

QPIRG Concordia – Annual General Meeting 2019

Meeting minutes

Tuesday, October 8, 2019

1 – Introduction

Facilitator: Amanda

Minute-taker: Nicole

Wade: Hi everyone, I'm Wade, QPIRG-C's finance and organizational planning coordinator. I want to start tonight's meeting with a land acknowledgment: We would like to begin by acknowledging that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community. We at QPIRG also believe that it's not enough to just acknowledge the history of these lands; it is even more important to resist ongoing colonialism and to support resistance against it. We see solidarity with Indigenous peoples as an ongoing process.

Amy: Hi everybody, I'm Amy. I'm part of a team of three people from Accessibilize Montreal who are currently engaging in an accessibility audit of this space. Since the move, the space is doing pretty well – this space is more accessible than the previous one – but we got to talking and we decided to hold a series of half-hour conversations next week, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, which will take place here at QPIRG-C. We're hoping we can get a good amount of feedback from folks with various kinds of disabilities, mental illnesses, monetary issues, sensory issues, and so on. With that in mind, we have a signup sheet for those wanting to participate – I'll pass it around now. Again, these sessions will take place this coming Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, in the afternoons. The names of the volunteers who will be there during specific sessions are also included at the top of the columns, in case there's a specific person you're more comfortable talking with. We'll also put out an online version of the signup sheet. If you have any questions, you can always come talk to me.

Just to clarify, an accessibility audit is a way to assess whether a space or practices are accessible – or not – to a large variety of people. So typically, we'll be looking at things like, is the space wheelchair-accessible? Are websites accessible? Are the practices or internal dynamics energizing or draining? We're paying attention to all these sorts of things in our audit, and it's an ongoing conversation happening with the staff at QPIRG

as well. To add, the consultations that will take place next week will be kept completely private and confidential.

Amanda: Thank you! With that, I'd like to welcome you all to this year's QPIRG-C Annual General Meeting. We're a fee levy association based at Concordia that supports both campus-based and community groups doing different grassroots projects. Because we're a non-profit, we have to hold an AGM every year. Speaking of accessibility issues – does anyone need translation toward French?

(Amanda explains the standard motioning and voting procedures that will be used during the meeting.)

2 - Presentation and Approval of Agenda

Hesser motions for the agenda as presented to be approved, with no modifications.

Lexi seconds.

(The motion is unanimously adopted, with one abstention.)

3 - Approval of 2018 AGM minutes

Mona motions for the minutes from the 2018 Annual General Meeting to be adopted.

Esther seconds.

(The motion is unanimously adopted, with one abstention.)

4 - Appointment of the Auditor

Amanda: Every year we typically appoint Caroline Pembert (of APSV) to do our financial audit. The proposal is to simply re-appoint them, since they've already been doing it for the past several years. If you have any questions or concerns about this person, feel free to address them to us now.

Wade: To clarify, an auditor is responsible for taking a close look at all of our financial documents. Their job is to make sure we're following the law and meeting the financial requirements for a non-profit organization.

Esther motions to appoint Caroline Pembert (of APSV) as the auditor.

Hesser seconds.

(Motion passes, with no oppositions and 4 abstentions.)

5 - QPIRG Reports

- i) **Board of Directors report (Anne Audrey):** It was my first time on the Board this past year. Most important event was probably QPIRG'S visioning, which took place over a weekend. It was a good opportunity to discuss what goals we wanted to focus on going forward. What really came out of that was

accessibility, focusing on conflict resolution, working on improving the policies we have, doing more promotion, doing more outreach, holding more events, making the new space more welcoming, and working to better support the staff. This year was a transition year for us in many ways, and involved the transfer of knowledge from the past Board to the new Board.

Speaker: What kinds of things does the Board hope to do to help staff?

Anne Audrey: Things like team evaluations, putting together an HR team, as well as just having the Board be more present in order to understand what staff need.

Mona: This really has been a transitional year – we’ve moved into a new space, but also, a lot of our current staff got started in their positions within the last year. Consequently, there’s been a lot of helping people settle in.

ii) **Staff Reports:**

a. **Administrative and Communications Coordinator (Adrienne):** Hi, I’m Adrienne. I’ve been here about four years, and I’m the only staff member who didn’t change over within the past year. As you all know, we also moved to a new space this year. That was a lot of what this year was about – just getting settled into a new space, putting it together, and helping new staff settle into their new positions. This past year, I helped coordinate the visioning session and the AGM. I also am continuously in contact with people who need to do community service and have chosen to complete it here at QPIRG. I also work on the Alternative Library, which is right over there – but I won’t talk too much about it because Amanda is our library coordinator, so I’ll let her discuss that further. I definitely do want to let people know about the library, though! It’s a really great space, and we’re working on increasing the accessibility of its contents for people who cannot physically come in to check out materials. We’re also connected to sister libraries, for example those at other QPIRGs. Our library is totally independent from Concordia’s. We have a zine library as well. We also take book donations.

b. **Finance and Organizational Planning Coordinator (Wade):** I’m in charge of budgeting, financial planning, and the overall financial health of the organization. Since we’ve moved, we’ve been doing quite well financially – partly because our rent here is cheaper, but also partly because we were able to get our fee levy indexed to inflation two years ago. Last year, we ran a bit of a surplus again – that was due to many factors, perhaps especially that folks were settling into new positions and therefore had less time to develop new programs and events. In any case,

it's not necessarily a bad thing to have a surplus at this time – currently, a big threat to our financial health in the future is that opt-outs could be put online, so we do need a safety net in case that happens. So, there's a plan in place for the small surplus we do have. Now, in terms of the audit – what with the transition, by the time we got all of our documents ready to get an audit done for the last fiscal year, it was too late. Legally, though, we only have to do an audit every two years, so we're going to get an audit done for two years – both last year and this year – at the end of this year. That's why I don't have an audit to present this year.

In terms of my organizational planning role, I've been contributing to putting in place accountability mechanisms and oversight, helping organize the visioning process that Anne Audrey discussed, etc.

Speaker: Can people opt out of the QPIRG-C fee levy during the entire school year?

Wade: No, this takes place during a specific time period. Before the DNE date each term, there's a two-week period where students have to come to the space in person in order to opt out. That being said, there is currently a referendum question being planned by the CSU executive to put opt-outs online – if this happens, it will become much easier for students to opt out. This actually occurred at McGill pretty recently, and caused QPIRG McGill to suffer a substantial loss in revenue.

Esther: Just so you know, this motion is not going to pass at CSU Council. I'm on Council, and we're very opposed to this year's executive – for many reasons, but I can tell you right now that Councillors overwhelmingly do not support this motion.

Meredith: We really encourage you all to come to Council and speak out against this, however! It's important to have input from the staff and service users of organizations like QPIRG who feel they would be negatively affected by online opt-outs.

c. Programming and Outreach Coordinator (Elena – absent)

Wade: Elena is sick and can't be here tonight, so I'll give a very brief overview of programming on her behalf. Major events we did this past year included Disorientation, ASL 101 (and 102 over the summer), we co-sponsored the Farming While Black event series (traditional African knowledge of agriculture; antiracist sustainable), Black Circle Days (which was more or less an extension of Black History Month), we held Emergency Thursday Parties in the library for a couple of months, there

was a book club, tarot card readings, game cafés... Every year, we also co-host an anticolonial dinner and anticolonial week (with workshops and film screenings) with Frigo Vert and other groups in the community. We also have around 25 working groups that do ongoing work all the time – part of Elena’s role is also to support them.

Adrienne: We’re also going to post the programming report online if people want more information, since Elena isn’t here to give a more thorough overview of her role.

iii) **Reports from Core Projects and Other Initiatives**

a. **School Schmoool:** Every year, we produce an agenda called School Schmoool in collaboration with QPIRG McGill. We’ve consistently done this for at least the past ten years. The agenda is printed at Katasoho, a radical printing place. It includes resources and articles focused around students belonging to marginalized groups and/or engaged in activism. The theme this year was Limit(less) – thinking about the future and trying to remove barriers, live dreams, fighting some of the labels around activism, etc. We print around 1600 copies every year to distribute.

b. **Alternative Library (Amanda):** I coordinated the library for the past year. We had a committee that met around once a week. We organized Emergency Thursday Parties and other events in the library. We’ve been trying to do a lot of outreach to get more folks into the new space since we moved. Notably, we also started a pilot project of bike-couriering books to folks who can’t access the space physically. We bought tons of cool new books and zines to add to our collection.

Adrienne: If people want to donate materials or get involved with the Alternative Library, feel free to get in touch at library@qpirgconcordia.org.

c. **FLAC (Fee Levy Advocacy at Concordia): (Wade:)** We meet with around 15 fee levy groups regularly to discuss common issues between us. We started a broader awareness campaign to discuss fee levy groups and the services they offer, since the general student population isn’t always aware of them. We worked on troubleshooting issues, sharing policies, etc.

Speaker: Has FLAC been talking about the opt-outs potentially being put online?

Wade: We've actually talked about it a lot, and there isn't currently a consensus about what to do about it.

- d. **Disorientation:** This year, Disorientation events included a panel on diversity in STEM fields, two Naloxone overdose prevention workshops (one was only for women, trans and GNC folks – which was actually the most well-attended event of the entire series), and bike tours about gentrification and radical history. We also held a queer support group co-hosted with Queer Concordia, and of course, the School Schmool launch party, which took place at Le Cagibi this year.
- e. **Grassroots Resistance Archive:** This group collects archives of activist materials for historical memory – we have posters and flyers going back around ten years. It's a big job – we actually ended up hiring someone to help us out and organize the chaos. Something that came up is that QPIRG-C has tons of archives that are currently just sitting in boxes, so we're hoping to be able to hire someone to go through those as well. We also redid the website – it was much, much harder to navigate before.
- f. **Research stipends:** We awarded two research stipends – it was a difficult decision this year because we had a lot of very strong applications. One of the projects we chose was the Ramp Q website – a website that will contain resources for people who have different kinds of restrictions on how they can get around, as well as interviews with people about their experiences. The other stipend we gave out was a project working with mostly Indigenous sex workers – this initiative was able to get around 40 participants together to come up with a project they wanted to work on building together.
- g. **Working groups: (Mona G.)** Hi, I'm Mona, from Because We've Read, which is a radical reading group that is also a QPIRG-C working group. We have regular sessions and recently put a few of our books in the QPIRG Alternative Library. Over the past year, we've read works by Assata Shakur, Naomi Klein, and Arundhati Roy, among others. We've also held emergency readings having to do with the African uprisings, Palestine, Kashmir, etc. If you're interested in reading with us or in discussing, definitely feel free to come talk to me later or pick up a flyer! We're planning to get more involved with the QPIRG library initiatives this year. Our next session is on prison abolition, and will take place on November 17th. There are a couple of books in the library for that unit, which are also available as PDFs.

Amy: Accessibilize Montreal started out in around 2013 or 2014, and at that time was mostly doing popular education work about accessibility. At that time, accessibility was really off the radar in social justice circles, so at the beginning our work was very Accessibility 101. Over the last few years, we've been focusing mostly on capacity-building among organizers and supporting organizations working to transform some of their practices in a way that's based on what their members want and need. We recently did an audit for PGSS, and we're currently doing audits for both QPIRG-C and CGA. We have some events coming up as well – mostly creative things, since most of our members are also artists. We don't have a huge infrastructure to welcome new members right now, but what we can do is invite folks to events.

Rojava Solidarity Montreal: We organize events in solidarity with Kurdish people fighting for their self-determination, as well as events and workshops supporting the Rojava project in Northern Syria. We organize solidarity actions and education. It just so happens that yesterday, Donald Trump announced that U.S. aid for this region will be ending, and so it's very likely that Turkey will attack Rojava. We're organizing a rally, which will probably be on Thursday. If any organizations want to support or help out, please come talk to me. This is very time-sensitive.

Adrienne: You can send the event out on the working groups email list!

Collective Opposed to Police Brutality (Jude): I'm a member of the Collective Opposed to Police Brutality. We're going to have a table at a hip-hop and punk fest this coming weekend. I also work with Solidarity Across Borders, which does different kinds of migrant justice and migrant solidarity work. On October 19th, we're doing a counter-mobilization against a racist demo at the Lacolle border crossing. We have flyers, as well as a bus leaving from Montreal if folks want to sign up for that. We're also doing a fundraiser for migrant solidarity – check out SAB's website for all the information.

Kliph: SAB also did an action against the Laval migrant prison on October 3rd.

Amy: Do you ever do social media campaigns or target social media for mobilization?

Jude: Sometimes we do press conferences and press releases. The fundraiser is going to be more online.

Kliph: In terms of targeting, we mainly target people directly involved with the migrant prison.

Mona: Just to add, there's less targeting of media, but there are often letter-writing campaigns and talking to specific Ministers. Those actions are less around the prison, but they're still good ways to get involved for folks who can't necessarily come out to an action.

Speaker: What's the definition of a working group?

Amanda: You can apply to be a working group under QPIRG in order to receive funds and institutional support. Other groups are not officially working groups, but still work in connection with QPIRG in different ways.

Wade: I actually checked, and we're up to around 30 working groups now – we got some new ones this year.

6 - Questions about Reports

(No further questions.)

7 - Candidates and Elections for Conflict Resolution and Complaints Committee (CRCC)

Amanda: The CRCC currently consists of a couple of people who are on-call and able to respond if a situation involving conflict comes up. We don't have biographies or statements for the two people running, but they are both people who were on the committee this past year and the year before. If you would like to know more about them, feel free to ask Adrienne. They are **Andrea F.** and **Stephanie D.**

Adrienne: We actually need four people to sit on the CRCC – so if anyone here is interested, please let us know.

Esther M. nominates themselves.

Amy: What is this committee for?

Adrienne: It exists as part of our “conflict policy.” If there's a conflict that arises, whether it's with a working group, a person or a staff member, this body helps with conflict resolution processes.

Amanda: You can also get in touch with Adrienne if you'd like to get involved later on.

8 - Candidates and Elections for QPIRG Concordia Board of Directors

Amanda: QPIRG's board is half Concordia students and half community members. You should have received a packet with candidate biographies in advance of this meeting. Candidates who are present tonight will also have the opportunity to introduce themselves.

Esther: Is it too late to nominate myself for the board?

Adrienne: No, but you can't be on both CRCC and the Board. If you're a student, I'd recommend joining the Board, as we really need to fill those student seats.

Candidate list:

Mario Iorio (community member): Experience with different social justice issues. Familiar with the bylaws of the organization, which is an important asset for a Board.

Audie Maginley (community member): Joined the Board last year and wants to return. Wants to dedicate their life to fighting capitalism and helping people navigate systemic inequalities.

Thien Vet Quan (community member): Was on the Board four years ago, has lots of experience. Now wants to return to the Board for another term.

Victoria Elliott (community member): Has been on the Board for a year, would love to stay for the next year and continue their ongoing work with QPIRG.

Kai Rajala (community member): Originally from Vancouver (unceded Coast Salish territory). Has benefited from PIRGs in their life and would now like to give back to PIRGs.

Deann Nardo (community member): Deann is a member of the Phillipine diaspora. They've been doing a lot of work with the library. Used to be a board member of Helios Makerspace, then created their own makerspace specifically for queer/trans BIPOC. Gathered stories of Filipinx careworkers. Is passionate and knows a lot about skillsharing, information, and community action.

Mona Ghassemi (community member): Passionate about social justice. They have been involved in CGA as a support volunteer, and have worked with a couple of other working groups like Food Against Fascism and Game Curious. They're also a member of the working group Because We've Read. Mona is interested in giving back to QPIRG.

Gustavo Guzman (student): Gustavo is a Concordia student studying human relations with a minor in sexuality. They believe they have skills – program planning, facilitation –that will be beneficial. Passionate about accessible education, materials, and resources. They have quite a bit of experience volunteering in LGBT youth centers, and is the coordinator of gender advocacy at Dawson College. QPIRG would allow them to

extend that work beyond just college students. Experience in intersectional awareness and harm reduction.

Tichina Williams (student): Student at Concordia in their second year. Interested in getting involved with different community activism groups. Did volunteering hours over the summer at the Douglas mental health hospital. Tichina wants to be a part of the Board to learn about different projects and initiatives occurring around activism on campus.

Anne Audrey Remarais (student): Anne Audrey is back at school after some years away. They now feel more confident and aware of how they can contribute to groups like QPIRG. They are a registered social worker, who does social work on the side, and have also been involved in community volunteering. They've run a platform for friends of color to come together and share their stories. Interested in seeing how their own intersecting identities can contribute to QPIRG and the board.

Kerwin Lucia (student): Kerwin couldn't be here tonight, but was a Board member last year and did a great job. They have been involved in a couple of working groups. The answers they included in their bio should be pretty clear.

Esther Morand (student): Esther is fairly new to Montreal; they are in their second year at Concordia in women's studies and Spanish. They've lived in many countries and speak many languages; their focus is more linguistic. Their participation on the Board could provide a different approach. They've also done a lot of volunteer work with diverse groups. They're really happy to find a radical group on campus.

CRCC candidates:

1. **Stephanie Dufresne**
2. **Andrea Figueroa**
3. **Chloe Raxlen**: Chloe has worked with lots of community groups; they have experience with conflict resolution and want to work on that in this group.

Official nominations:

Victoria nominates themselves.

Anne Audrey seconds.

Esther nominates Audie Maginley.

Mona seconds

Adrian nominated Thien.

Chloe seconded.

Adrienne nominates Kai.

Victoria seconds.

Dania nominates Deann.

Hesser seconds.

Alex nominates Mona.

Esther seconds.

Amadou nominates Esther.

Alex seconds.

Todd nominates Mario.

Alex seconds.

Mona nominates Gustavo.

Kai seconds.

Gustavo nominates Tichina.

Esther seconds.

Adrienne nominated Anne Audrey.

Deann seconds.

Victoria nominates Kerwin.

Anne Audrey seconds.

Lexi nominates Stephanie.

Tichina seconds.

Hesser nominates Andrea.

Jude seconds.

Mona nominates Chloe.

Kai seconds.

Amanda: We now need to elect someone to be our elections officer. That person can't vote, but will be in charge of counting the votes.

Adrienne nominates **Diane Gistal**.

Esther seconds.

Diane Gistal is elected unanimously.

(Voting ballots are passed out.)

9 - Community Event Announcements

(No further announcements.)

10 - Election Results

(The election results were posted subsequently to the closure of the meeting.)

Elected Board members, 2019-20:

Student Members:

- Kerwin Lucia
- Gustavo Guzman
- Tichina Williams
- Anne Audrey Remarais
- Esther Morand

Community Members:

- Deann Nardo
- Thiên Việt Quan
- Tichina Williams
- Mona Ghassemi
- Audie Augustus Maginley
- Victoria Elliott

Elected CFCC members, 2019-20:

- Stephanie Dufresne
- Andrea Figueroa
- Chloe Raxlen

11 - Adjournment

Mona moves that the election results be posted online and that we adjourn the meeting.

Deann seconds.

Adrienne: Candidates will be contacted tonight with the results.

(The meeting is adjourned, with no oppositions.)