

Presentation of the Research Diversité d'Abord

Diversité d'Abord: Racism in the nonprofit sector in Quebec
A research project by the Centre for Community Organizations (COCo)

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This introduction is part of the research project, Diversité d'Abord.
To access the full report, please click here: https://coco-net.org/diversite-dabord/

The Authors

The lead researcher on this project was Emily Yee Clare.
The report was co-authored by Emily Yee Clare and Kira Page.
The lead data scientist on this project was Alexandra Heggie.
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All of the included photos in this report were taken by Stacy Lee during our day-long Diversité d'Abord forum in May 2017.

This research has been in progress for several years and has benefited from the expertise of many people. We are thankful to members of the COCo team and Board who have supported this work, including Amaya Athill, Juniper Belshaw, Emil Briones, Parker Mah, Fabiola Mizero Ngirabatware, Jeneffer Ndahayo, Janie Janvier, Florencia Vallejo, Adjo Chevalier, Stéphanie Darbouze Lamarre, Cora-Lee Conway, Richenda Grazette, Miatta Gorvie, Julia Couture Glassco, and Homa Khairi.

We are also grateful to our external readers and supporters: Camilla Gordillo, Myriam Zaidi, Ainsley Jenicek, Kama La Mackerel, Régine Debrosse, Tiffany Ashoona, Kelly Schieder, Délice Mugabo, Pascale Brunet, Robyn Maynard, Shanice Yarde, Karine-Myrgianie Jean-François, Sunny Doyle, Edward Ou Jin Lee, Adrienne Piggott, and Paul Tshuma.

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Diversité d’Abord is a research project conducted by the Centre for Community Organizations (COCo) between 2016 and 2024. The presented data was collected from 252 people via two online surveys for Quebec-based community sector workers of all racial backgrounds, and 5 focus groups with racialized community sector workers. A portion of our findings are detailed in three introductions and two chapters. We outline our choice of terminology when discussing racism in the Quebec community sector context, present the infographic "The ‘Problem’ Woman of Colour in the Workplace," and detail our analysis of the specific experiences of racialized women in the Quebec community sector.

The Diversité d'Abord Research

The last decade in Quebec has seen an almost unending series of cuts to crucial services and increasingly severe austerity measures. We have seen a growing wealth gap, heightened levels of xenophobia, racism, and persistent violence against women & LGBTQIA2S+ communities, to name just a few realities. This era has also been hard on community organizations and nonprofits, who are being asked to fill the gaps of a disappearing social safety net, at the same time as their own funding and support is being cut. Unfortunately, we have also seen a failure of our sector to address our own oppressive practices, or to support the leadership and presence of marginalized communities in our organizations and coalitions.

Over the last several years, the Centre for Community Organizations has been paying attention to emerging research exploring specific manifestations of racial discrimination in the nonprofit sector in Quebec, Canada and the United States. In the course of our organizational health work with community groups, we were regularly witness to stories from racialized workers in the community sector regarding their experiences of racial prejudice and discrimination. It was clear that racial discrimination in the Quebec nonprofit sector was creating significant barriers for racialized workers to find, keep and enjoy their work. In 2016, COCo decided to dig deeper, and solidify our understanding of how racism operates in our sector. This research project became Diversité d'Abord.

We intend to use this research, its findings, and the testimonials of the people most impacted by this problem to concretely shift practices within the sector. Parts of the research have become central teaching tools at COCo, including as part of our day long forum in May of 2017 for community sector workers.

We are publishing the research piece by piece, so stay tuned for further installments. You can find everything to do with this project and its outcomes at https://coco-net.org/diversite-dabord/.

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The Centre for Community Organizations (COCo)

The Centre for Community Organizations (COCo)'s mission is to help build a more socially just world by supporting the health and well-being of community organizations in Québec. Through supporting organizational development, offering training, disseminating resources, producing research, and by strengthening links between nonprofit organizations, COCo helps to promote the vitality of the community sector in the province.

Our Theory of Change has led us to two central commitments:

1. **To bolster the impact and amplify the voices of grassroots organizations.** We believe in localized, bottom-up, collective action that prioritizes leadership from the people who are most affected, and try to focus our resources and support on the organizations who prioritize this as well.
2. **To strengthen inclusion and diversity** within the Quebec community sector by stewarding dialogue and learning. Our focus in this area has been partnering with key players in the nonprofit sector to "move the needle" on issues of anti-oppression, and particularly anti-racism.

Land Acknowledgement

COCo's office is situated on the Island of Montreal, also known as Tio'tia:ke, on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka people. This place has also been a historical meeting place for other Indigenous nations, including the Omàmiwinini or the Algonquin people. Today, Tio'tia:ke is the home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present, and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples in our work, and we are grateful to live and work on this territory.

Since 2016, the Centre for Community Organizations (COCo) has been engaged in Diversité d'Abord, a research and education project that examines how racism operates in the nonprofit sector in Quebec. Everything you need to know about Diversité d'Abord can be found at: https://coco-net.org/diversite-dabord/.
You can reach COCo over email at: info@coco-net.org or explore our website at: https://coco-net.org.
You can easily connect with COCo by following us on Facebook, X/Twitter, or LinkedIn.
We update these platforms regularly with resources, news, and updates on topics related to community groups.




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