

Dear friends,

I recently spent 18 days in Montreal and Quebec City, training, strategizing and dialoguing with many people about the upcoming FTAA negotiations at the Summit of Americas in Quebec City April 20-22. What follows is a report on my visit there. It includes some basic info on Quebec City, a review of key events and organizations, contact information, historical information on Canada and finally a few tips for US activists.

To give you an overview of my engagement and thus my perspectives I had numerous one-on-one conversations with many activists. Starhawk and I led several trainings over the weekend of the 12-14th with an independent group which has now formed an independent training collective that will host three weekend training workshops (2/17-18, 3/3-4) leading up to April. I participated in two panel discussions at the International Conference on Civil Disobedience sponsored by Operation SALAMI (one of the main nonviolent direct action groups in Montreal) in which about 200 attended including many religious and labor activists. I help lead a two-day training for trainers (1/19-21) which was also sponsored by SALAMI. I participated in a process to initiate a women's action in Quebec City, a call for which will be circulated around the world. Finally, attended the 1/23 CLAC Assembly and the 1/27-28 CLAC Consulta in Quebec City also attended by 200 or so activists from across Canada and the US. I am also working on a report on the CLAC Consulta, which I will distribute soon.

QUEBEC 101

Quebec Province is predominantly French speaking and has long considered seceding from Canada. **Montreal**, one of the larger cities in the province is divided between Anglophones – 30% and Francophones- 60%, that is English and French speaking respectively. While Francophones are the majority, the tendency is for much of the organizing in Montreal [where many of the organizers live] to be done in English. This has presented challenges, (getting the Francophone community more involved) that will continue throughout the mobilization.

Quebec City, [2 ½ hours east of Montreal] the capital of the Quebec Province, is a small and beautiful city that was established as a fortress city when it was founded. In addition to large fortress walls, one whole side of the city is made of cliffs/bluffs above the Saint Lawrence River. It is in this area, the upper city which includes part of the old city, that the Summit of Americas will be held.

Being the capital city, it has a large civil servant population, many of the unions representing these workers are beginning to build relationships with anti-FTAA organizers. Aside from government, tourism is the next most important industry. The population is predominately white, (98% French) although there are some Asian, mostly Vietnamese and Chinese as well as African immigrants. The movement, however is predominately white. It is the lower city, where most of the immigrant and poor people live. One exception however is the neighborhood of Saint Jean-Baptiste, parts of which will be in the security zone.

Saint Jean-Baptiste is an old working class community that has resisted many forms of development and gentrification over the years. It is also one of the areas where many activists live. Part of it is a shopping area made up of lots of mom and pop stores. There is a Committee de Saint Jean-Baptiste that is working with the anti-FTAA organizers to protest the security zone and the summit. There is a demonstration scheduled in March.

The nationalist Sovereignty Movement flavors much of the political work there (lots of problems, deep divisions etc) and has had a lot of pull with many youth activists. (See more about this in the last section called Canada 101)

The CLAC put out a good history of Quebec at the Consulta, I will try and get it emailed or scanned for distribution. The official tourism website for Quebec City is www.quebecregion.com

KEY EVENTS

1. The Official Summit of the Americas, April 20-22, The Summit begins on the night of April 20 with a big event at the Chateau Frontenac Hotel, the premier hotel in Quebec City. All the Western Hemisphere's 34 heads of state except Cuba's Fidel Castro are coming to discuss the FTAA which is essentially the expansion the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other issues.

The actual meeting starts on the morning of the 21st. There is still no official schedule available, but it is assumed that there will be a number of events on Saturday night. It is rumored that certain civil society organizations will be invited to participate. Organizers expect more than 4,000 delegates and 2,000 journalists, along with thousands of protesters.

The city is preparing one of the most massive security operations in their

[Canadian] history. A 4 kilometer [2 2/3 mile] fence will make up the planned security zone which will cover much of old Quebec City's upper town -- both inside and outside the fortress walls. While the zone may be smaller than initially proposed it will include six hotels, the Congress Center meeting site, the Quebec Parliament buildings, familiar tourist stops like the Terrasse Dufferin boardwalk, the Chateau Frontenac hotel and the Plains of Abraham (a big open park area, where some old battles were fought). Three of the big hotels – the Hilton and the Radisson border the Congress Center and it is rumored that lots of the Summit will be held in those hotels. The Loews Hotel near the Plains of Abraham is where the US Delegation will be housed.

Inside the zone is also the Citadel, an old military base and a government building called the Complex G. Both of these have helicopter pads. It is expected that at least the dignitaries will be flown in. There are also tunnels that connect all these building as well as to buildings and a military base outside the zone.

Access will be tightly controlled, with special passes required to enter the security zone and additional photo identification badges for each summit venue, including hotels. It is said that over 20,000 people will be issued access passes including 5,000 residents of the Saint Jean Baptiste neighborhood.

There are numerous security forces: the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), Sûreté du Québec which is Quebec's provincial police, Quebec City and Sainte-Foy police departments. While they have differing jurisdictions they will be working together to prepare a joint plan. They have already been meeting for some time. Right now that estimate that there will be 8,000 police available, with at least 500 of them in the Darth Vader suits (\$5,000 each). The city has also ordered a water cannon and it is rumored that they intend to use stun guns. Apparently they have announced that they will not use pepper spray, but I don't know if this is confirmed.

In Canada there are two types of penalties: **minor summary offenses** like the non violent direct action which may land you in jail for up to two weeks, easy to do even if it could be temporarily unpleasant. Then there are the more **severe indictable offenses** for acts of violence and significant property destruction that could result from being convicted of throwing an object at someone, hitting someone, touching a cop; throwing something at a cop; throwing maltov cocktails, etc., or destroying property worth more than \$____. The legal team is preparing needed information.

Canada has an Emergency Measures Act (previously the War Measures Act) that can suspend all civil rights during the duration of the degree. That

means with the proper pretext, they can implement this act which will also allow them to hold people up to 72 hours. This act has only been used once before in 1970, before the Charter of Human Rights when a government official was kidnapped. The government used it as an opportunity to round up and jail many, many leftists.

The city has announced it will empty the Orsainville Prison to make room for 600 people. I believe it is several hours outside of downtown.

2. The People's Summit, April 17-21. This summit is a "civil society" conference organized parallel to the actual summit. It is receiving some money from the government and is being spearheaded by the **RQIC** (Reseau Quebecois sur L'integration Continentale – Quebec Continental Integration Network), and supported by their English speaking partner **Common Frontiers** and the **L'Alliance sociale continentale**. Most of the major Labor Unions, including the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) are part of these groups.

This is the second summit of its kind, following up on a 1999 meeting in Chile where the Hemispheric Social Alliance was created. This Alliance brings together many organizations including peasant groups, labor groups, NGO's etc.

The summit will include forums, teach-ins, a concert and a demonstration. Some of the forums are by invite only since the spaces they were able to get are quite small. Info: www.peoplessummit.org .

3. The Teach-In, April 20. Sponsored by **Common Frontiers** and supported by the **Convergence Table or Tableau de Convergence (called TAB)** which is broad coalition of groups who have endorsed the idea of nonviolent direct action. This Teach-in is aiming for some high profile

folks like Chomsky as well as music and cultural presentations. They have secured a big tent that can hold 1300 people and will hold the event down by the Old Port, which is in the lower east part of the city.

<http://www.web.net/comfront/> or email comfront@web.ca

4. The Big March, April 21. This is being spearheaded by RQIC and is being supported by most if not all other groups. The route or exact time is not yet decided. It will be permitted and will have an opening and closing rally. It has already been agreed that the 3 central unions will be leading the march and providing marshals for it. www.rqic@alternatives.ca

Following the march, SalAMI and the TAB will be holding a **Citizens FTAA or Freedom and Truth Area of the Americas**. Groups and organizations will be invited to set up tables, literature booths, offer workshops, performances etc. There is discussion of a Street of the Americas, where each country could have a booth. The idea is to create a global village on the spot. It is not yet clear if there will be a permit for this or not. It is also under discussion to have this ongoing for 24 or more hours until the Summit is over. <http://www.alternatives.ca/rqic/>

5. DIRECT ACTION – there are two main groups that have organized direct action in relation to corporate globalization. One, Operation SalAMI grew out of the 1997 blockade of the Complex G, government building in Quebec City. The other is CLAC which was formed in April 2000. There is a deep division between these two groups based on the issue of nonviolence and diversity of tactics. Other supporters of direct action include many on the student groups, a large and important group called the Council of Canadians, which is also doing a big nonviolent direct action training in March and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers who sent 7 people to train as direct action trainers.

CLAC – The Anti-Capitalist Convergence has called for a day of action on April 20th. (although now some are advocating a change to the 21st.) The CLAC is an anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian group that has established a set of principles that guide their work. It has many young people, and is more racially diverse than most of the other groups. They hold open assemblies in French (usually 50-60 people) which are the main decision making body. In theory, only those who agree to the CLAC principals can participate and vote, (that is if a consensus is not quickly reached). They also have a series of working groups. They use words like affinity groups and spokes council but have not really organized or developed a plan on how to use them. They are not organizing and have not advocated for trainings. They are, however, organizing extensive and good educational events and caravans. They are proposing a Day of Resistance that would allow for a “diversity of tactics”

which is one of their core principles. This diversity of tactics is being thought of in three ways or zones.... A carnival zone, which would be a safe non-arrest area, a nonviolent civil disobedience zone, and a zone for a diverse range of tactics. This third area has been a focus of intense discussion and controversy in the broader movement. Many of the people who made up the CLAC helped organize a demonstration in October against the G20 meeting of leading capitalist countries finance ministers in Montreal. This action has been the focus of much discussion since the carnival-like action broke down when a group began throwing rocks at the police and the police attacked. That action, some who liked it, some who didn't, has fed the controversy. **A Consulta was held on Quebec City on January 27-28 where this was also a focus of discussion.** Again, I will soon be sending a report and evaluation of the Consulta. CLAC's partner in Quebec City is called CASA, which sees itself as the Welcoming Committee for the Summit. Email is clac@tao.ca or webpage: <http://www.quebec2001.net>

Operation SalAMI – was founded in 1998 to oppose the MAI – Multilateral Agreement on Investments. They organized two highly successful blockades, the first at the Complex G in Quebec City and the second against the MAI in Montreal. They have gained respect in the broader community. SalAMI has put a lot of energy in forming what is called a Convergence Table (TAB), which has brought together unions, student organizations, NGO's, religious groups etc. who oppose the Summit of the Americas. The TAB has endorsed the idea of nonviolent civil disobedience. SalAMI is firmly committed to nonviolence, (from both a philosophical and strategic approach) they organize with affinity groups and spokes councils. They organize and advocate training and have established a set of guidelines for their actions. (These guidelines as currently written have also caused discussion ie. no masks, no running, peacekeepers etc.) Some have been critical of SalAMI, for not being truly democratic, but instead led by a few key individuals. Some of the people in CLAC once organized with SalAMI but have left. SalAMI has called for an action on April 1 in Ottawa at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade for the purpose of picking the Canadian government document on FTAA which they have requested. If those documents are not made available they are calling for a nonviolent blockade of the building on April 2 where they will attempt a search and rescue operation to obtain the documents. SalAMI has talked about organizing a nonviolent civil disobedience and just recently put out a call for the first Continental Spokes Council Meeting on February 24 in Quebec City to begin discussing strategy and scenario plans for April 19-22. To register call (514) 524-8088 or email salami@colba.net. Web page is www.alternatives.ca/salami

Women's Action – what started at a potluck for the women's committee of

SalAMI has grown into an independent call for action that will be circulated throughout the world. Simply put, women will be weaving a web of solidarity through a direct action at the summit. Women are being asked to weave acts of resistance in their own communities as well as to send pieces of ribbon, rope, cloth etc, with messages of hopes and dreams that will be woven together in our web. Contact information will be available soon.

6. OTHER STUFF

•••••••• **Ecumenical Service**, April 20 (tentative) held in two churches simultaneously. One inside the security zone and one outside. The idea is at the end they will march to one of the security check points to meet.

•••••••• **Border Action Caravans** – people are planning a car caravan from Kingston and Toronto that will meet US activists at key bridges. If activists are not allowed over the idea is to block the bridges, so that no one can cross.

<http://www.tao.ca/~kdawg/smashftaa.html>

•••••••• **Shut Down the Locks -**

<http://www.tao.ca/~kdawg/locks.html>

•••••••• **Indymedia Center**

<http://www.quebec.indymedia.org/>

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OTHER KEY ORGANIZATIONS

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..... **OCP-2001** is a regional coalition based in Quebec City and has undertake the task of providing logistical support for the influx of demonstrators. Housing in particular is a key focus. OQP is part of the TAB or Convergence Table and supports non-violent tactics. Email is info@oqp.org or www.oqp2001.org

..... **Comite Populaire St-Jean Baptist** mentioned about is a working class neighborhood organization that is within the Quebec security zone. They are part of a demonstration on March 17th to protest the security zone. They can be reached at compop@qc.aira.com

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..... CASA is CLAC's counterpart in Quebec City and is the "welcoming committee" They are helping to spear head opposition to the security zone and can be reached at la_casa2001@hotmail.com

..... **GOMM:** The Group Opposed to the Mobilization of Markets - Montreal is a coalition of many student organizations, some community groups and several unions. They are officially part of the TAB or Convergence Table, although appear to support all anti-FTAA organizations – including those who advocate a "diversity of tactics". gomm@multimania.com or <http://www.multimania.com/gomm>

..... **FTAA-Alert McGill & Concordia** are based out of the respective universities, although they contain elder community members. They are not aligned with either CLAC or SALAMI. FTAA-Concordia is working up a plan to build a campaign to put the FTAA to a referendum before Canada could sign on. www.actionsite.org

..... **Canadian Federation of Students-Quebec** is mostly Montreal anglophone based and has been effective in mobilizing students and youths for previous mass demonstrations.

..... The **Queen's Coalition Against Corporate Globalization** is a gathering of individuals from both the Queen's University and Kingston communities. **QCACG** will strive to give these communities the opportunity to express their resistance to corporate-based globalization <http://www.web.net/~opirgkin/qcacg/main.html>

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US websites with good information and many of the links above...
www.stopftaa.org

www.a20.org

CANADA 101 – this is brief and basic and more for flavor than anything else. It is culled from conversations with activists and many not be completely accurate, but you'll get the idea...

Canada is made up of 10 Provinces and 3 Territories. Quebec is the only official French speaking province, New Brunswick is officially bi-lingual.

The Provinces are: (somewhat east to west) Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, PEI (Prince Edwards Island), New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. The Territories are Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

The Provinces have their own governments and the Territories are under the domain of the Federal Government. Technically the chain of command or power in the government goes:
the Queen of England, the Queens Representative, the Canadian Prime Minister of Canada and then the Premiers of each Province.

Only 1/3 of their Constitution is written down. They also have Constitutional conventions, which are basically common law established by precedent setting decisions. Finally they have Constitutional Conveniences or understandings of how things will work, some morally based. To change the Constitution you need to have the vote of 9 Provinces or $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population, both of which can be difficult.

A Charter of Human Rights was adopted in 1992. This is comparable to our Bill of Rights but not exactly. I am trying to get a copy of it.

A little known fact: the South Africa's government came and studied Canada's model for "dealing" with the Indian Nations when it set up it's apartheid system.

Quebec and Canada – a brief history of tensions and struggle that has seeded the secession movement.

In the 1700's the English troops came in and said you can keep your church but if you speak French you die. The Catholic Church had an iron clad grip on Quebec Society, although it's influence is much less powerful today. The French people in Quebec Province are still predominately Roman Catholic however. Over the years the French speaking population was told to speak white (or english). The French were the poor and working class and the English speaking were the ruling class. Today it is more mixed; there has

been a rise of the French bourgeoisie. The “Quiet Revolution” of the 60s that rebelled against English domination, also rebelled against the conservative Catholic Church. Now Quebecers have the highest abortion rate and the lowest marriage rate in North America. They also have liberal common-law and same sex partner laws.

Since 1980 Quebec held three referendums for Sovereignty (some form of separation from Canada) which lost. The last only narrowly. Nevertheless, Quebec thens to feel like it’s own entity and less part of Canada than other provinces.

In 1982 Trudeau, the Prime Minister, decided it was time to change from a dominion of England and sued the Queen for independence. He won which then required a change in the Constitution. Since most of the population lives in Quebec and Ontario (like the US – eastern coast vs. midwest), Trudeau called a meeting of 9 Premiers (all except Quebec whose Premier was staying in a different hotel). Trudeau got the 9 Premiers to agree to a new constitution, effectively cutting Quebec out. This was called the “La nuit des Longe Couteaux” or the night of the long knives. Quebec never signed the new constitution, again reinforcing a deep division between Quebec and the rest of Canada. The Sovereignty Movement continues today although it is wrought with problems, not the least of which, is the recent resignation of Quebec’s Premier, a leading advocate of sovereignty.

TIPS FOR US ACTIVISTS

- Realize that Quebec is not Canada. That is how people identify.
- Make an effort to use some French – even basic sayings. People are working on key phrases, but you can find some on the web or travel books.
- People in Quebec City have a lot of pride, they value its history and architecture, try not to trash it. While not explicit, this definitely applies to the Saint Jean-Baptiste neighborhood.
- It could still be cold! Even snow! Bring warm and water resistant clothes, (if they use water cannons in the cold it can put you out of action fast!. The medics will be putting out more specifics, but have urged rain gear, layers and lots of warm socks! They are debating the relative value of wool over the new synthetics.
- Housing is going to be difficult, if you can, **send OQP some**

money to help with deposits on large spaces and reservation in cheap places. Phone: 418-521-4099, email: info@ogp2001.org (I don't have a mailing address)

Lisa Fithian
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