



Summary

SMQ SYMPOSIUM 2025

*Taking care,
making sense,
building together*

October 8-9 2025

SOCIÉTÉ DES
**MUSÉES
DU QUÉBEC**

Under the theme “Taking care, making sense, building together,” the 48th symposium of the Société des musées du Québec was held at the Palais des congrès de Montréal on Wednesday, October 8 and Thursday, October 9, 2025. Preceded by a networking day on Tuesday, October 7, at the Espace pour la vie site, it was also complemented by a day of museum visits on Friday, October 10.

Adopting a new format, the symposium provided an opportunity to question current practices and reflect on the challenges facing the museum and heritage milieu. The gathering was held in a welcoming and inclusive space conducive to dialogue and individual and collective reflection.

Slowing down, reflecting on our practices, connecting and inspiring one another

Against the grain of prevailing performance-driven approaches, this symposium invited participants to focus on practical, thoughtful and engaging practices. Governance, human resources, mediation, collections, conservation, exhibitions, communication, philanthropy, security, maintenance... all museum professionals are addressed here.

How can museums take care, make sense, and build together?

This symposium explored the action levers that promote a human and sustainable approach to our cultural institutions. What strategies are available to better support teams, audiences, and collections? How do museums position themselves as places of dialogue and cooperation with and within a rapidly changing society?

Guest curator: Aurélia Fleury

 458 symposium participants  16 presentations
 46 panellists and speakers  4 networking workshops 12 visits to
museum institutions  20 featured companies

Table of Contents

Revisiting our Reserves	3
Networking and Working Together	4
Challenges and and Catalysts of Building Together	5
Mutualization, National Approaches	5
Grounding Mutualization in the Community: challenges and opportunities.....	
Museum Companies and Institutions: making sense, inventing together	7
Making Way for Embodied and Attention-bases Approaches	
Focusing on our Visitors' Needs	
The Institution: the visitor experience and citizenship.....	9
Exhibitions: taking stock.....	10
New Conservation Practices: performance, memory, cooperation (concurrent).....	12
Acquisition and Conservation of Performance Works	12
International Cooperation for the Preservation of Film Archives.....	13
Train, Learn, Transform	14
Mediation Practices: listening to visitors	14
Building Together: putting every expertise to work for the project	15
Grounding Practices in Local Realities (concurrent)	14
Between the Lines.....	15
Openess in Dialogue – Setting the Stage	17



WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 8

Revisiting our Reserves

- **Marina Gross-Hoy**, Author, Facilitator, Doctoral Candidate in Museum Studies, Mediation and Heritage at Université du Québec à Montréal, board member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) - Committee for Education and Cultural Action and member of the Groupe de recherche sur l'éducation et les musées (GREM) at UQAM.

Marina Gross-Hoy opened the proceedings by suggesting that we consider this keynote session as a threshold, a liminal space between everyday life and the symposium's two days of ideas and exchanges. She recounted a memory from the pandemic: a sunset she saw while taking out the trash, which made her realize the power of looking at everyday life with a "museum gaze," and how this speaks to our ability to change our relation to the world by paying attention to it.

She invited participants to apply this museum gaze to the event and to note the parallels between visiting a museum and attending a symposium: one enters for a limited time, to have an experience (learning, reflection, contemplation, social exchange, wonder) and dedicating oneself to this viewing activity.

For her, the museum experience, like attending a symposium, begins well before entering the venue and involves preparations and expectations. She considers reception areas to be multilayered zones, replete with decisions and micro-rituals. She sees these entry spaces as places where different temporalities meet, even collide, as places for learning and working, but also as places in their own right.

"Entering a museum involves a transformation of identity. You enter the site and become a viewer. You enter the building and become a symposium attendee."

Marina Gross-Hoy

To inhabit this threshold, she suggests a practice of slow-looking: slowing down, observing, shifting your attention, welcoming sensations, stories, and emotions. It's learning methodology that can help us to manage complexity and paradox. The audience was asked to observe five minutes of guided silence. This was presented as an "attention warmup" exercise.

Marina Gross-Hoy then foregrounded the fear which often accompanies these transitions: the instability of crises can nevertheless become a fertile ground for opportunities if the connections are nurtured. She shared a second story, at the Musée de Cluny, where a gesture of presence and a hand placed on the shoulder transformed anxiety into receptiveness, spurring her ability to complete the final stage of her doctorate.

"The ability to do something with someone can transform our fear into wonder. [...] This power of connection is also what drives museums." Marina Gross-Hoy

She drew on research to argue that attention, contemplation, care, and relationships are vital forces in museum ecosystems. Connections can steer the unknown toward curiosity rather than fear. Relationships are the lifeblood and survival forces of museum institutions: interpersonal relationships, emotional labour, and individual well-being must be prioritized because they have a direct impact on our institutions' sustainability.

Care must be put back at the core of museum work, particularly in the face of digital transformations and austerity measures: slowing down, thinking about people and their emotional labour are becoming strategic. Marina Gross-Hoy embraces the spiritual dimension of the museum experience (in the sense of making sense, in a non-religious manner) and has noticed a shift since the pandemic toward a focus on in-person and embodied experiences rather than all-digital ones. She describes a living relationship with objects, where mediation and context remain necessary.



Networking and Working Together

Panel moderated by **Patrick Dufault**, Human Resources Consultant and Lecturer in the Cultural Management Program at Université du Québec à Montréal.

- **Guylaine Archambault**, Director General, Musée de la santé Armand-Frappier
- **Jasmine Colizza**, Museologist, Director of the Salle Alfred-Pellan (SAP) at the Maison des arts de Laval
- **Catherine Lafranchise**, Director, DRAC - Art actuel Drummondville

The panel moderated by Patrick Dufault opened with a discussion of well-being at work from the perspective of employee experience, against the backdrop of new workplace safety and participation requirements (CNESST). Guylaine Archambault (Musée de la santé Armand-Frappier) reminded us that humanism, well-being, and safety—including psychosocial safety—are at the heart of the museum's mission. She described a recently relocated museum, featuring new, bright spaces designed for well-being, partnership projects, and a revamped branding expressed in a new business, exhibitions, and programming model... She foregrounded qualitative indicators (social impact, fun, and discovery) and concrete actions within communities (nutrition, physical activity, education). Guylaine Archambault also emphasized her current determination to slow down after this intense transformation phase.

“The well-being of our stakeholders, our visitors, and our staff is our primary concern. In order to ensure this we provide a caring, inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment.” Guylaine Archambault

Jasmine Colizza from the Alfred-Pellan Gallery (a municipal museum institution in Laval) presented the 2025-2030 strategic plan, which is based on three pillars that have helped the team to implement care within the institution: consolidation, empathy, and commitment. Specifically, the team reduced the number of exhibition periods to lighten the load during the weeks of set-up while maximizing the mediation program, strengthened reception and listening (local mediation, “Slow Thursdays,” discussion space, activities for French classes for non-French speakers), and encouraged citizen participation in institutional life. These pillars are supported by three mantras: do better rather than more, think structurally and sustainably, prioritize and let go.

Catherine Lafranchise (DRAC, Maison des arts Desjardins de Drummondville) described the official program dedicated to health and well-being at work launched in 2020. This program was supported by an internal committee and a Cohésion SP certification (level 1 and then 2). The measures are wide-ranging: workplace ergonomics, reimbursement for sports activities, group activities, personalized training, summer vacations... simple measures with powerful effects that foster motivation, solidarity, and enjoyment at work. Well-being also depends on ethics and safety: DRAC has set up an ethics committee to assess sensitive cases involving staff, artists, and visitors. For Catherine Lafranchise, museums promote well-being through the very nature of their mission and offer a positive model, which is a real competitive advantage for organizations in a sector weakened by a lack of human and financial resources. To take this further, DRAC is placing the well-being generated by culture at the service of local businesses through the “Employeur bienveillant” (Caring Employer) program.

“In truly placing arts and culture at the heart of our wellness strategies, we not only contribute to improving workplace quality of life, but also boost team motivation, cohesion, and productivity.”

Catherine Lafranchise

The discussion highlighted the importance of an authentic organizational culture, recognition, co-construction, and time—the main challenge, along with workload and securing long-term funding—as well



as the need to transform performance: less volume, more quality (visits length, diversity, active participation, outreach). The effects on the viewer experience are tangible: a more engaging and appreciated mediation, positive feedback, better listening and adaptation. Finally, the place of “dreaming” is claimed as a driver of well-being and loyalty so as to combine meaning, creativity, and sustainability without sacrificing the quality of the viewing experience.

“In regards to performance, we speak in terms of success indicators. We must go beyond attendance and volume; we must also consider visit duration, diversity (not only of our offerings and the artists we present, but also of our visitors), active participation [...] and influence.”

Jasmine Colizza

Challenges and Catalysts of Building Together

Mutualization, national approaches

- **Julie Bérubé**, Professor of Management, Université du Québec en Outaouais, Research Chair in Creative Economy and Well-Being (CRÉAT)
- **Philippe Dubé**, Founder and Director of the Museology Graduate Program at Université Laval (1988–2017), Full Professor (retired), President of the Musée québécois de l’agriculture et de l’alimentation

The panellists painted a worrying picture for small and medium-sized museums in rural areas, where the financial status quo is no longer an option, making mutualization a strategic necessity in order to meet current challenges. Julie Bérubé defined mutualization as a form of sustainable and structured collaboration, situated between a one-off project and a merger, aiming for reciprocity through the pooling of resources, skills, and services. She highlighted its recurring benefits (optimization of resources, increased visibility, shared practices, professionalization, expanded audiences, improved conservation and research) and inherent tensions (autonomy vs. pooling, social mission vs. efficiency, experimentation vs. formalization), as well as issues of identity, change, economic disparities, and freedom of action.

Philippe Dubé proposed a typology of inter-museum cooperation and a pan-Canadian review distinguishing between self-sustaining networks, supported networks, and hybrid models. He highlighted the strength of government-supported networks, the weakness of self-sustaining networks, and the value of certain provincial initiatives (Atlantic Canada, Manitoba, British Columbia). Seeking to learn from international examples, he set up a study mission in Denmark (which has a similar museum density to Quebec) with the Aarhus Museum Centre, in order to inform an ongoing project involving seven museums in the Côte-du-Sud and western Bas-Saint-Laurent regions.

“Strength through unity: rather than each museum going it alone, the aim is to pool resources, present a united front, share resources, and find new organizational models to ensure long-term survival and sound management.”

Julie Bérubé

Grounding Mutualization in the Community

Panel discussion moderated by Catherine Thibault, co-founder of MUSÉCO.

- **Marie-Claude Gamache**, Director General of the Musée maritime du Québec for *Cap au musée* (Musée maritime du Québec / Musée de la mémoire vivante / Seigneurie des Aulnaies)
- **Alain Bourbonnais**, Director of *Des récits qui font jaser* (Moulin seigneurial de Pointe-du-Lac / Vieux presbytère de Batiscan / Domaine seigneurial Sainte-Anne)
- **Elisabeth Routhier**, Director General, La Remise culturelle
- **Anne-Catherine Lebeau**, Co-founder and Director General of Écoscéno



Panel discussion moderated by Catherine Thibault, Co-founder of MUSÉCO.

Alain Bourbonnais presented a model for pooling resources between three heritage sites in Mauricie (Moulin seigneurial de Pointe du Lac, Vieux Presbytère de Batiscan, Domaine seigneurial Sainte-Anne), a model that has been in place since 1999. Each organization retains its own governance, while participating in a structured sharing of human resources, promotional activities, equipment, and, on occasion, suppliers. Six permanent employees are shared, with their time divided according to each institution's needs, while seasonal teams rotate between sites as needed. A joint package, along with a shared website and promotional tools, encourages visitor to go from one venue to another. The results are very positive: increased stability in human resources, strong financial growth (tripled or even quadrupled revenue), and a shift in the boards of directors toward a culture of “working together,” which is now seen as essential. The model's sustainability is based on a framework agreement with operational appendices and a coordinating committee with real decision-making power.

Marie-Claude Gamache discussed the Cap au Musée initiative, which brings together the Musée de la mémoire vivante, the Musée maritime du Québec, and the Seigneurie des Aulnaies: three accredited museums located within a 30 km radius in the L'Islet region, united around a common goal of regional outreach. Key achievements include the creation of a shared brand image, a promotional video featuring spokesperson Emmanuel Bilodeau, a museum passport, and a shared website and social media presence. Between now and 2026, the partnership also plans to roll out a fun inter-museum trail. However, the project has raised several challenges, particularly in administrative matters (lead organization, accountability, transparency), financing, and coordination. The decisive solution was to establish a neutral resource dedicated to the project, accompanied by a strict principle of fairness in both the visibility given to each institution and in the decision-making processes.

*“You need to agree on the limits and parameters from the outset, as soon as you formalize a mutualization initiative.”
Marie-Claude Gamache.*

Anne-Catherine Lebeau presented Écoscéno, which has received support from the CAM–CALQ to pilot a project to pool inventories between Montreal theatres. The goal is to replace rapid purchasing with local circulation of props and equipment by standardizing inventory tools, training schools, and creating new collaborative reflexes. Success requires a common tool, high responsiveness, support for smaller teams, and a renewed focus on governance to encourage member contributions beyond centralized management. Écoscéno also pools equipment transportation, a service that is already relevant for museums that wish to reuse items at the end of an exhibition.

“The aim is to have fewer goods circulating, but more connections between us.” Anne-Catherine Lebeau

Élisabeth Routier presented La Remise culturelle and its project *La Circulaire* for the Capitale-Nationale and Chaudière-Appalaches regions, which brings together multidisciplinary inventories (dance, circus arts, museums) in a common database aligned with Écoscéno's bill of materials. The model offers inclusive pricing, adjusted according to the size and need of each organization, allowing both emerging artists and major distributors to access and rent resources. A representative management committee (technical, distributors, institutional actors) guides implementation and sustainability, with the future ambition of interconnecting data between Montreal and Quebec City.

“Time is essential in a mutualization project.” Catherine Thibault



Museum Companies and Institutions: making sense, inventing together

- **Jérôme Buvat**, SITEM
- **Caroline Julien**, CREO
- **Élise Roberge**, Marais de la Rivière-aux-Cerises

The final session brought together companies and institutions under the theme “making sense, inventing together.” To begin, Jérôme Buvat (SITEM) highlighted the importance of shared spaces and time for breaking down barriers between different fields and increasing collaboration, while Caroline Julien (CREO) illustrated how participation in these meetings generates visibility, partnerships, and innovation, both locally and internationally (agreements with Universcience, consortiums for the Nausicaá aquarium, projects with Quebec studios). Caroline Julien summed this up in three verbs: reach out, join together and innovate. Finally, Élise Roberge (Marais de la Rivière aux Cerises) spoke about a restored exhibition (Momenti) co-produced with several companies and studios, where collaboration enhanced the aesthetic and technical quality while increasing the flexibility of a small institution.

“These events [...] are encounters, encounters that are transformed into alliances, alliances that bring forth innovation, innovation that is transformed into a significant change for the public.” Caroline Julien



THURSDAY OCTOBER 9

Making Way for Embodied and Attention-based Approaches

- **Sophie Lessard-Latendresse**, Head of the Mediation and Art and Well-being Program, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec
- **Anne Sophie Grassin**, Coordinator of the Special Interest Group ICOM-CECA dedicated to the mediation of the sensible and Head of Public Services at MAC VAL, Musée d'art contemporain du Val-de-Marne
- **Sophie Herrmann**, Coordinator at the Observatoire des médiations culturelles (OMEC), Doctoral Candidate in Cultural and Museum Studies
- **Mylène Landry**, Youth Program Assistant, CCA

The theme was clear from the outset: to talk about attention, care, and embodied mediation is to talk about human beings in all their complexity. Sophie Lessard-Latendresse highlighted the difficulty and necessity of finding shared terminology: care, attention, and embodied experience are interrelated concepts that require a collective effort to define and continually update. She stressed that these practices envisage human beings holistically, beyond disciplinary boundaries, and that empathetic support is a prerequisite for inviting audiences to feel without unsettling them. Sophie Lessard-Latendresse approached embodied mediation from a support perspective. Encouraging vulnerability in museums requires supporting both staff and audiences through training, the use of silence, empathetic attitudes, and a broader culture of welcome. She sees this as a civic function of mediation, promoting interpersonal skills and greater porosity between museums and society.

"It's very disorienting to walk into a museum and be told to turn off your brain - I want you to feel." Sophie Lessard-Latendresse

Herrmann proposed a theoretical framework for attention, a plural, contextual, and situated concept. In the history of Visitor Studies, attention has long been used as an indicator of effectiveness (the time spent before works). Gradually, museums have gained a better understanding of its complexity: attention varies according to personal, social, spatial, and temporal contexts. Sophie Herrmann recalled the "attention crisis" analyzed in the social sciences: a precious resource captured by technology and the media. Art museums, particularly since the late 2010s, have seized on this crisis as a critical issue and are experimenting with programs dedicated to "sensory attention," combining care and mediation.

"Attention is contextual, it's always contingent and situated." Sophie Herrmann

Mylène Landry recast the concept of care at the very heart of the museum, drawing on the etymology of curator (to take care). While institutions have historically taken care of objects, the question of caring for audiences is new. She traced the emergence of care in the social sciences, from Carol Gilligan to Joan Tronto, who politicized it and linked it to everyday practices. She reviewed recent museum definitions: Hamish Robertson (the museum as a social and therapeutic space in the face of aging), a proposal by the MBAM (inclusive, innovative, therapeutic space), Adeline Rispal (a place for self-encounter, a laboratory for collective life around art), and Guirec Zéo's definition (2022), which she considers the most apt: an inclusive space where adapted, sometimes therapeutic, mediation aims to improve the well-being of users through a holistic approach. Finally, in order to situate the caring museum in an iterative and evolving cycle she drew on Tronto's four-stage model: caring about (recognizing need), caring for (taking responsibility), care-



giving (direct action), and care-receiving (response/evaluation)—to anchor the caring museum in an iterative and evolving cycle.

“Care, is the very essence of the museum.” Mylène Landry

Anne-Sophie Grassin reflected on the concept of embodied mediation as a response to the crisis of attention and as a means of “taking care” of attention capacities in museums. Attention, like embodied mediation, is plural: it can be focused, floating, reflective, or joint, shaping an embodied experience that is unique to each individual. It takes a holistic approach to the audience: the work is experienced by the intellect, but also by the body, emotions, sensations, and imagination—what she calls “embodied intelligence.” Four approaches structure this mediation: sensory (stimulation of the external and internal senses), kinaesthetic (mobilization of movement and gesture), emotional (affective resonance), and imaginary (projection and visualization). At the centre is the notion of the “thinking body” (embodied cognition) and the goal of empowering visitors, i.e. developing their capacity to act and apply their skills. Anne-Sophie Grassin traces the creation, in 2021, of the CECA-ICOM research group on embodied mediation (an international network primarily made up of women, based in Quebec, France, Switzerland, and Belgium), which was formed in the wake of the pandemic and the rise of “immersive” experiences, with the aim of clarifying what really constitutes sense-based experienced and drawing up shared framework for it.

“Embodiment and attentiveness are linked by the conviction that art can change lives.” Anne-Sophie Grassin

Focusing on our Visitors' Needs

The Institution: visitor experience and citizenship

- **Carolyne Bolduc**, Cultural and Communities Project Officer, Musée de la civilisation
- **Annabelle Laliberté**, Department Head, MEM - Centre des mémoires montréalaises
- **Catherine Charlebois**, Chief Curator, MEM - Centre des mémoires montréalaises

Catherine Charlebois and Annabelle Laliberté presented the vision and implementation of the MEM – Centre des mémoires montréalaises, which emerged from the transformation of the Centre d’histoire de Montréal. Five founding principles have guided the museum from the outset: accessibility, inclusion, citizen participation, indigeneity, and environmental responsibility. Four approaches structure the visitor experience and institutional positioning: shared authority, which balances professional knowledge and citizen memories; human-scale micro-museology, which inspires a warm and familiar scenography, designed as an urban stroll; the “third place” approach, modelled on libraries, which legitimizes free spaces where people can simply be; and finally, the OF/BY/FOR ALL model, which commits the museum to reflecting its communities, co-designing with them, and offering them concrete benefits.

“Sharing authority calls for constant vigilance regarding the exercise of power.”

Catherine Charlebois

This led to a significant change, replacing the ticket counter with a more personal, non-transactional approach. Annabelle Laliberté described the implementation: recruitment inspired by the hotel industry and based on empathy, the creation of a reception team that reflects Montreal's diversity (“Les Rouges”), an emotional journey that anticipates needs, partnerships with specialized organizations, triple certification



in accessibility (mobility, visual impairment, deafness), inclusive pricing via the “Emprunter un musée” card, and intellectual accessibility through the use of gender-neutral writing, clear language, and the diversification and dissemination of media platforms. The principle is consistent: accessibility is not just about ramps and toilets, it also plays a role in narratives and representation—seeing oneself in the content is a welcoming gesture. The speakers underscored empathy as the basis of customer service and the importance of representing people in its contents as an integral part of visitor reception.

“Universal accessibility goes far beyond infrastructure. A person in a wheelchair is looking for more than just access to elevators and adapted restrooms. They also want to see their community reflected in the museum’s history, institutions, and issues.”

Annabelle Laliberté

Carolyne Bolduc then presented *Voix libre*, the Musée de la civilisation’s free collaborative space in Quebec City, designed as a gateway for the community to make the museum their own. The room is divided into six “territories of living together” (raising awareness, getting involved, listening, expressing oneself, introspection, developing tools), designed to encourage encounters, empathy, critical thinking, and dialogue skills training. Experience has shown that this space attains its full potential when it’s inhabited: the second year therefore focused on human presence—free access to the space, clearer formats, and three complementary mediation approaches: reaching out (becoming a social actor outside the museum walls), welcoming turnkey projects with joint commitments, and initiating co-construction proposals. The project has been promoted to the public, school groups, and the local community, as well as the internal team, by aligning the approach with the EDI plan. The example of *S’épanouir* illustrates the scope of the initiative: co-created with a teacher and adults with special needs, the residency led to concrete adjustments to the furnishings, inspired other projects (such as the “porte voix” labels in the permanent exhibition), and forged lasting ties between the school and the museum. Finding a middle ground remains challenging: protecting values, keeping commitments, maintaining operational flexibility, and making the space a living place.

Exhibitions: taking stock

- **Eve-Lyne Cayouette Ashby**, Head of Exhibitions, Public Programs, and Education, at Biosphère, Espace pour la vie
- **Eloïse Fouquet-Blanchette**, Collections Manager, Musée Colby-Curtis
- **Marie Lavorel**, Independent Researcher and Curator of Les Généreuses/The Caregivers
- **Marian Fournier**, assistant, Galerie de l’UQAM

The “Exhibitions: Taking Stock” panel opened with Eve-Lyne Cayouette Ashby (Biosphère, Espace pour la vie), who unveiled *Émolab*, a laboratory exhibition on emotions related to climate change, designed based on extensive feedback from 16- to 25-year-olds. Some striking findings emerged, such as activist burnout among young people, a longing for local roots and reliable, positive information, a rejection of hyper-individualization, and a need for solidarity. Drawing on research in the humanities (psychology), the exhibition explores both the physical and psychological effects of the crisis, helps people name and recognize their emotions, and creates spaces for dialogue. It will be accompanied by a web series designed with Urbania, which will take the form of a peer group chat complemented by interviews with specialists. At the Biosphere, the decision to target 16- to 25-year-olds while also addressing the general public led to design choices and a range of complementary features (sign language, easy-to-read and easy-to-



understand French, children's discovery map), in an GBA+ approach. The Biosphère follows a structured impact measurement approach, embracing its mission to shift behaviours to help bring about a socio-ecological transition. On sensitive environmental issues, Eve-Lyne Cayouette Ashby stressed the importance of an empathetic and respectful framework that allows for dialogue with differing points of view, while also protecting the boundaries of the staff who interact with the public.

“We don't have to manage these emotional reactions to climate change. Personally, I hate the expression ‘managing your emotions.’ What we encourage people to do is recognize the emotions they are experiencing, put words on those emotions, and then create a space for dialogue where they can talk about the fact that they are experiencing emotions, exchange ideas, help each other, and build solidarity.”

Eve-Lyne Cayouette Ashby

Eloïse Fouquet Blanchette and independent curator Marie Lavorel then presented *Les Généreuses/The Caregivers*, an exhibition and programming project co-created over nearly two years with thirteen Stanstead senior citizens, focusing on generosity and matriarchal heritage. The participatory process, based on shared authority, active listening, and attention to sensory memories, helped forge links between the Colby Curtis Museum and women unfamiliar with the institution. Five workshops explored intimacy and collective experience, resulting in stories, object loans, and transmission gestures. The exhibition, set in a Victorian house, included silent video portraits installed in the office of prominent figures—a symbolic reversal that prompted pride and a reclaimed connection (“this is where my father worked; today, that's me in the centre”). The challenges and lessons learned segment focused on time, planning flexibility, addressing grief and isolation, and the responsibility of maintaining connections beyond the opening. The ties forged between these women and the museum have an enduring effect: repeat visits to the workshops, facilitation of intergenerational activities, memberships, participation in AGMs, personalized follow-ups and correspondence, and dissemination of the museum's methodology in its next project.

In closing, Marian Fournier shared insights from the exhibition *De la vie au lit* (Galerie de l'UQAM), curated by Sarah Heussaff, which brought together artists from the disability community to explore resistance and creative power from the perspective of the bed. The approach coordinated a clearly explained “multi-accessibility” rather than an illusory universality: a 27-minute video tour accessible online and made available in with audio and Quebec Sign Language captions, guided tours by a mediator involved in the project, and, above all, curatorial accessibility measures integrated in the exhibition set-up. These included: a selection of multisensory works, tactile reproductions, alternating audio description, and vibro-tactile devices synchronized to the soundtrack or heartbeats. The approach, co-negotiated with the artists, provided the team with new skills and laid the groundwork for sustainable practices in a limited resources context. Three structural approaches were proposed: investing in one-off but sustainable projects (upgrading the website to accessibility standards), building a toolkit and modular repertoire of tested access methods, and creating a community of practice dedicated to curatorial accessibility, similar to what has emerged in the performing arts.

“The innovative practices emerging from exchanges between institutions and the disability community are opening up new avenues to engage with culture.”

Marian Fournier

As the panellists spoke, a common theme emerged: refocusing on people. Whether it's transforming an entranceway into a welcoming space, opening a room for community living, paying attention to emotional responses to climate change, sharing storytelling authority with senior citizens, or envisioning exhibitions as acts of accessibility, institutions have shown that inclusion goes beyond physical accessibility alone.



Inclusion is narrative, relational, emotional, and organizational. These demanding and sometimes fragile approaches transform practices as much as they transform places, inviting us to make the museum a living environment, a place for connections and sustainable co-construction with its communities.

New Conservation Practices: performance, memory, cooperation (concurrent)

The concurrent session, moderated by Katia Macias-Valadez, focused on the conservation of collection items. The first segment addressed the challenges involved in acquiring and sustaining performative works, followed by a second segment devoted to an international cooperation project in audiovisual archives.

Acquisition and conservation of performance works

- **Myriam Barriault Fortin**, Curator, Galerie de l'Université de Montréal
- **Julie Alary Lavallée**, Collections Curator, Musée d'art de Joliette
- **Mélanie Boucher**, Co-founder of CIÉCO, Professor of Museum Studies and Art History at UQO

Two performance art case studies highlighted the creative tension between the immaterial and the institution: how can works, whose substance resides in a process, a presence, or a protocol, rather than an object, be documented, transmitted, and “re-performed”? The discussion foregrounded the museum’s role, reconfigured as a long-term partner; the need to establish clear presentation protocols; the importance of contracts and fair compensation for artists; and a relationship grounded in trust and transparency.

“Acquiring works of art is primarily grounded in physical considerations related to objects, in order to know how best to display them in the gallery, how to store them in a collection reserve, and how to anticipate their future deterioration or degradation. But when we are faced with an immaterial work, where do we begin? What questions should we be asking? What do we preserve? What do we do?”

Julie Alary Lavallée

Myriam Barriault Fortin presented artist karen elaine spencer's donation of works to the artworks collection. She outlined the chronology of a process that began in 2018, which was subsequently slowed by an acquisition pause, and later resumed through successive inventories (both physical and digital). It also included the acquisition committee’s approval of two major corpuses (including *Red Belt*, spanning 2000–2020), and a significant cataloguing effort in 2025, which comprised drafting performance protocols. The donation contains eight performances and a very large body of 1,306 items (photographs, Polaroids, videos, sound recordings, screenshots, textual documents, material traces, correspondence, contracts), with the artist considering the work to begin as soon as the grant application was submitted. Given the scope and heterogeneity of the materials, the team developed a numbering strategy to accommodate future iterations, account for multiple versions of the same performance in different locations, and facilitate database tracking in a predominantly digital environment.

The effort involved grouping materials by project and type in order to reduce documentary duplication and maintain the clarity of a given protocol’s evolution over time. A key issue concerns terminology and the ethics of transmission: the artist is no longer comfortable with terms such as “reenactment,” “reactivation,” or “activation.” For loan purposes or inter-institutional exchanges, the institution uses the term “protocol,” but titled the document provided to the performer “Performance Guide.” This document is accompanied by a personal, confidential letter intended solely for the individual(s) who will do the performance. This letter conveys a state of mind and subtle nuances without setting them down in a public text.



The floor was then given to Julie Alary Lavallée (Musée d'art de Joliette) and Mélanie Boucher (CIÉCO, UQO), who presented a joint project about the acquisition of a performance work by François Morelli (*Terre à terre*, 1999) and the development of a best-practices guide for collecting performance art. Julie Alary Lavallée outlined the context of a regional museum with a large collection (8,300 objects), not accustomed to performances but already engaged with Karen Elaine Spencer, whose installation highlighted the importance of respecting the artist's intended rhythm, staging, and material economy. In response to identified blind spots, the Musée d'art de Joliette incorporated methodological support from the CIÉCO group. Mélanie Boucher detailed the ongoing approach and tools under development: a glossary, reference corpus, interview grids, questionnaires, and structured verbatim records. The model unfolds in three stages: authenticity (historical grounding, motivations, original elements), actualization (the artist's current intentions, potentially including the addition of documentary or installation devices), and musealization (defining the work's constitutive elements versus documentation, and the institution's capacity for long-term display and preservation). Conducting interviews over time, transcribed and validated by the artist, allows for capturing evolving perspectives while distinguishing sensitive elements to be excluded from public files. The goal is to provide sufficiently rich reference points to enable the re-presentation of works 20, 30, or 50 years later, when direct witnesses will no longer be alive.

The question period focused on the artist's role in drafting protocols (both central and collaborative, requiring a climate of trust), the museum's approach (guides rather than rigid frameworks, long-term scenarios), the question of resources and timeframes (processes that can span months or even a year, highlighting the importance of planning via meetings and deliverables), artists' remuneration (consultation fees according to the CARFAC-RAAV fee schedule; the necessity of including the artist's time in budgets), financial evaluation (establishing fair market value with expert input; clear boundaries to avoid infinite iterations), and post-acquisition management (distinguishing iteration processes from reinterpretation, and allowing an update margin while remaining faithful to the work's core concepts). The presenters underlined the opportunity that the inclusion of performance art in collections offers for renewing museums' heritage role and recognizing practices long considered to be anti-institutional.

International cooperation for the preservation of film archives

- **Elisabeth Meunier**, Preservation and Collections Development Director, Cinémathèque québécoise
- **Léonce Tira**, Director of the Cinémathèque africaine de Ouagadougou

The second part of this panel focused on the fate of a substantial video archive of works shot in East and Central Africa between 1985 and 1996. Considered unclassifiable by the Cinémathèque québécoise in light of its collecting priorities, the archive found a home via an international cooperation project that led to a customized digitization, which enabled the return of copies and restoring of access in Africa. Once again, the guiding principles were "care within complexity," inter-institutional and intercultural trust, and the ability to articulate one's limitations from the outset. This international cooperation project was presented by Élisabeth Meunier (Cinémathèque québécoise), with a video contribution from Léonce Tira (Cinémathèque africaine de Ouagadougou). The project concerned approximately 500 master video tapes shot by filmmaker Danièle Lacourse in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Rwanda. Repeatedly refused for processing reasons (multilingual indexing, volume, presentation) despite their historical value, the collection found a viable path through the establishment of a triangular partnership with the Institut fondamental d'Afrique noire (IFAN, Cheikh Anta Diop University, Senegal). The solution involved digitizing the 500 tapes at the Cinémathèque québécoise, creating preservation copies on LTO tapes that were provided to the Cinémathèque africaine (with technical support for software updates and future migration), and providing access copies for



research at IFAN. Léonce Tira emphasized the importance of these archives for the continent’s history, their quick availability to researchers, and the potential to enrich heritage dissemination practices. The financial framework relied on a Québec–Senegal cooperation grant, supplemented by in-kind contributions and internal expertise (digitization, LTO preparation, digital preservation expertise).

“Because of the unique nature of our mission, we receive a lot of donation offers. [...] On the other hand, like many museums, our reserves are full. [...] It’s always easier to bring collections in than to remove them. So, we’ve become increasingly selective when it comes to acquisitions. [...] One solution, in our case, was to develop an international cooperation project.” – Élisabeth Meunier

Train, Learn, Transform

The plenary session brought together panellists from the heritage, museum, and community sectors around a central theme: transforming our relationships with people, objects, and knowledge through mediation practices and a collaborative “doing together” guided by care. The session was divided into two parts: first, reflections on mediation initiatives that give visitors a voice, followed by examples of inter-institutional collaborations where each area of expertise contributes to the project.

Mediation Practices: listening to visitors

- **Louise Brazeau**, Visitor Experience Program Officer, Parks Canada
- **Stephen Legari**, Art Therapist and Educational Programs Office, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
- **Marie-Andrée Levasseur**, Visual Arts Director, Culture Trois-Rivières

Louise Brazeau (Parks Canada) presented dialogic interpretation, an approach developed by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and adopted within the federal network to address sensitive subjects present at many heritage sites. This technique uses dialogue as a tool to connect visitors to the sites, foster empathy, and encourage action by creating a space where sometimes opposing perspectives can coexist. She then highlighted the Canadian context of narrative transformation, particularly in light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action 79, and the embracing of inclusive storytelling in Parks Canada’s commemoration framework. The approach challenges the “knowledge-holder” model of the interpreter in favour of content co-created with visitors, which has required significant investment in training (virtual modules and in-person workshops, practice in writing and testing questions). Brazeau outlined the “dialogue arc”—a progression of questions moving from personal experience to more philosophical issues, then toward a synthesis focused on takeaways and next steps—emphasizing the quality, inclusivity, visitor groups and contexts, provided the depth of the questions is adjusted and multiple perspectives are represented, and that the facilitator acts as a guide who does not have all the answers.

“Dialogic interpretation is the use of dialogue as an interpretive tool [...] a space where all experiences are welcome, even when they are in opposition.” — Louise Brazeau

Stephen Legari (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts) and Marie-Andrée Levasseur (Culture Trois-Rivières) then presented a collaboration with the Faculty of Medicine at the Université de Montréal, integrated into the mandatory first-year curriculum on professional identity for medical students. Art, medicine, and education intersect through Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), a method based on collective discussion in front of artworks using three recurring questions: “What’s going on in this picture?,” “What do you see that makes you say that?,” and “What more can we find?” Trained with international experts, mediation facilitators and physician-coaches lead workshops in pairs, in small groups, to develop clinical observation, reasoning, tolerance for ambiguity, active listening, empathy, and communication skills. Artworks are selected to elicit



narrative, action, and ambiguity, taking into account spatial and flow constraints. In Trois-Rivières, the program draws on current exhibitions and, when necessary, figurative works from the municipal collection to initiate the process. Three visits per year structure the experience for about 400 students, with assessment overseen by the Faculty of Medicine. A testimony from a patient partner noted a perceptible shift in students' attitudes after the initial workshops. The panellists emphasized the importance of equitable partnerships between institutions of different sizes and missions, responsive facilitation adapted to students under pressure, and the model's transferability to other care professions.

"Just because you're a regional institution doesn't mean you can't make a difference."

Marie-André Levasseur

Building Together: putting every expertise to work for the project

- **Yaël Filipovic**, Education and Community Engagement Director, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC)
- **Ingrid Vallus**, Museum Accessibility Services Officer, Projet culturel MAC-RAAMM
- **Pascale Dussault**, Director of Regroupement des aveugles et amblyopes du Montréal métropolitain (RAAMM)
- **Karine L'Ecuyer**, Professor of Museology Techniques, Collège Montmorency
- **Isabelle Avingaq Choquette**, Collection Curator, Institut culturel Avataq
- **Leïla Afriat**, Education, Community Engagement and Cultural Programs Officer, McCord Stewart Museum

The second part of the conference focused on building together and pooling expertise. Yaël Filipovic (MAC), Pascale Dussault (RAAMM), and Ingrid Vallus (MAC-RAAMM) presented a two-year co-led project aimed at making the collection of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal more accessible to people who are blind or have limited vision, and at ensuring that this accessibility is sustained in the future museum. The partnership between the MAC and the Regroupement des aveugles et amblyopes du Montréal métropolitain is built on shared governance, a joint team, a diversity-of-abilities advisory committee, ongoing consultations with people directly concerned, and the involvement of internal staff—all supported by a budget designed with genuine equity in mind. The budget structure allocates substantial portions to compensating consulted participants, to RAAMM's coordination time, and to the production of adapted tools (audio description, braille, large print, 3D models, tactile reliefs), while the MAC covers internal training (reception services and guides). The speakers underscored the importance of process over immediacy, i.e. learning and relationship-building take precedence over short-term deliverables. Co-creation requires listening, transparency, and an acceptance of mistakes, along with continuous adjustments. Beyond audiences with visual impairments, the benefits extend—through a universal accessibility effect—to other groups as well, particularly in an aging society. Key takeaways: do not shy away from complexity; invest in listening (up to "70% of the time"); compensate lived expertise; and genuinely share power.

"For us, visitor restrictions do not exist[...]/To think in terms of universal accessibility is to innovate for everyone"

Yaël Filipovic

Finally, Karine L'Ecuyer (Collège Montmorency), Isabelle Avingaq Choquette (Institut culturel Avataq), and Leïla Afriat (McCord Stewart Museum) spoke about a "non-project" woven into the institutional fabric to care for and showcase Nunavimmiut students. The permanent exhibition *Lumière étudiante – Ilinniatiit qaumaningit*, installed in high-traffic areas of the CEGEP, was curated by young Inuk artist Jessie Fortier-Ningiuruvik, with support from Institut culturel Avataq and museology faculty members. Nunavimmiut students produced the content and images, while graduating students in museology techniques handled the technical production. In providing mentorship, lending works from its collection, and compensating the



artists, ensuring a meaningful and non-restrictive experience for youth visitors, Avataq played a pivotal role. At the same time, McCord Stewart Museum spearheaded a community-engaged project centred on the artist Manasie Akpaliapik. An initiative that created multiple opportunities for dialogue and for integrating Inuit content into the curriculum beyond usual frameworks and without predefined museum objectives. This approach demonstrated operational flexibility and a service-oriented stance toward students, with ripple effects extending organically to various classes and college departments.

“Interstices are not passive margins, but places of creation where hierarchies are dismantled in favour of cooperation.” Leïla Afriat

The discussion period brought several recurring themes to the surface. On the one hand, there has been a shift in positions of authority: mediation teams and institutions are learning to share initiative, embrace uncertainty, and value the expertise of audiences and community partners. On the other, concrete methods for cultivating empathy and observation were highlighted (structured dialogue, VTS, icebreakers, and the selection of works that invite ambiguity), with careful attention to the wording of questions and the creation of a safe framework. Finally, the issue of reach was addressed: initiatives designed for small groups can, through universal accessibility or visibility in high-traffic spaces, generate systemic impact and foster more inclusive communities over the long term.

Grounding Practices in Local Realities (concurrent)

- **Raphaël Boivin-Fournier**, Director General, Maison de nos Aïeux et Maison Drouin
- **Stéphanie Arsenault**, Professor in Intercultural Social Work at Université Laval
- **Stéphanie Robert**, Educational and Cultural Activities Officer, Colby-Curtis Museum
- **Julie-Ann Logan**, Director General, Ulverton Wool Mill
- **Julie Lespérance**, Programming Officer, Monastère des Augustines

The session presented four projects that highlight mediation practices focused on people, co-creation, and local roots. On Île d'Orléans, Maison de nos Aïeux celebrates the contributions of Mexican and Guatemalan migrant workers through living libraries, thus making an often invisible reality visible. The exhibition *Au-delà du travail agricole : migrants, personnes à part entière* is the result of a relational fieldwork approach initiated by Stéphanie Arsenault. Photography, authenticated biographical accounts, and a deliberate choice to focus on personal experiences have made these frequently 'invisible' workers visible. The “2.0 version” of the exhibition is based on large-scale portraits, an unapologetic trilingualism, and an embodied narrative journey, complemented by a documentary film and an opening reception in the form of a “living library.” The exhibition is now traveling, loaned out free of charge, including to schools and the Mexican Consulate in Montreal. During the exchange, the team highlighted the positive reception from the island's public, the surprise at the workers' attachment to the island, and the project's role in redefining the museum's social mission, which is now committed to a future permanent exhibition showcasing the island's mosaic of identities.

Stéphanie Robert (Colby-Curtis Museum) followed with a presentation on her “methodology of caring attention,” developed for a vulnerable border community unfamiliar with museums. Based on a clear diagnosis, she focused on a dedicated educational space, close alignment with the school calendar, and a series of encounters culminating in an opening reception with students. The dialogue- and action-based



approach fosters a range of skills and builds on a lasting relationship with schools, despite necessary adjustments related to certain sensitive topics.

At the Monastère des Augustines, Julie Lespérance described the “signature retreat,” a wellness experience rooted in the history and non-denominational spirituality of the Augustinian sisters. Alternating between physical activities, creativity, silence, and heritage mediation, the retreat is based on a strict ethical framework, personalized hospitality, and a close connection between heritage and overall health, supported by an internal research project.

“Health is the goal, but history is the means.” Julie Lespérance

Julie-Ann Logan (Ulverton Wool Mill) presented the revitalization of a rural site through community co-construction. Non-intrusive augmented reality, intergenerational workshops for passing on skills, and mobile digital tools make it possible to reconcile authenticity, accessibility, and innovation, while maintaining forms of human and living mediation. This re-evaluation of its presentation offer after the end of major funding has enabled the Ulverton Mill to claim the authenticity of a living place: a working mill, active wool and carding practices, and even sheep—a reminder that collections can also be know-how in action.

“Heritage comes to life when it is shared, passed on and reinterpreted.”

Julie-Ann Logan

Between the Lines

This session opened with a conversation between Marie-Louise Arsenault and Katia Macias-Valadez. The latter proposed a review of the day’s concurrent sessions. She first painted a picture of a morning devoted to new conservation practices applied to performative works and audiovisual archives, then foregrounded actions rooted in local realities, presented in the afternoon.

To follow up, Marie-Louise Arsenault took a moment to share her own impressions and observations on the two days of the conference, acknowledging her perspective as a ‘non-museologist.’ The conference allowed her to experience what it is like to work in a museum. She reflected on the words that touched her and were repeated throughout the conference: empathy, care, shared authority, and the social and political responsibility of museums. She expressed her surprise at the museums that are taking up these current issues and praised the initiatives that are transforming the relationship with authority, knowledge and the public towards greater horizontality and co-learning. Marie-Louise Arsenault contrasted this with the North American political climate, reaffirmed the importance of the inclusive approaches observed and pointed to a blind spot that was not explored due to a lack of time: future budgetary constraints, while acknowledging the unwavering enthusiasm of the community that enriched the discussions.

“Everything is political. Museums are tectonic plates, mirrors of social and political life, and therefore places of nurturing and care” Marie-Louise Arsenault

Openness in Dialogue – Setting the Stage

- **Angèle Séguin**, Author, Playwright and Theatre Director, Founder and ex-Artistic Director, Théâtre des Petites Lanternes.



The closing keynote by Angèle Séguin—author, stage director, and founder of the Théâtre des Petites Lanternes—was the culminating highlight of the conference. She situated her approach within an identity shaped by a territory—the Hautes-Laurentides—and by a set of values: risk-taking, listening, humility, working over the long term, and trust in “something greater than oneself” and in the power of building together. Her conviction is clear: to create is to dare—and to unlock voices. A decisive challenge—“You are not better if you write in our place”—led her to develop *La grande cueillette des mots*, a structured artistic process that transforms unfiltered citizen testimonies into dramatic writing.

She described its architecture: the formation of a local steering committee (a “circle of carriers”) bringing together influential and divergent community figures; the distribution of thematic writing notebooks—essentially a questionnaire—available in several languages where needed; introductory and support workshops; anonymous collection; the reading and distillation of thousands of pages into a “raw, unfiltered” core text that informs both the script and the on-the-ground actions of partner organizations; and a coherence review by the committee prior to production. The long timeline—often three years—is embraced as an integral part of the work itself.

Several emblematic initiatives illustrate the scope of the approach. In Hong Kong, the tool has drawn interest from artists grappling with the difficulty of finding their voice. In Brazil, a multilingual creation in the Amazon was transformed when an Indigenous leader, unmoved by the written text, offered a song that became the final blessing: the stage opened itself to another way of speaking. In Haiti, six months after the earthquake, a woman challenged the team directly: “What do you have to give us?” Angèle Séguin replied: nothing—except a commitment to perform and to give the floor back, anonymously and on site. That response sparked a process of collective writing; the performance was staged 300 times, at times provoking near-riots, so pressing was the immense need to speak. In Lac-Mégantic, in order to avoid freezing the tragedy in place, the notebooks opened onto the theme of “landmarks,” setting in motion a healing dynamic; lanterns created in each municipality were later brought together in a permanent artwork. In Kinshasa, a high-level committee—UN Women, UNESCO, members of the judiciary, customary chiefs, police, army, churches, the ministry, with the support of the Canadian Embassy—enabled the collection of 800 notebooks and a dissemination process that helped spur the adoption of local rules to combat violence against women. She also recounted a project with the military community on post-traumatic stress: when faced with an attempt to interfere in the notebook’s content in exchange for funding, she refused, insisting that entrusted words are sacred. Finally, she spoke of her current work with the Anishinaabe Nation, led by a women’s circle, as well as inspiring collaborations with museums in Rouyn-Noranda and the Monastère des Augustines that foster community and open up spaces for co-creation.

“Creating is about identity. But it is also about the imperative to speak. [...]”

“To create is to dare. To dare take risks. To speak is to take a risk.”

Angèle Séguin

The dialogue with the audience confirms these resonances. A former Oxfam employee spoke of the concrete impact of the Congolese project: traditional leaders have introduced regulations against violence against women. When asked about a possible political career, Angèle Séguin replied that theatre is political in itself. On the subject of finding the “right” people, she described a grassroots, network-based approach in which everyone gains something from the process. She distinguished between “rebellious” and “being indignant” – the former involves physical action – and called for artistic responsibility in the face of the current erosion of freedom of expression. What is the purpose of art? To open up inner spaces, to shift perspectives, to sow the seeds of patient transformation; not to change everything at once, but to make change possible.



"We must accept that we don't know everything. We must accept that others influence and challenge us. We must step outside our comfort zone to put our work back on the table." Angèle Séguin

