

Annual Report 2023–2024

CIRM

Centre for
Interdisciplinary
Research on Montréal



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Directors' message

In 2023, CIRM deepened its engagement with Montréal's dynamic communities, responding to the city's evolving challenges and opportunities. Highlights included the arrival of Miren Azkarate as the inaugural holder of the Elbira-Zipitria Chair in Basque Studies and a major public event focused on the complexities of urban densification. The year was also marked by significant local developments, such as the opening of the Réseau express métropolitain (REM), which symbolized hope for collective action in addressing climate challenges. Amidst these changes, public-sector strikes in Québec sparked debates on ensuring vital services and a decent standard of living for all. Recognizing these societal shifts, CIRM undertook strategic planning to bolster its internal structure, adding two full-time staff members to support long-term initiatives. By collaborating with civil-society organizations on pilot projects, CIRM aims to leverage its unique position at the intersection of university and civic life to support and mobilize diverse forms of engagement for the betterment of all Montréalers. As we continue to curate valuable datasets and work closely with our members and partners, CIRM is committed to being a central actor in action-research, contributing meaningfully to the city's future.



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Mission

The Centre's mission is:

- ❖ to develop partnerships, sets of themes, and fundamental and applied research projects on the economic, social, cultural and governmental spheres of Montréal;
- ❖ to stimulate emerging research in Montréal studies and to unite the research being conducted within various disciplines and universities.



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Mission

The Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Montréal (CIRM) is committed to fostering the development of concrete projects that, while taking advantage of the knowledge acquired within the university, will affect the daily lives of Montréalers.

The multidisciplinary interests of CIRM's members are grouped into six research-action axes:

1. Digital culture, art, literature and performance;
2. Language, belonging, and plurilingualism;
3. Economy, social innovation and social transformation;
4. Mobility, urban planning, and environment;
5. Governance, institutions and citizen participation;
6. Immigration, living conditions, and religion.

CIRM in numbers

❖ 73 members

❖ 25 disciplines

❖ 15 universities and organizations

❖ 6 action-research axes

❖ 1 BMO Postdoctoral Fellow

❖ BMO Postdoctoral Fellow

❖ Rachel Nadon (McGill University)

❖ 1 resident scholar

❖ Mary Anne Poutanen (McGill University)

❖ 2 visiting scholars

❖ Pavel Kunysz (boursier AIEQ-CRIEM, University of Liège)

❖ Fabio Scetti (Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3)

❖ 1 McConnell Professor of Practice

❖ Michel Hellman

❖ 1 Elvira-Zipitria Etxepare Basque Institute Chair

❖ Miren Azkarate (University of the Basque Country)



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CIRM in numbers

8 employees:

- ❖ Pascal Brissette, Director
- ❖ Nik Luka, Associate Director
- ❖ Stéphan Gervais, Scientific Coordinator
- ❖ Hélène Laurin, Communications and Knowledge Mobilization Supervisor
- ❖ Assunta Fiorita, Administrative Supervisor
- ❖ Karolyne Arseneault, Project Officer
- ❖ Karolina Roman, Digital Content Editor
- ❖ Pierre Antoine, Event Manager



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Events

2023-24 has been full of remarkable achievements for CIRM, solidifying its role as a key player in the mobilization and dissemination of knowledge in Montréal studies. Leveraging a strong and diverse network of partners, CIRM has organized and participated in numerous high-profile events, thereby contributing to the advancement of research and the development of the metropolis.

Unprecedented partnership dynamism

Over the past year, CIRM has supported 15 events, bringing together 29 partners from academic, community, institutional, and citizen sectors. This exceptional participation demonstrates CIRM's ability to forge lasting connections and to foster fruitful collaborations among stakeholders with diverse expertise and perspectives.

Mobilizing and disseminating knowledge for tangible impacts

At the heart of these events was a fundamental mission: to mobilize and disseminate knowledge in Montréal studies so that it is accessible and useful to those involved in the development of the metropolis. CIRM has thus played a crucial role in highlighting a variety of themes and issues critical to the future of Montréal.



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Events

Equity, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of our priorities

Guided by its commitment to promoting a more just and inclusive society, CIRM has set the objective for the coming year to support initiatives that prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). By emphasizing these fundamental principles, CIRM aims to contribute to building a more equitable and accessible Montréal for everyone.

A positive record and promising prospects

2023-24 has been a year of great success for CIRM, which has effectively leveraged its expertise and network to positively contribute to the development of Montréal. By mobilizing and disseminating knowledge in Montréal studies, CIRM has played a vital role in advancing research and shedding light on the critical issues facing the metropolis. In committing to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion, CIRM reaffirms its ambition to build a better future for all Montréalers.



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List of events

- ❖ May 5-7: Planning charrette on the development of Griffintown (workshop).
- ❖ **EDI** June 12-13: *Cultural citizenship: Creating the local social fabric* event, with Culture Montréal and the Atelier de chronotopies urbaines
- ❖ **EDI** June 27: *Adoes Dans la Ville* event, conference by Julia King, hosted by Nathalie Boucher and Sarah-Maude Cossette, organized by R.Es.P.I.R.E.
- ❖ **EDI** September 17 to October 18: Visiting Scholar (Elvira-Zipitria Chair, Extepare Basque Institute): Prof. Miren Azkarate, University of the Basque Country
- ❖ October 3: CIRM walking tour of Montréal monuments, with Louis-Thomas Kelly
- ❖ October 19-21: *Beyond Borders* conference, with Montréal Comic Arts Festival (MCAF)
- ❖ October 27: *Densifications urbaines: pluralités socioécologiques* symposium with the Office de consultation publique de Montréal (OCPM)

List of events

- EDI** ❖ November 17: *Municipalities and Religious Diversity* workshop, with Municipalités, Religions et Laïcité (MuReL)
- EDI** ❖ November 21: *Montréal as seen by...* meetings with Alexandre Ashkir, president of the AÉUM (McGill University Student Association) and Miren Azkarate (Elvira-Zipitria Extepare Chair)
- EDI** ❖ February 13-14: Opening of Ligue des Droits et Libertés's 60th anniversary exhibition: Rights in Motion
- EDI** ❖ February 20-21: Hubert Davis at McGill University: *Black Ice, the movie* (Black History Month event)
- ❖ March 2: *Night scenes* with UQAM's Atelier de chronotopies urbaines
- ❖ April 26: *Romans à lire* study day, with Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ) and Prof. Pascal Brissette



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Achievements and contributions

In 2023–24, the grants that were awarded directly to CIRM or to its members and partners by virtue of the Centre's support amounted to \$10,719,809. Funding granted to CIRM members by virtue of its support:

- ❖ Solange Lefebvre: \$200,000
- ❖ Nik Luka: \$10,295,054
- ❖ Mary Anne Poutanen: \$73,946
- ❖ Anouk Bélanger: \$28,649
- ❖ Paul-Étienne Rainville & Daniel Weinstock: \$10,000
- ❖ Pascal Brissette: \$28,510
- ❖ Natalie Doonan: \$57,150
- ❖ Claudine Déom: \$8,000

- ❖ Joan Laur: \$8,000
- ❖ Jonathan Durand Folco: \$8,000
- ❖ Pavel Kunysz: \$2,500

The events and external funding that CIRM enjoys through and with its members represent the most visible part of the Centre's activity. This work is also taking place in other areas—notably in the training and integration of emerging researchers into professional workplaces and research communities—are also very important aspects of CIRM's mission.

Partnerships

How should we amplify stimulating, equitable, and fruitful collaborations?

This was the question that emerged from the evaluation of the workshop organized with the Montréal Comic Arts Festival (MCAF) in October 2021. This successful activity aimed to explore the potential of comics for scientific dissemination and popularization. Researchers and comic artists were matched up in pairs to develop short comics for scientific popularization.

Noting the success of this collaboration between knowledge and the art of comics, CIRM wanted to integrate a comics artist recognized in his field into the team. The McConnell Professor of Practice Program was opened up to this profile, and with the help of its partner the MCAF, CIRM held a competition that led to the hiring of Michel Hellman, author of *Mile-End*. In 2024-2026, Michel Hellman will explore the theme of neighborhoods and pursue a research-creation approach in the Peter-McGill district.



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List of partners for 2023-24

- ❖ Arrondissement Le Sud-Ouest, Ville de Montréal
- ❖ Students' Society of McGill University
- ❖ Post-Graduate Students' Society, McGill University
- ❖ Atelier de chronotopies urbaines, Université du Québec à Montréal
- ❖ Atelier d'histoire Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve
- ❖ Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec
- ❖ French Language Centre, Faculty of Arts, McGill University
- ❖ Éco-Pivot
- ❖ Ligue des droits et libertés
- ❖ McGill Athletics
- ❖ Montréal History Group
- ❖ R.Es.P.I.R.E.
- ❖ Centre interdisciplinaire de recherche sur les religions et les spiritualités
- ❖ Cercle de sociolinguistique du Québec
- ❖ Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montréal
- ❖ Commissaire à la langue française, Ville de Montréal
- ❖ Culture Montréal
- ❖ Curbcut
- ❖ Département d'études françaises, Université de Moncton
- ❖ Department of Geography, McGill University
- ❖ École d'architecture, Université de Montréal
- ❖ St. Jax Church
- ❖ Peter-McGill Community Table
- ❖ Table ronde du mois de l'histoire des Noirs
- ❖ Département des littératures de langue française, de traduction et de création, McGill University
- ❖ Département des sciences biologiques, Université de Montréal
- ❖ Département d'études urbaines et touristiques, Université du Québec à Montréal
- ❖ Department of Geography, Planning & Environment, Concordia University
- ❖ École des langues, Université du Québec à Montréal
- ❖ Élisabeth-Bruyère School of Social Innovation, Saint-Paul University
- ❖ MR-63
- ❖ École d'urbanisme et d'architecture de paysage, Université de Montréal
- ❖ Peter Guo-hua Fu School of Architecture, McGill University
- ❖ School of Continuing Studies, McGill University
- ❖ School of Urban Planning, McGill University
- ❖ Etxepare Euskal Institutua
- ❖ Faculté des sciences de l'éducation, Université de Montréal
- ❖ Montréal Comic Arts Festival (MCAF)
- ❖ UTILE
- ❖ MEM Centre for Montreal Memories
- ❖ Montréal Botanical Gardens (Institut de recherche en biologie végétale)
- ❖ Municipalités, religions et laïcité (MuReL)
- ❖ Montreal Public Consultation Office
- ❖ Programme Grands défis de société, Fonds de recherche du Québec
- ❖ School of Data Science, University of Virginia



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Communications

CIRM has been using social media for over five years to improve communications among researchers and the Montréal population. Our communications strategy aims to optimize the reach of our interactions on these platforms.

The data below (covering the period between May 1, 2023, and April 30, 2024) summarizes the results of this strategy and its development.

- ❖ 1,017 subscribers to CIRM newsletter (an increase of 27%)
- ❖ 3,187 followers across Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and LinkedIn (an increase of 15.1%)
- ❖ 1,598 reactions to content on Facebook (up 84.2%)
- ❖ 209 reactions on Instagram (up 100%)
- ❖ 87 reactions on LinkedIn (up 14.5%)
- ❖ 15,654 unique views of CIRM website pages (up 52%)

Communications

To ensure that the knowledge developed by CRIEM members is mobilized, several intervention tools were put forward this year.

1 walking tour

Visiting researcher Louis-Thomas Kelly invited CIRM to film a walk around Montréal linking the monuments that make up his doctoral research. These monuments contribute to the construction of collective memory, as Louis-Thomas brilliantly demonstrates.

54 media appearances

Over the course of 2023-24, the expertise of CIRM's membership was called upon by local and international media. Since October 2023, a total of 54 different media appearances involving Montréal studies have been recorded, engaging 29 of our members.

25 fun facts about Montréal

Since November 2023, CIRM has been posting fun facts about Montréal on its social networks (Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn). Published once a week and alternating between French and English, these fun facts are popular publications, with comments, reactions, and re-shares.

7 interviews with members and researchers

Several interviews with CIRM members and researchers were conducted to mark their arrival, departure, or taking a new position. These interviews allow researchers to take stock and explain their research projects.



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Strategic projects

MR-63 Impact Laboratory: Griffintown Under the Microscope

What remains of the old Fief Nazareth or even industrial Griffintown in the condo-filled Griffintown 2.0? What cultures and heritage can serve as bridges between the neighbourhood's residents? How can today's Griffintown engage with its past, as well as with its neighbours, Pointe-Saint-Charles and Petite-Bourgogne, whose sociological and historical realities are quite different? These are some of the questions posed in this fascinating partnership project involving heritage specialists, cultural experts, territorial inclusivity advocates, and ecological transition experts, along with our partner MR-63. This actionresearch adventure will be enriched by the creativity of an illustrator and comic artist.

Neighbourhood Portrait of Peter-McGill: A Neighbourhood Worth Narrating

"Neighbourhood portraits" are statistical tools conventionally crafted from neighbourhood-scale data obtained from Statistics Canada. For Montréal, these are vital tools for decision-making and establishing major strategic priorities. They are, however, costly to produce, and they do not reflect the changing dynamics of local populations. Furthermore, the data they contain does not reflect or narrate the realities experienced by citizens, thus limiting their direct use in fostering citizen mobilization. In 2023-24, CIRM partnered with the Peter-McGill Neighbourhood Table to reinvent this tool, making it dynamic, easier to consult, and more narrative. The project brings together the City of Montréal Diversity and Social Inclusion Service (SDIS), the MCAF, and the McConnell Foundation through the commitment of a Professor of Practice, Michel Hellman, as well as Curbcut.



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Strategic projects

Densification: a hot topic

The controversial questions of urban densification are linked to matters of (high) housing prices and urban development. They were addressed in 2023-24 during a symposium held with the Office de la consultation publique de Montréal and they will be addressed through the MR-63 Impact Laboratory project along with other action-research initiatives involving members. Densification is a matter of concern that goes far beyond everyday media coverage, as it can be approached in multiple ways in metropolitan contexts: how space gets occupied and appropriated, ambient noise, and literal density of neighbourhoods. Densification is a theme that resonates with researchers as well as with citizens!

A Book to Remember

Crowning a collaboration spanning several years now, the publication of the book *Building the Montréal community: Histories, narratives, and identities* is on the horizon for 2024! This edited collection is both a culmination and a new starting point, as it will mobilize researchers around the issues of memory and communities it raises. Conducted in partnership with the 19 boroughs of Montréal and the Montréal network of public libraries, the book will serve as an excellent tool for popularization and introduction to the collections of our partner, the MEM Montréal Memory Centre.

Learning French... with CIRM

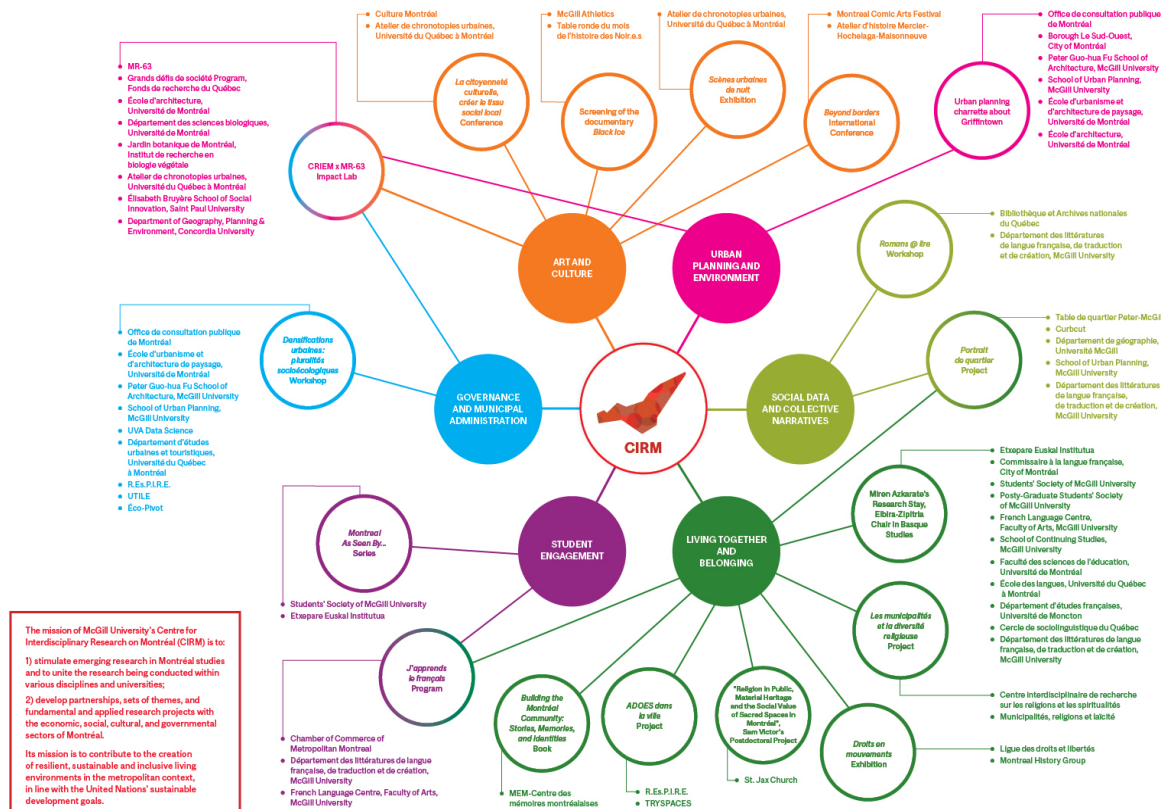
Who isn't familiar with the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montréal's "J'apprends le français" program? It relies on recruiting dozens of student volunteers who help Montréal shopkeepers acquire French language skills on-site, at their workplaces. CIRM is pleased to partner with the Chamber of Commerce to both contribute to student recruitment and to engage in reflection on the best methods for learning French in an urban context.



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Activities and networks 2023-24

CIRM'S NETWORK 2023-2024



The mission of McGill University's Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Montréal (CIRM) is to:

- 1) stimulate emerging research in Montréal studies and to unite the research being conducted within various disciplines and universities;
- 2) develop partnerships, sets of themes, and fundamental and applied research projects with the economic, social, cultural, and governmental sectors of Montréal.

Its mission is to contribute to the creation of resilient, sustainable and inclusive living environments in the metropolitan context, in line with the United Nations' sustainable development goals.



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Credit: McGill University's Graphic Design Studio



BMO Postdoctoral Fellow of CIRM 2023–24

The main objectives of the BMO Graduate Fellowships are to stimulate new interdisciplinary research on Montréal and to support recipients in establishing fruitful partnerships with key takeholders from the social, cultural, economic, and municipal sectors of the city.

The 2023–24 Postdoctoral Fellow is Rachel Nadon, who completed her PhD thesis in French literature, *La vie économique dans le roman québécois (1956–1983): représentations, histoire et pratiques*, at the Université de Montréal. Her postdoctoral project delves into the popular weekly tabloid *Allô Police*, focusing on representations of Montréal's urban space and their intersections with memory, emotion, and collective narratives. Working with Professor Will Straw (Professor of Urban Media Studies in the Department of Art History & Communication Studies at McGill University), Rachel will expand on her previous work, which deploys a feminist approach to crime weeklies. She will develop an approach combining scholarship on “feelings” with work on how people inhabit urban space. The journalism in *Allô Police* often comprised sensationalist accounts of crime and distress in everyday life in Montréal, cumulatively representing a fascinating collection of facts and narratives. The postdoctoral project therefore explores the forms, images, and subjects around which the tabloid's sensationalism was structured. Among her key questions:

- ❖ **What are the roles of emotions in the production of uses in the city as “crossings”?**
- ❖ **How do they inform critical readings of the “text(s)” of the city?**
- ❖ **How might the emotions aroused by the representations in *Allô Police* guide the analyst in making sense of the intersections of memory, space, and emotion in Montréal?**



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BMO Postdoctoral Fellow of CIRM 2023–24

Key to Rachel's approach are analyses of the poetics of the newspaper (forms, discourses) and the various ways in which Montréal is represented in its pages, considering how bodies were situated in space, how streets and neighbourhoods get portrayed, the people who were the subjects of articles, as well as ephemeral parts of the landscape, i.e. cultural or sporting events. What makes Rachel's approach so compelling is how she will weave into these analyses a critical consideration of the corpus of work produced by Allô Police from the 1970s to 2004 as an alternative archive. Rachel applies the notion of "archives of feelings" as developed by Ann Cvetkovich, which celebrates cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions encoded in both the content and the many practices surrounding their production and uptake by society. This work will be complemented by primary research collecting stories and objects linked to the newspaper. Rachel will develop an inventory of its material parameters, its authors, designers, editors, and distributors, and how its very structure evolved over several decades.

We at CIRM are very excited about how Rachel's postdoctoral project will animate the Centre through her extensive study of the poetic and editorial functioning of Allô Police, not least because the year 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of when Allô Police ceased publication. Rachel will organize a round table at the Librairie Zone Libre bringing together observers, readers, and former staff of the newspaper. This will be a generative moment enabling further collection of stories. Through sketching the poetics of the newspaper and its uses in (and for) urban sensationalism, the contributions made by Rachel in this postdoctoral project will fill important gaps in our knowledge of Québec's media practices in the second half of the 20th century, in a period when both Montréal and Québec were rocked by a series of important social and political transformations. They promise to add considerably to CIRM's aims of documenting and celebrating the tremendous richness and diversity found in Montréal as both metropolitan region and multicultural phenomenon.



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