set it off from the surrounding text.
- **Consider testimonials.** Particularly for activities like summer camps, it is often helpful to quote reactions from parents or students who participated previously – but use ones that are short and snappy
- **Check your spelling** and your grammar and phone numbers. Then have a second person proofread our ad. Errors give an impression of sloppiness
- **Don’t forget CPF.** Be sure to mention CPF’s involvement, or include the CPF wordmark (the letters “CPF” followed by the name between two lines), which can be obtained from CPF-SK

Visibility: Putting on a display

What are you trying to say?

Who is your target audience? Preschool parents? Parents of new kindergarten immersion students? Parents of current elementary (or secondary) immersion students? Teachers? Parents interested in core French or intensive French? Trustees? Business people? The community at large?

What message do you want to get across? To promote FSL learning? To illustrate a specific activity of your chapter? To illustrate the benefits of membership? To explain the structure of CPF and how it works? To give the historical highlights of the organization?

Without deciding *exactly* what message you're trying to give – and to whom – you can't determine how to give it.

How can you best illustrate your message?

- Use stencils, or computer graphics to produce neat lettering. Ensure it's very easy to read from a distance of at least one meter.
- Try making a collage of large photographs from a particular event on a colourful background. If you want to show off some CPF newsletters, instead of just showing front covers, choose pages from various editions that include particles of particular interest to your target audience.
- Perhaps you should show student's accomplishments: art work, science projects, stories etc., or illustrate the French section of the science fair, a summer French camp, your local Mini Rendez-vous. The message: "To support these programs and activities we need your membership!"
- Or perhaps you want to illustrate the support provided by CPF to local members: newsletter articles, the CPF handbooks, French classes for adults, information meetings and conferences, a resource list of bilingual adults and high school students available to tutor children experiencing minor problems, where to obtain French books locally.
- Any items that will be used more than once or twice should be laminated.
- Choose and/or design your handouts carefully as well. Always have follow-up information for people to take home. Neatly mark "for display only" on items you don't want people to take. Indicate those that you do want picked up: for example, use a folded sign that says, "Please take one".
- Consider placing a television and VCR beside your display for non-stop showing of a video about CPF or about French immersion, such as the *Proud of Two Languages* video.
- Whatever you do, be sure your display is neat and uncluttered! The overall effect gives a message too. And one clear, simple message is far more effective than several confusing messages.

Get them to come on over

The most visually appealing and informative display is wasted if few people stroll over to look. You might want to use some sort of “hook” to attract an audience, especially if there’s a lot happening where your display is set up.

For example, hold a free draw, asking participants to write their names and addresses on the entry forms. Later, check the forms against your membership list and then send the non-members some information on CPF, including a description of the activities of your local group, with an invitation to join. Suggested prizes: CPF merchandise (check with CPF-SK to see what is available right now), French audiotape, French cartoon book – even a one-year membership in CPF.

Draw attention to your display by floating balloons above it.

Or give something away, like balloons for younger children or posters from the office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (www.ocol-clo.gc.ca) for example.

Where to have a display

The list is endless:

- School events like spring kindergarten information events, the first day of school, Meet the Teacher Night, report card interviews, Open House.
- CPF events like information meetings, events for students.
- Education events like Education Week activities, the teachers’ annual convention.
- Community events like trade fairs, Volunteer Week at the shopping mall, Welcome Wagon “baby showers”.
- The public library, community centre, health unit, preschools
- Special events such as French immersion and core French week or Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie.

Problems getting volunteers?

Are your members reluctant to work at a display because they’re afraid they won’t be able to answer questions? Prepare a three ring binder for them with the most common questions and answers about CPF and French programs and opportunities in your community. Include items such as a list of your chapter’s activities, membership statistics, your Board of Director’s names and phone numbers, enrolment statistics and, most importantly, who to contact for further information on particular topics. Organize it into sections with index-tabs for quick reference. Be sure to it keep up-to-date.

Questions that can’t be answered on the spot can be followed up. Have your volunteer take down the person’s name and contact information with the question, then ensure that the enquiry is passed on to a knowledgeable member of your chapter for a speedy response.