

CONFEDERAL INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

2020-2023 REPORT



POUVOIR



MAINTENANT



5

**Committee
Members**

8

**2020-2023
Report**

—
CSN's Anti-Racism
Strategy and
Information Kit on
Intercultural Relations

9

**2021-2023
Work Plan**

—
Understand and analyze
the impacts
of systemic racism and
immigration policies

—
Promote social
integration of
recently arrived
immigrants

—

Ensure participation
and representation
of immigrants and
racialized persons

—

Fight racism,
discrimination,
and intolerance in
the workplace

—

Build union support
and solidarity

11

Conclusion



THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS DURING THE PART THREE-YEAR TERM:

DENIS P. BEAUDIN

Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de Gurit-CSN and Conseil central des syndicats nationaux de l'Estrie (CCSNE-CSN), replaced at the end of the term by

PATRICK AMULI

Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs du Service d'aide aux Néo-Canadiens de Sherbrooke-CSN

RAMA DIALLO

Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs du CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal-CSN and Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain (CCMM-CSN)

BLANDINE ÉMILIE

Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs des professeur-es de l'UQAM-CSN and Fédération des professionnelles-CSN

GUERT GÉNÉUS

Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs des agents de la paix en services correctionnels du Québec-CSN and Fédération des employées et employés des services publics-CSN

ALFONSO IBARRA RAMIREZ

Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de Développement et Paix-CSN and Conseil central des syndicats nationaux de l'Outaouais-CSN

ADEM JASAREVIC

Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs des Industries Lassonde and Fédération du Commerce-CSN

MARIE-HÉLÈNE BONIN

Union advisor at the Research and Status of Women Service, as well as

MIREILLE BÉNARD

and later replaced by

NANCY POIRIER,

political advisors to the CSN's Executive Committee, also joined the Committee, and

KATIA LELIÈVRE,

CSN's Third Vice-President and political officer responsible for the Intercultural Relations Committee and intercultural relations issues.

**Intercultural relations, or
interculturalism, has been a
topic of interest for the CSN
for decades. The Confederal
Intercultural Relations Committee
was founded in 1986, but has
changed a great deal over time.
In recent years, it has engaged
in an active campaign to inform
and educate the unions and
the regional and federation
decision-making bodies about
the immigration system,
systemic racism, and inclusion
and diversity within the CSN
movement. The main reason for
this new focus is the growth
in the numbers of people with
immigrant backgrounds in Québec
and in the workplace, and the
precariousness of their rights and
working conditions.**

POUVOIR MAINTENANT





2020-2023 REPORT

At its 66th Convention, in January 2021, the CSN adopted two resolutions committing the union to conducting a Québec-wide campaign and taking action within the Confederation to fight systemic racism. These commitments are part of a new, long-term initiative by the CSN to analyze and take action on intercultural relations, immigration, and inclusion in a more systematic way.

Acting on these resolutions, in spring 2021 the Committee developed a strategy for fighting systemic racism and proposed it to the Confederal Council. This strategy provides a comprehensive vision for acting consistently and persistently over time, through a series of action plans from one three-year term to the next.

This CSN strategy is based on five pillars, which are divided into multiple objectives.

To prepare the unions to implement this strategy, the Committee has produced an information kit on intercultural relations, titled *Pour un syndicalisme inclusif* and consisting of five fact sheets—one for each of the five pillars. The Committee then conducted a tour to present this information kit at meetings of central councils and various federation decision-making bodies.

This kit will also be translated into English for distribution in English-speaking unions.

CSN's Anti-Racism Strategy and Information Kit on Intercultural Relations

STRATEGIC PILLAR	OBJECTIVES	INFORMATION KIT
Understanding and analyzing	Understand and analyze the impacts of systemic racism and immigration policies on our workplaces and organizations, the better to know and serve our members and intervene more effectively with employers and governments	Fact Sheet 1 Immigration to Québec: A Vital Issue
Promoting integration	Promote social integration of recently arrived immigrants by sharing knowledge and tools and the community, with resources available in all regions	Fact Sheet 2 Promoting Social Integration of Immigrants
Inclusion in the union	Ensure participation and representation of immigrants and racialized persons in union structures and the movement's decision-making bodies through consistent positions and ongoing actions	Fact Sheet 3 Inclusion in Union Structures and Union Life
Fighting racism	Fight racism, discrimination, and intolerance in the workplace and promote union values including openness, respect, dignity, and solidarity	Fact Sheet 4 Fighting Systemic Racism and Systemic Discrimination
Building solidarity	Build union support and solidarity around issues that concern all members, and immigrants and racialized persons in particular, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Occupational health and safety – Equal employment opportunity – The fight against casualization 	Fact Sheet 5 Occupational Health and Safety for Immigrants

These concerns are not entirely new in the history of our movement. Back in the early 1950s, the CSN welcomed some 6,000 immigrants fleeing war and strived to help them find work, join unions, and integrate into their new environment (*Le Travail*, December 1952).

Since then, our workplaces have changed considerably. In the 2021 census, people from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds accounted for more than 16% of Québec's population (citizens and non-citizens combined). Thus, our members' backgrounds are changing, and, as they continue to change in the coming years, it will be crucial for unions to know more—not only about the realities that immigrants face on the job, but also about those faced by Québécois who were born here but experience racism and discrimination based on the colour of their skin, their name, their accent, or their religion.

2021-23 WORK PLAN

1 UNDERSTAND AND ANALYZE THE IMPACTS OF SYSTEMIC RACISM AND IMMIGRATION POLICIES ON OUR WORKPLACES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Through informational presentations and sharing of reports, Confederal Committee members have developed their knowledge of and ability to take action on CSN positions in terms of formulating policies on migration and immigrant workers, to fight systemic discrimination, and to promote francization in the workplace.

To evaluate the representation of racialized members within the CSN movement and develop a suitable methodology for the Confederation, the Committee reviewed the work already done by the central councils for Montréal métropolitain and Montérégie. The Committee decided to proceed by asking the unions to conduct a process to encourage buy-in, in which their members and officers self-identify their immigration status and membership in racialized groups through questionnaires or other “consciousness-raising” survey tools.

The Committee was consulted regularly on the analyses and positions that the CSN presented to the government at public consultations and on other occasions, such as meetings of the Immigrant Advisory Committee of the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail (CPMT). In these venues, the CSN underscored the casualization of immigrant workers through the use of temporary foreign workers, asylum seekers, and persons without immigration status to fill labour shortages.

2 PROMOTE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF RECENTLY ARRIVED IMMIGRANTS BY SHARING KNOWLEDGE, TOOLS, AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Committee members attended the activities of many central councils to encourage unions to take an interest in the integration process and become familiar with the external resources available to help them welcome, orient, and include newcomers (persons who have been in Canada for five years or less) in their own regions and to make employers aware of them.

These efforts were supported through the effective use of Fact Sheet 2 in the intercultural information kit, which deals with integration and inclusion of newcomers. The fact sheet lists the community resources available in every region of Québec and encourages CSN organizations to invite representatives from these agencies to participate in various activities.

The CSN also supported the campaign to restore asylum seekers' access to subsidized daycare services. This access had been eliminated by Québec's previous Liberal government, thus preventing asylum seekers from working even when they had work permits. Asylum seekers appealed this decision before the courts and, four years later, won a decision restoring their access—only to have it denied again, when the CAQ government decided to appeal the ruling in the summer of 2022.

3 ENSURE PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF IMMIGRANTS AND RACIALIZED PERSONS IN UNION STRUCTURES AND OUR MOVEMENT'S DECISION-MAKING BODIES

The Committee has promoted the inclusion, participation, and representation of persons from immigrant backgrounds and diverse ethnocultural groups on the executive committees of unions and other organizations. This concern was also expressed in the recommendations which the Committee submitted to the last convention (Thrust 2: Union Life and Mobilization).

Hoping to promote best practices in this area, the Committee made use of Fact Sheet 3, from the intercultural information kit, which deals with participation in union life. During the pandemic, as part of the Québec government's anti-racism action week, the Committee presented a webinar on inclusion of temporary foreign workers in our unions, in collaboration with Manuel Salamanca of the Comité des travailleuses et travailleurs immigrants (Immigrant Workers' Committee).

The movement is devoting more and more attention to creating spaces where racialized persons can express themselves and share their experiences in the labour market and within our organization, and where their

stories and contributions can be heard. One such activity, for example, took place at a day-long event presented in the fall of 2022 by the Conseil central du Cœur-du-Québec-CSN, in which a panel of immigrant members of CSN unions spoke on these subjects.

Lastly, the CSN increased its efforts to promote francization in the workplace—both in a spirit of inclusion and intercultural openness, and also to encourage participation in unions and reduce occupational health and safety risks. Among other things, we shared information about available programs and lobbied government policy-makers to improve access to these programs in the workplace, especially for temporary migrant workers.

4 FIGHT RACISM, DISCRIMINATION, AND INTOLERANCE IN THE WORKPLACE AND PROMOTE UNION VALUES OF OPENNESS, RESPECT, AND SOLIDARITY

In the wake of a growing number of tragic deaths, racism is no longer seen simply as a form of deviant behaviour on the part of individuals, but also as a set of more or less intentional practices within organizations. More unions have become aware of the importance of fighting systemic racism and discrimination in the workplace. Thus, efforts to raise awareness must continue.

Toward this end, the content of the CSN's intercultural information toolkit (especially Fact Sheet 4) was shared with unions, as well as other organizations interested in engaging in education and sensitization efforts, at events held by several central councils, including Québec-Chaudière-Appalaches, Montréal métropolitain, Outaouais, and Montérégie. A poster with the message *Non au racisme* (say no to racism) was also produced and distributed to all the unions.

During the pandemic, a webinar on systemic racism was presented. The webinar featured Myrlande Pierre, vice-president of the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse; Julie Sanogo, then coordinator of the CSN's Legal Department; and Rama Diallo, a member of the Confederal Intercultural Relations Committee.

In addition, our analysis of systemic racism in the employment of temporary foreign workers, asylum seekers, and undocumented workers was shared with CSN members through presentations and articles in the newsletters *En mouvement* and in *Le Point syndical*.

The Committee also supported and informed members about the objectives of campaigns conducted during the pandemic calling for the regularization of immigrants, such as the “guardian angels” campaign, which included actions to fight the expulsion of undocumented worker Mamadou Konaté, and a new campaign for the regularization of persons without status or with precarious status. Activities carried out on this theme included a webinar organized with Amnesty International; a talk at a

meeting of the Confederal Council by François Crépeau, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants; publication of open letters in the media; an intervention by the Syndicat du CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal-CSN to prevent a deportation; several actions by the CCMM-CSN; and, more recently, a mobilization by the Conseil central de Québec-Chaudière-Appalaches-CSN. In fall 2022, the President of the CSN reiterated these demands to the federal and provincial immigration ministers.

5 BUILD UNION SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY AROUND ISSUES THAT CONCERN ALL MEMBERS, AND IMMIGRANTS IN PARTICULAR

The members of the Committee believe that union support and solidarity must be built around issues that are common to all members, regardless of their immigration status or citizenship. Examples of such issues include occupational health and safety, equal employment opportunity, and the fight against casualization. In this spirit, the CSN is demanding that the status of workers with precarious immigration status be regularized so that they can hold decent jobs. For this same reason, diversity was also included in the Make Work Better campaign.

The Committee's members also contributed to the work of mutual support networks and organizations that deal with the occupational health and safety issues specific to newcomers, which is consistent with one of the priorities of the last convention (Thrust 1: OHS). Thus, actions were taken to support the unions, including the mutual support network within the Association professionnelle du personnel administratif (APPA-CSN), representing support staff who work for the Conseil scolaire de Montréal, the agri-food sector unions affiliated with the Fédération du commerce (FC-CSN), and others. Committee members also helped organize a day-long event on this theme, organized by the Conseil central du Cœur du Québec (CCCQ-CSN) in conjunction with National Occupational Health and Safety Week. For this occasion, a video was also produced which other regions may also find beneficial. This was a cross-regional event, with people coming from various regions to participate.

On all these occasions, Fact Sheet 5 from the information kit was distributed to provide more information about diversity in mutual support networks, processing of claims submitted to the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST), discriminatory harassment and psychological health, and other topics.

Another initiative, only just begun during this three-year term, has been created to promote buy-in and build union solidarity, in the ultimate goal of increasing the impact of equal employment opportunity laws (Thrust 3 of the CSN's positions at the last convention: Work). The

Committee is currently formulating a proposal concerning these laws with the intention to use it (as proposed at the last convention) as a basis for future CSN actions. The idea is that the CSN, as a union organization, demand to be included in the development and implementation of future plans for equal employment opportunity, and that the implementation of these plans be expanded to include all employers, as is currently the case for pay equity (as proposed at the last convention).

CONCLUSION

For too long, the CSN had been promoting harmonious intercultural relations without fully considering the obstacles. It has taken the emergence of a staunchly anti-racist discourse and activism to make the CSN, as an organization, aware of the conditions that must be established before the alternative social model known as interculturalism can take root.

This awareness could not be achieved until enough people from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds became CSN members and made their voices heard within our movement. Their growing presence has allowed them, at last, to bear witness to their all-too-frequent experiences with ignorance, prejudice, marginalization, inequality, assimilation, and exclusion. Of course, the combined effects of history, racism, and capitalism may explain the wall of silence that stood in the way of change, until sufficient numbers were finally able to break it down, challenge existing power relationships, and demand equal rights for all.

In response to such critiques, which may be difficult for many to hear, simply continuing to suggest dialogue and collaboration is not enough. No dialogue is possible without recognition of the repeated moral injuries suffered by victims of discrimination, racism, and exclusion. True interculturalism is not possible without a recognition of systemic racism and a critique of capitalism.

The members of the Committee believe that interculturalism is a project for social transformation that demands openness, recognition, inclusion, acceptance of difference, innovation, and change in how we see and do things. Without these prerequisites, the conflicts among us will be hard to resolve, and the risks of their multiplying will increase. It will also be difficult to enlist the participation required to build a future society together, one that is based on social justice, pluralism, and participatory democracy, all in the language of Québec.

To get there, we must not overlook the importance of providing organizational support for the efforts of the CSN's unions, officers, and employees. A study by Jessica Dubé and Daniel Côté, researchers at the Institut de recherche Robert-Sauvé en santé et en sécurité du travail, has shown that in order to take effective action in an intercultural setting, it is necessary to update intercultural competencies at all levels of an organization, to develop

flexible organizational mechanisms, and to provide sufficient time and resources. Otherwise, they argue, the result may be hostility toward ethnocultural diversity—what they term “compassion fatigue.”

The Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms requires that we treat all people who live in Québec as full-fledged Québécois, regardless of skin colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, or language. At the CSN, we believe that the right to equality is not only a legal obligation, but also our ethical responsibility to everyone. We are responsible, individually and collectively, for building and preserving the society of fairness, equality, and solidarity that we wish to see. To achieve this goal, unions have an essential role to play in our workplaces.

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