

# AGIR Annual Report

April 1 2012 – March 30 2013





## **Annual Report April 1 2012 – March 30 2013**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This report will provide an overview of AGIR activities from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 until March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013. This includes our previous Annual General Assembly (AGA), board of directors meetings, accompaniment and support work, community mobilization and advocacy campaigns, board of directors and members retreat, research initiatives, policy advocacy and popular education, social gatherings, website, event collaborations, partnerships, strategic planning and action plan.

*\* AGIR's previous year's annual report included activities from April 1st 2011 to June 28th 2012. For consistency purposes, this year's report (and future reports), is aligned our financial year - April 1st 2012 to March 30th 2013. Please note that there will be some activities included in last year's report (between April 1st - June 28th 2013) that will be included in this year's report.*

### **ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY (AGA) 2012**

AGIR's previous AGA was held on June 28th 2012 at the Centre 2110 at 1500 de Maisonneuve Ouest, #404, Montréal. This was AGIR's second AGA. During this AGA, AGIR voted to pass the 2011 AGA meeting minutes, year end financial and activity reports and elected 3 new board members.

The Board of Directors comprised of 3 co coordinators, 1 treasurer and 5 general board members

*AGIR Board of Directors*

*Co-coordinators - Valeria T. Contreras, Christina Olivieri, Betty Iglesias*

*Treasurer - Kevin Stanley*

*General Board Members - Anderson Bordim, Mohamad Niel Armstrong Ladode, Renata Militzer, Edward Lee, Edson Emilio Garcia*



## CALENDAR OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

### *Regular board meetings*

July 7th 2012, August 30th 2012, November 2nd 2012, April 12th 2013, May 13 2013, June 6 2013

### *AGIR board - member retreat*

AGIR coordinated a special Board of Directors-Members retreat from October 6 - 7th 2012 at Camp Kanawana. More details will be provided in the board of directors retreat section.

### *AGIR board strategic planning sessions*

AGIR participated in 2 board of directors strategic planning sessions with COCo (The Centre for Community Organizations) on March 3rd and March 17th 2013. More details will be provided in our strategic planning and action plan section.

## AGIR BOARD OF DIRECTORS - MEMBERS RETREAT

From October 6th - 7th 2012, AGIR coordinated its first ever *board of directors + members retreat* at the YMCA's Camp Kanawana. This retreat served to strengthen relationships and foster team building within our board of directors and some members. Retreat attendance included 6 board members, 1 general member and 2 AGIR - Charlie Chore production team members. This retreat served to build the capacity of our organisation, through training and skill building, especially for the queer and trans people with immigrant and refugee experiences who participated.





During the retreat, the following workshops were presented: histories of marginalized communities in Montreal, accompaniment & community organizing, presentation of ASTT(e)Q guidebook, introduction to documentary filmmaking, discussion about AGIR media project about LGBTQ Mexican refugees.

The AGIR - Charlie Chore production team also took extensive footage of the retreat (including two AGIR members and two Charlie Chore production team members). This video footage will be used both for AGIR purposes and a Charlie Chore production about a documentary focused on the experiences of AGIR board member Betty Iglesias.

*Retreat objectives:*

- Build capacity of AGIR board of directors and members, especially those with immigrant and refugee experiences in order to develop knowledge and skills
- Gain greater awareness about histories of marginalized communities in Montreal (i.e. First Nations, Black/Asian communities, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities)
- Engage in community organizing training and skill building (i.e. support work, campaigns, etc) to improve our support and advocacy with AGIR members
- Spend time together, get to know each other better, strengthen relationships and grow as a collective working toward common social justice goals.
- Take a break from our city lives, get out into nature and breathe some fresh air!



**AGIR Skills-Building Retreat**  
**Camp YMCA Kanawana, Saint-Sauveur**



**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6**

8 am - 9 am	<b>Pick ups around Montreal by van (Ed) and car (Jack)</b>
9 - 10 am	Drive from Montreal to Camp Kanawana (Saint-Sauveur)
10 am	<b>Estimated arrival time at camp</b>
10 - 11 am	Settle in, check out the facilities
11 - 12 pm	<b>INTRODUCTION &amp; ICEBREAKER</b>
12 - 1 pm	Have lunch, explore the site
1 pm - 2:30	<b>WORKSHOP 1 : Histories of marginalized communities in Montreal, Facilitator: Ed</b>
2:30 - 3 pm	Break
3 - 5 pm	<b>WORKSHOP 2 : Accompaniment &amp; community organizing, Facilitator: Ed + Presentation of ASSTeQ Guidebook, lead by Liberia</b>
5 pm - 5:30	Free time
5:30 - 6:30	Supper at dining hall
6:30 - 7pm	<b>CHECK-IN MEETING</b>
7 - 8pm	Free time
8 pm	<b>EVENING ACTIVITY : BONFIRE!</b>

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7**

8 am - 9am	Breakfast at dining hall
9 am - 10:30	<b>WORKSHOP 3 : Introduction to documentary filmmaking, Facilitators: Jack and Valeria</b>
10:30 - 10:45	Break
10:45 - 12:15	<b>WORKSHOP 4 : AGIR media project about Mexican LGBTQ refugees: discussion &amp; brainstorm</b>
12:30 - 1:30	Lunch at dining hall
1:30 - 2:30	<b>CLOSING ACTIVITY</b>
2:30 - 3 pm	Pack up, tidy rooms, load vehicles
3 pm	<b>Estimated departure time from camp</b>
3 - 4 pm	Drive from camp to Montreal
4 - 5 pm	<b>Drop offs around Montreal</b>

\* This is a tentative schedule for the weekend.

\* Workshop order, times and durations may change depending on decisions made by the group.



## **ACCOMPANIMENT & SUPPORT WORK**

Over the past year, AGIR provided one-on-one support and information to approximately 50 LGBTQ immigrants and refugees. AGIR supports individuals from a diversity of countries although we have support multiple people from Mexico, Nigeria, Morocco and Syria. We have also supported individuals from Croatia, Ethiopia, Guinée, Ghana, Indonesia and Lebanon. Out of these individuals, there were approximately 35 LGBTQ immigrants and refugees with whom we engaged in more on-going accompaniment which included multiple meetings, phone calls or e-mail exchanges. Of this group of people, nearly half are cis and trans women.

4 LGBTQ refugees who we supported this past year received a positive refugee decision while most are still undergoing their immigration or refugee process. Over the past two years, 12 LGBTQ refugees who have been supported by AGIR have been accepted. We are presently providing ongoing support to 5 refugee claimants, 1 of whom is from Mexico and will therefore be subject to the recent law C-31 policy changes related to being from a designated country of origin. The other 4 refugee claimants will still be subject to changes to refugee policy. For example, if they receive a negative decision at their refugee hearing, then they will not have access to a PRRA or an H & C until 12 months after their negative decision.

The various kinds of accompaniment and support work activities includes: active listening, peer support, referrals related to legal services, housing, education, healthcare, social services and employment, providing accurate information about immigration and refugee processes, providing letters of support for the refugee hearing, Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) appeals, sponsorship applications, Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRAA) and Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds Permit (H & C), employment rights advocacy. One of the key aspects of accompaniment and support work has been referring LGBTQ immigrants and refugees to various social services and community organisations that could address a particular area of concern that came up during meetings. In addition, there were a variety of organisations and social services that referred individuals to AGIR.

## **COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION & ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS**

Over the past year, AGIR initiated or continued 5 community mobilization and advocacy campaigns with 6 LGBTQ immigrants and refugees. The campaigns included advocating for refused refugees, the acceptance of Humanitarian and Compassionate (H & C) applications, appealing IRB decisions at the federal court and fundraising to combat housing discrimination. These campaigns included multiple AGIR board members and general members. Two campaigns were initiated in May 2011, 2 campaigns were initiated in 2012, and in 2013 1 campaign has been launched so far.

These campaigns included planning and coordination meetings, meetings with lawyers, meetings with federal MPs, mobilization events, creation of petitions, press releases, media communications, vigils, providing letters of support, interpretation, letter writing to the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, distribution of campaign via website and e-mails. An important



aspect to the coordination of these campaigns has been developing strong relationships with various LGBTQ advocacy and migrant justice groups. Oftentimes, the overall coordination of these campaigns was coordinated between members of AGIR and another group, in addition to requesting support from other organisations. Key organisations include: ADA, ASTT(e)Q, Solidarity Across Borders and MUR (Mexicans United for Regularisation).

### 1. *Campaign to support Manuel Sanchez – May 2011 - August 2012*

This campaign was a collaboration between AGIR and MUR, in addition to being officially supported by Action Santé Travesti(e)s et Transsexuel(le)s du Québec (ASTT(e)Q), Conseil Québécois des Gais et Lesbiennes (CQGL), Dignidad migrante and GLAM (Gais et lesbiennes asiatiques de Montréal). Manuel Sanchez submitted his submission for refugee status on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008. His refugee claim and subsequent recourses to remain in Canada was rejected. On June 19<sup>th</sup>, a vigil in support of Manuel was organized in front of the Guy-Favreau complex. Manuel's campaign has appeared on TVA nouvelles, le Journal de Montréal, 2mag, 24 heures and La Presse.

On July 20<sup>th</sup>, Manuel presented himself with his lawyer to the immigration office. Upon his arrival, he was sent to detention, and was at risk of being deported. A few days later, Manuel had a detention review and was accompanied by AGIR and MUR members. At the detention review, the IRB decision maker allowed Manuel to leave detention and prepare to leave for Mexico. Although Manuel was forced to move to Mexico on July 26<sup>th</sup>, AGIR has remained in contact with him. An individual on his support team fundraised over \$600 for Manuel also contributed a witness statement of his experiences in detention for a sound demonstration held in front of the laval detention centre on December 16<sup>th</sup> 2012.

“I arrived (to the detention center) on a Friday afternoon and I had to wait until Monday to see the adjudicator that would review my deportation order. On Saturday afternoon, I was informed by a security guard that I had visitors. I couldn't believe people were visiting even when they had already called me. The guard brought me to the visiting area. There, I saw Ed and Valeria from AGIR... a support group for LGBTQ new arrivals. Annie and other members of MUR, another group that I'm part of came to see me too... Others couldn't visit but supported me throughout the duration of my process and made me feel I wasn't so alone. I can't thank life enough for the existence of all these people that supported me so much.”

### 2. *Friends of Laura and Alejandra Campaign – May 2011 to present*

The campaign to support Laura and Alejandra began in May 2011 and has continued to the present. The main objective of the *Friends of Laura and Alejandra Campaign* is to ensure that Laura Rivas and Alejandra Valdivia be given the Humanitarian and Compassionate Ground (H & C) permit in order to live in Montreal in peace and security. In collaboration with Laura and Alejandra, AGIR developed a petition to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in order





for their H & C application (which they submitted in 2010) be accepted. After living here for nearly 5 years, Laura and Alejandra continue to wait for a decision.

### 3. *Campaign to support Julio Salas Arreola*

AGIR, in collaboration with Project Protect, began a community mobilization campaign in solidarity with Julio Salas Arreola in January 2013, a leader within diverse communities, especially for the LGBTQ latin@ community living with HIV. Our aim was to raise awareness and mobilize community support for Julio in his fight to gain permanent residency across LGBTQ, Latin@ and activist communities. Julio is an important community leader who has greatly enriched the lives of those around him. If he is deported, it will be an incredible loss for our communities.

On February 7<sup>th</sup>, AGIR launched the campaign for solidarity with Julio and his fight for permanent residency. This campaign included contacting Julio's immigration enforcement officer and attending his Federal Court appeal of a refused administrative stay of removal and H & C application. On February 15<sup>th</sup>, the judge presiding over his Federal Court hearing rendered a positive decision and giving Julio a stay of removal. An approved stay of removal means that Julio can remain in Canada while his case is studied by the Federal Court. Julio's case sheds lights on the obstacles facing Mexican refugee claimants, especially those who are LGBTQ and living with HIV. Below are some reflections from Julio.

“I convey my sincere heartfelt thanks to each one of you for your messages of support, and for your kindness in sending your letters to the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) agent. So many of you, your organizations and friends helped support this campaign in ways you probably didn't even realize and I cannot express enough gratitude to you. Your solidarity gives me more energy to live each day. I want to tell you that I won't give up and I will continue working and volunteering with the same enthusiasm, courage and commitment which I owe to the community and especially to Latinos Positivos.”

### 4. *Campaign to support Carlos Hurtado*

After first making contact with AGIR in June 2012, the campaign to support Carlos began in May 2013. The main objective of this campaign is to ensure that Carlos be given the Humanitarian and Compassionate Ground (H & C) permit due to being of victim of domestic violence related to a failed sponsorship application. In collaboration with Carlos, AGIR has created a petition to support his application for permanent residency on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Carlos submitted their H & C claim in November 2012 and continues to wait for the decision. Many people would be incredibly saddened if Carlos were forced to leave Canada. Carlos is an intelligent, caring and dedicated individual who has been living in Canada for the past 4 years and has clearly set roots within multiple, diverse communities in Montreal.





#### 5. *Campaign to support Edson Emilio Garcia*

In order to support Edson to defend his human rights, AGIR organized an Indiegogo fundraising drive to cover the costs of his Judicial Review of the Quebec Human Rights Commission's decision to reject his case after conducting a very problematic investigation. Because of this problematic decision, Edson has retained support from CRARR, a local civil rights group, to help him go to court to obtain justice. Through the indiegogo fundraiser, AGIR was able to fundraise \$250. We would like to sincerely thank everyone who contributed to Edson Garcia's Indiegogo fundraiser in order to help him to defend his right to equality without discrimination in housing. Edson is an important part of the AGIR community, having joined the AGIR board at our last AGM in July 2011. He continues to use his experiences as a gay Mexican refugee (and now Canadian citizen) to support and organize with fellow AGIR members.

### **POLICY / MEDIA ADVOCACY & POPULAR EDUCATION**

This past year, AGIR continued to engage in policy / media advocacy and popular education initiatives. AGIR focused a significant amount of energy of engaging in policy / media advocacy and popular education about the refugee law C-31 and cuts to the federal interim health care for refugees. Paying particular attention to its effects on LGBTQ refugees, AGIR coordinated and supported a number of campaigns and activities related to opposing law C-31. These activities were aligned with one of AGIR's main objectives of defending the legal, social and economic rights of LGBTQ immigrants and refugees.

#### *Spotlight - Opposing anti-refugee law C-31 short animated video*

AGIR created a short animated video which identified 3 problematic aspects of Bill C-31. These 3 aspects included: The designation of "safe" countries, detention policy and the "cessation" clause. Since posting an English version of the video on April 12<sup>th</sup> and the French version of the video on May 8<sup>th</sup> on YouTube, these videos have altogether been viewed over 4425 times.

#### *Bill C-31 policy and media advocacy initiatives coordinated and supported by AGIR includes:*

- March 27 2012 - an English and French version Press Release about Bill C-31 was released by AGIR, in collaboration with ADA, Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique, ASTT(e)Q, CQGL, GLAM and Helem Montréal. On March 29<sup>th</sup> 2012, an Open Letter was published in Xtra. [http://www.xtra.ca/public/National/Placing\\_LGBTQ\\_refugee\\_lives\\_at\\_risk-11759.aspx](http://www.xtra.ca/public/National/Placing_LGBTQ_refugee_lives_at_risk-11759.aspx) (please note these activities were completed prior to AGIR's annual report start date of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012).
- April 10 2012 - AGIR presented an information and mobilizing workshop at the Centre St Pierre which explained key aspects of Bill C-31 and the impact on LGBTQ refugees. The main goal for this workshop were to provide information and mobilize those directly



affected by Bill C-31, especially LGBTQ refugees and migrants. Attended by approximately 20 people.

- April 2012 - In collaboration with the Canadian Council for Refugees, AGIR presented a post card campaign directed towards federal MPs titled “A Tulip for Refugees”. Approximately 500 postcards were printed and distributed.
- April 2012 - AGIR officially signed the CCR open letter opposing Bill C-31.
- April - May 2012 - AGIR members participated in a number of vigils against Bill C-31.
- April 2012 - AGIR endorsed the policy brief submitted by Rainbow Refugee Committee during Senate hearings for Bill C-31.
- May 12 2012 - AGIR presented an information and mobilizing workshop at the Centre 2110 related to Bill C-31 and cuts to the federal interim health care program for refugees. Attended by approximately 15 people.
- May 18 2012, AGIR screened this short film at GLAMBoree, an artistic performance and film screening event at Café L’Artère with over 50 people in attendance.
- May 23 2012 - AGIR presented 2 information workshops about Bill C-31 at the Centre Lartigue, a French language school. Each workshop was attended by approximately 25 people.
- July 5 2012 - Festive rally at Kent Park and creative action to denounce health care cuts to refugees + Launch of the "We Refuse to Cooperate" Campaign, organized by Health Justice Collective, in collaboration with several community and health services organizations and groups. AGIR members were present at this rally to support this important campaign.
- July 28 2012 - AGIR created a facebook event page dedicated to providing people with strategies and actions for opposing refugee law C-31.
- March 25 2013 - Information workshop titled, *Important Changes in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, was co-presented by AGIR, Solidarity Across Borders, Services Juridiques et Communautaires de Pointe-Saint-Charles et Petite-Bourgogne, and Comité d’Éducation aux Adultes de la Petite-Bourgogne et St-Henri (CEDA). AGIR presented its short video on Bill C-31, talked about the particular issues faced by LGBTQ refugees and the impacts of the recent changes to refugee protection, and informed participants about AGIR's services for supporting and advocating with LGBTQ immigrants and refugees. Attended by approximately 25 people.

In addition to activities related to opposing refugee law C-31, AGIR has also participated in a variety of policy / media advocacy and presented a number of popular education and awareness raising workshops.

*Spotlight on popular education and presentations about LGBTQ refugee identities*  
*Co-developed and co-presented by Christina Olivieri and Edson Emilio*

These presentations and workshops were created for delivery at regional and national gatherings of the refugee support sector, with the aim of enabling better understanding of the complex identities of LGBTQ refugee individuals, in and on their own terms. Of focus were the importance of distinguishing sexual orientation from gender identity, recognizing the diversity of cultural understandings/expressions of sexual and gender identities, and minimizing the forced



'coming out' of individuals going through the refugee claimant process and when accessing services. Workshops were presented at the CCR consultations in Toronto, the Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA), and the Halifax Refugee Legal Clinic.

*Popular education and media advocacy coordinated and supported by AGIR includes:*

- November 30 2012 - CCR Fall Consultation, Toronto. AGIR participated on panel titled *Intersectionality, Identity, and Access to Services*, organized by the Integration and Settlement Working Group. Presenters included: Rabia Khedr, Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities, Maria Alejandra Ramírez Bolaños, FCJ Refugee Centre Youth Network, and Christina Olivieri and Edson Emilio, AGIR
- March 8 2013 - Along with ADA, Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique, Ethnoculture, GLAM and HELEM, AGIR signed an open letter published in Fugues, opposing media stereotypes that all immigrants are homophobic.  
[http://www.fugues.com/main.cfm?l=fr&p=100\\_article&article\\_ID=23613](http://www.fugues.com/main.cfm?l=fr&p=100_article&article_ID=23613)
- March 26 2013 - ARAISA Refugee Resettlement in the Atlantic RAP Learning Conference, Halifax (NS). AGIR presented on a panel titled *Intersectionality, Identity, and Access to Services*. Presentors included: Noor Al-Anbagi (with sign-language interpretation by Alice Mailman), Rup Nariayan Dhungana, Bhutanese Atlantic Youth Group and Christina Olivieri and Edson Emilio, AGIR.
- March 26 2013 - ARAISA Refugee Resettlement in the Atlantic RAP Learning Conference, Halifax (NS). *LGBTQ refugee identities* workshop (20 participants) facilitated by AGIR and explored the needs, as well as challenges, for their agencies in making known that they are a safe space for sexual orientation and gender diversity, and in offering appropriate referrals and support to LGBTQ newly settled refugees.
- March 26 2013 - Halifax Refugee Legal Clinic. *LGBTQ Refugee Identities* workshop presented by AGIR to the Legal Clinic's staff, most of whom are volunteers who are also studying law and to two LGBTQ refugee claimants. This was also an excellent opportunity for knowledge exchange between AGIR and the Legal Clinic, in terms of sharing experiences and approaches in supporting and advocating for LGBTQ refugees in our respective regions.

## **SOCIAL GATHERINGS**

Due to prioritizing policy / media advocacy, internal skill building (AGIR retreat) and research initiatives, AGIR coordinated a smaller number of social gatherings this past year. In addition, AGIR also decided to develop more event collaborations with other organisations, in addition to attending social and artistic events organized by other groups and organisations. The main goals for the social gatherings were to provide a safer space for LGBTQ immigrants and refugees to meet each other and allies, break social isolation, create dialogue and develop friendships. Social gatherings were held on: April 13th 2012 (peer support), December 8<sup>th</sup> 2012 (holiday party) and December 24th 2012 (holiday party).



## COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Over the course of the past year, AGIR has participated in a number of events and activities that were coordinated by other organisations and groups. They include:

- April 29 2012 - AGIR collaboration with South Asian Youth (SAY) for monthly film screening of the film *Pariah*.
- May 17 – 20 2012 – AGIR participated in the coordination and facilitation of Congrès Ethno 2012. Congrès Ethno is a weekend-long event leading into International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO). AGIR was especially involved with a mini-conference held on May 20. Collaborating organisations included: Arc-en-ciel d’Afrique, Helem Montréal, GLAM, ADA and Ethnoculture.
- August 18 2012 - AGIR had a booth during LGBT+ PRIDE Community Day
- August 18 2012 - AGIR presented during 2 QTPOC Montreal 2012, a series of artistic events between August 10th - 19th 2012, at articule artist-run centre by and about queer and trans people of colour, with gorgeous work, oral history, artist talks, and community lectures. [http://www.articule.org/web/expositions/12-13/2qt poc\\_en.html](http://www.articule.org/web/expositions/12-13/2qt poc_en.html)
- September 14 2012 - Several AGIR members attended the screening of the documentary film « La Cantine afghane » (Geneva Guerin, Canada, 2012) about Afghan asylum seekers in Paris, which was followed by a talk about Afghans in Montreal and a discussion about Bill C-31.
- November 22 2012 - Screening of the documentary *Last Chance* by Paul Émile d’Entrepont at Image+Nation, LGBT international film festival in Montreal. *Last Chance* tells the stories of 5 asylum seekers to Canada who flee their native countries to escape homophobic / transphobic violence. The festival organizers provided a dozen free tickets to AGIR members. AGIR members participated in the Q&A session with the director, asking questions about ethical dimensions of the documentary.
- December 10 2012 - Launch of TransSolidaire community project. TransSolidaire is a new project by ASTT(e)Q that focuses on prevention, intervention and social mobilisation against violence towards trans people in Québec. AGIR invited our members to participate in this event. One of our coordinators, Betty Iglesias, was hired as a peer support worker by ASTT(e)Q. This antiviolence project has the goal of encouraging trans community members experiencing different forms of violence (conjugal, work, on the street, etc). This project also aims to document the number of trans people in Montreal who are survivors of violence.





## PARTNERSHIPS

In this section, the aim is to identify key partnerships that AGIR has developed over the past year, with the goal to further develop these partnerships for the upcoming year.

- *Action Réfugiés Montréal*

ARM is a non-profit, faith inspired organization that seeks justice for refugees. ARM prioritizes supporting women and children while working to understand and address their needs and valuing their potential contributions to society. Over this past year, ARM has referred individuals to AGIR. In addition, AGIR has met with ARM in order to improve and strengthen joint support efforts and potential collaborations.

- *ASTT(e)Q*

ASTT(e)Q aims at promoting the health and well being of transvestites and transsexual persons living in Québec. Over the past year, AGIR has met a number of times with the ASTT(e)Q coordinators, in addition to participating in ASTT(e)Q community suppers. It is important to note that there are a number of people who are both ASTT(e)Q and AGIR members.

- *Charlie Chore Pictures*

AGIR is presently developing a formal partnership Charlie Chore productions. Charlie Chore Pictures, Inc., produces uniquely tailored, commissioned corporate video media for promotion, education and training purposes for a clientele that includes public and cultural institutions, non-profit organizations and artists. Charlie Chore Pictures is presently collaborating with AGIR in order to document a variety of AGIR activities, including our retreat, COCo strategic planning sessions and campaign mobilisations. Charlie Chore Pictures is also producing *Betty's Feast: a Refugee's Kitchen*, a documentary and community-empowerment initiative that follows the story of Betty Iglesias, a trans refugee from Tuxtepec, Mexico.

- *Immigrant Workers Centre*

The Immigrant Workers Centre (IWC) defends the rights of immigrants in their places of work and fights for DIGNITY, RESPECT, and JUSTICE. They provide resources and referrals for immigrant workers in several languages (English, French, Spanish, Persian, Hindi, Arabic, etc). Come and join the IWC to learn about your rights, how to fight to improve conditions in the workplace, and forward the movement for economic and social justice. AGIR has referred its members to the IWC and has collaborated with IWC workers in order to defend the employment rights of AGIR members.





- *Just Solutions Clinic*

The Just Solutions Clinic provides free legal information and assistance\*, rights advocacy and accompaniment to vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals regarding immigration status and social benefit entitlements. The majority of their clientele are refugee claimants (in process, accepted or refused), other newcomers with precarious immigration status and disadvantaged persons living in the downtown core. AGIR has referred a number of its members to the Just Solutions Clinic in order for them to be provided with accurate and free (or affordable) information about the refugee process. AGIR has also met with the Just Solutions Clinic in order to learn more about their policies and practices, so that AGIR may work towards improving our own accompaniment and support work.

- *Maison Haidar / Projet Refuge*

Maison Haidar / Projet Refuge was previously part of the Montreal City Mission and is now its own non-profit organisation whose main purpose is as transitional housing for refugee claimants and refugees. AGIR has referred LGBTQ refugees to Projet Refuge for housing needs and information about the refugee process. Projet Refuge has also referred LGBTQ refugees that access Maison Haidar to AGIR.

- *Solidarity Across Borders*

Solidarity Across Borders is a migrant justice network based in Montreal, active since 2003. They are comprised of migrants and allies, and organize together to support individuals and families who are confronting an unjust immigration and refugee system. As articulated in the Individual Campaigns section of this report, AGIR collaborated with Solidarity Across Borders for the Justice for Carlos campaign.

- *RIVO (Intervention Network for Persons Affected by Organised Violence)*

RIVO is a network of therapists and community workers concerned with the well-being of survivors of torture and other forms of organised political violence. They offer individual psychotherapeutic follow-up of survivors free of charge via our therapists, massage therapy on the recommendation of our psychotherapists, and referrals to a variety of psychosocial supports (language classes, community-building activities, etc) via our member organisations. AGIR has referred AGIR members to RIVO.

- *Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)*

The Canadian Council for Refugees is a non-profit umbrella organization committed to the rights and protection of refugees in Canada and around the world and to the settlement of refugees and immigrants in Canada. The membership is made up of organizations involved in the settlement, sponsorship and protection of refugees and immigrants. The Council serves the networking, information-exchange and advocacy needs of its membership.



## RESEARCH INITIATIVES

*METISS (Migration et Ethnicité dans les Interventions de Santé et de Service social)*

In September 2011, AGIR officially became a community partner with METISS, a network of researchers whose mission is to develop a critical perspective related to knowledge and practices within the context of diversity and migration, in order to act differently within health and social service interventions. (<http://www.csssdelamontagne.qc.ca/activites-de-recherche/equipe-metiss/#c7627>). In September 2012, AGIR renewed their partnership with METISS and provided a letter of support for their funding application to the FQRSC for 2012 – 2016.

In December 2012, AGIR and Dr. El-Hage proposed an exploratory community-based research project aimed to better understand the experiences of racialized LGBTQ immigrants and refugees within Québec society and within institutional settings (i.e. healthcare, social services, education). METISS provided AGIR with \$3000 in order to provide funding for three student researchers, including Radney Jean-Claude, Karine Myrgianie Jean-François and Mélodie Chouinard. This project included AGIR board member Edward Lee as co-researcher, in addition to an advisory committee made up of 4 AGIR board members, including Emilio Garcia, Niel Ladode, Betty Iglesias and Christina Olivieri.

AGIR, in collaboration with METISS, coordinated a Research Day (journée d'étude), held at UQAM on Thursday, March 21<sup>st</sup> from 1:00 – 4:30pm, in honour of the international day for the elimination of racial discrimination. This Research Day included a research panel and 2 focus groups explored various aspects related to the experiences of racialized LGBTQ immigrants and refugees. The research panel included four presentations by Dr. Olivier Roy (PhD in sociology), Marianne Chbat (MSc in Sociology), Dr. Vivane Namaste (associate professor at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute at Concordia University) and Dr. Tamara Vukov (assistant professor in the department of Communications at the University of Montreal) and Edward Lee (PhD candidate).

The first focus group gathered perspectives of representatives from diverse community organisations. The second focus group documented the experiences of racialized LGBTQ immigrants and refugees. Research Day concluded with an open discussion period where collective dialogue helped to bring together the discussions emerging from the focus groups, in order to develop solutions and future pathways. As a follow up, 2 additional focus groups made up of service providers and racialized LGBTQ immigrants and refugees were conducted after Research Day.

A final report will be produced with a projected completion date of September 2013. AGIR hopes to translate the initial findings into future research initiatives, tools for general education and awareness and reducing barriers to accessing healthcare, social services and education for racialized LGBTQ immigrants and refugees.





*Speaking Out! LGBTQ Refugee Research Project  
McGill School of Social Work*

This qualitative, community-based research project explored the migration and settlement of LGBTQ refugees in Montreal and Toronto. Since 2010, AGIR has been involved with this research project. For example, board members Valeria Tovar and Christina Olivieri were consulted prior to the completion of the LGBTQ research project executive summary report. The expected date of completion for the executive summary report is June 2013.

*Jack Stewart – Masters Student in the Fine Arts programme at Concordia*

Jack Stewart's research project aims to work in partnership with a refugee claimant to create a portrait of their story – their journey, insights, interests and their struggle and achievements in making a new home. The result of this partnership will take the form of a finished film.

*Edward Lee – Doctoral Candidate at the McGill School of Social Work*

Edward Ou Jin Lee's dissertation seeks to better understand the everyday experiences of queer migrants with precarious migrant status in order to reveal broader migratory processes and social organization of queer migration.

## **AGIR WEBSITE**

The AGIR website ([www.agirmontreal.org](http://www.agirmontreal.org)) was launched in June, 2011. The primary goals for our site includes: 1) providing visibility and a web presence; 2) chronicling our activities; 3) providing information about refugee and immigration processes, health and social services, housing and employment, etc. The site is not yet complete, but will continue to evolve and expand as more information is added over time.

Most current pages are in both English and French, and some are in Spanish as well. Adding additional languages is planned, when volunteer translators/writers can be found in those languages. The site has had a lot of traffic, mostly from Canada and the US, but also from around the world, so we know that information about queer and trans refugees and immigration is reaching those who are looking for it.



## STRATEGIC PLANNING & ACTION PLAN

In order to develop a collective vision for AGIR, in addition to engaging in long term strategic planning, AGIR enlisted the assistance of COCo. COCo's mission is to promote social justice, active citizenship, democracy, and just socio-economic development by supporting the development of healthy organizations and strong communities through education (<http://coco-net.org/>). During this past year, AGIR had 2 sessions with COCo facilitator Kit Malo - March 3rd and March 17th 2013. During these sessions, AGIR reflected upon their collective vision and took initial steps to develop a basis of unity.

At the end of these 2 sessions with COCo, AGIR has identified 3 overarching principles. The first principle is increasing visibility among LGBTQ immigrants and refugees, in addition to the general public. The second principle is developing an approach that ensures that all AGIR activities contributes to community organizing and mobilization with queer and trans migrants. The third principle is ensuring that AGIR place emphasis on developing and strengthening partnerships. These primary principles are embedded into the 8 identified priorities. AGIR plans to further develop these priorities, in order to create a concrete and long term action plan. This strategic planning will serve as the foundation for AGIR's collective vision, in addition to fostering healthy growth of the organisation.





## *AGIR Priorities*

The following are a series of questions that serve as a guide to consider and address within each of the 8 priorities that are identified below.

*1. How can the activities / actions from this priority incorporate a community organizing approach / model?*

*2. How can the activities / actions from this priority increase visibility among LGBTQ immigrants and refugees and / or in the general public?*

*3. How can partnerships be incorporated into the activities / actions from this priority?*

Priority #1: External Workshop and Capacity Building

Priority #2: Support for Individuals

Priority #3: Increasing web and internet presence

Priority #4: Fundraising

Priority #5: Social Activities for Newcomers

Priority #6: Internal Capacity Building

Priority #7: Media Projects

Priority #8: Research