

TWO EXTRAORDINARY DAYS OF INNOVATION, GROWTH & CONNECTION

The 2023 QueerTech Qonference



RECAP



Canada’s technology industry is home to incredible innovation, exceptional leaders, and solutions that have enormous global impact potential. However, this sector falls behind almost all others in one critical area - diversity and inclusion. The impacts of this glaring gap are both seen and felt by many, particularly queer techies who rarely see themselves represented at work.

That’s where QueerTech and our annual event - the QT Qonference (QTQ) - come in. Recently wrapping up, the second annual QTQ was an unparalleled celebration of community, innovation, talent, and personal growth designed for entrepreneurs and business professionals in the tech industry who identify as part of, or allies to, the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

This event, and QueerTech’s programming since its formation in 2016, are a testament to what a small team can do when connected by a common purpose — a purpose that goes beyond each of us — a purpose that lives in our hearts. We exist to progress the economic and social goals of queer individuals in tech, to advocate for them and grow the 2SLGBTQ+ leadership pipeline and, finally, to create meaningful spaces to amplify and celebrate our community.

Largest QueerTech Event Yet

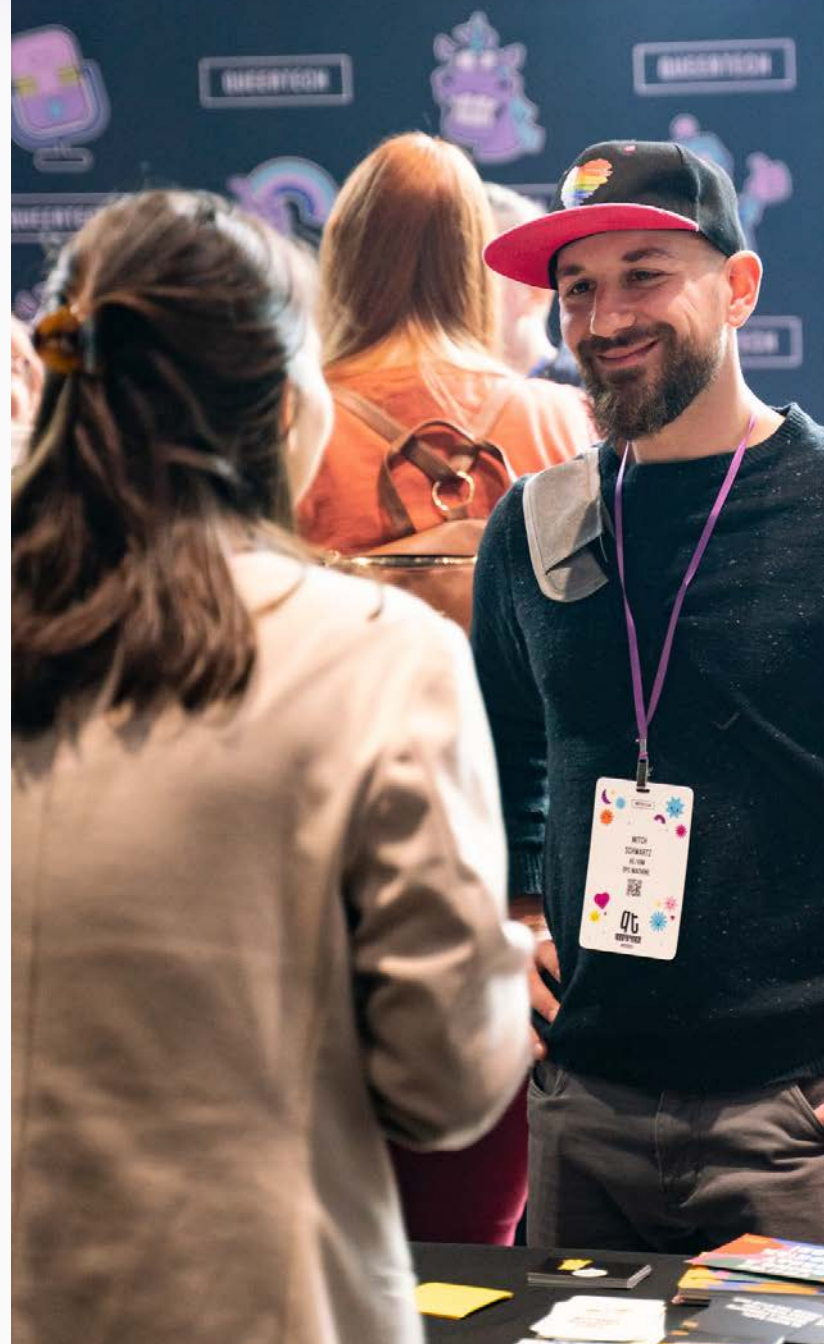
QT Qonference 2023 marked QueerTech's biggest event yet - and the 2SLGBTQ+ tech community's appetite for connection, growth and empowerment is only growing. The second annual event welcomed over 500 attendees for 78 sessions, delivered across two venues. This year, sessions were divided into four specialized content tracks - technology, leadership, mental health/wellness, and entrepreneurship - to ensure each attendee received tailored, applicable support for their personal role within the ecosystem. QTQ 2023 revealed the inaugural "QT Studio" - a "lights, camera, action" studio initiative to document the professional and personal journeys of 20+ queer and ally leaders, present and future, across the technology sector.



Who Was There?

QueerTech is endlessly proud of the community we have been able to create over the last eight years and are truly grateful for our role in convening so many talented, engaged professionals from across the country - all with the same collective purpose of queering Canada's tech ecosystem. QTQ 2023 acted as the perfect illustration of the power of this community, with so many key players from across the technology landscape truly showing up as themselves, for each other.

Within Canada's business space, there are many overlapping, complementary functions that contribute to a truly healthy and symbiotic ecosystem. Like a car, you won't get far if only some of the parts are working together as they were intended to. Through QTQ and other programming, QueerTech is committed to bringing these voices - industry professionals, influential queer leaders, students, media, recruiters, funders, wellness experts, leading researchers, entrepreneurs, and tech-focused organizations big and small - together for purposeful, solutions-oriented dialogue.



A vital extension of this ecosystem, making QTQ 2023 possible, is our dedicated network of partners and sponsors: [Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions](#), [Ville de Montréal](#), [Google Chrome](#), [TouchTunes](#), [National Bank of Canada](#), [RBC](#), [Accenture](#), [Communications Security Establishment \(CSE\)](#) | [Centre de la sécurité des télécommunications \(CST\)](#), [Hydro Québec](#), [KPMG](#), [VIA Rail Canada](#), [Mistplay](#), [CGI](#), [Moment Factory](#), [Bell](#), [INBO](#), [Mazdak Coaching-Consulting](#), [Unison Financial Solutions inc.](#), [WSP in Canada](#), [Sun Life](#), [Plank](#), and [BC Public Service](#).

Day 1 Highlights

Mainstage



The first day of QTQ 2023 kicked off with our fabulous MC, Laura B. MacDonald, who welcomed Joseph Gabereau on stage for a thoughtful, context filled Land Acknowledgement - honouring and acknowledging the Indigenous peoples whose land we gathered on, both in-person and virtually, across the country. We are grateful for Joseph's role in setting the tone for QTQ 2023 as a place of deep reflection, learning and self-growth.



QueerTech's Co-Founder and CEO, Naoufel Testaouni, then welcomed attendees with a powerful keynote - providing thoughtful context to the event. "Look around the room - this is the power of our community. We are queering the tech ecosystem, together. Thank you - each and every one of you - for joining us," said Testaouni in his address.

Following a schedule overview by Co-Founder and COO, Eustacio Andy Saldaña, QTQ 2023's first keynote kicked off in front of a packed house. The Online Harms in Canada and their impact on 2SLGBTQ+ Canadians keynote, presented by Sam Andrey, Managing Director of the Dais at TMU, chronicled the findings of the organization's recent survey findings relating to new insights on Canadians' experience with harmful online content, and the possible government policy options to increase online safety. Joined by Meagan Simpson, Manager of Communications at the Ontario Centre of Innovation, the conversation also covered the current and future state of social media and its impacts on the 2SLGBTQ+ community.



Following a full day of content track sessions, attendees reconvened at the mainstage for closing remarks and reflections - an audience engagement session, moderated by change and leadership coach Mazdak Chinichian, where attendees had the opportunity to share their takeaways from the first day of QTQ 2023, and set their intentions for the next day. "Today helped me see I am not alone and remember I'm not the only queer person in the tech industry - it can feel that way at times, but not in this room." - QTQ 2023 reflection.



Content Tracks - November 1st:

The first day of QTQ 2023 featured 25 unique content track sessions for attendees. This year's content tracks included: Leadership, Technology, Mental Health/Wellness & Entrepreneurship.

Session Name	Track	Type	Speakers
<i>Unleashing Your Leadership Potential</i>	● Leadership	Panel	Jacqueline Dinershul of Deloitte, Jo Cowell of the Communications Security Establishment, Lindsay Evans of IBM, Clea Arrieta of Bright + Early.
<i>Having Uncomfortable Conversations as a Leader</i>	● Leadership	Panel	Anne-Pascale Thiou of Hydro-Quebec, Billy R of Moment Factory, Elodie Palluet of Prelib, and Mazdak Chinichian of MAZDAK Coaching.
<i>Navigating Leadership: When You're the Only One in the Room</i>	● Leadership	Q&A	Amanda Levin of Local Logic, Ann Gaboriault of Accenture, Rachel Jean-Pierre of Accenture, and RK Popkin of Google.
<i>Empathy and Leadership: The Balance Between Empathy and Sound Business Decisions</i>	● Leadership	Panel	Dee Ann Lama of Bell, Giovanna Fiorilli of RBC, Ian Royer of Amazon, and Lisa Gibson of Microsoft.
<i>Future of Tech: How Do You Keep Your Company Safe and Relevant?</i>	● Leadership	Panel	Evelyne Chevy of Luminary AI, Lisa Di Jorio of AlleyCorp Nord, Nick Schiavo of Council of Canadian Innovators, and Omar Zahr of TandemLaunch.
<i>Exploring the Queer Founder's Journey</i>	● Entrepreneur	Panel	Jasmine Gervais of Wallrus Creative Technologies, Natalie Duncan of Bug Mars, Sam Naylor of Deloitte, and Simon Mills of George St Growth.
<i>Unlocking Product-Market Fit on a Budget: From Market Validation to Business Success</i>	● Entrepreneur	Workshop	Aaron Cruikshank of CTRS - Marketing Intelligence Agency, Calan Breckon of CalanBreckon.com, Meiling Fong of Blueboxfish, and Salem Jeili of My Indie Pixel Marketing Hub.
<i>Building Your Business: Is Now the Right Time?</i>	● Entrepreneur	Q&A/Panel	Dany Papineau of WeChalet and Ilias Benjelloun of Desjardins Emerging Innovation.
<i>Perfecting Your Pitch.</i>	● Entrepreneur	Workshop	Eustacio Andy Saldana of QueerTech, Georgios Depastas of Lerna AI, Isaac Cook of MindFrame Connect, and Shambhavi Mishra of Antler.
<i>Succeeding In Your First Job During a Recession</i>	● Technology	Panel	Élissa Forget of Petal, Mohamed Ayadi of NPower Canada, Nicolas Liénart of La tête chercheuse, Stéphanie Thomas of Mistplay, Troy Hu of BobaTalks.
<i>Queer Ethics and the Future Regulation of Emerging Technologies.</i>	● Technology	Panel	Juliette de Lamberterie of Concordia Applied AI Institute, Lisa Di Jorio of AlleyCorp Nord, Patrick Lecomte of University of Quebec in Montreal, Stéphane Bérubé of National Bank of Canada.

Content Tracks Continued:

Session Name	Track	Type	Speakers
<i>Prompt Engineering Leaders</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Mill Reyes Gonzalez of Cohere.
<i>Navigating the Latest Technological Trends: Learning, Applications and Impact on our Careers</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Saul Valery Cano of KPMG.
<i>The Modern Front-End Stack I Wish All Companies Adopted</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Evelyne Lachance of TouchTunes.
<i>QA Automation</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Maryna Kalachova of TouchTunes.
<i>Giving People Control of Their Identity with Digital Credentials</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Baptiste Laget of CloudRaker.
<i>Navigating The Latest Tech Trends: IaC, CI/CD and Serverless</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Bradley Campbell of OSEDEA.
<i>A Space for Everyone: The Non-Technical Side of Tech</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Dolapo Fadare of StriveOpp Inc.
<i>Ubi..what? When Digital and Connectivity Reshape Our Products and Their Development</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Jula Guerineau of Ecole de technologie supérieure.
<i>Breaking Into Data Science - Unveiling the Power of Data</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Guy Tsrer of WealthSimple.
<i>Breaking into Tech Through Entrepreneurship</i>	● Technology	Workshop	Alexander Caron of RBC, and Eloise Flesh of Ownr.
<i>Transcend: Advancing Inclusive Information Management in the Digital Age</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Jo Cole of the Government of Canada.
<i>Accessing Tech Through Art: Bridging Communities to Fine Art</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Ignazio Nicastro and Luigi Nicastro of IC Contemporary.
<i>Getting the Most Out of Mentorship: Best Practices for Both Mentees and Mentors</i>	● Technology	Workshop	Jennifer Petrela of Mentorat Quebec.

Networking & Connections

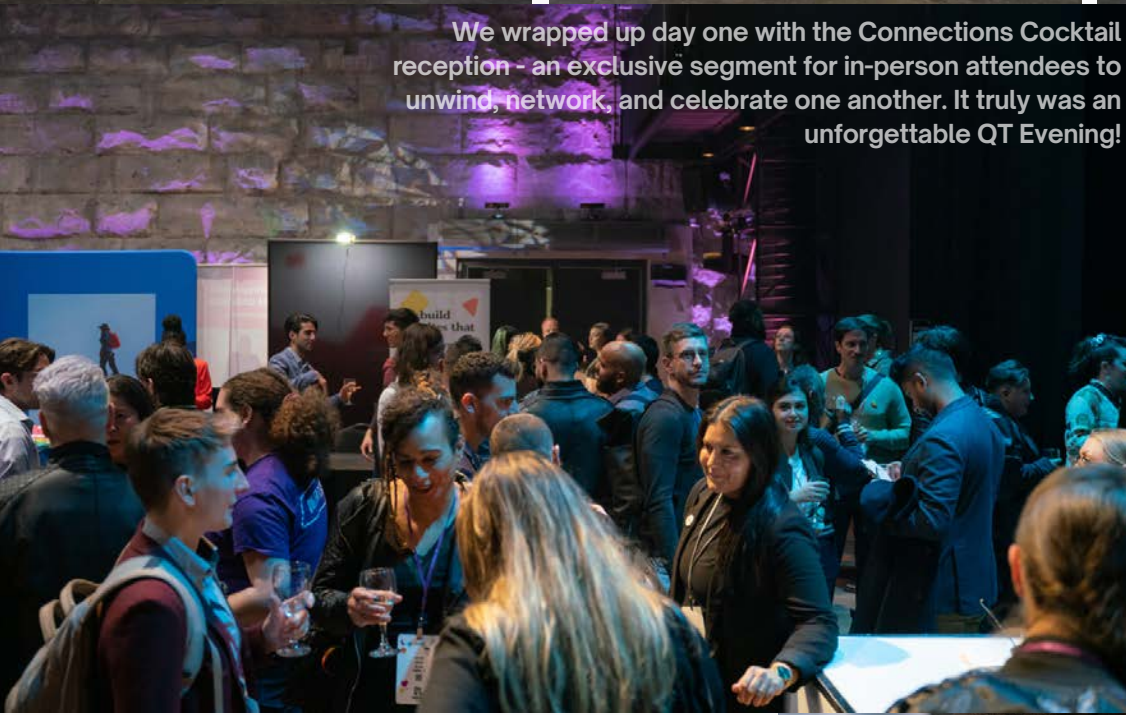
Throughout both event days, Speed Networking and Connections were offered - enabling attendees to book 15-minute speed networking sessions, explore sponsor booths, or request meetings via the event's mobile app.

A flagship session of QueerTech events, the first day of QTQ 2023 also featured multiple Ask & Offers sessions - an opportunity for attendees to get on the mainstage for 30 seconds each to share their questions or offers with the crowd. Some November 1st Ask & Offers included:

- Discounts of services from attendees, to other QTQ 2023 attendees - including SEO audits and marketing services.
- Those looking to hire, and be hired! We heard from multiple recent graduates looking to enter the tech sector, and many leaders eager to help them get there.
- In a first for QueerTech (and a first for any business event we can remember!) a VC pitched the audience.... You read that right! Shambhavi Mishra, Director of Growth & Portfolio at Antler, called on 2SLGBTQ+ entrepreneurs in the audience to connect, regardless of their specific industry segment or lifecycle stage.



We wrapped up day one with the Connections Cocktail reception - an exclusive segment for in-person attendees to unwind, network, and celebrate one another. It truly was an unforgettable QT Evening!



Day 2 Highlights

Mainstage

The second and final day of QTQ 2023 began with the Mindful Mornings with Mazdak segment, a guided session with Mazdak Chinichian, who walked attendees through an exercise based in meditation, affirmations, visualization and gratitude.

Following the Land Acknowledgement and opening remarks, QTQ 2023's mainstage shifted to the opening panel Executive Queer Leadership: Insights, Impact, and the Future of Business. Led by a collection of esteemed queer executives from across the country, this session covered the topics of leadership and inclusive management practices, technical training, job access, business strategies, and decision-making processes. Panellists included: David Cardon - COO of Morgan Stanley, Florencia Herra Vega - CEO & CTO of AlleyCorp Nord, Michael Acosta - CCO of VIA Rail Canada, and Lisa Gibson - Head of Strategy & Operations, Global Communications at Microsoft.



“At my organization, it’s about finding subtle ways to make our ‘default’ mode queer - from Slack emojis to the language we use. We’re shifting the social culture.”
- Florencia Herra Vega.

Next to the mainstage was the final highly anticipated keynote of QTQ 2023 - Empowering Change: The Queer Community's Role in Harnessing Change for Environmental Progress. Moderated by [OCI's Meagan Simpson](#), this session welcomed renowned entrepreneur and environmental advocate Dax Dasilva, Founder of both [Lightspeed Commerce Inc.](#) and [Age of Union Alliance](#). In front of an electric full house, the discussion explored themes of creative and tech-enabled conservation, cultural storytelling, DEI as a tool for meaningful climate action, and global collaboration.



Following the day's jam-packed content track sessions, attendees gathered around the mainstage to watch [Queering the Tech Ecosystem](#): A live recording of the "The Business Gay" Podcast, hosted by [Calan Breckon](#). For this session, Calan sat down with QueerTech's co-founders, Eustacio Andy Saldaña and Naoufel Testaoui to discuss the inception of QueerTech, the challenges and triumphs they have experienced along the way, and reflections on creating a thriving community at the intersections of 2SLGBTQ+ advocacy and technological innovation.

"I've been in tech for years, and I never thought I was someone who could create or even be involved in something like this. Being a part of a team who can bring this programming to the world... I feel so privileged to be a part of this."

- Eustacio Andy Saldaña,
Co-Founder and COO,
QueerTech.



Content Tracks - November 2nd:

Day two of QTQ 2023 featured 16 unique content track sessions for attendees.

Session Name	Track	Type	Speakers
<i>Advancing 2SLGBTQIA+ Leadership and Wellness - Pride at Work Research Report</i>	● Leadership	Workshop	Quinn Blue of Pride at Work Canada.
<i>How to Stop People-Pleasing at Work and in Life</i>	● Leadership	Presentation	Alena Papayanis - writer, professor, podcaster.
<i>Ask BIG Questions: Leading with Purpose</i>	● Leadership	Coaching	Jess Malz of INBO.
<i>Troubleshooting Trust as a Leader</i>	● Leadership	Presentation	RK Popkin of Google.
<i>Starting a Business: The Basics You Need to Know</i>	● Entrepreneur	Panel	Alice Zhong of Sun Life in partnership with Unison Financial Solutions Inc., Eloise Flesh of Ownr, and Laura B. MacDonald of Coeuraj.
<i>Navigating Montreal Tech Ecosystem</i>	● Entrepreneur	Panel	Amelie Morency of MTL NewTech, Anastasia Vintras of Startup Montreal, Karina Riviello of Fintech Cadence, and Naouel Hanani of Startup Montreal.
<i>Opportunities in the Canadian Tech Ecosystem</i>	● Entrepreneur	Panel	A.J. Stewart of CGLCC, Amber Rowden of YYC Queer Innovation Meetup, Claire Quirion of Digital Nova Scotia, Matt Hicks of ventureLAB Innovation Centre, and Simon Kim of Creative Destruction Lab.
<i>Applied 2SLGBTQ+ Entrepreneurial Resilience</i>	● Entrepreneur	Presentation	Isaac Cook of MindFrame Connect and Coach/Researcher Luke DeCoste.
<i>AMA: Best Practices for Success in Tech</i>	● Technology	Q&A	Hector Domingo Orozco Perez of Clemez and Maxime Martin of Google.
<i>I, Robot or We, Humans? Unravelling Ethics and (Gen) AI Through Film</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Luc DeGagne of Deloitte.
<i>Product Management, Engineering & Development, Data Science, and UX/Design</i>	● Technology	Peer Group	Guy Tsrer of WealthSimple.
<i>Discovering Your Neurodiverse Strengths to Manage Burnout Risk</i>	● Technology	Workshop	Rachel Anderson of YYC Queer Innovation Meetup and Ty McKinney of 8 Bit Cortex.
<i>Canada's Got Undiscovered Talent - Charting Your Path in Tech</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Margo Purcell of InceptionU.
<i>Queering the Benchmarks: LLMs and Their Biases</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Hector Domingo Orozco Perez of Clemez.
<i>Navigating the Culture That Comes With Your First Role</i>	● Technology	Presentation	Brent Caverly of bEHaviour Interactive and Jennifer Dell of CloudKettle.
<i>Get Upstream: Avoid Burnout, Reduce Overwhelm, and Advance Joyfully</i>	● Technology	Workshop	Mitch Schwartz of Ops Machine.

Marking the end of this year's QT Conference, attendees listened to inspiring closing remarks, celebrated each other and the QueerTech team, and engaged in the final reflections segment of the event. Did they ever share the love! QTQ 2023's final reflections session was a heartwarming example of the impact these events, and dedicated queer empowerment spaces, can have on those involved. Here are some final attendee comments:

“ QTQ is essential as it empowers the queer community by providing representation, fostering innovation, eliminating biases, creating safe spaces, promoting economic empowerment, driving social impact, and inspiring future generations within the Canadian tech industry.
Rachel A.

“ QueerTech is a fantastic organization! It was a great joy attending their conference, where I met amazing people in our community. Very talented and experienced folks were both speaking and attending. I will definitely be attending again!
Salem J.

“ I've been volunteering for QueerTech almost from the beginning. What y'all create is magic, and it has been a delight to see y'all grow so much
Hector O.

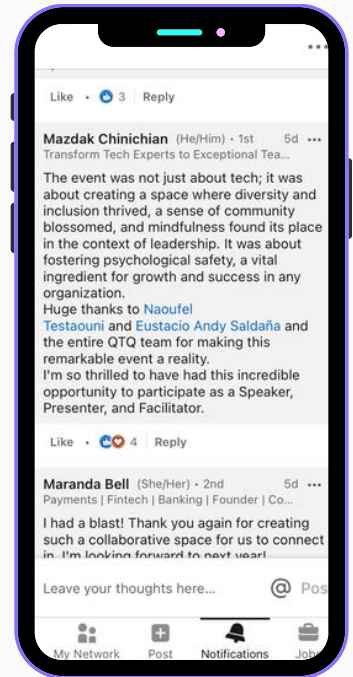
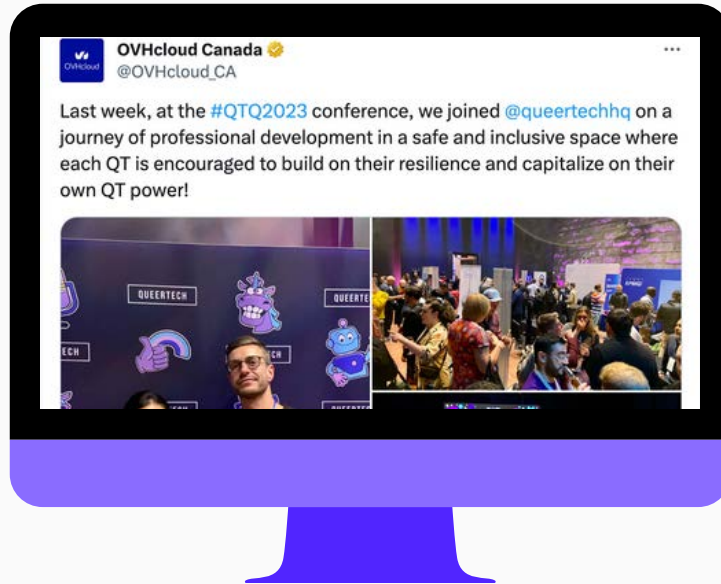
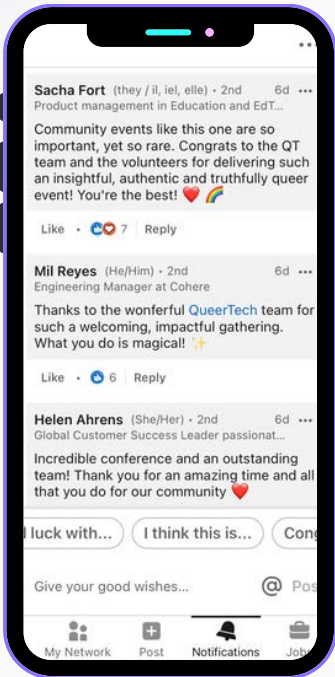


Networking & Connections

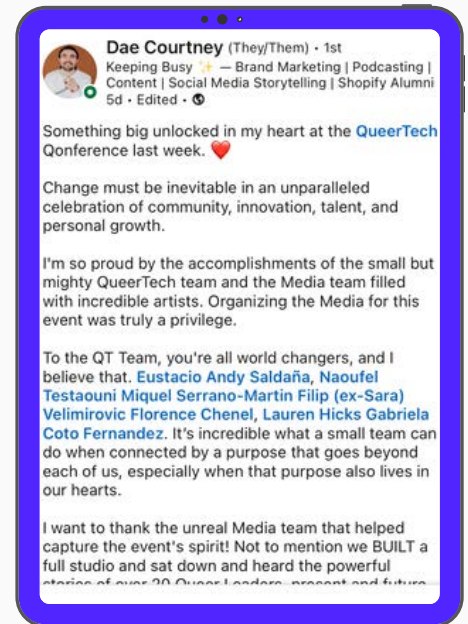
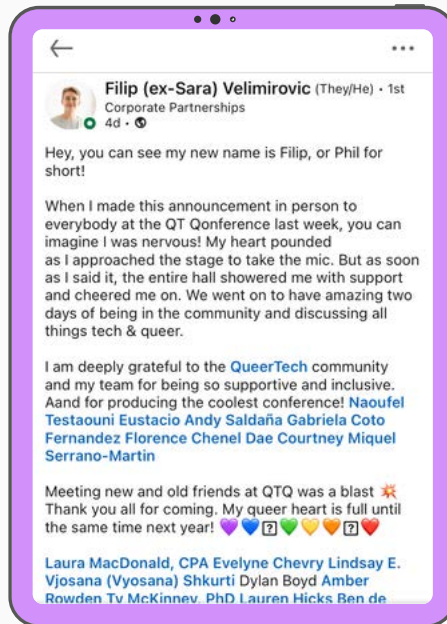
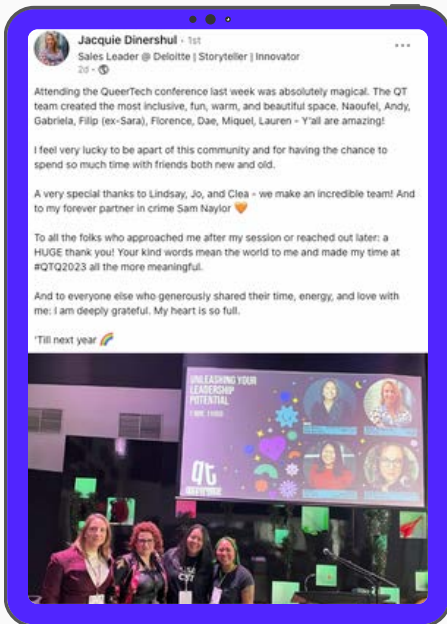
Here are some photos from another busy day of networking, connection and empowerment!



What Attendees, Speakers & Organizers Are Saying:



#QTQ2023



Queer the Tech Ecosystem with us in 2024!

If you attended QTQ 2023 and haven't yet had the chance to complete our feedback survey, you can do that [here](#).

To all 2023 attendees - thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for helping us queer the tech ecosystem, together. This selfless, endlessly talented community is what mobilization looks like. We take pride in being able to grow this powerful community, break down barriers, foster meaningful connection, and push relentlessly for true queer empowerment across the country.



Interested in QT Qonfernece 2024?

Stay tuned to www.queertech.org for more details in the coming months. See you there, QT's!

Thank you!

EN COLLABORATION AVEC

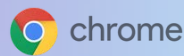


Développement
économique Canada
pour les régions du Québec

Canada Economic
Development
for Quebec Regions



FIERTÉ



TouchTunes

ALLIÉ

accenture



CGI



MOMENT
FACTORY



QMUNITÉ



MAZDAK
Leading change in life and business

Plank



Thank you to everyone that made QT Conference 2023 a smashing success.

We'd like to especially like to extend a special thank you to our 2023 partners and sponsors who showed up to welcome and collaborate with all of our amazing QTs!

Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Ville de Montréal, Google Chrome, TouchTunes, National Bank of Canada, RBC, Accenture, Communications Security Establishment (CSE), Centre de la sécurité des télécommunications (CST), Hydro Québec, KPMG, VIA Rail Canada, Mistplay, CGI, Moment Factory, Bell, INBO, Mazdak Coaching-Consulting, Unison Financial Solutions inc., WSP in Canada, Sun Life, Plank, and BC Public Service.