

ICH Recommendations to the Government of Canada (English version)



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA REGARDING THE UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

Preamble

The General Assembly of the Quebec Council for Intangible Heritage (Conseil québécois du patrimoine vivant, hereafter CQPV), gathered in Montreal on September 17, 2016:

Considers that intangible heritage consists of practices transmitted from generation to generation that are vital for the identity, development, and visibility of the different groups and communities in Canada that contribute to the diversity in the cultural expressions of humankind,

Recognizes that the different elements of this heritage present throughout Canada generate important social and economic benefits,

Emphasizes that actions undertaken by public authorities benefit from being integrated within a clear vision of sectoral development that considers safeguarding as a key value,

Reiterates that one of the primary objectives of the notion of intangible heritage remains aiming to ensure that cultural workers within this sector can earn a decent

living, when applicable, or that tradition bearers can devote themselves to their activities under favorable conditions,

Signals the character of change to cultural policies that this notion incurs,

Acknowledges the efforts made by the federal government and its diverse public institutions to support many elements of traditional culture, notably those linked to oral traditions,

Reaffirms the potential difficulties within the public sector in linking symbolic recognition to support for cultural actions,

Recognizes challenges linked to the depiction of the different traditions and folklore present on the territory,

Highlights the important role and skills of intangible heritage mediators as defined by Compétence Culture,

Has observed the different inventory initiatives that have taken place until now,

Reiterates that organizations present on the ground are the best allies of public authorities in the development of elements of culture transmitted from generation to generation,

Indicates that concerned cultural actors use the term “living heritage (patrimoine vivant)” in French, but accept the phrase “intangible heritage (patrimoine immatériel)” as a synonym,

Accepts the conclusions and recommendations of reports dealing with data on Quebec’s cultural traditions entitled “État des lieux du patrimoine immatériel (Situation of Quebec’s Intangible Heritage)” and “La danse traditionnelle québécoise (Quebec’s Traditional Dance),”

Recognizes Quebec’s cultural distinctiveness, which is furthermore reflected by the presence of a Quebec representative within the Permanent Delegation of Canada to UNESCO,

Embraces the UNESCO ethical principles whereby communities and groups must play a leading role in the safeguarding of their traditions in conjunction with public policies that favor cultural action,

Restates the role played by the CQPV within UNESCO, as well as its status as a national federation for the intangible heritage sector entrusted to it by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec (Quebec Ministry of Culture and Communications),

Confirms the willingness of the CQPV, and of numerous individuals and organizations concerned by cultural traditions, to work in partnership with the many public authorities,

Takes stock of the other international mechanisms that may have a link or an impact on intangible heritage, including the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Adopts the following recommendations to the Canadian government developed in the wake of the round table organized by the CQPV during the third world congress of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies on June 6, 2016 at Concordia University (Montreal); and of the formal recommendations already issued by the CQPV to the federal government on March 23, 2013; while also taking account of recommendations formulated by the General Assembly of Intangible Heritage in Quebec (États généraux du patrimoine immatériel au Québec) held in Quebec City in 2014; of information exchanged during the 2011 international colloquium on support measures for intangible heritage organized by the CQPV under the auspices of UNESCO and the Organization of American States; and of observations from a report emanating from the Faculty of Law at Université Laval commissioned by the CQPV.

Recommendations

- **Sign the UNESCO Convention** for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage accompanied with a strong commitment to developing important structuring projects on a national scale,
- **Determine a clear vision, objectives, and means** to safeguard or develop traditional practices in Canada, notably cultural elements that are seldom or not practiced elsewhere in the world, and include concrete mechanisms to measure results,
- **Establish specific national programs** dedicated to the development of the diverse oral traditions on Canada's territory, particularly with regard to training and to cultural mediation, and this for all the ministries, departments, and state-owned enterprises concerned,
- **Increase aid toward the production, dissemination, promotion, and documentation** of professional practices related to intangible heritage in a spirit of equity, sustainable development, inclusive economic opportunities, global cultural diversity, and peer review process, that includes players such as the Canada Arts Council and the Department of Canadian Heritage,
- **Put pressure on the Convention** to ensure that the Representative List becomes an open registry through which States Parties may include as many practices as they desire, given that many practices transmitted from generation to generation deserve to receive this type of promotion on an international scale,

- **Encourage the creation of socioeconomic studies and statistics** related to needs, impact, and markets, including data on the motivation of practitioners, putting forth concrete indicators related to safeguarding and development, in particular relating to cultural elements that may have been disadvantaged up to now by public interventions,
- **Call into question the development of inventories and legal recognition** mechanisms as efficient means for safeguarding,
- **Integrate the ethical principles** of the Convention within government actions by placing concerned groups and communities at the heart of all safeguarding and development actions concerning them, in particular through organizations and associations,
- **Encourage the Canadian provinces and territories** to set up development programs related to traditional local practices within all their ministries, departments, and state-owned enterprises.