

Ines Cavalcanti (1951)

Chambra d'Oc - Cultural Association, Event Planner in the Language, Culture and International Relations Sector.

Until 1970 I did not know I was Occitan. I did not even know the name of the language I spoke. To define our language we use to say, 'to talk *a nòsta mòda*', 'in our way'. We thought of the Occitan valleys in Piedmont as an isolated, unidentified place and, in a certain way, without a future.

When I met François Fontan, an Occitan from the other side of the Alps, I looked outside of what I thought of as my own reality, and I saw another world. In 1972, with Fontan and other young people of the Occitan Autonomous Movement, I attended the Occitan University of Villeneuve sur Lôt in Gascogne. There I encountered Robert Lafont, Yves Roqueta, Bernard Manciet, Marti, and Joan Bodon. Poets, writers, singers, ordinary people, all working in favor of the Occitan language and culture. I spoke '*a nòsta mòda*', my native dialect of Elva, and I was able to communicate with them. The very strong emotion this experience engendered within me radically changed my life. Since then, I have never stopped working to spread knowledge of the Occitan language and culture, so that more people can be aware of this vast geographical area in the heart of Europe, and come to know its language, its literature, its history, and its culture .

Along with the Chambra d'Oc, I have created projects and events such as '*Occitan Lengua Olimpica*, *L'Occitania a pè*, *Las Valadas Occitanas a pè*', and the '*Premio Ostana*'. I also coordinate working groups in Piedmont on the Law 482/99, '*Norms and standards for the protection of historical linguistic minorities*', and I supervise the publishing of literary works produced by the cultural association, Chambra d'Oc. I have always paid particular attention to the topic of Catharism. I have published books dedicated to Simone Weil's thinking, and, in collaboration with Maria Soresina, I have arranged and planned meetings focusing on the history of Catharism.

