



Motion to Adopt a Policy on Indigenous Solidarity

WHEREAS, the SSMU acknowledges that McGill University is located on traditional Kanien'kehá:ka territory;¹

WHEREAS, the SSMU Constitution "commits [the SSMU] to demonstrating leadership in matters of human rights, social justice and environmental protection";²

WHEREAS, Indigenous solidarity is a crucial component of practicing social justice;

BE IT RESOLVED, THAT the SSMU adopt the following Policy on Indigenous Solidarity, appended hereto as Appendix A.

Moved by:

Becky Goldberg, Arts Representative
Chelsea Kingzett, Environment Representative
Chloe Rourke, Vice-President (University Affairs)
Erin Sobat, Senate Caucus Representative
Kareem Ibrahim, President

¹ SSMU, *Traditional Territory Acknowledgement*, October 9, 2014, available at: <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Motion-Adoption-of-a-Traditional-Territory-Acknowledgement-Statement-2014-10-09.pdf>.

² <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/SSMU-Constitution-2015-02-21-EN.pdf>



Appendix A

Policy on Indigenous Solidarity

Background

The SSMU has a history of leadership on issues of equity and social justice. This dedication has been demonstrated in the creation of an Equity Policy for the SSMU. This policy aims to further this commitment by undertaking public awareness campaigns that aim to recognize underaddressed components of Indigenous history, better supporting Indigenous students and lobbying the University to prioritize Indigenous solidarity in service provision and academia. The SSMU recognizes a plurality of Indigenous voices and identities both in the Canadian context and abroad, but focuses on Indigenous peoples within the Canadian context in this policy.

The SSMU recognizes the historical and ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples both in society and in the McGill community. In particular, the SSMU understands that McGill University has historically failed to acknowledge and address its role in colonialism and the ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples. This policy aims to recognize those oppressions and to commit the SSMU to prioritizing Indigenous voices and histories as an institution.

This commitment is further demonstrated as the SSMU has implemented a traditional territory acknowledgement statement as follows: "SSMU would like to acknowledge that McGill University is situated on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations. SSMU recognizes and respects the Kanien'kehá:ka as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today."

Scope

This policy shall apply to all:

1. Staff, elected representatives, business operations, Clubs, Services, and Independent Student Groups of the SSMU.
2. Activities and events hosted, funded, or promoted by the Society and SSMU-affiliated Clubs and Services.
3. Written or graphic material, which is published, distributed, endorsed, or funded by the Society.
4. Activities, events, campaigns, or promotions held in the William Shatner University Centre.

Definitions

Indigenous: Refers to a person who self-identifies as First Nations (status or non-status), Inuit, Metis, American Indian, Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiians

Indigenous Community: Refers to a group of Indigenous people with shared background and/or interests including, but not limited to, reserves, non-status communities, urban Indigenous communities or community groups

Stakeholders – Refers to any person or group who has an interest in the outcome of a decision or event related to Indigenous issues or who has relevant expertise, including, but not limited to, the First Peoples' House, the Social Equity and Diversity Education Office, the



Indigenous Student Alliance and the Indigenous Women and Two-Spirit Harm Reduction Coalition

First Refusal Rights – Refers to the right given to a group to be given priority in the selection of a service through the right to be given an offer first

Traditional Territory Acknowledgement – Refers to a statement made publicly to recognize the colonial history of the land which is being occupied

1.0 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

In the larger context of Canada, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report and 94 Calls to Action in 2015. The SSMU shall actively support the implementation and success of these Calls to Action whenever possible. Particular focus shall be put on Calls to Action 6-17, 62-66 and 87-92, as these Calls to Action focus on matters within the realm of a university including Education, Language and Culture, Education for Reconciliation, Sports and Reconciliation and Business and Reconciliation.

2.0 Consultation

The SSMU recognizes the importance of developing relationships with McGill-based and local Indigenous groups that are grounded in open communication and respect. Furthermore, the SSMU acknowledges that meaningful advocacy can only be done in consultation with Indigenous communities. The SSMU, through the Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs), shall accomplish this taking the following actions:

- 2.1 Each academic year, the Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall compile the contact information of all relevant stakeholders, namely University units and student groups related to Indigenous matters, within the McGill community, as well as local Indigenous communities. This document shall serve to facilitate consultation with and active support of these communities and shall be updated on an annual basis.
- 2.2 The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall consult all relevant stakeholders in Indigenous student life at the University and local Indigenous communities on the renewal of the policy and any needed changes before this policy expires,.
- 2.3 All consultation processes shall involve an official meeting with notice at least 30 days prior, in addition to a minimum of 14 days to review the policy before it is submitted to the SSMU Legislative Council. The Stakeholders involved in consultation may veto the policy before submission, if deemed inadequate.
- 2.4 For matters involving Indigenous student life at McGill which are not covered within this policy, the Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall consult the aforementioned Stakeholders. For urgent matters, Stakeholders are required to be given notice at least 24 hours prior to a meeting. For non-urgent matters, the SSMU is required to give notice at least 7 days prior to a meeting. The Society shall endeavour to give as much notice as possible.

3.0 Support for Students



Students' Society of McGill University

3600 McTavish Street, Suite 1200, Montreal, Quebec H3A 0G3

The SSMU, through the Offices of the Vice-President (Student Life) and the Vice-President (University Affairs), shall ensure that support for Indigenous students and student groups shall remain a priority. This shall be accomplished by taking the following actions:

- 3.1 The Office of the Vice-President (Student Life) shall ensure that SSMU Services can provide adequate support, accounting for the unique perspectives, experiences and needs of Indigenous students, within reasonable constraints.
- 3.2 The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall endeavour to maintain space for Indigenous student voices within the institution through the maintenance of the position of an Indigenous Affairs Coordinator, with preference given to self-identified Indigenous persons. This support shall also involve actively reaching out to Indigenous student groups for their input on the SSMU's role in Indigenous student life.
- 3.3 The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and President shall work with the University to ensure that pertinent demographic information regarding Indigenous students is maintained and assessed on a regular basis to determine where additional support is needed and how the University can further recruit, retain and support Indigenous students.
- 3.4 The SSMU Executive Committee shall ensure that a traditional territory acknowledgement is made at the beginning of all public, non-alcoholic, SSMU-run events, including, but not limited to, General Assemblies, Legislative Council meetings, awards ceremonies, workshops, speaking engagements, open forums, film screenings and conferences. In addition, the SSMU Executive Committee shall endeavour to increase the visibility and breadth of land acknowledgements, both physical and verbal, at events in the McGill community.
- 3.5 The Office of the Vice-President (Finance) shall encourage funding-seeking student groups to make land acknowledgements at events funded by the Funding Committee.
- 3.6 The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and President shall lobby the University to ensure that University-run services can provide adequate support for Indigenous students, accounting for their unique perspectives and needs.
- 3.7 The Office of the Vice-President (Student Life) shall waive membership requirements for creating and maintaining Indigenous student groups, due to the underrepresentation Indigenous students at McGill.

4.0 Support for Indigenous Communities

- 4.1 The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall maintain outreach to Indigenous communities, including, but not limited to, Native Montreal, Kahnawake and the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal. This outreach shall include, but not be limited to, an open invitation for dialogue at the beginning of each academic year, as well as issue-based dialogue throughout the year. If a



community requests not to be contacted at any point throughout this process, that request shall be respected. The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall ensure that various methods of contact are used, depending on the needs of the community, including, but not limited to, phone calls, emails and in-person meetings.

- 4.2 Indigenous communities shall be given First Refusal Rights for services including, but not limited to, speaking, instructing and artistic opportunities which are relevant to Indigenous-themed events at the SSMU. The SSMU shall strive to prioritize Indigenous-run businesses whenever possible.

5.0 Advocacy & Solidarity within the University

The SSMU shall act in meaningful solidarity with Indigenous peoples through building and maintaining relationships with Indigenous communities, facilitating opportunities for self-advocacy wherever possible, including a diversity of voices, and striving for the participation of Indigenous people in all advocacy and policy development. The SSMU shall follow the leadership of and defer to Indigenous people advocating on their own behalf.

- 5.1 The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and President shall lobby the University to increase Indigenous presence on the University campus. All lobbying and advocacy shall be done in consultation with Stakeholders and Indigenous communities.
- 5.2 The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and the President shall support the presence of Indigenous peoples in both academic and support staff units of the University through advocacy initiatives including, but not limited to: increasing the number of Indigenous faculty and support staff through equitable hiring, supporting the creation of an Indigenous Studies Major program and department, and integrating Indigenous knowledge and history into existing courses and programs. All lobbying shall account for the need for these actions to be implemented in consultation with Stakeholders and Indigenous communities.
- 5.3 The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and President shall lobby the University to ensure that Indigenous peoples have a more prominent role in the administrative and decision-making processes of the University.

6.0 Physical Campus Environment

The SSMU shall advocate for the campus environment to reflect the history of the land on which we study through physical representations.

- 6.1 The Office of the Vice-President (Operations) shall ensure that there is an Indigenous presence in the William Shatner University Centre and in other spaces on campus over which the SSMU has influence. This includes, but is not limited to, displaying Indigenous art, prioritizing Indigenous voices in room naming processes, creating or adjusting spaces to facilitate cultural activities, such as smudging, and giving Indigenous student groups access to room



privileges equal to those of a SSMU Club through the Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs).

- 6.2** The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and President shall lobby the University to ensure there is visible Indigenous representation in the physical space of the University including, but not limited to, displaying Indigenous art, prioritizing Indigenous voices in building naming processes and the relocation of the Hochelaga Rock to a more prominent location.

7.0 Accountability

All staff and elected representatives of the SSMU are accountable for the implementation of this policy. To this end, the direction, policies, vision and planning of Legislative Council must include the principles of allyship and support outlined in this policy for Indigenous students and communities as an integral part of the aforementioned processes. Legislative Council is responsible for ensuring that all SSMU Executives and Committees integrate, demonstrate, and communicate this commitment in their work. Legislative Council is responsible for working with the Executive to ensure the development, implementation, and evaluation of all aspects of the agency against these principles.

8.0 Reporting

The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall report to Legislative Council once per semester on the status of the mandates in this policy. This report shall be made available to relevant Stakeholders and Indigenous communities.