

## THE CULTURAL POLICY OF TROIS-RIVIÈRES



Credits : Étienne Boisvert

**ACCESSIBILITY PARTICIPATION** CULTURAL POLICY  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT **MEMORY HISTORY**  
HERITAGE **COMMUNITY CONSERVATION** IDENTITY

### 1. Context

Canada's second oldest French-speaking city, Trois-Rivières, was founded in 1634. With its 135,000 inhabitants, it is ranked 8th city of Quebec. Its prosperity has long relied on the manufacturing and paper industry, which fell into crisis in the 1990's. Its current economic fabric is mainly shaped by the tertiary sector. Trois-Rivières is the regional administrative centre, where the regional offices of the provincial ministries have their administrative headquarters. It is also the cultural hub of the Mauricie region and is home to leading cultural institutions: university, colleges, music conservatoire, symphonic orchestra, performance halls, public libraries, museums, art galleries, exhibition centres and places of heritage.

The concentration of cultural institutions, as well as numerous festivals and large-scale cultural manifestations, contribute to the cultural dynamism that characterizes Trois-Rivières. This wealth of creativity earned it the title of Cultural Capital of Canada in 2009. The Trifluvian creators and artists are very active within the local and regional scenes, many of whom are also renowned both nationally and internationally.

Due to its huge lumber industry, during the 20th Century, the city was considered to be the "paper capital of the world". In the 1990's, the Canadian paper industry underwent significant economic changes that led to the closing down of factories. Having suffered a drop in employment, the city looked for new development objectives to overcome the bleak and lethargic atmosphere. At the same time, arts and culture were gaining a more prominent place within the social, economic and community fabric of Trois-Rivières. In cooperation with the population, Trois-Rivières decided to make culture a driving force for change and innovative, dynamic economic development.

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Thus, Trois-Rivières adopted its first cultural policy. In 1997, in order to implement this policy, the city created the Cultural Development Corporation, which brings together the municipal government, citizens and contributors from the cultural scene. This policy laid the foundations for major cultural action. This momentum reached a critical point in 2009, with the award of 'Cultural Capital of Canada' and the adoption of a new cultural policy.

In addition, culture has spanned the following fields: family policy, policy for integrating disabled people, social development policy, public art policy, Age friendly municipalities and, thanks to *Tourisme Trois-Rivières*, tourism development strategies. Its cultural policy has given the city a new look and identity. It has also fostered an economic revival and contributed to social development.

## 2. Trois-Rivières and Culture

In 1993, Trois-Rivières adopted a cultural policy, which marked the beginning of a cultural strategy to make culture a driving force for economic development and social change. After two decades of exceptional growth in cultural activity, resulting in the award of 'Cultural Capital of Canada', the city wanted to renew and update its cultural policy. As it celebrated its 375th anniversary, the city adopted a new cultural policy. It involved acknowledging the achievements of the last few years and suggesting a shared vision for the city's cultural development.

By adopting this policy, Trois-Rivières recognises the essential role that art and culture play in the quality of life of citizens and exhibiting its identity. Consequently, the city agreed to recognize and support the creators and organisations who contribute to cultural development. To implement this cultural policy, the city of Trois-Rivières has followed six guidelines, which ensure the development and influence of culture in its territory:

- **Accessibility and participation:** the city recognizes every citizen's fundamental right to actively participate in the cultural development of their community.
- **Supporting the development of arts and literature:** the city recognizes that the work and activities completed by artists and creators constitute the driving forces of cultural life.
- **Education, training, consultation and partnership:** the city recognizes the need for citizens to be introduced to and aware of culture.
- **Preservation and improvement of sites, assets and cultural facilities:** all the cultural infrastructures are an asset to the community.
- **The promotion of history and heritage** because they contribute to forging the community's identity and are a source of inspiration for its future.
- **Information and promotion:** the city is working hard to inform citizens about the cultural activities and the assets of its heritage.

The cultural policy of Trois-Rivières, through its program against cultural exclusion and its cultural mediation activities, encourages access to culture for everyone, particularly those who come from underprivileged social classes, live with disabilities or are excluded from the cultural community for social reasons. The city is placing the right to participate in the cultural community at the heart of its cultural policy. It also encourages the protection of its tangible heritage. In a former stationery factory,

the Borealis museum, which opened its doors in 2010, allowed the city to extend its work to its intangible heritage by reviving its history and bringing back the territory's former woodwork trade. Thus, breathing pride back into local cultural specificities. Cultural vitality has become a new source of identity, pride and sustainable development. This strategy is accompanied by an objective for tourist and economic development, by turning Trois-Rivières into a nationally and internationally renowned tourist destination.

## TROIS-RIVIÈRES RECOGNIZES THE ESSENTIAL ROLE THAT ART AND CULTURE PLAY IN QUALITY OF LIFE AND EXHIBITING ITS IDENTITY.

Over the past 20 years, Trois-Rivières has invested a lot into its cultural institutions. While conserving its assets in terms of dissemination of culture and the development of cultural tourism, it can now focus its efforts on citizen participation. The city aims to proceed with a significant reform of its cultural policy in order to better meet the Agenda 21 for Culture principles and objectives, notably on the topic of cultural rights and citizen partnership in the cultural community. This involves carrying out a cultural diagnosis of Trois-Rivières in order to both measure the progress made in the last 20 years and to initiate a dialogue between citizens and various contributors to the cultural scene. This dialogue will also be a chance to promote Agenda 21 for Culture. The new cultural policy that will follow will allow a better understanding of cultural life among Trifluvians and will contribute to a greater democratization of culture within the territory.

### 3. Objectives and implementation of the project

#### 3.1. Main and specific objectives

The cultural policy of Trois-Rivières aims to instil a cultural dynamic that makes culture a driving force for sustainable development and transformation into a cultural capital. It is the basis of a tourist development strategy and a way of reviving the population's sense of pride and belonging. Making culture a key part of its transformation involves acting on several fronts:

- Social: by making culture accessible to all, especially the underprivileged, elderly and young populations;
- Economic: by harnessing the appeal of culture through tourist development and by recognizing the significant amount of economic activity generated by this sector;
- Cultural: by making culture a part of the city's identity and pride and transforming its image both within the population and outside.

#### 3.2. Actions

##### **Vitalizing the town centre**

Vitalizing the town centre is an important element of this approach to making culture part of everyday Trifluvian life. With a rich, diverse heritage of great historical value, the city wanted to give its town centre a new lease of life through the use of culture, greater financial support from cultural organisations, support for cultural events, renovation of the *Maison de la Culture*, summer events on the high street and the adoption of the brand image 'Trois-Rivières, city of history and culture'. The town centre has become a cornerstone of cultural development by instilling liveliness and a continual sense of excitement.

##### **The program against cultural exclusion and cultural mediation**

The city considers culture to be a **fundamental right** of the population, which is all the more important as the economic and social crisis affects the working class the most. Since 2003, a program against cultural exclusion has been put in place to improve access to arts and culture for citizens living with problems that particularly hinder their social and cultural participation. Cultural mediation is at the heart of this measure against cultural exclusion. As of 2002, a resource dedicated to cultural mediation has been in place (Culture Club). Tickets for shows and entry to museums are more accessible; artists have been put in touch with schools or elderly people's homes. Contributors from cultural, community and educational sectors have been asked to participate and a dialogue using consultation and voluntary action has started at the heart of the community.



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### **Cultural dissemination and major infrastructures**

The concentration of culture and artistic dynamism also contribute to making culture a factor of economic development. Multiple initiatives in this area reflect the city's commitment. Trois-Rivières hosts a dozen festivals and cultural events, four of which are internationally renowned. The city is livened up by two self-run artist workshops, two editors, a symphony orchestra, an internationally renowned theatre company and the *Les Sages Fous* puppet group. The city depends on the dynamism of almost 70 cultural organisations, who contribute to its cultural vitality. The extent of the provision of culture is an important element of the city's tourist and economic development. Trois-Rivières relies on good quality municipal infrastructures: 6 performance halls, 1 exhibition centre, 1 museum, 2 heritage interpretation sites, 1 historical district, 1 network of 5 libraries and 1 external amphitheatre with 10,000 seats. The Trifluvian provision of culture is primarily aimed at the local population, but is also a major part of the tourist experience that Trois-Rivières offers its many visitors from Quebec and elsewhere in the world.

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### **Boréal, a major infrastructure**

Built in 1920, the Canadian International Paper (C.I.P) filtration plant used to be the most important newsprint paper factory in the world, but was abandoned in 2000 when the paper-making industry permanently shut down. The former filtration plant has been preserved for its heritage value and was converted in 2010 into a paper-making industry history centre. It strikes a remarkable balance between authenticity, respect for the building and the latest museum trends. It is also the best project that has emerged in the last ten years for showcasing Quebec's industrial heritage. The project received numerous honours and has become a point of reference for the integration between 'design and heritage'. The museum's design has been built around the building and is part of the intangible heritage in Trois-Rivières. Aim: revive its industrial history, honour the thousands of loggers, raft men and workers and give back a sense of pride to the city's origins and trades. Borealis is an important and distinctive part of the cultural provision of Trois-Rivières.



### **An important financial commitment**

Of all the cities in Quebec, Trois-Rivières has invested the most per capita into culture; in 2011 it invested \$129,510 in services rendered, which represents 8.02% of the city's total budget. Between 2002 and 2012, the total cultural expenditure of Trois-Rivières increased by 200%, from \$6.2m to \$18.6m. The budget set aside for major cultural organisations and events rose from \$295,060 in 2001 to \$1,726,500 in 2013: an increase of 485% in 12 years!

## **4. Impacts**

### **4.1. Impact on the local government**

In 1997, the implementation of the Trois-Rivières cultural policy resulted in the creation of the Cultural Development Corporation; a non-profit organisation that provides the bulk of the provision of arts and culture to citizens. It also allowed the city's different departments to work together and de-compartmentalize through both culture and various municipal policies.

THE CITY CONSIDERS CULTURAL TO BE A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT FOR ITS POPULATION.

### **4.2. Impact on the city's cultural officers**

The city has accredited and therefore given recognition to the missions and mandates of almost 70 cultural and artistic organisations within the territory. This recognition has been upheld by increased financial support from the municipality (\$295,000 in 2000 to \$1,725 million in 2013). These organisations (theatre, dance, light music companies, symphonic orchestra, choirs, cultural events, cinema club, heritage sites, museums, etc) all contribute to the cultural diversity of Trois-Rivières.

The cultural policy has transformed the town centre and the use of the territory. Moreover, it has given citizens access to a vast array of culture: every year, more than 2,000 cultural events (shows, exhibitions, workshops, heritage activities, book animations) are held for the citizens of all ages (seniors, child daycare centres, primary and secondary schools, citizens from disadvantaged areas, etc) and more than 30 projects have been supported as part of the cultural mediation program. More than 40,000 Trifluvians have visited Borealis since its opening in autumn 2010.



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#### 4.3. Impact on the town and population

The Trifluvian events attract more than 500,000 people per year and the cultural activities available to both tourists and the population involve more than 1,500,000 participants per year. The Culture Club has brought 3,850 culturally-excluded citizens in contact with arts and culture and has made them full-blown participants within the cultural community. The city aims to maintain its various partnerships and assets in terms of cultural infrastructure so that citizens can enjoy the best cultural experiences, for example, the upgrade of the main performance hall in the next few years.

#### 4.4. Continuity

Since the adoption of its cultural policy in 1993, the city had been increasingly active every year. This is due to a strong and constant commitment **despite changes in local government**. Presently, the city is working to update its support programs for cultural organisations and aims to revise its cultural policy to encourage citizen participation, so that citizens may also be key contributors to the cultural vitality of Trois-Rivières.

### 5. Further Information

The city of Trois-Rivières was a nominated candidate for the first 'UCLG International Award - Mexico City - Culture 21' (January-May 2014). The awards jury produced a final report in June 2014 and asked the UCLG Committee on Culture to promote this project as a practical example for the implementation of Agenda 21 for Culture.

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[www.enspectacle.ca](http://www.enspectacle.ca)  
[www.cer-l.ca](http://www.cer-l.ca)  
[www.ccpj.ca](http://www.ccpj.ca)  
[www.borealis3r.ca](http://www.borealis3r.ca)  
[www.manoirdeniverville.ca](http://www.manoirdeniverville.ca)

Youtube: Flashmob: [http://youtu.be/J9sf9MF\\_nv4?list=UUN6TiGwZalhMym--c7F1CGg](http://youtu.be/J9sf9MF_nv4?list=UUN6TiGwZalhMym--c7F1CGg)

Boréal Génération:

<http://youtu.be/WY3S68XWcG8?list=UUKK9461XqOeBvYREemVXe7Q>

CER-L – montage: <http://youtu.be/D5y7wlmNljk>

<http://youtu.be/feV-opOt6Bg>