



First Peoples Festival in Peril

Montreal, February 28th 2014 – Is it possible for First Nations to hold a festival worthy of the name in Quebec's metropolis? The question has brutally come to the fore as we see that the Partenariat du Quartier des spectacles (the PQDS), a paramunicipal body that administers a major program in support of cultural events in the quadrangle of the aforementioned Quartier des spectacles, decided to cut off all grants to First Peoples Festival for the year 2014.

What is their reproach against the festival of the First Cultures of this land? The lack of a sufficiently innovative program (!) This is an affront to the Montreal event that has best succeeded in transforming itself over the years. Since it took wing in the Quartier des spectacles, it has offered a groundbreaking formula unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

As we recall, last year the festival succeeded in balancing its budget without a deficit although the very day its program was launched, June 18 2013, the PQDS announced a drastic \$50 000 cut to the Festival's budget.

This time it seems no chances were taken: the festival was hit with a great blow, intended to be fatal. Looking at the makeup of the PQDS Board, we find the same influences that presided the decision to relegate First Peoples Festival to very tight quarters, in the shadow of a heavily subsidized mega-event, where it could only wither away. It took a general outcry back then to put matters right.

This new offensive against First Peoples Festival is a test of the commitment of Montreal and government stakeholders to make a place for First Nations culture in Quebec's metropolis and to associate these with the many commemorations set for 2017.

Thus, we demand that those granting funds at PQDS, the City of Montreal first and ensuite, the government of Quebec, must take action without delay to reinstate a funding structure for First Peoples Festival in a funding structure that can allow it to develop and thrive. Moreover, it is high time, as ethical choices are in the spotlight, to review the governance of the paramunicipal body that oversees such important budgets.

First Peoples Festival is the First Nations' multi-disciplinary festival, an event unique in its genre. Terres en vues/Land Insights, société pour la diffusion de la culture autochtone, has been its driving force for 24 years.

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Source: Land Insights

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