



# Question

TO: Senate

FROM: Claire Stewart Kanigan, Student Senator

SUBJECT: Question Regarding Support of Indigenous Access McGill

MEETING DATE: January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014

**PREAMBLE:** Whereas "[t]he Principal's Task Force on Diversity, Excellence and Community Engagement seeks to increase the number of qualified Aboriginal students gaining admission to, and excelling in all programs at McGill University,"<sup>1</sup>

Whereas Indigenous Access McGill is a "McGill support program for First Nations and Inuit students in Social Work, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Dietetics and Speech and Language Pathology," as well as a channel for "[Indigenous students] to get together with other First Nations and Inuit students . . . to support each other"<sup>2</sup> and be supported by a team of mentors, advisors, and tutors,

Whereas Indigenous Access McGill was instrumental in developing a summer "cultural immersion" field studies course targeted at Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Social Work, Medicine, Anthropology, and Law which aims to "enhance relationships between Native professionals and the communities they may serve,"<sup>3</sup>

Whereas Indigenous Access McGill's operation has depended on grant funding since its inauguration in 2007, and that funding has not been renewed as of 2013,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mcgill.ca/applying/keyword/Aboriginal%20Applicants>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mcgill.ca/socialwork/students/aboriginal>

<sup>3</sup> <http://publications.mcgill.ca/reporter/2010/06/another-way-of-knowing/>

<sup>4</sup> The Faculty of Arts has dedicated funds to the salaries of the Project Coordinator, Student Support Coordinator and the Academic Associate for the 2013-14 academic year to ensure the continuation of the program while the University searches for sustainable, long-term funding. However, this funding has not been confirmed to be a long-term means of support for these positions.

**QUESTION:** How does McGill intend to build its institutional commitment to creating a welcoming and supportive campus environment for current and prospective Indigenous students?

How does McGill plan to support the continued operation and growth of Indigenous Access McGill, and would internal funding be considered?



## On-Campus Support/Programming

First Peoples' House (established in 1997). The First Peoples' House serves as a residence, gathering place and resource centre where activities such as the annual Pow-Wow, community dinners, social activities, weekly soup and bannock lunches and guest speaker presentations take place. The First Peoples' House also offers psycho-social supports such as adjustment to campus life, Indigenous spiritual support, social networking, celebrating achievement and sustaining a sense of community. Early orientation for Aboriginal students to facilitate the transition to Montreal and to McGill. One-on-one academic advising (through the Aboriginal Student Associate).

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the intellectual diversity of the University by bringing excellent students from under-represented groups to McGill.

This being said, the financial climate for higher education in Quebec remains difficult. The allocation of permanent funding to Aboriginal Affairs in 2013-14 clearly demonstrates McGill's very strong commitment to outreach, access and support for Aboriginal students.