

Now, to start, I am not quite sure what you mean by "place" in the context of the Francophone community of Manitouwadge. For me, the Francophone community of Manitouwadge is as important as any other cultural community in our municipality and deserves the same respect as any other cultural community, including the majority Anglophone population. We share this community and land, work the same jobs, shop in the same places, enjoy the same events put on by the community, and so much more. Their place, to me, is the same as that of any Canadian: to live a happy and fulfilling life in their community.

Now I'm not blind to the fact that there are challenges to what I've written above. Certainly, like all cultural communities, the non-majority culture faces obstacles that the majority does not. This is where policy really does come into play, and as a current member of council seeking re-election, I believe that while there are certainly limitations on what municipal government can do to reduce these obstacles, there are also things our municipal government could be doing better to support the Francophone community. For example, I do not think that in all my years (4 now) serving on our municipal government, I have ever seen a council agenda item presented in both English and French. I am certain there have been, and that if it were requested, the municipality would be more than happy to provide any documents in French, but it should become common practice to present the initial documents in both English and French. This extends to the municipality's social media page on Facebook as well, where posts are mostly (perhaps even all) written in English and should also be written in French, even if it were just putting the post into a translator and adding the translation; it would be better than nothing. Just as well, there is much Manitouwadge can do to work with regional partners, such as Hearst and Kapuskasing, to support Francophone populations when attending conferences. Individually, our voice does not carry a significant amount of weight, but together our voice becomes much stronger when dealing with the province. In this regard, our municipalities could co-operate more in advocating on behalf of the Francophone peoples living in our region. These regional partnerships also present opportunities for us to learn much from other communities on how to better engage our cultural communities, as there are always things we can do better.

I hope these are both satisfactory answers to your questions.

With Regards,

Braden Kotyk