

Wednesday, March 1st, 2023

Office of Indigenous Initiatives
Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)
Peterson Hall, Suite 200
3460 McTavish Street Montreal, Quebec H3A 0E6

Ai'i, Aloha, Auneen, Bonjour, Boojhoo, Hello, Kwé, Kwey, Kia Ora, Me'taleyn, Oki,
Shé:kon, Tansi, Wachiya!

Greetings Indigenous Students at McGill,

We are writing to invite you to participate in a process that is underway related to the development of a policy on Indigenous citizenship verification at our institution. This initiative responds to McGill's 52 Calls to Action towards Truth and Reconciliation.

The Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) has begun the foundational work towards the development of a policy related to Indigenous citizenship verification at McGill, that will allow the university to meet its responsibility to ensure opportunities meant for Indigenous students reach them. This process will follow two streams: (1) staff and faculty hiring and; (2) students (related to accessing grants and opportunities intended for Indigenous students). "Citizenship" as opposed to "Identity" signals a move away from Indigenous identification based solely on self-identification (individualism) and/or genealogy (extractivism) towards collectively held rights and responsibilities based on active forms of kinship and nationhood (self-identification is about who I claim to be; a requirement of citizenship is about who claims me). This Indigenous-led process will be grounded in the principles of transparency, respect, accountability, kindness, and inclusivity. We seek to find a balance between ensuring we are preserving the integrity of Indigenous spaces and opportunities while taking into account the complexity of Indigenous realities. Both streams are being coordinated by the OII to ensure there is internal coherence and coordination.

Academic and public institutions across Canada are experiencing an alarming rate of fraudulent claims of Indigenous identity by individuals. The reasons for this vary, and can include dishonest self-identification to access opportunities intended for Indigenous people, distant archival ancestors, and family lore. Misrepresentation is an extension of settler colonial violence, which can have serious consequences on students' personal wellbeing, sense of cultural safety, as well as undermines Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and decision-making power.

As a first step, we are convening a working group, tasked with developing policies and procedures related to Indigenous citizenship verification. We are seeking to recruit Indigenous student representatives to serve on this working group, recognizing that Indigenous student leadership and advice is paramount to this process as it unfolds. To begin, we are holding information sessions in March 2023.

As a student, you can participate in this process in several ways:

- Participate as a student representative on the working group being formed (co-chaired by Celeste Pedri-Spade and Thomasina Phillips). We are seeking **2 undergraduate students** and **2 graduate students**. The composition will also include 2 faculty members and 2 community representatives. Student positions on this working group will receive an honorarium for their time. Contact thomasina.phillips@mcgill.ca, please self-locate and describe your interest in being a part of this working group.
- Stay informed about the process at McGill by attending an information session for Indigenous students held by OII. Register here: <https://forms.office.com/r/y8ptcP5h96>
 - Undergraduate students (in-person)- Thursday, March 30th, 2023, 3:00-4:30pm
 - Undergraduate students (in-person)- Friday, March 31st, 2023, 12:00-1:30pm
 - Graduate students (zoom)- Monday, March 27th, 2023, 1:00-2:30pm
 - Graduate students (zoom)- Friday, March 31st, 2023, 10:00-11:30am
- Attend the National Indigenous Citizenship Forum (hosted by First Nations University of Canada) on March 21st and 22nd. To participate online for free, visit: <https://www.fnuniv.ca/about-us/niusla/>
- Stay informed about this issue by viewing the following resources:
 - **Indigenous Voices on Indigenous Identity What was Heard Report**. National Indigenous Identity Forum March 2022. First Nations University. National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association:
https://www.fnuniv.ca/wp-content/uploads/Indigenous-Voices-on-Indigenous-Identity_National-Indigenous-Identity-Forum_Report_March-22_June-22-FINAL.pdf
 - **'GII-IKIDONAANIWAN' 'It Has Been Said'** Queen's University Indigenous Identity Project Final Report. First Peoples Group:

https://www.queensu.ca/indigenous/sites/oiiwww/files/uploaded_files/FPG%20Queens%20Report%20Final%20July%207.pdf

- **Building Trust and Accountability: Report on Eligibility in the Indigenous Screen Sector.** *Archipel Research and Consultation:*
https://iso-bea.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Building-Trust-and-Accountability-FINAL_compressed.pdf

Input from the Indigenous community at McGill along with local Indigenous communities and organizations is essential. Through these information sessions and future engagements with key stakeholders such as you, we hope to proceed in this work in a good way. We are eager to hear your ideas, insights, and any questions you may have about this initiative.

Sincerely,



Celeste Pedri-Spade
Associate Provost, Indigenous Initiatives
McGill University



Thomasina Phillips
Associate Director, Indigenous Student Success
McGill University