



INDIGENOUS SOLIDARITY POLICY

Adopted by Legislative Council: 2016/03/31

Expires: 2021/01/01

[Adopted Motion \(Link\)](#)

1. Background

The SSMU Constitution commits the SSMU to demonstrating leadership in matters of human rights, social justice and environmental protection. The SSMU acknowledges that McGill University is located on traditional Kanien'kehá:ka territory in the Constitution and has historically failed to promote and respect Indigenous voices. Indigenous solidarity is a crucial component of practicing social justice, and the SSMU recognizes that Indigenous students face a number of unique barriers and challenges to their well-being and learning opportunities on campus. As such, the SSMU recognizes the authority of Indigenous student bodies on this topic and commits to providing solidarity and allyship to ensure their wellbeing and success during their time at McGill. The thoughts, opinions and needs of Indigenous students will remain an influential driving force behind SSMU decisions and actions.

SSMU's history of leadership on issues of equity and social justice, demonstrated through such documents as the Constitution and the Equity Policy. Because Indigenous solidarity is a crucial component of practicing social justice, the Indigenous Solidarity policy aims to further this commitment by taking measures such as the following:

- Running public awareness campaigns that recognize under-addressed components of Indigenous history;
- Adapting current SSMU services to better support and meet the needs of Indigenous students
- Engaging in continuous consultation, via the Indigenous Affairs Commissioner, as to how the SSMU can best adapt in supporting Indigenous students
- Engaging with the territories and offer specific support mechanisms to Kanien'kehá:keka students
- Improving and increasing access to supports for Indigenous students;
- Lobbying the University to prioritize Indigenous solidarity in service provision and academia
- Calling out and taking swift action when injustices are seen to be occurring individually or collectively against any one or many Indigenous students;
- Ensuring consequences follow from actions taken against the interests and wellbeing of any one or many Indigenous students
- Undertaking other tasks as necessary to achieve the objectives targeted by this policy



The SSMU recognizes the historical and ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples both in the McGill community and society-at-large. In particular, the SSMU acknowledges that both McGill University and the SSMU have historically failed to recognize and address their role in colonialism and the ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples. This policy aims to address those oppressions and commits the SSMU to prioritizing Indigenous voices and histories in its activities. The SSMU recognizes a plurality of Indigenous voices and identities both in the Canadian context and internationally, however this policy focuses primarily on Indigenous peoples in Canada.

This commitment is further demonstrated as the SSMU has implemented a traditional territory acknowledgement statement for meetings as follows:

The SSMU acknowledges that McGill University is situated on the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee nations. The SSMU recognizes and respects these nations as the true and constant custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today. Further, the SSMU commits to and respects the traditional laws and customs of these territories.

2. Scope

This policy shall apply to all:

- 2.1 Staff, elected representatives and business operations of the SSMU.
- 2.2 Activities and events hosted or promoted by the SSMU.
- 2.3 Written or graphic material, which is published, distributed or endorsed by the SSMU.
- 2.4 Clubs, Services, and SSMU Representatives to Independent Student Groups.
- 2.5 Any other individuals, student groups or events relating to SSMU activities.

3. Definitions

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

3.2 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.

3.3 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.



4. Implementations

The Policy shall mandate the Society to act in five key areas related to Indigenous Solidarity: consultation and decision-making; support for Indigenous students; support for Indigenous communities; advocacy and solidarity within the university; and physical campus environment.

Such efforts will be coordinated by the Indigenous Affairs Commissioner --as the representative of Indigenous students within the SSMU-- with the Society being held responsible as an ally to the Indigenous student community. As such, the Indigenous Affairs Commissioner will coordinate with and prepare allyship status reports to the SSMU Board of Directors. In execution of this policy, the Indigenous Affairs Commissioner will maintain lateral relations with the SSMU Vice-President (University Affairs) in fulfilling the mandates outlined below.

- Promote awareness of supports and services available to Indigenous students
- Build ongoing rapport with Indigenous students to ensure their voices are heard and needs are met
- Ensure Indigenous students have adequate access to mental health care and supports
- Take definitive steps to expand the Indigenous Studies program
- Expand access to services that are in high demand for Indigenous students
- Facilitate access to off-campus supports and services for Indigenous students
- Ensure the availability of cultural activities and practices conducive to the wellbeing of Indigenous students

4.1 Consultation and Decision-Making

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 and decision-making can only occur in dialogue and ongoing engagement with Indigenous communities. All consultation efforts should take into account the diversity of Indigenous peoples and perspectives as well as the awareness that some perspectives may at times be harmful to Indigenous students and community members. The SSMU shall institutionalize consultation protocols through the following actions:

4.1.1. Each academic year, the Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall compile an internal document with the contact information of all relevant Indigenous Stakeholders, including University units, student groups, external organizations, individuals and local community groups. The SSMU will act in good faith with these Stakeholders based on First Refusal Rights and only refer students to them with their explicit permission. This document shall serve to facilitate consultation and shall be updated on an annual basis. In the event where SSMU has been found not acting in good faith with these Stakeholders, SSMU will



consult with these Stakeholders to determine the best course of action to make amends for its failure to do so.

4.1.2. The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) and Vice-President (Student Life) shall produce and distribute a consultation guide for reference by Clubs, Services and Independent Student Groups in their activities. The Indigenous Affairs Committee shall be responsible for making appropriate changes as needed and approving this guide and overseeing consultation requests in collaboration with the relevant Executive Officer(s).

4.1.3. The Offices of the Vice-President (External Affairs) and the President shall work to expand formal and informal opportunities for Indigenous student participation within the SSMU, including by actively reaching out to Indigenous student groups for their input on the role in Indigenous Student life.

4.1.4. The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall consult relevant Stakeholders in Indigenous student life at the University, as well as local Indigenous communities, regarding the renewal and revision of this policy before it expires.

4.1.4.1 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 feedback must be presented with the renewal of this policy.

4.1.5. For any 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 direction.

4.1.6. The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall seek out and implement any additional means through which to appropriately recognize and compensate Indigenous students and Stakeholders for their consultation and contributions.

4.2 Support for Indigenous Students

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. The SSMU shall improve support for Indigenous students and student groups at the University. This shall occur through the following actions:

4.2.1. The Office of the Vice-President (Student Life) shall provide Stakeholder-identified educational and consultation resources to student groups in an effort to ensure that adequate



support and consideration is provided to Indigenous students, accounting for their unique perspectives, experiences, and needs.

4.2.2. The Executive Committee shall ensure that Traditional Territory Acknowledgements are included as part of all public SSMU-organized events in whatever form is most appropriate.

4.2.2.1. The Executive Committee shall also endeavor to increase the visibility and breadth of Traditional Territory Acknowledgements at other events in the McGill community.

4.2.2.2. The Office of the Vice-President (Student Life) shall be responsible for ensuring that Traditional Acknowledgements are made at events organized by SSMU Clubs and Services and Independent Student Groups

4.2.2.3. The Funding Committee shall request that student groups make Traditional Territory Acknowledgements at all events funded by the Society.

4.2.3. The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and the Vice-President (Student Life) shall advocate for University-run services to provide adequate support for Indigenous students, accounting for their unique perspectives and needs. This includes, but is not limited to, targeted support for financial aid, housing, academic advising, peer mentorship, mental health support, and career services.

4.2.4. The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall provide Indigenous student groups on campus with all access to room booking privileges in the University Centre equivalent to those of any Full-Status Club.

4.2.5. The Club Committee shall consider the underrepresentation of Indigenous students at McGill University when assessing Club applications from Indigenous student groups and will waive membership requirements for these students where appropriate. The Legislative Council will ensure that this underrepresentation is accounted for prior to approving relevant reports of the Club Committee.

4.3 Support for Indigenous Communities

4.3.1. The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) shall maintain outreach efforts to Stakeholders in local Indigenous communities. This shall include, but is not limited to, an open invitation for dialogue at the beginning of each academic year, as well as issue-specific dialogue throughout the year. If requests that contact cease or be avoided at any point throughout this process, such a request shall be immediately respected. Various methods of contact shall be used- depending on the needs and resources of the group, including, but not limited to, phone calls, email messages, and in-person meetings.



4.3.2. Indigenous communities shall receive First Refusal Rights for services including, but not limited to, speaking engagements, education or instruction, and artistic or cultural production that are relevant to Indigenous events organized by the SSMU. The SSMU shall strive to prioritize Indigenous-run businesses for such events whenever possible.

4.4 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-representation wherever possible; incorporating a variety of perspectives in decision-making; and otherwise working towards the participation of Indigenous peoples in advocacy and policy development, as is desired by Indigenous community members. The SSMU shall follow the leadership of and defer to Indigenous peoples advocating on their own behalf.

4.4.1. The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and President shall lobby the University to actively respect, consult with, and take direction from Indigenous Stakeholders and to increase Indigenous presence on the University campus as a whole.

4.4.2. The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and President shall work with the University to better recruit, retain, and support Indigenous students, including by ensuring that pertinent data regarding current and incoming Indigenous students is collected, maintained, and assessed on a regular basis in order to determine where additional supports are needed, and by streamlining the admissions process among various faculties.

4.4.3. The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and the President shall advocate for increasing the number of tenured Indigenous faculty and support staff members at the University through equitable and cluster hiring, the development of a full Indigenous Studies department and integrating Indigenous knowledge and history into existing courses and programs. Such roles must avoid tokenization, be substantive and authoritative, and avoid being only symbolic.

4.4.4. The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and President shall lobby the University to ensure that Indigenous peoples have a substantive and authoritative formal role in the decision-making processes of the University, such as through representation of the Board of Governors and in senior administrative positions. Such a role must avoid tokenization, be substantive and authoritative, and avoid being only symbolic.



4.5 Physical Campus Environment

The SSMU shall advocate for the development of physical and symbolic representations on campus that reflect Indigenous histories and continued presence on the land, specifically that of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg peoples. Such efforts shall be undertaken with the goal of educating the community-at-large as well as developing spaces that facilitate the comfort, well-being, and cultural activities of Indigenous students. Furthermore, all activities should account for diversity in artistic and cultural representations; the societal prevalence of pan-Indigenous stereotypes; and the role of self-identification in Indigeneity and cultural expression.

4.5.1. The Office of the President shall ensure that there is a visible Indigenous presence in the University Centre building. This includes, but is not limited to, art displays produced by Indigenous artists; room and building naming, and creating or modifying spaces to accommodate cultural activities, such as smudging

4.5.2. The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and President shall lobby the University to ensure that there is visible Indigenous representation in the campus environment of the University including, but not limited to, room and building naming; and creating or modifying spaces to accommodate cultural activities such as smudging.

5. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada released its final report, including 94 Calls to Action, in 2015. The SSMU recognizes that the TRC framework is not universally accepted and does not meet the needs of all Indigenous peoples. However, it shall actively support the implementation and maintenance of these Calls to Action based on community consultation and direction, taking into account other local resurgence, nationhood, self-determination and self-governance frameworks. There shall be a particular focus on Calls to Action 6-17, 62-66 and 87-92, as these recommendations focus on issues within the scope of a university institution, including *Education, Language and Culture, Education for Reconciliation, Sports and Reconciliation, and Business and Reconciliation*.

6. Accountability

All staff and elected representatives of the SSMU are accountable for the implementation of this policy. To this end, the vision, planning, and decision-making of the Society should uphold the principles, support measures, and consultation protocols outlined in this document. Furthermore, the Legislative Council is responsible for ensuring that all Executive Officers and Committees integrate and communicate this commitment in their activities as well as in the development, implementation, and evaluation of new initiatives.



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7. Reporting

The Office of the Indigenous Affairs Commissioner shall report to the Legislative Council once per semester on the status of the mandates contained in this policy. The SSMU shall ensure that this report be made available to Stakeholders in an accessible format.

8. Enforcement Policy

If at any point, SSMU or any of its members or officials have or are seen to be disregarding this policy, discussions with affected parties must be held on how to rectify the situation and on appropriate amends to be made.