

DO MORE, DO BETTER

Government Action Plan for the Social and Cultural Development of the First Nations and Inuit 2017-2022

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 PROMOTE THE ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND LANGUAGES

Support the blossoming of the Aboriginal cultures

In recent centuries, the Aboriginal cultures have sustained repeated attacks that culminated in the system of boarding schools. However, when all is said and done, the historic record is clear: faced with adversity, Québec's Aboriginal peoples have preserved a deep-seated determination to assert their difference and their diversity. Contrary to what some people think, the Aboriginal cultures are not vestiges of bygone days or a folkloric past that are out of step with the contemporary world. The Aboriginal cultures reflect how Québec's First Peoples now grasp the world, i.e. resolutely modern but deeply rooted in their traditions, sensitive to the attractions of urban environments, but solidly rooted in the fullness of the territory.

Québec's Aboriginal peoples possess living, authentic cultures and add diversity to the Québec cultural landscape. It is a question of acting to concretely promote the blossoming of the Aboriginal cultures. Indeed, a living, shared culture facilitates cohesion, dialogue, inclusion and the overall quality of social bonds. Furthermore, it is, above all, through the influence of the Aboriginal cultures that it will be possible to significantly reverse the racism and discrimination in Québec of which the First Nations and Inuit are still the victims.

Strengthen the Aboriginal languages

Language, identity and culture are interrelated, all the more so in societies with oral traditions such as the First Nations and Inuit. Language is an expression of a shared experience of the world and is the instrument par excellence to transmit such experience. It is the first manifestation of the existence of a group and its presence in history.

The Aboriginal languages have been weakened in Québec. They have obviously suffered because of their minority situation but they have also been seriously damaged by a historic determination to assimilate.

Linguistic diversity is valuable and Québec must protect itself from the cultural weakening that the decline of the Aboriginal languages signifies. Second, the Government of Québec wishes to contribute to the blossoming of the languages of the First Nations and Inuit. Communities cannot be developed without a sustained effort to promote the Aboriginal languages, increase the number of speakers, and foster their use in the activities of daily living. This initiative depends, what is more, on the formal recognition of the contribution to Québec as a whole of the languages that the Inuit and the First Nations speak.

MEASURES RELATED TO THE PROMOTION OF THE ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

1. FOSTER THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE FIRST NATIONS AND INUIT TO QUÉBEC'S CULTURAL VITALITY

- Increase the number of cultural development agreements and strengthen the existing agreements
- Establish a permanent collaboration and consensus-building mechanism in the realm of culture in the First Nations and Inuit communities
- Establish a program to train and hire cultural development officers in the communities
- Implement a strategy to promote heritage of interest to the Aboriginal peoples
- Promote the presence of the Aboriginal cultures and arts in the public space
- Establish an assistance program for Aboriginal cultural enterprises, especially in the handicrafts and arts and crafts sector
- Establish a financial assistance program for Aboriginal craftspeople
- Support cultural projects for school-age children

2. PROMOTE THE ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES AS AN ESSENTIAL VECTOR FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ABORIGINAL SOCIETIES

- Broaden support for the communications sector, especially community radio stations, and the creation of original content in the Aboriginal communities
- Elaborate support programs for the Aboriginal languages, in collaboration with the federal government
- Adopt a national declaration on the Aboriginal languages that affirms the specific place that such languages occupy in Québec
- Make available children's literature in the Aboriginal languages