

## National museum project voted into law

Ruby Pratka  
editor@qctonline.com

A third major museum will open in Quebec City in spring 2026 if all goes according to the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government's current plans. The Musée national d'histoire du Québec will open in the Camille-Roy Pavilion of the Séminaire du Québec, near the Notre-Dame-de-Québec Basilica-Cathedral.

Premier François Legault and Culture Minister Mathieu Lacombe announced the project at the Musée de la Civilisation du Québec (MCQ) in April. At the time, Legault said the new museum would trace the story of the Quebec nation "from the First Nations, who were here before us and helped us" to the present day.

The project, which was voted into law by the National Assembly earlier this month, initially drew criticism from Indigenous and anglophone groups for its focus on white, French-Canadian historical perspectives.

However, after 14 hours of hearings in front of the National Assembly standing committee on culture and education, First Nations Education Council (FNEC) executive director Denis Gros-Louis said he believes "we got the train back on track."

The FNEC, the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) and the Institut Tshakapesh submitted a joint brief laying out recommendations for how the project could better incorporate Indigenous perspectives. CEPN representatives also testified before the committee last month.

The brief called on the committee to ensure that Indigenous perspectives, educational approaches and artifact conservation practices were built into the project and that Indigenous groups were regularly consulted.

"There were 14 hours of discussion before the committee and in 10 of those hours, First Nations and Inuit issues were discussed at some point," Gros-Louis said.

“We [the CEPN, the APNQL and the Institut Tshakapesh] have always worked together to make sure that teachers have access to relevant content [about Indigenous people] because the content [in textbooks] is old and clichéd. It’s our main purpose to make sure things are well thought out and relevant.” Gros-Louis said he believes the Indigenous groups’ recommendations “will be part of the DNA of the project.”

He said he saw the museum as “a great opportunity to talk about [Indigenous] teachings and spirituality and ceremonies ... where does the word Quebec come from? What does it mean when someone says they are from a clan? We have had great political leaders, and artists, and major achievements, like how we got our own schools back [after the residential school era]. We want [museum goers] to see Indigenous people as coming from a different culture and language, [but] not as UFOs or as a threat to the [Quebec] nation.”

The Quebec English-speaking Communities Research Network (QUESCREN) and the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) also submitted memoranda, although neither was asked to speak before the committee. “Given our preoccupations, we thought it was really important to ensure that the notion of the Quebec nation, or let’s say the collectivity of Quebec, include realities of English-speaking Quebecers, among others,” said Concordia University historian and QUESCREN co-ordinator Lorraine O’Donnell. In the group’s memorandum, co-authored by O’Donnell and fellow historian Patrick Donovan, they noted that one in five Quebecers speaks English at home and the English presence in Quebec dates back to 1668. They called on the government to go beyond stereotype-driven “tokenism” when telling the stories of English-speaking Quebecers and their interactions with the francophone majority and other groups.

“English speakers are often reduced to the image of a minority of conquerors and privileged people. Although there was indeed a small English-speaking elite holding a disproportionate share of power, the majority of English-speaking Quebecers are descendants of immigrants from modest origins who arrived well after the conquest of 1759,” they added. Like Gros-Louis, they said they saw the project as an opportunity to improve mutual understanding.

“I’m confident that at the very least, [committee members] took note of the fact that our brief was submitted and took a look at it,” O’Donnell added, saying it was “heartening” to see that groups like the Fédération d’Histoire du Québec had also called for improved representation of minority groups.

The MCQ is expected to play a central role in the development of the new museum; no one there was immediately available to comment.

