

## TEN YEARS OF CULTURAL MEDIATION IN LONGUEUIL



*Credit: Jean-Michael Seminario.*

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT** SOCIAL YOUTH  
WELL-BEING MONITORING **PARTICIPATION**  
**COMMON GOOD WOMEN** MINORITIES

### 1. Background

The City of Longueuil has a population of 246,900 and is part of one of the most urbanised areas of Montérégie region of Quebec, Canada. The city is divided into three boroughs, Greenfield Park, Saint-Hubert, and Vieux-Longueuil, with several concentrations of poverty and disadvantaged neighbourhoods where people are often disconnected from cultural life.



The city has more than 350 cultural and community organisations, as well as hundreds of professional artists that work alongside the Department of Culture. Indeed, cultural mediation has proven to be an essential tool for bringing people and communities closer to the arts.

## 2. Longueuil and Culture

In Longueuil, several community organisations provide personal assistance services in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in order to improve the quality of life of its residents. Since the adoption of a cultural policy in 2005, one of the city's primary focuses has been to make culture accessible to populations distanced from cultural life.

By implementing this framework, the City of Longueuil has developed tools for encouraging cultural and artistic practices, supporting professional artists and cultural organisations, and subsequently meeting the needs of communities that lack access to culture.

**SINCE 2007, CULTURAL MEDIATION HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN LONGUEUIL FOR REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHO ARE FURTHEST REMOVED FROM CULTURAL LIFE AND FOR ENCOURAGING THEIR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION.**

Through the Department of Culture, the preferred partner for community organisations, the City of Longueuil has established synergy between cultural, social, community, and urban development. Over time, the diversity, authenticity, and boldness of cultural initiatives, has made the project successful, particularly because of its uniqueness and entrepreneurial vitality. Major long-term partnerships have been developed with the various established cultural, community, and economic authorities throughout the region.



The 2005 cultural policy, which is currently being revised, and the 2012 reference framework for cultural mediation both remain indispensable tools for the Department of Culture.

### 3. Objectives and Project Implementation

#### 1.1. Primary and Specific Objectives

The goal is to "deploy strategies and actions geared towards closing the gap between artists, their work, and citizens, particularly for groups that are far-removed from cultural life due to social, economic, or territorial factors."<sup>1</sup>

It aims to promote exchange between residents and artists to foster accessibility to culture and improve citizens' quality of life.

The City of Longueuil has outlined certain specific objectives:

- Improve access to arts and culture for citizens who are removed from cultural life
- Encourage meetings between citizens and cultural professionals
- Encourage exchanges between artists and creators of Longueuil on their creative approaches
- Participate in the social development of citizens and create a sense of belonging to the cultural environment of Longueuil.

#### 1.2. Project Development

##### Main Actions Carried Out

Since 2008, through four triennial agreements with the Ministry of Culture and Communications (MCC), nearly 150 cultural mediation projects have been organised by the Longueuil Department of Culture, cultural and community organisations, as well as local artists and creators.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition taken from the Practical Guide for Arts and the City – 2007, adopted by Longueuil.





Following the implementation of an initial project in partnership with cultural and community organisations in 2008 and 2009, a cultural mediation reference framework was developed by the city in 2012. The latter was part of a second agreement with the MCC enabling the city to better target disadvantaged populations and facilitate their access to higher quality cultural events. Between 2011 and 2012, the city reflected on the development of its cultural mediation policy, which it presented in August 2012 during a meeting with the cultural sphere and the community.

In August and September of 2012, with the help of the Longueuil Council for the Arts, a first call for projects was launched with artists and professional organisations. To submit a project, they had to be paired up, under the supervision of Department of Culture, with a community organisation committed to the intended audience. Ten projects were selected by a jury of professionals. In order to ensure good pairings, a cultural mediator was in charge of supervising the artists and organisations, helping the project to run smoothly on the ground. In June of 2014, the city published a brochure detailing the implementation and concrete results of each project. The budget for outlining the reference framework and carrying out projects between 2010 and 2013 was \$120,000.

From February to October of 2013 five other cultural mediation projects arose out of partnerships. These were the initiative of artists or cultural organisations, such as the project "*Guéris vite! Dessine-moi des ailes... j'irai au bout de mes rêves*" [*Heal! Draw Me Wings... I'll Travel to the End of My Dreams*], crowned with the Ministry of Education's regional Essor Recognition Award, and nominated at the provincial level.

In 2015, a third agreement was signed for 2015 and 2017 allowing the city to host ten major cultural mediation projects, with a budget of \$115,000. The Department of Culture has set up four projects in the important area of health. In order to help guide these actions, brainstorming sessions and discussions with other cities that carried out similar projects in this area were organised in 2016 and 2017.



The Department of Culture simultaneously had its own budget for the implementation of cultural mediation projects, which has been set at \$50,000 since 2008. Most of these projects were carried out in partnership with the House of Culture, professional cultural organisations, groups on the path to becoming official cultural authorities, or with artists.

Since January 2012, the House of Culture has hosted four exhibitions a year, while the Department of Culture has simultaneously organised cultural mediation activities. Exhibiting artists are invited to host free art workshops for community groups or students from disadvantaged schools. Since November 2015, thanks to a partnership with the MCC, the schools of the Marie-Victorin School Board have had their transportation costs reimbursed, in addition to the cost of art workshops at the House of Culture.

In 2016, a cultural mediation project was born out of the exhibition *"Under the Bark of Words by Kim Thúy"*, in collaboration with the Marie-Victorin School Board and Saint-Jean-Baptiste High School. Cultural mediation projects related to old trades were also organised with the Crafts and Traditions organisation, which enabled immigrant women to work with craftspeople to make sash belts, or gave those who dropped out of school to work with a blacksmith.

The city has long-term funding for its cultural mediation policy through four signed partnerships providing \$400,000, with \$200,000 from the city and \$200,000 from the MCC, on top of the present budget for the city of \$50,000. The city has entered into several partnerships with a wide variety of organisation: the Ministry of Culture and Communications (Triennial Development Agreements), the Longueuil Council for the Arts (collaboration with professional organisations and artists), Quebec Council of Arts and Literature, the Montreal Arts Council, the Regional Conference of Elected Officials, the Montérégie Council of Culture and Communications, the Marie-Victorin School Board, the Petits Bonheurs Network, the Culture For All organisation, the Longueuil library network, etc.



A total of 8,000 people, 80 school groups, 100 community organisations, 15 cultural organisations, and nearly 30 artists participated in cultural mediation activities between 2008 and 2018, with 150 projects. There are 10 other major projects already planned up to 2021.

## 4. Impact

### 1.1. Direct Impacts

#### Impact on Local Government

Through the development of its cultural mediation framework, the City of Longueuil has developed a reference tool to initiate a cross-cutting, horizontal initiative with cultural and community organisations and schools in the region. The mediation framework helped leverage the signing of a 4th cultural development agreement with the MCC.

#### Impact on Culture and Cultural Stakeholders in the City

Through the cultural mediation framework, cultural organisations have a firm commitment on the city's involvement in the field of cultural mediation.

#### Greater Impact on the City or Territory and its Population

With this project, the City of Longueuil prioritises people with disabilities, disadvantaged families, schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and the elderly. At the district level, the city participated in meetings and training sessions to share its tools and expertise on the subject, thereby becoming a regional cultural mediation body. The last meeting was held on February 23, 2018, and made it possible to take stock of the cultural mediation actions over the last ten years, while also reflecting on the future of cultural mediation in Longueuil.

### 1.2. Assessment



After each activity, surveys were conducted on the participants' satisfaction. In 2016 and 2017, a pilot project led to further evaluation of a cultural mediation project with the help of a consultant. The Department of Culture will also be equipped with more effective indicators for evaluating its actions over the next year.

## THE CITY AIMS TO BECOME A REGIONAL HUB FOR CULTURAL MEDIATION AND TO EQUIP ITSELF WITH MORE EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT TOOLS IN THE YEARS TO COME.

### 1.3. Key Factors

The openness, cooperation, collaboration, creativity, enthusiasm, commitment, and motivation of the participants are all factors that generate success in any new project.

In 2014, during the Arts and the City programme, the Department of Culture presented several key factors for the success of cultural mediation projects. First, any initiative must first come from the environment in which it will be implemented. Secondly, the involvement of various groups and stakeholders from the cultural sector, school board, and community are paramount, in addition to involvement by municipal workers, artists, and cultural organisations without interference. Finally, the passion of artists and organisations for their cultural projects is an essential element for helping target audiences take an interest in cultural initiatives.

### 1.4. Ongoing Work

To date, the majority of scheduled activities are funded under the 4th agreement with the MCC into 2020. At the end 2018 and the beginning of 2019, a meeting was planned, specifically focused on the subject of health.

## Further Information

The City of Longueuil was a candidate for the third annual "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2017 - May 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2016, and requested that the UCLG Committee on Culture highlight this project as a good practice in the implementation of Agenda 21 for culture, and as a special mention for the third awarding of the Prize.

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