

# Building Community While Building 'Something Cool': Community wireless networking and community-building by urban youth in Canada



Graham Longford  
Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
Faculty of Information Studies  
University of Toronto

# Projects



## *Canadian Research Alliance for Community Innovation and Networking*

- ✓ PI: Dr. Andrew Clement  
Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto  
[www.cracin.ca](http://www.cracin.ca)



## *Community Wireless Infrastructure Research Project*

- ✓ PI: Dr. Catherine Middleton,  
Faculty of Business, Ryerson University  
[www.cwirp.ca](http://www.cwirp.ca)

# Research Focus: Community Networks & Civic Participation



- ✓ community-based ICT initiatives designed to support civic participation/engagement and the development of social capital in local communities
- ✓ Focus on new immigrants and youth in Canada
- ✓ case study sites across Canada
- ✓ Participatory action research, qualitative interviews, surveys
- ✓ 'embedded researchers' - Diane Dechief (VCN), Alison Powell (ISF)
- ✓ 'Community informatics' (Gurstein, Keeble & Loader)

# Île Sans Fil (ISF): Community Wireless Networking

- ✓ Volunteer-run community wireless network (Montreal, founded 2003)
- ✓ Free wireless internet access in public places
- ✓ 130+ WiFi 'hotspots'
- ✓ 'venue-sponsored' model
- ✓ 30,000+ users
- ✓ 40-50 volunteers
- ✓ Free, fast, reliable, DIY, alternative infrastructure for internet access in Montreal



# ISF: WiFi-Augmented Urban Community



- ✓ Beyond access provision - (“vanilla WiFi”)
- ✓ Use WiFi to deliver locally-relevant information & services
- ✓ WiFi-enabled local civic participation / engagement
- ✓ “2nd generation” CWN (Townsend)

# ISF: WiFi-DOG & Location Portals

- ✓ Participatory open source software development
- ✓ WiFi-DOG “captive portal” software
- ✓ Generates unique, location-specific portal @ ea hotspot
- ✓ Rapid adoption by other CWNs in NA, UK, EU, Japan (25+)



## Features & functions:

- ✓ Venue news & event info
- ✓ ISF-generated content
  - ✓ Hub d'Artiste Locaux (HAL) Project
  - ✓ Civic Sense
  - ✓ 'Citywide' chat
- ✓ Planned:
  - ✓ more user-generated content;
  - ✓ links to political reps & voting records

# Café Laika

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address [https://auth.ilesansfil.org/portal/index.php?node\\_id=6ddf7add76aa0408691106cbb83a7ac2](https://auth.ilesansfil.org/portal/index.php?node_id=6ddf7add76aa0408691106cbb83a7ac2)

Welcome to **Laika**

Logged in as: callmeal

Preferences Logout

Language: English

Chat with other ISF users

**Online users**

8 users are online at this hotspot

- iabelanger
- katz
- sofatruck
- Pluto
- elkahna
- deraspe
- Illucie
- thedaythesunrose

**Local student art show**

**Art Matters 2007 - Un échange entre l'art et la communauté**

The 7th edition of Concordia University's Art Matters festival will take place from March 2nd to 18th 2007. The event will bring the works of over 120 students to over 19 venues across the city. Visit [artmatters.concordia.ca](http://artmatters.concordia.ca) for more information.

**Chat room**

**Laika's Citywide**

**Say It !**

Citywide is a chat interface custom-designed for Laika's Ile Sans Fil users.

**Provincial election news RSS feeds**

**Provincial Election 2007**

TodayBeyond Prohibition: Changing Attitudes in Policy and Practice - 1st Annual CSSDP National Conference, March 16-18, 2007-

start | [Ile Sans Fil portal for ...](#) | [MyMail :: INBOX: Re: ...](#) | [Itechnique.bmp - Paint](#) | Internet | 2:54 PM

# Café l' Utopik

File Sans Fil portal for Café l'Utopik - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address [https://auth.ilesansfil.org/portal/index.php?node\\_id=7de8ca6fe339e39e842451f71ca6c02a](https://auth.ilesansfil.org/portal/index.php?node_id=7de8ca6fe339e39e842451f71ca6c02a)

Welcome to **Café l'Utopik**

Logged in as: callmeal

Preferences Logout

Language: English

Chat with other ISF users

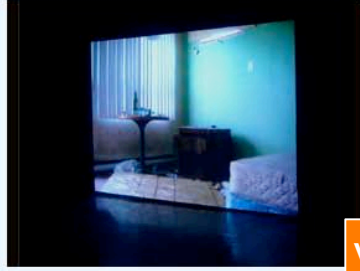
**Online users**

- 2 users are online at this hotspot
- Breaker
- j73f66dg

**New hotspots**

- 17/02/07Village, Chez Cora Antenne [See more](#)
- 17/02/07Village, Chez Cora [See more](#)
- 10/02/07Café Lézard [See more](#)

**Art Matters 2007 - Un échange entre l'art et la communauté**



The 7th edition of Concordia University's Art Matters festival will take place from March 2nd to 18th 2007. The event will bring the works of over 120 students to over 19 venues across the city. Visit [artmatters.concordia.ca](http://artmatters.concordia.ca) for more information.

12/03/07Pour nous joindre [See more](#)

09/03/07Phyllis Bennis [See more](#)

09/03/07Michel Warschawski « Mikado » [See more](#)

09/03/07Gustave Massiah [See more](#)

05/03/07La Tournée Alternatives pour la paix globale [See more](#)

No selected items from source:

- o [Nouvelles de l'Utopik](#) [See more](#)

Venue-generated news and events listing

start | MyMail :: INBOX: Re: ... | 2:49 PM

# 'Civic Sense' Project

Québec Élections 2007 - Microsoft Internet Explorer


File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address <http://civicsense.ca/elections/quebec07/>

Google Go 277 blocked AutoLink Send to Settings


## Québec Élections 2007

March 14, 2007


source → [Parti Liberal du Québec](#) 

**COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE: Jean Charest gagne aussi la 5e période**  
March 14, 2007 02:32 AM

**Québec, le 13 mars 2007** - Le premier ministre du Québec et chef du Parti libéral du Québec, Jean Charest, a gagné haut la main le dernier bloc du débat des chefs, celui portant sur l'avenir politique du Québec, le Conseil de la fédération et le dossier constitutionnel.

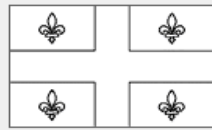
source → [Parti Vert](#) 

**Agenda du chef**  
by sophie at March 14, 2007 02:30 AM

source → [Parti Liberal du Québec](#) 

**COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE: En éducation et pour la famille, le PM Jean Charest affirme son leadership**  
March 14, 2007 02:24 AM

**Québec, le 13 mars 2007** - Le premier ministre et chef du Parti libéral du Québec, M. Jean Charest, a une fois de plus démontré qu'il est le seul vrai chef d'État. Qu'il est le seul à avoir à cœur l'éducation, les intérêts des familles et l'avenir du Québec.



**Québec Elections '07**

présenté par /  
presented by:  
[Ile Sans Fil](#), [ZapQuebec](#),  
[CivicSense](#) / [SensCivique](#)

Une aggregation de sources présentant points de vue et d'interet concernant les élections prochaines au Québec.

An aggregation of sources presenting views and news about the upcoming Quebec Elections.

## Results:

# WiFi-augmented Local Community?



## ISF User Survey (Powell and Furlano)

- ✓ Daily/weekly; 1-2 hrs/session; afternoon/evening
- ✓ Get out of house/office; see familiar people/be part of community
- ✓ Work & personal use
- ✓ Email; news; IM; word processing; VOIP
- ✓ Access local information
- ✓ Other activities: eating; socializing w friends; people-watching
- ✓ Seek out ISF venues over paid WiFi services
- ✓ Further research: location portal use and impact

# WiFi-augmented Local Community?

## ISF Volunteers Study (Powell)

- ✓ Many volunteers not initially very engaged
- ✓ Instrumental motives for involvement
- ✓ Increased sense of “community” was main benefit of involvement
- ✓ ISF involvement as “gateway” to wider community
- ✓ Opportunity to *“build community while building something cool”*
- ✓ Community wireless networking as form of civic participation (Powell, 2006)

# Thank You

*cracin.ca*

*cwirp.ca*

