

Quite a show!

A narrow defile twisted to the left and then emerged facing the blank wall of an outer ravelin of La Citadelle in Quebec City. I suppose the original intent of the constricted entryway was to provide additional protection against enfilading fire from any approaching foe. The major threat now, though, appeared to be to the mirrors of the fifteen seat van I was driving. They barely cleared the sides of the narrow passage before I had to make the hard right 90 degree turn forced on by the fortification's curtain wall.

Another 90 degree turn placed us beside the guard station inside the gate of the bastion's wall itself. The young military woman checked over the Governor General's guest list and raised the gate. Fortunately Ilona, my daughter and the executive director of Apathy is Boring, continued to guide me around the parade ground right up to the door of the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean Quebec City residence.

K'naan, Jordan Croucher, Sol Guy, Samian, Ariane Moffat were among the musicians that piled out of the van for the reception. Jully Black would hurriedly arrive later. They all would be performing at a concert Apathy is Boring had organized to follow the Governor General's first Youth Dialogue (www.gg.ca/media/pho/index_e.asp?GalleryID=529&Sequence=13).

The August 13th event held on the campus of Laval University during the 4th World Youth Congress launched this series of discussions. They will take place in a number of Canadian cities over the coming year.

The next one is happening in Halifax on September 20th.

These dialogues “will draw on the new and exciting ways youth are using democracy,” according to a press release, “and acting as effective agents of change locally, nationally and internationally.” The Governor General chose youth concerns as one of the main focuses of her mandate. She sees this “as an opportunity to shed light on the incredible efforts made by young people in Canada and overseas to build a better world.

Michaëlle Jean’s position helps “to ensure their voices are heard.”

Once all the artists were inside I had the time to wander the grounds of La Citadelle a bit. Just up a small rise above the Governor General’s residence sits an “ultimate réduit.” Built in 1842 a decade after the completion of the irregularly pentagon shaped bastion which sits on the height above the walled city of Quebec, this stone building’s narrow gun slit windows aim out on the surrounding buildings of the fortification. It was intended as the last refuge for the British garrison posted there “in case of a siege or citizen uprising.” The 1837-38 rebellions against autocratic rule in Upper and Lower Canada inspired this realistic fear.

Apathy is Boring tries to overcome the general feeling in a lot of youth today of a lack of trust in the political system. An element in the crisis of democracy now rests on governments seeming inability to deal with the critical issues that youth see plaguing our world. AisB “aims to be the entry point for young people into lifelong active citizenry.” They use art, media, and technology to reach out “to a broad demographic of

youth about how to be more involved in their communities and the democratic process.”

(www.apathyisboring.com/en/about_us/overview)

Partnerships with Canadian artists like those we brought over for the reception with the Governor General help Apathy is Boring spread the word that youth's voice and active participation in the change process is critical. A several hours later after the Youth Dialogue ended, K'naan, leading off the concert, got the crowd including Her Excellency up singing along with him. The heavy nature of the issues his music raises didn't deter even Michaëlle Jean's suited and ear plugged security guards from clapping and swaying away. It was quite a show.

By Michael Dougherty, September 4, 2008