

Brief for Official Language Policy Review 2016

1) English-Language Arts and Artists in Quebec

ELAN was conceived in November 2004 at the Quebec Arts Summit held in Montreal. More than 120 artists and other representatives of the English-speaking arts milieu, as well as government officials, came together to discuss ways to support artists and cultural workers in Quebec's official language minority community (**OLMC**). With the support of sister organizations the Quebec Drama Federation (**QDF**), the Quebec Writers' Federation (**QWF**), and the Association of English-Language Publishers of Quebec (**AELAQ**), ELAN was created to give a united voice to minority English-language artists of all backgrounds, working in all disciplines, and living in all regions of Quebec. Through networking events, a monthly email newsletter (ELANews), needs assessment surveys, and major projects such as the Arts Alive! Québec community festivals, ELAN has worked to bring Quebec artists closer together and spread their work far and wide.

ELAN has fulfilled its mandate by:

- **Documenting the achievements of 150+ notable Quebec artists** through essays, biographies, and video profiles as part of the RAEV (Recognizing Artists: Enfin Visibles!) project.
- **Creating and distributing** *Minority Report: An Alternative History of English-Language Arts in Quebec*, a book documenting the evolving roles and relationship of English-speaking artists in Quebec.
- **Building ongoing relationships** with French-speaking organizations such as Culture Montréal, Diversité Artistique Montréal (**DAM**), and MAI (Montréal arts interculturels).
- **Launching Made au Québecⁱ**, a website that gathers and translates media coverage of English-speaking artists' successes for a French-language audience. Its launch received extensive positive coverage from English and French media (e.g. CBC, The Gazette, *Le Devoir*, *La Presse*, and *VOIR*).
- **Bringing community arts to the fore** with Arts Alive! Québecⁱⁱ festivals in Hudson, Québec City, Knowlton, Huntingdon, Wakefield and Montreal's West Island, in the summers of 2015 and 2016. Sellout crowds and town-wide parties have paved the way for ongoing collaboration between participating communities.
- **Bridging the Arts and Education Sectors** and creating links throughout Quebec, and across Canada with projects such as YEAH! (Youth, Education, Arts Health) and the ACE (Arts, Communities, Education) Initiative.
- **Connecting with decision-makers**. ELAN is often called to meet with government and community leaders on issues that matter to artists such as market access, community broadcasting, and cultural diversity as well as official languages issues and federal, provincial and municipal cultural policy.

2) The English Language Within Quebec

Since the passage of Bill 22 in 1974, Quebec recognizes only one official language, which is French. This bill presents complications for Quebec's English-speaking artists, which we will briefly outline.

One of ELAN's first projects was to commission a series of on-line articles documenting how Quebec's English-speaking artistic community evolved during the 20th century. These articles were published by Guernica in its Essay Series in 2011 under the title *Minority Report: An Alternative History of English-Language Arts in Quebec* which documents the rise, fall, and renaissance of the English-language arts community in Quebec. During the 1950s, English Montreal was the cultural centre of Canadaⁱⁱⁱ. A tremendously vibrant scene was still active at the time of Expo 67, then decline began with FLQ activity in October 1970, culminating in a full scale exodus of at least 300,000 people over the next two decades. Most of these people were English-speakers as well as cultural consumers and benefactors, and their departure negatively impacted all artistic disciplines. By December 1989 La Presse^{iv} newspaper reported: *Le théâtre anglophone au Québec- pratiquement mort.*

The story since the 1990s, and particularly after the referendum of 1995, is far more positive. At the time of the first referendum in 1980 very few of Quebec's English-speakers were bilingual, fewer than 5%. By 2011 the percentage had increased to 67.8%^v and the percentage is higher among younger demographics. In addition, an astonishing number of Anglo-québécois are in romantic relationships with francophones; the children of these couples are often bilingual and bicultural. The Department of Canadian Heritage's 2011 Statistical Profile of OLMC artists^{vi} found that Quebec's English-speaking community had a significantly higher percentage of artists than any other official language community (minority or majority) in Canada. These are all signs of positive transformation, and cause for celebration.

Around the dawn of the new millennium, a new spirit of optimism had begun to prevail among English-speaking artists. They wanted to break down old stereotypes, identify common ground, and consolidate links with French-language colleagues. The challenge was to build a sustainable community and create conditions that would empower English-speaking artists to stay in Quebec and thrive. Some of the most visible examples of this cultural vitality are the Quebec Writers' Federation and their annual QWF awards, the Blue Metropolis Literary Festival, the Quebec Drama Federation and their annual Montreal English Theatre Awards, and the POP Montreal music festival.

For the most part, mutual respect prevails between Quebec's French-speaking majority and its English-speaking minority. A good example of this came in 2011 when Arcade Fire won a Grammy Award in front of millions of

television viewers and shouted: *Merci, Montréal!* Quebec was proud, and the National Assembly got so excited that they voted a unanimous resolution recognizing the role of artists – French-speaking and English-speaking – as ambassadors for Quebec culture. ELAN has made a conscious effort to build bridges with the French speaking majority by serving on the boards of *Culture Montréal* and *le Salon du Livre de Montréal* and by collaborating with *Vision Diversité* and *Diversité Artistique Montréal*, with whom we acted as guest editor for a special edition of their Tic Art Toc magazine^{vii} about the joys and challenges of being an English-speaking artist in Québec.

ELAN's members understand that Quebec is (demographically) a small island surrounded by an ocean of English-speakers, and they understand the threat to French-speaking culture in Quebec posed by global English-language cultural products, which are both seductive and invasive. The Internet makes abundant, inexpensive content readily available, but this 'invasion' is not unique to Quebec, and is not a problem for French-speaking artists alone. In fact, English-speaking artists are also threatened by Anglo-American culture because we are in direct competition with it. The proliferation of Anglo-American culture is a threat to countries as large as Germany and France. The difference in Quebec is that the local English-speaking community is often blamed for these exterior factors, over which it has no control. An oft-repeated irritation is 'English music' played in public spaces. Defenders of the French-language complain that merchants or building owners are deliberately choosing to promote 'English' music to the detriment of 'French' music (the assumption being that legitimate Québécois art can only be produced in French). In 2012, during the public hearings on Bill 14 (to revise and strengthen the charter of the French language), ELAN pointed out to commissioners that premier Marois was playing English-language background music in her Montreal riding office. The motives were not sinister but pragmatic - this kind of music is easy to obtain and cheap. These foreign products never benefit local English-speaking artists but often negatively impact the local English-speaking community. As ELAN has pointed out many times, even if every single English-speaking Québécois citizen were to leave Quebec tonight, the most powerful threats to the French language – American films, music, magazines, website radio, TV etc – would not be changed in any perceptible way tomorrow morning.

Some of the discomfort surrounding the English language emerged during this past summer's consultations to renew Quebec's Cultural Policy. When the first Cultural Policy was created 25 years ago, the English-speaking arts community was at its lowest ebb. Nonetheless, the original Cultural Policy recognized the historical contribution of the English-speaking community and made a commitment to provide equitable future support, a promise which has been kept. In 2016 when Quebec embarked upon a consultation process to modernize its Cultural Policy, it was disturbing that the working documents contained no reference to English-speaking artists, as if we were absent from the conversation. Although explicit commitments were made regarding indigenous artists and inclusivity for immigrants from 'cultural communities,' the only reference to English-language art was a pointed question about the 'problem' of Quebec artists creating works in English. ELAN interpreted this to be a rebuke directed at

francophone artists 'selling out' by producing in English, but Culture Montréal questioned in their brief if this question was directed at all English-speaking artists. The unfortunate fact of the matter is that 25 years of renaissance for Quebec's English-speaking artists is not always viewed as a cause for celebration in the Quebec's Francophone community when a zero-sum lens sees us a threat to French-language culture. As all English-speaking communities in Quebec will testify, we face special minority language challenges due to Quebec's complex history and its single official language, which must always be defended against threats from English.

3) Challenges and Opportunities for English-Language Arts and Artists in Quebec

It is no exaggeration to say that the vitality of Quebec's English-speaking artists is dependant upon the Official Languages Act, Road Map support, and federal cultural institutions: Canada Council for the Arts, NFB, Telefilm, CBC, CRTC, and the many programs administered directly by the department of Canadian Heritage. It is of vital importance to us that this support be maintained. Quebec's English-speaking artists have identified a number of challenges to be addressed, as well as opportunities to pursue with Official Languages support over the next five years.

a) Institutional Strength

Artistic umbrella groups provide vitality for many individuals within the community, as well as artistic associations. Five active umbrella groups have all come into existence in post-Bill-101 Quebec and are a reflection of a community seeking to reinvent itself and its relationship with the majority community. They are the Quebec Drama Federation (1989), the Association of English-Language Publishers of Quebec (1989), the Quebec Writers' Federation (1998), the English Language Arts Network (2004), and the Quebec English Language (Film) Production Council (**QEPC**) (2011). All five of these artistic umbrella groups play important roles in the community. Increased support for them translates into increased support for many individual artists and associations.

ELAN plays a special role in Quebec's cultural scene by maintaining active working relationships with QDF, QWF and AELAQ, which all hold seats on ELAN's board. Each of ELAN's sister organizations serves a specific artistic discipline (theatre, writing, film/TV production) while ELAN plays a broader role analogous to la Fédération culturelle canadienne-française (**FCCF**). ELAN is called upon to fill gaps for artistic disciplines which lack structure: music, visual arts, dance. Part of our mandate is to connect with other community sectors (E.g. Education and Health) in order to develop collaborations, and ELAN is the umbrella group that most actively engages with Quebec's Ministry of Culture (E.g. drafting and presenting a brief for the 2016 review of Cultural Policy) and dialogues with francophone artistic groups (E.g. frequent collaborations with Diversité Artistique Montréal (DAM) and Vision Diversité, as well as holding seats on the boards of Culture Montréal and le Salon du Livre de Montréal.)

ELAN is also the main artistic umbrella group consistently called upon to play a national official languages role in Ottawa on behalf of Quebec's English-speaking arts community. This work ranges from regular consultations with the Standing Committee on Official Languages, the Committee of Assistant Deputy Ministers for Official Languages, and the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. In 2015 ELAN signed a collaboration agreement with the National Film Board (**NFB**) and regularly consults with Telefilm and CBC on behalf of English-speaking artists. In 2016 ELAN organized public consultations and wrote a brief on behalf of the entire English-speaking arts community for PCH's review of Canada's digital policy. For the past seven years ELAN and the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (**QAHN**) have collaborated with Quebec's regional office of PCH to organize an Arts, Culture and Heritage Working Group with cultural workers and Federal Institutions. ELAN also plays a major role in representing Quebec's English-speaking community (its citizens in all regions) at CRTC hearings, a role that QCGN has delegated to ELAN. This work is currently assisted by funding from the Broadcasting Participation Fund. When that fund (made possible from tangible benefits related to media acquisitions) expires an important gap will appear.

Recommendation 1: It is important for all umbrella groups to be adequately funded to fulfil their provincial mandates and support their communities. ELAN needs to be recognized for the important work that it performs at a national (federal) level, and funded accordingly. As noted in QCGN's brief, it is a community priority to finance national level representation for community sector organizations and provide resources to develop and maintain sector policy expertise where gaps exist to ensure the ESCQ is able to participate as an equal at the national official languages table.

b) Infrastructure

Physical Infrastructure is currently lacking for all artistic disciplines. A wave of major investment in cultural spaces was made in the 80s and 90s when Quebec's English-language cultural scene was at its nadir. All disciplines have seen dramatic growth since 1995 in numbers of artists, performances and recognition. However, a lack of spaces for theatre, dance and music continues to be a barrier for artists, particularly those who are emerging and struggling to get a start.

Recommendation 2: The Cultural Spaces Fund could assign resources to address this problem.

c) Arts and Community

Artists play a vital role in giving a voice and identity to their community. Artists can also play an effective role in bridging minority and majority communities via shared cultural activities. Nowhere is this more important than in rural, regional and remote communities. ELAN has devoted a great deal of time and energy in recent years to

partnering with artists in regional communities to create Arts Alive ! Qu,bec mini-festivals (summer 2015 and 2016). These events have leveraged support from local merchants and municipal governments and enhanced collaboration between English- and French-speaking neighbours.

Recommendation 3: The Community Cultural Action Fund should prioritize artistic activities that directly involve local communities.

These artistic events also have important economic implications as demonstrated by CEDEC's Tourism study^{viii}, ELAN's Tourism study^{ix} and QUESCREN's Creative Economy Study^x. As noted in QCGN's brief: It is important to enable federal research to support community vitality.

Recommendation 4: Additional research and pilot projects are required to effectively develop tourism projects.

d) Training, Mentorship and Youth Retention

Artists are increasingly called upon to learn new skills as they must often act as their own agents, publicists, business managers, graphic artists, web designers, social media specialists and more. On-going professional training is therefore essential. Artistic umbrella groups (ELAN, QWF, QDF, AELAQ) provide specific workshops in collaboration with Youth Employment Services (**YES**), and cegep programs that address this need. Mentorship is also a valuable tool for assisting emerging artists and helping them remain in Quebec, where making a career is more challenging than in many other cities.

Recommendation 5: Special support for training and mentorship needs to be a priority in the coming years.

e) Arts and Education

ELAN has explored community collaboration between arts and education via two major projects: YEAH! (Youth, Education, Arts and Health) and the ACE (Arts, Communities and Education) Initiative. Arts and Education can be powerful allies in enriching the learning process, stimulating young minds, and in engaging youth at risk.

As noted in QCGN's brief: It is important to change the way resources are channeled to our community. Federal institutions are often challenged in taking positive measures to enhance our community. Solutions could include establishing a community-managed cross-sectoral development fund, or to create thematic inter-institutional programs and resources that address specific community needs.

Recommendation 6: The Federal-Provincial Agreement should be employed more frequently to fund Arts-Education projects.

f) Decline of traditional media

Quebec's English-speaking community has recently suffered the closure of English alternative arts weeklies *The Montreal Mirror* and *Hour* as well as the progressive shrinking of the Montreal Gazette and the reduction of resources for radio and television media. These are issues analyzed in ELAN'S Digital Shift Report^{xi} which anticipated many of the problems under study in PCH's #DigiCanCon review. One of the most effective solutions is to provide high level media training to link artists, promoters, audiences and communities.

Recommendation 7: High level media training to be made a funding priority.

Ten years ago the landscape was grim and barren as outlined in ELAN's Short History of Broadcasting^{xii}. This is why over the past 10 years ELAN and QEPC have worked to advocate on behalf of Quebec's English-language TV and film producers. Recent results have exceeded all expectations and demonstrate the economic and social community benefits that accrue from carefully targeted advocacy work.

Recommendation 8: It is essential for Quebec's English speaking community – in Greater Montreal and in the regions - to see itself reflected in the media and to be able to tell its own stories. One solution has been to create consciousness of an Anglo Québécois brand of artists via ELAN's Made au Québec website. This site could become the cornerstone of a network of linked sites via targeted funding.

Thank you

Sincerely,

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ⁱ www.made-au-quebec.ca

ⁱⁱ www.arts-alive-quebec.ca

ⁱⁱⁱ William Weintraub, *City Unique: Montreal Days and Nights in the 1940s and 50s*.

^{iv} *La Presse* 7 décembre 1985 : Le théâtre Anglophone à Montréal : pratiquement mort.

^v *Le Conseil Supérieur de la langue française, 2010*

^{vi} William Floch and OLSPB Research Team, March 2011

^{vii} Tic Art Toc printemps 2015 – Made au Québec

^{viii} CEDEC Tourism 2025 Study (CEDEC's Plan for Creating 46,900 Jobs and adding \$5.2 BILLION to the Economy) 2015

^{ix} ELAN Study (CULTURAL TOURISM AND TOURING RESEARCH) June 2016

^x QUESCREN Study (The Creative Economy and the English Speaking Communities in Quebec) March 2012

^{xi} ELAN's Digital Shift Report, December 2014

^{xii} ELAN's Short History of English-language Broadcasting in Quebec, October 2016