



Montreal, Cultural Metropolis:

Combine creativity and the citizen experience in the digital age

2017-2022 Draft cultural development policy

Policy brief submitted by ELAN Quebec (English Language Arts Network)

March 17, 2017

1. Introduction

The English Language Arts Network (ELAN) was conceived in 2004, when more than 120 artists and other representatives of the English-speaking arts milieu and of government, gathered to discuss support for artists and cultural workers in Quebec's official language minority community (OLMC). With the support of sister organizations the Quebec Drama Federation (QDF),¹ the Quebec Writers' Federation (QWF),² and the Association of English-Language Publishers of Quebec (AELAQ),³ **ELAN was created to give a united voice to English-language artists of all backgrounds, working in all disciplines, and living in all regions of Quebec.** In fact, ELAN's first public intervention was to submit a brief as part of the 2005 consultations for Montreal, Cultural Metropolis.

ELAN's activities have connected and supported English-speaking artists and cultural workers for 13 years. We help artists and arts organizations find guidance, opportunities, and connections, and build relationships with French-speaking colleagues. Networking events, promotion, informative communications, and arts advocacy have won ELAN thousands of followers among Montreal's arts communities.

ELAN is the only multidisciplinary organization representing Quebec's English-speaking artists and cultural workers as a whole. The 2011 Census reported that people whose first official language spoken is English account for 22.5% of the Montreal Census Metropolitan Area.⁴ Most ELAN members are based in Montreal (80% in 2015-16); our Montreal membership increased by 25% from 2016 to 2017.

ELAN members are mostly professional artists, cultural workers, and organizations, all of whom have a great deal at stake in the present conversation. As creators, they require basic support in order to create art that Montreal's citizens experience. Both service organizations (like ELAN and its sister groups) and artistic organizations (presenters, collectives, festivals, etc.) require a certain amount of stability to effectively meet the needs of their members and audiences. Of course, **Montreal's ELAN members are also cultural citizens themselves, who participate in the cultural metropolis as audiences, consumers, and creators.**

In preparation for this brief, ELAN consulted with our members and community, and held a public consultation event on March 7, 2017 that was attended by creators and cultural workers from the visual arts, film and video, digital entrepreneurship, theatre, music, and publishing sectors. The present comments seek to represent their concerns and hopes, in addition to ELAN's recommendations informed by more than a decade of representing the English-speaking arts and culture sector.

¹ www.quebecdrama.org

² www.qwf.org

³ www.aelaq.org

⁴ Brigitte Chavez, Statistics Canada: English-Speaking Immigrants in Quebec and French-Speaking Immigrants Outside of Quebec: A Brief Overview. November 25, 2014. p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/01/Brigitte-Chavez.pdf

2. General observations

The place of English-speaking artists

English-speaking artists of all disciplines, backgrounds, and walks of life make invaluable contributions to the rich cultural tapestries of Montreal and Quebec. Venerated artists such as the dearly departed Leonard Cohen (*compagnon des arts et des lettres du Québec*), Margie Gillis (*chevalière de l'Ordre national du Québec*), Alanis Obomsawin (Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award from the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards), and Oliver Jones (*compagnon des arts et des lettres du Québec*) have raised the profile of Montreal and Quebec arts on national and international stages.

However, such contributions have not always generated recognition, or even mention, at the local level. In 2009, the Conseil des arts de Montréal produced a book celebrating its 50th anniversary. Many pages were devoted to significant moments in Montreal's artistic history. Surprisingly, the English-speaking arts community was almost totally absent from the collective memory. Not even Centaur Theatre (founded in 1969) was mentioned. CAM acknowledged this unfortunate oversight and worked with ELAN to host an evening celebrating 10 organizations that had achieved significant milestones: Black Theatre Workshop (40 years); Geordie Productions and Teesri Duniya Theatre (30 years); Montreal Serai (25 years); Montreal Fringe Festival, The Other Theatre and Coeur Maha (20 years); and POP Montreal, Porte Parole Theatre and Expozine (10 years).

The following year, in 2011, Arcade Fire's Win Butler exclaimed *Merci, Montréal!* to a global audience of many millions as the band accepted the Grammy Award for Album of the Year. Quebec's National Assembly thought this was sufficiently important that its members unanimously voted to recognize "the contribution of our francophone and anglophone artists in spreading our culture on the international stage." Recent successes like Nadia Myre (Sobey Art Award), Sean Michaels (Scotiabank Giller Prize), and Madeleine Thien (Governor General's Literary Award) continue to represent Montreal's cultural excellence nationally and internationally. Yet the accomplishments of Montreal's contemporary English-speaking community remain little known in the broader Montreal and Quebec cultural spheres.

It is a remarkable transformation within the English-speaking community that it has progressed from close to zero levels of bilingualism at the time of Expo 67 to 67.8%⁵ in 2011, and the percentage is increasingly higher in the younger demographics. In ELAN's experience, English-speaking artists hold the view that language need not be a zero-sum game.

During decades of linguistic tension, and in our present time of heightened global tension, the English-speaking artistic community wishes to unite around the common ground we share with our French-speaking colleagues

⁵ Conseil Supérieur de la langue française study, p. 6, Tableau 1.3 : capables de soutenir une conversation en français

and co-citizens. Montreal is a multilingual city where French is the language of public life; both of these statements are true. The English-speaking community is a vibrant and proud part of Montreal's unique artistic, linguistic landscape.

ELAN welcomes the City's commitment, stated in section 10.2, to "give even more room to artists from culturally diverse backgrounds, First Peoples and the Anglophone community so that the rich cultural mosaic of the metropolis is fully represented and contributes actively to its influence." However, like other elements of this Policy which take a cross-cutting, transversal, integrated approach, diversity, inclusion, and equity for all members of the mosaic, regardless of mother tongue, must be understood as cross-cutting commitments that require consideration in all of the City's initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 1: We encourage the City to collaborate with ELAN and our sister organizations, including the Quebec Drama Federation (QDF), the Quebec Writers' Federation (QWF), AELAQ (the Association of English-Language Publishers of Quebec) to engage the English-speaking arts community in the Policy's initiatives. Similarly, the Conseil des arts de Montréal should continue outreach and information sharing with the English-speaking arts and culture community.

Connecting citizens with the policy process

ELAN thanks the City of Montreal for providing a draft English translation for our own consultation in preparing this intervention, especially given the tight timeline of the consultation process. To be sure, many English-speaking artists and cultural workers are quite able to read French documents. However, given the importance of this policy and its direct effects on English-speaking artists, providing documentation in English will go a long way towards the Policy's stated intent to include Montreal's English-language arts community.

RECOMMENDATION 2: To engage the English-speaking community in the success of the Policy's initiatives, the City should provide materials in English during ongoing consultations regarding the Policy and associated action plans.

Digital platforms

One of the main concerns of this Policy is the use of digital platforms to connect Montreal citizens with culture in their everyday lives. The policy implementation process itself could make active use of social media and digital platforms to engage and consult the largest number of citizens, especially those who are primarily active on these same platforms that are of such concern in the document at hand.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The City should set a standard for citizen involvement in the digital age by taking full advantage of social media campaigns, livestreaming, and other means of promotion, both digital and otherwise, in the ongoing implementation of the Policy.

Clarity of objectives

ELAN has heard comments from its members, and agrees with these comments, that the structure of the Policy is confusing with respect to its objectives and priorities. In each of the chapters explaining the three cross-cutting projects (creative entrepreneurship, digital technology, and living together), objectives are provided throughout. However, these objectives do not match the objectives found in the final chapter of the Policy titled “Objectives and Priorities”. In some cases, initiatives that are titled as “objectives” earlier in the document appear to be listed as “priorities” in the final chapter. In other cases, objectives listed at the end of the document did not appear listed as objectives in earlier chapters.

RECOMMENDATION 4: To ensure the City’s objectives and priorities are clear, objectives stated throughout the Policy document should be aligned with the objectives and priorities appearing in the final chapter.

3. First cross-cutting project: Cultural and creative entrepreneurship to make creation sustainable

Objective 1: Heighten the impact of support for cultural industries by dynamic collaboration between the Services de la culture and the Service du développement économique

Artists are innovative by nature, finding solutions to problems and supporting one another in their quest to produce excellent work. ELAN welcomes the City’s commitment to “support the development of business models based on the collaborative economy” including “reassess[ing] the eligibility criteria for its assistance programs to allow the eligibility of projects that are often atypical and innovative.” Responding more flexibly to models of working or creation developed by artists, for artists, implies a reassuring trust in artistic communities as experts of their own needs and solutions.

RECOMMENDATION 5: In reassessing eligibility criteria for assistance programs, the City should undertake thorough consultations with artists and organizations who may be affected by any changes in those criteria. Artistic communities should be encouraged to articulate their own needs and suggest solutions.

Arts and business: A two-way street

Artists and creators are increasingly required to be their own publicists, labels, agents, managers, and bookkeepers. To make their living in an increasingly competitive and cash-strapped landscape, they respond by broadening their skill sets and finding new resource streams—in short, by being entrepreneurial and innovative.

ELAN supports the provision of programs to increase artists' business and entrepreneurship skills, and to pair artists with resources in the private sector that could facilitate the creation and dissemination of their work. These skills should be adequately addressed in CEGEP and university fine arts curricula, and also offered to working artists as part of their on-going professional development. Some of this training is already offered to English-speaking artists by Youth Employment Services (YES) Montreal⁶ as well as a new program in creative venture creation at Dawson College.⁷ Inter-city exchanges, for instance with arts administrators, cultural workers, and entrepreneurs in North America and Europe, would further enrich Montreal creators' readiness to develop and export their work.

Artists must go about their business, and must learn the skills to do so. However, the artistic mindset and approach have much to offer the private sector in turn. **Any bridges built between the arts and business sectors must run both ways.** To build collaborations that are truly *transversal*, which break us all out of our silos, workers and organizations in the private sector must be encouraged to recognize the inherent benefits of art and culture, not only their potential profitability. Specialized trainings or courses could be offered to incentivize private sector workers to pursue careers in the creative and cultural industries. True inter-sectoral exchanges will encourage the private sector to contribute to Montreal's cultural landscape with the understanding that artistic and cultural creation is about more than the profit motive alone.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Ensure that collaborations between business and the arts involve a two-way exchange of ideas, resources, and knowledge. If creative entrepreneurship is to be sustainable, artistic creation must be valued for more than its potential profitability.

Collaborative business models and mutualization

ELAN lauds the City's commitment to support "a favourable environment and resources adapted to the search for innovative business models" as well as "greater collaboration between the arts and business communities". Montreal can take pride in its resilient, resourceful, and responsive artists who have set up structures to address existing needs in their communities. For example, artist collectives (for example The Long Haul,⁸ located in Parc Extension) are a great benefit to the visual arts community. As a group they not only provide each other with creative support and organize community arts events, but they can also exert pressure to keep studio rents affordable.

⁶ <http://www.yesmontreal.ca/>

⁷ <https://www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/centre-for-innovation-and-entrepreneurship-education/incubator-for-the-creative-and-cultural-industries/>

⁸ <http://thelonghaulmontreal.blogspot.ca/>

As the Policy notes, artists and cultural workers of various disciplines are increasingly grouping together to share resources, skills, and space. These models can generate unexpected opportunities and fruitful relationships. However, ELAN and our members recognize that they are in part a response to a structural, long-term lack of funding and resources in the arts and culture sector, particularly for emerging artists and new collaborations. **Artists have long taken a proactive approach to finding solutions through collaboration, but this should not be mistaken for a sustainable strategy in and of itself.** Arranging co-working partnerships, finding appropriate spaces, negotiating leases, purchasing and maintaining equipment, establishing internal working relationships, and devising strategies for private sector support and sponsorship where appropriate are crucial to successful mutualization. Done right, they take a great deal of time, effort, and in some cases external expertise.

ELAN's partners and sister organizations—both English- and French-speaking—know well the negative effects of insufficient administrative resources on talent retention, staff turnover, and ultimately, service provision to artists and to the broader community. While mutualization may address some of these detrimental effects, it cannot replace adequate financial support of established organizations whose work has proved itself valuable to Montreal communities, artists and cultural workers.

Objective 2: Intervene at crucial moments in the development of a project or an enterprise, as leverage with other public and private partners

ELAN supports the City's proposals to support the audiovisual industry and to establish sustainable development for the festivals and events portfolio. With the above caveats, we also support the City's "search for greater administrative flexibility in order to seize opportunities better and support innovative business models and hybrid projects."

RECOMMENDATION 7: Mutualization and resource sharing are promising models but they must be explored in tandem with maintaining and improving existing support programs and structures. The City may as a catalyst to help artists and organizations achieve stable working models through adequate support from private and public stakeholders.

Objective 3: Promote the discoverability of works and Montreal's brand image to Montrealers, and in Quebec, Canada and abroad

Many of ELAN's members are directly faced with the challenge of making their work discoverable in an age of overwhelming variety in digital platforms and distribution methods. The film, television, and music sectors have abundantly documented their struggles, but other sectors also face challenges. ELAN represents performing artists (in collaboration with the Quebec Drama Federation), writers (with the Quebec Writers' Federation),

publishers (with the Association of English-Language Publishers of Quebec), visual artists and other creators who struggle to connect with audiences and situate their work in a digital environment.

The digital age puts artists in a strange bind. On one hand, digital technologies offer unprecedented tools for creating and marketing artistic work. On the other, traditional income streams have dried up, and creators have trouble cutting through the online noise to reach audiences. The existence of this bind was strongly reinforced in the findings of ELAN's 2014 Digital Shift research project (funded by the Canada Council for the Arts).⁹ Through consulting almost 250 artists, arts organizations, journalists, and publicists, ELAN learned that many creators are struggling to gain a foothold in these conditions. **ELAN welcomes the City's readiness to assist Montreal artists in closing this gap in discoverability and to promote their work to cultural citizens in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, and abroad.**

Links with the regions

As a Quebec-wide organization with strong links in the Eastern Townships, West Quebec, the Capital Region, and other areas outside Montreal, ELAN is very interested in the proposal to "give the regions renewed access to the metropolis by creating the Maison des régions."

Through working with strong English-speaking and bilingual arts communities on our Arts Alive! Québec¹⁰ series of community arts festivals, ELAN knows that regional artists, including many English-speaking artists, can face isolation and a lack of resources. Further, ELAN has been taking preliminary steps to develop a touring circuit which would benefit both Montreal-based and regional artists by providing access to new venues and audiences without having to travel too far from home.

ELAN would be pleased to help spread the knowledge and energy evident in Montreal arts and culture communities to the regions, including via connections between English- and French-speaking communities.

Cultural tourism

In 2015, ELAN was commissioned by Industry Canada (now Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada) to study cultural tourism in Quebec's official language minority communities.¹¹ Many communities have identified arts and culture as a crucial way to draw visitors to their regions. We see potential overlaps with the Maison des régions proposed in the Policy document, as well as with the work of CEDEC (Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation) in this area. Specifically, we see potential in the idea of

⁹ Digital Shift Project Final Report, December 2014, <http://quebec-elan.org/portfolio-item/digital-shift>

¹⁰ <http://arts-alive-quebec.ca>

¹¹ <http://www.quebec-elan.org/portfolio-item/elan-tourism-and-touring-report-2016/>

bilingual cultural tourism marketing initiatives, which could enable both French- and English-speaking artists to reach new audiences from Montreal, Quebec, Canada and abroad.

In addition, we encourage the City to involve English-speaking artists in the creation, use, and promotion of platforms such as Montréal à pied and La Vitrine culturelle, as well as future digital platforms developed to support cultural tourism. **ELAN would be pleased to facilitate access to these platforms for English-speaking artists.**

Objective 4: Support the Conseil des arts de Montréal as the front-line stakeholder of the Cultural Development Policy

ELAN recognizes the critical role of the Conseil des arts de Montréal in supporting artists and arts organizations. We support the City's commitment to CAM. However, regarding the proposal to "consolidate the respective programs of the CAM and the Service de la Culture in order to optimize their support for the cultural and creative industries", prior to taking any action we urge the City to undertake meaningful consultations with artists and arts organizations who depend on CAM and who may be affected by structural changes to its funding programs. ELAN also encourages CAM to continue outreach and information sharing with the English-speaking arts and culture community, including recruiting bilingual English-language artists for positions within the organization's juries, board of directors, and staff.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The City should undertake extensive consultations with artists and arts organizations who may be affected by changes to the support programs of the Conseil des arts de Montréal.

4. Second cross-cutting project: Digital technology serving the citizen's cultural experience

As the Policy notes, Montreal is recognized internationally for its flourishing digital arts activity, including but not limited to video gaming, installation art, virtual reality, film and television post-production, electroacoustics, and innovative interdisciplinary collaborations using digital technology. At the federal, provincial, and municipal levels, digital technology has been recognized as an important cultural policy issue. ELAN is encouraged by the City's commitment to help culture "develop organically and sustainably" in the context of digital innovation.

Objective 1: Position Montréal as a leader in digital creativity, by developing and consolidating this niche of excellence

The digital challenge

Montreal creators in multiple disciplines (independent video gaming, visual arts, music production, etc.) have told ELAN that falling budgets and rising precarity have impeded their ability to create quality work. Artists are offered less time and less pay, yet are expected to produce work of equal or greater quality. In some ways, digital production and consumption have exacerbated this problem rather than providing solutions. This is in addition to the problems of discoverability highlighted above.

Montreal's creators need adequate support to invest in producing good work, and its cultural citizens need clear pathways to discover and enjoy the results. In addition to its enormous potential for creating powerful artistic works, we should think of digital technology as an opportunity to facilitate connections between creators and audiences in all genres. **Artists should be trusted and supported to produce excellent work, whether that work responds directly to the digital context or simply circulates within it.** Much like art and business, art and digital technology must be in a two-way relationship, informing and enriching one another.

Access to digital tools and skills

Canadians pay among the highest rates in the world for internet access,¹² which means economically disadvantaged Montrealers may lack the most basic digital building blocks to unlock their creative potential. The Policy mentions libraries as a point of public access to digital technology and training, which is an excellent start.

RECOMMENDATION 9: ELAN encourages the City to integrate discussion of accessible public WiFi into the Policy, per the first working area of the Montreal, Smart and Digital City¹³ initiative.

Even when digital tools and platforms are available, training and familiarization are required to use them effectively. ELAN knows that even artists with a good grasp of social media are stymied by the rapid-fire changes characteristic of digital tools and platforms. **Artists are eager to use technology to push boundaries and spread their work, but don't always know how.**

Participants in ELAN's Digital Shift project expressed the need for specialized social media training to better understand how to reach new audiences and retain existing ones.¹⁴ Social media workshops for artists emerged

¹² Nordicity Group Ltd. study commissioned by CRTC and cited by Christine Dobby, "How Canada's Internet, wireless rates compare with international prices," *Globe and Mail*, August 11, 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/how-canadas-internet-wireless-rates-compare-with-international-prices/article31379589/>

¹³ <http://villeintelligente.montreal.ca/en/strategy>

¹⁴ Digital Shift Project Final Report, December 2014, <http://quebec-elan.org/portfolio-item/digital-shift/>

as ELAN's first recommendation following this research. CBC Montreal has delivered several free workshops on Getting Media Attention to ELAN members, including discussions of specific promotion strategies on social media, and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

RECOMMENDATION 10: The City should promote and support social media and digital marketing training initiatives for artists and creators as part of their ongoing professional development.

Objective 2: Provide structuring stimulation for the blossoming of spaces for research and citizen meetings that will act as incubators and accelerators of cultural and creative enterprises, talents and ideas

Unlocking creative potential

ELAN is encouraged by the City's commitment to connect citizens with opportunities for digital creation and literacy through libraries, Fab Labs, makerspaces, and other models. To ELAN's knowledge, English-speaking artists do not frequently access existing resources like Fab Labs. **ELAN offers its assistance in making these resources known to our members and community.**

The knowledge sector

ELAN conducts regular outreach to students in collaboration with partners at Concordia and McGill Universities, and is in full support of the City's intervention to "foster networking between the arts and knowledge communities and the cultural and creative industries". Concordia University in particular is home to well-regarded arts programs whose graduates often make significant contributions to Montreal's artistic landscape. **ELAN has heard calls from its members and community to facilitate more encounters between artists, universities, and the technology sector.**

RECOMMENDATION 11: The City should explore cross-sectoral partnerships to facilitate networking and provide access to university space and equipment, while building stronger links with the resources and knowledge available in Montreal's arts and culture communities.

5. Third cross-cutting project: Living together, embodied in cultural districts

Objective 1: Pursue the responsible development of cultural districts

ELAN agrees with the approach of the *Plan de mise en oeuvre des quartiers culturels* quoted in the Policy: “the arts and culture are Montreal’s main strengths and constitute an essential dimension of the quality of living environments.” **Responsible development of Montreal’s cultural districts will protect the contributions and expressions of existing communities in those districts, while enhancing the ability of all citizens to enjoy their cultural offerings.**

ELAN supports the Policy’s attention to public transit and active transportation, as well as to “dynamic signage ... to support greater citizen cultural participation” through the Montréal à pied (MAP) project.

Maisons de la culture and other multipurpose facilities

Regarding the Accès culture network and the Maisons de la culture, ELAN is particularly thrilled with the City’s priority 13.6, as identified in the final section of the Policy, to “improve annually, starting in 2017, the representativeness of Montreal cultural diversity and artists from culturally diverse backgrounds and from the Aboriginal and Anglophone community, both in the programming and in the audiences.” **ELAN pledges its full support to connect our members and community with the Réseau and the Maisons de la culture, which we find are not well known among English-speaking artists.**

The Policy’s mention of developing municipal facilities with “multipurpose vocations,” such as public libraries with multipurpose rooms, is also promising. ELAN agrees that “this is a trend that should be encouraged.” Indeed, we would extend the encouragement of this trend to the private sector.

RECOMMENDATION 12: Explore the possibility of incentivizing private developers to devote a certain percentage of a project’s budget or square footage to artist studios, non-profit organizations, community facilities equipped with digital technology, or subsidized housing for low-income artists in the community.

Protecting existing communities

While the development of cultural districts holds promise to spread the presence of art and culture in citizen’s everyday lives, this process must protect communities, cultural organizations, and artists who already live and work in these neighbourhoods. As the Policy mentions, “Cultural districts are considered to be the manifestation of the knowhow of the communities that shaped them.”

Artists and arts facilities are widely understood to play a catalytic role in neighbourhood gentrification, a process which can harm community relations and threaten existing artistic spaces without the resources to pay rising rents or relocate. Neighbourhood change and increased residential development can cause issues, such as noise complaints, that threaten crucial venues and events with long histories supporting a neighbourhood’s

artistic milieu. This is particularly notable in the Plateau Mont-Royal with the cases of Le Divan Orange¹⁵ and Les Bobards, the latter of which eventually closed.¹⁶ Careful communication and consultation with all affected groups is necessary to enhance a district's existing cultural identity and resources while, in the Policy's words, "accounting for the fragility of the natural ecosystems" in place.

Finally, Montreal's new *statut metropole* (Bill 121) will provide the City with new powers in matters of housing, heritage preservation, and social policy. These powers may hold promise for responsible development of cultural districts, for instance by protecting and providing affordable housing, or stabilizing existing artistic and cultural spaces (e.g. long-term leases such as those protecting buildings on de Gaspé in the Mile End).

RECOMMENDATION 13: Efforts to develop Montreal's cultural districts must involve extensive and meaningful communication and consultation with all affected groups, including artists and citizens involved in existing cultural activities that may be threatened by development.

The West Island as a cultural hub

ELAN has strong ties to arts communities in the West Island through our Arts Alive! Québec community festival project, as well as through our member networks. We have seen on the ground how this community bridges French- and English-speakers under the common banner of celebrating local arts and culture. **ELAN encourages the City to integrate the English-speaking community into potential development of a West Island cultural hub.**

Heritage

Knowing the complex identity and history of the English-speaking population in Montreal, ELAN supports the City's understanding of heritage within culture as a "multiplicity of points of view on the appropriation of urban places by a diverse community and continuity of development of the meaning of places by this community."

¹⁵ "Oh the noise! Plateau's nightlife at stake as residents complain about live music venues", *Montreal Gazette*, January 24, 2015, <http://montrealgazette.com/entertainment/arts/oh-the-noise-plateaus-nightlife-at-stake-as-residents-complain-about-live-music-venues>

¹⁶ "Plateau live music fans complain about the noise complainers after cops bust concert", *Montreal Gazette*, October 18, 2013, <http://montrealgazette.com/entertainment/music/plateau-live-music-fans-complain-about-the-noise-complainers-after-cops-bust-concert> ; "Longtime music venue Les Bobards closes its doors", *CBC Montreal*, October 18, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/bobards-bar-and-music-venue-closes-on-st-laurent-1.3277092>

Just as the Policy encourages cultural citizens to create and experience culture in their everyday urban environment, citizens should also be encouraged to contribute their own thoughts and stories to the collective identity of the City of Montreal.

Objective 2: Stimulate citizens' involvement in their community

ELAN recognizes the City's commitment to access and enjoyment of cultural experiences for all citizens. **By fostering encounters both within and outside their everyday routines and neighbourhoods, Montreal's citizens will develop a deeper understanding of their own home city and of each other.**

In this vein, ELAN welcomes the City's "commitment to give even more room to artists from culturally diverse backgrounds, First Peoples and the Anglophone community so that the rich cultural mosaic of the metropolis is fully represented and contributes actively to its influence." **ELAN pledges to continue its work alongside CAM, DAM (Diversité Artistique Montréal), MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels), Vision Diversité, Culture Montréal, and other partners in pursuit of this goal.**

Inclusion, diversity, and equity

Systemic barriers to involvement in cultural activity face those citizens and artists who face discrimination or discouragement on the basis of their race, economic status, disability, gender, sexuality, or a number of other factors. This discrimination results in social exclusion and lack of integration. Pro-active outreach to marginalized communities is crucial, and exceeds the capacity of a single body or office. It requires a coordinated effort, and long-term commitment.

Montreal's artists and creators often express their identities and lived experiences with great passion through their creative work. However, ELAN has noted that many artists feel that categories like "Anglophone", "immigrant", "minority", or "culturally diverse" do not allow for their experience as Montrealers to be recognized in its full complexity, nor for their talent to be appreciated for its full value. **Identity is complex, and so is artistic expression.** With reference to the community ELAN serves, 4 in 10 Montreal English-speakers are immigrants, while 55% of English-speaking immigrants to Quebec, and 18% of English-speakers born in Quebec, belong to a visible minority ([Statistics Canada](#)). A work of art produced by a culturally diverse English-speaking artist who has immigrated to Montreal is as much a part of Montreal's cultural identity as any other. Montreal artists must have equitable access to space and resources to create, perform, and share their work with their co-citizens.

RECOMMENDATION 14: Like other elements of this Policy which take a cross-cutting, transversal, integrated approach, diversity, inclusion, and equity must be understood as cross-cutting commitments that require consideration in all of the City's initiatives—not only those intended to support artists from specific groups or

backgrounds. If all of Montreal's citizens are to see themselves reflected in this Policy, and to feel involved in its initiatives, ELAN would suggest a clear statement to this effect.

Bridging artists across languages

Many English-speaking artists employ French in their private, public, and collaborative artistic spheres. Many artists with a mother tongue other than English speak both English and French with ease. Artists in disciplines such as dance, music, and visual arts frequently collaborate in both English and French. Increasingly, translation of literary and dramatic works is seen as an effective way to export Québec culture and to make use of parallel networks for English- and French-speaking artists. Many novels and plays have been translated during the past 10 years and more could be done with enhanced support. English-language cultural organizations work in cooperation with those of the Francophone milieu who share their values, goals, and aesthetic orientations.

Local English-speaking artists, who reflect different aspects of contemporary Montreal, should not be confused with Anglo-American mass culture coming from outside Quebec. English-speaking Montrealers have specific stories to contribute to the overall identity of Montreal itself, stories which also struggle to be heard—sometimes, especially close to home.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Many English-speaking artists are bi- or multilingual, and eager to encounter artists from all linguistic backgrounds. The City should actively facilitate opportunities for speakers of any language to encounter one another, connect, and create. The use of municipal facilities such as Maisons de la culture and libraries for networking events, or special funding for multilingual or bilingual projects, are only two possibilities.

Museums

Museums are a rich part of Montreal's cultural offering. ELAN agrees the museum sector should be well supported to effect "the preservation and transmission of Montrealers' immaterial cultural heritages," telling the stories of French- and English-speaking Montrealers, and Montrealers of all linguistic backgrounds in all their complexity, and in close consultation with those communities.

As the policy mentions, "The preservation and enhancement of the living heritage of the First Peoples is also a necessity." The contributions and struggles of historical and contemporary Indigenous populations must be more widely recognized and taught. **In an era of Truth and Reconciliation, the arts and culture sector must do its part to actively counter misinformation and prejudices about Indigenous peoples and listen to Indigenous voices—not only from the past, but from the present.**

Libraries

ELAN supports the City's vision of libraries as "a hub of access to knowledge and culture and as a privileged point of access for all citizens to their communities." As previously mentioned, ELAN supports the role of libraries as points of access for digital literacy, equipment, and skills. Further, in a multilingual and multicultural city such as Montreal, **ELAN sees potential for the development of libraries a place of linguistic exchange and encounters between English and French, Indigenous languages, and other linguistic and literary cultures.**

Citizen creativity

Through projects such as YEAH! Quebec (Youth, Education, Arts, Health)¹⁷ and the ACE Initiative (Arts, Community, Education),¹⁸ ELAN has witnessed first-hand the benefits of citizen creativity and artistic activities for community wellbeing. In addition to various initiatives supporting public access to digital tools, the fulfilment of Montrealers' creative potential, and the development of talent and ideas, can come about through many means. A standout example is the Art Hives network, which includes 20 publicly accessible artistic spaces in Montreal alone.¹⁹ These spaces are committed to making creative expression available and accessible for all citizens, fostering leadership, and encouraging responsible social and economic development.

Objective 3: Build on the power of culture and the arts

Cultural mediation

ELAN's ACE (Arts, Community, Education) Initiative seeks to develop strong ties between English-speaking communities and schools through the arts, and will produce tools for replicating successful projects in regions throughout Quebec. ELAN recognizes that cultural mediation must be conducted with respect and understanding for the needs of the cultures and communities involved. Artists must be appropriately and ethically trained to conduct this work, and they must be matched carefully with communities based on experience and cultural context.

ELAN would be pleased to facilitate communication and access for English-speaking communities, schools, and artists through existing cultural mediation programs supported by the City.

¹⁷ <http://www.quebec-elan.org/past-projects/>

¹⁸ <http://www.quebec-elan.org/ace-initiative/>

¹⁹ <http://www.arthives.org/>

6. Additional comments

Regarding Objectives 13.15: Private Montréal venues and 13.6: Art workshops

Spaces for creation and performance access based on genre and background for artists who produce work that falls through the cracks – facilitate self-production

Without spaces for artists to create their work, the ecosystem of Montreal’s renowned artistic output—and indeed, the presence of culture for all its citizens to enjoy—is in jeopardy. In addition to the City’s priority to “Pursue the development of art workshops throughout the territory and increase the number of square metres available” and to evaluate the sustainability of current models (as expressed under Objective 13.16), **spaces already in use by artists must be protected while facilitating innovative solutions to problems of scarcity and physical and financial inaccessibility.**

Music: Montreal is widely recognized as a music hotbed. Since the 1990s, numerous independent artists from Godspeed You! Black Emperor to Grimes have moved from playing tiny Montreal venues to headlining festivals and touring the world.

However, for tomorrow’s next breakout acts, **it is incredibly difficult to find physically accessible, affordable, small- and mid-sized venues in Montreal.** Private venues struggle to survive in the face of noise complaints, rising rents, and outdated sound equipment. Many underground community spaces cannot even afford to meet basic fire codes. Rehearsal spaces, already difficult to find, are also fast disappearing due to gentrification, rising rents, and noise complaints.

Finally, while ELAN supports the City’s priority to “Implement an assistance program for the digital update of private performance halls,” many small and mid-sized private venues are unable to meet the basic physical and financial accessibility requirements of their audiences and communities. Funding for elevators, ramps, and other renovations should be considered alongside funding for digital technology. **Venues and communities themselves should be trusted to articulate their own priorities.**

RECOMMENDATION 16: In tandem with necessary digital upgrades, the City should support private venues (and rehearsal spaces, which are equally important) in meeting basic benchmarks of financial and physical accessibility.

RECOMMENDATION 17: The City should include proper sound insulation in plans for multi-use spaces, and support the installation of proper sound insulation in existing venues and rehearsal spaces.

Visual arts: Finding affordable studio spaces continues to be a major issue for visual artists as well. Not only do artists need a place to work, they also require studio spaces for storage and displaying their works during visits with collectors and gallerists. **Accessible, low-rent studio spaces need to be provided to maintain cultural production.** Spaces like the De Gaspé complex and the Belgo building could be subsidized to this end.

Visual artists also require opportunities to exhibit their work. While publishing work online is on the rise, it is insufficient for disciplines such as installation, media art, sculpture, or works where materiality is central. Accessible exhibition spaces need to be supported, such as artist-run centers, pop-up spaces, and not-for-profit galleries. A financial support structure to encourage commercial galleries to exhibit emerging artists also aids in making artistic practice sustainable. In line with the City's intention to support innovative business models, hybrid commercial/non-profit gallery models also benefit artists working in a post-modern studio practice, where part of their production is for sale while other creative projects (such as audio-visual installations) are not.

Theatre: The lack of available, affordable space for independent English-language theatre companies is a major problem in Montreal, and has been for more than a decade despite the clear need and feasibility of creating new space suitable for development of new work, rehearsal and production. Long-standing companies have a great deal of difficulty advancing from "emerging" status to a more stable position from which they can grow and develop their work. Projects such as the old fire station home to Espace Libre, which received three levels of government funding, show promise for solving this problem. Likewise, the City's funding of Centaur Theatre's renovations shows a commitment to maintaining a legacy space in the English-speaking community.

Dance: This milieu also struggles to find accessible and affordable performance and rehearsal spaces.

RECOMMENDATION 18: The City should explore integration between theatre and music rehearsal spaces. Schools and Maisons de la culture have also been suggested as holding potential for innovative cross-sectoral partnerships to provide artists with access to properly equipped rehearsal spaces.

Next steps

ELAN would welcome further clarity as to how the priorities and commitments outlined in the policy will be put into place, and how citizens, communities, and artists will be consulted throughout the five-year policy arc. ELAN looks forward to further information about the quinquennial action plan, to be revised annually, as mentioned at the March 2 information session.

7. Recapitulation of Recommendations

General observations

1. We encourage the City to **collaborate with ELAN and our sister organizations**, including the Quebec Drama Federation (QDF), the Quebec Writers' Federation (QWF), AELAQ (the Association of English-Language Publishers of Quebec) to engage the English-speaking arts community in the Policy's initiatives. Similarly, the Conseil des arts de Montréal should continue outreach and information sharing with the English-speaking arts and culture community.
2. To engage the English-speaking community in the success of the Policy's initiatives, the City should **provide materials in English** during ongoing consultations regarding the Policy and associated action plans.
3. The City should **set a standard for citizen involvement** in the digital age by taking full advantage of social media campaigns, livestreaming, and other means of promotion, both digital and otherwise, in the ongoing implementation of the Policy.
4. To ensure the City's objectives and priorities are clear, **objectives stated throughout the full Policy document should be aligned** with the objectives and priorities appearing in the final chapter.

First cross-cutting project: Cultural and creative entrepreneurship to make creation sustainable

5. In reassessing eligibility criteria for assistance programs, the City should **undertake thorough consultations with artists and organizations who may be affected** by any changes in those criteria. Artistic communities should be encouraged to articulate their own needs and suggest solutions.
6. **Ensure that collaborations between business and the arts involve a two-way exchange** of ideas, resources, and knowledge. If creative entrepreneurship is to be sustainable, artistic creation must be valued for more than its potential profitability.
7. **Mutualization and resource sharing** are promising models but they must be explored in tandem with **maintaining and improving existing support programs and structures**. Further, the City may offer its leadership as a catalyst to help artists and organizations achieve stable working models through adequate support from private and public stakeholders.
8. The City should undertake **extensive consultations with artists and arts organizations who may be affected by changes to the support programs of the Conseil des arts de Montréal**.

Second cross-cutting project: Digital technology serving the citizen's cultural experience

9. ELAN encourages the City to integrate discussion of **accessible public WiFi** into the Policy, per the first working area of the Montreal, Smart and Digital City²⁰ initiative.
10. The City should promote and support **social media and digital marketing training** initiatives for artists and creators as part of their ongoing professional development.
11. The City should explore **cross-sectoral partnerships to facilitate networking and provide access to university space and equipment**, while building stronger links with the resources and knowledge available in Montreal's arts and culture communities.

Third cross-cutting project: Living together, embodied in cultural districts

12. Explore the possibility of **incentivizing private developers** to devote a certain percentage of a project's budget or square footage to artist studios, non-profit organizations, community facilities equipped with digital technology, or subsidized housing for low-income artists in the community.
13. Efforts to develop Montreal's cultural districts must involve **extensive and meaningful communication and consultation with all affected groups**, including artists and citizens involved in existing cultural activities that may be threatened by development.
14. Like other elements of this Policy which take a cross-cutting, transversal, integrated approach, **diversity, inclusion, and equity must be understood as cross-cutting commitments that require consideration in all of the City's initiatives**—not only those intended to support artists from specific groups or backgrounds. If all of Montreal's citizens are to see themselves reflected in this Policy, and to feel involved in its initiatives, ELAN would suggest a clear statement to this effect.
15. Many English-speaking artists are bi- or multilingual, and eager to encounter artists from all linguistic backgrounds. The City should actively **facilitate opportunities for speakers of any language to encounter one another, connect, and create**. The use of municipal facilities such as Maisons de la culture and libraries for networking events, or special funding for multilingual or bilingual projects, are only two possibilities.

²⁰ <http://villeintelligente.montreal.ca/en/strategy>

Additional comments

16. In tandem with necessary digital upgrades, the City should support **private venues** (and rehearsal spaces, which are equally important) in meeting **basic benchmarks of financial and physical accessibility**.
17. The City should include **proper sound insulation** in plans for multi-use spaces, and support the installation of proper sound insulation in existing venues and rehearsal spaces.
18. The City should explore **integration between theatre and music rehearsal spaces**. Schools and Maisons de la culture have also been suggested as holding potential for innovative cross-sectoral partnerships to provide artists with access to properly equipped rehearsal spaces.