



Her path

Since then, Lavoie has had an



She went on to apply for the next few Paralympic and Olympic Games (2006, 2010, 2012). In 2006, when she applied for the 2010 Paralympic and Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver, she did not expect to be accepted; and when she was, her husband and children agreed to move to Vancouver with her. ➔

Lavoie's Career:

- Nov. 2013 to now – President of Marie-Pierre Lavoie Translation Inc.
- 1997 to Oct. 2013 – Freelance translator and localizer
- June 2007 to March 2010 – Manager, translation, Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games
- 2006 to June 2007 – Coordinator, translation, Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games
- Summer 2005 – French Language Services Information Officer, Edmonton 2005 World Masters Games
- 2000 to 2001 – French Translation Services Coordinator, Edmonton 2001 Championships in Athletics
- Summer 1999 – Translator, 1999 PanAm Games, Winnipeg
- 1998 to 2007 – Quality Agent, L-3 Com. – Spar Aerospace Ltd
- 1997 to 2007 – Freelance Translator/Revisor, L-3 Com. – Spar Aerospace Ltd
- 1996 to 2008 – Freelance Translator/Revisor (including localization), Intuit Canada
- 1992 to 1997 – Technical Translator, CAE Aviation Technical Publications

Fun Fact:

French is 20% longer than English. So the client has to make sure to make enough space in a chart for example so that French is not written smaller.

Fun Fact:

A translator can work on 2000 words a day on average. Some do more, some less according to experience and the genre they are translating.

“Tell me how many words and that should tell how long it’ll take.”

Being able to work for the Paralympic and Olympic Games was a great opportunity for Lavoie. She and her team of translators were taking care of the website, and the opening and closing ceremony speeches amongst other things. Canada has two official languages, French and English, so they had to translate everything in both languages.

“My family is back East,” she says, “I told them ‘ok, mom and dad, when you watch the Games, the words that you hear are the words I wrote’.” She is proud of her work because she helps shape the image of the country as well as building her legacy.

What about her writing?

Writing is the most important part of a translator’s job. A translator’s rate is calculated according to the number of words, not pages. “Tell me how many words and that should tell how long it’ll take.”

Cultural differences are present everywhere, even in writing, so a writer has to know the differences in punctuation, or even how and when to capitalize a letter. “Every country has standards, if you will, of writing,” she explains, “and as translators we must respect them.

As mentioned above, Canada has two official languages, French and English. A translator has to make sure they are both treated equally in the translation. “For having worked with the National Defense in Canada,” she says, “that was illegal in their field to put French smaller than English, or to

give French a different treatment than English. Everything has to be on the same level.”

Of course, we are only human so everyone makes mistakes, translators as well. That is why proofreading is a crucial part of translation.

“If I translate myself, I get revised by somebody else,” she explains, “if I send the file to a freelancer, then I’ll do the revision.” However, to know the different standards and be good at revising someone’s translation is not easy to acquire.

Any Advice?

“I would tell people who want to enter this field to work in a company first before working for themselves,” she says, “Working for yourself is hard because you have to be self disciplined. Also, work in a workplace where you are going to be revised. And more importantly, working in a company gives you a sense of accountability, and a sense of time.”

Working in a company can give the opportunity to see if the person likes the work itself and take a break after you are done with your day. “You will be able to leave your work at work; working from home is hard because work is always here.”

Translating is about following good processes, knowing writing differences between cultures, being able to work in a field that you like, or leaving a legacy for people to read or watch. Now the question is, “Why don’t you try translation?” ■