

For immediate release

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Valley student wins national prize in French language public speaking contest

Comox Valley, B.C. – A French Immersion student at Ecole Puntledge Park who is new to the language takes top seat in Canada for his grade level in virtual speaking contest.

Sasha Woldnik won first place among grade 6 students across Canada in the [*Concours D'art oratoire*](#), a French oral language competition.

Woldnik has only been learning French for the past nine months when he enrolled in the [*Late French Immersion*](#) program at the start of his grade 6 year.

With the encouragement of his teacher, Mme. Thea Black, Sasha entered the contest at the classroom level and was selected to represent his class in a District Zoom competition. His performance earned him the chance to submit a persuasive speech via video recording for the national level competition.

Each year, the District hosts a Concours event for French Immersion students at the elementary and secondary level. Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, a virtual event for District students was held March 17 after a hiatus in 2020 when in-class instruction was suspended.

Like many school events and competitions, Concours was delivered in a digital format to allow the annual contest to continue. The goal of language contest is to offer a valuable opportunity for students to practice French on any topic ranging from a favourite hobby to views on current events.

Woldnik chose to speak about what he is most passionate about, competitive swimming. As a member of the [*Sharks*](#) swim team, Woldnik shared stories of the social interaction swimming offers and the awards he has won competing throughout Vancouver Island. He already has his sights set on joining the swim team and studying at University of Victoria.

“My speech was on swimming and why it is the best sport in the world because I’m a swimmer and I really love to swim,” explained Woldnik. “You can make a lot of friends through swimming and build life-long relationships. It’s a social sport.”

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Learning languages has been influenced from his upbringing in a dual English and Ukrainian language household. Along with his teacher, Woldnik's mom, Luba, gave him much encouragement to learn a third language.

"We encouraged him to enrol in Ecole Puntledge Park because, even though he already spoke Ukrainian as a second language, we felt that knowing a world language like French would make him a better student," shared Mark and Luba Woldnik, parents. "Since last September he has become so enthused in his studies. He has made great friends and he really likes his Teacher, Mme Black, who was the one who encouraged him to take Concour."

"I really like to thank my mom because she pushed me a lot and if not [for] her, I wouldn't have done this program," expressed Woldnik. "I'm not fluent yet, but I've learned a lot of French."

Judges use a rubric to score individual speeches on vocal expression, coherence of presentation language proficiency, and delivery. Woldnik earned first for his category in late French Immersion, Grade 6. He received notice of his results early June, more than two months after his video submission and will receive a cash prize later this year.

The Concours d'art oratoire is Canada's largest annual French public-speaking competition. open to students in every province and territory in a wide range of age/grade categories and French abilities. The contest is organized by Canadian Parents for French (CPF) CPF, a grassroots organization that began more than 40 years ago to support bilingualism and promote opportunities to learn and use French.

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To view Sasha's passionate Concours speech about competitive swimming, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MzZFiVTjfQ>

For more information about [Concour D'art Oratoire](https://cpf.ca/en/participate/youth/concours-dart-oratoire/), visit <https://cpf.ca/en/participate/youth/concours-dart-oratoire/>

For more information about Comox Valley Schools' French Immersion program including late French Immersion, visit <https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/french-immersion/>

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Sasha Woldnick stands outside his school Ecole Puntledge Park where he enrolled in the Late French program nine months ago. (Source: Comox Valley Schools).



YouTube screenshot of Sasha Woldnick's speech. In the background is a collection of Sasha's competitive swimming medals.

