



# Internal Dialogue Summary

Indigenous Citizenship Verification in  
Employment-Related Opportunities

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Office of Indigenous Initiatives

McGill University

April 27, 2023



Three (3) sessions were held (March 30, April 11 and April 14, 2023)

Two(2) online and one(1) in-person

Each session had 9-12 participants

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### **Internal Dialogue Sessions**



- Indigenous faculty and staff positions are inextricably linked to student experience (safer learning spaces, culturally relevant and meaningful experiences, mentorship, representation, overall institutional transformation)
- A form of redress (righting past wrongs)

*"Honesty is healing. Dishonesty is harmful."*

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**Why Hire 'Indigenous' & what do Indigenous Peoples Expect that an "Indigenous hire" bring to McGill?**



- Lived Experience as an Indigenous Person (*what can't be learned in 'books'?*)
- Cultural knowledge specific to their Indigenous Nation/Community (*what do you carry in your bundle?*)
- Understanding of Indigenous Nation-to-Nation protocols
- Disconnected versus Reconnecting versus Reconnected (*Have you done the work?*)
- Kinship/community relationships (*Where did you get your teachings? Who are/were your teachers?*)
  - *How do we define 'community'? Does the community extend from/is recognized by the Indigenous Nation? Is there evidence of Indigenous Nation-Nation recognition (e.g. Cree and Metis communities in prairie provinces)*

**Why Hire 'Indigenous' & what do Indigenous Peoples Expect that an "Indigenous hire" bring to McGill?**



- The importance and also limitations of sharing stories about ourselves. Sharing stories about ourselves in relation to others, the land, etc. is an ongoing way we enact our governance. It is how we relay information about lived experience and cultural knowledge, etc.; however, stories can also be learned, stolen, etc.
- Limitations of colonial institution- it isn't our job to evaluate what a specific community/nation says. It is our job to listen, respect and adhere to their respective citizenship orders. This involves working with individuals and their communities.

**How do we 'verify'?**



- Documentation is another way of verifying
  - Not always reliable (e.g. some settlers do have status cards)
  - Not always accessible

Non-Indigenous Peoples should not be 'verifying'

Importance of having Indigenous representation on hiring committees (2 is ideal)- the importance of local community representation

There should be standardized questions asked of Indigenous candidates by Indigenous peoples on hiring committees

Verification should start at the moment an individual comes into relations with McGill (encouraging self-location statement with CV)

**How do we 'verify'?**



**This work will require additional resources:**

- community engagement
- Indigenous faculty/staff recruiter? (Indigenous led pre-screening?)
- Who will look after this policy and ensure it is carried out?
- A collective effort (standing working group)-
- Educational component (to McGill community and beyond)
- Personal data (how do we collect documentation, secure storage, privacy, how long does McGill keep the data? How is it destroyed/returned when the individual is no longer employed with McGill?)

**Other points about  
'verification'**



Indigenous specific positions (preferential hiring versus regular position that an Indigenous person happens to apply to)- Same treatment. What does it mean if a person can turn on/turn off their 'indigeneity'?- is that even possible?

Indigenous hiring needs to be aligned with Truth and Reconciliation and principles of EDI. It also needs to privilege constitutional rights of FNIM given we are located in Canada.

The need to consider past public claims tethered to academic/administrative work (preventing shifting back)

**Other points about  
'verification'**



## Beginning to Envision a Process

### Indigenous Position Development

- Involve Indigenous Peoples from **multiple** units/communities in position development
- Ensure Indigenous representation on hiring committees
- Work with OII

### Advertisement

- Specific Language Used
- Link to Calls to Action & McGill Verification Policy

### Application

- Encourage Indigenous Self-Location Statement in Application file
- Pre-screen with Indigenous representatives
- Submit verification Documentation

### Interview/Visit

- Implement standardized questions re: Indigeneity to be asked during interview
- Schedule time for candidate to meet with Indigenous colleagues in Faculties & OII

### Post-Interview

- Weaving it all together! :
- Self location statement
- Verification Documentation
- Interview Questions
- Visits with Indigenous colleagues



The new policy should apply to all employees in circumstances where:

- Indigenous lived experience is central to the job (e.g. Indigenous student counsellor)
- The claim to indigeneity is inextricably linked to the academic conduct of the individual (previous and current (e.g. did the person carry out their research as an Indigenous person? Has their claim to indigeneity always been key to their scholarly pursuits? Ask oneself, "Could you ethically do what you do, **the way you do it** if you were not an Indigenous academic?" Indigenous academics build academic 'capital')
- Where there has been/is a clear advantage/opportunity attached to the individual's indigeneity (e.g. research grants, professional awards, etc.

### **Current Employees Self-Identifying as Indigenous**



Opinions range on this topic (from dismissal to reassignment)

-Is there clear evidence of dishonesty/academic conduct? (METL or Bourassa, etc.)

-Is it a case of being tenuous (self-identification based on locating a long ago Indigenous ancestor?)

How could we potentially employ principles of restorative justice?

**What if existing person does not meet new policy?**



- Policy development (USask, Wilfrid Laurier, Queen's)
- Some individuals spoke about people no longer in their positions (Concordia examples)
- All policies do request some form of documentation to verify specific claims

**What are other universities doing?**