

# Agenda 21

## Culture Today Tomorrow

Québec's Agenda 21  
for Culture





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## Background

Beginning in the mid 1980s, a new vision for the future known as **sustainable development** began to emerge in regions around the world. The term was popularized in the Bruntland report and adopted by political leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." It is founded on a "long-term approach that takes into account the inextricable nature of the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of development activities," (the *Sustainable Development Act*, Québec).

A desire to integrate culture into sustainable development soon followed, and was expressed in a variety of international instruments. In 1996 the World Commission on Culture and Development stated that "development has to be seen in terms that include cultural growth, the fostering of respect for all cultures, and for the principle of cultural freedom." In 2001 UNESCO adopted the **Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity**. It states that "market forces alone cannot guarantee the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, which is the key to sustainable human development [...] As a source of exchange, innovation, and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature."

UNESCO's **Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions** was adopted in 2005, committing all signatories to "integrate culture in their development policies at all levels for the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable development." In 2004 the international organization United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) proposed, at the Universal Forum of Cultures in Barcelona, an **Agenda 21 for Culture**, the first international document of its kind committing cities and local governments to cultural development. In 2007 the European Union adopted the **European Agenda for Culture** with a view to making culture an integral part of EU policies.

In 2006 the Québec government adopted the *Sustainable Development Act* which, by nature of its innovative character, represents a genuine societal commitment to sustainable development. In keeping with the Act, the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications released an action plan for sustainable development in April 2009. The development of **Québec's Agenda 21 for Culture** is a key component of this plan and was launched on September 20, 2010. An interministerial committee made up of 18 ministries and organizations was formed to examine methods for integrating culture into all aspects of government policy. In addition, a liaison committee made up of 12 leaders from various sectors of society was tasked with orchestrating a major public dialogue and fostering active public participation in developing the preliminary propositions for Agenda 21 for Culture.

From November 2010 to April 2011, a total of 98 meetings were held in 44 municipalities, drawing over 5,000 participants. On May 6, 2011, an interministerial forum was held and, on May 30, a provincial forum brought together 220 participants from every region on the theme of "The Future of Culture in Québec, a Commitment to Be Shared by All." This forum provided an opportunity to validate the conclusions of the public dialogue, highlight the principles and objectives of Agenda 21 for Culture, and propose avenues for subsequent reflection.

### Note

Adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Agenda 21 is an action plan for the 21st century that aims to achieve sustainable development.

## Introduction

Culture plays an invaluable role in quality of life. It provides a foundation for individual growth and fulfillment and defines entire societies. It is the key to understanding the world and to living together. In this sense, culture precedes and influences all development endeavors.

According to the most common definition at the international level, culture is the “whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.” (UNESCO, Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies, 1982).

Art and literature cultivate critical thinking skills, educate, challenge beliefs, and give citizens access to another vision of the world, providing impetus for experimentation and reflection that open new dimensions of the unconscious and indescribable. Artists are in the vanguard of culture. They explore reality and create works that convey intimate emotions, represent collective values, or seek to express universal ideas.

Québec, which has long strived to affirm its own culture, boasts a well-established and internationally recognized cultural infrastructure composed of artists, creators, organizations, businesses, and institutions, with all the necessary tools to play an important role in developing our society.

The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions advocates making culture a part of development policy at all levels as a means of establishing conditions conducive to sustainable development.

Culture is a major and vital part of society that is integral to the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It requires commitment from all partners involved.

## **Culture is a vehicle for meaning, identity, values, and community**

Identity and development are more inextricably linked than ever. Identity enables us to maintain lasting commitments to groups, communities, ideals, and projects.

All human communities possess cultural identities that evolve with each generation, building on the natural and cultural heritage of their forebears. These identities are enriched by contemporary experiences and transmitted to future generations. Culture is dynamic and must be permitted to thrive.

Modern-day Québec is rooted in the Americas. It is the product of the meeting between aboriginals and other cultures from the four corners of the globe, which acknowledge and intermingle with each other to forge a sense of belonging founded on shared values.

Québec's identity is built upon the ideals of a democratic society and its accompanying values. These values have shaped our political, social, and economic institutions, forming the underpinnings of a society founded on the rule of law and a strong parliamentary tradition, the separation of religion and state, and respect for personal rights and freedoms, including equality between men and women.

The primacy of the French language is a core principal within Québec society. French is the official language of Québec and is vital to its culture and social fabric. All sectors of society share the responsibility of making French the normal common language of public life. This goal is pursued in a spirit of openness respectful of Québec's English and cultural communities as well as the First Nations and Inuit, all of whom are full-fledged members of our society.

### **Culture is a vector for democracy, intercultural dialogue, and social cohesion**

Through the sharing of common values, culture acts as a powerful vector for social cohesion and citizenship building. Art and culture are a fundamental part of a well-rounded education intended to promote individual well-being and growth and active participation as creative members of a community.

Culture aids in the integration of minority groups and the inclusion of marginalized citizens. It can also help build relationships and encourage intercultural dialogue, since art enables us to transcend differences and build bridges between cultures.

An open attitude to other cultures is a source of enrichment in and of itself. The mobility of individuals, ideas, and projects is what allows cultures to breathe. By enriching each other, cultures act as drivers for development.

### **Culture is a catalyst for creativity, economic development, and wealth creation**

Culture is closely linked to economic development strategies, both because of its ability to shape knowledge-based societies and its contribution to employment and tourism industry growth and urban and regional revitalization. Together with technology, the world now sees culture as a factor for development, and one that sometimes carries even more weight than traditional production factors.

Culture is a powerful catalyst for creativity, which is strategically significant in today's economy as it serves as a source of innovation. Creativity, innovation, education, and research are today's core drivers of development. Creative energy is vital to all sectors of society, which is why an investment in culture is an investment in economic development.

### **Culture is a compass for land-use planning and development**

Culture is rooted in territory and shaped by its relationship with nature. Conversely, territories themselves are human and cultural constructs. Land use mirrors the evolution of a society's

lifestyle and values, which is reflected in the importance ascribed to preserving natural and cultural heritage and in the expressions of creativity that arise in response to a place's natural and cultural characteristics.

A population's quality of life depends in large part on its cultural land use practices, as expressed in heritage, public art, design, architecture, and landscapes. All of these elements contribute to individual and collective well-being, foster a sense of belonging, and help make the environment more attractive.

Biological and cultural diversity are closely related and intertwined in peoples' relationships with the land, historical accounts, use of language, and the development of *terroirs* and landscapes.

*Given the interdependent relationship between culture and the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, cultural action and policies at all levels must reflect an integrated vision that seeks to establish complementary and mutually compatible development objectives.*

*Furthermore, culture must play as significant a role in policy and major initiatives at the local, regional, and national levels as it does in international relations.*

## Guiding Principles

To better integrate sustainable development objectives, Québec's Agenda 21 for Culture recommends adhering to the principles for sustainable development set forth in the *Sustainable Development Act*, including the protection of cultural heritage, in addition to the principles that follow.

### **Preservation of cultural diversity**

Cultural diversity is a valuable individual and societal asset. The protection, promotion and maintenance of cultural diversity are an essential requirement for sustainable development, for the benefit of present and future generations (taken from the Principle of sustainable development from the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions).

Protecting, promoting, and maintaining cultural diversity involve protecting and promoting the diversity of Québec's own cultural expressions, since they help foster the evolution and growth of Québec's culture.

### **Sustainable use of cultural resources**

Cultural resources such as heritage, the arts, and cultural expressions must be used responsibly in a manner respectful of their essence and balance, so as to ensure they aren't overexploited, distorted, or impoverished in a way that could compromise their long-term use by future generations.

### **Creativity and innovation**

Culture is a powerful catalyst for social and technological creativity and innovation. Support for creativity is crucial to assuring the viability of society's growth.

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### **The principles of Québec's Sustainable Development Act**

Health and quality of life · Social equity and solidarity · Environmental protection · Economic efficiency · Participation and commitment · Access to knowledge · Subsidiarity · Inter-governmental partnership and cooperation · Prevention · Precaution · Protection of cultural heritage · Biodiversity preservation · Respect for ecosystem support capacity · Responsible production and consumption · Polluter pays · Internalization of costs

## Objectives

Québec's Agenda 21 for Culture will be implemented through the efforts of social actors seeking to contribute to sustainable development objectives by taking culture into account in their own actions, be they individuals, civil society organizations, businesses, or government ministries and organizations.

Implementation will involve a multitude of actions that reflect the following 21 objectives:

### PART 1

#### Cultural Action from a Sustainability Perspective

#### **Culture is a vehicle for meaning, identity, values, and community.**

- 1 Recognize and promote Québec's cultural identity by protecting and developing its tangible and intangible heritage in all its forms throughout the territory.
- 2 Promote the role of artists, cultural professionals, and creators from all fields as standard bearers for the renewal of Québec's cultural identity and vectors for the diversity of its cultural expressions. Support cultural creation, production, and presentation throughout Québec, protecting freedom of expression and encouraging all social actors to take responsibility for the sustainable development of Québec's cultural sector.
- 3 Ensure that French, as Québec's official language, remains the common language of public life for Quebecers of all origins, in a manner respectful of Québec's English-speaking and cultural communities as well as the First Nations and Inuit.

- 4 Recognize the cultural specificity of the First Nations and Inuit, as well as the contribution of their cultures, knowledge, and traditions to Québec's cultural identity. Promote awareness, protection, transmission, and development of these cultures within their communities and throughout Québec.
- 5 Foster cultural development among citizens as well as access to and participation in cultural activities. Encourage amateur cultural activities and cultural mediation. Include citizens in the cultural policy development process at all levels. Treat cultural activities as an opportunity for learning and building citizenship.

## PART 2

### Culture and Society

#### **Culture is a vector for democracy, intercultural dialogue, and social cohesion.**

- 6 Promote the importance of the arts and culture in all educational institutions, both within the curriculum and as part of extracurricular activities.
- 7 Recognize the role of culture as a vector for social cohesion. Highlight the work of artists and citizens whose cultural activities contribute to the social and economic development of their communities.

- 8 Foster, through the arts and culture, intercultural dialogue between Quebecers. Increase opportunities for interaction between Québec society and artists of all horizons in order to promote integration and inclusion. Combat intolerance, discrimination, and racism.
- 9 Integrate culture into municipal family policies and make cultural facilities more accessible to families. Promote the same integration of culture into social policies and improve access to cultural facilities for disadvantaged groups.
- 10 Promote the role of culture as a determining factor for health. Make space for art at health and social services institutions. Increase partnerships between artists, cultural organizations, and this sector.

## PART 3

### Culture and the Economy

#### **Culture is a catalyst for creativity, economic development, and wealth creation.**

- 11 Recognize and promote culture as a driver of sustainable economic development at the local, regional, and national levels. Highlight the economic impact of Québec culture. Create new models of economic support for culture and for promoting patronage. Encourage cultural entrepreneurship in all of its forms. Support Québec's cultural presence on the international stage and make it a part of local and regional economic planning.



- 12 Build on the power of the arts and culture to drive excellence in other sectors of economic activity such as land-use planning, tourism, marketing, and the use of information technologies.
- 13 Foster business support for culture's role in development by championing collaboration and the pooling of resources between the culture and business communities, both for the benefit of business projects and the development of the culture economy.
- 14 Develop and promote creativity by making culture a part of innovation policy and by supporting the adaptation of the arts and literature sector and culture industries to the Internet and digital age.

#### PART 4

#### Culture, Territory, and Environment

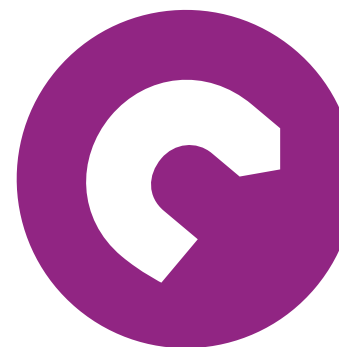
### **Culture is a compass for land-use planning and development.**

- 15 Recognize culture's role as a source for practices, knowledge, and traditions that help protect and stimulate biological and cultural diversity. Take the territory and the environment into consideration as part of every culture endeavor.
- 16 Recognize and promote regional artistic expression and cultural specificities by encouraging diversified, locally anchored production to avoid cultural standardization.

- 17 Recognize and respect the close link between culture and territory among the First Nations and Inuit. Support the development and preservation of traditional knowledge and customs.
- 18 Acknowledge that our natural heritage must be protected for its cultural significance as well as its ecological and economical value.
- 19 Take culture into consideration when developing policies for environmental protection, including impact studies for major projects.
- 20 Incorporate cultural issues into land-use planning and development processes in order to enhance quality of life for citizens, foster a sense of belonging, and create a more attractive environment.
- 21 Improve the cultural quality of public spaces through astute heritage development, significant use of public art, and distinctive architecture, design, and landscapes. Integrate the life cycle concept into landscape and facility design.

Québec's Agenda 21 for Culture  
Voluntary Charter

**The Future of Culture  
in Québec: A Commitment  
to Be Shared By All**



## **The Future of Culture in Québec: A Commitment to Be Shared By All**

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Over the past 50 years, Québec has developed tools to promote culture and spur creativity. Artists and creators from every discipline, organizations, businesses, and cultural institutions lend Québec society the distinctive flavor and character that set us apart and help us make our cultural mark around the globe.

In keeping with the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Québec's Agenda 21 for Culture serves as a frame of reference. It sets forth the principles to follow and objectives to pursue for integrating culture into development policy at all levels, with a view to creating the conditions conducive to sustainable development.

Québec's Agenda 21 for culture is founded on recognizing culture as a core component of society. It is part and parcel of the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and requires committed partners. Culture places people at the heart of development, gives our society a soul, and keeps us in step with a world that is profoundly changing.

### **This proposition affirms that culture is**

- A vehicle for meaning, identity, values, and community
- A vector for democracy, intercultural dialogue, and social cohesion
- A catalyst for creativity, economic development, and wealth creation
- A compass for land-use planning and development

Agenda 21 for Culture is aimed at actors from all levels and sectors of society, including individuals, civil society organizations, businesses, and government ministries and organizations. The implementation of Agenda 21 for Culture lies in the hands of these actors, who are mobilizing and working together, and providing each other with mutual support.

Adopting the voluntary charter is a way to be part of this collective and collaborative movement seeking to make culture an integral part of the sustainable development of our society.

### **By adopting this charter, I agree to**

- Promote Québec's Agenda 21 for Culture among my partners, clients, and professional contacts, and strive to uphold and respect its principles
- Implement initiatives and actions in accordance with Agenda 21 for Culture objectives, particularly within my area of expertise and operations
- Share my experiences and knowledge, in particular through the Agenda 21 for Culture discussion platform

**Add your name  
online to the Charter!**

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