



# REPORT OF THE INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

**MARCH 23, 2017**

## Overview

The Indigenous Affairs Committee is responsible for organizing events and programming; facilitating collaboration with student and community groups; overseeing the implementation of the Indigenous Solidarity Policy; and acting as a consultative body for the Indigenous Affairs Commissioner, the Executive Committee, and other staff and students. This term, the committee has primarily been focused on planning the second annual *Indigeneity and Solidarity Week* as well as finalizing revisions to the Indigenous Solidarity Policy. For the remainder of the term, the Indigenous Affairs portfolio will be involved in developing resources for the implementation of the policy, monitoring the progress of the Task Force on Indigenous Education, and hiring the 2017-18 Indigenous Affairs Commissioner.

## Membership

Victoria Gagné, ISA Co-President

Alex Gray, AISES President

Ashley Bach, Former ISA Coordinator

Spencer Bossaer, ISA VP External

Sandra-Lynn Leclaire, Member-at-Large

Kelsa Ferguson, Member-at-Large

Mckenzie Gingrich-Hadley, Member-at-Large

Caroline Lou, Member-at-Large

Phoebe Colby, Member-at-Large

Erin Sobat, Vice-President (University Affairs)

Christian Quequish, Indigenous Affairs Commissioner (Chair)

## Meeting Dates

January 20, 2017

February 6, 2017

February 17, 2017

March 24, 2017

## Current Projects

### Indigenous Solidarity Policy

Discussions begun in the Fall term identified the need for revisions to the Indigenous Solidarity Policy in order to outline better consultative measures for engaging with Indigenous issues and peoples on campus. Changes focused on strengthening the policy scope and requirements for territory acknowledgments; updating the language of this acknowledgment to reflect historical and ongoing Anishinaabe presence; and improving the language and expectations around consultation. The



Indigenous Affairs Committee and other stakeholders reviewed these changes before they were brought to the Legislative Council and formally approved at the March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **Indigeneity & Solidarity Week**

This second annual event series was held from March 13–18, culminating with the full-day conference organized by the Indigenous Student Alliance and partner groups. The goal of the week was to center Indigenous speakers and their experiences with issues of Indigenous identity and settler-colonialism, and particularly to create spaces for Indigenous students and staff to think about resurgence and revitalization (i.e. how we can best push back against colonialism and develop responses to contemporary issues in ways that prioritize Indigenous needs and narratives). Therefore, the title was changed from “Indigeneity and Allyship Week” in order to shift the focus from settler allyship to solidarity among and with Indigenous peoples. Main speakers included Kanen'to:kon Hemlock, Dr. Cindy Blackstock, and Dr. Kyle Mays.

### **Task Force on Indigenous Studies & Indigenous Education**

The Indigenous Affairs Commissioner sits as a student representative on the Provost's Task Force and the associated working group on Indigenous student recruitment and retention. He has been working with the Executive Director of Enrolment Services to review college-to-university transfer credit systems at peer institutions, which should culminate in a new McGill policy on transfer credits for college graduates. The Task Force submitted a preliminary report in January 2017 and will make its final report in June 2017.

### **Indigenous Course Content**

The SSMU has a mandate to advocate for increased Indigenous course content as per a motion passed at the Winter 2016 General Assembly. The commissioner has undertaken consultations with the Indigenous Studies Program Committee as well as students and professors in the Faculty of Arts. Currently, the IAC is working to compile a list of current Indigenous-related courses, as well as courses that are problematic or lacking in Indigenous content but offer opportunities for improvement. We hope to use this resource to approach faculty and department associations to assist with advocacy at the local level.

### **Student Group Resources**

It has been identified in several instances that student groups do not necessarily have the knowledge or connections in order to undertake meaningful solidarity initiatives (or, to know when not to). As such, it is proposed that an Indigenous Affairs resource package be compiled for reference by SSMU members and affiliated groups. This could include “Frequently Asked Questions” regarding topics such as territory acknowledgments and appropriate community consultation, as well as suggestions for events or needs on campus. We hope to have a skeleton draft for the guide by the end of the term.