



# REPORT OF THE EQUITY COMMITTEE

**NOVEMBER 17, 2016**

## Overview

The mandate of the SSMU Equity Committee is to confront historical and current inequities at McGill through active engagement and public education in agreement with the Student Society of McGill University's relevant policies (e.g. Equity Policy, Accessibility Policy). The committee so far has been planning awareness, sensitization, and support events largely focused on race; however, committee members have a range of knowledge, skills, and lived experiences that can contribute to ongoing and future programming or advocacy initiatives.

## Membership

Robyn Lee, Member-at-Large  
Ki-eun Peck, Member-at-Large  
Jennifer Chan, Member-at-Large  
Alexandra Yiannoutsos, Member-at-Large  
Jennifer Lockerby, Member-at-Large  
Anton Zyngier, Member-at-Large  
Noam Blauer, Member-at-Large  
Ashley Yu, Member-at-Large  
Romita Sur, Law Representative  
Erin Sobat, Vice President (University Affairs)  
Simone Cavanaugh, Equity Commissioner  
Marilyn Verghis, Equity Commissioner

## Meeting Dates

September 28, 2016  
October 5, 2016  
October 12, 2016  
October 19, 2016  
October 26, 2016  
November 2, 2016  
November 9, 2016

## Current Projects

### Equity Policy Revisions

We are in the process of revising the *Equity Policy* in order to improve the clarity and accessibility of this resource for both students and our Equity Officers. This entails a substantial reorganization of the existing



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content with some revisions to improve interpretation, scope, procedure, conflict of interest scenarios, and more. These changes will now come to the Legislative Council for review by January.

Sustainability Projects Fund (SPF) Application

SSMU Equity has provided several letters in support of a Sustainability Projects Fund application to hire a Community Projects Manager (Racialized and Ethnic Students). This individual would develop consolidated support, advising, and educational materials on racialized student experiences at McGill.

Campus Accessibility Projects

In order to build collaborations and coordinate advocacy efforts, Simone organized a meeting with people involved in accessibility-related initiatives on campus. Topics discussed included addressing issues with current construction projects; the lack of a centralized complaint or reporting process; improving accessibility and Universal Design standards for capital funds (e.g. the Library Improvement Fund); and creating a centralized resource page on the University Affairs website (in development)

Representation on the Joint Board-Senate Committee on Equity (JBSCE)

Marilyn is continuing as the SSMU representative to this committee, which develops University policy regarding “under-represented groups” (women, racialized and ethnic peoples, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ people). Current initiatives of the JBSCE and subcommittee include revising the terms of reference; advocating for IT improvements for the use of preferred names; advocating for more equitable recruitment and hiring; providing feedback to the Task Force on Indigenous Education providing feedback on the draft *Policy Against Sexual Violence*; and more.

Mandatory Equity Training

Marilyn has been collaborating with a working group of the Joint Board Senate Committee on Equity to advocate for an online equity training for all incoming students, similar in model to the Minerva academic integrity tutorial. The group is developing a series of modules around existing policies that promote and protect equity and inclusivity at McGill, in order to establish a “baseline” equity standard for all students based on their rights and responsibilities.

POC Mental Health Advocacy

Many students have identified issues with the lack of intersectional services at McGill. We have been working with McGill Women of Colour and Mental Health Services to develop mini-Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) workshops, which are peer-facilitated mental health strategy groups that will be closed to racialized students. In addition, conversations are ongoing with the Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) Office and PGSS Equity regarding the possibility of formalizing and supporting a racialized student mentorship network on campus.

Fall Campus Conversations

So far, SSMU Equity is planning on a total of three “Campus Conversations” sessions this term. This includes our *Post-Election Support and Solidarity* self-care event held last Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup>; a closed POC discussion on *Race in the Academy* next Thursday, November 24<sup>th</sup>; and a SSMU-PGSS workshop on strategies for engaging in anti-oppressive conversations post-election on Monday, November 28<sup>th</sup>, which will focus on skills for white students when they head home for the Winter break.



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## **Future Projects**

### Equity Roundtable

In January we would like to host a roundtable meeting of the various equity-related groups on campus, with the goal of establishing an informal “Equity Advocacy Network” moving forward. Topics would include identifying collaboration opportunities, shared advocacy priorities, and support opportunities via SSMU (e.g. training, resource-sharing, etc).

### Winter Campus Conversations

We plan to continue our Campus Conversations series next term with monthly installments. Tentative topics include discussions on mixed race student experiences, decolonizing love (Valentine’s Day), and anti-semitism and intersectionality.

### SSMU Equity Speaker Event

We are currently planning the details of our annual speaker event, to be held sometime in January or February. This year we are looking to book an anti-oppressive comedian such as Hari Kondabalu, pending contract negotiations and buy-in from other collaborator groups on campus.

### International Women’s Day

We are planning to collaborate with the Women of Colour Collective of McGill Law for the second installment of their *Women’s Resistance* art night, which will be held in Thomson House on March 8<sup>th</sup> (following up on a keynote speaker event the night before and in advance of the Law Needs Feminism conference the following weekend).

Respectfully Submitted,

**Marilyn Verghis and Simone Cavanaugh**

*SSMU Equity Commissioners*