



## **Pick Your Path! March Break 2021 Final Report**

Pick Your Path! (PYP), a Branches Program, is an online learning and mentorship experience for youth. The purpose of PYP is to pique youth's interest in post-secondary education by giving exposure to various areas of study they are interested in, as well as providing a mentorship experience.

The Branches Program first facilitated Pick Your Path! in Summer 2020 with Indigenous participants from CÉGEP and University, and Indigenous McGill student mentors. After the success of the first cycle of PYP, the program was expanded to reach more students. The Branches team partnered with the Kahnawà:ke Education Center and the Cree School Board to reach Indigenous high school students that would like to be part of the program.

In this cycle of PYP, facilitated during March Break 2021, four Indigenous students attended 9 online sessions led by McGill Indigenous professors and students, as well as staff from different faculties. These sessions equipped the participants with the tools needed to make informed and empowered decisions about their education – and to pick their path!

Throughout the program, participants worked on their final project, whose goal was for them to trace a plan for their education and career path. To support them with their final project, PYP participants were paired with a mentor, an Indigenous McGill student; the mentor-mentee relationship involved not only working on the final project, but also sharing experiences regarding post-secondary education and studying at McGill.



### ***Participants and Mentors:***

In partnership with the Kahnawà:ke Survival School, the Kahnawà:ke Education Center, and the Cree School Board, 7 students were identified to participate in the program. We recruited Indigenous McGill students to be mentors, and after the application process, we selected them based on the participating students. Before the program started, we received notice that only 4 were able to participate due to their availability to take part in the program.

### ***Final Projects:***

PYP participants were required to complete a final project. The final project was an opportunity for participants to trace a plan for their education and career path. The project had two parts: a reflection piece, for which participants could use any medium they wanted to complete i.e. a PowerPoint, an art piece, essay, video; and an information piece, in which participants compiled all the important information of their CÉGEP and University of choice. Throughout week, they had the support of their mentor to complete their project.

Please follow this [link](#) to find the final projects of each participant.

### ***Conclusion:***

Overall, we are very happy with how this cycle of Pick Your Path! went. The group of participants was amazing - they asked insightful, thoughtful questions, and engaged in meaningful discussion with the speakers. When asked to provide feedback, the participants mentioned they felt more confident about the next steps of their educational path, therefore meeting our goal. We intend on keeping in touch with the participants once a year or when new program opportunities become available for them.



Likewise, the mentors shared that they not only enjoyed the mentoring experience, but they also learned from the participants reflections and experiences. We are confident that what we experienced through this cycle will inform and allow us to further improve the program.

Regarding the future of PYP, we are planning on continuing to expand the reach the program to reach Indigenous students from different educational levels. We are currently developing a cycle of PYP to be facilitated during Summer 2021 as well as a cycle for CÉGEP students to be facilitated throughout the 2021-2022 academic year. They will involve both online and in-person activities, if permitted. Furthermore, we are working to gain institutional support and sustainable funding for the program.



**Thank you for being part of Pick Your Path!**