

CRC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

May 26-29, 2016

Au cœur des défis,
discerner
l'espérance

Discerning
hope
amid the challenges



CRC 

Executive Director's report

This is my first report as Executive Director. I began in this position in January 2015, but was involved with the CRC through my work on the Theological Commission since 2011.

Sister Rita Larivée and the other members of the Administrative Council have been both and patient and generous in assisting me in what has been a challenging transition. I would like to express my thanks to my predecessor, Fr. Yvon Pomerleau, OP, for his counsel and wisdom.

Pope Francis' proclamation of the Year of Consecrated Life gave rise to a whole series of tasks. While for the most part, celebrations for the year were at the level of the local Church, there were some elements that engaged religious communities at the national level. We were involved in the preparation of a letter to all consecrated persons jointed signed by Sister Rita as President of the CRC and Archbishop Paul-André Durocher as President of the CCCB. As well, a major liturgical celebration was held on September 17 at St. Joseph's Oratory with all Canadian bishops and about 1000 consecrated persons. This allowed us to, in the words of Pope Francis: "look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion, and embrace the future with hope" (See Apostolic letter *to all consecrated people on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*, 21 November 2014).

The General Assembly of 2014 had chosen as its theme "Beyond our borders: a call to transformation". We were honoured to have the challenging talks from Fr. Anthony Gittins on interculturality as well as the orientations proposed by the Theological Commission in light of the assembly. As such, the staff of the CRC prepared a series of sessions for local leaders, coinciding for the most part with meetings of the Administrative Council. The general theme allowed me to prepare a series of interventions on this theme in English and French. As well, the crisis of Syrian and Afghan refugees required a shift in our work in the final months of 2015. It was particularly gratifying to see the generous response of so many religious communities across the country. The CRC was able to publicize this important ministry on our website.

The broad topic of inter-culturality called for a variety of responses: Canadian religious communities have considerable experience in the dynamics of inter-culturality based on their ministry in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. More recently, many communities are experiencing an intercultural encounter here in Canada as they welcome for varying degrees of time members from Asia, Africa and Latin America. As well, the rapid and on-

going secularization in Canadian society gives rise to a kind of inter-cultural encounter with post-modernity. Many faith-based communities are finding themselves increasingly at odds with political and cultural developments in Canadian society. A good example is the debate in Quebec over questions as varied as the disposal of human remains and the on-going debate over euthanasia.

Since its beginnings, JPIC has occupied an important place in the life and activities of the CRC. On the francophone side, Francine Cabana has directed regular and frequent meetings in Quebec, Outaouais, and in the Atlantic region on topics as varied as human trafficking, the environment, and poverty. We partner in Quebec with ROJeP (Réseau oecuménique justice et paix) on First Nations issues and in preparation for the World Social Forum of August 2016. We are also partners with CATHII (Comité d'Action contre la Traite humaine interne et internationale) on the important issue of human trafficking.

On the Anglophone side, there were two important gatherings in the Toronto area. In June 2015, Sister Carol Zinn SSJ, former LCWR President gave the keynote address at a national JPIC gathering on the theme "All is one: weaving a single cloth for justice". In January 2016, members of leadership teams and JPIC network members in Ontario attended a CRC workshop entitled: "A sacred threshold; what does this moment hold for us?"

In solidarity with Canada's bishops, the CRC is participating in an on-going forum on our future relationship with First Nations. It has allowed us to affirm the Calls to Action for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and seek a way forward with our Aboriginal sisters and brothers.

In March of this year, the CRC convened a consultation process involving a small group of religious with significant involvement in justice concerns from across Canada. It was an opportunity to reflect on the history of CRC involvement in justice and to consider what areas are particularly appropriate for the CRC as it moves forward.

I would be remiss in not acknowledging the very important work of the Theological Commission over the past two years. The wisdom and creativity that our brothers and sisters have brought to the great task of theological reflection constitutes a vital contribution to the CRC. I'm delighted that the commission has now new members from different parts of Canada. Their generosity is a blessing for all of us.

Sister Louise Stafford has directed our communications efforts with great skill since 2003. It is no small feat to manage a website in two languages, maintain communications with major superiors across the country and supervise CRC-related publications, again in two languages. The publication of six *Bulletins* from our office over the two years has allowed

us to explore themes as varied as inter-culturality, and the impact of Pope Francis' "Joy of the Gospel" and "Laudato Si" on religious life. We're delighted that Jean-Michel Bigou has now joined our staff as Coordinator of communications, allowing Sister Louise to concentrate on matters related to publications.

I wish to acknowledge Renée Ntagungira for her work here in Quebec with the 'Service de priorités dans les dons'. Through this service, religious communities have the means to evaluate the many requests they receive for funding. An annex (page 9) describes in greater detail this office.

As I write this report, we have transitioned from the Year of Consecrated Life to the Year of Mercy. Pope Francis' call for Christians to be "mediators of mercy" (General audience of 27 January 2016) seems particularly relevant to our vocation as women and men religious in Canada. The spiritual and corporal works of mercy are at the ministerial heart of both contemplative and apostolic religious communities.

In keeping with the practice of our predecessors, Sister Rita and I met with officers from various Roman dicasteries to facilitate communication between the Holy See and religious communities in Canada. As we visited the various offices at the Vatican, it was gratifying to experience their interest in our work in Canada. I can say that the Church is blessed with the leadership of Cardinal Braz de Aviz and Archbishop Carballo at CICLSAL. I would also like to thank in a special way Sister Patricia Murray, Secretary of UISG for the time she gave us so close to their own General Assembly.

This has been a time of transition for the staff at the CRC. I would like express my thanks to Sister Joyce Murray who has returned to her community after five years' generous ministry in the area of JPIC. She has been replaced by Apraham Niziblian, who brings a great variety of experiences to the office including most recently his work for the Congrégation de Notre Dame. Following the General Assembly, we will also be saying goodbye to Jean Bellefeuille. Jean joined the CRC twelve years ago and has worked in a variety of areas including JPIC and on-going formation. He will be sorely missed.

I am ably assisted by Paula Demirelli and Nathalie Gauthier in the areas of office administration and finances. Without their contribution, our work would not be possible.

We have begun a series of public sessions in English and French across the country on the Paris climate summit and its relationship to Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*. This is an opportunity for us to collaborate with other organizations committed to work in peace and justice (Équiterre, Development and Peace-Caritas Canada).

The Projet Reconnaissance has now begun under the direction of Sister Erika Martino of the Fraternité monastique de Jérusalem. This will allow us to create an electronic calendar of religious women and men who have made a particular contribution to the life of the Church in Canada.

For the next two years, we anticipate a variety of activities in the area of on-going formation, as concerns in eco-theology, inter-culturality, and pastoral outreach to the poor and marginalized continue to preoccupy us in Canada today.

In 1534, two Benedictines accompanied Jacques Cartier on his second voyage to what would become New France. In twenty years' time, we will be commemorating the 500th anniversary of the first religious setting eyes on this part of the new world. Grateful for our history and inspired by Pope Francis, the CRC now looks forward with hope. We on the permanent staff seek guidance and direction from the General Assembly and the new Administrative Council as we set our sights on 2016-2018.

Fr. Timothy Scott, CSB

Executive Director's report

ANNEX 1

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL – 2014-2016

Members of the Administrative Council

Rita Larivée, SSA, President
George T. Smith, CSB, Vice-President
Annette Noël, SP, Secretary-Treasurer
Yvon Chalifoux, OSM, Quebec representative
Pierre-Anne Mandato, SCSM, Quebec representative
Elisabeth Villemure, SMNDA, Quebec representative
Joan Cronin, GSIC, Ontario representative
Rosemary MacDonald, CSM, Atlantic representative
Peter Novecosky, OSB, West representative

Administrative Council meetings

| Date | Lieu |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| June 2, 2014 | Montreal, QC |
| September 21-22, 2014 | Montreal, QC |
| December 12-13, 2014 | Montreal, QC |
| May 29-31, 2015 | Winnipeg, MB |
| September 20-22, 2015 | Halifax, NS |
| December 2, 2015 | Quebec City, QC |
| April 13-15, 2016 | Toronto, ON |

Executive Director's report

ANNEX 2

2014–2016 REPORT ON SELF-FINANCED SESSIONS

2014

January 9: In Quebec City, 114 leaders of religious communities met with the Administrative Council to discuss the theme *Où en sommes-nous (Where we're at)*. The meeting was held in French.

March 20: In Moncton, 42 people participated in the meeting with the Administrative Council. The theme was *Who are we?* This meeting was in English.

March 26: In Montreal, 20 people participated in the formation session offered to the secretaries of religious communities. This meeting was in French.

April 5: In Ottawa, 74 people gathered together on the theme of *Serving With Passion* to reflect on the impact that Pope Francis's Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, is having on their life. This session was held in French.

November 5: In Scarborough, 23 people involved in social justice attended a meeting. This meeting was in English.

In total, **273 people** participated in 2014 activities.

2015

April 22: In Montreal, 84 people participated in a reflection-and-discussion meeting that focused on the theme of *Interculturality in Religious Congregations: Challenges and Promise*.

April 22: In Ottawa, 64 people gathered together to reflect on the prophetic mission of religious communities based on Chapter 4 of *The Joy of the Gospel*. This session was held in French.

May 26: In Quebec City, 61 people attended a reflection-and-discussion meeting that focused on the theme *Interculturality in Religious Congregations: Challenges and Promise*. The day unfolded in French.

May 29: In Winnipeg, 29 leaders of religious communities attended the meeting with the Administrative Council, focusing on the theme *Welcoming the other and the Other*. The day unfolded in English.

June 2–4: A National Gathering on social justice was held in Toronto, which was attended by 101 people. This session was held in English.

October 21: In Toronto, 22 people participated in a reflection-and-discussion meeting focusing on the theme of *Interculturality in Religious Congregations: Challenges and Promise*. This meeting was held in English.

November 4–5: The Ontario Anglophone JPIC network met in Scarborough, with 22 people attending.

November 5–8: A meeting of the *Benjamins* was held in Trois-Rivières with the theme of *Gathered Together in Joy*.

September 21: In Halifax, 23 people participated in the meeting with the Administrative Council, an encounter that focused on the theme of *Welcoming the other and the Other*. Simultaneous interpretation was available.

December 3 and 5: In Quebec City and Montreal, 144 people attended a meeting with the Administrative Council on the subject of welcoming refugees.

ANNEX 3

Donation Priorities Service (DPS)

This Service is mandated to receive requests for financial assistance from community organizations, to have those requests analyzed by six members from religious communities in various regions of Quebec, to visit the groups in their respective regions and to apply intervention criteria that have been pre-established by the religious communities.

This alliance with community organizations allows the religious communities to go to the community at large and to be close to those who are at the forefront of the struggle for a necessary change, to participate in giving a voice to the voiceless and to develop a network of relationships so that every human person regains their dignity and pride.

Despite the reduction in the number of people in the religious communities, their financial support to community organizations still remains significant. Nearly 300 groups across Quebec profit from that fact to offer their services of popular education, defending human rights, and enabling the citizen involvement of their members. Among these organizations, many umbrella organizations or coalitions of groups enable a collective voice to be raised before our political decision makers.

The DPS includes an "Issue Table" composed of those men and women representatives from religious communities who are in charge of distributing donations in their respective communities. It is a place of information and formation on a given situation and problem. In the last two years, the four meetings held have focused on:

1. *Analysis of the current situation in Quebec, the drastic financial cuts that are affecting people, institutions and community organizations.*
2. *The history of taxation and tax havens.*
3. *The environment: "When mining development does not mean wealth creation, respect for human rights and the environment".*
4. *Conditions of Aboriginal women.*

Despite the fact that the Service does not have a single permanent employee, we believe that it has succeeded thanks to the involvement of men and women collaborators from all regions, lay persons or members of religious communities, who believed and still believe in this form of solidarity. And may they all be warmly thanked.

Renée Ntagungira
Member in charge

ANNEX 4

REPORT OF THE THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION TO THE CRC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

This report covers the period from the May 2014 General Assembly to May, 2016.

The majority of Theological Commission members attended the May 2014 Assembly, which had as its theme *Beyond Frontiers - A Call to Transformation*, referring to the intercultural challenges and opportunities we face today. At this assembly, the commission was given the particular task of listening to the voices of the assembly, in order to propose orientations for CRC for the next two years. We drafted orientations that were presented to and approved by the assembly.

Since the 2014 Assembly, the commission has met three times: October 23-24, 2014; May 14-16, 2015 and October 23-24, 2015. Our next meeting will be immediately after this assembly at Providence International Centre in Montreal, where all our meetings have been held.

The May 2015 meeting merits special mention. Our aim for this meeting was to broaden and deepen our own intercultural experience and its gifts and challenges to consecrated life, by engaging with persons from diverse cultures. To this end, we invited four religious from various countries of origin, now living in Canada, to address us and engage with us on specific themes. Present were: Pierre Bach Tran, CSSR, Vietnamese; Jeanne Bashigé, SF, Congolese; Alba Letelier, SP, Chilean and Idara Otu, MSP, Nigerian. Commission members present found the exchange enriching and profound. This encounter and the 2014 Assembly provided the rich ground for the winter 2016 bulletin.

Much of our meeting time is devoted to our main task as commission, the writing of the winter CRC Bulletin. Commission members wrote the articles and introductions for the following bulletins:

- Winter 2015 - Theme: *The Joy of the Gospel - Challenges to Consecrated Life*
- Winter 2016 - Theme: *Interculturality - Challenges and Promise*

In addition to this, some commission members contributed to the summer/fall 2015 edition of the bulletin, which had reflections on *Laudato Si* as its theme.

We have had several membership changes in the past two years. Timothy Scott, CSB left the commission when he took on the role of CRC Executive Director. Carmelle Bisson, AMJ and Lorraine Caza, CND completed two terms in the fall of 2015, so were not eligible for a third term according to the by-laws. Rick VanLier, OP withdrew from the commission in 2015. We thank them for their substantial contributions to the commission. We welcomed Louis Riverin, FMJ as a new member, and Michel Proulx, O. PRAEM., as a returning member. Our most recent addition is Gill Goulding, CJ who will be joining us at our next meeting. In case you have lost count, we are now seven on the commission. We will consider the addition of another member at our coming meeting. The present membership is:

Quebec members:

Gaétane Guillemette, NDPS
Antoine-Emmanuel de la Sayette, FMJ
Michel Proulx, O. PRAEM.
Louis Riverin, FMJ

Western member:

Margaret Patricia Brady, OSB

Atlantic member:

Lorraine d'Entremont, SC

Ontario member:

Gill Goulding, CJ

A report of the commission would not be complete without reference to our support network. CRC Administration provides us with recording secretaries for our meetings. Lorraine St-Hilaire, SNJM served us in this capacity until spring 2015. Paula Demirelli took up the task in fall 2015. We are provided with simultaneous translation at our meetings, and translation for our articles. Louise Stafford, FSP, publishing manager of CRC Bulletins, ensures our articles are correct and attractively presented. We are kept connected with CRC Administration by the attendance of the Director or President at parts of our meetings. For all these services and the people who provide them, we are most grateful.

Lorraine d'Entremont, SC
for the Theological Commission