



REPORT OF THE SSMU INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DECEMBER 1, 2016

Overview

The Indigenous Affairs Committee has met twice this semester to discuss several projects to pursue for the rest of the year. For the first month and a half, my role as Indigenous Affairs Commissioner was limited to committee representative on two working groups. The first is the Indigenous Affairs Working Group, which is particularly invested in Indigenous student retention, bridging programs, and long-distance education programs. The other working group is the Joint-Senate Board Sub-Committee on Equity for First Peoples, which deals with internal Indigenous issues.

Membership

Victoria Gagné, Co-President (ISA)
Alex Gray, President (McGill Chapter of AISES)
Ashley Bach, Former Coordinator (ISA)
Spencer Eric, VP External (ISA)
Denzel Sutherland-Wilson, VP Finance (ISA)
Kelsa Ferguson, Member-at-Large
Honour Alma, VP Internal (ISA)
McKenzie Gingrich-Hadley, Member-at-Large
Caroline Lou, Member-at-Large
Phoebe Colby, Member-at-Large
Julianne Skarha, Member-at-Large
Igor Sadikov, Arts Representative
David Aird, Vice-President, External (SSMU)
Erin Sobat, Vice-President, University Affairs (SSMU)
Ben Ger, President (SSMU)
Christian Quequish, Indigenous Affairs Commissioner (Chair)

Meeting Dates

November 2, 2016
November 18, 2016

Current Projects

Consultation luncheon - SSMU General Assembly address – Completed

After several weeks of consultation with Indigenous students, staff, and faculty in McGill and in Kahnawake, the SSMU executive team and myself decided to strike the Women Titleholder's motion from the Fall 2016 GA. Working with the SSMU president, SSMU VP university affairs, and recent McGill graduate and committee member Ashley Bach, we crafted a press release announcing the decision to cut the



women titleholder's motion. This was followed up by a contextual speech given by myself at the GA, and subsequent media interviews.

Indigenous Course Content campaign – Ongoing

The SSMU is mandated to advocate for increased Indigenous course content, per a [motion](#) passed at the Winter 2016 General Assembly. The committee is particularly motivated to pursue this initiative. We are drafting a general callout to send to departmental student associations. Committee members will be reaching out to these groups to get a feel for what is actionable within the remainder of the year.

I have personally approached the Indigenous Studies Program Committee (ISPC) – which operates under the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC) – for advice on how to pursue this initiative. I have also consulted with faculty and students in the Arts faculty (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) about what more Indigenous course content might look like. There are mixed views. The ISPC has stressed *more* Indigenous faculty hires. Some students feel like selling McGill to a prospective Indigenous scholar would be difficult. Others are worried about some problematic Indigenous scholars. This campaign is student-centered. If we get the support from student associations, we can push forward with this campaign. The hope is that once McGill sees a large student body demanding more Indigenous course content, that this will be reflected in the work of the Task Force on Indigenous Education and Indigenous Studies.

University Centre Art Project – No longer directly under IAC

This is a project to have Indigenous art put up in the SSMU building. It is an initiative run by VP Operations Sacha Magder. The Indigenous Affairs Committee discussed this project at its first meeting. It was struck from the agenda at the second meeting as a separate advisory selection committee will be created. I will be continuing to work with Magder to see the initiative gain traction. The hope is to have an art piece ready for unveiling during the Indigeneity and Solidarity Week happening next semester.

SSMU Indigeneity and Allyship Week – Ongoing

Proceeding forward into the new semester, this event series will be the big event of the year for the Indigenous Affairs Committee. Currently, a proposal for call-outs is being drafted to be sent out to the greater Montreal region. The theme of the event series is Post-TRC Solidarity and Indigeneity. As Indigenous identity is constantly shifting, and solidarity efforts often come into question – especially by Indigenous people – this event series hopes to clarify what solidarity means for Indigenous people. A secondary goal of this is to explore what Indigenous solidarity means to BIMPoC. This event series will be centered on local experiences, and will conclude with the Indigenous Student Alliance/First Peoples House/COUSINS academic conference on resistance and revitalization in the media.

SSMU Club Status for Indigenous Student Alliance – Ongoing

Briefly met with the VP Student Life to discuss the possibility of granting the Indigenous Student Alliance (ISA) either interim or full club status. Subsequently attended a club committee meeting with the ISA Co-president Victoria Gagné to argue for why ISA should be granted club status. We eagerly await their response.



Students' Society of McGill University

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Located on unceded Kanien'kehá:ka traditional territories

Indigenous Solidarity Policy improvements - Ongoing

Connected to the 2016 Winter GA. Preceding up to the women titleholder's motion, a consultation luncheon with Indigenous students concluded with a need for better consultative measures with respect to Indigenous individuals, groups, and communities. Working with the SSMU President and SSMU VP University Affairs, I will be looking at ways to improve and strengthen the Solidarity policy. Especially in the areas of consultation and engagement. We will present our edits to the committee for vetting and approval. The former IAC has indicated interest in being involved with the editing and vetting process.

Task Force on Indigenous Education and Indigenous Studies - Ongoing

I sit as a member of the recently launched Task Force in my role as Indigenous Affairs Commissioner. The Task Force is split into five working groups, and I sit on the working group for Indigenous student recruitment and retention. My main research in this area has been looking at U15 universities and their college-to-university transfer credit systems. I work directly with Kathleen Massey, the University Registrar and Executive Director of Enrolment Services. Our most recent project includes drafting a proposal to McGill for a policy on transfer credits for college graduates interested in studying at McGill.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian Quequish

Indigenous Affairs Commissioner