AGENT OF ONE’S OWN CULTURE: CONTRIBUTION OF BOITE ROUGE VIF IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND TRANSMISSION OF AUTOCHTHONOUS CULTURES

In numerous meetings organized by Boite Rouge vif (BRv) in Aboriginal communities, teachers, as well as cultural agents and educators, raised the complex issue of young people’s mobilization about their culture. They also stressed the urgency of finding innovative approaches to bridge the gap between generations while fostering curiosity, interest, and engagement among students. For several years, BRv has been working to allow the encounter, under creation modes and inventive practices, of art and of education as of Aboriginal culture and of methods of transmission that make its promotion possible. The organization is in active collaboration with the bearers of such knowledge, the development levers for individuals and communities.

WITHIN ART AND EDUCATION: MEDIATION

Boite Rouge vif is a non-profit Aboriginal cultural organization dedicated to the creation and design of cultural transmission devices for the dissemination and valuation of autochthonous cultures. Its mission is individual and community empowerment via training and development. With members of different Aboriginal communities, researchers, research assistants, professionals with practices in various artistic fields (visual and digital arts, design, video, cinema, etc.), and teaching experts developed resources through collaborative methods.

BRv is at the crossroads of education, mediation, and cultural transmission. Its team has developed expertise in training for Aboriginal communities. These customized courses cover subjects such as the creation of design objects, graphic design, museography, photography, videographic creation, and video documentary. All these activities are based on a participatory methodology in which creation and concertation foster co-operation. The work is executed in the field for and with community members. Over the years and projects, BRv has woven a dense network of collaborators with the vast majority of autochthonous cultural, educational and museum institutions.

SHASHISH ANUTSHISH/JADIS MAINTENANT: AN INTERACTIVE DATABASE OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL VOCATION

This website well represents BRv’s cultural transmission expertise in design and education and its collaborative methods with its partners, the Conseil des Innus of Pessamit, the Shaputuan of Uashat mak Mani Utenam, and Commission scolaire De La Jonquière. This virtual museum presents three collections of objects illustrating Aboriginal Nations culture: The first collection, Reconnaître, displays 105 Aboriginal design masterpieces and a detailed backgrounder informs visitors on techniques that led to their realization; Valoriser, consists of 321 items of Uashat mak Mani Utenam’s community heritage; the third, Transmettre, highlights the creative actualization of traditional knowledge of 23 contemporary Aboriginal designers. In the Education section, several learn-
ning situations around tangible and intangible heritage are developed for different school levels and for extracurricular activities. These situations can range from the collective creation of a vast puzzle at the elementary to the production of a short documentary for advanced high-school students. A digital scrapbooking tool, a website in which one can create and disseminate one’s personal collection, as well as a search engine are also added. We note that objects that are near or distant from us prove to be true knowledge, history, and therefore learning venues.

AN EXTENSIVE DATABASE ARISING FROM MEETINGS WITH 18 ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

The need to create a comprehensive website containing Aboriginal cultural data arose from a meeting in Wendake, in June 2014. More than sixty representatives of 11 Aboriginal Nations from Quebec participated. The purpose of the meeting held, in conjunction with BRv, was to take stock of the visits of 18 Aboriginal communities, conducted between 2010 and 2013; it enabled a thematic work establishing the major axes of the exhibition C’est notre histoire : Premières Nations et Inuits du XXIe siècle of Musée de la civilisation du Québec.

The great question asked by everyone was: How to return to communities their word, their knowledge, and their queries expressed during this great concertation?

A forum was given to hundreds of people of different genders, ages, and areas of interest. Their expressions are diverse and result in an extremely rich body of information, portraying the perception they have of themselves, their culture, and the great challenges they face. A portrait of the nations’ living heritage lies dormant inside this corpus; a citizen speech rooted in currentness and focused on the future. It is a unique moment in this 21st century, a moment engraved in living history.

From this concertation originated a bank of information whose impressive Aboriginal community members are the real authors: 250 hours of video, 5,000 pages of written data, thousands of photographs, and more. MAMO members gathered at this June 2014 meeting asked the members of the BRv to find a way to make this vast database accessible, which we are in the process of doing.

BRv carries a special attention to the transmission of this knowledge with teachers, students, and with autochthonous youth. The site, still under construction, will indeed be a constellation of several sites. It will contain the raw database resulting from consultation, ten thematic capsules, and 11 portraits of Aboriginal Porteurs d’espoir consisting of ten educationcapsules on ten Aboriginal artists from various artistic disciplines and accompanying learning situations. Almost all these documents come from the great concertation and are presented as part of the Musée de la civilisation exhibition previously mentioned. (...) But how can we render the quantity and quality of this material to communities? How can this data be specialized for educational purposes? How to think and create a site sensitive to the reality of young people?

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COMPLETING THE 2016–2017 CIRCLE

To disseminate these initiatives with and for Aboriginal communities, the Boite Rouge vif will begin an extensive tour of 14 communities in the fall 2016. A strategic plan designed with our partners is under way. Educational activities, training, and transmission tools are at the heart of this future action plan. Autochthonous cultural, educational, and museum institutions have expressed their flagrant lack of transmission tools. Educational communities often lack the expertise, resources, and project contexts to animate cultural activities with respect to cultural objects while having as a concern the renewal of dynamics with students. Thus, each community visited select members participating in their education sectoral table. The development of these new cultural and educational products emerges from these tables, in co-creation and co-production with Aboriginal participants. This represents a real concertation and not a mere consultation.

BEING BEARER OF KNOWLEDGE OR BEING AGENT OF ONE’S OWN CULTURE

During the second edition of Convention on Perseverance and Academic Achievement for First Peoples, our presentation took the form of an initial consultation with participants, since we were and still are in the process of concertation and preproduction. Several reflections came out of this presentation. Young people generally show great ignorance of their environment, they do not know the system that governs them. Autochthonous and educational sites are numerous; however, none of them recount currentness in communities. There is no framework, no way for students and young adults to transform content into an awareness opening to knowledge and desire to learn. A website dedicated to youth should create diversity reflecting nations and transversality allowing several teachers to navigate back to the cultural elements highlighted in the courses. But beyond this intention of transmission, how can schools help develop a culture of integration?

L’ART DE SE RACONTER: A PILOT PROJECT IN EKUANITSHIT

The pilot project L’art de se raconter wishes to engage young people as producers and agents of their own culture. Learning is foremost a living space arousing curiosity of a look at oneself and at others, as sort of an invitation to travel. How can we design a site open to students and Aboriginal youth’s current models of communication for cultural promotion purposes? L’art de se raconter is a project from the Ekuanitshit Innu community and Boite Rouge vif mobilizing eight students from Teueikan High School, the school management, the Band Council cultural agents, and an Aboriginal filmmaker. It is a real participatory partnership. Current video creation workshops bring the participants to discover and present knowledge and specific realities of their community. The project is risky and requires great flexibility. Where some experiments succeed in a commendable manner, it is in informal exercises exposing young peoples’ lives together and their encounters with Elders in places that are important to them. The production will be finalized in June 2016. Will this take the form of short video capsules, of an installation for the house of culture or again, of portraits of these young people? That remains to be determined. However, two big questions remain. How will this pilot project initiate projects in other Aboriginal communities? How will these productions...
Video as a Communication and Expression Tool: Reflections

Small video cameras are very reasonably priced simple tools incorporating excellent digital technology; intended for personal utilities, they can again serve for semi-professional and professional uses. These cameras capture sounds and images in their immediacy, but also in their obvious transparency; they reveal, on account of their acute observations, a greater scope than a mere recording technique. In *Leçons de cinéma pour notre époque. Politique du sensible*, François Laplantine immediately evokes his faith in cinematic specificity as a sensitive mode of knowledge of reality. In these words, he addresses the rapprochement between cinema and ethnography: “Ethnography and cinema are modes of knowledge through listening and sight. For both, social phenomena are visual and sound phenomena” (Laplantine, 2007). The challenge of a cultural transmission research project with community involvement induces a whole social scenario of which cinematic issues are the potential source. Laplantine’s reading paves a practical way for our creative activities where deploying the full cinematic device arsenal is not the matter, but rather sharpening the participants’ sense of observation for them to gradually structure their point of view and from the plan, get a unique perspective.

This view, we wish it to be initially relational. In 2009, Christian Lallier, Anthropologist and Filmmaker, develops in his book *Pour une anthropologie filmée des interactions sociales* the major methodological phases of such a realization. Our main objective is to return to autochthonous participants the tools of their own expression, and ideally, the realization of their own productions. From eternally filmed, they will become “filmmakers” of their own community, their own culture, and their own lives: they will be their own amateur anthropologists. For Lallier, as for Aboriginal participants, it is important to understand the real as the production of an effort, individual and collective, as the act of filming does not only include the expression of an individual, it involves building a relationship with others and their community.

Educational activities, training, and transmission tools are at the heart of this future action plan. Autochthonous cultural, educational, and museum institutions have expressed their flagrant lack of transmission tools. Educational communities often lack the expertise, resources, and project contexts to animate cultural activities with respect to cultural objects while having as a concern the renewal of dynamics with students. Thus, each community visited select members participating in their education sectoral table. The development of these new cultural and educational products emerges from these tables, in co-creation and co-production with Aboriginal participants.

Notes

1 URL: www.anutshish.com

2 MAMO, which means “together” in several Aboriginal languages, gathered a representative from each Nation of Quebec and representatives of Aboriginal organizations.

References
