

Story 1: Gespe'gewa'gi (Gaspé Peninsula), a Land of Nature

Background: In this future, a surge in the price of oil internationally in the early 2030s prompted Quebec to double down on the development of public transit routes, but it started too late. Gradually, most of the population and services (shops, health care, etc.) had to be concentrated in the densest areas of each region, leaving people living on the outskirts in sometimes precarious situations. However, this isolation from the major centres has allowed for the development of a culture rooted in social ties and connection to nature.

Le Musée des mémoires du bout du monde presents an episode from the Live in the Gaspé Peninsula Podcast ! Today, Alix, a 30-year-old newcomer, talks about his daily life in Gaspé.

January 17, 2051, City of Gaspé. My name is Alix. Every morning, I walk to work. I can't help but smile when I think of this 30 minutes of pure happiness, despite the chilly wind!

When I think back, I had to walk for an hour and twenty minutes on York Boulevard to get to my factory job. It was almost surreal. There are too few shuttles; they are late because of the poor state of the roads and always crowded. There is organized carpooling. It worked well at the beginning, but as time goes by, more and more people can't afford to buy a car let alone pay for maintenance! The public transit system is struggling to meet the needs. It should have been developed before the oil crisis. Governments would not be battling so much to adapt networks to make them accessible.

Since I got my job at the shipyard, closer to home, my life has changed: I walk to work using the new trails by the sea. I silently greet the gulls and sometimes the great blue herons that I come across. I would like to venture off the trail to fully enjoy this connection with nature, but I respect fragile and protected ecosystems. On weekends, when I manage to reserve a spot in an electric shuttle, I take a trip to Forillon Park, to the few areas that are still open to the public.

Halfway through, I meet the Mendez, a family who has just arrived on the Gaspé Peninsula. Climate change has made Quebec a welcoming place for many people from other countries, like the Mendez and me. From what I heard, Greater Gaspé has become much denser to accommodate more people, businesses and services. This growth has come with many challenges, especially for finding new ways to house people! I am staying with Peter, who has set up a dwelling unit in his yard. We get along well, and I learned a lot from him about the region. He told me that the ipsigiq, or barachois in French, which naturally protects the banks, almost disappeared about ten years ago. A great mobilization, bringing together the Mi'gmaq, French and English-speaking communities and supported by scientists, made it possible to restore them and protect many migratory birds threatened by extinction.

I must admit that when I arrived in Quebec, I thought I would have a big house and a large lot. It turned out that I shared someone's yard, but I've found some great spaces close to home. My neighbourhood was built with the best construction practices in mind. All residential projects have 30% forest cover. So, we live surrounded by trees, which is so good for your morale!

However, my mood darkens when I arrive at work. The cargo ships remind me that many multinational companies wish to set up in Gaspé to exploit natural resources.

Once my workday is over, I walk to the community hall for our citizens' assembly. I love these meetings, even if making decisions sometimes takes a long time. But when we happen to make one, it has a good chance of being considered by elected officials. On the agenda today, we must discuss proposals to improve the lives of people with reduced mobility. Unfortunately, this time, tension increased because as soon as we talk about making services accessible to all, people raised the issue of the lack of money to meet all the needs. Chronic underfunding of services and infrastructure is, in fact, a major problem that comes up all the time.

More and more people in the region want to see multinationals set up here in the hope of receiving royalties for the exploitation of our natural resources. Since Quebec's natural resources protection laws are tougher than elsewhere, by setting up here, companies see an opportunity to make their products eco-responsible and thus increase their value. However, every new economic development has become a controversial topic throughout the province, since we have done so much in recent years to protect ecosystems!

I believe we should try to become more self-sufficient, that is, to produce here as much as possible: food, clothing, medicine and even electronic equipment. Local production means bringing pollution back here and it's hard to hear. But if we don't, we'll have to learn to do without a lot of things! Fortunately, in the Gaspé Peninsula, people know how to stick together and share when there are supply disruptions. But some shortages, such as medicines, hurt more.

Well, I hope you found my story interesting! I'm happy to have been able to share my daily life as part of this project. Thank you to the Musée des mémoires du bout du monde for giving me this opportunity!