

Antoni «merci»

I am thrilled to be here today. /Exactly thirteen years ago, /I was experiencing precisely what you are going through right now. /We were then /five months away from launching the first edition of the Journées de la culture in Québec. We believed strongly in the project, /had mobilized support and, most of all, /we were working to bring together hundreds of artists, cultural workers and organizations of all sizes /from various cities and regions /to work towards the same goal.

But / I must confess: we were scared to death.

We had poured /so much /of our credibility and passion into the project that /failure was absolutely not an option. /Since some of you/ may know my colleague Simon Brault – whom I eventually married! – I'd like to share with you what he kept repeating at the time: "If the Journées de la culture don't fly, we'll just ask to join the Witness Protection Program. We'll change our names and move to a small town south of the border."

- Pause

But you have/ every reason in the world /to be confident in the success of this first edition of Culture Days/ Fête de la culture.

Citizens' movement like the Journées de la culture in Québec and Culture Days/ Fête de la culture are /happenings /fueled by a genuine desire to connect / and /a sincere drive to create ties with people who are not for the moment our patrons.

To ensure the sustainability of this voluntary initiative, /we asked the government of Québec to officially declare/ the last Friday of September and the two following days to be the Journées de la culture. On June 17th 1997, the National Assembly granted our request. /For 4 years, we have been inviting municipalities across the province to do the same. To date,/ 280 cities have officially endorsed the Journées de la culture.

Every year for the past 14 years, /thousands of cultural institutions have opened their doors. Actually, last year, it was over 2,300 organizations and more than 8,000 artists, artisans and other professionals who provided a privileged access to training, creation, curatorial, production and dissemination processes.

Citizens are invited to experiment, create, question or simply let themselves be /transported by the wonders /of the artistic and cultural adventure.

The Québec media partnened with us since the beginning to broadcast ads /reaching over 2 million people.

But, / the true impact of the Journées de la culture does not arise out of the annual communications campaigns, /as essential as they may be, /but rather out of the renewed commitment of the active and creative artists and professionals /working in big cities such as Québec and Montréal as well as/ in smaller town and regions all across the province.

I am increasingly aware of the importance of explaining/ the foundation principles on which the Journées de la culture are based /to ensure that they are not reduced to a simple marketing ploy.

Today, /there is no doubt /that the Journées have impacted many communities and almost all participating organisations. In fact, over 80% of organizers have stated that /their participation in the event /has led a positive transformation of their relationship with neighbors and fellow citizens.

To see the Journées de la culture model informing and inspiring Culture Days/ Fête de la culture across Canada makes me very proud. I would like to convey my high regard for the members of the many provincial task forces and of the steering committee led by Antoni Cimolino, who are all working to make this project possible.

Finally,/ I tip my hat to two people /who work in our office every day: David Moss and Helen Yung, who are completely committed to the implementation of Culture Days/ Fête de la culture.

Merci

Longue vie aux Journées de la culture

Longue vie Culture Days

Longue vie Fête de la culture.