



ABORIGINAL  
SUSTAINABILITY  
PROJECT

## REPORT FOR THE 1ST AND 2ND YEAR

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**A project of:**

**Social Equity and Diversity Education Office, First Peoples' House, Aboriginal  
Community Outreach Coordinator**

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## Background

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The Aboriginal Sustainability Project seeks to develop a broad-based educational campaign aiming to provide Aboriginal-specific programming and opportunities for bridge-building among diverse members of the McGill community.

## Year 1: Completed Activities

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The vision is to enhance the presence of Aboriginal peoples within the McGill community. Over the last year we have achieved our goals through:

- Cultural and Educational Programming
- Community Based Programming
- Involvement within the McGill and Montreal community

### Cultural and Educational Programming

A main component to the programming was our Aboriginal Awareness Week held in September preceding McGill's annual Pow-Wow. The programming focused on a wide-spectrum of Aboriginal perspectives and realities in history, environment, traditional knowledge, language, policies, and education. The programme included films, lectures, discussion panels, workshops, academic projects and cultural activities.

Working with the Student Service's Student Assessment Manager, we sent a survey to the participants and the presenters of the week. The responses were very positive, and the results highlighted the need for Aboriginal-specific programming at McGill. A major factor for the success of the week was the collaborations with all levels of McGill; students; staff; and faculty. As a result, information was widely dispersed across the university. Lastly, the connections made paved the way for continuous support for the year's programming.

Overall the programming has been successful in:

- Raising an exchange in dialogue of the realities of Aboriginal peoples in Canada
- Enriching the community through traditional values and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples

### Community and Outreach Programming

A significant initiative that bridged the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities together was through our after school program with the Inter-Tribal Youth Centre of Montreal (ITYC).

In February, we started *The Best Story Ever Told*. The series focused on a shared learning experience amongst the community through discussion, poetry and arts. McGill students planned weekly activities in order to jump start the creative potential of urban Aboriginal youth. Examples of projects were mask

making, film discussion, and storytelling. It gave opportunities for McGill students to learn about urban Aboriginal youth realities, and build their capacity in developing education curriculum. As a result, urban Aboriginal youth had an outlet to engage in self expression and build self-esteem.

Overall the community and outreach programming has been successful in:

- Providing opportunities to open new dialogue around cultural and social issues
- Creating opportunities for greater understanding through shared experience

*\*The success of the programme, helped create Homework Help. The program was designed to have McGill student volunteers to help tutor urban Aboriginal youth in various school subjects. Unfortunately, the program did not start. Both programs will resume in the fall of 2012.*

## **Involvement within the McGill and Montreal Community**

Since the start of the project, the Project Coordinator, Allan Vicaire, has been making important connections within the McGill and Montreal community through collaborative project and opportunities.

### **A) Networks**

Allan is an active member of:

- Aboriginal Affairs Work Group at McGill University
- Arts and Culture Committee of the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network.

### **B) Student Network**

Initiated by the project, all of student indigenous groups on campus have developed a network in order to share information of events and support one another. The partnership has created an opportunity to collaborate on a full week of programme in March dedicated to the Inuit. The success of the week was attributed to the support by the groups coming from a diverse range of faculties; Law; Medicine; Social Work; and student research.

### **C) Human Resources**

Allan has been working with Human Resources and SEDE in its efforts for Aboriginal outreach in its hiring practices. The primary goal is to diversify the pool of candidates for available positions at McGill. In effect, shift the culture of how McGill operates to be more inclusive and diverse in its hiring practices.

## **Year 2: Future Activities**

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Building the framework of the project and establishing partnerships within the community were the essentials in the first year of the project. The second year will be building on the foundation; improving strategies in promoting our events and existing programming; enriching the monthly programming with new ideas; and exploring partnerships. Lastly, the committee of the project will be focusing their attention to funding options in order to continue the project.

## **Strengthening Partnerships and Programming**

In Year 1, we had the opportunity to collaborate with the Redpath's Science Outreach program, in a film screening. The event received positive feedback. As a result, we will be organizing an event together for Montreal's *Journées de la Culture* on September 30<sup>th</sup>. This will be an opportunity for our programme to reach beyond the McGill community.

## **Film Festival: ImagineNATIVE**

ImagineNATIVE is the largest Indigenous film festival in Canada. Currently, there is discussion with the organizers to develop a 2-day short programme. The advantage of collaborating with ImagineNATIVE is learning best practices in organizing a film festival. The event will surely enrich future programming.

## **After School Program: Kahnawake**

The after school program with the ITYC has been a success, and will resume in the fall. An idea that is being explored is the possibility of offering Homework Help at the Kahnawake Survival School (KSS), the community high school in Kahnawake. The program will provide youth the opportunity to improve in their studies, and an opportunity for McGill students to experience a First Nation community.

## **Strengthening Student Network: Website**

Year 2 will be to strengthen the network, and explore initiatives to support each other. A challenge at the moment is information on the groups is difficult to find. In order to overcome the challenge, we are in the process of creating a website that will consolidate information of the groups and their activities. The website will serve as a valuable resource for the community wanting to know information on Aboriginal activities on campus. Consequently, it will strengthen the outreach to the community.

## **First Peoples Studies Program**

In the last year, there has been an emergence of discussion within the McGill community for the need of a First Peoples Studies Program. In collaboration with SSMU, we created a research position that will start this summer until December 2012. The person will research best practices and document past attempts at creating a First Peoples Studies Program at McGill. The final product will be a document consolidating past research, and a final proposal for the program.

## **Conclusion**

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Over the last year, the Aboriginal Sustainability Project has become a hub for Aboriginal projects and initiatives and has succeeded in creating much greater visibility and importance within the campus community. Establishing partnerships and building on existing ones has contributed to the success. As a result, there has been an integration of values and perspectives on Aboriginal sustainability in well being and in culture into the wider community. These outcomes are reflected in the Aboriginal Awareness Week's assessment, feedback from participants and presenters.

A fantastic result of the project is that McGill Aboriginal students have taken an active role in volunteering and contributing their ideas on future programming. The rewarding outcome of their participation is that Aboriginal students are gaining pride in their heritage and developing relationships with non-Aboriginal students.

Another wonderful outcome was the opportunity for the coordinator to participate in the sustainability network's Vision 2020. He has played a role in providing a voice in equity and diversity, and strengthening the role of social sustainability on campus.

The focus in year 2 will be strengthening and enriching the programming, and the continuing development of strategic networks. A vital partnership of year 2 will be with SSMU in creating a document that will highlight strategies in establishing a First Peoples' Studies Program. This will be a forefront issue to the students and the project. As a result, there will be greater importance on Aboriginal specific programming at McGill.

Lastly, the Aboriginal Sustainability Project's committee and important stakeholders within McGill are in the process of trying to figure out how to integrate this project within McGill for January 2013. As a result of the project and the conversation, there is a clear indication that there is a need to continue to enhance the presence of Aboriginal Peoples within McGill community and Montreal, through educational and building sustainable relationships that benefit the communities.

## Year 1: Cultural and Educational Programming

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Activity	Date	Collaborative Partners
Aboriginal Awareness Week	September 12-15 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First peoples' House</li> <li>• Social Equity and Diversity and Education Office</li> <li>• Ethnoculture</li> <li>• Students' Society of McGill University</li> <li>• Post Secondary Graduate Society</li> <li>• KANATA</li> <li>• Mushkeg Media Inc</li> <li>• Native Friendship Centre of Montreal</li> <li>• Inter-Tribal Youth Centre of Montreal</li> <li>• Botanical Gardens</li> <li>• McGill Bookstore</li> <li>• Faculty of Architecture,</li> <li>• The Yellow Door,</li> <li>• Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network.</li> </ul>
The Boreal Forest: Our Lands, Our Stories, Our Responsibility	November 16 2011	Canadian Boreal Initiative
Attawapiskat Benefit Concert	December 2 2011	Students' Society of McGill University.
The Wampum Chronicles	January 11 2012	McCord Museum
Indigenous Education: Lessons in Self-Determination from the Akwesasne Freedom School	March 1 2012	Sauvé Scholars Foundation
Arctic Realities: Inuit Perspectives on Change	March 12-16 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McGill's Aboriginal Health Interest Group</li> <li>• Aboriginal Law Students' Association</li> <li>• KANATA</li> <li>• Inter-Tribal Youth Centre of Montreal</li> </ul>
Reel Injun: How Hollywood Portrays Indians	March 30 2012	Redpath Museum's Science Outreach Program
Housing Policies for First Nations Communities	April 4 2012	Post Secondary Graduate Society

# ABORIGINAL AWARENESS WEEK

September 12 to 15, 2011

All events are free and open to the public.

## MONDAY SEPTEMBER 12

### OPENING CEREMONY

First People's House - 3505 Peel Street  
8:00AM - 12:00PM  
A light breakfast will be served.

### INDIGENOUS ANTI-COLONIAL RESPONSES TO SEX "TRAFFICKING" AND VIOLENCE FROM THE STATE WITH JESSICA YEE

Break-Out Room, SSMU Building  
2nd Floor, 3600 McTavish Street  
2:00PM - 4:00PM

### RHYTHM NIGHTS SPOKEN WORD WITH TABRALIK & ELECTRONIC ARTIST MADESKIMO

The Yellow Door  
3625 Aylmer Street  
6:00PM

## TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 13

### STONE CARVING WORKSHOP

10:00AM - 1:00PM  
SPACES ARE LIMITED!! RESERVE BY E-MAIL:  
ALLAN.VICAIRE@MCGILL.CA

### TWO-SPIRITED PEOPLE: SURVIVING COLONIALISM WITH DIANE LABELLE

Thompson House Ballroom - 3650 McTavish Street  
2:00PM to 3:30PM

### 'FINDING OUR TALK' WITH COURTNEY MONTOUR FILM SCREENING

Redpath Museum Auditorium  
859 Sherbrooke Street West  
6:00PM

## WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 14

### FIRST NATIONS GARDEN EXPERIENCE

Montreal Botanical Gardens  
4101 Sherbrooke Street East  
9:00AM - 3:00PM  
FREE PASSES ARE AVAILABLE AT  
FIRST PEOPLES' HOUSE,  
3505 PEEL STREET

### RHYTHM NIGHTS WITH FOLK ARTISTS CHELSEA VOWEL & DEMIEL PEPIN

The Yellow Door - 3625 Aylmer Street  
6:00PM

## THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 15

### READING WITH WAUBGESHIG RICE: 'MIDNIGHT SWEATLODGE'

McGill Bookstore - 3420 McTavish Street  
10:00AM - 11:30PM

### MEDIA PANEL: (MIS/SELF)REPRESENTATIONS OF ABORIGINALS IN PUBLIC SPACES

Lev Bukhman Council Room, SSMU Building -  
2nd Floor, 3600 McTavish Street  
2:00PM - 4:00PM

### COMMUNITY SOCIAL & FEAST

Native Friendship Centre of Montreal  
2001 Saint-Laurent Blvd  
6:00PM

For more info please visit  
<http://www.mcgill.ca/fph/events> or contact  
Project Coordinator at [allan.vicaire@mcgill.ca](mailto:allan.vicaire@mcgill.ca)

Poster by Walter Scott

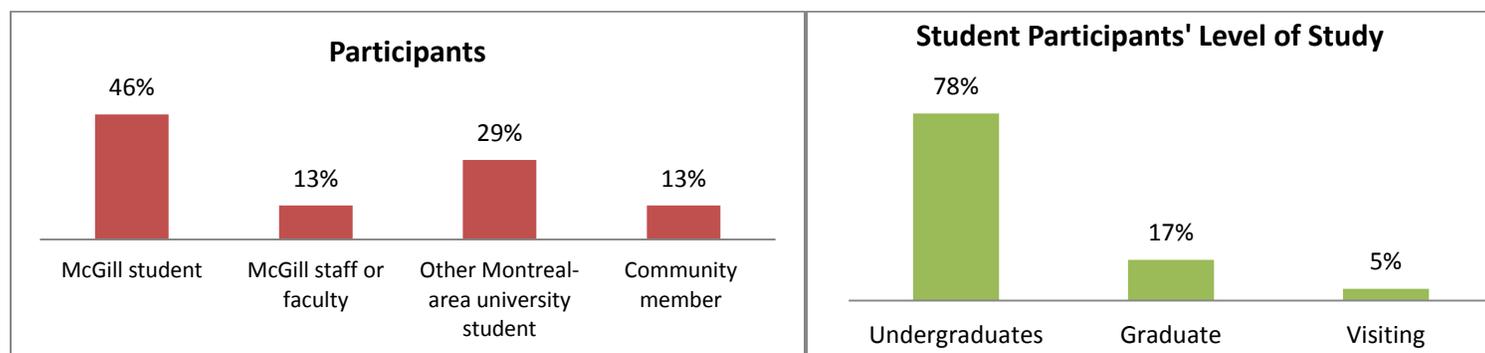


**Introduction:** The inaugural McGill University Aboriginal Awareness Week was held on September 12 to 15, 2011. This project is supported by First Peoples' House, the Social Equity and Diversity Education Office (SEDE), the Office of the Dean of Students (represented by the Aboriginal Outreach Coordinator) and funded by the Office of Sustainability.

Activities held throughout the week were developed to foster inclusivity for all: McGill students, faculty, and staff and community members. The programming included cultural celebrations (e.g., Pow-wow, Community feast, etc.); workshops and activities for the McGill community (film screening, First Nations Garden Experience and lectures); and outreach activities for Aboriginal youth from the greater Montreal area (e.g. Stone Carving Workshop).

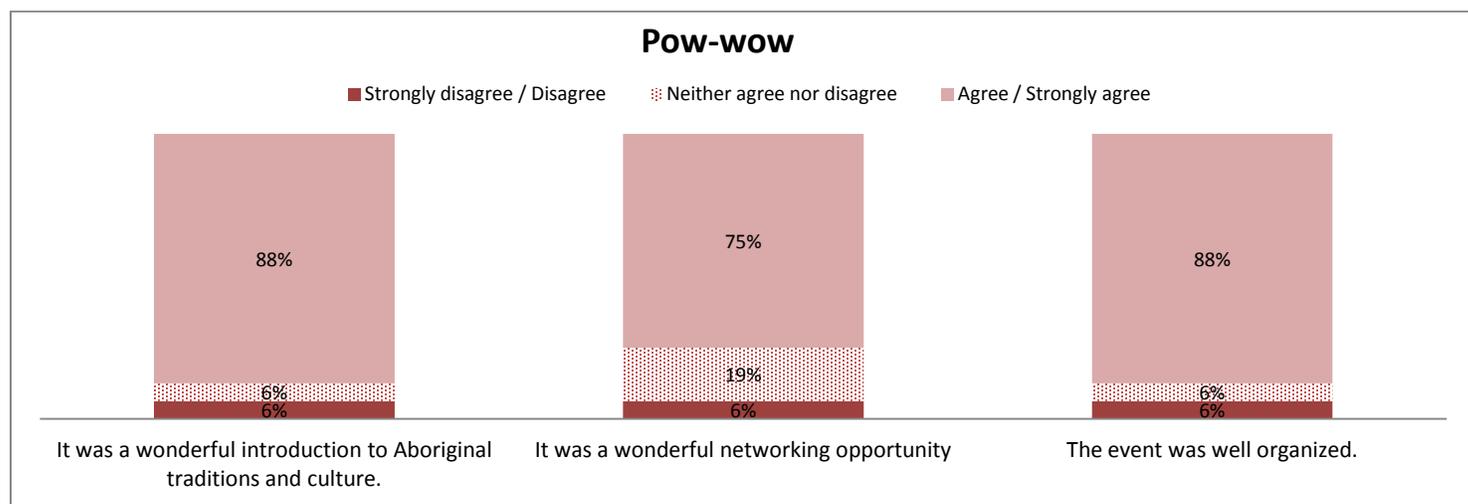
**Methodology:** The Aboriginal Awareness Week assessment includes a multiple perspective and mixed research methods approach. Event participants were invited to complete an online survey (n=40) and follow-up interviews were conducted with presenters (n <5). This summary report will include findings from both participants and presenters.

**Participant Demographics:** Two-thirds of event participants were students, most of which were enrolled in undergraduate programs of study.

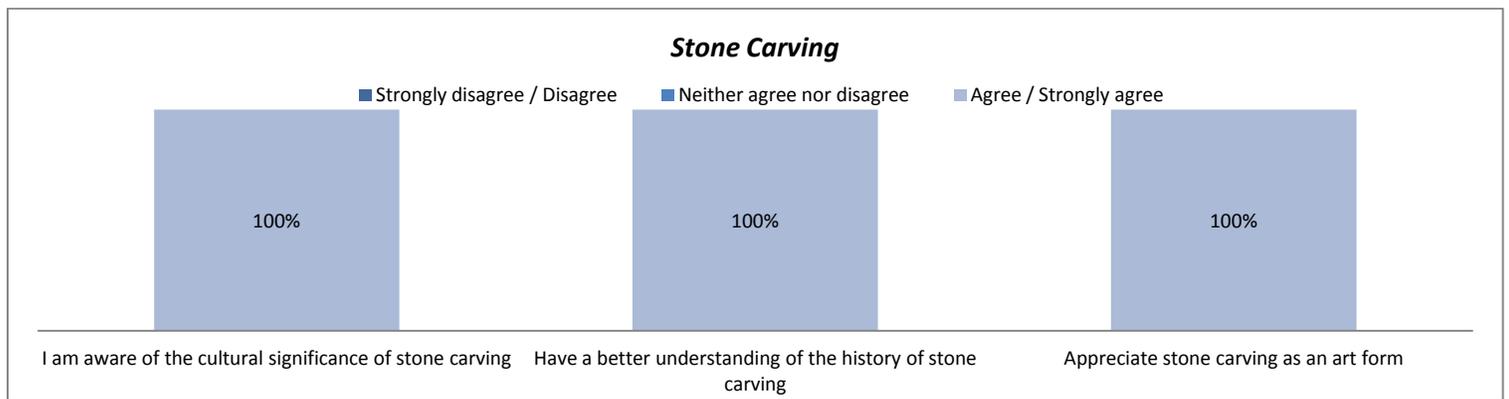
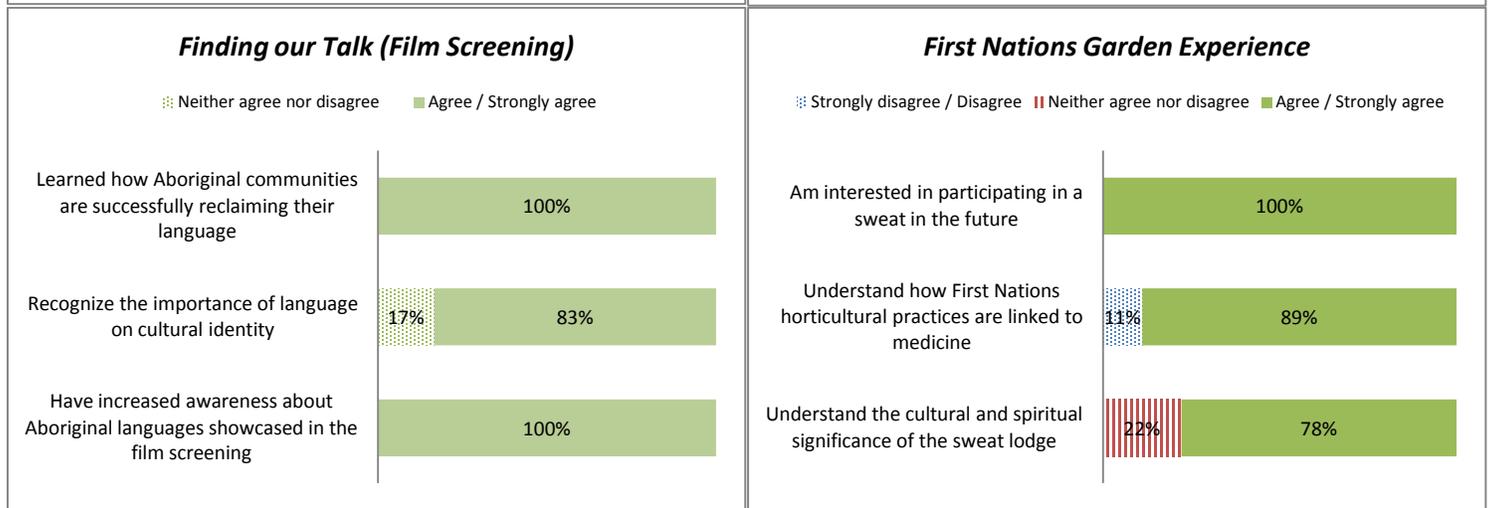
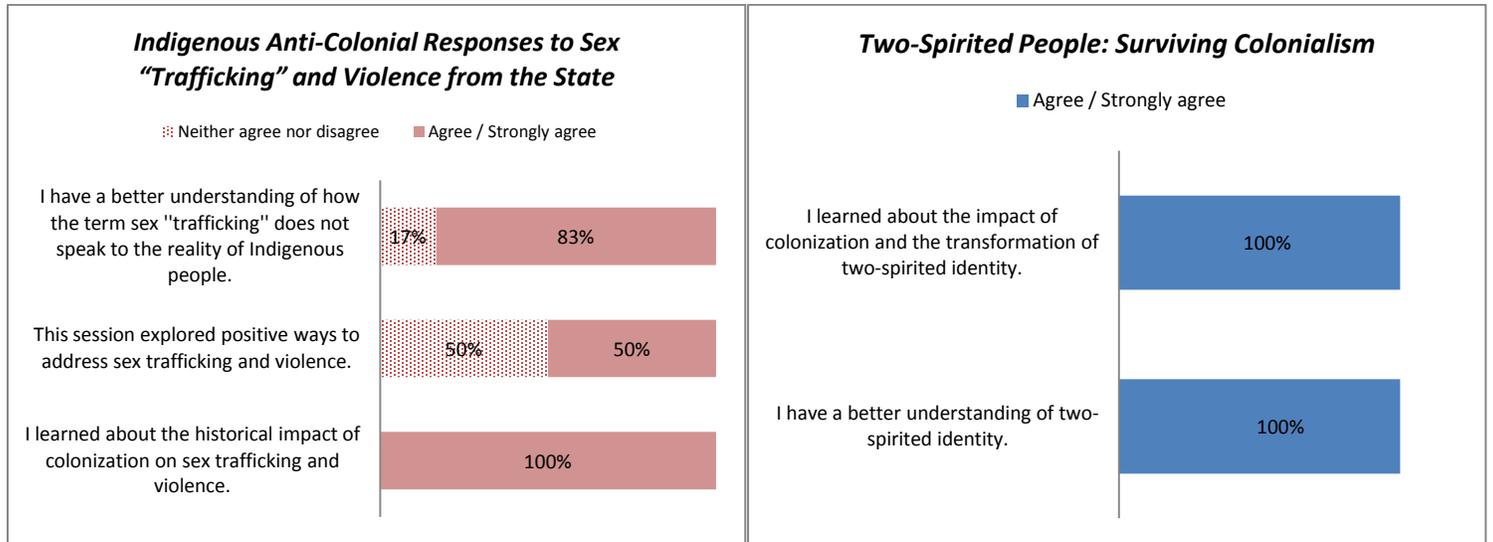


### Event Feedback from Participants

The Pow-wow cultural celebration was rated as well organized event that served as a wonderful introduction to Aboriginal traditions and culture (88%) and a good networking opportunity (75%).

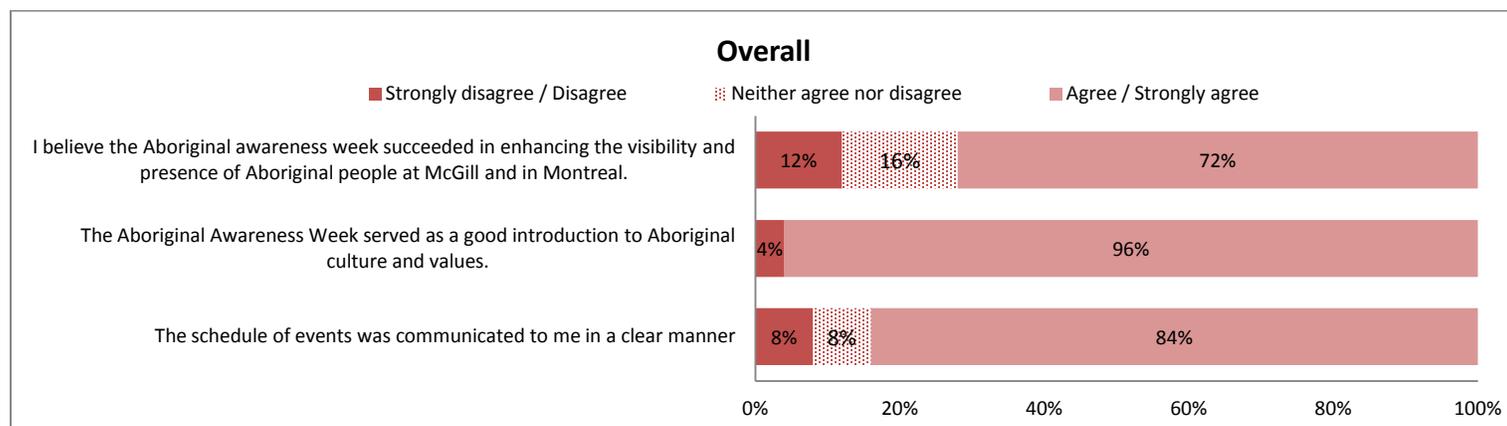


Workshops and activities for the McGill community were also favorably rated. The graphs below outline responses from different events based on pre-identified learning outcomes for participants. Overall, participants learned about the historical impact of colonization on sex trafficking and violence, two-spirited identity, how Aboriginal communities are successfully reclaiming their language and the cultural significance of sweatlodges and stone carving.



## Overall Aboriginal Awareness Week Evaluation:

Overall 90% of respondents were positive about the Aboriginal Awareness Week programming and over 70% felt that event enhanced the visibility and presence of Aboriginal people at McGill and in Montreal.



## Sample Participant Comments:

- *There needs to be a greater Aboriginal presence on the McGill campus especially, and I thank all the organizers and contributors of this event for welcoming Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the McGill and Montreal community to taste the beginnings of what will hopefully become a very successful, annual tradition.*
- *Looking forward to next year and future activities throughout the year.*
- *This is a very important project to be continued every year. I feel it meets several objectives: Fostering inclusion on campus, education and community engagement.*

## Presenter Feedback

Presenters were contacted for a follow-up interview / email one week after the event. Presenters were asked to provide feedback on their experience, how it compares to other University events and suggestions for improving future Aboriginal Awareness Week programming. Below are key themes and excerpts from respondents.

Questions	Comments
What was your McGill Aboriginal Awareness Week experience like as a presenter / facilitator?	<p><i>Aboriginal Awareness Week is a well put-together interesting platform to address important topics and community networking.</i></p> <p><i>It was a great experience. Well organized and we had a great audience with good questions. The mediator did an excellent job at dividing up out time. The other panelists were very informative. I would gladly participate in another experience like this.</i></p>
How does it compare to other university awareness week experiences you've had in the past?	<p><i>Compares favorably with similar awareness weeks and distinguishes itself by a variety and pertinence of issues that are unique to the question.</i></p> <p><i>The programming was great and varied.</i></p> <p><i>I've never participated in anything like this before. This event was much better organized than my previous experiences and the audience was much better informed than the last audience I had as a panelist.</i></p>

**Future events:**

Both participants and presenters were asked to provide suggestions on how to improve future events.

**Areas of improvement:**

The most comment areas of improvement cited by respondents:

- more advertising
- increase local Aboriginal artists' presence at the Pow-wow
- co-ordination with student schedules (timing of events)
- increase time for discussion following events

**Ideas for next year:**

- **Cultural:**
  - Aboriginal film festival
  - Drama on culture and alienation
  - Drumming, mask carving, moccasin sewing, medicine bag making, dream catcher making, beading classes and quill work
  
- **Educational:**
  - Aboriginal history of Montreal, for example, from the original Hochelaga Village, to the James Bay Protests and the Oka Crisis, to Montreal's current urban aboriginal community.
  - An intergenerational panel on ecology.
  - Healing workshops
  - Introduction to an Aboriginal language.
  - Native traditions from many groups (Cree, Mohawk, Innu, etc.)
  - Sweatlodge or healing circle.