

* *resistance* *
* *research* *
* *community* *

Year in Review at QPIRG Concordia

2019-2020

The Annual Report of the Quebec Public Interest Group of Concordia



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Acknowledgement & Call to Anti-Colonial Resistance

QPIRG Concordia acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka people. The Kanien'kehá:ka are the keepers of the Eastern Door of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The island we call Montreal, called Tiotia:ke in the language of the Kanien'kehá:ka, has historically been a meeting

place for other Indigenous nations, including the Anishnaabe peoples.

QPIRG Concordia believes it is not enough to just acknowledge the keepers of this land. We encourage everyone to get informed and educated, and to actively resist colonialism in the many forms it takes,

and in the diversity of forms that resistance can take too. We view indigenous solidarity as an ongoing process as we continue to learn and seek out tangible ways to support anti-colonial action.

We would like to highlight a few issues, resistance efforts and events:

Mi'kmaq Treaty Rights and Livelihood Fisheries

Sipekne'katik First Nation is the first band to start its own Moderate Livelihood lobster fishery, which they have the right to do based on treaty and court rulings. Non-Mi'kmaw fishers are angry that Mi'kmaw fishers are dropping lobster traps out of season, to earn a living. What is missing from many reports is that the Mi'kmaq have a right to catch and sell lobsters, and decide when they can do it.

Background information: <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/the-facts-behind-mikmaw-fishing-rights/>

How to help and more resources: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u_LF_bCFBbSijzqJgHNh4-MfpYzohfdv/view

Protect the Kanienkehà:ka Rights in the Oka Pine Forest

The latest provocation of the Kanien'kehà:ka of Kanehsatà:ke by the Oka municipality attempts to reappropriate the pines, the site of the 1990 siege, as a settler colonial site. This proposition, advanced on the 19th of October 2020, signals the Oka municipality's refusal to change.

Petition and more information: https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/no-going-back-support-kanehsatake-rights-in-the-oka-pine-forest?source=direct_link&

1492 Land Back Lane

Six Nations Land Defenders have mobilized to stop the the Mackenzie Meadows housing development project bordering the town of Caledonia. Mackenzie Meadows is one of several housing developments within the area that are directly violating the sovereignty of the Haudenosaunee.

Donations to the camp / build fund can be sent to landback6nations@gmail.com

Support for legal fund can be made here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/legal-fund-1492-land-back-lane>

For updates and information: www.facebook.com/1492Land-BackLane

The Tiny House Warriors

Our Land is Home is a part of a mission to stop the TransMountain pipeline, now owned by the Canadian Government, from crossing unceded Secwepemc Territory. Ten tiny houses will be built and placed strategically along the 518 km TransMountain pipeline route

to assert Secwepemc law and jurisdiction and block access to this pipeline.

More info at: tinyhousewarriors.com and facebook.com/tinyhousewarriors

October 2020 statement:

<http://www.tinyhousewarriors.com/2020/10/joint-statement-by-secwepemc-gidimten-land-defenders/>

Missing and murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People

The ongoing crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit people continues to not be addressed by the Canadian government. Some groups doing work to draw attention to this crisis and to support those most directly affected by it locally include Missing Justice (a campaign of the Centre for Gender Advocacy) and Iskweu Project (a project of the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal)

-There are Settlement Reparations Facebook groups and various crowdfunding campaigns to give indigenous people the monetary and material support they need to survive on their own lands

Message from the Board of Directors

The 2019-2020 board year began with a new board composed of returning board members Thiên Việt Quan, Anne-Audrey Remarais, and Victoria Elliot, as well as new members Deann Nardo, Gustavo Gusman, Tichina Williams, Kai Rajala, Mona Ghassemi, and Esther Moran. Zoë Christmas and Timothy Law joined the board in the months following the AGM. Board capacity and burn-out was an ongoing problem, as it has been in previous years, with five board members resigning over the course of the year. We believe that the burn-out was compounded by staff conflict and the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we are confident that new board membership in 2020-2021 as well as renewed energy in QPIRG's mission can help prevent this from happening next year.

Staff Conflict and Board Turnover

A major issue facing the board this past year was a months-long interpersonal conflict between two staff members. Despite attempts at mediation, the two staff were unable to work with one another in the same space, and the board struggled to address the issue head on. This was due in part to a lack of board conflict-resolution training, as well as the fact that the crux of the issue exceeded the individual board members' experience and capacity. A handful of board members resigned owing to the burn-out resulting from this conflict, which converged with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The result of this was that one of the staff members resigned once their contract expired. While it is unfortunate that the conflict was not exactly resolved, the board recognizes that the magnitude of the conflict made it next to impossible for a more peaceable conclusion to take place. Ultimately, the board is on good terms with the resigned staff-member as well as the remaining staff-member.

Throughout the conflict, the board learned more about QPIRG's employment policies, the shortcomings of the existing policies, and QPIRG's past staffing issues. We also learned the importance of setting boundaries as regards to communication approaches from staff. It was noted that a functioning conflict resolution committee would have potentially expedited the resolution process of the conflict, and taken some of the weight off of the BOD. Moving forward, we hope that we can put renewed policies in place to mitigate any conflicts that arise in the future.

Response to and Reverberations of Covid-19

As we're all aware, our worlds were rattled in mid-March as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. On an individual level, each board and staff member had varying experiences, and a few board members had to resign. In many respects, Covid-19 was somewhat of a 'reset button' for us; the suspension of regular activities gave us some time and space to rethink our individual and collective roles in our communities.

The ensuing public health measures and government decrees have evidently affected the use of QPIRG's office downtown. Working groups now have to communicate with staff in advance in order to access the space, and individual space users are no longer able to enter spontaneously. This has of course diminished QPIRG's character as a dynamic, interactive community space, which serves the Concordia and Montreal communities as an open-door resource centre.

Moving our monthly board meetings onto a digital platform was also a change, but it was a relatively smooth process. Of course, virtual meetings are incomparable to the real deal—and we're all aware of 'zoom fatigue' (in our case Jitsi meet)—but we have to make do. For the time being, we're practicing patience with this new (and hopefully temporary) form of communication.

Committee Work

SLC Committee

Due to ongoing staff conflict, as well as board turnover, the SLC Committee shifted and evolved over the 2019/2020 board year. In an effort to reduce what the board viewed as the inevitable biases that develop between individual staff and their SLC rep (i.e. by way of advocacy) instead of neutral reporting, the SLC experimented with dissolving the representatives and instead met with staff individually as a committee. In the new year, the board plans on solidifying what shape the SLC committee will take in 2021.

Policy Committee

The Policy Committee also adapted due to the staff conflict, and the Employee Policy was especially in need of an update and, during the summer, the Policy Committee met on two occasions to edit and strengthen it. In particular, we redrafted the meanings of full-time and part-time employees and clarified our approach to leaves of absences. Throughout the 2020/2021 board year, we hope to renew more of QPIRG's policies in order to foster a healthy and structured work environment with equitable and straightforward policies.

Training & Workshops

The board received training soon after the last AGM. The following workshops were completed:

- History and Structure of QPIRG, Board Committees, After Hours Access and Key Training
- How To Be A Good Employer
- Finances
- Consensus Decision-Making, Facilitation and Minute-Taking
- Anti-Oppression 102

However, through the staff conflict and our on-going efforts to address organizational issues, we recognize the need for additional workshops. These workshops were planned but delayed due to COVID-19 and major events of 2020 during which facilitators were unavailable, but we hope to organize them at the next available opportunity.

- Tokenism and Anti-Black Racism in the Nonprofit Workspace
- De-escalation and conflict resolution
- Indigenous competency training

New Horizons

The past year has truly shaken QPIRG's organizational structure—from the staff conflict, to board turnover, to the consequences of COVID-19. The board wishes to tackle some of the roots of these issues in order for QPIRG to be a healthy, vibrant community resource moving forward.

We are hiring a consultant named Kit Malo who will be working with the staff and board over the next several months to assess and improve QPIRG's issues, namely board turnover, staff tensions, overall burnout and the sustainability of the organization. With Kit's assistance, we aim to conduct an organizational audit and create an action plan to resuscitate QPIRG's governance and operations, which will strengthen our existing efforts to revitalize policy and job descriptions.

We will also be hiring a temporary contract worker to help with QPIRG's day-to-day operations. In early 2021, once we have a better vision of QPIRG and its organizational intentions, we will be hiring a third, full-time, permanent staff-member.

Recommendations

The current board of directors recommends that the incoming board focuses on the completion of outstanding training, particularly in regards to conflict mediation as well as a tokenism/anti-Black racism training, in the first two months of the year. We also recommend that a functioning conflict resolution committee be formed and trained immediately following the AGM, and be ready to take over in the event of any future staff or board conflict.

As stated previously under New Horizons, we recommend that following an organizational audit conducted by Kit Malo, that QPIRG create a pragmatic and sustainable action plan in order to alleviate staff workload, and revitalize policy and strengthen governance structures.

Board Members

- Zoë Christmas (Community Member)
 - Mona Ghassemi (Community Member)
 - Kai Rajala (Community Member)
 - Timothy Law (Concordia Student)
 - Deann Louise C. Nardo (Community Member)
 - Thiên Việt Quan (community member, resigned May 2020)
 - Gustavo Guzman (community member, resigned May 2020)
 - Victoria Elliott (community member, resigned May 2020)
 - Tichina Williams (community member, resigned May 2020)
 - Esther Morand (community member, resigned May 2020)
 - Audie Maginley (student, resigned December 2019)
 - Kerwin Lucia (student, resigned December 2019)
 - Anne Audrey Remarais (student, resigned February 2020)
-



Message from the QPIRG Concordia Staff

Let's be honest here. This has been an incredibly difficult year, for so many reasons. COVID-19 has taken up all the head space of staff and board members, just like it has for everyone.

Normally, QPIRG Concordia is a busy hive of activity, but this is not the case this year.

One of our other main priorities as core staff is to maintain a welcoming, accessible office space for campus and community volunteers and allies. And for a portion of the year, this was true, as we worked and met together weekly to maintain our space and encourage its use by volunteers, students, and community members. Usually, we work very hard to make our office and our resources accessible. However, QPIRG decided to close our offices in March, and staff began working mostly from home. Normally, there are many people who have access to the office space. During the health crisis, this has not been the case. We decided it would be safest if the space were not open to everyone during this time. Working Groups & other individuals still had access to the printer, and groups are still able to access sound equipment. However, access has been limited, and needs to be scheduled ahead of time.

The QPIRG Concordia core staff have done their best to work together to maintain and nurture QPIRG Concordia and our various projects, groups and initiatives... remotely, of course. But, things have been slower, and confusing, and we are all stressed. Not only

have our offices have been closed for many months, our programming has been greatly reduced this year. We have tried to distribute the resources that we would otherwise have spent on programming on some of the amazing frontline work that was happening. Some of the groups we were able to give funds were: Taking What We Need, Solidarity Across Borders emergency fund for non-status folk (just saw the call for donations now), MTL Rapid Response, the Native Women's Shelter/ Resilience Montreal, Projet Autochtones du Québec (PAQ) shelter, Hoodstock, the Black Indigenous Harm Reduction Alliance / the Connect Prison Project, Racines, DESTA, and some funds towards a food basket program being set up by the Concordia Farmers Market.

What has not changes is that our main priority as core staff is to ensure QPIRG remains transparent and accountable to its members. This is reflected in our efforts to provide institutional and financial transparency and accessibility, third-party audited financial statements, minutes and institutional documentation, hassle-free opt-outs, an annual report, an updated website and social media, a constitution and other key documents that are available on our website, and more. Maintaining accountability to our members is important behind-the scenes work that took up much of our collective time and effort in the past year. More generally, QPIRG Concordia continues to support Fee Levy Advocacy at Concordia (FLAC), and works

hard to maintain transparency and accountability to all students by all fee levy groups.

Our work is directed by a Board of Directors, and this year we decided to organize our Board training over a period of several weeks, rather than one weekend, with additional trainings throughout the year. We continue to reflect, taking into account Board feedback, about how best to train and integrate board members in the future. We have learned many lessons that we will try to apply in the coming year. We would like to thank, by name, everyone who served on this year's Board of Directors: Zoë Christmas, Mona G, Kai, Timothy Law, Deann Louise C. Nardo, Thiên, Gustavo Guzman (resigned May 2020), Victoria (resigned May 2020), Tichina, Esther (resigned May 2020), Audie (resigned December 2019), Kerwin (resigned December 2019), and Anne Audrey (resigned February 2020).

We share office space with The Centre for Gender Advocacy. This was our second year sharing our new space and while there have been occasional difficulties, overall sharing the space has gone very well. With this new arrangement, rent is shared, bills are shared and resources are shared. We look forward to continuing to build our relationship with them and work together in the coming year.

While there were challenges, there were other successes and satisfying moments. Another beautiful, informative version of School Schmoool

was published. We were able to organize an online version of Dis-Orientation, as well as improve and expand both our Alternative Library. Throughout the year, we did not organize many programming events, but we definitely supported our amazing working groups and allied community organizations as much as we could.

Our core staff work and tasks are not done alone. A large part of our work this year was to secure funding for part-time jobs, as well as to train our part-time employees. We want to highlight the contributions of all our part-time, work study, grant-based and contract employees over the past year, as well as our active volunteers: Noah (book-keeping), Jaime (on-site tech), Lise (cleaning), Kelsey (Alternative Library), Quin & Nicholas (School Schmool), Gau (Disorientation), Vic (Outreach) and Megan (Community Archive).

Overall, outside of a global pandemic, QPIRG is a challenging work environment. It involves a lot of hard work and communications with hundreds of people, but it remains a stimulating and satisfying organization to work for. It's inspiring for us to meet so many amazing students and community members that in so many different ways make important contributions to social and environmental transformation.

Again, we are especially proud of the many new faces that continue to access QPIRG and QPIRG events in the past year, and the support we are able to provide to campus and community social justice initiatives. As staff, we thrive on working in collaboration with curious, engaged and dynamic volunteers, who access our space on a daily basis. We have lots of lessons and experiences to learn from in the past year, and we are looking forward to building

and improving in the upcoming year. Mostly though, we very much look forward to being able to return to work and opening up our offices safely again!

In solidarity,
Adrienne Pan, Administration and Communications Coordinator
Wade Walker, Finance & Organizational Planning Coordinator



QPIRG Mandate and History

QPIRG Mandate

The Quebec Public Interest Research Group at Concordia is a resource centre for student and community research and organizing. We strive to raise awareness and support grassroots activism around diverse social and environmental issues. Our work is rooted in an anti-oppression analysis and practice.

We seek to make campus-community links and inspire social change through engaging, inclusive and non-hierarchical approaches.

QPIRG Concordia is committed to being inclusive and accessible to all. We are actively opposed to all forms of discrimination

and oppression. QPIRG is a volunteer-driven, student-funded, non-profit organization that is independent from the Concordia administration and student unions. Both students and community members are welcome to make use of our space and resources as well as participate in QPIRG projects.

QPIRG History

The Quebec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG) at Concordia has been an important link between campus and the community on issues related to social and environmental justice and progressive social change. From their origins in Canada in the early 1980s, PIRGs have provided a forum and training ground for students and non-students alike to become critical and engaged community participants.

QPIRG at Concordia started in 1981 as a club funded by the student union. QPIRG's popularity grew until a student referendum in 1989 determined that QPIRG would be funded by a student fee levy. In 2010, Concordia graduate students voted in a referendum to become members of QPIRG Concordia as well. QPIRG Concordia is an autonomous group on the Concordia campus, with both student and community membership.

In the 1980s and '90s, QPIRG, like other campus-based social justice groups, was active in solidarity with human rights movements in Central America, campaigns for nuclear disarmament and global peace, opposition to apartheid in South Africa, feminist and anti-rac-

ist organizing, GLBT rights, consumer activism, and environmental justice.

Some of the projects and activity of QPIRG in the 1980s and '90s is reflected in the working groups and projects that grew out of QPIRG, including: Right to Move/La Voie Libre; the Popular Film Series (evolved into Cinema Politica); Urgence Manif; Sustainable Concordia; Blood Sisters; Un Juste Café; Santropol Roulant; the Concordia Recycling and Composting Committee; the Vegan Lunch Program (became the People's Potato); ProjectTake Root (evolved into the Frigo Vert); Action Rebut; ASEED (became Equiterre); and others.

In the late 1990s, QPIRG, like other PIRGs, was active in solidarity with international self-determination and liberation movements, from Latin America to the Middle East to South Asia. This period was also marked by increasing involvement and support with indigenous sovereignty efforts on Turtle Island.

QPIRG contributed to the growing global justice movement of this period, and was associated with demonstrations and popular

education work around institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Our programming and working groups also increasingly reflected queer, prisoner solidarity, migrant justice, and trans struggles and self-organizing.

QPIRG Concordia has evolved from its original mandate and projects to include a wide range of community activism and research, rooted in an explicit grassroots, anti-oppression organizing framework and prioritizing consensus-based decision-making. This is reflected in QPIRG's current working groups, our core projects and publications, and our resource library as well as our support for campus and community groups through co-sponsorships, endorsements, and discretionary funding.

In the past seven years, QPIRG has specifically developed a community-based social justice research model through core projects like Study in Action, the Community-University Research Exchange (CURE), and the Convergence Research Journal.

PIRGs were set up as consumer advocacy groups in the United States in the early 1970s, but PIRGs in Canada have operated on a different model. They involve and empower students and the majority of their funding comes directly from students, unlike the NGO model of PIRGs currently operating in the US. Most PIRGs in Canada operate on a consensus decision-making model, and are directed by a volunteer board of governors composed of students and other community members. The diversity among PIRGs reflects the diversity of each group's membership and volunteer board. PIRGs in Canada communicate with each other, especially PIRGs in geographical proximity, but they are ultimately autonomous organizations that are directly accountable to their campus and

community memberships. In essence, PIRGs complement the university experience by linking theory with practice while breaking down barriers and creating links between knowledge work on campus and in the community.

From 2007 until November 2016, all undergraduate students at Concordia paid 0.31\$ per credit, making them automatic members of QPIRG Concordia. However, since November 2016, with the successful referendum campaign that was run through the Concordia Student Union in the Fall semester of last year, QPIRG now receives 0.41\$ per credit from undergraduate students. This much-needed increase in our fee levy will allow us to better serve our membership – both students and community members

– and we have already been able to increase funding to our discretionary fund and our research stipend program.

Since September 2010, all graduate students at Concordia also become automatic members through the 0.50\$ per student per semester paid with regular school tuition. Membership also consists of active volunteers and members of our working groups.



Board of Directors

At QPIRG, the board plays an integral part within the organization. With regular meetings and active participation in all aspects of QPIRG, board members set the organization's agenda and direction, and support the staff. Members gain valuable experience and training in anti-oppression, how to be an employer, community organizing, and consensus building. A new board is elected during the fall semester at QPIRG's Annual General Meeting (AGM), although new

members can join with consensus from the current board at any time there is a vacant seat. The Board of Directors consists of 12 seats – 6 seats are reserved for Concordia student members, and the other 6 are reserved for Community members who may or may not be Concordia students. This reflects our mandate to create campus-community links.

For the year 2019-2020, we were proud to have on our Board of Directors:

Zoë Christmas (Community Member)
Mona Ghassemi (Community Member)
Kai Rajala (Community Member)
Timothy Law (Student)
Deann Louise C. Nardo (Community Member)
Thiên Việt Quan (Community member, resigned May 2020)
Gustavo Guzman (Community member, resigned May 2020)
Victoria Elliott (Community member, resigned May 2020)
Tichina Williams (Community member, resigned May 2020)
Esther Morand (Community member, resigned May 2020)
David Augustus Maginley (student, resigned December 2019)
Anne Audrey Remarais (Student, resigned February 2020)
Kerwin Lucia (Student, resigned December 2019)



Conflict Resolution and Complaints Committee

At the Annual General Meeting in September 2019, the following QPIRG members were elected to the Conflict Resolution and Complaints Committee (CRCC):

Stéphanie Dufresne, Chloe Raxlen and Andrea Figueroa.

The CRCC follows a CRCC policy to address complaints involving QPIRG members that cannot be

resolved by the board of directors. The CRCC can be emailed directly at crcc@qpirgconcordia.org, though for most matters it is best to email QPIRG at info@qpirgconcordia.org

Staff

For the year 2019-2020, QPIRG employed a total of 3 permanent staff members, who collectively worked to facilitate the day-to-day operations and coordinate long-term planning and training of the Board.

Our permanent staff people in 2019-2020 were:

Adrienne Pan, Administration and Communications Coordinator
Wade Walker, Finance & Organizational Planning Coordinator
Elena Stoodley, Programming and Working Groups Coordinator
(Resigned May, 2020)

In the Winter and Summer semesters of 2019-2020, we were glad to have **Megan Quigley** as our part-time Grassroots Resistance Archive Coordinator, and **Kelsey Blair** as a part-time coordinator of QPIRG's Alternative Library in the Fall and Winter semesters. **Vic Samoylenko** was our Social Justice Outreach Coordinator in Winter 2020. These positions are supported partially by Concordia's Financial Aid and Awards Office Work-Study Program – a program which allows groups like QPIRG to hire Concordia students.

In May 2019, **Quin Green** joined the QPIRG team as our summer School Schmoool co-coordinator, working on the School Schmoool organizer in partnership with QPIRG McGill (and **Nicholas Raffoul**). Through a grant from Canada Summer Jobs, we were also able to employ a part-time Alternative Library coordinator, a DisOrientation coordinator, and a social justice research and outreach coordinator. **Gau Mahadevan** was hired as our DisOrientation coordinator in June 2019.

QPIRG was supported by an external bookkeeper, **Noah Eidelman**, a member of the Concordia community. In addition, QPIRG systems received the support of our network administrator and computer technician **Jaime Maclean**.



QPIRG Board Committee Reports

QPIRG Concordia Board Committees

QPIRG Concordia's core Board committees are Policy, Finance, Programming & Working Groups, and Staff Liaison, as well as the newer Accessibility Committee. QPIRG Board members, in conjunction with staff members, are active on the core committees (staff do not participate in the Staff Liaison Committee directly).

The Policy Committee, both through meetings, and through discussions at the board level, overviews QPIRG Concordia practices and guidelines, and when necessary, modifies and creates new policies. The Policy Committee meets a few times to introduce new board members to QPIRG Policy, preparing to discuss and review much-needed updates to QPIRG's policy handbook. This year the committee made a recommendation that we hire outside assistance both for our policy & structure.

The Programming and Working Groups Committee has the joint responsibility for undertaking and supporting QPIRG programming initiatives, as well as supporting QPIRG's core projects and working groups. This year, this Committee was not active.

The Finance Committee has the mandate is to give direction to financial decisions, advise the board on financial matters, develop transparent and accessible financial practices, and maintain a more in-depth understanding of QPIRG's financial position than is possible at the general board level. The Finance Committee met several times to prepare the mid-year and annual budget reviews and budget for the move. The Financial Reports section of this Annual Report provides information about our Financial Statements as well as our Audited Statements.

The Accessibility Committee has been one of the ways QPIRG has tried to center accessibility and issues of access in the work that we do. Accessibility has been – and continues to be – a priority at QPIRG, and we are continually working to try and make our space and our work as accessible as possible.

The SLC or Staff Liaison Committee provides board liaison-people for QPIRG staff to discuss their daily needs and challenges at QPIRG, and provides recommendations to the board that aim to address unmet needs of staff members. The SLC is also tasked with keeping track of policy and practice surrounding labour issues at QPIRG, and bringing relevant issues back to the board for discussion as necessary for discussion and decisions.

The Board also struck a **Selection Committee** to award research stipends to 5 recipients, as well as 3 **Hiring Committees** for the positions of DisOrientation Coordinator, and Community Archive Coordinator, and School Shmool Coordinator (with QPIRG-McGill).

(All of QPIRG Concordia's six committees have involved the direct involvement of core staff and Board members).

Conflict Resolution Complaints Committee Report (CRCC)

The purpose of the Conflict Resolution/Complaints Committee is to review complaints entailing decisions made by the QPIRG Board or Staff, or any other internal disputes, which cannot otherwise be resolved. The CRCC is voted by the

QPIRG Concordia membership at the Annual General Meeting.

This year, as in previous years, there were no complaints to the CRCC, either formally or informally. The CRCC and QPIRG Con-

cordia conflict policy is in need of updating, and this is the plan for next year.

(This year's CRCC (2019-20) was: Andrea Figueroa, Chloe Raxlen, and Stéphanie Dufresne).

Core Projects, Activities, and Supported Initiatives

Alternative Library

Kelsey Blair was the library coordinator throughout the 2019/2020 school semester. The pandemic has been a struggle to manage events that are focused on bringing in students and the community into the physical space. However, during the 2019 fall semester, the library gained a lot of new members through different tabling events with Concordia and within the city. Because of the pandemic, library engagement has been done through

engagements on social media accounts, with a 112% member increase across social platforms since the beginning of the 2019/2020 term. Kelsey has also contributed significantly to the overall maintenance and coordination of the library.

The 2019/2020 year also brought a huge expansion of resources within the library, with over 150 added books and zines. There was a focus on expanding available material for

the First Peoples, sex work, disability justice, french non-fiction, and BLM activism sections.

(The Alternative Library was coordinated this year by **Kelsey Blair**, with the contribution of **Adrienne Pan**. Thank you to our Library Committee volunteers **Deann Nardo, Danya Gilday, Amanda Murphy, and Mona Ghassemi**).



Convergence Journal of Undergraduate & Community Research

Published by QPIRG McGill and QPIRG Concordia, Convergence is a Montreal-based journal highlighting undergraduate and community contributions to social justice research and art. Convergence is the name we give to an event that

unites different people, ideas, and approaches in a common project. This year we changed the format of the journal to be published online throughout the year and we plan on compiling the contents into a print format in the coming months.

We've done work on updating and redesigning the website (<http://convergencejournal.ca/>) and will be publishing more of this year's by the end of the year.

School Schmool Alternative Agenda

School Schmool, the agenda produced each summer as a joint project between QPIRG-McGill and QPIRG-Concordia, was successfully put out again this year. The 2019-2020 edition of School Schmool was coordinated by **Quin Green and Nicholas Raffoul**.

The agenda dates back to 1994, beginning as a bi-annual publication that brought together group profiles, articles, and practical resources of use to all students, especially those interested in environmental and social justice issues. It was resurrected as an agenda and resource book in the summer of 2006, and has been connecting the Concordia, McGill and Montreal communities ever since.

This year's theme was locality. All of us who call Tio'tia:ke/Montreal home have intersecting connections to locations beyond the city. Now more than ever, we use digital spaces to stay connected to those places, not only to maintain these personal connections, but to bear witness and to support the social and environmental justice movements which speak to us from all over the world. At the same time, our relationships with our local environments are drastically changing. The COVID-19 pandemic has us constantly evaluating how we occupy space, factoring new social-distancing needs into our everyday lives and how we gather together, to demonstrate against systemic injustice and build community. We encourage you to think to think of the various ways you might be a "local", of a campus, a neighbourhood, a city, and how your locality has been impacted by our changing environments. We hope to give you the tools to go beyond the contents of this agenda and engage with ongoing struggles happening in Tio'tia:ke



as we adjust to a new normal. We encourage you to reach out to the QPIRG's and to other organizations that interest and inspire you!

We continued to prioritize fairly compensating School Schmool contributors -- this year we gave honorariums for all the new content printed in the agenda, and we continued to reach out to BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and disabled contributors to prioritize these voices. We continued to print on recycled paper at work with the local printer Katasoho. We ended up getting less funds than we usually would from the Sustainability Action Fund this year, so we are still currently

working on finding other sources of funding.

Due to the current health crisis, only 500 agendas were printed this year, much less than last year. Agendas have been distributed through foodbaskets, Le Frigo Vert, and L'Eugelionne (where they are also available online). We are working on distributing them at various independent bookstores and community locations around the city, whatever makes sense at this time.

(The 2019-2020 edition of School Schmool was coordinated by **Quin Green and Nicholas Raffoul**).



DisOrientation

QPIRG's annual Dis/Orientation provides an alternative orientation for incoming and returning Concordia students, and the communities within the Greater 'Montreal' area, and is based in an intersectional social justice praxis. Dis/Orientation aims to situate Concordia, as an institution, within larger structures that contribute to social inequalities and provide participants with the skills, knowledge, and resources to engage in social justice activism on campus, and beyond. The 2020 event series ran throughout the month of September, ending with a final week-end-long workshop from October 10th to 12th.

Due to the current health crisis,

the series was held online over Zoom in order to facilitate greater accessibility. Unfortunately, due to logistical barriers, ASL, LSQ, speech-to-text, or English-to-French translation was not provided for this year's Dis/Orientation Series, although a call for (paid) translators was publicized on the event pages. QPIRG's Instagram account was resurrected for promotion, which increased the organization's visibility and following on social media. The feedback from the events were extremely positive, as shown in feedback surveys and emails sent to participants.

Dis/Orientation soft-launched with panels and workshops held in collaboration with the Concordia

Student Union, Arts & Science Faculty Association, and Sustainable Concordia. These included "BLM", featuring speakers Harold Jumice (Never Was Average), Melissa Calixte (Hoodstock Montreal), and Jessica Quijano (Iskweu, Native Women's Shelter Montreal); "Cops, Climate, and COVID" featuring Harsha Walia, Ellen Gabriel, and Sandy Hudson; a Wet'suwet'en Teach-In with Marlene Hale; and a GNL-TMX Teach-In. Collaborating with student groups served to increased visibility of both QPIRG-Concordia and Dis/Orientation to Concordia students, as all the events were cross-promoted between the groups on their various social media accounts.

Dis/Orientation wrapped up with events and hosted exclusively by QPIRG-Concordia:

"Critical Introduction to the Canadian Carceral System"

introduced participants to a practical and critical understanding of the Canadian prison system: how it works, how it came to be the way it is, and why. Additionally, it will examine how the institutions that make incarceration possible have been shaped and contested by movements inside and outside of prison walls.

The workshop was facilitated by Patrick DeDauw, a member of the Prisoner Correspondence Project and a researcher in geography at the CUNY Graduate Center. The Prisoner Correspondence Project is a solidarity project for gay, lesbian, transsexual, transgender, gender-variant, two-spirit, intersex, bisexual and queer people in Canadian

and US prisons, linking them with people a part of these same communities outside of prison.

Workshops facilitated by the Tech Witches Collective:

Given the global crises in capitalism, highlighted by COVID-19 and ecological collapse, the Tech Witches Collective facilitated three workshops that aimed to provide practical guidance on and discuss the conditions of internet privacy and protection within the context of ubiquitous surveillance:

“Cybersecurity 4 BBs” provided a basic rundown on digital security and internet privacy on a user level, and was geared for those without previous experience with frameworks of digital/online privacy.

“Cybersecurity, the World & U” offered an introduction to issues of mass-surveillance, cybersecurity, and global solidarity. By covering both theory and concrete examples, we will examine how carceral systems and surveillance culture are instrumentalized against marginalized communities both now and throughout history. We will also address ways in which we each unknowingly participate in these larger systems of personal and global surveillance.

“Gearing up Ur Tech 4 Resistance” covered how to use digital tools to organize, take action, and build solidarity across space, class, and identity. Topics covered included corporate surveillance, government surveillance, online presence, digital violence, legal resources, encryption, virtual private networks.

The Tech Witches, Liane Décary-Chen and Teagan Corazon, facilitated the three workshops, which included guest facilitation from Yuan Stevens.

Liane Décary-Chen is an artist, creative technologist, and community organizer working in digital media and cultural intervention. She is interested in creating work that grows inside of the digital systems she seeks to dissect. More specifically, she uses her own virtual selfhood to explore identity, media, social structures, and issues of “truth.” Décary-Chen worked in numerous fields, including cybersecurity, wearable computing, games, interactive filmmaking, and tech education. She previously collaborated with TAG Lab, Vice Quebec, Cambridge Radical Tech Series, the International Marketplace for Digital Art, and Shanghai Design Week.

Teagan Corazon is an artist whose work focuses on fragmented identities, power, and the embodied self. Primarily working in video and photography, they create audiovisual installations and responsive videos. They are a regular host on Venus Radio (CKUT 90.3 FM),

which highlights racialized, female, trans, gender non-conforming, and queer music production in order to confront patriarchy in the music industry.

Yuan Stevens is an action-oriented researcher working at the intersections of law, policy, and computer security. Her work equips society with the ability to understand and patch up harmful vulnerabilities in sociotechnical and legal systems. She currently advances this work as Policy Lead on Technology, Cybersecurity & Democracy at the Ryerson Leadership Lab as well as the Cybersecure Policy Exchange at Ryerson University. She is a research affiliate at Data & Society Research Institute and a research fellow at the Centre for Media, Technology & Democracy at McGill’s School of Public Policy.

Dis/Orientation received \$1,428 in special project funding from Sustainable Concordia. The promotional materials – including posters and bookmarks – were designed by local artist, **Lo Sirois**. The coordinator for Dis/Orientation was **Gau Mahadevan**.



Community Archive

The QPIRG archive includes hundreds of posters made by activists for organizational activities, events, and programming. The purpose is to preserve these ephemeral symbols of grassroots resistance. This archive has been maintained by various volunteers and coordinators over the years and exists in both physical and digital forms. Currently, the online archive is up to date as of 2016.

Megan Quigley began the position as Community Archive Coordinator in early March. With the support of the QPIRG team, particularly Wade, I was excited to get the archive up to date as well as develop initiatives for supporting its dissemination and animation. Goals for my position included:

- Digitizing and archiving materials collected from 2016-2020
- Supporting with the amplification and dissemination of selected archival materials
- Raising awareness of the existence of the QPIRG archive
- Proposing the implementation of new archiving processes
- Organizing the physical archives and temporary storage systems

Unfortunately, very shortly after beginning my position, Concordia closed in response to the precautions for COVID-19. Because access to the office was restricted, unfortunately these projects were halted. With the QPIRG team we had discussions about other approaches to the archives and other ways to disseminate materials and resources.

In collaboration with the QPIRG Alternative Library team we brainstormed ways of sharing library materials both online and in person. We developed a plan for a library delivery program and also discussed the digitization of QPIRG's zine collection. Together, we developed a list of selected books and resources from the QPIRG library to be reserved and dropped off to members. Due to a personal familial emergency, our Community Archive Coordinator had to return to the West Coast for most of the summer and was no longer able to support with the library delivery program.

As closures related to COVID-19 have continued, these activities have still been suspended. Moving forward, the following initiatives would benefit the QPIRG archives:

- Catching up on the digitization and archiving of pending materials
- The development of an archival storage system for large items
- Disseminating selections from the archive over social media
- Connecting with community groups, artists, researchers, and other archives to raise awareness of the archive and to invite research activities or engagements

(This year the Grassroots Resistance Archive has been coordinated by **Megan Quigley**, with the support of **Wade Walker**).

Research stipends

This year (2019) QPIRG Concordia picked ASTTEQ's Black Transwoman Audio Project for our stipend, and also provided some funding to other applicants.

Black Transwoman Audio Project

Thanks to the Summer Stipend Project **ASTTeQ** has been able to create two episodes (so far) of a four part podcast series entitled the Black Transwoman Audio Project in collaboration with CKUT. The project is on schedule so far and we fully expect it be complete in December with our last episode airing. Since September we have produced one episode a month with our third episode (November) finishing recording this week!

- The first episode was called : Transgressive Femmes : A how-to guide for Black and Arab AMAB'S
- The second episode was called : Parcours Migratoires – Afrique, transidentité et islam
- The third episode yet to be named will explore the issue of mental health.
- The fourth episode yet to be named will explore the dynamics of sex-work.

So far the series has been very positive and enriching. It has given space to black transfeminine people in the city to tell their stories, collaborate with their sisters, and archive underrepresented histories and knowledge.



ASTTeQ, QPIRG-Concordia & Transister Radio Present:
THE BLACK TRANS WOMAN Audio Project
A 4-Part Fall Monthly Series on CKUT 90.3FM
Episode 1:
Transgressive Femmes: A How To Guide For Black & Arab AMABs
Thursday, Sept. 10 at 2PM

With your hosts:
Chris Barbara
Syana Barbara

And special guests:
Amal Aki
Akassa Kassabi

The Prisoner Correspondence Project Zine Project

The Prisoner Correspondence Project is using the QPIRG Concordia Summer Stipend to produce a zine about accountability and harm reduction beyond carceral punishment, based on submissions from our inside membership of LGBTQ prisoners across Canada and the United States.

The publication is rooted in principles of transformative justice, which challenge the widespread idea that harm is caused by the bad behaviour of pathological individuals, and safety is maintained by separating those people from society and placing them inside prisons. Instead, transformative justice understands harmful actions within the context of structural oppressions--such as racism, poverty, and colonialism--while promoting non-carceral, community-based approaches to harm reduction.

PCP's zine aims to address a gap that we see in the existing materials on transformative justice, which mostly focus on addressing harm from the perspective of communities and individuals who have experienced harm. On the other hand, there are few texts that speak to the experience of having committed

harm. PCP are creating a resource on accountability for people who have caused harm, something that is grounded in a prison abolitionist analysis and avoids perpetuating the perpetrator/victim binary.

PCP came to identify the need for an initiative like this from conversations with inside members and outside penpals who are building relationships with incarcerated people. Many of our participants recognize the prison system's failure to address and prevent harm, yet very few of them have access to alternative conceptions of justice and tools for taking accountability. The recent uprisings from the Black Lives Matter movement and campaigns to defund the police have revealed the dire need to dismantle the existing justice system, which criminalizes black and brown people and violently removes them from the broader community via mass incarceration and early death. In this moment, it is more important than ever to involve incarcerated voices in envisioning a radically transformed future.

This summer, PCP included a callout for submissions in the 22nd issue of our newsletter (attached

screenshot), which was mailed to the roughly 3300 active inside members of the project. The callout solicited reflections on non-carceral ways of taking accountability for causing past and ongoing harms. So far, they have received over 50 submissions, with more coming in every week.

After the November 15 deadline, they will select contributions and compile the chosen pieces into a zine, which the PCP collective will design and print ourselves. The zine will be added to a resource library and distributed free of charge to inside members who request it. The publication will then be featured on their website and Facebook page as a resource for outside penpals and volunteers, and also make it available to other organizations in the Concordia community and beyond.

We are using the QPIRG stipend to pay writers of published pieces, cover printing costs for the zine, and provide an honorarium for the PCP collective.

Project Lichen Project

Project Lichen Project is a support group for queer and/or trans survivors of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) focused on creative arts therapy and ecotherapy. Although the second lockdown forced them to postpone their first support group to the spring, **ME Louis and Mycelium** were able to design, coor-

dinate and advertise it in the fall, leading up to a welcoming meeting online. Nine participants signed up and they will check in again once or twice before the group can fully begin.

Documentary project

Geoffrey Pranteau aka. Daybi pronounced (Day-bye) has been producing a short film (with assistance from AQPSUD and PEACE-PARK MTL), to cover the effects of gentrification and what happens to the people who use these public spaces regularly as part of their daily survival and habits. Montreal is a challenging city for many Indigenous people because of the many

barriers presented. And Daybi knows all too well that our systems can be racist towards Indigenous people and that has devastating consequences when it comes to the health of the Indigenous community. The rates of crime, unemployment, lack of services or places to go are all part of the complicated existence for our people. The purpose of this short documentary

is not only going to be used as a current picture of the reality the urban Indigenous population face everyday, but also as an unbiased informative film to educate those trying to learn more about the people involved.

Spatialization of Montreal's Sex Industry

Bee Khaleeli's project is a multimedia exploration of the spatialization of Montreal's sex industry throughout the past century. The final result of the research includes multiple components. First, an interactive map outlining the geographies of criminalization in Montreal, both past and present. Second, a series of easily-accessible infographics on Bee's research

findings, for easy dissemination amongst community members. Last, a summary in a research essay to be posted online, along with companion snippets taken from the research process.

This diverse range of media will ensure engagement across interest and knowledge levels, and ensure that the created work is accessible for a wide audience, sex workers

and civilians alike. Furthermore, a website will allow QPIRG to maintain continuous access to the outcomes of my research and give other community members an opportunity to build upon it in coming years.

Fee Levy Advocacy at Concordia

QPIRG Concordia continues to actively participate and contribute to Fee-Levy Advocacy at Concordia (FLAC) that brings together more than 15 campus-based fee-levy groups.

The CSU executive that was elected in April 2019 ran on a campaign platform based on online opt-outs of fee-levies, which would threaten

the financial stability of all fee levy orgs. They then ran a referendum in fall 2019 on the implementation of online opt-outs. We ran a campaign, along with other fee-levy groups against this but unfortunately the referendum question passed. The CSU executives said they would consult and develop this opt-out system with the fee-levy groups, however the consul-

tations were quite limited. For summer and fall 2020 semesters, opt-outs were processed online. This has greatly increased the number of students who opt-out. We were able to use previous years' surpluses to offset these budget losses and will be able to do so for a couple years to prevent any need for sudden drastic budget cuts.

Working Groups

Programming and Working Groups Highlights

QPIRG Concordia undertakes programming year-long. In addition to core projects like DisOrientation (a full-week of events described elsewhere in this Annual Report), as well as the hundreds of activities organized by working groups. Here are some selected highlights from QPIRG Concordia programming in the past year:

- Anti-colonial Week // Workshop, Panel, & Dinner // Celebration our cultures of resistance to colonialism (November 25th - Dec 3rd): Cinema Politica Film Screening co-sponsored with QPIRG (Artifishal by Josh Murphy, 2019); Introduction to Indigenous Solidarity free workshop to learn ways to better act in solidarity with Indigenous peoples; If it's about the Land, it's about Us: A Climate Justice Panel; ANTI-COLONIAL FALL FEAST, a free dinner & film screening (Biidaaban (The Dawn Comes) by Amanda Strong, 2017), a fundraiser for the Native Friendship Center and the Kanehsatake Land Defense Fund which took place at The Native Friendship Center of Montreal

Among our co-sponsorships, QPIRG Concordia was actively involved the following events and initiatives:

- QPIRG McGill Presents Culture Shock 2019: Culture Shock 2k19: A Community Interface (November 18th)
- Defund the SPVM Coalition
- QPIRG Concordia offered two American Sign Language (ASL) 101 classes sessions of Introductory on Wednesdays in Fall & Winter.



Discretionary Funding and Endorsements

In addition to working group budgets, every fiscal year QPIRG creates a discretionary fund that is open to student and community initiatives that promote social justice in a variety of formats, from conferences and guest speakers, demonstrations and radical art projects. This discretionary fund is accessed by making an application to the Board of Directors. The standard application form is accessible

on the website (qpirgconcordia.org). Groups whose initiatives fall within the parameters of QPIRG's mandate generally receive between \$50 and \$700 per application and, if a group has more than one initiative throughout the year, it can re-apply for funding as new ideas take root. From October 2019 to August 2020, the Board of Directors made discretionary decisions usually once per month,

allocating roughly \$1400 per session. In addition to discretionary funding, groups will sometimes ask for QPIRG's endorsement of their event or project, meaning that they are seeking political support and help with promotion through our networks, rather than financial support.

Below is a list of some of the groups who received discretionary support or endorsements from QPIRG in the past year:

- TAWA Women's Committee Retreat Workshop discretionary funds
- Dure Réalité discretionary funds
- Creative Arts Therapies Students of Colour Alliance (CATSOCA) discretionary fund
- Anticolonial and anti-authoritarian interventions in the climate strike movement discretionary fund
- L'industrielle discretionary fund
- Pop Life! A Kiki Ball discretionary fund
- safrrr.space discretionary fund
- Consent Factory discretionary fund
- Projection Intimes & Salees Collective #5 discretionary fund
- Caribbean Culture Weekend discretionary fund
- 2019 Yellow Door Benefit Dinner discretionary fund
- Manifestation contre le racismisme discretionary fund
- Queer Performance Camp 2020 discretionary fund
- Centre de travailleurs et travailleuses immigrant.e.s (CTI) discretionary fund
- NYE Noise Demo Organizing collective discretionary fund
- What Role Can Workers Play in the Fight Against Climate Change? discretionary fund
- Foire D'Hiver 2020/ Foire D'Hiver Collective discretionary fund
- First Voices Week discretionary fund
- Coopérative de travail Touski discretionary fund
- Fly (film) discretionary fund
- Taking What We Need / Grind'her discretionary fund
- CKUT 90.3 FM Homelessness Marathon 2020 discretionary fund
- Montreal Kiki Ballroom Alliance discretionary fund
- Bibliothèque DIRA discretionary fund
- Living Black Studies discretionary fund
- Writing for Ourselves discretionary fund
- Community Leader Consultation for MMIWg2S, The Native Women's Shelter Iskweu Project discretionary fund
- Trait d'Union / documentary discretionary fund
- Anastasia on behalf of Solidarity for Kahnawake Blockade discretionary fund
- Concordia Film Festival discretionary fund
- Caring For Social Justice discretionary fund
- ASTTeQ Emergency Counter discretionary fund
- Fire & Nice (podcast) discretionary fund
- Solidarity Across Borders - Mutual Aid Fund discretionary fund
- Belonging - Safe Space or BIPOC discretionary fund
- Collective 4891 discretionary fund
- Radlaw McGill H&C Project discretionary fund
- Rad Frosh (QPIRG McGill) discretionary fund
- Queer Sangha space use
- NYE Noise Demo space use
- STAND for Prison Justice space use
- Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) space use
- Extinction Rebellion space use

Below is a list of some of the groups who received discretionary support or endorsements from QPIRG in the past year: (continued)

- Sexual Assault Centre Of McGill Students (SACOMS) space use
- Queer Idea of Fun (Alcoholics Anonymous) space use
- Israeli Apartheid Week space use
- Urban science space use
- Rap Battles for Social Justice space use
- Social Justice Days (QPIRG McGill) space use
- Beyond Equity space use
- Narcotics Anonymous space use
- Queer Sangha space use
- Fee Levy at Concordia (FLAC) space use
- Contre le racismisme et la haine space use
- Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (research retreat) space use
- Cantonese classes space use
- Cantonese playgroup space use
- AGIR space use
- Kemet Knowledge Workshop space use
- Culture Shock (QPIRG McGill) space use



Financial Report

Please note that we do not have our usual draft financial statements included at this time. The transition to working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, along with only having two full-time staff since June has lead to delays into completing all the required records for the 2019-2020 budget year. Financial statements will be added to this report and published on our website when they're completed. Questions can be directed to the Fiance Coordinator at wade@qpirgconcordia.org

Additional financial report for the 2020 QPIRG Annual General Meeting

This is a short additional report to the report given by the Financial Coordinator to give some context as to why QPIRG Concordia will once again not be presenting audited financial statements at this year's annual general meeting (AGM). In the past few years, as most of you are likely aware, QPIRG has undergone some massive changes – most notably in terms of changes in staff and changes in space. These changes occurred during a period of restructuring and reorganization for QPIRG, including, notably, changing to the working groups' financial year to match the fiscal year of QPIRG more broadly – a change which, while perhaps initially somewhat complicated for working groups, will ultimately significantly simplify much of QPIRG's financial activity and recordkeeping. Additionally, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting shutdown

of much activity has also meant delays in terms of the auditing process. That said, financial records for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 are in the final stages of preparation for external financial review (audit). Although not required to, QPIRG has chosen to maintain a practice of undergoing an annual external financial review (audit) and has done so consistently for the past many years. The upcoming audit will be for the previous two financial years, and it will be at the discretion of the QPIRG board in consultation with staff and membership to decide if external financial review should resume a yearly schedule thereafter or if auditing every two years is deemed to be acceptable. Audits for previous years can be found on the QPIRG Concordia website. QPIRG Concordia is committed to maintaining transparency to its membership

around its financial activities. Once the audits from the previous two financial years are completed, they will be posted to the QPIRG Concordia website and otherwise made accessible to QPIRG's membership as per QPIRG's standard practice. We do not anticipate these kinds of delays in financial reviews going forward.

It is also worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic has – obviously – meant some amount of reduction in, and changes to, much of QPIRG's activity. This will necessarily be reflected in the finances for the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

Any questions can be directed to the QPIRG Financial Coordinator or to the bookkeeper who can be reached at bookkeeping@qpirgconcordia.org



**The Annual Report of the
Quebec Public Interest Group of Con-
cordia**