

CONFEDERAL INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

REPORT 2017–2020

As the aging of our population continues to affect Québec and many other regions of the world, in many other regions people are battling unemployment and poverty in a number of ways, including through immigration to foreign countries. In the meantime, people are trying to understand how their societies, workplaces, and living environments are transforming and trying to adapt to these changes.



NOTE REGARDING COVID-19

The confederal committee reports were produced in March 2020 for the convention that was to be held in May 2020. These reports include committee actions that were planned for the period between March and May 2020. Please note that said reports have not been modified and that the period from May 2020 to January 2021 will be covered in the next committee reports, which will be presented at the 67th CSN Convention.

The Liberal and CAQ governments undertook an in-depth reform of Québec's immigration policy primarily focused on the needs of employers. While the CSN and its members have, of course, been concerned by labour issues, we are also concerned with immigration issues related to labour market integration, social inclusion, and the respect of human rights.

These concerns are not new in the history of our movement. In the early 1950s, the CSN was already welcoming 6000 immigrants who were fleeing war and attempting to help them find work, unionize, and integrate (*Le Travail*, December 1952).

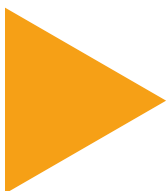
Since then, our workplaces have continued to not only to welcome immigrants, but also include many "racialized" people born in Québec.

In fact, our union members include an increasing number of these Quebecers, whose families immigrated two, three, or even four generations ago, yet are often still considered to be "immigrants" or "visible" minorities. These perceptions indirectly acknowledge that these people may experience racism or racial discrimination. While our membership demographics are changing and will continue to do so in the coming years, it is critical that unions learn more about the realities experienced by immigrants at work.

In this report, the Committee will present the outcomes of its 2017-2020 work plan.

Over this mandate, the Committee intensified its work to better support union actions related to socio-professional integration, union inclusion, and the fight against discrimination.

This work was undertaken in five key areas: labour education, the role of our unions, the role of employers, government policy, and raising public awareness.



Labour education

When it comes to labour education, the Committee tried to raise awareness of issues related to immigration within the CSN movement, and also combated the increase in racism against visible and ethnocultural minorities in a number of ways, including:

Training and information

- **Blog posts** were written by Jacques Létourneau, CSN President, and Véronique De Sève, CSN Vice-President, on issues related to racism, the extreme right, and immigration.
- **Lunch conferences** were held on equal opportunity policies with Marie-Thérèse Chicha, a professor at the School of Industrial Relations at Université de Montréal and the recipient of many awards.
- **Presentations on immigration and intercultural relations** were given to the bodies of certain federations (FC, FNC), central councils (CCMM-CSN), and support networks (CCMM-CSN, APPA-CSN).
- **A presentation on minority representation** in union bodies was given to the Confederal Council.
- **A day of reflection** on Islamophobia, the initiative of the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain (CCMM-CSN), was organized with the Committee's collaboration.
- **A lunch conference** with the historian Aly Ndiaye, a.k.a. Webster, on the contributions of immigrants to Québec society, an initiative of the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain (CCMM-CSN), was organized with the Committee's collaboration.

Actions and communications

- **Provided support and information** during events such as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21).
- **Published and disseminated** the *Déclaration de la CSN contre le racisme, la discrimination raciale et la xénophobie* (CSN declaration against racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia), proposed by the Confederal Intercultural Relations Committee and adopted by the CSN Executive Committee.
- **Consistently contributed to and participated** in the Action Week Against Racism, which is held in Québec each year during the week of March 21.

The role of unions

In order to improve our services for immigrants and racialized people, the Committee offers information and educational tools to unions while also raising awareness about the role of unions on this issue among executive committees, activists, and other committees. We have also been encouraging candidates from ethnocultural minorities to run for union positions.

Union information tools

- **The CSN brochure** on immigration and intercultural relations entitled *Des milieux de toutes les couleurs* (workplaces of all colours) was replaced by a new, downloadable topic-based information kit on the following five topics: immigration and the labour market; integration and social inclusion; participation in union life; occupational health and safety; and discrimination and the right to equality.
- **PowerPoint presentations** for a variety of events covering essentially the same topics as above or focusing more specifically on one specific topic.
- **A directory** of people responsible for intercultural relations in federations and on central councils. We now regularly share tools and information by email.

Raising awareness among activists about the role of unions

- **Held a conference on the occupational health and safety** of immigrants organized in collaboration with the Confederal Occupational Health and Safety Committee. Presentations were given by researchers who have studied the role of French proficiency, communication, and culture in relation to OHS as well as by union representatives who have undertaken initiatives in this area.
- **Included information** on the occupational health and safety of immigrants, intercultural communication, francisation, and the participation of immigrants in union life in kits provided to unions.

Representation of immigrants and their concerns

- **Promoted better representation** of immigrants and racialized people and addressing their concerns within labour bodies, including support networks.
- **Supported an action research initiative** on immigrants and racialized people and union life as part of a research project with UQAM that was carried out in 2018–2019 with support of the federations and the CSN's Service de recherche et de condition féminine (Research and status of women department).
- **Presented and discussed research findings with the Confederal Council.** The research shows that union executive committees perceive there to be a number of members of their unions who are immigrants or racialized people. We also found that union executive committees believed these people experienced very few or no difficulties at work. The research also showed, however, that there are almost no immigrants or racialized people among elected representatives on union executive committees.

The role of employers

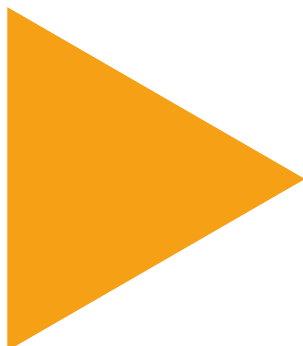
The Committee wanted to get employers more active in integrating immigrants and racialized people. We focused on facilitating workplace co-operation with community groups, unions, support networks, and other CSN committees, as well as promoting francisation efforts in the workplace.

Workplace co-operation

- **Provided information** in kits given to unions on the role of employers, contact information for community groups in their regions that support workplaces in integrating immigrants and offer peer matching programs.
- **Raised awareness** within support networks, committees, and organizations in the movement with regard to the importance of intercultural issues in workplaces and labour relations. Some federations also received support from the Research and status of women department on this issue.

Promoting francisation

- **The Committee** cooperated with the union francisation network as part of a conference on occupational health and safety highlighting the risks associated with poor working language proficiency.
- **Emphasized** workplace francisation programs that include wage compensation during CSN representations with the Ministère du travail (MTESS) and the Ministère de l'immigration (MIFI), and in kits provided to unions.



Government policies

The Committee has been following the amendments made to government policies on immigration. We have also taken part in discussions on CSN representations made to the government during public consultations.

The Commission des partenaires du marché du travail (CPMT)

- **Took part in follow-up** and discussions on a research project entitled “Portrait de l’intégration en emploi de personnes immigrantes au Québec: Expériences et points de vue croisés sur les obstacles systémiques, les éléments facilitants et les ressources” (Portrait of employment integration for immigrants in Québec: intersecting experiences and points of views on systemic barriers, facilitating aspects, and resources) through the Comité consultatif sur les personnes immigrantes (CCPI) of the CPMT.
- **The Union Advisor** provided representation for both the Committee and the CSN on the CCPI of the CPMT.

Government public consultations

- **Made various representations** in favour of a public inquiry commission on systemic discrimination and racism, which only resulted in a consultation forum in the end.
- **Made presentations**, did follow-up, and discussed certain bills related to immigration, which were the subject of CSN briefs.

Other political actions

- **Contributed** to the campaign to allow access to subsidized daycare services for the children of asylum seekers, temporary immigrant workers, and any other immigrants awaiting permanent resident status.

Raising public awareness

The Committee also strives to make the CSN’s positions better understood and contribute to public education through various partnerships.

Activities to raise awareness

- **Organized a workshop** on discrimination and racism in the labour market for the Festival des Solidarités.
- **Our CSN Vice-President** was on a panel organized by ENAP entitled “Égalité et équité sur le marché du travail: quels rôles devraient jouer les syndicats?” (equality and equity in the labour market: what role should unions play?).
- **The CSN union adviser** participated in three courses on unions and immigration at Université Laval and Concordia University.

Partnering with other organizations

- **Took part in Action Week** Against Racism activities with the Immigrant Workers Centre’s (IWC), the TCRS (issues table on systemic racism), the TCRI (issues table of support organizations for refugees and immigrants), the Ligue des droits et libertés (Québec civil liberties union), Amnesty International, and more.

Outlook

We will continue our work in the following four key areas over our next mandate.

Labour education

- **Continue to raise awareness** among CSN movement leaders.
- **Guide organizations looking to hold** trainings and unions looking to raise awareness.
- **Fight against the rise** of the right and denounce racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia.
- **Promote the participation** and representation of immigrants and ethnoculturally diverse people on the executive committees of unions and organizations.

The role of unions

- **Continue to consolidate** the union network through our central councils in all regions.
- **Organize a confederal event** on a major issue related to unions, immigrants, and racialized people in the workplace.
- **Continue to assist support** networks looking to improve their capacity when it comes to listening and action.
- **Support** federations and unions looking to improve prevention and union defense on issues related to racial harassment.

Government policy

- **Convey** the CSN's positions to the Québec government.
- **React to** bills or public consultations as they arise.
- **Support** timely campaigns when relevant.

Raising public awareness

- **Continue to participate** in activities for the Action Week Against Racism, with the Immigrant Workers Centre (IWC), the TCRS (issue table on systemic racism), the TCRI (issue table of organizations that support refugees and immigrants), the Ligue des droits et libertés (Québec civil liberties union), Amnesty International, and more.

Conclusion

The Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms requires that we treat all people living in Québec as Quebecers, no matter the colour of their skin, their ethnic or national origin, their religion, or their language. At the CSN, we believe that the right to equality is not only a legal obligation, but also our responsibility to one another. We're all individually and collectively responsible for building and maintaining the society we all want: a society based on justice, equality, and solidarity... And in working towards this future, unions have a key role to play in our workplaces.

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According to the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (CDPDJ): "The expression 'racialized group' reflects that 'race' is a social construct that we now know has no scientific basis. The past participle 'racialized' refers to the fact that so-called 'races' are the result of external categorization processes carried out by the majority group." *From Mémoire sur le document de consultation "Vers une politique gouvernementale de lutte contre le racisme et la discrimination"* [Brief on the "Towards a government policy to fight against racism and discrimination" consultation document]. (2006). Cat. 2.120-1.28.

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