

# McGill University

## ONKWEHONWE ADVISORY COUNCIL

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### **PREAMBLE**

The McGill University Onkwehonwe<sup>1</sup> Advisory Council has been created a result of McGill University's advancement in its efforts to implement the [52 Calls to Action](#), resulting from the [2017 Provost's Task Force Report](#) on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education.

As McGill continues to enact its commitment to Reconciliation, it recognizes the importance of learning and respecting the principles and values of Indigenous governance in a meaningful and effective way.

This initiative stems from Task Force's Call to Action #51, which calls upon McGill to, "create a formal Indigenous Advisory Board or Indigenous Education Council with a defined mandate, whose composition includes community leaders and stakeholders at McGill."

The initiative is also linked to Call #22, which calls on McGill to establish mechanisms that provide Indigenous community representation in University governance.

The establishment of the Onkwehonwe Advisory Council is not intended to prevent members of the University's academic community from ethically engaging in scholarship and teaching on Indigenous issues, nor derogate from or supersede the University's Policy on Academic Freedom.

For the purposes of this initiative, consistent with McGill's *Policy on Indigenous Membership/Citizenship Validation*, "Indigenous" means Aboriginal persons as defined in the Canadian Constitution, that is, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, and American Indian or Alaskan Native persons who are enrolled members of federally recognized Indian tribes whose reservation boundaries or traditional territories are intersected by the Canada-United States border.

#### **MANDATE**

The mandate of the OAC is to contribute to the empowerment of Indigenous peoples by providing advice and recommendations to McGill's leadership and governance bodies, on matters related to Indigenous education and McGill's relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

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<sup>1</sup> The word *Onkwehonwe* is used as a title in place of the English term *Indigenous* with the intent of further grounding the work of this Council in Kanién'kehaka (Mohawk) culture and as a concrete demonstration of McGill University's respect for Indigenous nationhood, in particular of the Kanién'kehaka Kahnawakeròn (Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke), on whose land the University is located. For clarity, in Kanien'keha (Mohawk) and in other Haudenosaunee languages, this term refers to the original peoples of the Americas.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The OAC is comprised of faculty members, staff, students, and community advisors who may or may not be McGill students or employees and who are actively committed to embodying and employing, in their work and relations with each other and with the wider McGill community, the values of the core cultural teachings of Ka'nikonhri:io (The Good Mind) and the Seven Grandfather Teachings.<sup>2</sup>

## MEMBERSHIP

Seats are designated to allow for representation on the Council as follows:

- six Kanién'kehaka, comprised of one traditional (longhouse) and one elected council representative from each of the communities of Kahnawà:ke, Kanasatake and Akwesasne
- a representative of the First Nations Education Council
- a representative of the Grand Council of the Crees
- a representative of Makivvik
- a representative of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation
- a First Nations, Inuit or Métis student recommended by the Provost<sup>3</sup>
- a First Nations, Inuit or Métis faculty member recommended by the Provost<sup>4</sup>
- a First Nations, Inuit or Métis resident of Montréal recommended by the Montreal Indigenous Community Network
- the Associate Provost (Indigenous Initiatives), Ex-Officio and Chairperson (non-voting)

From time to time and as needed, other members of the University community, including international experts, possessing relevant knowledge or information required to give context to issues under consideration by the Council shall be invited to participate in Council meetings or to provide input for Council's consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> The Haudenosaunee concept of the Good Mind is a teaching that encourages us to be aware of our thoughts and their intent as a way of achieving kind and loving ways of being. The Seven Grandfather teachings are a set of Anishinaabe guiding principles based on the concept of abiding by moral respect for all living things.

<sup>3</sup> Selection of the student representative may be done in consultation with relevant student associations and/or the Indigenous Affairs Committee (SSMU) and the Indigenous Student Alliance.

<sup>4</sup> The Indigenous faculty member representative will be appointed by the Provost following the solicitation and review of nominations submitted by the Deans.

Members shall be selected by each community, organization or administrative unit according to the process most appropriate to their structure and operations.

Community and non-McGill organizational representatives shall serve for a period of three years, and McGill faculty and student representatives shall serve for a period of one year, commencing August 1<sup>st</sup> - the membership of the OAC will be reviewed on an annual basis and communities and organizations will be contacted to ascertain whether there are any changes in their representation, and new McGill faculty and student representatives will be appointed.

Should any voting member be absent from two consecutive meetings, the Chair will request clarification of the member's intent to remain on the Council. In the absence of a timely and satisfactory response, and at the Chair's discretion, the member may be removed from Council.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The OAC as a whole has a responsibility to advise McGill in a manner that is representative of the needs and interests of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and students at McGill, and is specifically established to:

- a) provide advice and recommendations on strategic direction to the University's leadership and governance bodies related to the advancement of Indigenous education;
- b) provide advice to the University's leadership and governance bodies on policies and procedures affecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, faculty and staff; and,
- c) provide advice to academic and administrative units on programs, research initiatives<sup>5</sup>, courses and services that have a bearing on Indigenous education at McGill University.

In addition to the collective responsibilities listed above, each Council member shall be responsible for forwarding information and communicating OAC's recommendations to their respective organizations.

McGill will provide administrative support to the OAC through the OII.

For those Council members who are not McGill employees or students, the University, through the OII, shall provide honoraria for participation in meetings and pay for those members' travel, meals and any accommodation expenses incurred in attending meetings, consistent with the University's established rates and accounting practices.

## **MEETINGS**

The Associate Provost (Indigenous Initiatives) shall serve as Chairperson of all OAC meetings.

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<sup>5</sup> This does not pertain to individual research programs and projects related to Indigenous education of members of the McGill community.

The OAC shall meet on a biannual basis, with the schedule determined by the Chairperson and announced in August of each year, with additional special meetings scheduled from time to time and online consultations with Council members on an as needed basis.

All meetings shall be in person and held either at McGill's downtown campus or in Kahnawà:ke.

A quorum of seven voting members will be required to carry out official decision making.

### *Agenda*

All proposed agenda items are to be submitted to the Chairperson at least two weeks in advance of scheduled meetings and an agenda will be developed by the Chairperson, who will determine the order of discussion and priority of agenda items. Four weeks prior to the scheduled meeting, the Chairperson will distribute a call for agenda items to OAC members, Deans and members of senior administration.

Meeting agendas and supporting materials will be distributed at least one week prior to scheduled meetings, with the agenda for all OAC meeting including at least the following items:

- a) Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen (Opening)
- b) Adoption of the agenda
- c) Housekeeping, including approval of previous meeting minutes
- d) Formal agenda items
- e) Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen (Closing)

### *Meeting Format and Decision-Making*

Consensus will be the prime method of deciding all matters, according to the following procedures:

1. The matter to be decided is introduced by the Chairperson;
2. The floor is opened, and the Chairperson facilitates discussion;
3. After adequate time is allowed for discussion, the Chairperson proposes a statement on the matter that reflects the consensus of the Council;
4. The Chairperson determines if all Council members are in agreement;
5. Members who disagree with the statement must explain why they object and provide an alternative for the Council to consider, or their willingness to nonetheless accept the general agreement on the matter in the interest of achieving consensus;
6. Members who abstain from the statement must provide reasoning for their abstention; and,

7. After discussion is complete, the Chairperson determines if consensus has been reached.

When consensus cannot be achieved, a vote will take place according to the following procedures:

1. The Chairperson declares that a vote is required;
2. A motion is proposed and seconded by voting members of Council;
3. The Chairperson calls for a vote on the motion by show of hands; and,
4. The agreement of two-thirds or more voting members shall be required to pass a motion.

Should the motion fail, it will be closed until the following OAC meeting where it may be re-introduced for discussion accompanied by new facts or additional information.

The OII will ensure that the minutes of OAC meetings and statements of consensus and results of votes, recommendations and all related materials are archived and available to Council members, and that Council members are informed of the outcome and result of the recommendations that the OAC makes to the University.

#### **AMENDMENT**

This Terms of Reference may be amended in writing by the Chairperson after consultation and consensual agreement of the Council's members. If the proposed change relates to the Council's mandate or responsibilities and stands to intersect with matters governed by existing institutional bodies, those bodies must be consulted in advance.

Ratified: **DRAFT 8.3**  
**10/12/25**