



Manifesto: for an intercultural rurality

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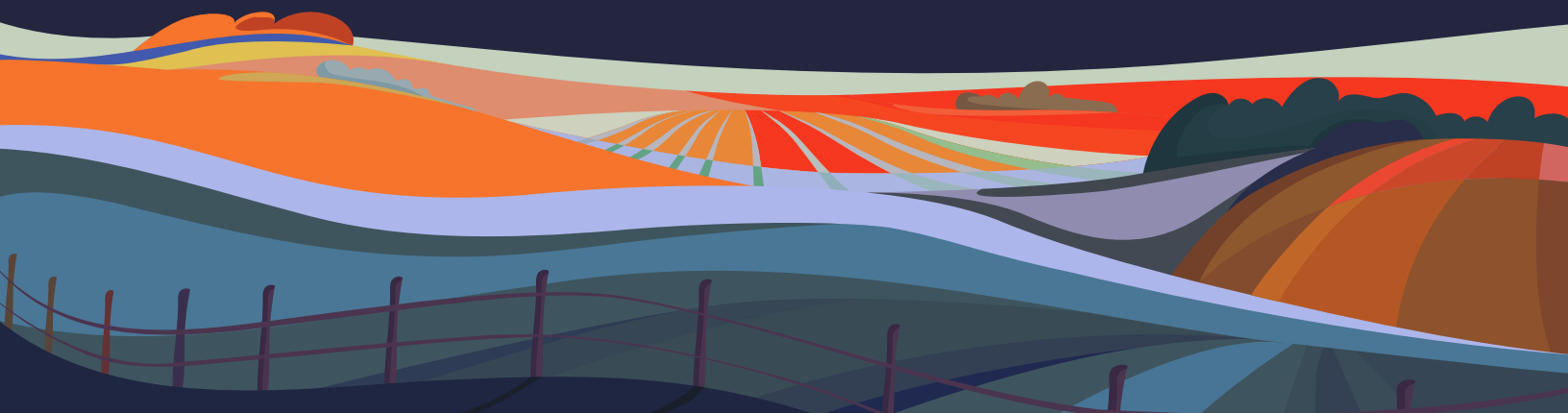
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"To be able to reach out to you even if you have no hand, whoever you are;

To enable your heart to burn with love, blossom and thrive in this life before death caresses you and carries you peacefully away;

To ensure that the percentage of water in your body is a validated drop, heard in this vast ocean;

To ensure that your destiny is the one you choose, no matter what the lines in your hand indicate;

That the lines of your heart be open."

(translation)

*Lou-Phélip DBrouillard Lessard
(Lou-Philip Brouillard, Sherbrooke)*



What is the purpose of this manifesto?

More and more people feel concerned and share a desire to find a way to welcome and support newcomers. The concept of everyone working together towards this vision inspired La Boîte interculturelle to write this manifesto. It is a compilation of testimonies and actions that may already exist in Québec, or that were shared during public consultations.

It is intended primarily as a source of inspiration to deepen our common journey towards a Canada that is more welcoming and responsive to ethnocultural diversity.

We wish to acknowledge the tremendous work done by regional county municipalities (RCMs), municipalities and local organizations in implementing action plans to welcome newcomers.

This manifesto reinforces their work. It is a shared commitment to being agents and promoters of change in our daily lives. It is also an effective way to engage and to raise awareness to an ever-growing audience from all sectors of society.



SOLIDARITY IN OUR ACTIONS

Community building

Art and its unifying power

Between policy and practice



CULTURE
EXCHANGE
CHANGE



Community building

Guiding principles

Canada is diverse and we recognize the importance of inclusion, respect, and the right to free expression.

An approach based on "inclusive peer-to-peer learning about faith and human rights" must be developed.

(United Nations High Commissioner for Human Right)



*Diversity is the strength
of a territory.*

–Bas-Saint-Laurent
Region

"I walk towards you, so that you may walk towards me."

–Bas-Saint-Laurent Region



Plan of actions

- To include newcomers when developing new strategies because they are a vital source of information and knowledge.
- To work with the community and develop a willingness to create opportunities for intercultural meetings and exchanges, associated with all activities.
- To establish a welcoming committee with RCMs, municipalities and local associations to do regular follow-ups with newcomers and to encourage them to participate in activities within the community.
- Intercultural pairing.
- To take note of successes and innovative ideas for welcoming newcomers by other cities and towns, and to act in partnership to expand within other communities.
- To encourage local merchants to offer different products which reflect the profile of newcomers.
- To provide the population with a basic guide of the different languages spoken by newcomers in their community.
- To increase public awareness by promoting the benefits of welcoming newcomers while building on similarities.
- To develop a newcomers' guide to highlight available services.
- To create opportunities to meet for cross-language learning.



Art and its unifying power

Guiding principle

Recognizing that art and culture are unique and valuable tools for fostering exchanges, we must make our leaders aware that communities need cultural programs and that financial commitments must be recurring.

“

*Pulsing to the rhythm
of the world, together
without border.*

–Chaudière-Appalaches
Region

"Reaching out to love and music."

–Chaudière-Appalaches Region



Plan of actions

- To foster cross-cultural learning through the arts.
- To promote the distinct character of all cultures by highlighting their rich craftsmanship, music and heritage during events.
- To always include newcomers and give them the opportunity to get involved.
- To increase resources for projects which use the arts as a facilitator for rapprochement.
- To facilitate inclusive and creative exchanges between newcomers and local communities.
- To mobilize young people around intercultural projects.
- To stimulate intercultural exchanges through artistic activities.
- To focus on creating events and communication which will encourage deeper cooperation with local communities
- To create public spaces for the coexistence of all citizens through the arts.
- To ensure the sustainability of actions over time.



Between policy and practice

Guiding principles

Bridging the gap between the policies which welcome newcomers and their engagement in the community.

Integration is not just a matter of language, you must nurture a sense of belonging and facilitate participation in community life.



I want a multicultural Quebec with more inclusion and no discrimination.

–Estrie Region

*"I dream of a world where empathy and respect prevail over fear of differences and selfishness."
–Bas-Saint-Laurent Region*



Plan of actions

- To establish innovative cooperation mechanisms which strengthen a sense of belonging. Workforce retention depends on the community's willingness to work together.
- To develop and promote internal policies for ethnocultural representation within organizations.
- To demonstrate and promote the economic, social and civic contributions of newcomers.
- To provide intercultural training for elected officials and the local population.
- To promote newcomers' success stories.
- To advocate for the government to increase or speed up the recognition of newcomers' diplomas and accreditations.
- To strengthen local support networks by increasing partnerships with local organizations
- To share knowledge and to implement best practices.
- To encourage community involvement in all activities which support integration.
- To advocate for affordable public transportation and accommodation for all.

Our commitment

- Improving community well-being is a collective issue.
- Providing a healthy environment to encourage openness and to cultivate kindness for the well-being of others.
- Fostering honest dialogue with consistent respect for differences. Dialogue requires openness, listening and understanding.
- Learning without judging—a daily practice that can help us identify our shared values and encourage dialogue.
- Increase public awareness about the arrival of newcomers to the community.
- Denouncing racism or discrimination. Knowing how to defend our rights and those of others.
- Providing resources and opportunities for newcomers and local community members to drive meaningful exchanges.
- Acknowledging and deconstructing prejudices about ethnocultural minorities.
- Working to ensure a harmonious and richly diverse coexistence (the advantage is not only economic).
- Promoting a receptive and caring approach, and being curious about other cultures—as a personal challenge for all community members.

We believe in:



What our community looks like?

Whether we like it or not, change is inevitable. It is up to us to take steps that will bring about changes leading to a true intercultural dialogue in our communities.

Together, let's take up the challenge and mobilize our communities for better living together while embracing our differences.

This document is for everyone; bring it to life and spread the word.

NOTES: The statements and actions in this publication are not specifically endorsed by the signatories.

We believe that everyone is free to have a point of view and to take a stand. We hope this manifesto will inspire communities to courageous and deliberate engagement, strengthen ongoing dialogue, and above all, lead to genuine change.



"I wish adults would teach children that no matter where we come from, we are all human beings."

–Bas-Saint-Laurent Region



"A culture shock is not only intercultural. It can happen within the same culture between different generations. The only *race* that exists is the human *race*, the rest is just a label."

–Centre-du-Québec Region



"We have to admit, first of all, that racism stems from ignorance and a lack of knowledge about the other, whom we fear. It's up to *US* to act, to initiate meetings, to participate in activities, to greet our neighbours..."

–Bas-Saint-Laurent Region



"Art is a tool for integrating all new citizens in Québec... art is a bridge builder... art is a social therapy..."

–Estrie Region



We wish to thank organizations and participants
from the following regions:

Bas-Saint-Laurent
Centre-du-Québec
Chaudière-Appalaches
Estrie



Vivement l'Afrique / Oil on canvas 61 X 76 cm
Work by Benoît Lévesque www.benoitlevesqueart.com
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