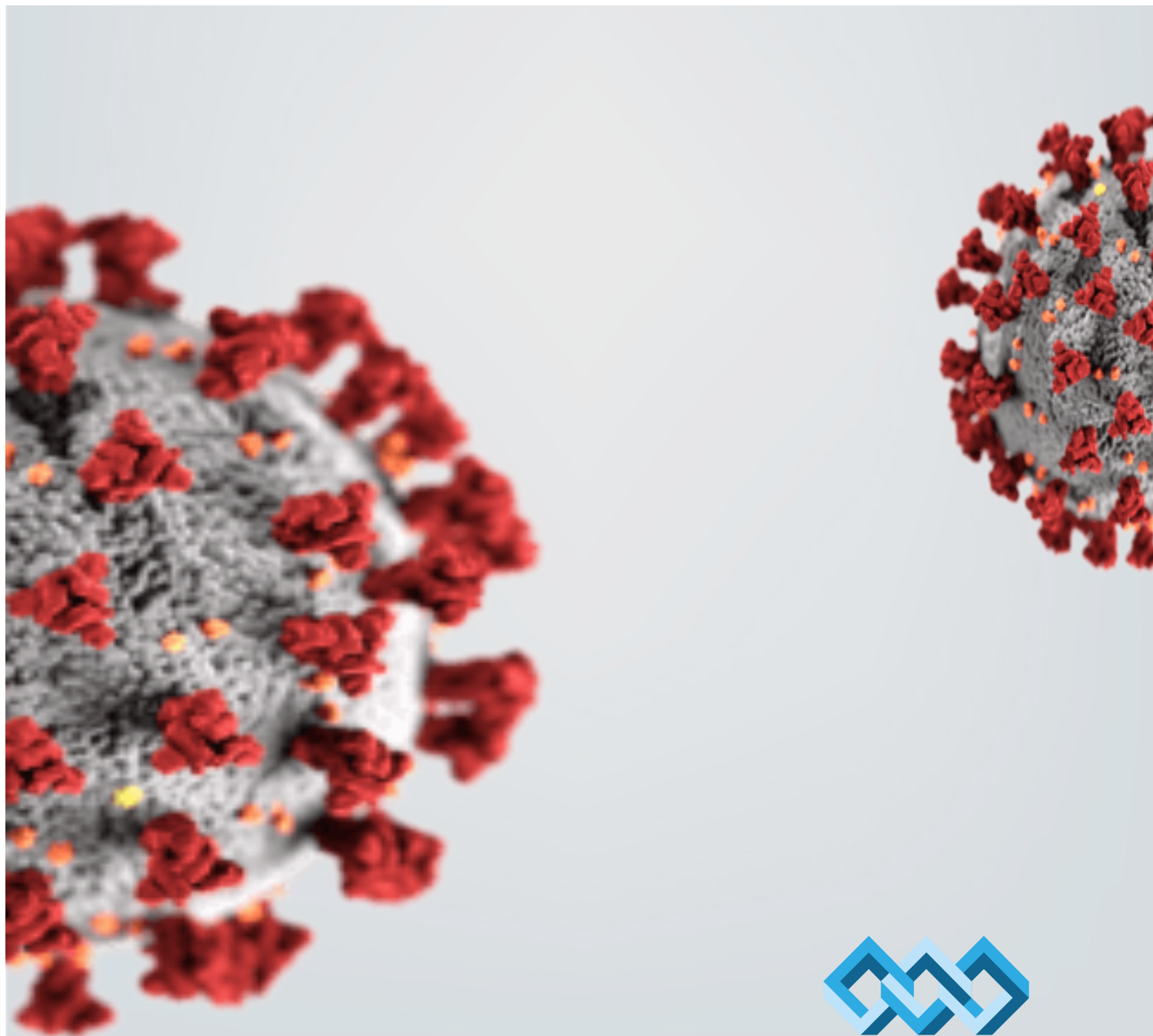


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PhiLab

Réseau Canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie
Canadian Philanthropy Partnership Research Network

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À propos du PhiLab | About PhiLab

Le Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie (PhiLab), anciennement Laboratoire montréalais de recherche sur la philanthropie canadienne, a été pensé en 2014 dans le cadre de la conception de la demande de financement du projet développement de partenariat CRSH intitulé “Innovation sociale, changement sociétal et Fondations subventionnaires canadiennes”. Ce financement a été reconduit en 2018 sous le nom “Evaluation du rôle et des actions de fondations subventionnaires canadiennes en réponse à l’enjeu des inégalités sociales et des défis environnementaux”. Depuis ses débuts, le Réseau constitue un lieu de recherche, de partage d’information et de mobilisation des connaissances des fondations canadiennes. Des recherches conduites en partenariat permettent la coproduction de nouvelles connaissances dédiées à une diversité d’acteurs : des représentants gouvernementaux, des chercheurs universitaires, des représentants du secteur philanthropique et leurs organisations affiliées ou partenaires.

Le Réseau regroupe des chercheurs, des décideurs et des membres de la communauté philanthropique à travers le monde afin de partager des informations, des ressources et des idées.

The Canadian network of partnership-oriented research on philanthropy (PhiLab), previously called the Montreal Research Laboratory on Canadian philanthropy, was thought up in 2014 as part of the conception of a funding request by the NRCC partnership development project called “Social innovation, social change, and Canadian Grantmaking Foundations”. From its beginning, the Network was a place for research, information exchange and mobilization of Canadian foundations’ knowledge. Research conducted in partnership allows for the co-production of new knowledge dedicated to a diversity of actors: government representatives, university researchers, representatives of the philanthropic sector and their affiliate organizations or partners.

The Network brings together researchers, decision-makers and members of the philanthropic community from around the world in order to share information, resources, and ideas.

Prochaine publication

Next publication

Volume #2 en juin 2020 / June 2020

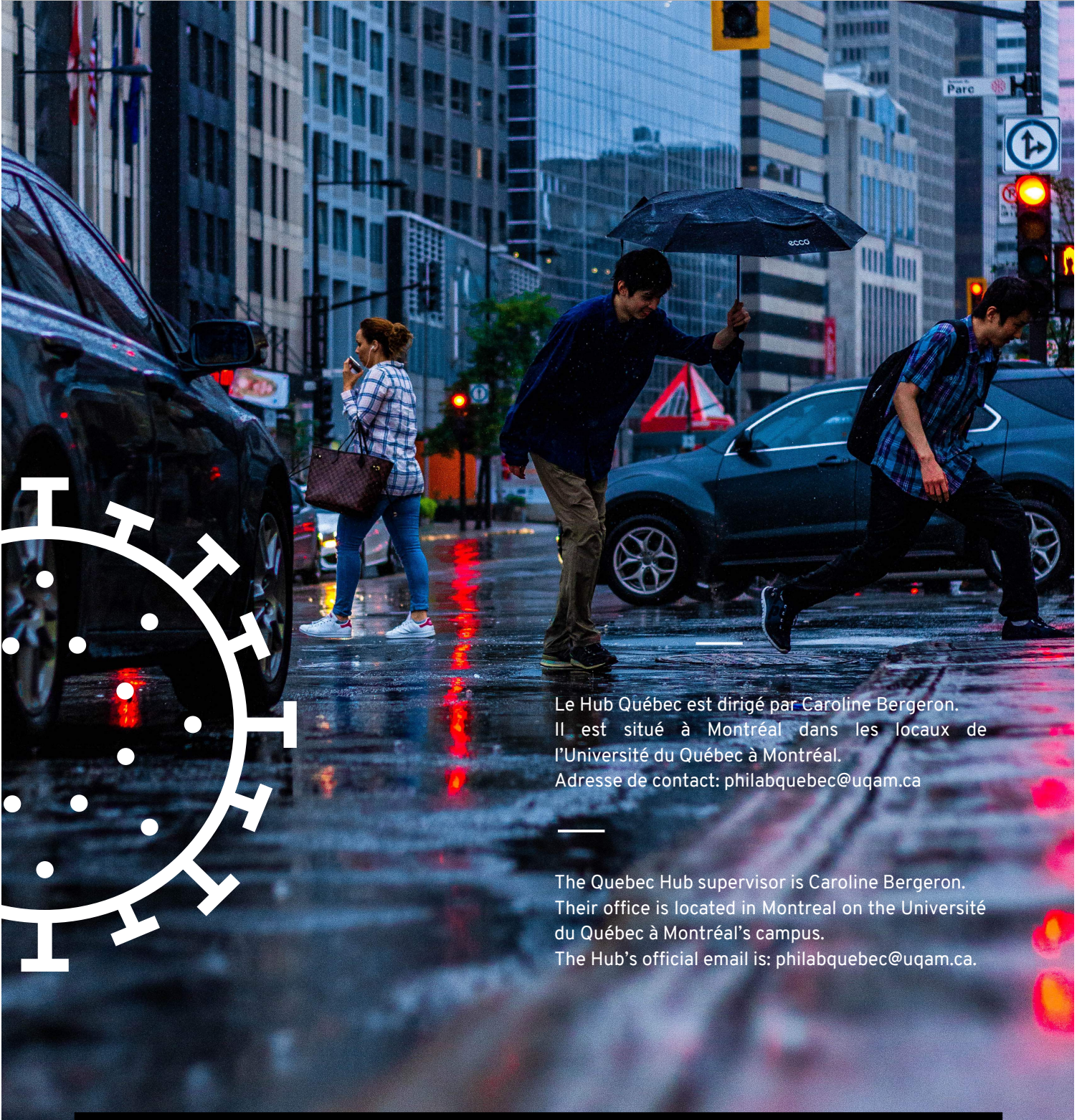


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QUEBEC HUB

Philanthropy During COVID-19: The Urgency of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Lens



Par | By:
Adam Saifer, Quebec Hub Postdoctoral Researcher

Adam Saifer obtained his Ph.D in Cultural Studies in 2018. Since then, he has worked as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for Social Impact at Queen's University, and as Assistant Adjunct Professor in the Department of Global Development Studies. At PhiLab, he is a postdoctoral researcher and is exploring the barriers and challenges faced by equity-focused grantees in their relationship with philanthropic actors.

Earlier this year, I began a new research project in collaboration with PhiLab on “diversity, equity, and inclusion” [DEI] policies and practices in the Canadian philanthropic sector. The project aimed to critically examine the promises and limitations of DEI philanthropy as a framework to combat social injustice by listening to, and prioritizing, the experiences of philanthropic grantees doing equity-based work on the ground. In theory, this approach would complement—and, likely, challenge—existing research that has foregrounded the perspectives of foundation staff and directors. As you might have guessed, COVID-19 has forced us to rethink this project, both in terms of what is pragmatic and possible, as well as how DEI-related research efforts can best meet the immediate needs of the sector in these unprecedented times.



At the moment, we are seeing a sector in scramble mode. Foundations—including those that prioritize DEI—are shifting their grantmaking priorities on the fly to address the short-term and long-term ramifications of this unprecedented crisis.

However, during this process, I urge foundations not to abandon their DEI lens. Instead, they must understand the ways in which the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 are DEI issues as well. Or, better yet, they should consider the ways in which race, gender, and sexual orientation (among other facets of identity/axes of oppression) shape how, and to what degree, the effects of COVID-19 are experienced differently across Canada. Contrary to what New York Governor Andrew Cuomo [1] and Madonna [2] claim, COVID-19 is not “the great equalizer.” Rather, foundations need to be acutely aware of how COVID-19 reinforces and magnifies persistent structural inequities in our society. In doing so, foundations will be better poised to face this crisis head-on and—just as importantly—be better equipped to take on future crises.

Here are just a few examples of how societal inequities affect how COVID-19 is experienced differently across Canada:

Image: Cheng Feng

“*The economic impact of COVID-19 will be felt more severely by women.*”

Race, Gender, and Work

In a collective effort to “flatten the curve,” Canadians are being asked to work from home. However, for many working in low wage jobs, particularly in sectors with an overrepresentation of women and racialized peoples (e.g., food services, retail, cleaning, and care work), working from home isn’t a possibility. Those who remain employed—in cleaning, care, or cashier work, for example—are encountering increasingly dangerous and demanding work environments, typically without paid sick leave or health benefits. Workers in gendered and racialized service industries deemed “non-essential,” on the other hand, are the most likely to have lost their jobs already, reflecting the direct linear association between hourly wage earned and risk of being laid off during the current crisis [3]. The introduction of the new Canada Emergency Response [4] Benefit—while an important reinforcement of the EI safety net—by no means addresses the legacy of a systemic gender and racial wage gap in Canada. As a result, in addition to being more at risk of job loss, the economic impact of COVID-19 will be felt more severely by women, who earn 75 cents for every dollar a white man earns—particularly, women of colour, who earn 59 cents to every dollar a white man earns. [5]

Overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada’s Prison Population

As so many of us are self-quarantining, those incarcerated in federal and provincial prisons are left wondering how to navigate their cramped, unhygienic, and undersupplied surroundings. Additionally, one quarter of inmates are over 50 years in age, and 15% report suffering from hypertension or respiratory illness [6], making them particularly susceptible to COVID-19. The situation is even more dire in provincial prisons where inmates—all of whom are serving sentences under two years in length or who are still pending trial—are often forced to bunk three or four to a single room and do not have access to adequate healthcare [7].

However, the ticking time bomb that is Canadian prisons in the age of COVID-19 is fundamentally a settler-colonial issue as well. Indigenous people account for over 30% of Canada’s prison population [8] (compared to 5% of the total population)—reflecting a criminal justice system biased against Indigenous peoples at every stage, from their interactions with police to their experiences before judges and parole boards. These numbers are particularly troubling for Indigenous women who account for 42% of the female prison population, and Indigenous youth who make up 50% of youth in corrections. Additionally, generations of settler-colonialist policies have resulted in appalling socio-economic conditions that produce higher rates of infectious and chronic diseases in Indigenous communities, which puts them at particular risk to COVID-19.

LGBTQ2 Youth Homelessness

COVID-19 has magnified the struggles faced by the 35,000 Canadians [9] who experience homelessness on any given night. Shelters and respites are overcrowded and underfunded, making it impossible to enforce social distancing without rejecting clients. The recent move in major urban centres like Toronto and Montreal to create new shelter spaces is an important step in the right direction. However, frontline workers maintain that the process is moving far too slowly and without required urgency [10]. For those who choose to avoid the shelter system altogether, community resources and supports are dwindling. Food banks are shutting down, while those that remain open are straining to meet demand. Moreover, with the closing of libraries, restaurants, and cafes, it is nearly impossible for homeless individuals to practice the hand hygiene required during this pandemic. COVID-19 has created a unique set of issues for LGBTQ youth who are overrepresented in the homeless population (estimated at between 25-40%)[11]. This reality reflects a range of causes such as family rejection, as well as barriers in housing such as homophobic and transphobic landlords and tenants. At the same time, LGBTQ youth are underrepresented in shelters, due to fears of homophobic and transphobic discrimination, as well as a lack of services and staff support tailored to their needs.

For LGBTQ youth, COVID-19 has further complicated an already-impossible choice: either subject yourself to abuse and violence at home/in a shelter or live on the streets without the ability to practice necessary hygiene and social distancing.

Rethinking DEI Philanthropy

Now, more than ever, foundations need to foreground DEI in their grantmaking, and further grapple with the short-term and long-term implications of COVID-19 through a DEI lens. Some links between COVID-19 and DEI are more explicit than others—for example, the growth in anti-Chinese and anti-Asian racism[12], and the increased precarity of temporary foreign workers. However, it's just as crucial that foundations examine the less visible ways that race, gender, sexual orientation, and immigration status—among other categories of identity/axes of oppression—structure who will be hit the hardest by this crisis.

To do this, foundations can look to examples of grassroots community-driven organizations working collaboratively to help those most impacted by COVID-19. For example, communities across Canada are creating Mutual Aid Networks[13] to make sure that vulnerable people—particularly those who cannot leave their homes—have access to groceries, supplies, and other necessities. Other communities have been organizing themselves in pursuit of a rent freeze in solidarity with the working poor. These grassroots collectives are doing the kind of DEI-inspired work that the COVID-19 moment demands, and that foundations should look to support.

COVID-19 requires that foundations move beyond thinking of DEI as a funding category. Rather, they need to approach DEI as a lens and a set of priorities that helps them examine how societal power structures (e.g., racism, sexism, and homophobia/transphobia) shape how COVID-19 is experienced throughout Canadian society. Such an approach is not only key to understanding and addressing the short-term and long-term effects of COVID-19. It is also necessary to make sure that future crises—from climate change to mass automation—do not disproportionately harm racialized and Indigenous peoples, women, the LGBTQ community, undocumented migrants, and the working poor. ■

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