



RÉSEAU des jeunes



Vol 4 | No 2 | November 2012
www.fiqsante.qc.ca

BULLETIN DU RÉSEAU DES JEUNES DE LA FÉDÉRATION INTERPROFESSIONNELLE DE LA SANTÉ DU QUÉBEC



**25 years of
Generation FIQ,
the next generation!**

TO BE YOUNG, A PROFESSIONAL AND AN ACTIVIST IN 2012

In this year that we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Federation, the Youth Committee wanted to have, along with its sisters, a time for reflection on what it means to be young, a professional and an activist in 2012. At the same time, it wanted the participants in the Youth Network to learn about the history of the FIQ and the struggles that it has waged since its beginnings.



It was therefore under the theme “25 years of Generation FIQ, the next generation!” that the members, aged 30 and younger, were invited to this 7th Network. In panels, workshops and conferences, they were able to take a moment to study different issues. What do young healthcare professionals in 2012 identify with? How can they make themselves heard? How to generate interest among young members for activism and to participate in union life? How has being an activist changed over the last 25 years? What are the main issues and challenges facing unions today? For the FIQ? What has been the contribution of the Federation in the history of the labour movement in Québec and what will be its place in the future?

If they are strong from past gains and resolutely farsighted, the young healthcare professionals must nevertheless confront numerous issues and challenges. It is together that they will be able to address these challenges and that is what they had the opportunity to find out last November 6 and 7. ■

Marie-Claude Ouellet, Political Officer for the Youth Committee

The next generation...

At the microphone:
Marie-Pier Tremblay, Institut universitaire de
cardiologie et de pneumologie de Québec
(IUCPQ)





Mélanie Dufour-Poirier, researcher at the *École des relations industrielles de l'Université de Montréal*

UNION ACTION AS SEEN BY YOUNG PEOPLE!

In this anniversary year, this 7th Youth Network was a great opportunity to redo the consultation on the vision that young healthcare professionals under age 30 share on union action. This process is aimed at providing input for the debate by the FIQ and the Youth Committee on the actions likely to push the young activists to get more involved within the Federation.

To do this, the Youth Committee was honoured to work in collaboration with a researcher from the *École des relations industrielles de l'Université de Montréal*, Mélanie Dufour-Poirier. Ms Dufour-Poirier outlined the profile of young workers in Québec and explained their relationship to unionism. According to research, young workers tend to reject the unions' traditional means of actions in greater proportion than other age groups. This fact leads to questions on the strategies likely to attract and mobilize young workers in the union ranks.

It is therefore in light of this finding that the Youth Committee asked the participants to reflect on the different aspects of union life at the FIQ, notably:

- The issues that can be taken on by their local union and the Federation;
- The means foreseen at the local level to raise the level of participation of the young healthcare professionals in the union;
- The impact of a Youth Committee, at the local level, on the participation of young healthcare professionals in the union;
- The actions and the activities that would enable young healthcare professionals to better identify to the FIQ, to support it and to be more of an activist.

This round table exercise was greatly appreciated by the participants. Tongues were quickly loosened to share their proposals and question those of others. Although Ms Dufour-Poirier needed time to compile and analyze the different discussions, it is already possible to highlight some preliminary findings:

- The participants identify in a very positive manner to the positions and to the actions waged by the Federation;
- Several of them believe that it is effective for the local unions to establish informal contacts with the young healthcare professionals and, in the same respect, argue that being able to put a face to the name of the union representatives in their institutions is conducive to better participation of the young members in union activities;
- They emphasize the importance of union training as a means to better understand the role of unions in society in general and, more specifically, that of the FIQ;
- Lastly, several of them emphasized the need to avoid the clichés linked to unions, often reported by the media, and to work towards discarding preconceived ideas. ■

Who does what?

In order to break the ice, the participants at the Youth Network took part in a game to associate the name of each member of the Executive Committee to her photograph and her political responsibilities. No one lost face!





“Without young people, the FIQ will become extinct. You have to be there to create a movement, an exchange of views.”
(Lina Bonamie)

From left to right:
Élaine Trottier, Jennie Skene and Lina Bonamie

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

The participants at the Youth Network were surprised to see two previous presidents of the Federation arrive, Jennie Skene (President from 1993 to 2005) and Lina Bonamie (President from 2005 to 2009). Diane Lavallée (President from 1987 to 1993), was present in spirit and by voice through a previously recorded video clip. For her part, Élaine Trottier, President of the *Association professionnelle des inhalothérapeutes du Québec* (APIQ) from 1997 to 2005 and respiratory therapist vice-president on the Executive Committee of the FIQ from 2005 to 2011, accompanied the happy duo.

These exceptional women came to speak to the young participants about their experiences as activists, what motivated them to get involved, what kept them going all those years and what they think of the challenges today for young people who want to take the same path as them.

Here are some gems heard during that memorable exchange:

“When the group is there, it makes all the difference” referring to the power of the local team, the cohesion of the group of healthcare professionals.
(Lina Bonamie)

“We have to talk with our family, not argue. Show them that we are in proposal mode, not reaction mode.”
(Élaine Trottier)

“What kept me going was every time we succeeded in resolving a problem, making a gain, making a step forward.” (Jennie Skene)

“I always attended my assemblies. Even when I was a student, I attended my student assemblies.”
(Lina Bonamie)

“We are in an era of rising individualism. The labour movement is therefore being questioned.”
(Diane Lavallée)

“I did not have any children, but I fought for maternity leaves. I had friends, sisters who had children, I fought for them.”
(Jennie Skene)

“If we want things to change, we have to get involved. I realized that collective involvement is productive.”
(Diane Lavallée)

“We can’t give up at the first sign of trouble. We have to move forward with the group. We have to lean on the group.”
(Jennie Skene)

“Unionism must expand through social networks. If communication is cut, it won’t be long before we fall into individualism.”
(Lina Bonamie)

The
next
generation...

1. At the microphone:
Jocelyn Marcoux,
*Centre hospitalier universitaire
de Québec (CHUQ)*, member of
the Youth Committee
2. At the microphone:
Caroline Proulx,
CSSS Pierre-Boucher



Jacques Rouillard, Historian and Professor at the *Université de Montréal*

HISTORY OF THE QUÉBEC LABOUR MOVEMENT

A reflection on the issues and challenges facing young people and activism would not be complete without discussing the history of the struggles waged by workers over the years. If Québec is what it is today, it is in part thanks to the activists who fought to improve the lot of the whole population. This is how Jacques Rouillard, Historian and Professor at the *Université de Montréal*, tackled the important milestones in the history of the Québec labour movement as well as the place occupied by the Federation.

From the unionization of skilled tradesmen at the beginning of the 19th century, to the creation of industrial unions in the 1940-1960's, the participants first became familiar with the role of workers' groups, that of creating collective bargaining power, which became necessary in a context of the rising growth of industrialization. Moreover, the different laws passed by governments made it easier: the passing of the Rand Formula comes to mind. Then, a brief overview of the labour movement in the public and parapublic sectors was presented which included the history of the unionization of nurses. Did you know that it was following the merger of three federations that the FIQ - the FIIQ at the time - was born in December 1987?

The participants in the Youth Network also had the opportunity to analyze

the sociopolitical action conducted by the labour movement and to focus on the reasons why the rate of unionization is on the decline since the 1990's - notably because of the strong growth of the services sector where unionization is more difficult.

Lastly, while being encouraged by Jacques Rouillard, the participants were made aware of the pertinence still of unions today. Findings were revealed, such as the dominance of a neoliberal ideology, the inequality of the bargaining power between the employees and the employers as well as the fact that the young people arriving on the job market are often compelled to hold temporary, unstable jobs with no protection. This contributes to making the labour movement and collective bargaining power more necessary than ever. ■



Jérôme Rousseau and Sara Caron-Guay

Two previous members tell their stories

Jérôme Rousseau and Sara Caron-Guay, two previous members of the Youth Committee, took turns talking about their experience as an activist.

Both of them were bitten by the union bug by following their desire to find solutions to the problems experienced on their work units. Their paths were then marked by different experiences which allowed both of them to obtain positions on the executive committee of their local union. Nothing less!

It is by joining forces that we can accomplish great things and, if we want to have an impact, it is important to develop alliances, to go see the people in the field and to always show a spirit of openness towards others. That is what stands out from the accounts of Jérôme and Sara.

They also took advantage of their visit to the Network to remind the young participants of the importance of being informed, of being politicized, of debating and, especially of invading the decision-making forums in order to influence and to make their point of view known. "You must take your place, because the union of tomorrow is you!"



Régine Laurent... young at heart

Another surprise in store for the participants at the Youth Network was Régine Laurent, President of the FIQ, who came to say a few words.

After touching on some of her childhood memories, Régine Laurent talked about her beginnings as a union activist. "In the 1990's, when I first started, there was no "union bashing". Union action was therefore easier to carry out and it was easier to reach the people", she emphasized.

Régine Laurent stated that the two files that have marked her career in particular are the Chantal Daigle issue and the recognition of midwives. Thanks to the solidarity shown by women and, notably, by the healthcare professionals, significant gains have been obtained. "There has always been that notion of collectiveness. We said that they wouldn't get us because we were in a gang", she explained.

In concluding her speech, the president recalled that "the quieter we are, the less power the labour movement will have". We succeeded in convincing the public that, when we are demanding better working conditions in the health-care institutions, it is also for them. That is our Union Defence Fund", she concluded.

Visibly impressed, the young healthcare professionals were numerous in taking advantage of this unscheduled forum to ask questions or to share certain concerns with this exceptional woman.

THE GAINS OF THE FIQ, FROM YESTERDAY TO TODAY

The 25th anniversary of the FIQ also means 25 years of struggles and solidarity. In order to become familiar with the history of the Federation and to learn more about the gains obtained during the different rounds of negotiations, the participants at the Youth Network had the opportunity, during a round table workshop, to discuss five significant periods that reflect past gains and rights to preserve.

Here are a few examples:

- Salary increases, creation of a critical care premium, recognition of time worked, time and one-half paid for work on Christmas Day and New Year's Day;
- Creation of new, more representative job titles, granting of permanent positions, conversion of replacement hours into positions;
- Improvement of the budgets allotted to human resources development, better guidance for newly-hired staff;
- Measures to combat workplace violence, procedure to resolve disputes on workload;
- Formula on arrangement of work time, national reduction target of 40% in the use of independent labour, etc.

Although the members of the FIQ are strong because of their past, in light of this workshop, they must nevertheless remain vigilant. Furthermore, to end this activity, each group was invited to identify a few of the demands that appear to be a priority for the coming years. The big winner? Work-family-personal life balance! ■



A stethoscope for young people

To celebrate its 25th anniversary, the Federation had a stethoscope made in the colours of the Youth Network. You can order one at the following web address: www.fiqsante.qc.ca/boutique-fiq/.