

# McGill Institute for the Study of Canada

## Strategic Plan 2021/22-2023/24

MAY 2021



**McGill**

McGill Institute for the Study of Canada  
L'Institut d'études canadiennes de McGill



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# 1. MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

During the first months of 2021, the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC) held its first ever strategic planning exercise, with the assistance of professional facilitator Christine Pietschmann from Paradigm Labs Inc. This exercise took the form of a series of virtual strategic planning meetings involving MISC's staff and board members. The present strategic plan is a product of these meetings and of a series of online polls with participants that helped improve the final product.

More than 25 years after the creation of MISC, this three-year strategic plan outlines the vision, mission, values, and strategic priorities of our Institute. Over the next three years, we will return regularly to this plan to ensure we stay the course and fulfil the promise of this first MISC strategic plan. Although ambitious, this plan is realistic and crafted with concrete implementation challenges in mind. I am certain this strategic plan will help us advance MISC's vision, which is to foster a broader and deeper understanding of Canada.

As we wrap up this strategic planning exercise, I thank Christine Pietschmann for her outstanding work, which was instrumental in this success. I would also like to thank our board members, who devoted many hours to various meetings despite their busy schedules. MISC is blessed to have such a dynamic, engaged, and committed board of trustees. I also thank the MISC staff, who both organized and participated in this strategic planning process. As a Director, I am lucky to have such a great team of professional and dedicated staff. Finally, I thank Dean Antonia Maioni and the rest of the administrative leadership team at the Faculty of Arts and, more generally, at McGill University, for the support they have shown for MISC over the years. We are a successful Institute in large part because of the support we have received from board members, staff, and administrative leadership, and this strategic plan should help us become even more successful in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Daniel Béland

Director, McGill Institute for the Study of Canada

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The MISC strategic plan for 2021/22 – 2023/24 positions the Institute for the future by updating the vision and mission, articulating the values, and setting out three strategic priorities that will move the organization towards achieving its vision.

### VISION:

Foster a broader and deeper understanding of Canada.

### MISSION:

Enrich Canadian society by:

- convening conversations about matters that are important to Canadians,
- educating and engaging students to be active participants in Canada's future,
- promoting interdisciplinary scholarship about Canada.

### DIFFERENTIATORS:

Located within McGill, a major international university in Montreal, MISC is uniquely positioned due to its:

- subject matter focus
- reputation and longevity
- quality of McGill students
- capacity to organize events and offer courses in both official languages

### VALUES:

- Relevant
- Inclusive
- Informed

### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Public Outreach and Engagement: Convene events that offer meaningful conversations about Canada.
2. Undergraduate Teaching: Fortify our core program and recruit lecturers who will bring significant value to our curriculum and a positive impact on our students.
3. Research and Scholarship: Strengthen the focus on scholarship and interdisciplinary research about Canada.

### 3. VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

MISC's vision is to foster a *broader and deeper understanding of Canada*.

To support the achievement of this vision, MISC's mission is to enrich Canadian society in three primary ways. First, by *convening conversations* about matters that are important to Canadians. Second, by *educating and engaging students* to be active participants in Canada's future. Finally, by *promoting interdisciplinary scholarship* about Canada.

To fully enable the vision and mission MISC, faculty, staff and board members strive to engage in ways that are *informed, inclusive and relevant*, thereby reflecting and upholding the MISC values.

## 4. RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

MISC exists to foster a broader and deeper understanding of Canada. This vision compels us to further commit to the following:

### BILINGUALISM

MISC is committed to offer courses and organize public events in both official languages.

### RECONCILIATION

MISC is committed to supporting McGill's strategy of "*engaging and collaborating with Indigenous communities and their Elders to identify, explore and advance ideas, initiatives and plans that will embed Indigeneity in the life and activities of the University while seeking to enhance the presence and success of Indigenous students, faculty and staff at McGill.*"

### INCLUSION AND COMBATING RACISM

MISC is committed to supporting McGill's plan to fight racism and both "*acknowledge and seek to address the lasting effects of historic injustices that continue to challenge equal opportunities to access, and to succeed within, the McGill community.*"

# 5. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND KEY INITIATIVES

Our 2021-2024 strategic plan is made up of three strategic priorities. Focused on enriching Canadian society, these priorities will guide our programs and activities as we continue to work towards our vision of fostering a broader and deeper understanding of Canada.

## 1. PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

*Produce programming and convene events that offer meaningful conversations about Canada.*

The ability to engage audiences within and beyond McGill to explore important Canadian topics remains a key element of MISC's value proposition. Rethinking traditional approaches and formats will allow the Institute to welcome more people into these conversations, while building its reputation nationally and internationally. MISC will seek to build a larger community through two new key initiatives:

- **A new flagship event:** The Charles Bronfman Conversations will allow MISC to expand into new, larger audiences, delivering compelling content and increasing awareness of the Institution nationally and globally. At the same time, updating the ways in which it organizes conferences will enable MISC to leverage partnerships within and outside of McGill and deliver timely, multi-format conferences to traditional and new audiences.
- **Digital audience:** As part of an audience building strategy, MISC will explore ways to showcase research and scholarship and to engage in a more continuous way with interested online audiences.

**Issues to resolve:** The approach and timing for the Bronfman Conversations, and updated conference formats will be further developed as part of a MISC public outreach strategy. In addition, all public outreach will need to consider any residual post-pandemic concerns for the foreseeable future.

## 2. UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

*Fortify our core program and recruit lecturers who will bring significant value to our curriculum and a positive impact on our students.*

MISC benefits from excellent students and strengthening the core curriculum will help to ensure strong enrollment. This will be achieved through three initiatives:

- **Consolidate the Minor:** In 2020, the Minor in Canadian Studies (CANS) was extensively revised and MISC continues to host Minors in Indigenous Studies and Quebec Studies. To continue to increase enrollment MISC must secure more permanent teaching staff for foundational courses, while keeping elective courses relevant and timely by inviting visiting lecturers to engage with students. Integration of MISC research within the CANS Minor will enrich the program and provide opportunities to promote and showcase the work of scholars.
- **Reinstate the Major:** Adding the MISC Major back to the undergraduate programming will provide an opportunity to curate an expanded offering around key Canadian issues, while continuing to promote a multidisciplinary understanding of Canada.
- **Assess space for growth:** A foundational element of MISC's value proposition is the ability to bring people together. Having space that is fit for purpose matters a great deal. The current location is not ideal and leaves little room for growth. As MISC works to encourage dialogue around social and cultural concerns, having a space where students can gather for conversation becomes very important. The proposed future location on the former site of the Royal Victoria Hospital, while excellent, remains distant and uncertain. In order to achieve the growth intended by this strategic plan, a decision about space will need to be made. The two options being considered are improving the current space to the extent possible and managing growth or finding a new location for the next 5 - 10 years while the Royal Vic facility is being constructed.

**Issues to resolve:** Space and staffing remain significant concerns and potential barriers that could impede MISC's evolution. Fortifying a sense of community among students will be important post-pandemic, as will promoting the value of a MISC education in a potentially challenging economy.

### 3. RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

*Strengthen the focus on scholarship and interdisciplinary research about Canada.*

Establishing research and scholarship more prominently as a key priority for MISC will ensure continuity. This will be achieved through three initiatives:

- **Create a book series:** A joint venture between McGill-Queen's University Press and MISC, the launch of a book series directly supports MISC's vision and mission. Offering diverse and multi-disciplinary perspectives on the leading subjects Canadians care about, this series seeks to make foundational and current knowledge more accessible to informed citizens, practitioners, and students of Canada.
- **Appoint MISC Research Fellows:** MISC fellows participate in the life of the Institute, and contribute towards research, public events and administration. They also help guide its academic programming. Over the next three academic years, the number of MISC research fellows will be expanded, with the aim of integrating their work ever more within the public outreach and undergraduate teaching initiatives.
- **Establish a yearly graduate conference:** Launching in 2021, the Graduate Conference is expected to become an annual event. The conference will bring together graduate students in the humanities and social sciences. Students from diverse perspectives and deploying a range of methodologies will have the opportunity to present and discuss their work with faculty and peers. This will support interdisciplinary exchange and advance graduate students' progress in their research.

*Issues to Resolve:* There is work to do to integrate research and scholarship into public events and undergraduate teaching. This will enable MISC to more fully leverage and promote this important work.

## 6. HIGH-LEVEL THREE-YEAR PLAN

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
<b>Public Outreach &amp; Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary MISC conference</li> <li>• Plan launch of the Charles Bronfman Conversations</li> <li>• Develop and launch a digital engagement plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize re-imagined conference(s) with responsible stewardship commitments in mind</li> <li>• Launch the Charles Bronfman Conversations as Flagship event</li> <li>• Build digital audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iterate updated conference formats</li> <li>• Launch second annual Charles Bronfman Conversations event</li> </ul>
<b>Undergraduate Teaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and approve plan for teaching staff</li> <li>• Develop and approve plan for MISC space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinstate MISC major</li> <li>• Strengthen teaching capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poll students to evaluate the Minor</li> <li>• Evaluate class content with regard to responsible stewardship commitments</li> </ul>
<b>Research &amp; Scholarship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch book series</li> <li>• Double the number of research Fellows from 4 to 8</li> <li>• Secure visiting scholars for 2021-22</li> <li>• Launch annual Graduate student conference</li> <li>• Articulate clear goals for Integrating research into teaching and public outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select and promote books for series, with an eye towards issues related to responsible stewardship commitments</li> <li>• Secure visiting scholars for 2022-23</li> <li>• Decide on possible creation of Fulbright Chair</li> <li>• Expand annual Graduate student conference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select and promote books for series</li> <li>• Secure visiting scholars for 2023-24</li> </ul>

