

ACTION CANCER DU SEIN DU QUÉBEC  

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BREAST CANCER ACTION QUEBEC

# ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015

*Prevention, Education, Advocacy*

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## Report of the Board of Directors

The year 2014-2015 has been a year of consolidation. With our new executive director, Jennifer Beeman, at the helm and a stabilization of our staff, BCA-Qc has been able to solidify its roots in the women's and environmental movements, while at the same time getting its messages out to a wider and wider circle of people.

Your board has worked to ensure that BCA-Qc is moving forward in line with our strategic plan. We are beginning to have more of a provincial (and even Canadian) presence and are becoming better known in diverse milieux, mainly through efforts by our ED and staff. The board has encouraged our youth coordinator as she develops her programming, through several discussions regarding orientations and methods, and has confirmed our new approach to education, which links our educational workshops to collective activities on the part of participants.

This year was also marked by our audit by the Canada Revenue Agency which took up a lot of staff time. While we have not yet received the final results of the audit, the board has been following this closely.

More specifically, with regard to its mandate, the board has continued to improve the working conditions policy as well as salaries and benefits. The Human Resources Committee has overseen all aspects of human resource management to ensure recognition of the valuable contribution of each worker and help them to continue improving. The board is committed to maintaining all our workers and offering them interesting working conditions.

The Communications Committee is moving slowly but surely towards a rebranding, that is to say a new look, for the organization as well as harmonizing the visual component of all our publications (hard and electronic versions). In that way, all our work will be easily recognizable.

Sustainable funding is a constant challenge for the board as competition for limited funds increases. Government austerity programs have a direct impact on our income and more and more groups, all vying for the same dollars, are soliciting foundations. The funding committee and the whole board have thus supported the ED and staff to write as many grant proposals as possible, as our core funding only pays for about 1/3 of our actual expenses. We are hoping to get funding to allow us to move forward on some new issues such as breast cancer and toxins in the workplace and the financial burden of breast cancer on women in treatment, while also looking for money for our on-going youth and educational programs. Although not always successful, these proposals are

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making us known to a wider range of potential funders and we are optimistic that we will be able to fund our activities for the next year.

In line with our financial needs, the board decided to increase our membership fees and to create new membership categories. We decided to raise our regular membership fee from 25\$ to 35\$ as of January 1, 2015, while membership for students and persons on fixed incomes will be 10\$. We have also added two new categories: organizational members – 50\$ and a life-time membership for only 350\$. Membership fees are an important source of income in support of the work we do.

Board members were also involved in organizing and participating in different events and campaigns during the year, particularly around endocrine disruptors. These activities are presented in the activity report.

Finally, the composition of the board will be undergoing some major changes. As you know, board member Carla Gasparini passed away in July and she is sorely missed by us all. As well, long-time board member and a backbone of the organization Carol Sectar, will be leaving the board, while remaining an active member of BCA-Qc while it is proposed that founding member Deena Dlusy-Apel become an honorary life-time board member. There are no words to express our gratitude to these two pillars of the organization without whom we would probably no longer exist.

But as BCA-Qc moves forward to become a truly Quebecois organization we hope to diversify our board membership, and in particular to rejuvenate it with a new generation of health activists. Next year, our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, we intend for you to hear more and more about BCA-Qc and our activities and campaigns – and not only from our internal communications!

In closing the board wishes to salute the staff who whose commitment to BCA-Qc is remarkable. We have a truly amazing, talented, creative and brilliant group of women who ensure that board decisions are put into practice and who go above and beyond their mandates to make BCA-Qc what it is today. Hats off to you.

Nancy Guberman,  
President, Breast Cancer Action Quebec  
September 29, 2015

## View from the Office

As Nancy has said in the Report of the Board of Directors, this year has marked my first full year in the position of Executive Director. It often takes a year to see the whole life of an organization. This year has definitely been marked by everyone working together to make all the varied and amazing parts of this organization work as a unified whole.

The strengths of Breast Cancer Action Quebec definitely start with the extraordinary membership that has been built over its 24 years of operations and its very active Board of Directors. The mission of the organization and its dedication to real breast cancer prevention have never been more important and the long-term commitment of its members to this goal is exemplary. In addition, our very active volunteers contribute over 1600 hours of work annually in the fields of writing and revision, translation, scientific counsel, awareness raising activities and much more. Our team of volunteer translators are particularly important as we operate completely bilingually which is a huge accomplishment for a relatively small organization.

Over the past several years, a core team of qualified staff has supported the organization in the carrying out of its mission. These workers have now been operating as a permanent team for just over a year and the dynamism this creates for the projects and programs as well as the organization as a whole is palpable.

To make sure we are all working in the same direction, we organized two Board-Team study days, the first where the more experienced Board members provided training on the organization's history, mission and principles and the second where we discussed our visions of our priorities and how to meet them in order to develop a shared collective vision of where we want to go from here. This process will be taken a step further at this year's Annual General Meeting where we will discuss with members, their vision of our priorities as we head into our 25<sup>th</sup> year.

One of the most exciting aspects of our work has been how well received it is when we offer workshops and presentations to other groups in Quebec. People in a wide variety of communities, men and women across a wide range of ages really understand our message of needing to work for a more toxic-free environment to ensure our health. This year we have worked with over 20 different community groups or associations, sharing our educational workshops or working in coalitions for a more toxic-free environment and healthier futures.

One of the most frustrating aspects of our work is the struggle to maintain adequate funding. All of our major campaigns and educational programs have momentum and are generating much support from other groups and from participants. Achieving success in our mission requires long-term efforts to educate and create pressure to reform a variety of regulatory structures and practices. Project funding allows us to educate and intervene in the short-term, but our organization will still be needed for at least 25 more years, if not longer. So we are looking at ways to find long-term solutions to our funding questions. Thankfully, again, the support from you, our members, is stronger than ever.

Jennifer Beeman, Executive Director

## Action cancer du sein du Québec /Breast Cancer Action Quebec

### Committees and Staff 2014-2015

<p><b>Board of Directors</b>  Nancy Guberman, President  Deena Dlusy-Apel, Vice-President  Rosanne Cohen, Treasurer  Carol Secter, Secretary  Lise Parent  Deborah Bonney  Carla Gasparini  Jennifer Beeman, E.D.</p>	<p><b>Endocrine Disruptors Committee</b>  Naïké Ledan, coordinator  Carla Gasparini  Deena Dlusy-Apel  Lise Parent  Carol Secter  Anaïs Lagacé  Patricia Kearns  Jennifer Beeman</p>
<p><b>Funding Committee</b>  Nancy Guberman  Rosanne Cohen  Jennifer Beeman</p>	<p><b>Safe Cosmetics Committee</b>  Deena Apel  Carol Secter  Jennifer Beeman  Patricia Kearns</p>
<p><b>Human Resources Committee</b>  Nancy Guberman  Carol Secter  Carla Gasparini  Jennifer Beeman</p>	<p><b>Newsletter Committee</b>  Susan Hertzberg  Maychai Brown  Maureen Lafrenière  Avis Antel  Patricia Kearns  Viorica Lorcencova</p>
<p><b>Communications Committee</b>  Deborah Bonney  Rosanne Cohen  Elizabeth Lallemand  Patricia Kearns  Jennifer Beeman</p>	<p><b>Work Team</b>  Patricia Kearns, Research and Networking Advisor  Anaïs Lagacé, Project Coordinator  Naïké Ledan, Youth Program Coordinator  Viorica Lorcencova, Administrator  Jennifer Beeman, Executive Director</p>

## I : Breast Cancer Education and Current Issues

Breast Cancer Prevention, Education and Advocacy is the heart of Breast Cancer Action Québec's work and in many ways encompasses all the other sectors of activities. In this section, we are referring specifically to the activities that address issues of breast cancer first and foremost. Much of our work also involves issues of toxic chemicals in the environment or young women's understanding of their health and the role of the environment in their health, all of it as it relates to breast cancer. However, but these issues are addressed in following sections.

### **Our October Event: Screening of Pink Ribbons Inc.**

Breast Cancer Action Quebec holds a public activity every October to underscore its critical perspective on Breast Cancer Awareness Month. On October 6, 2014, we held a screening of the film, Pink Ribbons Inc, at the Beaubien Cinema in the Petite Patrie neighborhood of Montreal. Our goal was to raise awareness on the problematic nature of the Pink Ribbon Industry as well as expanding our visibility into Francophone milieux on the East side of the city. Over sixty people attended the screening. In addition, a panel featuring Patricia Kearns, research and screenwriter for the film and Lise Goulet, feminist health activist, answered questions on the film after the showing. The event was a wonderful success and served as a model of offering our activities in other parts of the city through partnerships with other organizations. As well, in the previous year, the Campaign, "Little Pink Lies" garnered much attention and was featured prominently on our website again this past October.

### **Translation of APHA statement on Breast Cancer and Occupation**

In November 2014, the American Public Health Association published an important policy statement on Breast Cancer and Occupation: the Need for Action. The Policy Statement outlines the major studies linking breast cancer to occupational risk factors and the need for further research and action. Breast Cancer Action Quebec oversaw the translation of the policy statement into French and promotion of both statements in Canada. A researcher was able to have the statement translated into Spanish and it is also available on our website, the only website to carry it.

## **Café-rencontre on Straddling Mainstream Medicine and Complementary Cancer Treatment When Treating Breast Cancer**

In April, BCA-Qc collaborated with a new partner, FEM International, located on St. Hubert Avenue, for a café-rencontre with **author Tamara Levine on her experience with combining complementary and traditional breast cancer treatments.** BCA-Qc's Executive Director, Jennifer Beeman, opened the evening by framing the discussion with a presentation of some major shifts, or changes of paradigm in relation to breast cancer, that we are in the age of complexity of breast cancer; that cancer including breast cancer is no longer predominantly a fatal disease but often a chronic disease and that the importance of the profound relationship between physical and mental health is finally recognized; there is a new understanding of the immune system in preventing and fighting cancer and the effect of mental health on the immune system.

The evening was a success for BCA-Qc: 23 participants, eleven with breast cancer attended. The CBC interviewed Tamara Levine on Radio Noon on the day of the event. A bilingual Q&A and discussion after Tamara's presentation lasted over an hour; there were many new faces for BCA-Qc - some were members who had not participated in an event before, others were not members. There were family pairings – a mother and daughter and two sister duos. Our social media campaign was successful in reaching new people – some participants mentioned that they had found the information through our promotion via the internet.

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

### **Chemical Detective Workshops**

Educating the public on toxicants present in our environment and their effects on human health is an important component of BCA-Qc's mission. The Chemical Detective Workshop was developed to take participants on a tour of their home environment and show the toxicants present around us and how some of them can be avoided. As in all our work, Chemical Detective is also offered in French. Furthermore, we shared the rights to the workshop with Environmental Defence Canada who offered it in several cities across Canada this year. The Chemical Detective workshop has been given annually to new immigrants at the English Montreal School Board to 40 participants.

### **The PACT Project's Phase II**

In 2014, the Chemical Detective workshop was incorporated into the PACT Project: Prevention and Action Against Cancer and Toxicants that added a collective action component to the workshop. Participants chose an action aimed at reducing the presence of these toxic substances. The action could be anything from making homemade personal care or cleaning products to undertaking an awareness campaign in their neighborhood, to undertaking a political action to encourage the government to enact stricter regulations regarding these substances in our environment. In 2015, the project was renewed by adding a social media and communications component as well as broadening the communities where it is offered. Environmental health justice is at the heart of BCA-Qc's work, and the PACT Project allowed us to work with citizens of economically marginalized communities to offer information of the health impacts of toxicants in our environments as well as to support them in their choice of collective action as they become involved in working to improve their lives and their communities.

Through funding from the Catherine Donnelly Foundation and the collaboration of Environmental Defence, our goal this year was to reach 12 groups and thus carry out 12 collective actions, i.e. twice as many as the previous year. We also wanted to make PACT available to 4 off-island partner organizations.

## LISTE OF GROUPS AND COLLECTIVE ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN

### **Chez Émilie, community self-help group (Centre-Sud)**

Collective action: a campaign to disseminate our PACT project web page via emails and social media. 159 emails were sent and 706 persons were reached through Facebook.

### **Centre d'action socio-communautaire de Montréal (Mile-End)**

Collective action: collect 40 signatures for our *Recognizable symbols on products that contain cancer causing chemicals needed in Canada* petition. This petition was in fact officially tabled in the House of Commons of Canada on Friday June 5, 2015, by MP Tyrone Benskin.

### **Centre des femmes de St-Laurent**

Collective action: distribute the Toxic 20 pocket guide on toxins to avoid in your daily purchases among associations in the St-Laurent neighbourhood. Over 100 leaflets were distributed.

### **Carrefour populaire de St-Michel**

Collective action: hold a workshop on writing personalized letters to be sent to Procter & Gamble Canada asking them to rid their products of toxic chemicals. 13 personalized letters were mailed to the President of Procter & Gamble Canada.

### **Le Carrefour Mousseau (Longueuil)**

Collective action: have their network of contacts sign a postcard to be sent to the federal government, calling for the creation of a national strategy on endocrine disrupting chemicals with the purpose of eliminating five priority toxic substances. A total of 237 cards were signed.

### **Pavillon d'Éducation Communautaire Hochelaga-Maisonneuve**

Collective action: workshop on homemade non-toxic household products. Participants then distributed their products to their friends and families together with copies of the Toxic 20 pocket guide and the pocket guide to recipes for homemade cleaning products. 45 pockets guides were distributed as well as 25 action postcards addressed to Health Canada.

### **Femmes-relais (St-Michel)**

Collective action: run information booths on environmental toxic chemicals in local parks during the month of July to provide information to families.

## **Au coup de pouce Centre-Sud**

Collective action: have their network of contacts sign a postcard to be sent to the federal government, calling for the creation of a national strategy on endocrine disrupting chemicals. Information leaflets on EDCs were distributed with the postcards. A total of 88 cards and leaflets were distributed.

## **Centre communautaire Bon Courage de Place Benoît (St-Laurent)**

Collective action: host a radio broadcast discussing household toxic chemicals and how to avoid them in our homes and talking about our organization and the PACT project. The program was broadcast on April 13 and 27 on *La Voix de St-Lo*, a community radio station.

## **Concertation-Femme (Ahuntsic)**

Collective action: distribute to their friends and families information leaflet on how to avoid household toxic chemicals. The goal was for each participant to distribute 3 leaflets on endocrine disrupting chemicals and 1 leaflet on the Toxic 20 chemicals to avoid in household products. Over 100 leaflets were distributed.

**Chez Carmen St-Cyr** : a former PACT participant wanted to offer this workshop to her friends and family.

Collective action: have the participants' network of contacts sign postcards on endocrine disrupting chemicals to be sent to the federal government. A total of 65 cards were sent.

## RESULTS:

- ♥ **11 groups took part in the project workshop** this year with a **total of 156 participants**.
- ♥ **11 collective actions were carried out**.
- ♥ The multiplying effect of collective actions allowed us to connect with around **6944 persons**.
- ♥ **An additional 78 individual actions were carried out** aimed at reducing toxic chemicals in our environment. These included: a workshop held by a parent at her child's primary school, signing petitions and mailing postcards, meeting with store managers, designing an information leaflet listing businesses selling organic products, etc.
- ♥ **228 information kits were given** to participants as part of the project and some participants gave kits to their family and friends so as to spread the information even further.
- ♥ **510 postcards** *We demand safer cosmetics* and *Take a stand against endocrine disruptors!* were sent to the Minister of Health.

## MEDIA:

Since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, we have focussed on giving media coverage to the collective actions undertaken by PACT project participants. **A total of 183,048 individuals** were reached through press releases in local newspapers as well as Facebook posts.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE AND PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK:

In the questionnaires completed at the end of the PACT project, participants reported being satisfied with the collective actions selected and stated that it would help them eliminate toxic chemicals from their environment. They also said that they felt better informed about toxic substances in consumer products and that they would be changing their buying habits so as to reduce their exposure. They reported that the collective action had made them feel more empowered as citizens and consumers and that they felt they had an impact on their communities. Here are some of their comments:

*"I think that with small actions like the one we chose we will continue to make progress towards a toxic-free world. Thank you."*

*"This was my first civic action, it's a good start that I found interesting and encouraging, there's a lot of work to do, it's inspiring..."*

*"I simply loved the workshop on the various toxic products that are all around us in our daily lives. I've understood that I have a duty as a consumer and that I also have a greater impact on the environment than I realized."*

*"The facilitator reassured us, because it was all very shocking at first, but I really enjoyed the activity, thanks!"*

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

Like other environmental health organizations, Breast Cancer Action Quebec is very concerned with the proliferation of endocrine disrupting chemicals in all kinds of products of our daily life, from personal care products, to consumer products, fragrances, cleaners, plastics and pesticides. These substances literally surround us, are in our bodies and are affecting our health and physical development. Our bodies can mistake them for hormones, upsetting the important messaging system of our endocrine system. 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.

### ***Hands off my hormones! Take a stand against endocrine disruptors campaign***

Financed by the Solstice Foundation, the *Hands off my hormones! Take a stand against endocrine disruptors* campaign ran a social media education blitz about EDC's, between October and June 2015, consisting of weekly capsules in both languages on BCA-Qc's FB and Twitter feeds. These 47 posts were a mix of educational videos, scholarly articles and the latest world news about EDCs as well as consumer tips for avoiding these substances. This short capsules informed the public about various issues such as pregnancy and EDCs, European policies and regulations on EDCs, where EDCs are found in our daily lives, what are triclosan, BPA, phthalates and parabens, and many other topical issues relating to endocrine disrupting chemicals.

### **Twelve workshops on EDCs were given jointly with the PACT Project in communities groups**

Part of the PACT project workshop was adapted to focus on our campaign against EDCs. According to the questionnaires they completed at the end of the workshop, most participants felt better informed about endocrine disrupting chemicals and a majority intended to change their shopping habits following the workshop.

### **An On-Line Resource Page**

This page provides information about endocrine disrupting chemicals and their impacts on our health. It also contains advice on how to limit our exposure to EDCs in our daily lives. We also have a section with complementary resources and links to a number of relevant reference web sites.

## **Café-rencontre on EDCs with Lise Parent: EDCs are everywhere and they are affecting everyone's health**

For this event BCA-Qc invited Professor of Biology, founding member of the Réseau des femmes en environnement and our own Board member Lise Parent to give a presentation on endocrine disruptors. We held the event in the evening of May 12, 2015 at the Université de Québec à Montréal. Lise, a specialist on EDCs, introduced what these chemicals are, where they are found, what the implications are for our health, in particular the relation between EDCs and breast cancer. And she included a section on what we can do to lessen our exposure to them. Fifteen participants attended with a mix of BCA-Qc members and people new to our events. An excellent Q&A followed and once again the discussion surpassed an hour.

## **June Action on EDCs**

We also organized a collective action for our campaign aimed at getting the government to change its approach. On June 6, 2015, we held a march against EDCs in our daily environment. We walked from the Place St-Henri metro station to the Lionel-Groulx station via Atwater Market. 21 people took part. During this awareness action, passers-by were given copies of our leaflet on EDCs. We also had a booth at the Lionel-Groulx metro station to welcome the walkers and inform the public about our campaign. A total of 328 leaflets were handed out.

## **New information leaflet on endocrine disrupting chemicals**

This leaflet sets out what an endocrine disrupting chemical is and how it can affect our health. It also provides tips on how to limit one's exposure to these chemicals as well as ideas for actions to call for changes in the government's approach to EDCs. Altogether, 868 leaflets were given out this year as part of our campaign.

## **New postcard calling for action and targeting the elimination of endocrine disrupting chemicals**

In this postcard, we call on Health Canada to ban the following five EDCs from all consumer products: triclosan, parabens, phthalates, bisphenol A and fire retardants. Citizens were invited to sign this card and send it to Canada's Minister of Health. We also call on the government to develop a national strategy on endocrine disrupting chemicals aimed at reducing Canadians' and the environment's exposure to EDCs. Through our workshops and various activities, a total of 443 cards were signed.

**Safe Cosmetics Committee** : The Safe Cosmetics Committee held one meeting in December to discuss issues it wanted to explore, but was ultimately dissolved into the larger EDC committee in the spring of this year.

## IV: Young Women's Program

The Young Women's Program underwent a complete overhaul over the past year. The project was concluded, and FemmeToxic's name and orientation moved towards a model much more geared to youth leadership. The position of FemmeToxic coordinator was abolished, and the position of 3i Project coordinator became the position of youth projects coordinator.

### **Our 3i Project : The Final Year**

Funded by Status of Women Canada, this year marked the final year of the innovative 3i Project, Influence, Initiate, Impact. The year started with the MAKENIN project in July-August 2014. The MAKENIN project took the form of an educational mentorship-based youth retreat that brought together five leaders on the weekend of August 30 and 31, 2014, for the purpose of:

- building trust on the basis of healthy relationships
- sharing knowledge about the building blocks of self-esteem;
- obtaining information about which consumer products are beneficial or harmful to our health;
- developing critical thinking about the way girls and women are portrayed in the media;
- promoting positive choices in support of healthy youth in healthy bodies

The retreat took place at the Manoir d'Youville on St-Bernard Island in the Municipality of Châteauguay, one hour outside Montreal. Our post-retreat activity was a celebration of the project at the Little Burgundy community fair so as to highlight the participants' achievements in their own community. This activity attracted 35 youngsters.

**Number of project participants:** 10 adolescents aged 13 to 17, 5 leaders aged 18 to 25 and 4 workers from 3 different partnerships

### 3i Forum: September-October 2014

On Friday October 10, 2014, Breast Cancer Action Quebec (BCA-Qc) hosted the 3i Forum (Influence, Initiate, Impact) on the empowerment of young women. BCA-Qc believes that girls and young women from various Montreal communities should be empowered to take charge of their health, and supports initiatives in this regard. This event, the first of its kind, was aimed at initiating discussion on the impediments to girls' and young women's participation in civic, political and community life.

This was also an opportunity to discuss these issues with the public and to hear about and share the ideas and steps taken by young women to take their place in society. Young women who had

carried out original projects on this theme were invited to present them. The Forum was held at the McCord Museum in Montreal, from 11 am to 3 pm, and was followed by a one-hour networking cocktail.

Speakers:

- Cathy Wong, President of the Conseil des Montréalaises
- d'bi Young, spoken word artist
- Sarah St-Fleur, positive body-image activist

**Number of participants:** 75

### Photography project aimed at young women at risk of homelessness: November-December 2014

In the fall of 2014, the Montreal YWCA invited us to join one of its initiatives aimed at developing the leadership skills of eight young women who were experiencing isolation and marginalization and were at risk of homelessness.

Altogether, four workshop sessions were needed to create a photographic exhibition of their impressions of the media, critical thinking and health.

On November 5, 10 and 20, 2014, we held informal get-togethers with these young women, during which we discussed issues such as self-esteem, empowerment and fundamental human needs. We also re-examined the concepts of privilege and oppression and the importance of making one's voice heard so as to bring about positive changes in one's community. Our discussions focused on justice in health and individuals' disenfranchisement.

On November 26, the young women shared their photographs amongst themselves and selected the ones they wanted to include in the exhibit. On December 3, they met to put the finishing touches to the event. Finally, on December 11, their photographic works were unveiled.

**Number of persons involved:** 28 people came to the photography exhibit.

### **Young Women's project - post-3i project**

In December 2014, at the end of the 3i Project, a retrospective evaluation showed that we had worked with a total of 24 leaders, young women who had themselves led projects that had had a positive impact on the lives of other young women in their communities. Eight of these young leaders expressed a wish to continue working with BCA-Qc. Thanks to funding from the Betty Averbach Foundation, we overhauled the content of the workshops so as to make it more relevant to the needs and interest of young women from a variety of backgrounds. The work was done by an advisory committee called the action council. From January to June 2015, the members of this action council met twice a month to plan a summer retreat for ten girls aged 12 to 17, which took

place on June 19, 20 and 21, 2015. The young women also worked on designing a new more complete workshop, in order to implement ideas that had been put forward by participants at four discussion forums held in December 2014 and January 2015 with various groups of young women. In the summer of 2015, the action council also planned to set up an information booth on breast cancer prevention in various city parks. What a passionate, efficient and reliable council!

➤ New workshop:

This new tool is in the form of a Power Point presentation. Thanks to several consultations with young women from the Montreal YWCA, Maison d'Haïti and L'Envol, we were able to determine the education needs of our target audience as well as the best ways to present the information. The young leaders oversaw every step of the design of the new workshop, which will be offered as an extracurricular educational tool outside classroom hours in a number of high schools.

➤ 2015 retreat

The retreat formula is the most popular and must be maintained. It gives participants a sense of belonging to BCA-Qc and a private space that allows them to focus on learning while reinforcing their feeling that they matter. The annual retreat is also a summer ritual, a celebration for the young participants. This year's event was even more meaningful in terms of the profound changes it brought about. An assessment of changes in perception and knowledge revealed significant progress in awareness among the young participants.

**Number of girls reached: 13**

➤ Information booths - summer 2015:

Information booths were run by young leaders soon after the end of the June 2015 retreat. Throughout July and August, young women ran an information booth every two weeks in various parks across the island of Montreal.

Various activities:

• Maison d'Haïti : February-March

We held four workshops at Maison d'Haïti during which we held two game-based discussion sessions, one on identifying toxic substances and the other on making safe products. **Number of young women reached: 20.**

• L'Envol, a support organization for young mothers: March and June

We held three workshops with L'Envol, an organization that provides support to young mothers in Longueuil: one dealt with identifying toxic substances, one was on making safe products and the third focussed on health leadership. **Number of young women reached: 24.**

## From FemmeToxic to ToxiqueResistance

Since the end of the 3i project, the Young Women's Program has shifted towards a model aimed at democratizing information and moving away from a safe cosmetics campaign to become a true youth program focussing on health leadership. The switch from FemmeToxic to ToxiqueResistance! thus makes complete sense.

Our main challenge has been to encourage young women from different communities across Montreal to join the mission of FemmeToxic. Getting young women actively involved requires the will and the skills to capture their interest. We have therefore adapted our workshop to make it more relevant to young women's experiences and more culturally sensitive to the realities of different cultural communities. For example, one of the sections of our new workshop deals with skin lightening products and another deals with structural barriers to information. Safe cosmetics are generally quite expensive, but rather than seeing this as a barrier, we incorporated it into our approach to developing critical thinking about social justice, justice in general, justice with respect to health issues and economic justice. This form of open and frank dialogue can motivate young persons to opt for non-mainstream forms of discourse, for example through activist art, resistance or by adopting other standards of beauty and consumption.

Our new approach is based on the participation of a youth collective acting as experts, who will help us design awareness tools and will act as mentors for their peers.

Through mentoring and by fostering meaningful relationships among the young, our message can connect from inside with members of different neighbourhoods and communities. Working with communities that have very little access to this sort of information is all the more motivating because it is so vital.

In order to try joining forces with young women activists from various campuses and environmental groups, we formed an advocacy committee on August 13, 2015.

## V: Partnerships and Affiliations

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 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

### **The Name Change**

This year has seen much movement for BCA-Qc's communications. In September 2014 at last year's AGM the proposal to change our name to Action cancer du sein du Québec/Breast Cancer Action Quebec was adopted. This name better reflects our aspirations and place within the world. It took a little time for our new moniker to fall from our lips like BCAM did, but in good time, we answered the phone without hesitation.

### **Newsletter**

This year, the very dynamic and professional Newsletter Committee produced two excellent Newsletters, BCA-Qc Connected, full of original articles or carefully chosen reprints from other publications. The challenge for the coming year will be to better promote the newsletter on the website and with a larger public.

### **E-Bulletins**

During this year BCA-Qc was in touch with its members on a regular basis using our e-bulletins. We sent out 20 bulletins to keep members up to date on office and Board news, announcements of events, requests for volunteers and other issues.

### **Website**

This year we continued to promote our activities and campaigns, carry important news items, media pieces and articles via our website and blog. The website is also the place where our well respected and appreciated newsletter – *BCA-Qc Connected* finds its permanent home. This 2.0 website has made a big difference to the organization and moving forward with our communications strategy of a rebrand, the website will undergo some important changes in the months to come.

### **Facebook**

This year, we are just about to hit the 1000 mark on Action cancer du sein du Québec/Breast Cancer Action Quebec's Facebook page. We have been steadily building our audience with a wide variety of posts. Our Youth Programme Coordinator recruited a dedicated volunteer to post regularly to the FemmeToxic Facebook page. Elizabeth Lallemand's posts bring a serious youth voice to the

page; consistency being very important. This year, we exceeded 1000 likes on FemmeToxic's (FT) Facebook page.

## **Twitter**

BCA- Qc now has an interesting collection of 675 followers. With our re-brand underway and a very active youth presence in our organization, we look forward to the creation of a Twitter personality for our youth program in the near future that will be synchronous with BCA-Qc yet carry its own personal identity and spirit.

## **Revamping our look**

Our Strategic Plan proposed that we develop a global communications strategy including our (re)branding and changes to the look of our various communications tools to help promote our transformation. The very active Communications Committee of BCA-Qc (Deborah Bonney, Rosanne Cohen, Elizabeth Lallemand, Patricia Kearns and Jennifer Beeman) is charged with overseeing the communications strategy and is responsible for its implementation. The committee crafted a temporary logo reflecting our name change until our professional re-brand takes effect.

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

The committee is currently working with the wonderful design team Rouleau-Paquin to shape ACS-Qc/BCA-Qc's visual identity or brand. We are confident that this team will synthesize our many components, beliefs and actions into a recognizable logo and visual tools that convey who we are. We want our re-brand to attract many new members across the city and province and to celebrate our 25th anniversary in 2016. Stay tuned for our new look!

## VII: Membership and Organizational Development

### **Membership**

Our members constitute the backbone of Breast Cancer Action Quebec. Without their commitment year in and year out, our organization would not be the dynamic, growing group it continues to be. This year has seen many younger women become interested in our work. Interestingly, this often perplexes some people and certain funders when we tell them about our work, but that does not deter young women from continuing to join our ranks or more experienced members to be delighted to see our youth program grow.

### **A Strong Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors maintains its very active leadership regarding the orientation and administration of the organization. The Board held seven meetings in addition to the meetings of the Board committees, notably the Human Resources Committee and Funding Committee.

### **Strengthening the Work Team**

Strengthening the work team is constant priority. This is done through bi-weekly team meetings to keep colleagues abreast of one another's work and to promote collaboration on a variety of activities. We also held two joint board-work team days to make sure everyone understood our mission and history as well as to identify together our priorities regarding achieving our goals. Improving working conditions as well as offering the possibility of training on specific topics of interest are also ways of strengthening the team's commitment and work.

### **Funding: the Eternal Question**

This year saw our core funding from the Ministère de Santé et des Services sociaux increase as well as a major project grant from Status of Women Canada come to end. These are good examples of the ups and downs of funding for a small group such as ours. We are working actively to develop strategies to get out of the "feast or famine" cycle of project funding for NGOs such as ours. This will include broadening our base of individual funders. We are already off to a good start this year as our annual solicitation letter brought in donations from more individuals than in previous years.

## **An Exciting Year Ahead**

2016 will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Breast Cancer Action Montreal, now Breast Cancer Action Quebec. The founding members probably had no idea that the organization they launched would know such a long life. They probably also never imagined that a new generation of women, young and less young, would completely understand the mission and want to be a part of its work. Everyone at the organization, whether volunteers or staff, gets very excited when discussing how we are going to mark this anniversary. We have lots of ideas that will be put into place over the fall. If you want to be part of the activities in any form whatsoever, just get in touch with any of us to let us know. We are thrilled with all offers to contribute. And be sure to be part of the activities in 2016. We can assure you that it is going to be good, and more importantly, we will put the many issues related to breast cancer and the environment and true breast cancer prevention back on the map.

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

*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

Status of Women Canada

The Catherine Donnelly Foundation

Environmental Defence Canada

The Betty Averbach Foundation

The Solstice Foundation

The Abe and Ruth Feigelson Foundation

All BCA-Qc Sustaining Donors and Supporters

1001 Lenoir, bureau B-250

Montreal (Quebec) H4C 2Z6

[info@acsqc.ca](mailto:info@acsqc.ca)

**Tel** 514-483-1846

**Fax** 514-483-9221

[www.acsqc.ca](http://www.acsqc.ca)