

# Addressing Harassment: A Perspective from Canadian University Ombuds Office (OO)

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# A Perspective from Canadian OO

- Presentation of the OO of the University of Alberta (UofA) and Concordia University (CU)
- Profile of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO) members
- Results of the survey
- OO in Canada: not a linear evolution
- Best practices to address harassment
- Lessons learned

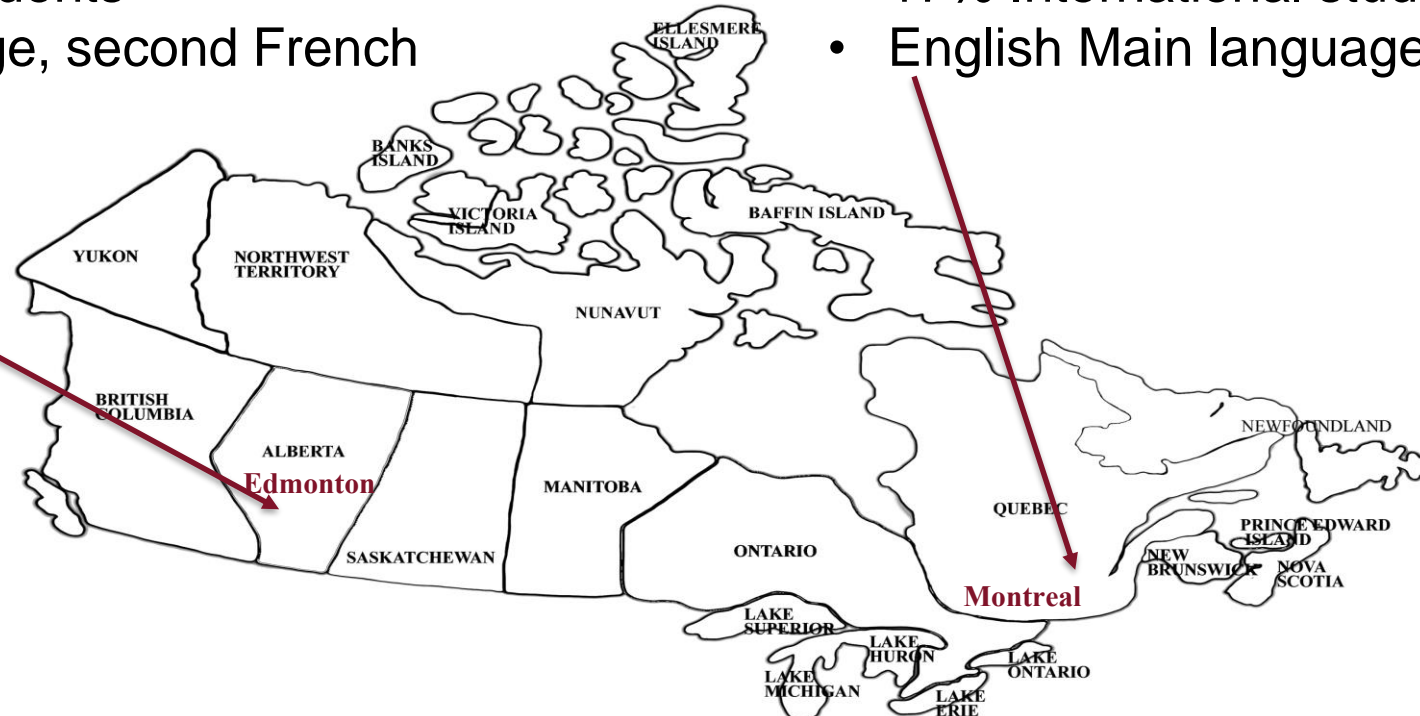
# Presentation of the OO of the University of Alberta (UoA) and Concordia University(CU)

## UofA

- 38 000 students( 1<sup>st</sup>,2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle)
- 15000 employees (4 campuses)
- 21% international students
- English Main language, second French

## CU

- 45 000 students ( 1<sup>st</sup>,2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle)
- 6000 employees (2 campuses)
- 17% International students
- English Main language, second French



# Profile of ACCUO Members

- ACCUO has 37 members
- Variance in client base:
  - ❖ 66% serve students only
  - ❖ 44% serve faculty, staff, and students
- 75% have their own Terms of Reference and produce an annual report

# Results of the ACCUO Survey= 62% responses

## Who deals directly with harassment complaints?

43% said YES

57% said NO

## How many harassment cases received per year?

- 60% received between 1 to 10 cases
- 40% received 10 cases or more

## What type of harassment cases are received?

- 50% of the cases received are related to
- 30% psychological harassment
- 20% sexual harassment.



# OO in Canada: not a linear evolution

**CU**

**UofA**

**1969**



- Computer science riot

- Complaint letter from citizen

**1971**



- Ombuds Office created at both universities

# 1970s to 1980s

## CU

Harassment  
Harassment  
Harassment  
Harassment

1975

## UofA

DEAN OF  
STUDENTS  
OFFICE

- CU starts using term harassment:
  - ❖ Disruptive behaviour
  - ❖ Inappropriate conduct
  - ❖ Violence incitement, libel, slander..
- UofA Faculty dispute Ombuds resigned
- **1976** New Ombuds position is created
  - ❖ Complaint and concern of students only

# 1980's to 1990's

CU

1981



- CU policy harassment: physical, verbal, psychological

1982-1983



- Ad hoc Intervention team: informal

UofA



- Secretary General: staff, faculty grievances
- President's Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment (PASCH)



- Equity Office (EO): promote human rights
- Student Ombuds Service (1<sup>st</sup> cycle)
- PASCH +EO= Office of Human Rights



# 1990's to 2000

## CU

1992



- Re-evaluation of internal policies
- Examine larger questions: expel or suspend a disruptor

1995



- Office Rights and Responsibilities: One stop

## UofA



- Sexual Assault Centre
- Graduate Student Association created 1<sup>st</sup> part-time ombuds position

# 2000 to Today

## CU

2008- 2009

- Student Ombuds Services (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle)
- Office of Human Rights renamed Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights,

2016



- Sexual Assault Centre

2018



## UofA



- Renamed: Office of the Student Ombuds (OSO)
- Created Sexual Violence Policy



**UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**  
OFFICE OF THE STUDENT OMBUDS

# Best Practices to Address Harassment

## Best Practices

Refer harassment complaints diligently and confidentially to the appropriate office

Be empathetic and listen to all clients: let complainant tell their story

Urge the Complainant to complete a summary document of events and to keep you updated on the progress of events to ensure they understand process and delays

Offer support throughout the process, refer to relevant policies

Make sure the student understands the harassment process and harassment complaint process

Assist the student in the complaint in addressing other administrative issues: academic issues

Follow-up on the complaint

# Lessons Learned

- Be careful in evaluating information
- Not a court interrogation
- Beware not to use “trigger words” or draw conclusions in an area in which you are not an expert; it is better to refer a person to the right resource or to work in collaboration
- Do not accept unwritten rules or practices to be fair because “that is the way it has always been done.”
- Question and evaluate practices, and see what is being done elsewhere.
- Beware of charming and manipulative harassers



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