Quebec Student Politics: How did we get here and where are we heading?

Presentation by External Affairs

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Association étudiante de l'Université McGill
Students' Society of McGill University

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Estimated time: 10 minutes

Agenda

- 1960-1970
- 1970-1980
- 1980-2000
- 2012
- Present and future

Overview

- Over more than a 100 years of history, the SSMU has always had a major role to play within provincial and federal politics.

- Although we have always been an **key player** in forming alliances and leading the charge in things, we are currently one of the only few associations across the country that is **completely independent**.

- How did we get here? And where are we heading now?

1960-1970

- **Key debate: Was McGill a Canadian university or a Quebec University?**
- **The Quiet Revolution transformed Quebec.** The provincial government assumed greater responsibility for education and other institutions previously dominated by the Catholic Church. Quebec nationalism grew, including support for sovereignty.
- UGEQ (Union générale des étudiants du Québec): First ever provincial student association.
- SSMU tried to join UGEQ multiple times, finally joined in 1967 after the third referendum. Passed by only 34 votes


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LA PRESSE

La session à Québec — Page 31

EDITION MÉTROPOLITAINE 10¢

Apollo-7 : mission accomplie

Les trois cosmonautes sont sains et saufs

Le conflit à la RAQ

Masse met en doute la bonne foi du syndicat

Sous le signe de la solidarité

La marche des étudiants à Montréal se déroule dans un ordre parfait

Opération McGill français

- Shortly after joining UGEQ, SSMU quickly pulled out after UGEQ begin assisting a campaign called McGill français.
- The march saw 10000-15000 people marched in front of the roddick gate and demanded McGill be converted into a french institution and decolonize itself.
- This protest led to McGill beginning to admit more francophone students and directly led to the founding of UQAM.
- UGEQ eventually collapsed in 1969



1970-1980

Formation of Association nationale des étudiants du Québec (ANEQ, 1975)

- Beginning of militant student politics: it emphasized mobilizing students through **general assemblies, demonstrations, and strikes**.
- SSMU never retained status within the organization, but was an observer throughout. (joined very briefly, but quickly pulled out)

Formation of Regroupement des associations étudiantes universitaires du Québec (RAEU, 1976)

- SSMU was a leader in founding it in the beginning. Even had a head office for them in the UC.
- Withdrew three years later due to the fact that Anglophone association was charged more than francophone

Both disbanded around 1985-1990

1980-2010

A period of chaos and instability



1980-2010

Context:

- Very complicated part of the history. Quebec was on its way to two separate referendum on the question of sovereignty.
- Parti Quebecois (Yes, the same party that just won) had just become a dominant force in the national assembly.

Formation of FEUQ (1989-2015)

- Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec was formed in 1989 as an alternative to the ANEEQ, formed originally by SSMU, CSU, CADUEL, FACEUM, Bishop and FEUS.
- PGSS, in order to fight for their independence, threw a student referendum against the joining of FEUQ in the same year. Passed by 13 votes but overturned by J-Board

FEUQ and ASSÉ (both disbanded in 2015)

- Two more exit happened in the 1990s with FEUQ. Once because pro-tution stance (1992) and once because of pro-sovereignty stance (1995).

- Rejoined in 2002 after FEUQ softened on the issue of sovereignty, but distrust in FEUQ meddling in SSMU governance and election processes broke down relationship in 2006.

ASSÉ- Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (2001)

- Following the UGEQ and ANEQ tradition, ASSÉ was composed 23 student association across Quebéc and continued the militant and combative approach towards advocacy.

- SSMU was never a member due to governance differences but maintained observership status with ASSÉ



Meanwhile in federal politics....

- Canadian federation of Students: founded in 1981 as an amalgamation of provincial associations. CFS and SSMU had very complicated relationship that involved multiple lawsuits in 2007.
    - CFS is currently not recognized by any governments and lawsuits follows every time student association tries to leave. Often critiqued for misusing funds and not effective at all.

- CASA (Canadian Alliance of Student associations): founded by the SSMU in 1994. Left the organization in 2006 after dissatisfaction regarding its effectiveness and reform efforts. CASA proceeded to sue SSMU for unpaid fee.

2012- Le Printemps érable

- In 2011, the Charest government tabled a bill to increase university tuition by 75 percent. The strike on this issue has happened multiple time in the last few decades.

- ASSÉ formed a coalition called CLASSÉ (Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante) aim to trigger a general strike.

- In a few weeks, all of the student association participated in the general strike. March 2012 saw 310,000 students walk out to the streets to protest.

- Charest government tabled Bill 78, using fines and punitive measures and tried to force students back to class. This eventually backfired and directly caused them to a minority government.



Present

UEQ- Union étudiante du Québec

- Continuation of FEUQ and its traditions. Lobbyist approach to provincial advocacy. SSMU is currently an observer on UEQ.
- 11 Student Associations across Quebec.
- CASA and UEQ bilaterally recognize each other, means that we cannot join CASA in any status unlike other universities in Canada.

CRUE- Coalition de résistance pour l'unité étudiante syndicale

- Continuation of ASSÉ. Militant approach to provincial advocacy. SSMU has worked with CRUE in the past few years.

UCRU- Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities

- An informal alliances between several research intensive universities in Canada.
- Fell apart due to disagreement in governance and approach



Now what?

- **SSMU is now at a crucial cross point. We need to begin to understand our situation provincially and federally. We need allies.**

- **What is our federal and provincial strategy forward?**

- **SSMU External Affair Plan??????**

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