



QPIRC MCGILL THROUGH THE ERAS

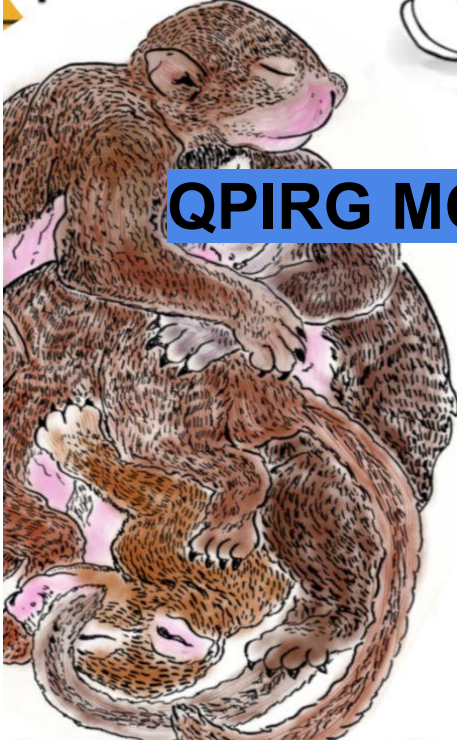


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What is QPIRG McGill?

The Quebec Public Interest Research Group at McGill (QPIRG McGill) is a student-initiated, student-funded, and student-operated organization working toward social and environmental justice. With an anti-oppressive mandate, it seeks to build campus-community alliances to ignite social change and dismantle oppression, including but not limited to the basis of class, race, gender, sexual orientation and dis/ability.¹

This document chronicles the course of QPIRG McGill's history from its inception in 1987 to the present. It details how QPIRG has connected McGill students to the wider Montreal community through socially-engaged research, popular education, activism and working groups at McGill, Milton-Parc, and the wider Montreal community. In providing this history, we show the organization's successes and innovations, as well as the challenges they have faced while running a community-based organization and from running a non-profit in a university environment.

This overview was compiled with information drawn from QPIRG McGill's archives, as well as student media and legal documents. Unless otherwise cited, information is from QPIRG McGill's annual reports and their other

archival material, compiled by staff of the organization.



QPIRG's Alternative Library Space

QPIRG 411: The Need to Know

Working groups:² Working groups are autonomous organizations and collectives made up of students and community members, who undertake action and research into issues at the core of QPIRG McGill's mandate. They organize throughout the year around a plethora of issues, including migrant justice, Indigenous solidarity, worker's rights, local mutual aid, and many more.

QPIRG McGill Independent Initiatives:

*pictured in a timeline on the following page

Rad Frosh: A three-day long alternative orientation to McGill University and Tiohtià:ke (Montreal) during the end of August. The unique experience gives

¹ <https://qipirgmcgill.org/our-mandate-new/>

² <https://qipirgmcgill.org/about-working-groups/>

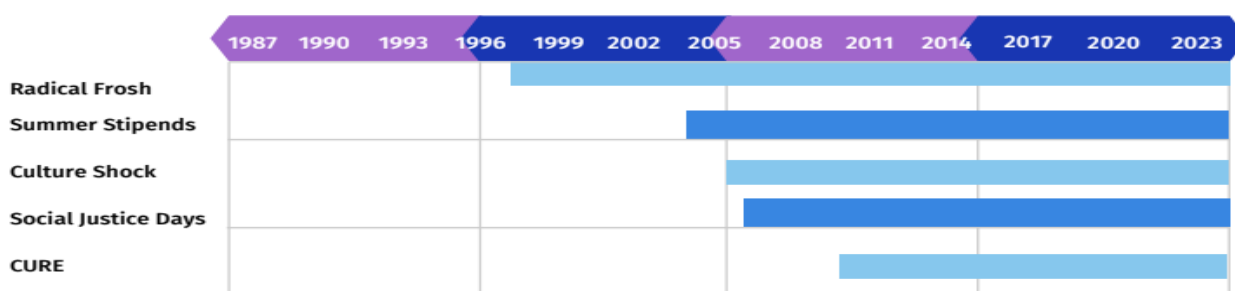
students the chance to get to know activist and community groups on campus and beyond, while also introducing them to more social justice issues.³

Culture Shock: An annual event series on anti-racism, migrant justice, and Indigenous solidarity. It brings together racialized communities to discuss issues relevant to their lives, as well as to allow those who do not belong to these communities to learn more about struggles against racism, colonialism and border violence. Culture shock includes panels, workshops, film screenings, performance nights and fundraiser parties.⁴

Summer Stipends: QPIRG McGill's summer research stipends are intended to provide individuals or groups with budgets/honoraria to work over the summer (June-August), doing research leading towards action and change within the Montreal community.⁵

Spring into Action (previously known as Social Justice Days): An annual event series that is organized and funded by QPIRG McGill and the Students' Society of McGill University. Intended to stimulate an alternative political culture in the McGill community and beyond, Spring into Action involves a week of workshops, discussions, film screenings, and social events engaging local and global issues.⁶

Community University Research Exchange (CURE): CURE facilitates research collaborations between university students and grassroots community groups. The program was formed as a response to concrete research needs voiced by community groups lacking resources. Through CURE, QPIRG McGill wishes to channel the resources and privilege of the University towards groups working for social change, and to provide resources for students to perform relevant, action-oriented academic work.⁷



³ <https://qpirgmcgill.org/rad-frosh/>

⁴ <https://qpirgmcgill.org/cs/>

⁵

<https://qpirgmcgill.org/summer-research-stipend/>

⁶ <https://qpirgmcgill.org/spring-into-action/>

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<https://qpirgmcgill.org/community-university-research-exchange-cure/>

The Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU): The SSMU is McGill's undergraduate student union, of which every undergraduate is a member. The SSMU advocates for students' interests and represents them to the McGill administration. SSMU works for fairer academic justice processes, better quality instruction, and improved services for students.⁸

SSMU Independent Student Groups (SSMU ISGs): An Independent Student Group is an organization that exists independently outside the framework of the SSMU but is affiliated with SSMU because of its involvement on campus.⁹

Judicial Board (J-Board): The Judicial Board is a body of the SSMU Board of Directors which has the authority to render opinions on matters which the SSMU Constitution or Internal Regulations specify.¹⁰

Memorandum of Agreement: A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is a written document describing a cooperative relationship between two parties wishing to work together on a project or to meet an agreed-upon

⁸ <https://ssmu.ca/who-we-are/>

⁹ <https://ssmu.ca/student-life/independent-student-group-isg-resources/how-to-become-an-independent-student-group-isg/#:~:text=An%20Independent%20Student%20Group%20is,of%20its%20involvement%20on%20campus.>

¹⁰ <https://ssmu.ca/how-we-run/judicial-board/#:~:text=The%20Judicial%20Board%20is%20a,Constitution%20or%20Internal%20Regulations%20specify.>

objective. An MOA serves as a legal document and describes the terms and details of the partnership agreement and is more formal than a verbal agreement but less formal than a contract. QPIRG McGill has MOA with McGill and the SSMU.¹¹

Referendum: The principle or practice of submitting to popular vote a measure passed on or proposed by a legislative body or by popular initiative. Referendums for all independent student groups (ISGs) at McGill were initiated in 2007 and are run through the SSMU.¹²

METHODS

As students of the McGill GSFS 400 Capstone course, we were assigned a research project in collaboration with QPIRG McGill to develop an article on their history and social impact. Our research question, as investigated in the following article is "how did the QPIRG system evolve over its lifetime in Montreal, and how has this organization participated in and contributed to social movements/change in the province?" This project was overseen by professor Dr. Alexandra Ketchum.

¹¹

<https://acqnotes.com/acqnote/careerfields/memorandum-of-agreement-moa>

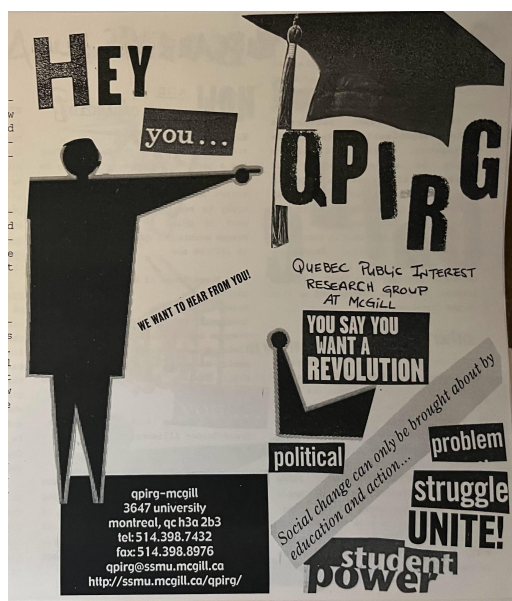
¹²

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/referendum>

The following article presents QPIRG McGill's overarching history and social impact chronologically through three main eras: birth-2002; 2002-2012; and 2012-present, under the key themes in each era.

ORGANIZATION HISTORY

ERA #1: 1987-2002



Early promotional material

Establishment and Development of QPIRG

QPIRG-McGill emerged as part of a network of Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG's) that began in the United States in the early 1970s. Very early on, they define themselves as "[...] a fledgling non-profit student organization aimed at promoting positive social change in Québec [...] open to student ideas concerning how and what

the organization can do to fulfill its goals," citing environmentalism, social equality, education, and culture as some of their interests. Due to their affiliation with other Public Interest Research Groups, much of their early operation is grounded in the structures and values of the PIRG's more broadly—they consider and reference various late 70s-early 80s agreements, constitutions, and by-laws from mainly Ontario and BC PIRG's and communicated frequently with OPIRG's through their establishment at McGill. As is the case with its counterparts in other provinces, QPIRG-McGill would be provincial in its aspirations, welcoming anyone who wished to join, and would be funded by an opt-outable per student, per semester fee.

The organization sought to be officially recognized in a 1987 letter to the SSMU program director. In the letter, the general coordinator of the PIRG Organizing Club, Marinda Van Dalen expressed the group's wishes to establish an autonomous PIRG on McGill's campus. QPIRG-McGill would then undergo years of negotiation surrounding their constitution and fee levy referendum, with the principal issues taken by the Dean of Students and Board of Governors being QPIRG's attempted provincial approach and wishes to control their own finances. In an undemocratic appeal—not unlike the continuing actions of McGill administration—claims were made that students did not know what they were voting for in their approval of

QPIRG-McGill. As such, the provincial aspirations which necessarily included a partnership with the emerging QPIRG-Concordia could not be supported. QPIRG-McGill elected to instead pursue a provincial approach in spirit by maintaining an identical organization to QPIRG-Concordia as per the advice of a lawyer, and were eventually able to gain the right to control their own finances. Their constitution was ratified in November of 1988 and QPIRG-McGill would begin to function as an SSMU-recognized, student-funded organization. They would continue their close-knit work with QPIRG-Concordia, later also forming close relationships with GRIP's Université de Montréal and UQAM. Their earliest work is most significantly defined by environmentalist action, the Housing Project, and their long-running Research Internship Program.

Environmentalist Action

The most significant and broadly engaged-with initiatives through the beginnings of QPIRG were related to environmentalism. Several projects taken on by many levels of student organizing and pursuing many different avenues of impact including direct action, appeals to legislation, and attempts to change campus policy were made. These actions also received comparatively significant attention in the media—particularly student-run media—making them some of the more well-documented of QPIRG's

endeavours. Several waste management programs were proposed and pursued, with QPIRG and its working groups being instrumental to the establishment of recycling on campus, reduction of single-use waste in McGill cafeterias, as well as research into composting facilities and other long-term energy and water use reduction solutions—including purchasing dishwashers for various facilities. QPIRG highlighted McGill's waste production in a 1994 garbage audit, where students used the football field to compile and sort the six tonnes of waste produced on campus in one day, demonstrating the necessity of the proposed programs. Many groups would also prepare reports which highlighted the shortcomings of McGill and other institutions—including the government of Quebec—in their environmental policies. Some of these documents were produced with GRIP U de M and presented to the corresponding legislative bodies. QPIRG also extended their reach by working with other off-campus environmental initiatives like GreenPeace through the Research Internship Program. They would shift to a less localized approach and more into support of a national environmentalist perspective through the later 1990s, which was also much more grounded in Indigenous land defence. QPIRG-McGill ultimately showcases a significant engagement and material impact with this cause, developing its working basis on some of the initiatives pursued in this interest.

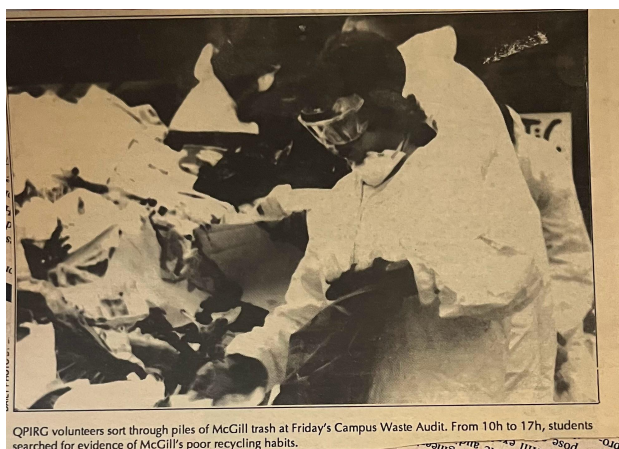


Photo from a campus newspaper article about the waste audit

The Housing Project

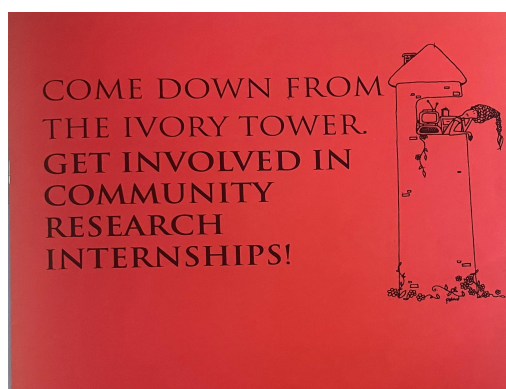
Another of QPIRG-McGill's foundational interests—with work beginning in 1989-90—manifested in the form of a Housing Project which, at the time of its doors opening in 1994, went by the Pink Triangle Student Housing Co-Op and was the first of its kind in Montreal. The initiative formed as an effort to become involved in local housing activism (including opposing the City's 1992 intention to lift bans on the conversion of rental units into condos) as well as to provide permanent, affordable solutions to the rising costs of rent students were paying, particularly downtown. Its members worked to support the initiative by stressing the institutional nature of its efforts, recruiting the support of other student orgs, encouraging SSMU to become involved in the social situation of students off campus, as well as recruiting and training co-op members to live in the student-owned building. As a notably developmental and therefore

long-term initiative, they struggled over some years with maintaining student interest, but most significantly with securing a building for the eventual co-op, with several options falling through for one reason or another. However, the Pink Triangle Student Housing Co-Op would continue to work towards creating a space where McGill, Concordia, and UQAM students could all live, stressing the importance of having students from a variety of backgrounds. The co-op maintained membership with NASCO (North American Students of Cooperation) and received financial support from two Ontario campus co-ops.

QPIRG's Research Internship Program

QPIRG's Research Internship program spanned almost the entirety of this first era, and extended much past 2002. The initiative was a particularly successful collaboration between QPIRG-McGill, university and community-based organizations, and McGill students and faculty who would work with the organizations to complete the projects. A mutually beneficial situation for everyone involved, the popular program embodied the values of QPIRG in creating university-community partnerships, lasting relationships with faculty, and opportunities for students to earn academic credit while linking theory with practice, reaching out of the ivory tower as the publicity for this program encouraged (pictured below). At McGill in particular, one of the

founding projects of the program took place in a geography class taught by current professor Thom Meredith. Student Melissa Abbott's study of the feasibility of on-campus recycling of glass and tin provided information to QPIRG which later helped establish recycling on McGill's campus. An incredibly popular program, it spanned McGill, UQAM and Concordia campuses, the QPIRG/GRIP's working together on this program each year.



From a Research Internship Program information booklet

ERA #2: 2003-2012

This period of QPIRG McGill's development is not only marked by a strong solidification of its status in the McGill and Montreal space, but it is during this time that QPIRG McGill develops in a way that reflects a personified embodiment of its current mission statement.

During this time, QPIRG McGill continued to heavily forefront its research, awareness and activism

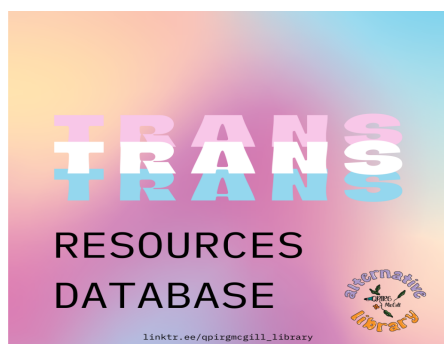
through lenses of social and environmental justice, a focus that has been integral to their mandate since its development and can still be found today. As is also representative of QPIRG McGill's current praxis, this was pursued through hosting self-run groups, events and programs, many of which are still currently seen at McGill. QPIRG McGill also continued its work in maintaining and fostering lasting affiliations and partnerships with working groups. Although this is by no means an extensive list, some examples of these working groups include: No One is Illegal Collective and Solidarity Across Borders, two working groups that are centred around anti-deportation activism and migrant justice; Queer McGill and QUEER TEAM, two working groups that focus on LGBTQIA+ activism; Greening McGill, a student led working group that is centred around climate justice; and ALCAN'T, a solidarity campaign created to support people in India whose land is being invaded by the mining company ALCAN.

2003-2004

The years 2003-2004 marked a time when QPIRG McGill heavily forefronted social justice as a primary pillar in its working relations, activism, and affiliations. This prioritization of social justice-related work placed environmental justice, although prominent, as secondary. Looking into the work done by QPIRG McGill, as well as its working group affiliations, prominent themes emerged during this

period, such as LGBTQIA+ activism, anti-racism, antiglobalization and migrant justice.

QPIRG McGill's affiliations with working groups during this time reflected involvement and subsequent support of their missions primarily through providing funding, and secondarily by partnering with these groups for the different QPIRG events. Some examples of working groups that were prominent during this period include: Trans 101, a working group that forefronts trans activism with which QPIRG McGill partnered to host workshops and panels in the McGill space; PMAWTO (Popular Mobilization Against the World Trade Organization) in which QPIRG McGill provided funding to and collaborated with in the planning of protests and marches centred around antiglobalization; and No One is Illegal, which QPIRG McGill partnered with under the "Act Now to Prevent Deportation" Campaign through providing funding and collaborating to host marches and panels centred around the issue of Palestinian deportation.



QPIRG McGill's Trans Resource Database

Throughout this period, QPIRG McGill solidified a number of its long-term partnerships with working groups such as No One Is Illegal, CKUT Radio (a non-profit McGill Campus radio), ALCAN'T, and Greening McGill in the latter end of 2004. Additionally, it is also during this time that QPIRG McGill continued to grow Rad Frosh with themes including Queer/trans activism and inclusion, Indigenous resurgence, and environmental justice. Similarly, 2004 marked the first year that the QPIRG McGill archives kept record of its Summer Stipends program, with this year's research producing a workshop series about immigrant/refugee support work.

2005-2007

By 2005, QPIRG McGill began to reintegrate environmentalism as a large area of focus alongside its social justice work. Major themes of activism and initiatives were oriented around migrant justice, pollution and waste reduction, LGBTQIA+ activism and international solidarity, which were further exemplified through working group relations.

For example, QPIRG McGill partnered with Greening McGill not only through the providing of funding for an event intended to reduce styrofoam and paper waste on McGill campus, they also collaborated on events such as a "Car-Free Day" event held at Rue McTavish. Moreover, QPIRG McGill also worked prominently with Parc Ex Migrants, a working group that hosted

an initiative with fellow organizations including QPIRG McGill, Solidarity Across Borders and No One Is Illegal to create a workshop series for refugees going through the immigration system as well as marches to fight against Palestinian deportation. QPIRG McGill also continued to provide funding to various working groups that produced such as Listen Up (a program that provided free sound production tradition for queer, trans and intersex people) and Queer McGill.

As of 2005-2007, QPIRG McGill had continued work on long-term initiatives, while also developing new independent initiatives. Ongoing initiatives included another successful series of Rad Frosh, with an approach that integrated the SSMU as well as working groups such as CKUT Radio and Solidarity Across Borders in its events, panels, and workshops. Similarly, under a reduced budget, therefore limiting the extensivity of summer stipends during this time, QPIRG McGill partnered with School Schmoool in 2007 to allocate one research project towards bettering their physically distributed items such as agendas and daytimers, while the other research project focused on integrating alternative health into palliative care. 2006 marked the first year that QPIRG McGill implemented initiatives such as Culture Shock and Social Justice Days, with Culture Shock being oriented around decolonization, migrant and refugee justice, and anti-racism. Social

Justice Days, through a series of events, forefronted issues in the realms of LGBTQIA+ activism as well as climate justice.

2008-2012

Following QPIRG McGill's steady reintegration of environmental activism, 2008-2012 proved to be a period wherein social justice and environmentalism as dual pillars were taken up in equal parts, further informing QPIRG McGill's praxis. Throughout this period, major themes included: climate justice, food sovereignty, LGBTQIA+ inclusion, antiracism, gender empowerment, anti-urbanization, international solidarity and human rights to land, and decolonization.

In regards to environmentalism, QPIRG McGill continued to work closely with Greening McGill by providing steady funding, collaborating in events, and involving themselves in initiatives such as climate justice marches and protests. It was also during 2011 when QPIRG McGill began working with the Milton Parc Ad Hoc Committee, a working group that was formed to fight against the urbanization and subsequent destruction of greenspaces and parks in Plateau-Mont-Royal. In incorporating environmental justice into its social justice initiatives, QPIRG McGill also involved itself in events such as the Milton Parc Affair intended to fight gentrification in the Plateau-Mont-Royal area. QPIRG McGill also began working very closely, through funding and

collaboration, with working groups such as Barrier Lake Solidarity and KANATA, two organizations that work towards Indigenous resurgence and decolonization.

By 2008, the majority of QPIRG-McGill's second era independent initiatives had already been established and continued through into its third historical era. Rad Frosh continued to thrive, with major themes including feminism, food politics, migrant justice, climate justice, and LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Similarly, Summer Stipends during this time were conducted with the intent of fitting a social as well as environmental justice mandate, with emphasis on issues that extend outside of Quebec, to develop broader Canadian and international representation. Events series like Culture Shock and Social Justice Days also follow this mandate, with common themes including antiracism, migrant justice, colonialism and capitalism. It was then in 2010 that QPIRG McGill launched its involvement in its final second-era initiative: Community-University Research Exchange (CURE), a database where students can integrate their academic research with the work of local movements and off-campus activist organizations.

ERA #3: 2012-Present

Referendums

Since its establishment in 1988, QPIRG McGill collected a fee from all SSMU members to fund its activities and services. QPIRG-McGill relies heavily on student membership fees to sustain its operations and programming, overseen by McGill's Administration. The regulation of these fees is achieved through referenda.

McGill University and QPIRG McGill entered a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) from June 1, 2007, to May 31, 2012. The university also facilitates QPIRG McGill's lease and utilities as outlined in the MoA. Given this context and the administration's stance, the board and staff encounter significant challenges in negotiating amendments to the MoA that would greatly benefit QPIRG and its members. This difficulty arises from McGill's repeated rejection of proposed changes, often without providing transparent justifications for discussion.

To ensure continued student support, McGill mandates QPIRG McGill to conduct a referendum every five years before renewing the MoA. This requirement significantly impedes the board and staff's ability to sustain the organization's programming, leading to considerable burnout among both the board and staff members. Ongoing discussions are being conducted to strategize on overcoming these challenges. SSMU facilitates this referendum on behalf of QPIRG McGill,

with the SSMU Constitution outlining its requirements. SSMU Elections, responsible for overseeing all referenda, is led by a Chief Electoral Officer with the authority to issue sanctions. The SSMU has granted the Judicial Board (J-Board) the power to impartially adjudicate any disputes arising from referenda.

Key Referendum #1: November 2011

During the Fall 2011 semester, members of SSMU McGill participated in a referendum that included two questions addressing QPIRG-McGill's ongoing existence and the modification of the current online opt-out mechanism. The referendum took place from November 4 to November 10, 2011, with approximately one-quarter of the student body taking part. On the evening of November 10, the results were announced, revealing that 65% of participating students voted in favor of QPIRG-McGill's question.

On November 11, 2011, a notice of appeal to the Director of McGill's Student Advocacy Program recommended challenging the constitutional validity of QPIRG-McGill's referendum question. The J-Board ultimately decided to invalidate QPIRG McGill's question, citing its unclear nature. The approach of combining two issues in the manner proposed was considered a violation of the SSMU Constitution. The concerns regarding QPIRG-McGill's two questions were deemed different enough that an

informed voter could reasonably vote "yes" for QPIRG-McGill's continued existence and "no" to changing the online opt-out mechanism. Therefore, an exceptional referendum was held in Winter 2012 in which a decision was reached to simplify the referendum question by focusing solely on whether students supported the existence of QPIRG McGill, as opposed to addressing two distinct issues. Consequently, the revised question did not include considerations about the opt-out mechanism for QPIRG's student fee, which would continue to be available online. QPIRG McGill emerged victorious in the referendum, with students expressing their overwhelming support. As a result, QPIRG McGill will continue to operate its services as usual.



McGill Tribune article discussing the 2011 appeal

2012

The 2012 Quebec student strikes and protests over the Quebec government's proposed tuition fee increase—colloquially known as the Printemps Érablé—marked a new era for QPIRG McGill.¹³ Before the official start of the strikes on February 12th, McGill students and Mob Squad¹⁴ members led a protest of their own on February 7th in response to the McGill administration rejecting the results of the CKUT and QPIRG referendums. This protest later became known as the #6party solidarity camp, which sought to defend CKUT and QPIRG McGill as important pillars in the McGill community “whose social justice mandate benefits all of us”.¹⁵

The Printemps Érablé and #6party action, while seemingly insular, provided an opportunity for QPIRG McGill to emphasize their mandate of connecting students to activism and social movements to larger contexts beyond the university. The board took the initiative to create a resource center for progressive student organizing. Their other work included offering skillshares and workshops, like the “Reclaim Your Education Week”, which spoke to the nuts and bolts of organizing work and various social and environmental issues. Following that, the 2011-2012 edition of School Schmool, in anticipation of the

¹³

<https://www.thetribune.ca/news/2011-2012-year-in-review-2/>

¹⁴

<https://www.mcgilldaily.com/2017/02/mob-squad-2012-student-protests/>

¹⁵ This is Fucking Class War, Collectif Dix Novembre

student strike, specifically featured dates from the history of Quebec student organizing

Following this thread is the Study in Action (March 2012) opening panel, which featured different speakers from a variety of resistance movements “from Tahrir Square to Spain’s indignados, from Occupy Wall Street to local community organizing [against gentrification],”¹⁶ Alongside this series was the introduction of Art in Action, which highlights creative expression on social and environmental justice issues through diverse mediums.

2014-2015

The 2014 edition of Study in Action (held in March) was the first year that QPIRG McGill collaborated heavily with GRIP UQAM for the event, allowing for a substantially higher number of UQAM students and francophone content at the conference, occurring in addition to their usual collaboration with QPIRG Concordia. This partnership with UQAM proved to be mutually beneficial for all parties through building a coalition between anglophones and francophones. This edition of Study in Action was notable in that much of the programming had been informed by the charged political climate in Quebec stemming from the proposed Québec Charter of Values (Bill 60). The event also incorporated the International Day Against Racism by holding workshops

¹⁶

<https://www.qpirgconcordia.org/2012/02/study-in-action-opening-panel-re-creating-the-commons/>

on anti-racist, anti-Islamophobic, and anti-charter organizing, and collaborating with Ensemble contre la Charte xenophobe on an Anti-Colonial, Anti-Racist, Anti-Charter Demonstration.

In March 2015, QPIRG McGill's popular education committee organized From Austerity to Solidarity, a two-day popular education workshop series, planned in conjunction with Spring 2015 student strikes across Quebec. The series had a large turnout that engaged McGill students and community members on a broad range of issues relating to austerity, the history of student strikes at McGill.

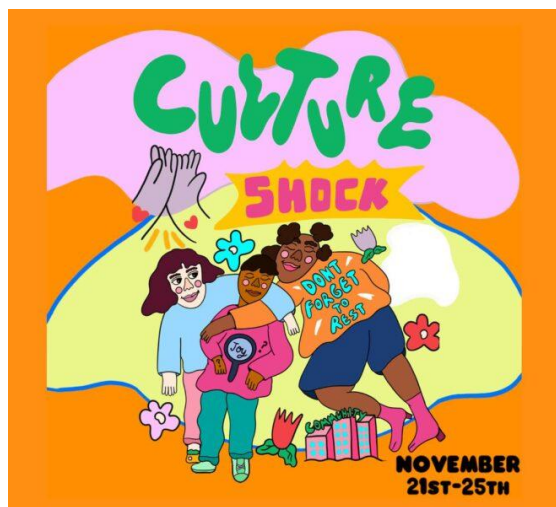
2016

Coming into 2016, we see organizational and structural changes with new committees and positions, including the Working Groups and Community Research Coordinator, which focused on building QPIRG-McGill's community-driven research programs and providing resources, training and support to working groups. Moreover, the Radical Research Committee was established, replacing the pre-existing CURE Committee, and was responsible for organizing the newly created Radical Research Days event series. The purpose of this new event series was to present CURE and QPIRG McGill's other research initiatives to both first-year students and several academic departments, as well as envision the

direction of QPIRG McGill's radical research work.

As part of the Radical Research Days series, there were "Research in Action" and "Research in Rez" workshops, which explained the concept of community-driven social justice research, and a panel on the difficulties of doing research in and about Palestine as a part of Israeli Apartheid Week. They also organized the "PCParty" with the Prisoner's Correspondence Project, where participants answered research requests from prisons. Finally, they held an Audit-A-Thon, co-organized with QPIRG-Concordia, where participants completed accessibility audits of various locations around McGill and Concordia campuses for the Radical Accessibility Audit Project (RAAP).

Another new project was the Radical Research Mixtape, which was launched alongside the 7th edition of Convergence, an annual journal that was co-published by QPIRG-McGill and QPIRG Concordia. Both Convergence and the Radical Research Mixtape featured pieces grounded in struggles for prison abolition, Indigenous solidarity, as well as against police violence and anti-black racism, from students, writers and activists both inside and outside the McGill campus.



QPIRG's Culture Shock

Key Referendum #2: November 2016

In the fall semester, a referendum was conducted by QPIRG, prompted by the impending expiration of the MoA with McGill in 2017. The outcome of the referendum was a majority "yes" vote, indicating that students supported the continuation of funding for QPIRG McGill through an opt-outable student fee of \$5 per semester. The significance of this financial support lies in its role in maintaining QPIRG McGill's operational budget which allows for the continuation of its services and existence.

2020-2022

In mid-March 2020, all of QPIRG's activities were disrupted by the unprecedented quarantine surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak, leading to the closure of McGill campus and the QPIRG McGill office. All members transitioned to working from home for the duration of the quarantine and to the best of their abilities, adjusted to

managing operations. Previously planned event series like Social Justice Days (March 2020) were cut short, with intentions of postponing events to fall of 2020. Their first foray into organizing events solely online was the August 2020 Rad Frosh.

As the year rolled on, QPIRG received more requests for mutual aid funds striving to meet the immediate needs of different communities around Montreal. Examples of these organizing efforts include Park Ex Mutual Aid and Montreal Student Initiative for COVID-19 Response & Relief. Research projects also reflected themes of Mutual aid, including one of the 2021 Summer Stipends: "Voices from the Frontlines", a project by the Montreal chapter of Kapit-Bisig (Kapit-Bisig Laban COVID¹⁷).

Navigating the pandemic through 2021 and into 2022, QPIRG McGill moved to an online-only format for events like Culture Shock and Social Justice Days, while other activities like Rad Frosh 2021 operated in a hybrid fashion. Again, themes of mutual aid and community building very much guided the different events, programming, and working groups.

Key Referendum #3: Fall 2021

This referendum achieved similar results to the November 2016 referendum. QPIRG McGill received a majority "yes" vote in which the organization shall continue as a

¹⁷ <https://kapitbisig.ca/about>

recognized student activity supported by a fee of \$5 per semester from undergraduate students.

How do QPIRG McGill's Referendums determine their social impact?

It is up to students to help fund QPIRG McGill. If the organization continues to receive “yes” votes, this reaffirms students' endorsement of and belief in the services they run and the positive work they do for the McGill community. The referendums also force QPIRG McGill to justify its services and activities to a student body. In turn, they must figure out the best way to market themselves which is no small feat.

2022- Onward

QPIRG McGill would once more navigate changes when they moved their office from Rue University to Avenue du Parc in the early summer of 2022. After working in the same space for thirty years, this move, in some ways, marks a new era that reflects their mandate of connecting students to larger movements by moving outside the immediate McGill bubble. While they are ten minutes away from the previous location, the new office space is framed as a community office that shares space with other like-minded social justice-oriented groups, like the Citizens Committee of Milton Park and Comm-un, a collective “that participates in efforts to support [and empower] people who are homeless or at risk of

being homeless through housing, mediation, and healthy cohabitation”¹⁸.



QPIRG's shared office space with CCMP on Av du Parc

Through the third era, QPIRG McGill cemented itself as a vital member of the McGill community and as a crucial organization in the greater social and environmental justice activist space within Montreal and beyond.

Despite many years of navigating campus and administrative politics, there were years when QPIRG McGill received affirmation through “yes” votes in the referendums with little pushback. The importance of being able to allocate their energy to wider community activities and outreach, as well as internal affairs and managing member burnout cannot be understated.

Since its inception, they have continued to provide a space to learn,

¹⁸ <https://comm-un.org/home>

discuss and act on progressive issues. The continuation of QPIRG features like School Schmool, Rad Frosh, Culture Shock, and Social Justice Days (now known as Spring into Action) receive consistent student attendance and student media coverage. They have also consistently maintained their research activities through various research projects and programs, which have platformed important and often underrepresented voices and perspectives.

REFLECTING ON QPIRG-MCGILL'S SOCIAL IMPACT

As an organization with a long and continuing history at McGill, QPIRG has facilitated several programs, supported various social justice, environmental, and anti-colonial initiatives, provided resources to groups pursuing important actions, and formed relationships with university and community partners. Maintaining student support across the years of their activities, QPIRG has supported and continues to support anti-oppressive and student-led action, even while the goals and interests of the organizers fluctuate. Considering how they have truly altered the experience of McGill, the campus itself, and how they have created avenues for students to engage with the larger Montreal area, QPIRG's social justice work has fostered a community within Montreal organizing.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Given the scope and limitations of this research project, the future implications function as our recommendation for how QPIRG McGill can use the article as a base on which they can further build.

Preservation and Maintenance of Institutional Memory

As a primarily student-run organization, there is a cyclical turnover of staff and board members, resulting in the loss of institutional knowledge. A sticking point since 1992, the turnover creates a challenge to their growth as an organization, limiting possibilities for certain long-term projects as members come and go. Due to the nature of the physical archives, information from pre-2010 is limited to whatever physical documents had been kept by the members at that time and over time. There also exist limitations with electronic archives, as the information is not easily accessible beyond members of QPIRG.

While clearly a condensed history, this project provides current and future members with a primer on the organization's history and sociopolitical context under which the organization operated. This is especially relevant as current members are reflecting on how the organization has changed, and how they would like to develop and expand.

Measuring Impact

Our research also revealed the recurring problem in the org's ability to access funding and/or the necessity to increase its funding to maintain itself as an organization. Furthermore, QPIRG McGill has often found itself having to justify its existence and utility as an organization within the McGill context. This article can therefore be referenced when providing examples of the work they have done and the impact made both within and outside the McGill community.

It would be worthwhile to further develop a more in-depth historical document that also follows up on the different research projects, community initiatives, events, and programs.

