



## Question

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**TO:** Senate

**QUESTION FROM:** Senators Réginal Labonté and Madeline Wilson

**RESPONSE FROM:** Senator Christopher Manfredi, Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)

**SUBJECT:** Question Regarding Indigenous Curriculum Content and Equitable Recruitment

**MEETING DATE:** November 21, 2018

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**PREAMBLE:** The Provost's Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education was first proposed by Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) Manfredi in 2015, following the publication of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) and a statement from Universities Canada which identifies Indigenous education as a priority for postsecondary institutions. Through the Office of the Provost, McGill University sought to pursue a "renewed commitment to equity and inclusion within the Office of the PVPA"<sup>1</sup>, and to explore the opportunities of partnerships between the University and Indigenous communities aiming towards reconciliation<sup>2</sup>.

In September 2016, the Task Force and its five working groups were officially created, "animated by recognition of Indigenous history, contemporary presence, and ways of knowing and learning; and by reconciliation, in heeding the TRC's calls to action, specifically through educational and institutional efforts aimed at redressing historical legacies of injustice and restoring relationships with Indigenous peoples."<sup>3</sup>

Two years later, in 2017, the Task Force published its Final Report where 52 "Calls to Actions" are presented, each of them identified as being feasible in the immediate, medium or long term. The "Calls to Actions" are divided into 5 categories: Student Recruitment and Retention, Physical Representation and Symbolic Recognition, Academic Programs and Curriculum, Research and the Academic Complement and Building Capacity and Human Resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Provost's Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education. *Final Report*. 2017. [URL](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> "Indigenous Success". Office of the Provost and Vice Principal (Academic) Website. [URL](#)

Following the Task Force, the Office of the Provost committed to “put in place a plan to implement recommended actions, and to ensure that we deliver on our commitment to Indigenous success.”<sup>4</sup>

Call to Action 39 calls on McGill University to integrate Indigenous Content into all its Faculties and Schools Curriculum. These Faculties and Schools were expected by the Task Force to present a plan to the Provost in the academic year 2017-2018 in order to determine how to implement that recommendation<sup>5</sup>.

Call to Action 45 calls on McGill University to “establish and support active, innovative and equitable recruitment strategies that respect and support Indigenous peoples” through multiple ways, including mandatory trainings, community reaching and recruiting tenure-track candidates from the University’s pool of Indigenous graduate students<sup>6</sup>.

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**QUESTION:**

1. What progress has McGill University made in realizing Calls to Action 39 and 45 of the Provost’s Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education?
2. Are there any Calls to Action detailed in the report that McGill University does not plan to pursue or has decided to postpone?

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**RESPONSE:**

Thank you for your questions, Senators Labonté and Wilson.

With respect to Call to Action 39 of the final report of the Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education, which entreats McGill’s Faculties and Schools to incorporate Indigenous content into curriculum and programs, a number of our Faculties and Schools have indeed identified opportunities to integrate Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies into their academic programs.

As the text of Call to Action 39 indicates, “there are mandatory courses or course modules with Indigenous content in the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Education, the School of Social Work in the Faculty of Arts, and the Schools of Nursing and School of Medicine in the Faculty of Medicine”. In addition to those more formal requirements, the need for Indigenous content is addressed in other ways, such as, for example, through the Faculty of Medicine’s longstanding Indigenous Health Curriculum Committee. A resource and course-material planning initiative led by Teaching and Learning Services and McGill’s Indigenous Education Advisor will offer support to University teachers across disciplines and we are also developing a network of local

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Provost’s Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education. *Final Report*. 2017. [URL](#)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

Indigenous facilitators who are able to further support Faculties and departments in this regard.

In addition to the inclusion of Indigenous content in more broadly defined programs, the Faculty of Arts offers a minor in Indigenous Studies, the Faculty of Education offers ground-breaking BEd programs designed for and delivered in Indigenous communities, and the School of Continuing Studies offers a range of certificate programs specifically for Indigenous learners.

Moreover, it is evident in discussions with Faculty leaders, in recent efforts to recruit specialists in Indigenous studies across a wide range of disciplines, the Faculties' annual budget planning exercises, and in fundraising priorities identified by the Deans, that there is genuine commitment to responding to this and other Calls to Action.

It should be noted, of course, that our capacity to address this particular Call is dependent in part on the expertise of our teaching Faculty. In order to incorporate Indigenous content into curriculum and programs, we must have Faculty members with the capacity to do so. This capacity is emerging and the University is working toward ongoing growth to establish and maintain a robust curriculum tied to Indigenous histories, languages, knowledges, and approaches to health, justice, discovery, teaching and learning.

Earlier this term, the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) granted six exceptional licenses to recruit new faculty members in the areas of Indigenous Health and Indigenous Languages, Education, and Governance. In addition to these six licenses, which should bring new professors to McGill over the next two years, Faculties have recently successfully recruited new professors in Law, Science, Arts, Agricultural and Environmental Science, and Education. These new professors were welcomed to the University earlier this fall in a ceremony led by Bear Clan Matron, Tewakierahkwa, and attended by Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty, staff and students.

The recommendations of Call to Action 45 have informed the processes by which new faculty members have been and will be recruited. Specifically, search committees are provided with support and training to ensure inclusive and equitable hiring processes that attract excellent candidates and welcome them to McGill as the site and home of their academic careers.

Indigenous faculty members may have particular needs and goals tied to land- and community-based research and education. The Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) is therefore working with Faculties to recognize and anticipate these goals and needs in recruitment

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and retention efforts. We are examining closely the teaching, research, and service supports and expectations for Indigenous academic colleagues, so that these can be established in an equitable manner that encourages their full flourishing and success.

There are no Calls to Action identified in the final report of the Task Force that McGill will not address.

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