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Source: Centraide Collective Impact Project

ÉTUDES DE CAS | CASE STUDIES

Centraide's Collective Impact Project: Poverty Reduction in Montréal



Par | By:

Nancy Pole *PhiLab Researcher, Quebec
Regional Center*

Myriam Bérubé *Director – Collective Impact
Project at Centraide du Grand Montréal*

Résumé

Le Projet Impact Collectif (PIC) est une initiative collaborative de soutien au développement des communautés montréalaises. Sous le leadership de Centraide du Grand Montréal, ce projet sur 6 ans (prenant fin en 2022) mobilise neuf partenaires philanthropiques et trois partenaires stratégiques. Par une mise en commun de moyens financiers et non financiers, le PIC entend intensifier et assurer une plus grande cohérence au soutien accordé aux démarches collectives et intégrées de développement portées par des quartiers à Montréal. Cet article brosse un portrait du cadre d'émergence du PIC et décrit les aspects potentiellement novateurs de cette initiative.

Launched in late 2015, Montreal's Collective Impact Project (CIP) is a six-year collaborative philanthropic initiative that describes itself as an accelerator of community change. As of early 2019, the CIP was composed of ten philanthropic partners, including Centraide of Greater Montreal (Centraide) as project manager and nine (9) grantmaking foundations acting as financial partners. Three non-funding strategic partners are also involved in the CIP's governance.

Through the pooling of financial and non-financial resources, the CIP aims to intensify and ensure greater coherence to supports given to comprehensive community change processes in Montreal. The project is based on the assumption that if both funding support and funders' strategic actions are coordinated, local communities will be able to achieve more meaningful results with regard to poverty reduction.

The CIP's central hypothesis is that:

[...] the action of a certain number of funders, if it is well organized and coordinated among them, will allow for greater local and regional coherence and consistency and will have a more powerful collective impact than the isolated outcomes achieved so far. (Centraide, 2016a, 36 [our translation]).

The CIP follows in the established tradition of place-based philanthropy, and wrestles with some of the challenges that present themselves in connection with the funder's role in collective impact. As an initiative, it represents both continuity as well as a new development in Montreal's funding ecology. By introducing a new opportunity for funders, grantees and policymakers to come together and test out new

ways of working, this initiative shines a light on existing relationships and system dynamics, while casting ripples that may (or may not) have a lasting effect elsewhere in the system. In addition, the CIP signals philanthropy's intention and capacity to occupy a more significant place within Montreal's funding ecology.

Context

The CIP was made possible by a particular context and set of enabling conditions in Montreal. Nonprofit and public sector organizations already had an established tradition of place-based collaboration, supported by various funders, public programs and structures in Montreal and elsewhere in Quebec.

A metropolitan region grappling with poverty and social inequalities

In 2010, 24.6% of the population on the Island of Montreal was considered to be low-income [2] (Ville de Montréal, undated), a rate which exceeds all other regions of Quebec (Fréchet et al., 2013). Between 1997 and 2010, the Montreal region was the only region in Quebec to report an increase rather than a decline in its low-income rate.

As in other major cities in North America, Montreal is a polarized region in terms of employment and incomes, despite a renewed economic vigor since the mid-1990s. Poverty and unemployment in Montreal occur in a much higher concentration among people of immigrant origin [3] – a situation that lends urgency to the issue of immigrants' economic and social integration (Centraide, 2016a). Like many other cities, since 2001, Montreal has also seen a rise in the number of working poor, low-wage and precariously-employed workers who continue to struggle to make ends meet. Immigrants

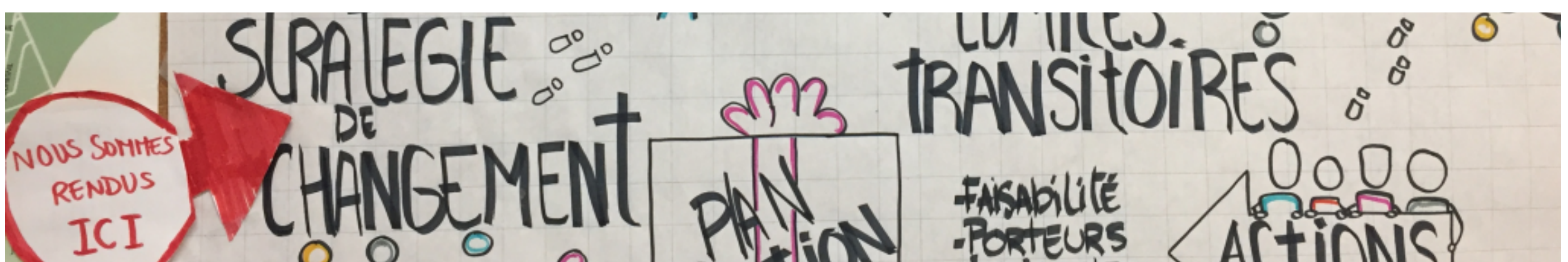
accounted for nearly two thirds of this increase between 2001 and 2006, despite being more educated than the general population.

Wealth and poverty are unequally distributed across the Montreal region. Since the turn of the millennium, a “patchwork” metaphor has come to describe the geographical dispersion of poverty, [4] as it has bled out from the traditional working-class neighbourhoods of the east end and southwest of Montreal to reappear in the first outer ring of the city's post-war suburbs – which is where large numbers of recent immigrants have settled in recent decades. These districts are home to populations who are vulnerable to chronic unemployment and who are confined to the margins of the labour market.

Neighbourhood-based poverty reduction before the CIP

In light of this unequal distribution of poverty across Montreal, over the years local poverty reduction initiatives emerged in many neighbourhoods. With roots in community action and/or the social economy, these initiatives have progressively moved towards more comprehensive and integrated approaches. Over time, these approaches to poverty reduction have been integrated into a broader framework of local social development.

Of particular relevance to the CIP, between the late 1980s and the early 2000s, thirty local cross-sector and multi-stakeholder neighbourhood roundtables had emerged across the city of Montreal [5]. Over the years a good number of these neighbourhood roundtables had come to occupy “backbone” roles, supporting the development of a shared vision of community change for their neighbourhoods, and then leading a joined-up action plan that served as a guidepost to help local organizations align their own



Source : Centraide Collective Impact Project

actions with collectively-determined priorities. Centraide already had well-established relationships with these roundtables, providing core [6] and project funding for over a decade prior to the advent of the CIP. Alongside this, many roundtables also managed project funding from various other sources that was specifically earmarked for cross-sector, collaborative local initiatives focused on poverty reduction, neighbourhood revitalization, or the development of healthy environments for children, youth and families.

In the year leading up to the CIP's launch, a scale-back of institutional support for community change processes had left many communities uncertain about how to hold on to the gains that they had worked so hard to achieve. In the context of such sector wide upheaval, the scene was somewhat fortuitously set for a major new philanthropic funding initiative to emerge.

The idea for the CIP takes shape

The idea for the CIP emerged out of a dialogue between Centraide of Greater Montreal and the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation. The two organizations had been in contact with each other for a number of years, as each had its own history of supporting broad-spectrum community development approaches. Together they began to explore opportunities to develop a more purposeful strategic partnership focused around comprehensive community change approaches in Greater Montreal. The context was conducive for each organization.

Centraide was also contending with major ongoing changes in the fundraising environment, as its federated model came to be challenged by the proliferation of new fundraising channels and platforms. To help counter the impact these trends were having on its campaign, Centraide undertook two strategic shifts:

- It publicly repositioned itself as a value-added philanthropic actor, acting to raise its own profile as an expert, convener and leader in regional social development. In making this move, Centraide followed in the footsteps of other North American community philanthropy organizations that have sought to position or brand themselves

in ways that give them a comparative advantage with donors, in particular by taking up a “community leadership” role in the social development of their city or region.

- It devised a new campaign strategy that involved soliciting “transformational gifts” or large donations spread out over several years, and on engaging these major donors in establishing and rolling out specific granting initiatives. The CIP offered itself up as a first opportunity to test out this new transformational gift strategy.

The CIP's specificities

A shift towards trust-based funding mechanisms

The CIP was designed to address a specific issue: available funding for neighbourhood revitalization processes was limited in scope, standardized in nature and highly fragmented, as each funding source had its own set of guidelines and parameters. Neighbourhoods relying on these existing funding sources were challenged to coordinate and fit the different pieces of funding together in ways that would support the integrity of their neighbourhood's development plan.

As a direct response to this issue, the CIP set out to make more substantial amounts of funding available to neighbourhoods to support them in implementing their comprehensive action plans. A core principle of the CIP's design was that communities should be able to articulate what kinds of outside supports they need, based on the priorities for change that local stakeholders and residents have established together. Communities receiving CIP funding could set their own goals and targets for change.

In taking this route, the CIP's originators chose a complexity-friendly funding model built on devolution of decision-making and trust in local communities' intrinsic motivation to determine and drive the changes that will most benefit them. This stands in marked contrast to other strong trends in the funding landscape, inspired by the New Public Management paradigm, that incur transaction costs both for applicants and for funders themselves, such as competitive grant awarding processes, payment-for-results schemes, and public-nonprofit sector

contracting and procurement.

Five (5) neighbourhoods were selected to receive substantial resources for implementation of their entire neighbourhood plan; these five neighbourhoods were intended to be the primary testing ground of the CIP's central intention. Twelve (12) other neighbourhoods received more moderate amounts of funding for specific pieces of their neighbourhood development plan. The CIP's design also featured a range of customized capacity-building supports for funded communities.

Lastly, the CIP was designated as a learning project. Because of the inherent complexity of comprehensive community change processes, observers of the field call for a continuous learning approach that can support flexible and adaptive management strategies. The CIP's evaluation, knowledge mobilization and knowledge transfer activities were designed to occur within and across funded neighbourhoods, as well as between neighbourhoods and funding partners. Lessons would be shared with other communities engaged in comparable initiatives elsewhere in Quebec, Canada and the United States.

Expansion of the initial partnership to form a funder collaborative

As the project's two originators, Centraide and the Chagnon Foundation made the key decision to expand the partnership beyond themselves. The CIP's co-architects believed that a broader funder collaborative could better affect systems-level outcomes by modelling new types of funding practices, and by influencing regional policy alignment in support of poverty reduction and community change.

The idea was to engage a group of agile, independently-resourced funders to first build the template for funder alignment from the ground up. In addition, as eligible major donors to Centraide, philanthropic foundations could be engaged in the CIP as the test case for the organization's new transformational gift strategy.

The CIP and its participating foundations have been

guided by a set of trends in philanthropy that have made their mark over the past 15 to 20 years, including the shift towards strategic or "changemaking" philanthropy. In aligning themselves with a strategic philanthropy approach, foundations choose to shift away from a traditional responsive relationship with grantee communities towards a position that assumes more active responsibility for identifying and framing problems, as well as for designing strategies to address them. These trends also call upon foundations to mobilize all of their financial resources (not just their granting budget) as well as other assets, such as expertise, networks, political capital and influence, in order to contribute to the sought-after changes.

In joining the CIP partnership, each partner foundation agreed to make a five-year financial commitment. The end result: a total pooled amount of \$23 million was made available over six years for communities selected for CIP support. [7] Centraide would act both as project manager and as funder intermediary, receiving partners' contributions and allocating funds to communities.

The partners of the Collective Impact Project as of early 2019

Centraide of Greater Montreal (project manager)

Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation

Pathy Family Foundation

McConnell Foundation

Mirella and Lino Saputo Foundation

Silver Dollar Foundation

Foundation of Greater Montréal

Molson Foundation

Marcelle and Jean Coutu Foundation

Trottier Family Foundation

La Ville de Montréal (City of Montreal)

La Direction régionale de santé publique de Montréal (Montreal Regional Public Health Department)

La Coalition montréalaise des tables de quartier (CTMQ) (Montreal Neighbourhood Roundtables Coalition)

In parallel to the core CIP pooled funding envelope, funding partners can also channel complementary contributions to CIP neighbourhoods. This opens up the possibility for partners to grant or to leverage resources towards communities both as needs and opportunities arise, and in ways that align with their own strategic orientations beyond the CIP.

As this has happened, the CIP has also become a point of encounter between stakeholders associated with different generations of urban collective action, each responding in their own way to the complex dynamics of metropolitan development and renewal in the early 21st century: on the one hand, pragmatic comprehensive community change traditions rooted in specific neighbourhoods, and on the other, newer movements focused on reclaiming and redesigning public spaces, led by emerging social entrepreneurs who are not tied to place or neighbourhood in the same way as older nonprofits.

The points of encounter between the CIP originators' intentions and foundation partners' other involvements can be both generative and disruptive as they play out on the ground. In the best-case scenario, the CIP's focus on place - and the granular, real-world challenges that it presents - offers an opportunity for funding partners to reach a negotiated understanding of the most valuable contribution that each one can make, based on their respective specializations as funders. However, this challenges the partners to arrive at a common reading of the environment in which they are operating, one that they did not share at the project's outset. In this context, the curated, on-the-ground experiences become sites of *bricolage* that in themselves are likely to yield insights, whether they succeed or fail.

Changing systems

The CIP's systems change aims are in line with recent writings that argue that, in order to really tackle complex problems, collective impact initiatives need to expand their scope beyond programmatic outcomes, such as improving service coordination in a given area, to focus their efforts on policy and systems change - referring to sustainable changes to policies and practices within the broader

The CIP may also be able to act as a catalyst for alignment within and between public institutions.

ecosystem, in order to create an enabling environment for transformations to take place at the local level. Actors with access to decision-making, including funders, are in a better position than local communities themselves to work to change practices and policies that hamper local revitalization efforts. In recent years, this understanding has led foundations involved in supporting community change to carry out parallel strategies focusing on policy and systems change.

In keeping with these trends within the field, the CIP's funding and strategic partners have recognized that they have a role to play in leveraging opportunities and addressing systemic constraints that fall beyond local communities' range of influence. At the project's half-way point, opportunities have arisen to leverage new resources for broad strategies that span many neighbourhoods, and whose regional applications may extend beyond the CIP. These opportunities may include:

- Aligning funding strategies and mobilizing networks in order to fill gaps and better support the breadth and spectrum of local food systems work;
- Leveraging connections and mission-related investments to help public sector partners meet demand across the region for safe, affordable housing.

The CIP may also be able to act as a catalyst for alignment within and between public institutions. As CIP neighbourhoods work to implement their locally-prioritized development projects, many have run up against regulatory barriers at the municipal level. It was hoped that having the city's senior social development official on the CIP steering committee would make it easier to lift some of these barriers. In

the future, actions to create an enabling environment for CIP neighbourhood development plans will likely call on other forms of cross-departmental alignment within the city administration that go well beyond the social development branch, including housing, economic development, urban planning and land use, and transportation and public works.

CIP partners will not be alone in working towards these kinds of outcomes, and indeed, the boundaries between the CIP and other processes of influence are likely to become blurry. Many CIP partners are also participants in various other multi-stakeholder regional governance initiatives in areas such as housing and built infrastructure, homelessness, education and food systems, all of which may at various points have cause to advocate for better cross-sector institutional alignment. A dense webbing of networks overlays the boundaries between these different regional governance spaces, allowing intentions to form and opportunities to be identified in ways that loop back and forth between the CIP and these other spaces.

The CIP's significance to Montreal's funding ecology and beyond

The CIP's arrival in the Montreal landscape can be read in a number of ways. With the inauguration of a trust-based model that provides flexible support for community-set priorities, the CIP represents a significant innovation in the community change funding ecology. Recognizing this, many community stakeholders have heralded its arrival, stating that the CIP has helped to fill a very real funding gap.

The CIP has offered Centraide the means to act on ambitions that it had long nurtured for its work in place-based philanthropy. It has also signalled a significant "win" for Centraide as it has sought to position itself in a community leadership capacity, as an influential broker with the ability to set agendas. This accomplishment, for all its rootedness in a specific context and history, may point to a way forward for other United Ways that are looking to focus their identity and renew their campaign strategies. At the same time, in going the route of convening and facilitating a funder collaborative, there is a tension to navigate between upholding a

community leadership positioning and engaging in the type of adaptive, humble systems leadership required to engage a group of foundations as peers in a collaborative venture.

The CIP also signals a shift in Montreal's funding landscape, in which philanthropy takes on an even greater role in setting the parameters and sculpting the contours of comprehensive community change work in Montreal. A shift of this nature has particular reverberations in Quebec where, in comparison to the rest of Canada, the State has continued to play a stronger role both in setting and delivering on social policy and in recognizing and supporting civil society and third sector organizations.

With its avowed intentions to engage with policy and to try to influence certain development trajectories within the region, the CIP partnership also signals philanthropy's concomitant rise to greater prominence within regional governance networks. In Montreal as elsewhere, philanthropic foundations are increasingly recognized and sought out for their role in these spaces of networked governance. As Jung and Harrow (2015) contend, foundations' resource independence allows them a high degree of self-organization, which in turn lends them a stronger influence, relative to their size and numbers, within complex governance processes. Observers of philanthropic foundations' increasing presence and power in these spaces have consistently raised issues of legitimacy, transparency and accountability. CIP partners would do well to engage proactively with these issues, in dialogue with the CIP's proponents and detractors, and seek to articulate their understanding of their social license to occupy these spaces and of their corresponding accountabilities.

Nancy Pole has been a PhiLab research associate since 2015. With the start of the new SSHRC grant in 2018, she now works with Juniper Glass on the preparation of a strategy concerning knowledge transfer and the mobilization of partners. She will continue to assume the functions of liaison with the partners as of the Fall of 2018. Since 2015, Nancy has accomplished 4 research mandates with PhiLab (see the list of publications). Outside of PhiLab, Nancy Pole is a consultant who offers accompaniment in evaluation,

planification and governance of collective action. Among her recent mandates or those in progress are: liaison agent for the Collective of Quebec foundations (in progress since 2017); preparation of the global evaluation plan of the Collective Impact Project of Centraide du Grand Montréal; accompagnement in collective impact with Innoweave. In 2018, Nancy was also a lecturer at Carleton University (for a class on evaluation, Master program in Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership).

Myriam Bérubé coordinates the collective impact Project (CIP) at Centraide of Greater Montreal (<http://pic.centraide.org>). The PIC is an accelerator of change that aims to increase the impact of engagement and achieve measurable and significant results in reducing poverty in Montreal neighborhoods. This project is made possible through the collaboration of nine major foundations that engage with Centraide to invest \$ 23M over 5 years in 17 districts of the island of Montreal. She is motivated by a deep interest in the development of communities. This interest has had an impact on her personal, academic and professional journey.

She has been advisor on planning and development at Centraide (2012- 2015). Over the past 15 years, she has held various positions in management of development projects, in particular with migrants and refugees in Canada and abroad. She studied and worked in Colombia, Mexico, Spain and the Netherlands. In Montreal, she was director of the Carrefour de Ressources en Interculturel. She was also research and liaison officer at Centre Métropolis du Québec - Immigration et métropoles, and director of volunteers' development at AFS Interculture Canada.

Notes

[1] This article is based upon a PhiLab report documenting the CIP's origins and its first year of roll-out (2015-2016). As such, it reflects the early days of the CIP partnership and not the present day.

[2] According to the Low-income measure after tax, National Household Survey (2011).

[3] In the sense used here, the term refers to both immigrants and their Canadian-born children.

[4] In 2010, Montreal was the city in Canada with the highest number of low-income neighbourhoods (neighbourhoods where 30% or more of the population is low-income) (Statistics Canada, 2013).

[5] Pour une présentation video des tables locales montréalaises de concertation : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ypf_eh9hq4#action=share.

[6] Through the Initiative montréalaise, a funding and strategic partnership of Centraide of Greater Montreal, the Montreal Regional Public Health Department (*Direction régionale de la santé publique de Montréal - DSP*), the City of Montréal and the Montréal Neighbourhood Round Tables Coalition (CMTQ).

[7] These are confirmed financial commitments at the time of writing.

