



**Community Connections:
Youth Perspectives on Mental
Health for English-Speakers
Across Québec**

*Community Liaisons Program
Periodical - Fourth Edition*

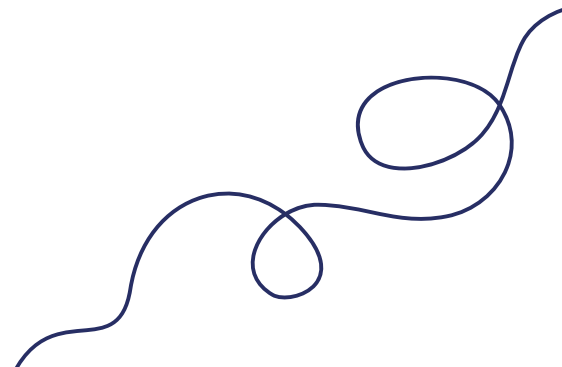
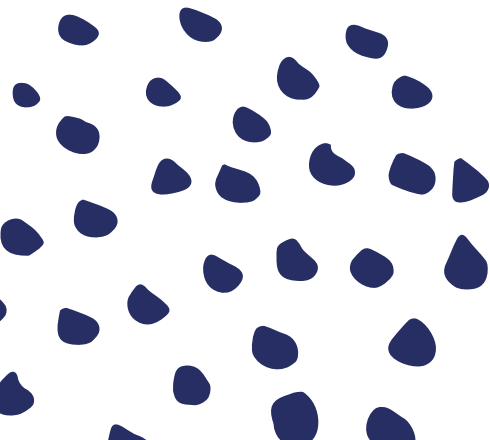
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About Y4Y

Y4Y Québec is a non-profit organisation committed to addressing the issues facing English-speaking youth (ages 16-30) across Québec.

Y4Y Québec is quickly becoming a credible force in the community; establishing an Advisory Board made up of qualified individuals with a track-record in the nonprofit world; publishing multiple policy documents concerning the situation of English-speaking youth throughout the province; holding outreach events that strengthen community at the local level; bringing information to important stakeholders from the corporate sector and in government; empowering leadership locally through a growing regional ambassador program, and having fun while doing so!



@Y4YQuebec



y4yquebec.org



Community Liaisons Program

This zine is a feature of the Community Liaisons Program. Funded by Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), the Community Liaisons Program functions as an ear to the ground for Y4Y Québec to hear from a diverse variety of regions about what matters to youth, about their communities, and how we can better support their mental health.

Now concluded, this program was unique because it reached a variety of regions, including the Bas-Saint-Laurent, the Laurentians, the Mauricie, Québec City, and of course, Montréal. Community Liaisons published two blog posts per month about mental health, their communities, and their experiences as English-speakers. Sharing these stories allows us to connect to the broader community of English-speaking Québécois. Community Liaisons also hosted two events in their communities, one artistic and one outdoors, to provide an opportunity for community members to connect while doing activities that are positive for their well-being. Part of liaising of course included the French-speaking majority. Our Community Liaisons conducted outreach to Francophone community organisations and attended Francophone events.

Finally, Community Liaisons have left a lasting legacy of their work by installing a community exchange box in their regions, whether free little libraries, or game and puzzle troves. As an outcome, community members in various regions of Québec may feel more connected to the French majority, and to other English-speakers, which improves the collective well-being.

Funded by:



Foreword



It is with great pleasure that I have the honour of presenting you with the latest Community Connections, the 4th and final edition of the Community Liaisons periodical. I can't believe how far we've come while working on the project.

When each of us took on the project, we had no idea what was in store for us. Many of us felt that all we had to do was organise a couple of events over eight months. Instead, we undertook an ambitious, multilayered project to serve our English-speaking youth community.

Of course, we've been writing blog posts on the issues affecting us, our mental health journeys and our experiences as English speakers in Québec. I've seen each Community Liaison (CL) go above and beyond, sharing their personal stories with all of us. In this edition, Savannah opens up about how knowing her worth has led her to list what she wants in her future partner on pages 15-19.

We've also organised a wide range of community events over the past eight months, from creative events like pottery and egg painting, pumpkin carving, and winter solstice décor making to active events such as skating, spinning, rock climbing and yoga. Connecting in person was a precious experience for many CLs, and we all wish we could have run even more events. Flora reflects on virtual vs. in-person connections on pages 8-10 with a more in-depth discussion.

The big kahuna of the project had to be building our community exchange boxes. When Y4Y first fielded the idea to us, we were all sceptical. Not that we thought our communities didn't need English resources; we just weren't sure we could pull it off. I know I've been cheerleading the CLs to success over the past several months as they've encountered challenges, persevered, and succeeded with flying colours. One bump in the road was adapting our communication and meetings to Nadine's wifi-less household. For more on how they adapted to being disconnected at home, they've written about their personal experience on pages 20-22.

Not only are the boxes beautiful (you can see for yourself in the images), but people are already taking advantage of their presence. Nadine's box in Amqui is already off to a great start, with books snatched up in the first couple of weeks since their

unveiling. I'm so proud of all the hard work the CLs have done, and I'm so excited to see the future of our boxes. Even though our project has come to a close, these boxes are our lasting impact, providing English resources and bringing community members together.

That's a wrap on the Community Liaisons project; we can't wait to see where next year's Wellness Liaisons take the project. That's all from me!


Chloe Merritt,
Community Liaison Lead



Wanting to Connect: Can Meeting in the Virtual World Replace In-Person Interaction?

Flora Janos, QC City

(Photo credit: Frederik Lipfert)



As human beings, connection to others is a huge part of our existence. Social media has made it possible to connect with others from all over the world if we want to. It has been a wonderful tool for maintaining connections despite long distances. In the recent global pandemic, social media allowed people to feel less isolated despite being in lockdowns for long periods. We could work from home and study from home, have virtual doctor's appointments, and even have Zoom weddings. It seems like most things in life can carry on online when meeting in person is impossible. However, there is still something about meeting others in person that cannot be fulfilled through virtual meetings.

I organised two in-person events for youth in Québec City as part of my Community Liaison project. For both events, I received feedback that participants were happy to participate in person and that many, especially those who work from home, feel isolated and look for events in-person to feel better. I have also talked to youth in my region about if they prefer in-person or online interaction, and many agreed that the convenience of hopping on a call last minute from anywhere in the world does not quench their need for in-person connection. Many youths miss the pre-pandemic days when fewer things happened online. It is unsurprising to hear this feedback. During the pandemic, with the emergence of cottage core, where people yearned for pastoral life and being connected with nature without technology, there seemed to have been a rising need for experiencing life outside the internet.

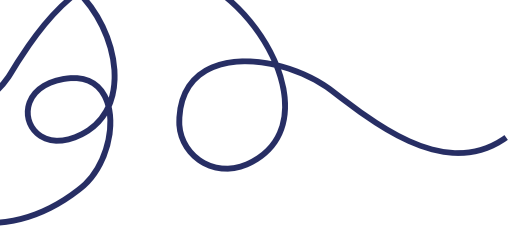
"It would seem that in-person communication is becoming old fashioned, but there is a strong need for it despite all the technological advancements that create newer and newer ways to interact online"

In my opinion, online communication can be a good thing if meeting in person is not an option. However, I believe it is not a long-term substitute for in-person communication. I have both friends and family members who live very far from me, so I have been keeping in touch with them online. Sometimes years pass by without meeting in person, however, what keeps us connected is our shared experiences in the past together or another value that we see in the relationship



(Photo credit: Brooke Cagle on Unsplash)



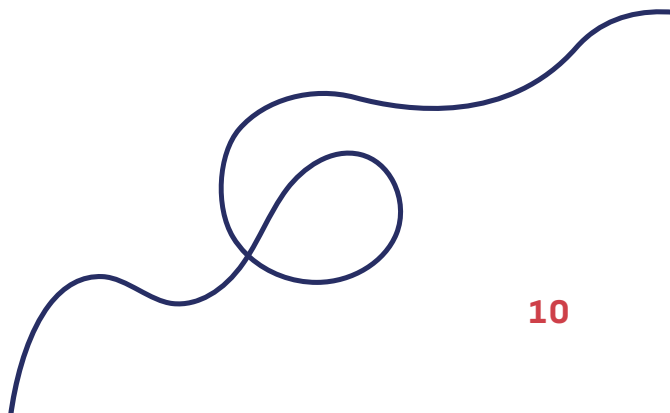
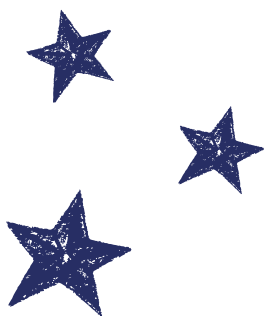


that was not cultivated online. Also, even though I can manage relationships online, there is still a desire to meet my friends and family in person.

It would seem that in-person communication is becoming old-fashioned, but there is a strong need for it despite all the technological advancements that create newer and newer ways to interact online. Online interaction focuses on verbal and written communication, but there is no option for physical touch. Sending a hug emoji is just not the same as a comforting hug when my friends are going through a hard time, and sometimes a shoulder pat can convey more than words can, especially when sometimes words fail me.

The way we connect and communicate is certainly changing, but the need for physical connection remains. Even without touch being in the same room as someone else can create a sense of intimacy that being in the same Zoom meeting can't.

I am happy that there are more and more in person events and gatherings happening around me and that it is becoming more and more the norm after years of social distancing due to the pandemic.





An Ode to Active Listening

Chloe Merritt, Montréal

I have a confession to make. I am obsessed with trashy reality TV dating shows. I've watched the classics and the Netflix series. I've even watched some deep cuts (was anyone else around for the Flavor of Love?). Having sacrificed many an hour of my time to the Bachelor Cinematic Universe, I know a few things. I'll tell you, a well-timed traumatic story can make the lead fall in love with you in one conversation; I can spot a villain edit from a mile away; I know when the producers are trying to trick you during the previews. Yet, the most common trope?



Every contestant wants to “feel seen.” I admit I mostly watch reality tv for the fun and dramatics; I cheer for my favourites and boo the villains. Yet, that so many people long to be appreciated for their authentic selves speaks to a need we have to be understood. We don't just want to be heard; we want people to really listen to us.

How often does someone take the time to just listen to you? They forego dinner (because you can't actually eat on the dinner dates - I know) and stare deep into your eyes while they listen to you talk about that thing that happened to you. It's a special and valuable time to have someone's undivided attention.

Amazingly, a dinner date on the set of The Bachelor in Punta Cana is not the only way to experience such a phenomenon. Here's where I get to active listening. I think what makes contestants feel so special during these moments (besides the pressure of the show pushing them to fall in love) is that their partner is employing active listening skills, offering them support and giving the contestant a chance to show vulnerability.

“How often does someone take the time to just listen to you?”

According to [VeryWell Mind](#), “Active listening is a communication skill that involves going beyond simply hearing the words that another person speaks but also seeking to understand the meaning and intent behind them. It requires being an active participant in the communication process.” Active listening takes liste-

ning from a passive experience to a functional skill using techniques to improve your engagement in the conversation, communicate back your understanding, and make the other person feel valued. Methods commonly used include open and attentive body language, reflecting, posing open-ended questions, and validating ([EDC SSMU](#)).

"Active listening takes listening from a passive experience to a functional skill using techniques to improve your engagement in the conversation, communicate back your understanding, and make the other person feel valued."

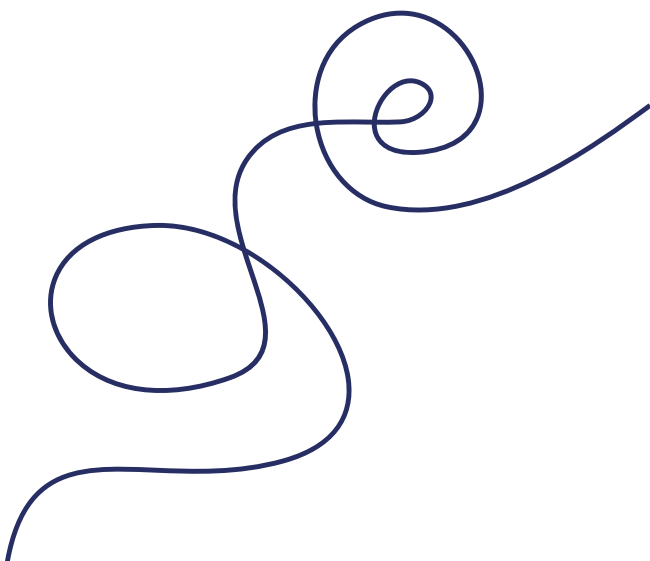
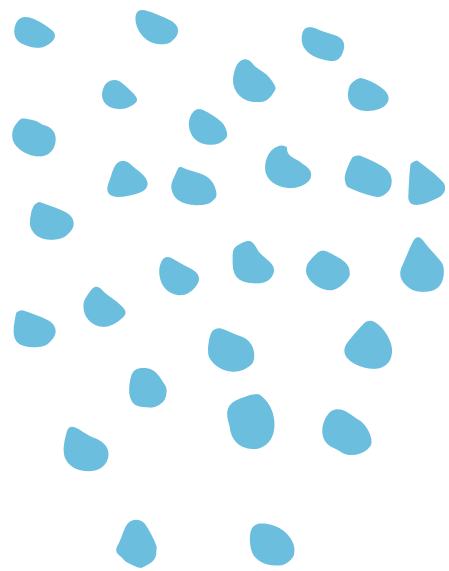
Even a brief description of active listening explains why reality TV show contestants feel so special during their dates. While many mental health services can have financial or legal barriers and are in short supply (especially for English speakers in Québec), active listening is often an accessible option. Active listening can bring comfort and connection if you are going through a turbulent time in your life, struggling with a specific issue, or just needing a listening ear.

It's hard to argue with feeling valued and heard, but what about the other side of active listening? Active listening benefits the person sharing and their conversation partner - the listener. From my own experience, I first learned active listening skills while in peer support training as a volunteer with the Eating Disorder Centre of SSMU at McGill. My training taught me to improve my listening skills, listening to understand and to communicate my understanding back to others. When my friends or family come to me to vent after a long day, to work through a problem, or for a shoulder to cry on, I feel much better able to support them. In making someone else feel understood and valued, I also feel valuable to them. Active listening is a kind of support I can provide without being a mental health professional or letting go of my own past experiences. In fact, empathizing and relating to someone else's struggles can also make them feel less alone. By using active listening skills with my loved ones, I benefit from being a better supporter and the value of being there for others.

Peer support is the real crux of active listening to me. Through active listening, we can support each other. Just as I want to be there for my loved ones, I need them to be there for me. When we know we can support and rely on each other, we can approach mental health together. Active listening works against mental health challenges not as an isolating experience but as an opportunity for connection.

So, I have to thank The Bachelor for pointing out why I love active listening so much (even when the contestants gaslight themselves into falling in love). Fortunately, we

don't all have to sign up for a reality TV show to benefit from active listening. We can learn to support each other. Also, while I am a big proponent of learning active listening skills for your relationships, you don't always want to spill everything going on in your life to your mom (no matter how good she is at listening). In that case, I recommend checking out [Vent Over Tea's](#) virtual and in-person (Montréal) active listening sessions, which are always free and confidential. For resources in other regions of Québec, you can also check out our complete list of [English-Language Mental Health Resources](#).





10 Things I Want About You

Savannah Leroux, Nicolet

Dating at any age is confusing and emotional. I'm going to be 25 soon, and I'm still looking for the right person to spend the rest of my life with while my Instagram has some people having kids, getting engaged or even married. I'm not in a huge rush or anything, just tired of wasting time with the wrong relationships. In coming to Québec, I have met some really great people. There was even one person I was seeing, but it didn't work out the closer we got to working on the specifics. It's unfortunate, but I always reach the point of 'well, they weren't right for me' ... eventually.

Because of this, I have built a running list of things I want my future partner to have. Think of like 'Love is Blind' vibes, but of course, I get to see the person. I do want to explain first that this list is to remind me of what I prioritize about the person I intend to spend my life with. These are mostly important to my journey of both healing from my past hurts and knowing my worth. As young adults, we are all figuring out who we are, and where we are going, but the journey never stops there. It's that continual development that I hope to share with someone one day. While I definitely want to be attracted to my future partner, the 10 things I want in my partner are based on lifestyle and personality. So, without further a-do...

10. Sense of Style

This is at the bottom of my list because it's something a person can learn. I have a pretty varied style depending on my mood, so I would like my partner to have a similar base too- even better if there are a couple of items that I can steal from them, like a shirt or hoodie. I find that a sense of style is important to me because it shows who you are and that you also value yourself.

9. Sense of Rhythm

I really enjoy singing and dancing when I'm in my car or going out, and I find a sense of rhythm super attractive. They don't need to be professional by any means, like I'm definitely not anywhere near that good. Just simply be able to vibe and enjoy our time together.



8. Athletic

I do like a person being in shape, but this one is more specific to athleticism. I enjoy a good balance of indoor and outdoor activities, so I would like my partner to share this with me too. I don't mind if it's not every time of course, just to share the enjoyment of hiking and kayaking while also sharing quiet activities like reading, for example.

7. Adventurous/Travelling

I appreciate experiencing different cultures and lifestyles so that I can learn more about myself and how I can improve within my life. I need someone with a similar outlook on development and enjoys being active and travelling. This is also meant to be adventurous in our local community too, since not everything needs to be all or nothing.

"These are mostly important to my journey of both healing from my past hurts and knowing my worth."

6. Funny/Good Banter

Humour is so much more important to me now after going out with someone with a different sense of humour than me. It meant that we were smiling less and felt a lot more disconnected. Sharing good banter means that you can match each other's wit and absurdity without going overboard. I like feeling connected with my partner on all levels.



5. Organized

I am not even close to the neatest person, but growing up in a messy house has made me appreciate the need for cleanliness. I don't require things to be constantly spotless, but I do appreciate the minimum of sharing daily chores when we eventually live together and doing a deeper clean once a week. This also goes into planning activities and dates and such. Spontaneity is appreciated; just plan out the big things with me, please.

(Photo credit: Hunter Newton on Unsplash)

4. Financially smart

I was raised by a single mom who works as an accountant/bookkeeper, so she taught me the value of money and the importance of being responsible. It's very important that the other person understands this too, but this is definitely a learned skill. I have big dreams I want to accomplish with my partner and on my own, as well as travelling dreams that aren't exactly cheap either. Being financially responsible has become a very attractive quality to me more recently.

3. Patient/Kind

I feel like this one is kind of obvious... but it is important nonetheless. I can be annoying and need some extra space sometimes, or maybe my partner needs that from me too. Either way, valuing this trait is necessary for the long run. Looks come and go, but personality is who you are forever.

"This list is meant to keep me accountable to my values and I highly suggest writing out your values in a person or in yourself too. Prioritizing yourself is not selfish; it's knowing your worth."

2. Intentional/Passionate

I'm stealing the word 'Intentional' from my friend's future wife list, but it still holds true to my thoughts as well. I want someone who does everything with a purpose. They are excited to be who they are and develop into who they are meant to be every day. I want my person to be passionate and excited to share all they are with me the same way I want to share all I am with them. Another factor is if who they are with their friends and with me is the same person.

1. No Smoking/Drugs

This one speaks for itself. I have seen the worst side of this lifestyle and while I accept that it is your own choice, I do not want to be involved with someone who doesn't value this as well. They don't need to share the same reasoning of course, but it cannot be in my life anymore. For many years, it was a trigger for me and I just kept thinking 'oh I can change them'. Honestly, that does not work. A person can change, but they have to want to change for themselves. This value has only recently become my top value and I feel that this is a major development for myself and my future.



Ok guys... That was a lot. I've had this list, or idea of one, for most of my dating life but to actually write out why I value these things in someone has been hugely monumental in my understanding of my what I want and need in a person. This list is meant to keep me accountable to my values and I highly suggest writing out your values in a person or in yourself too. Prioritizing yourself is not selfish; it's knowing your worth. I personally believe that dating is like a trial run for marriage, so I don't want to spend time with the wrong person. I am ready to find my forever when the time is right... but like relatively soon, right?



A person wearing a blue hoodie and a brown beanie is looking down at a smartphone. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with greenery and sunlight. A dark blue text box is overlaid on the upper part of the image.

I Don't Have Wifi at My Apartment. What Now?

Nadine Steinley, Amqui

Since September 2022, I have not had wifi at my apartment. This was not intentional but a result of my landlord. I was not allowed to install fibre optic wires in my building. Thus, I had no wifi. At first, I was devastated. I didn't know how I was going to work or watch Netflix. I changed my phone plan to have more data than before; I have 25 gbs of high-speed data, then an unlimited amount of slow data... very slow. Over the next few months, I learned the schedule of the library, where I could go to download movies and shows from streaming services. I spent one or two hours at the library each Saturday, downloading movies and shows, as well as catching up on any TikToks I'd missed. It became my ritual. I was comfortable with it, and it was a safe routine for many months.



However, I learned something unfortunate. Prime Video has a limit on how much content you can download. I'm not sure if it's a gigabyte maximum or a number of titles/episodes, but there is a limit, and I hit that limit fast. I was at the library one weekend when Amazon Prime told me I couldn't download any more titles. I had been deleting all my videos, so I did not understand why I

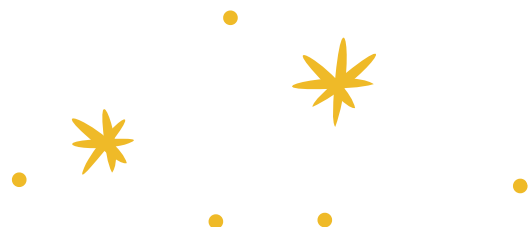
couldn't download any more titles. I re-read the message; I could only download Amazon originals. That was very disappointing. Now, you might be asking, what about Netflix? Who doesn't have Netflix? It is true; I do have Netflix, but they have been starting to crack down on their password sharing. I have stopped using it as I was using my parents' Netflix, so I have primarily been using Amazon Prime (I know, screw Jeff Bezos). I even tried to use my parents' Amazon Prime, but I quickly ran into the same problem. So, I am now stuck with only downloading Amazon Prime originals on my computer

"I feel like I am 12 years old again, discovering my unsupervised Netflix privileges."

I also tried to use my best friend's Disney Plus. However, they only allow downloads on mobile devices (i.e., phones, tablets, etc..). So, I can download videos and watch them, but only on my phone, which lowkey sucks. I feel like I am 12 years old again, discovering my unsupervised Netflix privileges.

So, with my newfound streaming issues, I have needed to find new ways to occupy myself and ways to unwind. One of these ways has been with paint-by-numbers. I

(Photo credit: Elisa Ventur on Unsplash)



figured I would like them, so I went to Dollarama and picked one up. It was not of great quality, but it sufficed. I quickly fell in love with it. I finished it in a week. I was proud of my work, but the paint quality and the brushes made it hard to feel satisfied. I went to Amazon and found one that I liked. When it arrived, I got right to work. I finished that one in less than a week. I spent about 3 hours per day working away at it. The paint quality and the good brushes made it much more enjoyable.

"I found myself much calmer and more rested after working on these paint-by-numbers. It feels like I got to be creative without thinking."

During this time, I also listened to two audiobooks and several podcasts in French to help improve my French skills. I found myself much calmer and more rested after working on these paint-by-numbers. It feels like I got to be creative without thinking. I also took the chance to work on my knitting projects, although I haven't finished any of those yet.



Now, after I've figured this out and found a way to deal with it, I have decided to move, which means I will have wifi soon. I considered not moving because I knew that having wifi would mean I would be more connected, and not having wifi meant that I could disconnect from the world. Once I move, I think I will take this as a learning experience. We always hear about how bad screens are for us and how spending so much time online negatively impacts us, but I've never taken it to heart. I knew how bad screens are for us, but I've never experienced the other side for myself. I enjoy my wifi-less apartment and will definitely miss the forced disconnectedness, but I know I will also benefit from and feel some relief from finally having wifi. Unfortunately, we live in a world of perpetual connectedness, so it is necessary to have wifi at my apartment, but I will forever remember my year of forced disconnectedness.

**Navigating the mental health system can be difficult,
to say the least.**

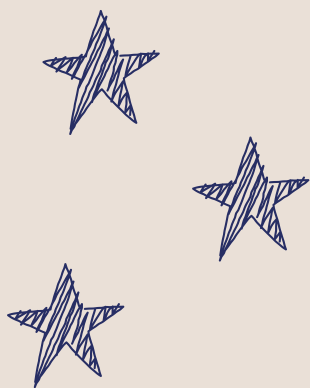
**We've compiled a list of free mental health and self-care
resources to help you out wherever you are, whatever you need.**

**Check out English-language mental
health resources in Québec!**



**Check out our Nunavik-specific mental
health guide!**







Y4Y Québec

