
French “discoveries dictionary” From the “French, the language we cherish from coast to coast to coast” contest¹

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A

Allons nous galancer!

Let's go for a swing.

A s'é grimée pour aller s'épivarnée

To dress up in order to seduce.

Attention aux beluettes

Watch out for the sparks. An expression commonly heard around a campfire.

Au boute / au boutte

Used to emphasize something or someone that is incredible or marvellous.

Avoir d'autres chats à fouetter

Having much more pressing issues to attend to. The English equivalent is “Having bigger fish to fry.”

Avoir une langue de bois

Refers to a pejorative rhetorical cliché, aimed at disqualifying an opponent's discourse by asserting that their argument is made up of stereotyped formulas.

Avoir la langue à terre

To be exhausted. Could also be used to express being very hungry.

B

Bain-o-bain

Interjection meaning “shame on you”. Equivalent of “tisk tisk”

Barrer la porte

To lock the door.

Typical expression that recalls the old days when doors had bars to close them.

¹ The words, expressions and meanings are from the responses received from employees who participated in the contest. The Official Languages Program of PSPC is not responsible for the accuracy of the content.



Binmanque

Probably.

Bonjour!

Greetings: Hello

Bottes à douille (n.f.)

Rain boots.

Brunante (n.f.)

Dusk/sunset.

C

Câline de bine

Expression generally used to express disappointment. Can also express joy when used in the right intonation.

Ça prend pas la tête à Papineau

Something that does not require a high level of intelligence. Louis-Joseph Papineau, lord of the Petite-Nation, was known for his great intelligence. He lived in Montebello.

Catin (n.f.)

A doll in Quebec.

A prostitute or country girl in France.

Ça va changer l'eau des bines / Ça changera pas l'eau des bines

Expression meaning that it will make a change (will change), or have little impact (will not change).

C'est de la poutine interne

In administrative terms, this expression refers to an organization's operating mechanism.

Cerf-volant (n.m.)

A kite. The literal translation is "a flying deer."

Cossin (n.m.)

A small object of little to no value that one cannot or does not want to name.

Synonyms

- Patente (n.f.)
- Gugusse (n.f.)

D

Dégraille-toi

Take off your clothes.

Déshabiller Pierre pour habiller Paul

Expression that originates from the apostles Peter and Paul and made its appearance around the 16th century.

Expression that means to move the problem or to want to solve a problem by creating another problem. It also means to take something from someone and give it to someone else.

Other possible versions

- Déshabiller Saint-Pierre pour habiller Saint-Paul
- Déshabiller Pierre pour habiller Jean
- Déshabiller Pierre pour habiller Jacques

E

Encarcaner (v.)

To stumble.

Être Beaulac

Expression meaning to be a fool.

Être dans les patates

Expression meaning to be wrong. In France, the expression used is "être à côté de la plaque".

Être de bonne heure sur le piton

To be in good shape, that we got up early, sometimes for the purpose of going to work.

Être habillé comme Marie Kata

To be very badly dressed, dirty and torn clothes.

Être un panier percé

To report everything you hear and see, to report everyone's mischiefs and bad behaviour.

F

Faque

Contraction of the expression « ce qui fait que ».

Indicates the consequence and replaces words like: so, therefore, so that, etc. In some cases, the slightly modified expression "faique là" can replace a time marker meaning "then", "after". It can also be pronounced "faique".

Fripper (v.)

To lick.

G

Gârdon-ça / Gâ!

Expression meaning "Look", to tell someone to pay special attention to something or to be sarcastic.

Gramant (n.m.)

A word that refers to anything you can't remember the name of, can't pronounce, or don't have "much" respect for. For example, "Look at the *gramant* on their back! "

I

Ici-dedans

A way of referring to the interior of a building. For example, "It's nice in here" / "It's warm in here!"

other version:

Icitte-dans

Il fait fret

"Fret", a Franco-Norman word. Used to express that it is very cold.

J

Jeudredi

The Thursday prior to a public holiday that falls on a Friday. In effect, Thursday is the last day of the work week, and thus becomes Friday. Hence the merging of the words "jeudi" and "vendredi".

Lâche pas la patate

To not give up, to continue one's efforts.

L

La poule qui chante et celle qui pond

Expression meaning that the one who reports something is often the one who committed the action or fault.

Les bottines doivent suivre les babines

Expression meaning that actions must follow speech.

M

M'a g'hy aller beto

To be leaving soon.

Malpatient

Impatient.

Mettre à la jaille

To put in the garbage or recycle.

N

Ne pas avoir les moyens de ses ambitions

Not having what it takes to achieve your goals. Commonly used in the workplace when there are not enough resources to achieve desired goals.

Niaiser, nounounnerie

Fooling around.

Noyer le poisson

Expression that appeared in the 20th century, which means that one confuses a person in order to make them give up or forget something. It is a reference to the fishing field, where a fish that has taken the bait is successively kept inside and outside the water in order to exhaust it.

O

On d'cend en bas

Typical expression to say that one goes to Gaspésie, to the elders.

On n'engraisse pas les cochons à l'eau claire

Expression used to express dissatisfaction when someone refuses the dish served to them by making bad comments about the meal.

Où est la bibliothèque

Expression used when trying to learn a new language.

P

Pechay-la-la

Expression meaning "oh poor sweet baby lol". Used when showing sympathy and compassion but yet humour.

other version:

Pitché-la-la

Pogner une chire

To fall down.

R

Ramasse-bourrier (n.m.)

A small garbage scoop to clean the floor.

S

S'enfarger dans les fleurs du tapis

To let very small, insignificant obstacles stop you.

Se sucrer le bec

Quebec expression used when eating a dessert or something sweet. It refers to the action of eating sweets, candies or any sweet food. This expression is particularly used when taffy or maple syrup is eaten at the sugar shack.

Slepines (n.m.)

Underwears.

T

Tigidou / C'est tigidou laï laï

Expression meaning "It's all good".

Tire-toi une bûche

Sit down.

This expression originated during the period of French colonization in North America: the living conditions of the colonists were precarious and seats were often replaced by simple logs cut to the necessary height. "Tire-toi une bûche" meant "grab a log to sit on".

other version:

Hale-toi une bûche

Tokébakicitte

Expression meaning "We are in Quebec here".

Tomber entre les craques

An expression used in the workplace to say that something that should have been done was not done.

Tourtière (n.f.)

A Quebec traditional dish served during Réveillon on Christmas Eve.

Two possible explanations for the name tourtière:

- "tourtes"- the name of a pigeon-like bird found in France and in Quebec, were used to make pies in the 1600s by early Quebec settlers.
- a "tourtière" is also the name of the pie pan in which this meat pie was cooked and baked.

U

Un chien regarde bien un évêque

Justifying oneself for simply casting an insistent or even incredulous or questioning look at someone who then considers themselves attacked by this rudeness.

Un tiens vaut mieux que deux tu l'auras

Il vaut mieux profiter d'un acquis modeste que de risquer pour un bien supérieur mais pas réel ou espéré.

It is better to take advantage of a modest achievement than to risk for a superior but not real or hoped-for asset.

Y

Y a sauté la clôture

To commit adultery.

Y mouille à boire deboute

Pronounced "Y mouille à bouère deboute".

Expression meaning that it is raining hard. It is raining heavily.

Yé habilgué comme la chienne à Jacques

Expression meaning that the person is poorly dressed or dressed in an inappropriate way.

Yé pas aller d'main morte

Refers to someone who expresses out loud what others do not dare to say.

Z

Zire (v.)

To be very disgusted. For example "Ça me fait zire", (it really disgusts me).