

Report of the PSAC-Quebec Director of Equity Groups 2014-17

I am pleased to present my report on equity and diversity for the period from June 2014 to February 3, 2017.

From June 13 to 15, 2014, I took part in a course on the myths and realities surrounding solidarity with indigenous peoples. The course shed light on the various myths about First Nations. In my opinion, this course should be offered in our workplaces, to our national officers and in our schools to promote a better understanding of Indigenous issues among our members and our youth. I have always said that education is the best way to fight prejudice.

On June 22, 2014, I participated in a screening of the documentary *Québécoisie* at the Musée de la civilisation in Québec City. The screening was followed by a round-table discussion with the filmmakers and with Francine Lemay, the sister of Corporal Lemay, who was killed during the Oka crisis. One of the issues the film looks at is reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. After that event I decided that the film had to be seen by our members across the province. The first screening took place at Manoir Victoria on October 14, 2014. Francine Lemay was invited to take part in a round table to answer participants' questions after the film.

I participated in the Human Rights Conference that was part of WorldPride 2014 in Toronto. That event, which took place from June 25 to 29, was attended by over 400 people who took part in workshops on different topics. The themes for the conference, which centred on LGBT issues at the national and international level, included migration, health, religion, justice, security and the realities of transgender people.

The PSAC Pride Committee (on which I serve) has created an excellent document on what PSAC has done for LGBT rights. This bilingual document is available in both paper and electronic format. It can be accessed via the PSAC website under the "Equality rights" tab, in the "LGBT" section.

During the period this report covers I participated in a number of mobilization events, including the 19th of every month campaign, the Montreal flash mob and negotiation updates at a number of locals, regions and components.

I took part in the 2014-16 LGBT festivities, which consisted of a community day and a parade. All three years were successful for us. The LGBT-FTQ committee was present at the community day, and the FTQ and its affiliates were also present at the parade. We need to show what the labour movement has done for the rights of LGBT workers, and a strong presence is a message of solidarity.

I met with equity group members in every region that has a representative to offer my assistance to help develop a regional action plan. It would be good to host community days like this at workplaces or with regional councils to promote understanding of how equity and diversity enhance a society such as ours.

PSAC needs to continue improving its strategy for equity, diversity and inclusion. PSAC is one of the leading unions, and our success is based on the promotion of diversity and equity.

This is not my responsibility alone, but rather the responsibility of each and every one of us. We need to remember that, in order to make diversity and equity a reality, PSAC and its members need to commit to this objective.

I attended an evening organized by Centre R.I.R.E 2000 in Québec City as part of Black History Month at Palais Montcalm. The theme for 2015 was cultural diversity as a treasure to be shared. As you know, in February of each year we have an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of members of black communities to society and highlight their many achievements. I shared this invitation with my network. The evening was a great success.

I also attended an evening organized by the Equity Group Representative for Estrie, Laurier Thibault, in connection with Black History Month. The event took place in Sherbrooke on March 14, 2015. The theme of the evening centred on bringing peoples and cultures together to promote youth awareness. The evening was highly successful. Laurier Thibault presented a film on the life of PSAC cofounder Cal Best.

I also shared with my network an activity hosted by Centre R.I.R.E 2000 in connection with the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21. The evening began with a talk and discussion with Sophie Langlois, a journalist with ICI Radio-Canada, on the theme of "We are Quebec". Ms. Langlois was the Africa correspondent for Canada for a number of years. Her position was eliminated in 2007. She has written a book, *Lumières d'Afrique*, which I highly recommend you purchase as a door prize for your union or equity evenings.

This was followed by a screening of Philippe Falardeau's excellent film *Le beau mensonge*, a moving piece of work that I would also recommend. It helps us put our problems into perspective and makes us aware of the tragedies happening around us and the horrors that wealthy countries are indifferent to.

On April 16, 2015, a conference on Indigenous peoples was hosted by the Equity Group Representative in Montreal.

The Education Committee met on January 20, 2016 and discussed the 2016 action plan.

I shared information about equity groups in a number of different settings. I gave a noon-hour talk as part of Black History Month at the Service Canada office at the Gare du Palais in Québec City on February 25, 2016. I also attended a cocktail conference on the theme of immigration and the challenge of integration. This excellent initiative was hosted by the Equity Group Representative in Montreal and was very well attended. The speaker was Thomas d'Aquin Oulāï.

On February 27, 2016, I attended *Québec au rythme des musiques du monde*, a musical evening at the Palais Montcalm that highlighted the influence of world music in Quebec. I have been sharing this event for the past several years, and a number of PSAC members were in attendance for this wonderful evening of diversity as part of Black History Month in Québec City.

As I travelled around to provide updates on the negotiations, I took the opportunity to talk about equity and diversity and I offered books on human rights as door prizes.

I was chosen to serve on the steering committee for the PSAC National Equity Conferences to be held in Toronto in March 2017. I attended the face-to-face meeting of the PSAC Pride group in preparation for the conferences.

From April 24 to May 27, 2016, I had the privilege to take courses at the renowned Collège FTQ-Fonds. We were asked to prepare a project, and mine dealt with union renewal. In a nutshell, the question we must ask is no longer whether the labour movement needs to be renewed, but what we can do to start bringing about this change. During that five-week period we took part in general and multidisciplinary training to gain a better understanding of the major economic, social and political issues facing us.

From June 26 to 28, 2016, I attended the International Pow Wow in Wendake and I shared that experience with my network. We were able to experience the festivities first hand with dancers and drummers of different First Nations from here and elsewhere. There were artisans, booths, demonstrations of traditional practices and performances by Indigenous and Quebec artists in the evening. It was a lively event that had something for everyone.

I attended the World Social Forum in August 2016 and led a PSAC workshop on LGBT rights. The workshop is available for any Locals that are interested. Please write to me at toufic.el-daher@hotmail.com if you are interested. PSAC was also present at the MondoKarnaval 2016 celebrations in Québec City on September 3 and 4, 2016. The theme was "Haiti, Pearl of the Caribbean."

I am proud to announce that PSAC was nominated at the Gala Arc-en-Ciel of the Conseil québécois LGBT in the distinguished partners and allies category. For PSAC to even be nominated at a gala at which unions do not have a high profile is a victory in itself. Thanks to the work we are doing in the LGBT community, through the LGBT-FTQ committee and through PSAC, we are making a name for ourselves.

I attended the second edition of the CLC conference on human rights, *Rise Up! 2016*, at the Shaw Centre in Ottawa from October 20 to 23. The conference offered forums, discussion meetings and workshops to provide an opportunity to discuss equity and diversity issues, struggles and accomplishments and encourage members from all unions to get up and stand up for human rights!

I am pleased to announce that we have a new Equity Group Representative for the Mauricie region. His name is Johny Maillot.

The first Conference for Racially Visible Members for the Quebec region was held at the Esterel Resort from November 4 to 6, 2016. I opened the conference, but unfortunately I had to be in Ottawa for the bargaining round with Treasury Board from November 4 to 10. The first conference was a great success, and members are already looking forward to the next one. A number of esteemed guests were at this year's conference:

- Émilie Nicolas, from Lévis, is conducting research on the role of a shared language in social inclusion and international solidarity, in the context of the Francophonie in particular.
- Rachida Azdouz is a psychologist who specializes in intercultural relations at Université de Montréal.
- Marc-André Joubert was elected in June 2016 as president of the FTQ's regional council for Metropolitan Montreal and is an advocate for numerous social and political causes.
- Carla Beauvais is known for her citizen and social engagement.

I attended the PSAC National Health and Safety Conference in Montreal from November 17 to 20, 2016. The theme was "Shaping a new culture for our health and safety."

From November 28 to December 2, 2016, I attended the 31st FTQ convention, where we voted on a number of resolutions relating to equity and diversity. We also voted for the establishment of a Quebec commission of inquiry to determine the causes of the systemic racism experienced by Indigenous women.

In my capacity as co-chair of the LGBT-FTQ committee, I helped organize a lunchtime talk on various facets of the LGBT cause by Marie-Pier Boisvert, Executive Director of the Conseil québécois LGBT. We approved a proposal that the FTQ host a day of reflection and discussion on LGBT rights as well as training on sexual diversity and equality.

A resolution calling for the FTQ and governments to make mental health in the workplace a priority elicited some moving personal statements from delegates. Distress,

lack of support, fear of prejudice and stigmatization are the fate of those affected, who need more support and attention.

Brother Boyer put it this way: “Even though people with HIV/AIDS now have access to treatment that enables them to live a normal life, they still face stigmatization and discrimination in their day-to-day lives and in our workplaces. As union members, we need to stand together in solidarity to combat this type of prejudice.”

PSAC Equity Group Representatives shared a number of different activities in their regions in connection with the 2017 edition of Black History Month. This year in Québec City, *Nuit de l'excellence afro-antillaise* gave me an honorary award to recognize my contribution to the advancement of racially visible groups in the Québec City area. I was very honoured to receive this award. It further increases my motivation to advocate on behalf of equity groups as a reflection of my innate desire to fight for human rights. The second edition of *Nuit de l'excellence* took place on February 11, 2017. The evening is now part of Black History Month in Québec City and is a joint effort of the Conseil Panafricain de Québec (COPAQ), Table de concertation pour le Mois de l'histoire des noirs de Québec and PSAC-Québec.

I conclude my report with a quote that means a great deal to me:

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”
Desmond Tutu

Toufic El-Daher