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# THE ARTS

AS A FORCE FOR INTERCULTURAL  
UNDERSTANDING IN QUEBEC

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## EXPLORATION OF CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Interculturality plays a crucial role in reinforcing social connections and promoting a harmonious coexistence in communities. In the summer of 2024, we at La Boîte interculturelle conducted an exploration intended to gauge the impact of local initiatives on intercultural understanding through arts and culture.

That exploration, meant to be rudimentary, allowed us to interview seven professionals working in the Mauricie and Bas-Saint-Laurent regions. The objective of those interviews was to collect their general impressions and best understand their reality on the ground, with no claims of a comprehensive analysis. By focusing on our interviewees' experiences and perspectives, we were trying to identify the dynamics, opportunities and challenges that go along with initiatives intended to create bridges among members of the public from various origins.

This report is intended to share the results of those interviews and pave the way for constructive reflections on strengthening the impact of local initiatives on intercultural understanding through arts and culture.

**Music** (sometimes along with dance) and the **culinary arts** are the main artistic and cultural forms used in the activities our interviewed professionals organize.

Those activities are usually occasional because sources for the needed human and financial resources are never guaranteed.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES

- The **lack of human resources** means a lack of time devoted to organizing such activities. Several of those we interviewed brought up generalized burnout among both salaried and volunteer participants.
- The lack of financial predictability is a major obstacle in the planning of those activities. Our interviewees talked about the constant need for **hand-to-mouth funding**, which is also time consuming to do in the context of insufficient human resources.
- Some of them said that it's difficult to measure the benefits of particular activities while also lamenting the fact that funders require quantified financial reports **without considering the qualitative benefits** of those activities, such as their social and human impacts.

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## CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC MOBILIZATION

- Mobilizing members of the general public isn't always easy due to the overabundance of offers and **competition from digital media**. Some also mentioned the difficulty in reaching native Quebecers, who aren't always interested in intercultural activities.
- In several regions, the **lack of public transportation** creates issues in accessing the activities. Although carpooling may be considered a solution, it also involves an organizational overload.
- **Communications** are a source of several challenges as well: how to inform the regional public of upcoming activities? Using which communication method(s)? **Generation gaps** within regions seem to exacerbate that difficulty because different age groups no longer use the same tools to get informed.

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## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- **More joint efforts** among organizations and their respective municipalities and even among the municipalities themselves would mean less duplication of activities and the focusing of effort.
- **Tools and resources for consulting members of the public more systematically** and understanding their needs and main channels of information would be useful because most of the organizations are currently functioning by word-of-mouth and intuition.
- The **generational issue** is both a challenge and a potential lever: it involves different functioning modes (communication methods, interests, etc.) but also facilitates the imagining of bridges between the parents and children participating in the activities and between the current generation of those involved in creating them and those who will carry on after them, who could in turn breathe some new energy and ideas into the creative process.
- **Funding** remains a major issue in maintaining material needs and perhaps human resources above all. Besides the obtained amounts, our interviewees said they would like to have more **financial predictability**.

Our exploratory approach at La Boîte interculturelle shows that artistic and cultural initiatives are preferred ways to bring together members of the public with different origins. Although small in size, our exploration allowed us to identify some key points: **the arts and culture are a catalyst for authentic interactions**, and they reveal challenges regarding the resources for and awareness and sustainability of regional intercultural activities.

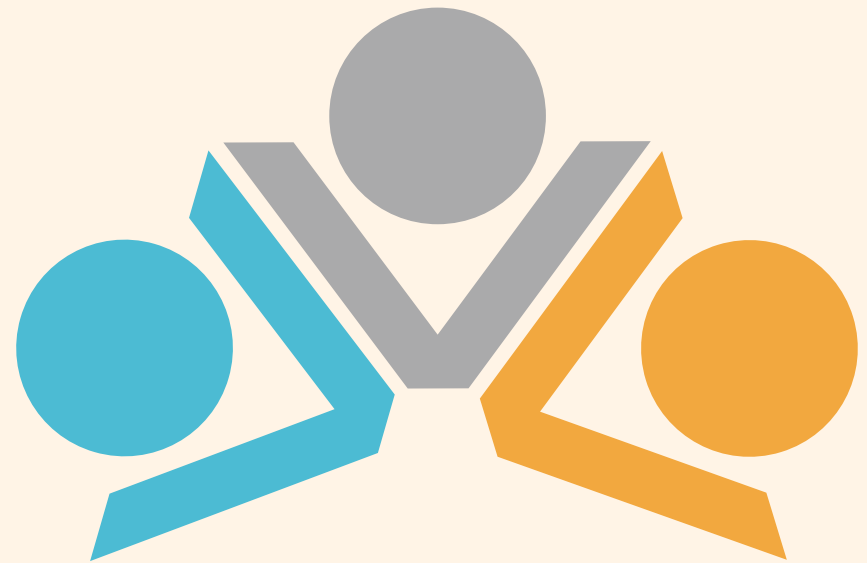
Our interviewees' words show that there's enormous existing potential but also that the creators of intercultural activities need stronger support and acknowledgement. The results of our interviews should encourage us to deepen our collective reflection and develop joint strategies to maximize the impact of artistic and cultural initiatives for tightening the Quebec social fabric.

We hope that this summary can be an invitation to continue dialogue and expand spaces in which interculturality can not only be expressed but also flourish because more and more people of diverse origins are sharing their artistic and cultural creativity.

**La Boîte interculturelle** is a non-profit organization with the mission of creating bridges among cultures and territories within rural locations and even international ones.

We believe that each bit of dialogue between the members of different cultures, whether that dialogue takes place in a field, a village or a city, creates a unique opportunity to reinvent our perspectives, build bridges and inspire bold collaborations.

Our mission is to nurture those extraordinary moments in which diversity becomes a unifying force opening the way to a more inclusive, harmonious and staunchly innovative society.



CULTURE ⇄ DIALOGUE = CHANGE