



**ACTION** CANCER DU SEIN DU QUÉBEC  
BREAST CANCER **ACTION** QUEBEC

**25** YEARS OF **ACTION**

# ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016

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## Report of the Board of Directors

This has been a year of paradoxes at Breast Cancer Action Quebec (BCAQc). We have seen our reputation and reach grow by leaps and bounds. We have developed innovative programs, given important conferences, organized successful public events and are increasingly solicited to participate in important coalitions and public forums.

On the other, due to the vagaries of project funding, we have had to reduce staff and thus our potential to capitalize on this growth has suffered. Indeed our financial situation which continues to limit our expansion was a central preoccupation for the board this year.

But first, this year's achievements: Let's start with the fact that we welcomed to the board four new, young members from diverse backgrounds who each made precious contributions to our work this year. . In line with our name change, we also have board members who live far from the office and so virtual participation is now a reality at board and committee meetings. Adapting to new technologies and ways of functioning is essential to our growth.

In terms of the board's role in assuring the mission and orientation of the organization, we feel that we have been on track to achieve our three-year strategic plan that is now at its end. We have seen BCAQc grow from a local concern to a provincially-known and respected organization that is also gaining notoriety across Canada. We have consolidated our position within the Quebec women's movement, and the environmental movement and continued to build bridges with unions. We have moved forward with a global communications strategy and have clarified the place of our youth program within BCAQc. As well, we have made significant changes in the board role and functioning and in our relation with our members and donors. Perhaps the one area that we are not entirely satisfied with is that of ensuring stable funding. But we can definitely congratulate ourselves on having achieved the majority of the objectives of our strategic plan.

The board also is the body that develops BCAQc policy and this year we are very proud of having developed a very interesting policy on diversity and equity. As well, we developed guidelines for accepting or not researchers who wish to recruit subjects from among our membership. We also made decisions regarding our role in certain national coalitions.

Several board committees were active this year including the communications committee that has created our new look both on paper and on the website; the members and donors committee that has developed new strategies for being more closely in touch with members; the finance and fundraising committee that has worked particularly hard to come up with ideas for increasing revenues in an extremely difficult socio-political context and the human resources committee that ensures excellent working conditions and staff evaluations.

But, as mentioned, the issue that has concerned the board the most this year is our deficit budget situation and the necessity to lay off two staff members in December. This was indeed a very

difficult financial year with few new revenues, despite having submitted multiple grant proposals. It should be noted that this is the situation of many community organizations in this era of austerity at the provincial level. The board is following the situation closely and we are hopeful that we can find a way out without having to compromise too much. This is not the first time that BCAQc has had to weather a period of uncertainty and we have always emerged strengthened.

The board would like to take this opportunity to recognize the amazing work done by our staff team of Vio, Trish and Jennifer who are a group of highly dedicated, experienced, competent and creative women. They really go beyond what any organization could hope for.

This year is the last for Rosanne Cohen as a board member and she will be terribly missed. Rosanne is also past ED of BCAQc and I lack the words to describe how important her contribution to our organization has been. What more can we say than thank you Rosanne for all you have done for BCAQc.

Nancy Guberman,  
President, Breast Cancer Action Quebec  
September 27, 2016

Action cancer du sein du Québec /Breast Cancer Action Quebec

Committees 2015-2016

<p><b>Board of Directors</b>                  Nancy Guberman, President                  Lise Parent, Vice President                  Rosanne Cohen, Treasurer                  Elizabeth Lallemand, Secretary                  Deborah Bonney                  Diahara Traoré                  Maria Anney                  Shawna Ketter (until March 2016)                  Jennifer Beeman, E.D.</p>	<p><b>Endocrine Disruptors Committee</b>                  Shawna Ketter                  Rosanne Cohen                  Lise Parent                  Patricia Kearns                  Jennifer Beeman</p>
<p><b>Funding Committee</b>                  Nancy Guberman                  Lise Parent                  Rosanne Cohen                  Jennifer Beeman</p>	<p><b>Newsletter Committee</b>                  Patricia Kearns                  Susan Hertzberg                  Maychai Brown                  Maureen Lafrenière                  Avis Bay</p>
<p><b>Human Resources Committee</b>                  Nancy Guberman                  Maria Anney                  Jennifer Beeman</p>	<p><b>Member and Donor Engagement Committee</b>                  Rosanne Cohen                  Patricia Kearns                  Viorica Lorcencova                  Nancy Guberman                  Jennifer Beeman</p>
<p><b>Communications Committee</b>                  Deborah Bonney                  Rosanne Cohen                  Patricia Kearns                  Maria Anney                  Elizabeth Lallemand                  Jennifer Beeman</p>	<p><b>25th Anniversary</b>                  Diahara Traoré                  Maria Anney                  Shawna Ketter                  Jennifer Beeman</p>
<p><b>Staff and Interns</b>                  Jennifer Beeman, Executive Director                  Patricia Kearns, Research and Networking Advisor                  Viorica Lorcencova, Administrator                  Naiké Ledan, Youth Coordinator and PACT Program Coordinator (until December)                  Milena Gioia, Youth Project Advisor (Jan. To June)                  Carly Welham, Intern 2015-2016                  Jeanne Reynolds, Summer Intern 2015</p>	

## **I: Breast Cancer Education and Current Issues**

Breast Cancer prevention, education and advocacy is the heart of Breast Cancer Action Québec's work. This year we have developed several new important areas of education in addition to continuing with on-going programs.

### **1.1 "From Anger to Conformity: What has happened to a feminist analysis of breast cancer" (De la colère à la conformité: Que reste-t-il d'une analyse féministe du cancer du sein?)**

This presentation focuses on the history of the breast cancer movement, the women's environmental health movement and where we are today. It was given by Jennifer at the Congrès international des recherches féministes de la francophonie at UQAM in August 2015. Jennifer then gave the same presentation at the AGM of the Réseau québécois d'action pour la santé des femmes in September 2015 and again to women's groups, community groups and social work students at a public forum held at the University of Sherbrooke called The Body as Territory, "Le corps comme territoire" in November 2015.

### **1.2 Breast Cancer and the Workplace**

We were invited to give the opening presentation at a two day conference organized by the Status of Women Committee and the Workplace Health and Safety Committee of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) in February 2016. A complete presentation was developed, vetted by our scientific advisor Lise as well as by Nancy. Over 100 people attended the event, both women and men. The presentation provoked a lot of questions and discussion. Also on this issue, the Supreme Court of Canada in June handed down a decision on the question of proof required to demonstrate that a case of breast cancer is a workplace related illness. (finding in favor of the women claiming a link between their breast cancer and their work-place environment) This decision will continue to push this issue forward.

### **1.3 October Event: Where is Feminism when My Body Needs It Most? A Panel Discussion on Breast Cancer and the Absence of a Feminist Analysis**

On October 14th 2015, we hosted a panel discussion on what a feminist analysis of breast cancer brings to our understanding of the disease and the problems created by the feminine, heteronormative culture surrounding the disease. Participating on the panel were Julie Michaud, coordinator at the Centre for Gender Advocacy who had recently undergone treatment for breast cancer, Luisa Molino, Research Coordinator for the Cancer's Margins Research Project on LGBT2Q experiences of breast and gynecological cancers and Jennifer Beeman, ED, Breast Cancer Action Quebec. The panel was held at Concordia University. 36 people attended and a lively discussion ensued.

## 1.4 Cafés rencontres

We held two café rencontres in the spring of 2016.

*La face cachée des produits de beauté*, May 11, 2016

The first was a presentation by biologist, ecotoxicologist, professor and BCA-Qc vice president, Lise Parent on 'La face cachée des produits de beauté » (The Hidden Face of Beauty Products). The evening was co-organized with the Réseau des femmes en environnement and the Réseau québécois d'action pour la santé des femmes. It was held at the Teluq Building. 20 women attended.

*Eliminating Toxic Chemicals from our Lives: Individually, Collectively and Politically*. May 31, 2016

Our second café rencontre was a round table held at Concordia University. Five guests discussed the personal, ethical and political considerations around "green consumption" that is encouraging individuals to buy nontoxic, sustainable products. The panel included Nancy Falaise, hair salon owner specializing in the care and maintenance of curly hair. Nancy was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2012 and consequently changed her lifestyle as well as switching to non toxic products with her customers. Annie-Claude Pepin, who after an internship at Breast Cancer Action Montreal, created the Pépin company which is dedicated to making products with natural ingredients. Erik Michaud is a professional engineer who shared his overview about invisible pollutants, the related chemical safety actions in industry and current challenges. Jennifer, ED at Breast Cancer Action Quebec, who talked about how while "green" consumption is important it also has serious pitfalls, especially for women. The evening was facilitated by Naiké Ledan, social and health justice activist and former BCA-Qc Youth Coordinator. 38 people with an amazing diversity of ages and backgrounds attended. It was such a successful evening that all involved would like to repeat it again this year.

## 1.5 Screening of Pink Ribbons Inc.

We continue to accept invitations to facilitate discussions at screenings of Pink Ribbons Inc. A screening was held at McGill University on October 6th that was organized by Think Pink McGill and Make It Your Own Collective. 20 students came. Jennifer answered questions after the event.

## 1.6 Internships at Breast Cancer Action Quebec

*Breast Cancer among First Nations Women in Canada*

Breast Cancer Action Quebec has a long history of hosting dynamic interns. This year, we were lucky to work with Carly Welham who is doing an MA in Public Health at the University of Victoria (distance program). Carly is specializing in aboriginal health. While with us, she undertook research on the state of scientific research and public health approaches to breast cancer in

Aboriginal communities in Canada. Grounded in a firm analysis of the social, environmental and health impacts of colonization, Carly's research presented data indicating increasing rates of breast cancer and an almost complete lack of educational programs regarding the disease by health organizations working with these communities. Carly was interested in trying to develop an educational environmental health project with aboriginal groups in Montreal and we made several different contacts, but despite interest, we were not able to get a project off the ground. We hope Carly will be back with us in January 2017.

We were also very pleased to host Jeanne Reynolds as a summer intern for the Youth Program. She accompanied Youth Coordinator Naiké Ledan to many activities with our different girls groups as well as producing original promotional information on toxic substances and women's health.

### **1.7 Information and Referrals**

We field a range of phone calls and emails every week from women looking for information on a variety of questions related to their personal experience of breast cancer. This service requires us to maintain up to date referral information. Taking these calls also allows to see emerging issues affecting women. Questions can range from finding a prosthesis for a bathing suit to advice on how to get a second opinion, dissatisfaction about the side effects of a specific treatment or where to get financial aid during treatment. We make it clear that we never give medical advice, but can refer women to clinics we know to be particularly helpful and open to women in a range of complex situations. Some women really need someone who will just take the time for them to express what is troubling them. Trish fields most of these calls and emails and we are very lucky to have such a knowledgeable and compassionate person on staff.



## **II: Education and Action on Toxicants: Chemical Detective Workshops and the PACT Project**

This was the second year that we have offered our PACT workshop, Prevention and Action Against Cancer and Toxicants, in economically and environmentally disadvantaged areas in Montreal and surrounding regions, funded by the Catherine Donnelly Foundation. Our goals this year were to expand the impact by creating a more explicit and lasting connection to the environmental movement and our partner, Environmental Defence, developing a “mobile” requiring only one day (rather than the original 2-3 days) to offer outside of Montreal, teach the contents of our Activist Toolkit and develop a robust communications plan to further promote this work and its educational information. Our multi-talented Youth Coordinator, Naiké Ledan, took over coordinating this project when Anaïs Lagacé left on maternity leave in June 2015.

The most important impact of this project was to empower very marginalized communities through education on toxic substances, specifically the five substances identified by Environmental Defence for elimination at the same time as initiating them to undertaking political actions for environmental justice. We have given our workshop with economically disadvantaged seniors, a whole range of new immigrant communities, young people from economically disadvantaged communities outside of Montreal, young mothers on welfare from a variety of communities, among many others.

Naiké gave the two day workshop in 8 community groups in Montreal to a total of 155 participants and the one day workshop in four community groups in regions outside of Montreal to a total of 43 participants. Two local newspapers published information about the event, there was a radio show about it, over 20 Facebook posts on group pages, two articles in community group newsletters, and over 300 postcards signed and 450 pamphlets on EDCs distributed by participants, some who even included them in their Christmas cards to friends.

With this grant, we confirmed the great interest in marginalized communities for information on toxic substances, the work of the environmental movement and the need for regulatory change. But it takes time and commitment to sow the seeds of change with these communities.

An important issue for us, as with many small, grassroots organizations, is for funders to make multiyear funding available. All funders want original projects and are almost never interested in picking up good work that has been initiated by another funder. We were lucky to have two years of funding for PACT, but the momentum created has been limited but the funding coming to an end. In addition, we were not able to maintain Naiké’s position and thus lost an extremely talented worker as well as having to scale back on offering this workshop.

### **Chemical Detective Workshops**

The PACT Project was based on the Chemical Detective Workshop that we developed several years ago. Fortunately we have dedicated volunteers who continue to give this workshop in schools, community groups and even to businesses who want to offer it to their employees. This year,

Nancy Guberman gave four presentations, one in the adult education program of the English Montreal School Board to about 40 mostly new immigrants. Nancy does this annually and the workshop is always greatly appreciated with lots of participation. She gave the presentation to a group of Girl Guide leaders in April and to two groups of workers of the Ecotape Company in Montreal West.

### **III: Our On-Going Campaign against Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs): Hands Off My Hormones!**

Breast Cancer Action Quebec is very concerned with the proliferation of endocrine disrupting chemicals in all kinds of products used regularly in our daily lives. BCA-Qc has been working on this issue for many years, and this past year saw a variety of different actions to alert the public to the problems created by EDCs and the health risks they pose.

This year, we participated in the **Buyer Beware: Toxic BPA & Regrettable Substitutes in the Linings of Canned Food Campaign** by promoting via social media and sending press releases to local Montreal mainstream media the report by six non-profit organizations including Environmental Defence, one of our partners, showing that the majority of food cans sold by three of the most popular retailers in Canada contain bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical linked to endocrine (hormone) disruption; hyperactivity and low prosocial behaviour in children; and breast and prostate cancers. We oversaw the translation of the press release into French which was subsequently picked up in prominent Francophone news outlets, particularly La Presse, Le Devoir and Radio-Canada.

## IV: Young Women's Program

For almost fifteen years, Breast Cancer Action Quebec has worked with young women on the links between the environment and health and teaching them about avoiding toxic substances in everyday personal care and household products.

In 2013, with funding from Status of Women Canada and then the Betty Averbach Foundation, this work expanded to develop workshops aimed at developing leadership skills on these issues with young women from diverse communities in Montreal. Innovative workshops were developed to look at sexist and racist social norms of beauty, consumerism and toxic messages, toxic substances in our environment and empowering approaches to develop self-acceptance, self-worth and strong practices for mental and physical health.

And in 2015-2016, we undertook an even greater challenge. We were invited to present this material to all the students in Grade 10 (Secondary IV) as part of the Ethics class in James Lyng High School. This high school consistently rates as one of the most disadvantaged in Montreal. To meet this challenge and building on our previous work, we developed a new curriculum, *Health, Environment and Community Curriculum: An empowering environmental health program for teens*. The curriculum connects taking care of one's own overall health with community action and the environment more broadly. Specifically, it brings critical awareness to food consumption and access, toxins in our personal care products and environmental degradation, as well as helping participants access healthcare and other services in their communities.

This work is part of BCAQc's continually evolving Youth Program. Many people have played key roles in making it what it is today. We would particularly like to thank the very talented Youth Coordinators we were lucky enough to work with, Naïké Ledan and Milena Gioia. Naïké brilliantly led the 3i Project that renewed our Youth Program making it reflect the diversity, creativity and drive of today's young women. Milena jumped in and took over the project to add her expertise in working with teens based on a true respect for all they understand and have to deal with.

### Needs addressed

Teenage years are a key time for young people to transition into a more active role regarding their health. Parents may be less present and the young people start developing life-long habits and practices around food, exercise and leisure activities, personal care, make-up, and their relationship to their social environment.

This is an important time to introduce an understanding of health as intimately related to our physical and social environment and that exposure to toxic substances in the environment actually starts in our homes.

Encouraging an active and empowered relationship to health and the environment also means teaching about community resources that teens can call on, as well as helping them understand that they have the right to healthcare and should have the right to a clean environment, and that they can play an active role when these rights are not respected.

We sincerely thank the Betty Averbach Foundation for its commitment to our youth program. It has allowed us to pursue our unique work on prevention with teens. We also thank the Solstice Foundation for its support of our work.

### **V: Networking, Partnerships and Affiliations**

Jennifer and Trish were particularly active this year networking with a wide range of individuals and organizations.

**In Political Circles:** Promoting BCAQc is high on our list of priorities. To that end, this year Jennifer, Nancy and Lise met with our Deputy Dominique Anglade. We also met with PQ health critic Diane Lamarre.

**In scientific circles:** In our quest to put together a scientific panel and to network with researchers, we met the following researchers working on breast cancer and the environment or environmental health:

- Mark Goldberg, Epidemiology McGill
- France Labrèche, Epidemiologist, Institut de recherche Robert Sauvé de santé et sécurité au travail
- Gilbert Welch, Internist and Professor, Dartmouth Medical School, specialist on overtreatment.
- Bernard Robaire, Toxicologist, McGill
- Isabelle Plante, Toxicologist, INRS
- Dana Scott, Law Professor, York University, Specialist on Environmental Law and Women's Health. (Phone interview)

**In Environmental Circles:** We have been present and active all year on a series of issues regarding environmental law reform. After a careful examination of the content, we co-signed several letters by the Canadian Environmental Law Association regarding stricter controls on specific toxic substances.

We were active in an informal coalition against reintroducing requirements for flame retardants in commercial furniture initiated by an industry group going through an obscure mechanism in Industry Canada. The actions of the coalition seem to have been effective in stopping this initiative.

Currently, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act is the major law that outlines the regulation of toxic substances. It is not the only law that concerns us, but it is the most important and it is under review this year. Trish and Jennifer have been active with environmental partners involved in the review and on other issues in order to learn as much as possible about the regulatory system and affirm our place as a voice for women's environmental health and breast cancer prevention. Last spring and this fall, we participated with other NGOs in webinars on the CEPA review led by CELA. We will remain active on this issue.

We reached out to the David Suzuki Foundation to be a co-partner in hosting our Scientific Panel this October. Other partners include the Research Centre CINBIOSE and the Réseau des femmes en environnement. Our request to join with us was met with much enthusiasm.

**Among Women's Groups:** We are active members of the Réseau d'action des femmes en santé et services sociaux and the Comité Santé of the Table des groupes de femmes de Montréal.

Breast Cancer Action Quebec is a member of the following organizations:

Canadian Breast Cancer Network

Regroupement intersectoriel des organismes communautaires de Montréal (RIOCM)

Regroupement provincial des organismes et groupes d'entraide communautaire en oncologie (RPOGEO)

Relais-Femmes

Réseau québécois d'action pour la santé des femmes (RQASF)

Table des groupes de femmes de Montréal

Active Affiliations through Joint Projects and Funding:

Canadian Environmental Law Association

Canadian Women's Health Network

Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur le bien-être, la santé, la société et l'environnement, CINBIOSE

Environmental Defence Canada

Girls' Action Foundation

National Network on Environments and Women's Health

Réseau des femmes en environnement

## **VI: Communications with Members and the Public**

### **Op-Eds and Interviews**

Jennifer had two op-ed pieces published last year, the first in the Devoir on Overdiagnosis and Overtreatment that was published the same day she gave her presentation at UQAM in August 2015. The second was in the Gazette at the beginning of October on the neglect given to environmental causes of breast cancer and the work that still needs to be done. Jennifer also gave an interview to CJAD on the Angelina Jolie effect and was interviewed in July by the National Post on overtreatment of DCIS (article due out in the fall). And we have given two interviews to CKUT. We hope with good promotions of our fall events to really push forward on establishing or reestablishing contact with a wide range of media.

### **Our New Look and New Website**

Our Communications Committee worked with great determination this year to update our brand with a new logo, a complete visual branding and a new website. Congratulations to them on a fantastic job. Our look is vibrant and fresh. Getting a new website up and running is a monumental piece of work but we did it, despite being a bit behind schedule.

### **Newsletter**

This year, the very dynamic and professional Newsletter Committee produced two excellent issues of BCA-Qc Connected, full of original articles and carefully chosen reprints from other publications. The newsletter is at something of a crossroads as fewer volunteers have the time to write original pieces for such a newsletter. We will be rethinking ways of achieving the goals of the newsletter and how to ensure this valued source of information.

### **E-Bulletins**

During this year BCA-Qc was in touch with its members on a regular basis using our e-bulletins. We sent out 42 bulletins (21 with a French and English version each) to keep members up to date on office and Board news, announcements of events, requests for volunteers and other issues.

### **Facebook and Twitter**

Our facebook page is active and the number of followers grows steadily. We need to make more of an effort to be active on twitter.

## **VII: Membership and Organizational Development**

### **Membership**

Thanks to the initiative of Rosanne Cohen, we struck a new committee called the Member and Donor Engagement Committee. This committee is analyzing our current and past membership as well as our donor base to determine their interests in being part of BCA-Qc and whether these are being met, as well as how to better engage them with the organization. Viorica did a fantastic job organizing the information which helped us come up with better methods for keeping members and donors informed of our work. Continuing this work is a priority for 2016-2017.

### **Building Our Donor Base**

We also had a small targeted fundraising campaign in June 2016. This campaign showed that we have significant networks that can be brought into the donor base of the organization through personal outreach. In fact, our donor base continued to grow significantly this year. As great as this news is, it does not replace the need for government and foundation funding.

### **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

With a great line-up of events for our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we expect to be able to build both our member and donor base. With such noteworthy events, we remain determined and optimistic about future funding opportunities.

### **Fundraising**

Fundraising is a constant preoccupation and a range of proposals were submitted to foundations offering grants of varying amounts. Foundations are receiving many more submissions than usual for grants and this has a variety of consequences. Some accept as many proposals as they can, but at lower levels of support than they originally state. This has happened to us several times and puts groups in an awkward position on how to move forward on a project developed based on more support as well as putting in jeopardy the ability of the group to keep its staff needed for the project. Foundation support remains a challenge as our work does not fit into traditional funding priorities. All of our work covers a range of issues in a very holistic manner.

Fundraising activities geared at individuals were successful at increasing our donor base. Our end of year solicitation letter brought increased our level of support. And our fundraising cocktail in June to expand our network of donors brought in new donors at a good mid-level of donations.





**ACTION** CANCER DU SEIN DU QUÉBEC  
BREAST CANCER **ACTION** QUEBEC

**25** YEARS OF **ACTION**

*We would like to sincerely thank our funders for their support to this vital work.*

Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec

The Catherine Donnelly Foundation

The Betty Averbach Foundation

The Solstice Foundation

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