



Students' Society of McGill University

Tel: (514) 398-6800 | Fax: (514) 398-7490 | ssmu.ca
3600 McTavish St., Suite 1200, Montréal, QC, H3A 0G3
Located on unceded, Kanien'kehá:ka traditional territory

For Immediate Release

November 4, 2016

STATEMENT ON THE “MOTION REGARDING SUPPORT FOR THE KAHTIHON'TIA:KWENIO (WOMEN TITLEHOLDERS OF THE LAND)” AT THE FALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The SSMU acknowledges that McGill University is situated on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg peoples; a place which has long served, and continues to serve, as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous nations.

At the Winter General Assembly held on February 22, 2016, a [motion](#) was introduced from the floor regarding “Support for the Kahtihon'tia:kwenio (Women Titleholders of the Land).” This called for the SSMU to support a [Notice of Seizure](#) delivered to McGill University on September 12, 2015, by a group presenting themselves as representatives of the Kahnawake Mohawk community. The Notice demanded that the university immediately cease trespassing on traditional Indigenous territory. Following concerns regarding inadequate consultation raised by an Indigenous student in attendance, the motion was tabled to the Fall General Assembly.

The SSMU is committed to [Indigenous solidarity](#) and to advocating for Indigenous issues and priorities as identified by our community members. However, the motion presented at the Winter General Assembly is misrepresentative of local Indigenous perspectives and stems from selective consultation with activists operating in isolation from traditional governance systems. In particular, the “Women Titleholders” are not official representatives of Kahnawake, nor do they have the support of the Kahnawake Longhouses or many Indigenous students on-campus.

For these reasons, the motion is tokenizing of Indigenous peoples and contributes to the erasure of diverse voices by validating notions of pan-Indigeneity. Unfortunately, Indigenous students who stood up against the motion have also faced harassment from both the “Women Titleholders” and their supporters. While the SSMU encourages free expression of diverse political opinions, a serious engagement with, and respect for, the communities affected by these issues is necessary. Therefore, at the Fall General Assembly this coming Monday, November 7th, the SSMU Executive will propose that the “Motion Regarding Support for the Kahtihon'tia:kwenio” be struck from the agenda.

Moving forward, the SSMU will take steps to better institutionalize consultation protocols for motions, decisions, and events regarding Indigenous issues. In addition, we will seek to educate our representatives



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and student groups on these measures to ensure that such situations do not arise again in future. The SSMU particularly condemns the harassment of Indigenous students and reaffirms its commitment to countering harassment and discrimination on our campus.

Finally, the SSMU Indigenous Affairs Commissioner and the Indigenous Affairs Committee are available as resources to address your questions or concerns. They can be reached at iac@ssmu.mcgill.ca.

- The SSMU Executive Committee