

CITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE CENTURIES

# QUEBEC

A MAJORITY GAME SUPPORTED BY WORKERS

When I opened the box of Quebec for the first time I was shocked by the board: one of the worst I ever saw in the last few years! Luckily, I had already the opportunity of reading a few reports from Essen and I knew that the game was well accepted by players, so I went on with the set-up for our first test.

The board depicts the old walls of the town of Quebec with some roads, houses and fields: inside this "perimeter" a mix of groups of 3 or 4 colored circles (yellow, blue, red and violet) fill the map. Each "group" includes 2 or 3 "empty" circles (for the buildings that the player will erect during the game) and a colored one with some symbols (that we will examine later). Around the board are printed a scoring track and 5 important "Zones of Power" (Religion, Politics, Economy, Culture and Citadel).

On this map you have to place 44 heavy cardboard colored disks (yellow, blue, red and violet) that show on one side a famous building of the town, and on the reverse side a number (I,II,III, IV) and three empty squares. The number indicates the "century" in which the building was erected (I for 1600, II for 1700, III for 1800 and IV for 1900) and the "squares" are used to place the workers that will build it.

The game also contains 125 "workers" (colored wooden cubes, 25 for each player's color); 11 Architects (2 pawns per players and a yellow one for the Economic Leader); 120 cardboard colored tokens (24 per players); 11 blue wooden chips (used to mark the available buildings); 5 (optional) Leaders cards and 16 (optional) Event cards. Finally we have 5 heavy cardboard mini-boards in the players' colors that will be used to display the available workers during the game. They are called "hand" tiles (because a hand is depicted on each tile).

The set-up requires a few minutes and some attention: you have to fill each group of colored circles on the map with the appropriate disks (buildings) of the same color but you must avoid placing two buildings of the same color and century next to each other. Place the 11 blue chips on the "Century I" disks to better show which building will be available on the first round of the game. Finally place the five Leaders cards (and four Event cards if this option is selected) near the board.

Then each player takes his workers, tokens and pawns: one pawn is placed on the scor-

ing track that is printed on the map, while the other will be the player's "Architect" during the game. Store the Architect and 3 workers on your "Hand" tile. The remaining components will be the players' reserve.

The game may be played in three levels: the first is the "Family Game" and will not use Leaders and Event cards; the second is the "Full Game" and will add the Leaders; the third add the Event Cards. We started

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*A game well worth trying, offering an excellent choice of options and tactics, but no clear-cut strategy!*

playing immediately the Full game and we passed to the third level after 3 test. We never played the "Family" game, but the considerations that will follow will not change (just do not consider the comments on Leaders and Events).

Quebec is easy to learn (there are very few rules and they are clearly explained) and once you have understood what each symbol means you do not need to go back to the rules. But the available options are so many that you surely need a couple of games before being able to play with some sort of strategy in mind.

In short: you send your Architect to a building (taking the blue chip on it) and you hope that the other players will help you to finish it quickly (sending their workers there) in order to let you start another building. Once a building is finished (or when you decide to stop the construction) your Architect is moved to another building, you place one of your tokens there while all the workers are sent to the Zone of Power of the same color and so on until all the buildings of that century are completed.

Each player, on his turn, has to select one of the following actions:

- 1 – Start a new building
- 2 – Contribute to a building
- 3 – Place a worker on a Zone of Power
- 4 – Take a Leader Card

To START A NEW BUILDING you simply have to send your Architect to that location (and immediately take 3 workers from your reserve to be placed on your Hand tile). Each building belongs to a "District" of the town and has three "working" areas that must be filled to complete the construction. Each district offers some features to the players that will invest their workers on the con-

struction of a building started by another player.

To CONTRIBUTE TO A BUILDING you have to send 1-2-3 workers on one of the three working areas of that building. If there is another player's Architect you will benefit of the "bonus action" offered by that District: usually this means that you may get free workers from your reserve placing them in another building or in one or more Zones of Power or you may get victory points (VP), etc. If you send workers to a building with your own Architect you will not get any bonus (but you will accelerate the construction of that building).

To PLACE A WORKER ON A ZONE OF POWER you simply take ONE cube from your Hand tile and you place it in one of the five available zones

Finally you may take one of the five LEADER



CARDS (if still available) in order to use their "special powers": with the RELIGIOUS leader you may get the District bonus even if you place workers with your Architect; with the POLITICAL leader you may chose to move your workers from a building of a color to a Zone of Power of a different color; with the ECONOMIC Leader you get a second Architect; with the CULTURAL leader you get extra VP when a building is finished; with the CITADELLE leader you immediately move 3 workers from your reserve to the citadel. Note that when a century ends all the leaders are given back and they will become again available at the beginning of the following turn.

You may stop the construction of a building when you like: you just have to take the action (1) and move your Architect to another place. If the building's three work-

ing areas are filled you flip the building tile on the front side and you place a "3 stars" token of your color on it. Otherwise you must use a "2 stars" or "1 star" token, but if nobody invested workers on that building no tokens are placed. It is very important to note now that you should try to have a good number of your buildings in adjacent position inside Quebec, possibly with a lot of "stars" tokens on, as they will score a lot of VP at the game's end.

When a player wishes to start a new building but all the blue chips are already taken the first Century arrives to an end and the game pause for a while. Players mark the Victory Points (VP) given by the five Zones of Power, starting from the Citadel: each cube on this Zone gives 1 VP to its owner (move the corresponding pawn on the scoring track). Then you must check who

has the majority of cubes and move half of his cubes (with a maximum of 5) to the following Zone (this is called a "cascade move"). The remaining cubes are sent back to each player's reserve. Do the same for the following Zone (1VP per cube and check for the majority, with half of those cubes sent to the following zone) and so on until the last Zone. Then you place the 11 blue chips on the buildings for the second Century. (Please note that the "order" of the Zones changes on each century, but the First one is always the Citadel).

All that done the Architect that caused the century's end is placed again on the map on a new building and the game resumes as before: it is very important to try to estimate the right timing of the century's end, as being the first to place your Architect will give you the opportunity to select the right



building before your opponents. I wish to stress again that having many adjacent buildings at the game's end will grant a lot of VP and most of the game's tactics are based on this consideration: it may happen that you will be obliged to select a building of scarce interest just to avoid that he is taken by an opponent; sometimes you may decide to stop early the construction of one of your buildings only to be certain to start the century's end phase and to move your Architect in an important location ... without forgetting that if you are the first to place the Architect you will be ... the last to select a new Leader.

At the end of the IVth Century's end phase the game is finished and a FINAL SCORE is done: first the players receive 1 VP for each worker still on a building under construction; then they get 1 VP for each "star" of their color on buildings that are not part of the player's main group; finally for each main group the players add the VP numbers printed on all the tokens (1 VP for a "1 star" token, 3 VP for a "2" stars token and 6 VP for a "3" stars token). As I wrote before a good "group" of adjacent buildings may grant many VP!!!

The player with most points is obviously the winner.

As we have seen the rules are not so many or so difficult, and you may learn them very quickly; but playing is another thing as you will constantly have to think well before taking your actions.

The first decision is "which" building to select to start: if the "bonus" action is very interesting and the cost (in workers) is not too high (1 or 2 cubes per area) your opponents will send their workers and you will be able to quickly finish the building and send your Architect to another one ... but your opponents get a lot of bonus actions. If the selected building is too ... expensive (3 workers) you will have to wait a lot before completing it or you will be obliged to use your own workers without getting any bonus (unless you have the Religious leader). But the most important decision is always "where" to send your own workers: you always have a limited number of them available (you start with 6 and you get 3 extra every time that you move your Architect) and some buildings require 2-3 workers per area. So a careful look at the different possibilities is necessary: try to select places where you get extra workers as bonus, if possible, but remember that your opponents will do the same and sometimes waiting an extra turn will mean ... losing the opportunity.

Leaders also are important: we discussed a lot in our group to understand which one was the most valuable of them, but we were unable to find a clear answer and this

means that the designers were very clever!!! After the first two test games there was really a first turn "race" to get the Religious Leader (who has the advantage to let you use the District bonus even in your own Architect's building). It seemed a very powerful choice especially when you need to take a particular building to increase your main group and it has also an interesting (even if costly) bonus.

But after a few extra tests we discovered that each Leader is powerful, if properly used, so each player often decided his general strategy for that century before selecting a Leader.

The Political leader allows you to move your workers from a finished building to any Zone of Power (and not just to the Zone of the same color): this is a very strong possibility when you are fighting to get the majority in one or more Zones

The Economic leader gives you a second Architect and you may use it to start a second building (getting also 3 extra workers on your hand tile): you may take this leader when you have to use your Architect in a costly building (knowing that it will take a lot of time to finish) or when you wish to enlarge your main group quickly.

The Cultural leader is particularly interesting if you decide to select low cost (1 worker per area) buildings: in effect he gives you extra VP (1 to 4) every time that you place your "star" tokens

Finally the Citadel leader is the one that generated most discussions: his bonus allows you to "simply" place 3 workers from your reserve to the Citadel and that's all. In the first test we all ignored this card but soon we realized that the Citadel is always the first Zone to be counted at the century's end and thus the player who win the majority here may "cascade" half of his cubes on the following one, and very often this gave him the possibility to have a second cascade on the third Zone. Really a lot of VP!!! So actually this leader is the first or second to be selected (also because it is not so easy to send workers in the Citadel: the District's bonus gives very few opportunities and always just one cube per bonus).

It is very difficult for me to give you a sort of "strategy" for a game of Quebec as things change very quickly and you must adapt your tactics accordingly, seeking any opportunity as soon as it arises. The game is really very interactive!

So it easier to let you know a couple of dirty tricks that we discovered during our test:

(a) – If you have an architect in a building that requires 3 workers and if your opponents filled the three areas ... you have now 9 hostages! If possible do not move your Architect until the century's end, so the 9 workers will not be available for a while.

(b) – If one player is well advanced in the scoring track and if he places his architect in an important building (for his main group) do not send any worker there so he will be obliged to send his own (without getting any bonus) or change building without scoring any star.

Of course Quebec is not a game for families or casual players, and if you are a "pure strategist" you will be probably disappointed as you will not be able to program a long term strategy. But this game is really very interactive and you will be hooked after the first or second try. You immediately have to start to make decisions on "which are the best available bonuses" and you have to immediately jump on each opportunity, always with an eye on the five Zones of Power to try to select the buildings of the right color if you wish to get a majority (and therefore start the "cascade" process).

Finally remember that having a "main group" of 5-6 buildings may give you up to 30-36 VP, really a lot of points: so at the game start try select buildings not too far from each other because they will probably allow you to connect them later in the game and, of course, always do your best to block your opponents to do the same! ☑

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## INFORMATION

Designer: Baudoin, Poissant-Marquis

Artist: Mariusz Gandzel

Price: ca. 38 Euro

Publisher: Scorpion Masque / Ystari 11

[www.asmodee.de](http://www.asmodee.de)

PLAYERS:  
2-5

AGE:  
13+

TIME:  
90+

## EVALUATION

Worker placement game

With friends

Version: de

Rules: de en fr

In-game text:

Comments:

Surprising new and innovative mechanisms \* Interesting interactions due to assistance given and bonuses received for assistance

Compares to:

El Grande and other worker placement games on majorities and area control, but first game of its kind in combination of those mechanisms

Other editions:

Currently none

