



PRESS RELEASE

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ELAN’s Activation Conference: Close to 200 artists, cultural workers, and arts organizations gathered over important topics regarding diversity and inclusion within Quebec’s arts, culture, education sectors

The English-Language Arts Network’s 3rd State of the Arts series of consultations took place on February 28th with the day-long Activation Conference, an event that focused on best practices for diversity and inclusion.

Montreal, March 4, 2019 – The State of the Arts Activation Conference was designed as an experiment to test assertions made during the consultation process carried out earlier this year throughout Quebec’s broad artistic community, which included the regions and the French language milieu. According to Farah Fancy, State of the Arts Project Manager: “Each teach-in, panel discussion or break-out session presented at the conference could have easily commanded a full-day summit since diversity and inclusion are multifaceted concerns. But the enthusiastic feedback we collected so far shows that during the day we succeeded in creating activations that will have long-lasting impacts to fill the gap between reaching our artistic potential and the barriers that exist. This project is only one part of the puzzle, there is still a long way to go!”

The conference keynote speaker was Nadine St-Louis, a social and cultural entrepreneur in the Indigenous arts sector. In addition to founding Sacred Fire Productions and the Ashukan Cultural Space in Old Montreal, she also participated in the advisory committee Quebec’s new cultural policy. St-Louis discussed ethical collaborations with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit artists. Her pointers and calls-to-actions included the following:

- “Go inform yourself, your community and ask for guidance. If you are not sure then don’t touch it”;

- “Within our cultures, there is a process to take stories: we ask the grandfather, the grandmother to get their consent”;
- “We see a direct link between the importation of internationally made ‘Indigenous’ items such as dream-catchers, masks, totems, statues, moccasin (...), and the devaluation of authentic Indigenous art: Sign the *Reclaim Indigenous Arts* petition”;
- “Emphasize the circular worldview, the reverse of capitalism”.

Charles Childs, General Manager of the Centaur Theatre Company, was impressed with St-Louis’ talk: “I was moved by the way Nadine shared her personal experiences and stories to demonstrate the ways we can and need to build an inclusive community through respect and being open to each other. Building community is personal.” Nadine St-Louis’ intervention along with other segments of the conference can be viewed on [Facebook.com/elanartsquebec](https://www.facebook.com/elanartsquebec).

Moreover, the program also gave room to funding and career development issues. Break-out sessions on topics like *Funding Outside the Boxes*, *Crossing the Sectors in the Arts*, *Arts & Identity* and *Connecting Arts & Education*, as well as a speed-dating session with Canadian Heritage, Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, and Conseil des arts de Montréal provided attendees with fresh ideas and opportunities. Additionally, ELAN hosted the *State of the Arts Public Expert Projects* (SOTA-PEP) that will award \$1,500 each to 4 projects that aim to make positive impact on Quebec’s current state of the arts.

Guy Rodgers, ELAN Executive Director, who presented the break-out session entitled *Funding Outside the Boxes*, reflected on the day with enthusiasm: “State of the Arts 2019 is ELAN’s most ambitious outreach project to date, connecting old friends in many regions of Quebec with new artists and cultural workers from an unprecedented diversity of backgrounds, from puppetry to multimedia. I was happy to witness the vibrancy of our community at the Grande Bibliothèque and online too. As we celebrate ELAN’s accomplishments over the past 15 years as a mediator, instigator and catalyst of new opportunities for Quebec’s English-speaking artists, we are now also charting a new course for the decades that lie ahead.”

About ELAN

ELAN (English-Language Arts Network) is a not-for-profit organization that connects, supports, and creates opportunities for Quebec's English-speaking artists and arts communities. It was established in 2004 as a legacy of the first State of the Arts forum. ELAN's members include artists and organizations representing a wide array of artistic disciplines, cultural, linguistic and geographic backgrounds. ELAN's philosophy is inclusive, encouraging an evolving Quebec identity that recognizes French as the public language and celebrates social, cultural, and artistic diversity.

ELAN would like to acknowledge that, as settlers, we the organizers were not invited to Tiohtiá:ke, but we are honoured to have the opportunity to live here and to host events.

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