

culture, the implications of which contribute to and reflect the distinctive character of our nation. Culture is a way of being, thinking and feeling. As a driving force in society, it unites individuals by language, custom, habit and experience. Culture is also a way of life, composed of many elements which influence our thoughts, our feelings and our creativity. Every culture enriches other cultures with which it comes into contact.

For our purposes, cultural activities are the creative elements of our existence — expressions of who we are, where we come from, and where we wish to go. In pursuing them, we enhance and build on the foundations of our identity, both as individuals and as communities. As we strive to give expression through cultural activities, we do indeed create and strengthen our cultural foundation.

As individuals, we seek to know ourselves. As families, we seek to share with others. As a neighbourhood, community, province, region, or country, we reach out to share in common cause, while striving to ensure that our individual sense of identity is not lost along the way.

For Canadians, the expression of identity is a cultural act. Through our interests, likes and dislikes, convictions and skills, each one of us reflects and shares our individual cultural identities. This process of sharing forms our collective identity, our national culture. In this way, we build neighbourhoods, communities, provinces and a country. Indeed, the measure of a civilized society is the ability of its peoples to develop a strong sense of national cultural identity, while preserving and nourishing individual cultural values.

*...most people can live and reconcile a number of identities at the same time, just as they can manage to belong to a number of groups, which is the same thing. It also became clear that the notion of identity is not static, but on the contrary profoundly dynamic. In addition, it evolves constantly. It responds, evidently, to human needs... It is useful to ask if the same is true of a nation, and if so — and here I ask the question, whether national unity can be achieved when a number of regional identities already exist? — Jean-Pierre Hogue, M.P., Member of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture (Issue 28:7).*

In Canada, our governments have adopted principles and policies that are distinctive in the world, and we have recognized diversity as the essence of our national being. We have chosen to cherish our diversity, not to diminish it. Although Canada is still a relatively young nation, its culture is rich and diverse. The challenge facing us today is to forge a collective view of the country — one that takes into account *all* of its parts but is even *larger than the sum of its parts*.

National unity does not imply the submergence of diversity into one homogeneous entity, nor does it imply the subordination of one cultural group to another. Believing that our neighbour's differences are not a threat, believing in what we stand for, agreeing to be a part of the neighbourhood within which our own identity will find free expression, establishing a sense of sharing and of common purpose, being tolerant of the beliefs and identities of those around us — these are all expressions of mutual understanding and represent steps toward *national*