

***Megaphone* installation hits the mark: giving Montrealers
a public space to speak out**
*A co-production by the NFB and the Quartier des spectacles
A Moment Factory creation directed by Étienne Paquette*



Montreal, November 13, 2013 – The [National Film Board of Canada](#) (NFB), the [Quartier des spectacles](#) and [Moment Factory](#) hit the mark! The interactive installation [Megaphone](#), which ended on November 4, one day after municipal elections, gave Montrealers the opportunity to take over a public space. For two months, the visual “footprint” of their words illuminated the President Kennedy Building of Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). **Megaphone** was co-produced by the NFB and the Quartier des spectacles and was a Moment Factory creation directed by Étienne Paquette.

A panoply of uses

When citizens spoke through the **Megaphone** installation—addressing specific topics or expressing an idea or emotion on the spur of the moment—the facades of the building came to life with their words via a speech-recognition system developed by the [Computer Research Institute of Montreal](#) (CRIM): the words themselves became a rich visual backdrop for what was being said.

Participants also used **Megaphone** as a creative tool, making “digital postcards” by taking photos and sending them from a smart phone. **Megaphone** was also the venue for personal literary readings, improvised concerts and even fleeting commemorative monuments (for example, with the names of the Greenpeace activists imprisoned in Russia, or the victims of police brutality).

Additionally, **Megaphone** enabled citizens and tourists to express their love for Montreal, in French and English, serving as a wonderful symbol of the city’s openness to the world.

Voices that rocked the city According to Louis-René Beaudin, *Megaphone's* MC

Highlights included the **evening with Montreal's mayoral candidates**, which allowed the public to hear almost all the candidates—about 10 in all—for the first time; the speech by former student leader **Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois** on the **Quebec Charter of Values**, which sparked heated discussions; several evenings of **slam** (in French) and **storytelling** (in English), with inspiring speakers whose words flowed as never before thanks to *Megaphone*; and a wide **range of social groups**, including young people, members of the gay community, people with disabilities, immigrants, seniors, homeless people, and citizens denouncing the abuse of power and corruption; these voices calling for more social equity spoke as individuals, yet they expressed collective needs. As Michel Seymour from the Philosophy Department at Université de Montréal stated in *Le Devoir* on November 6: “By enhancing individual citizen voices, *Megaphone* demonstrated their importance and uniqueness.”

Promotional material for *Megaphone*, including broadcast quality Mpeg4 files, available at the following links:

<ftp://va-guest@ftp.nfb.ca/megaphoneeng>

User name: va-guest | Password: s1qR3r

FTP access restricted to media only. Please do not share this information.

Moments captured live

Watch excerpts from *Megaphone's* highlights [here](#).

What they said about it

Michel Venne, Director General, Institut du Nouveau Monde:

“*Megaphone* should become a tradition. For example, we could install *Megaphone* in front of City Hall or in its Grand Hall whenever there's a municipal council meeting so that citizens could speak out and discuss topics that are of concern to them and that their representatives should hear about.”

Kofi Sonokpon, independent Montreal mayoral candidate:

“I really enjoyed my experience at *Megaphone* during the debate between Montreal's mayoral candidates. It's a place for democratic culture and citizen participation that should absolutely be preserved. An important point that needs to be stressed is the democratic attitude of the event's organizers, who made sure that all mayoral candidates got to speak.”

Claude Fortin, a doctoral student at Simon Fraser University conducting a study on *Megaphone*:

“Lots of people use *Megaphone* to voice an idea or spontaneous emotion or to announce their 'status,' as is often done in social media. Some of them say they liked this film or that show others tell a story or comment on a current news item. It begs the question: Has social media changed the way people communicate?”

Mission accomplished for the NFB and the Quartier des spectacles

Megaphone captured peoples' words and thoughts and resonated with diverse voices, as citizens took control of the installation, often in new and creative ways. Other cities are already showing interest in hosting their own *Megaphone*. Discussions are underway.

Thank you to the partner organizations that held forums during *Megaphone* and greatly contributed to its success: École Urbania, Institut du Nouveau Monde, *Le Devoir*, ICI Radio-Canada, Ivy and La Ligue de slam, Rassemblement pour des actions innovantes en démocratie (RAID), 100en1jour, Équiterre, Ianik Marcil and François Cardinal, and everyone else who took control of *Megaphone* for an evening.

Words, words, words

Montréal, dire and *être* were among the 10 most spoken words over the course of the entire **Megaphone** experience. The others? *On, je, il, vous, nous, you, peut.*

Other examples of citizens speaking out

Inspired by Montreal's early 20th-century history of popular assemblies as well as the Speaker's Corner in London, **Megaphone** reminded some participants of examples of vehicles for speaking out that exist elsewhere in the world: they include the tradition of the palaver tree in Africa and the *dazibao* in China—a poster written by a citizen, frequently dealing with a political topic, and wall-mounted so that everyone can read it easily.

Megaphone was an interactive public-speaking experience in the heart of the Quartier des spectacles on the Promenade des Artistes that ran from September 4 to November 4, 2013. An audiovisual exhibition presenting Quebec's greatest orators was set up along the Promenade to complement the installation.

[Watch the demonstration video.](#)

About the NFB

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) is one of the world's leading digital content hubs, creating groundbreaking [interactive](#) documentaries and animation, mobile content, installations and participatory experiences. The NFB has created over 13,000 productions and won over 5,000 awards, including 4 Canadian Screen Awards, 7 Webbys and 12 Oscars. To access acclaimed NFB content, visit [NFB.ca](#) or download its [apps](#) for smartphones, tablets and connected TV.

The Quartier des spectacles

The Quartier des spectacles has been the cultural heart of Montreal for over a century. Today, it's also a hub of economic, urban and cultural development that builds on its many strengths to consolidate Montreal's position as a major cultural city. Alive, creative, open to artistic and cultural diversity, the Quartier has something for everyone, from lovers of digital art to fans of world music. At all times of the day, 12 months a year, Montrealers and visitors flock to its 80 venues, its more than 40 festivals and its seven public spaces. Located in a unique urban setting that stands out for its bold lighting design, the Quartier des spectacles is a key destination for encountering the excitement of culture. For more information, visit [quartierdesspectacles.com](#).

-30-

For more information:

National Film Board of Canada

Pat Dillon
NFB Publicist
Cell: 514-206-1750
E-mail: p.a.dillon@nfb.ca
Twitter: [@PatDoftheNFB](https://twitter.com/PatDoftheNFB)

Lily Robert
Director, Corporate Communications, NFB
Tel.: 514-283-3838
Cell: 514-296-8261
E-mail: l.robert@onf.ca

Partenariat du Quartier des spectacles

Marie-Joëlle Corneau
Media Relations
Tel.: 514-879-0009, ext. 260
Cell: 514-348-9676
E-mail: marie-joelle.corneau@quartierdesspectacles.com