

**POLICY PAPER**

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Indigenous Students

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## Table of Contents

<b>Contributions</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Files From</i>	2
<i>With Focus Group Contributions From</i>	2
<i>Collaborations</i>	2
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Respect and Recognition</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Access to Education</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Community</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Support and Accessibility to Support</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Support for Current and Future Indigenous Students</i>	15
<i>Support for Indigenous Students with Dependents</i>	15
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Transferring Credits</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Academics</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Curriculum</i>	19
<i>Diversity of Indigenous Knowledge</i>	22
<b>Financing Education</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Accessing Funding</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Transportation</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Policy Statement</b>	<b>32</b>

## Introduction

It is important that Indigenous students are supported throughout their studies at McMaster University, in a variety of ways. Approximately 500 Full-Time Indigenous students are enrolled at McMaster University<sup>1</sup>, and it is important that any undue barriers to education are removed to ensure that this number is growing.

Indigenous students have unique and diverse needs, and many pursue post-secondary education at a variety of different life stages. This policy outlines principles, concerns, and recommendations under key sections including: respect and recognition, access to services, support, financing education, accessing funding, transportation and more.

For the purposes of this policy, an Indigenous student will be defined as:

- Any McMaster Students Union (MSU) member who identifies as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, in Canada.
  - First Nations may include status and non-status Indigenous individuals, as defined by the Indian Act<sup>2</sup>

## Acronyms

ISP: Indigenous Studies Program, an academic department within McMaster University

ISS: Indigenous Student Services, a student support network within the department of Student Affairs at McMaster University

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<sup>1</sup> Report. McMaster University. <https://ira.mcmaster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Final-Draft-SMA-Report-Back-Nov.-24-2016-SF.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> "Non-Status Indians," Government of Canada; Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada; Communications Branch, September 03, 2012, , accessed February 20, 2017, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014433/1100100014437>.

## Respect and Recognition

Principle: Land acknowledgement is an important first step in decolonization and reconciliation.

Concern: Indigenous land is not widely acknowledged at events, services, activities, and meetings.

Recommendation: McMaster University should make it a practice to recognize traditional Indigenous land usage when hosting events, activities, and Senate & Board of Governors meetings.

Recommendation: McMaster University should position the Haudenosaunee & Anishinaabe flags permanently on campus in recognition of the intrinsic Indigenous culture and land on which it participates in and resides on.

Recommendation: A "Dish with One Spoon" flag should be erected as it symbolizes the pre-colonial Wampum Treaty.

Students, settlers, Indigenous people, and institutions have a complex historical relationship with the land McMaster resides on. The City of Hamilton is part of the land that was subject to the Treaty 3 purchase between the Mississauga (Anishinaabe) First Nation and the Crown in 1792<sup>3</sup>. Traditionally, this land was shared between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe Nations through a pre-colonial treaty called the *Dish With One Spoon Wampum Treaty*. This is the treaty that is commonly cited when discussing land recognition, and indicates that the land and its resources are to be shared among all, taking only what is needed.<sup>4</sup> Part of the process of decolonization and reconciliation is recognizing the original owners of the land McMaster resides on. The University of Saskatchewan, for example, has begun to implement a land acknowledgement of the Métis Nations and the treaty that governs the land that The University of Saskatchewan is situated on.<sup>5</sup> Extensive consultation was done to determine the exact wording of this land acknowledgement to ensure it serves its purpose. McMaster should recognize the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee & Anishinaabe Nations at all important meetings and events on campus.

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<sup>3</sup> Zimmer, David. "Treaties." Ontario.ca. October 27, 2016. Accessed February 23, 2017. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/treaties>.

<sup>4</sup> "The Dish with One Spoon." Indian Time, August 5, 2010. Accessed February 19, 2017. <http://www.indiantime.net/story/2010/08/05/cultural-corner/the-dish-with-one-spoon/7510.html>.

<sup>5</sup> University Of Saskatchewan. "Land Recognition." Land Recognition - Aboriginal Initiatives - University of Saskatchewan. Accessed February 23, 2017. <https://aboriginal.usask.ca/land-recognition.php>.

This includes Senate meetings, Board of Governors meetings, convocations, and other presidential addresses. This land acknowledgement should be the result of extensive consultations with community members from Six Nations of the Grand River, ISP, as well as Indigenous student groups on campus. It should also be standardized and published with background education so other campus groups can access and use it. Background education should be permanently published on the McMaster website and other areas of campus so students have an understanding of why these steps to Indigenize the institution are being taken. This should also be an active process, such as education during Welcome Week.

The McMaster Indigenous Student Community Alliance (MISCA) currently uses the following land acknowledgement: McMaster University is situated on traditional Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe territory through the “Dish with One Spoon” wampum treaty.

Another step toward recognition that can be taken at McMaster is the raising of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe flags on McMaster’s campus. Currently, McMaster hosts the Canada flag and Ontario flag on the Burke Science Building field. Given that McMaster rests on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe Nations, these flags should be permanently raised on campus in a place of prominence, in consultation with community groups. Several universities around Canada have Indigenous flags permanently raised on campus, whose raising ceremonies were accompanied by education. Dalhousie University has the Mi’kmaq flag permanent raised on both its campuses,<sup>6</sup> and Mount Royal University has both the Métis and Treaty 7 flags raised on its campus as part of its Indigenous Strategic Plan<sup>7</sup>. McMaster should adopt similar policies and raise the flags of the Nations which traditionally lived on these territories. This should be accompanied by easily accessible education pertaining to the history and significance of these flags and the communities they represent.

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<sup>6</sup> Reeder, Matt. "Moving forward together: Dal permanently installs Mi'kmaq Grand Council Flag on Studley Campus." Dalhousie News. October 07, 2016. Accessed February 18, 2017. <https://www.dal.ca/news/2016/10/07/moving-forward-together--dal-permanently-installs-mikmaq-grand-c.html>.

<sup>7</sup> "Indigenous Strategic Plan 2016-2021." Indigenous Strategy - Mount Royal University - Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Accessed February 23, 2017. <https://www.mtroyal.ca/IndigenousMountRoyal/IndigenousStrategy/index.htm>.

## Access to Education

Principle: All Indigenous students should be aware of academic programs through the University.

Concern: Indigenous students are not fully aware of the academic programs provided by McMaster University.

Concern: There is only one student recruitment officer that works for ISP at McMaster.

Recommendation: The province of Ontario should develop comprehensive academic and social support programs to provide guidance to students as well as increase Indigenous student attendance at McMaster.

Recommendation: McMaster should hire dedicated Indigenous recruitment officers to help support students' transition to the Indigenous Studies Program, and McMaster University.

Recommendation: McMaster should increase the promotion of ISP and provide high schools across the province with additional information and resources to ensure they are well informed.

Recommendation: McMaster should enhance communication and collaboration/partnerships with Elders and Indigenous communities to improve awareness of programs regarding Indigenous education, and aid in the development of Indigenous-centered preparation courses and supports.

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada insisted that Canada's continued economic and social development and sustainability will largely depend on increased access to and success in post-secondary education (PSE) for Indigenous people.<sup>8,9</sup> Currently, Indigenous people are under-represented in PSE. While many young Indigenous people in Canada strive to attend PSE, only 39% of those between the ages of 25 and 64 have graduated from some form of PSE. For Indigenous individuals, only 20% under the age of 24 have pursued PSE, compared with 42% of non-Indigenous individuals.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Promising Practices: Increasing And Supporting Participation For Aboriginal Students In Ontario*. 2017. Ebook. 1st ed. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

<http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Promising%20Practices.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation. 2005. *Changing Course: Improving Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Millennium Research Note #2.

[https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf\\_files/millennium\\_2005-09\\_rn-2\\_en.pdf](https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf_files/millennium_2005-09_rn-2_en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

The benefits of post-secondary education are numerous – including a higher income, improved health outcomes, as well as increased likelihood of employment, engagement in civil life, and volunteering.<sup>11,12</sup> In the 2006 Canadian Census, only 35% of Indigenous people aged 15 years and older had obtained a post-secondary degree, certificate or diploma, compared with 51% for the non-Indigenous population.<sup>13</sup> Barriers such as low academic achievement and poor academic preparation; lack of interest, self-confidence, and motivation; and absence of role models who have attended post-secondary education, often preclude Indigenous people from pursuing PSE.<sup>14,15</sup> Thus, there is a need to address these barriers, and increase PSE participation and completion rates at McMaster.<sup>16</sup>

Indigenous students benefit from support programs providing them with aid throughout their high school career and university application processes. “Making Education Work” (MEW) is a comprehensive pilot program that has been implemented by the Province of Manitoba. MEW provides academic preparation, personal and family supports, career development and guidance, cultural development, and mentoring services at Indigenous high schools in Manitoba.<sup>17</sup> In particular, this student-centered program provides in-school supports and services to aid students in Grades 10-12 in meeting their graduation requirements and attending post-secondary education programs.<sup>18</sup> This program was developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities, and seeks to increase retention rates of Indigenous high school students, as well as increase graduation and post-secondary education enrollment rates.<sup>19</sup> Nearly all MEW students agreed that the program provided them with “skills to help me continue with my education”. A follow-up one year later indicated that MEW helped students obtain information on post-secondary information, and make their post-secondary education decisions. Students also reported that MEW helped them with “getting information on post-secondary options”, and MEW

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<sup>11</sup> *Promising Practices: Increasing And Supporting Participation For Aboriginal Students In Ontario*. 2017. Ebook. 1st ed. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

<http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Promising%20Practices.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> *Making Education Work Outcomes Report*. 2013. Ebook. 1st ed. Manitoba: Proactive Information Services Inc. [http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/mew/outcomes\\_report\\_2013.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/mew/outcomes_report_2013.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Orders, Shari and Cheryll Duquette. 2010. *Enhancing Access To Post-Secondary Education In Canada: An Exploration Of Early Intervention Initiatives In Selected Countries*. Ebook. 1st ed. Canadian Policy Research Networks. [http://www.cprn.org/documents/52017\\_EN.pdf](http://www.cprn.org/documents/52017_EN.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation. 2005. *Changing Course: Improving Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Millennium Research Note #2.

[https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf\\_files/millennium\\_2005-09\\_rn-2\\_en.pdf](https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf_files/millennium_2005-09_rn-2_en.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> *Promising Practices: Increasing And Supporting Participation For Aboriginal Students In Ontario*. 2017. Ebook. 1st ed. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

<http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Promising%20Practices.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation. 2005. *Changing Course: Improving Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Millennium Research Note #2.

[https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf\\_files/millennium\\_2005-09\\_rn-2\\_en.pdf](https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf_files/millennium_2005-09_rn-2_en.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> "Making Education Work". *Manitoba*. Accessed February 20. <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/mew>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

students were also more likely to be enrolled in a post-secondary program.<sup>20</sup> High schools should develop and implement support programs and services similar to MEW to help Indigenous students as they progress throughout high school and prepare for university.

There is currently a lack of awareness of academic programs at the University. This is largely the result of a lack of communication between prospective Indigenous students, high schools, and the University. Communication and promotion of PSE programs is imperative; research indicates that seats reserved for Indigenous students remain empty, necessitating enhanced communication strategies. McMaster should engage in outreach at the high school and community level, as well as increase communication with Indigenous elders regarding the availability of these seats.<sup>21</sup> McMaster should develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy that allows students to engage with administration as well as currently enrolled students at McMaster. Carleton University's Centre for Aboriginal Culture and Education's "Soar Like A Raven" Aboriginal Student Recruitment Tour travels across Ontario and Quebec to recruit First Nations, Inuit, and Metis students. In collaboration with the Aboriginal Post Secondary Information Program, this tour provides informative workshops to prospective students and first hand experiences from current Carleton students.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Sault College is currently working towards implementing a "role model Program" whereby current Indigenous students can converse via videoconference with high school students, providing them with information on the university experience.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, the lack of awareness of university academics and supports may be further addressed through hiring a Indigenous recruitment officer. Algoma University has a dedicated Indigenous recruitment officer who engages in career fairs, high schools and community events to recruit students. Likewise, Recruiters at Lakehead liaise with human resource officers on reserves to promote university programs and recruit students.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the University should collaborate with the Indigenous community to improve awareness of PSE, and ensure a supportive environment for Indigenous students; it is recommended that PSE institutions solicit the support of Elders to counsel students both on and off campus. Student recruitment should occur through networks created

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<sup>20</sup> *Making Education Work Outcomes Report*. 2013. Ebook. 1st ed. Manitoba: Proactive Information Services Inc. [http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/mew/outcomes\\_report\\_2013.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/mew/outcomes_report_2013.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> *Promising Practices: Increasing And Supporting Participation For Aboriginal Students In Ontario*. 2017. Ebook. 1st ed. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. <http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Promising%20Practices.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> "Soar Like A Raven" Student Recruitment - Centre For Aboriginal Culture And Education (CACE)". 2017. *Carleton University*. <https://carleton.ca/aboriginal/services/student-recruitment/>.

<sup>23</sup> *Promising Practices: Increasing And Supporting Participation For Aboriginal Students In Ontario*. 2017. Ebook. 1st ed. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. <http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Promising%20Practices.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

between post-secondary institutions, the Aboriginal Band Council, Elders, and local high schools.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Georgian College and the University of Toronto provide students with access to Indigenous Elders.<sup>26</sup> Programs that utilize the support of Elders and Indigenous community leaders on campus as counselors, or on reserves as advisors, encourage future student enrolment. Likewise, collaborating with Elders to develop Outreach programs are more likely to be successful.<sup>27</sup> These initiatives are crucial to improve access to PSE for Indigenous students.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

## Community

Principle: There should be a strong sense of community for Indigenous students at McMaster.

Concern: Indigenous students face unique cultural barriers and may feel disconnected from the McMaster community.

Recommendation: McMaster should ensure that Indigenous students (from all provinces and territories) feel welcomed upon arrival by providing students with resources, and knowledge to ease the transition into McMaster's community.

Recommendation: ISP & ISS should have increased visibility on campus and promotion to students at McMaster, allowing for greater accessibility and the development of a sense of community.

Indigenous communities are often located in geographically remote areas. As a result, students need to leave their communities and families to study in an urban environment.<sup>28</sup> This exacerbates the difficulties faced by these students as they enter the university setting; this separation from their community often provides them with feelings of disconnectedness. It is therefore crucial that McMaster establishes a strong community feeling for all prospective and current Indigenous students. Enhanced promotional activity and visibility on campus will aid in developing a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere while also fostering a sense of community. Additionally, through emulating the MEW program in Manitoba, as well as the collaboration with Indigenous Elders and Indigenous communities at Georgian College and the University of Toronto, McMaster will be able to ease the transition to university for incoming students, while simultaneously improving the community experience for current McMaster students.

If extra funding is needed to create these community supports through ISS, McMaster should supply these funds or advocate to the appropriate levels of government to achieve the necessary funds to support students.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

## Support and Accessibility to Support

### Support for Current and Future Indigenous Students

Principle: Indigenous students should be aware of social supports, services, opportunities, and funding designed specifically for them when they enter university.

Principle: McMaster should ensure that Indigenous students have an awareness of the broad variety of services the University provides.

Principle: All Indigenous students should be supported through services for Indigenous students offered by the University.

Concern: Indigenous students are often mature or first generation students; and are not always aware of the various services offered.

Concern: Current Indigenous support services are targeted towards students from Six Nations as opposed to all groups of Indigenous students.

Concern: Indigenous students who accept their offers to university are not notified of services, opportunities, social programming, and funding opportunities for Indigenous students.

Recommendations: McMaster should ensure that demographic information (self-identified information) collected can be used by registered services to provide support to students, while ensuring that student confidentiality is maintained where appropriate.

Recommendation: The demographic information collected by the University should specify if a student is Inuit, Métis, First Nations, and whether they have Status or Non-Status.

Recommendation: Students self-identified as Indigenous should receive a package outlining services and programming offered to Indigenous students upon acceptance or each year of enrollment.

Recommendation: The University should keep Indigenous students aware of Indigenous clubs and groups available on campus so that they may engage in these groups and have a fuller university experience.

Recommendation: ISP and ISS programming and support services should be designed to support all groups of Indigenous students equally, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.

Recommendation: During Indigenous Program “Awareness Days”, such as in Welcome Week, ISP should invite Indigenous groups to the table to offer information to new students and to recruit new members.

Recommendation: To improve McMaster's ability to identify and support Indigenous students, McMaster should work with campus Indigenous groups to better define who is considered an Indigenous student.

While a university can provide funding and resources to services that support Indigenous students, it holds no merit if Indigenous students are not aware of what services are offered to them. Participants in the 2015 & 2016 Indigenous Student Policy Focus Group mentioned that “There [were] many missed opportunities that I missed out on because I didn't see any of it anywhere and did not know where to go to find out about these things”. Other Indigenous students have indicated that they were unaware of many services until they had discovered ISP, Welcome Week outreach services, financial aid, or other services on their own time. While current outreach to future students regarding services offered for Indigenous students may/may not have been revamped, current Indigenous students (especially mature students unable to get involved with extracurricular groups) still suffer from this barrier. Students should be aware of clubs and groups offered at the University so that they can receive support, which may currently be lacking in academic life of university. During Indigenous Program “Awareness Days”, ISP can collaborate with other Indigenous groups on campus to offer information to new students. This can recruit new members and help with student retention by offering a sense of community and support. Students who were connected to MISCA were informed about services that they were not previously aware of before.

Through applying to university each student that accepts their offer to McMaster has the option to self-identify as Indigenous (The application and acceptance process to universities through OUAC allows students to self-identify if they so choose). This recommendation pertains to providing that demographic information to the relevant services that can offer support to Indigenous students so that all self-identified Indigenous students can be aware of the resources that have access too. Students should also have the option to identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis. In addition, Status information should be collected as many Indigenous students do not have official Indigenous Status, but should receive supports regardless. With this information, McMaster would be able to identify if students have specific needs or could qualify for additional resources. This would be

helpful for those registering that have identified as Indigenous, who would like to receive information regarding Indigenous services, clubs on campus, etc.

Currently, ISP and ISS focus their efforts on offering content and services to students from nearby communities. While it makes sense that they would be the main focus as the University occupies traditional Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe territory, offering courses that focus other Indigenous content would be beneficial for two reasons. First, it would better reflect the diversity of Indigenous nations across Canada, which is important for non-Indigenous students taking ISP courses to grasp. Secondly, it would also allow Indigenous students from other areas around the country to learn about/reclaim their cultures, languages, and traditions. The MSU recommends that ISP continues to broaden the variety of cultural teachings they offer, as it will facilitate the learning of other people's histories, traditions, and cultural practices.

The Equity & Inclusion Office should also offer Lateral Violence Workshops to provide support for students. Lateral Violence refers to harmful and undermining practices by members of oppressed groups towards each other as a result of marginalization.<sup>29</sup> Lateral violence is a form of bullying that should not be tolerated at McMaster University, and is present not only within the Indigenous population. These workshops can provide support and an interactive learning experience for students who may be challenged with lateral violence. Lateral violence workshops can also aim to explore behaviours of individuals that are related to lateral violence, and determine how it can affect communities, families, and organizations on campus.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Wingard, Barbara. "A conversation with lateral violence." *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work* 2010, no. 1 (2010): 13.

<sup>30</sup> "Aboriginal Cultural Training," Aboriginal Cultural Training, 2014, accessed March 11, 2017, <http://www.aboriginalculturaltraining.com.au/lateral-violence-workshop>

## Support for Indigenous Students with Dependents

Principle: Indigenous students come to university at a variety of different life stages, with many mature students attending McMaster, and should be supported through services.

Principle: McMaster Child Care Centre should be accessible for all students.

Concern: Current hours do not accommodate for night classes, rendering Indigenous students enrolled in night classes unable to use the service.

Concern: Current hours do not accommodate for exam periods where an Indigenous student with children may only need to use the center on a drop-in basis.

Recommendation: The McMaster Child Care Centre should offer services during the hours of night class to accommodate for students enrolled in night class who require the service.

Recommendation: The McMaster Child Care Centre should adopt a new payment model for the exam months of December and April to accommodate student needs.

The literature on the barriers that Indigenous students face to education repeatedly indicates that childcare is a significant factor in determining whether to stay in postsecondary education. Nearly 30 per cent of Indigenous post-secondary students report caring for a dependent child.<sup>31</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, Indigenous students are much more likely to spend time on dependent care responsibilities than non-Indigenous students; 45 per cent of Indigenous students spend time on dependent care responsibilities, compared to just 23 per cent of non-Indigenous students.<sup>32</sup> A comprehensive literature review published in 2010 by the Council of Ministers of Education found that Indigenous students are much more likely than non-Indigenous students to face barriers to post-secondary education attainment specifically because of their higher incidence of dependent care responsibilities. While McMaster makes efforts to meet the needs of mature students with dependents, its services are often poorly publicized, too expensive, and not able to address the needs of Indigenous patrons.

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<sup>31</sup> Holmes, David, *Redressing the Balance: Canadian University Programs in Support of Aboriginal Students*, report (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> P. Sattler and U. McCloy, *From Postsecondary Application to the Labour Market: The Pathways of Underrepresented Groups*, report (Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2010).

Participants in the Indigenous Student Policy Focus Group identified accessibility as a chief concern. A clear constant concern is financial accessibility which prevents a number of self-identifying mothers from using McMaster day-care services with its monthly fees costing up to \$1000+. Another factor which contributes to this is the operating hours which do not currently align with the student schedule. A participant in the focus group stated that the childcare center "could only have [their] son in until 6 o'clock, so [they] couldn't take evening courses. Night classes offer the equivalent material of three separate classes condensed into one evening time block. By taking night classes, Indigenous students with dependents are able to spend more time working and/or caring for their dependent. With the current operating structure of the McMaster childcare center, this option is not available for Indigenous students with dependents. Participants in the focus groups also mentioned that the on-campus child care center "couldn't accommodate for exam periods" where an Indigenous student with a dependent would only need to drop off their dependent for a few hours to write an exam or study. This combined with the above factors furthers the concerns of financial inaccessibility and perpetuates barriers they face to being successful in post-secondary education.

## Opportunities

Principle: Indigenous students should be provided opportunities for professional development, whether through work-study opportunities or through interactions with community.

Concern: Indigenous students often do not have connections to workplace/future employers that other students have.

Concern: McMaster University does not do enough to incorporate Indigenous communities into the student experience at McMaster.

Recommendation: McMaster University should increase funding for further work-study placements, internships, mentorship programs, and opportunities for cultural learning.

Another concern expressed by students is the lack of opportunities they are provided with once they become a PSE student. From 2008 to 2009, the decline of Indigenous youth employment was 2.6% higher than those of their non-Indigenous peers.<sup>33</sup> In 2011, Indigenous youth aged 20-24 had an unemployment rate 9.5% higher than those that we labeled as being 'not visible minorities'.<sup>34</sup> Indigenous students attend PSE with the goal of attaining full-time employment following graduation, or pursuing further education. The MSU believes that the University should look to alternative methods to provide Indigenous youth with the skills to help them succeed in the workforce during their PSE or following graduation. Departments within the University including the Student Success Centre and ISS can also help to provide opportunities and career supports for Indigenous students. The University may further look to increase work/study positions targeting Indigenous students and provide funding for capacity building events within ISP.

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<sup>33</sup> "Aboriginal peoples," Statcan.gc.ca, October 07, 2016, accessed February 18, 2017, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-402-x/2011000/chap/ap-pa/ap-pa-eng.htm>.

<sup>34</sup> "Chapter Three: Youth As Potential or Current Employees," House of Commons Committees - Final (41-2) - Youth Employment in Canada: Challenges and Potential Solutions - 1. Unemployment Among Aboriginal Canadian Youth, accessed February 18, 2017, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=6658485&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=41&Ses=2&File=225>.

## Transferring Credits

Principle: Indigenous students may complete their degree at varying life stages and at varying post-secondary institutions.

Concern: It is often difficult to transfer course credits from many post-secondary institutions to McMaster University.

Concern: The existing difficulty that students experience in receiving equal credit for their previous courses at other post-secondary institutions creates a barrier for academic and career success.

Recommendation: McMaster University Registrar should work in partnership with all faculties to ensure that more credits obtained from students' previous academic experiences are valid at McMaster University.

Indigenous students at McMaster University come from a wide variety of backgrounds. This includes varying life stages.

Indigenous students at McMaster University, throughout the Indigenous Student Policy Paper focus groups, have stated that a difficulty exists for all students at McMaster in terms of gaining credit for transferred courses towards a student's undergraduate degree. These students felt that this may especially pose a significant barrier to Indigenous students in general who already face many barriers in obtaining an undergraduate degree. These students believe that bettering the transfer credit policy would be a step towards making education more accessible to Indigenous students who may be at various life stages.

After speaking with academic counselling services within the Indigenous studies department, it is apparent that from the perspective of an academic counsellor in the Indigenous studies department, bettering the transfer credit policy would greatly benefit Indigenous students at McMaster University.

## Academics

### Curriculum

Principle: All students should have an understanding of contemporary and historical Indigenous issues and culture.

Principle: All Indigenous content should be carefully planned and delivered by professors who have an understanding of Indigenous historical and contemporary issues and culture.

Concern: Indigenous content being taught in courses outside of ISP is not accurate, and this has a negative effect on Indigenous students learning about their people.

Concern: Many students are not being exposed to basic knowledge surrounding Indigenous issues during their time at McMaster.

Concern: Misrepresented Indigenous content can affect non-Indigenous peoples' perceptions of Indigenous people.

Concern: Professors teaching Indigenous content are often not qualified to do so.

Recommendation: The Federal & Provincial Governments should mandate that all post-secondary institutions implement a mandatory Indigenous course or content requirement.

Recommendation: McMaster University should, through the Indigenous Education Council or a newly struck committee, research and investigate the implementation of a mandatory Indigenous studies course or content for all incoming students.

Recommendation: The University should mandate that professors who incorporate Indigenous content into their courses receive well-formed Indigenous socio-historical training.

Recommendation: The University should hire more Indigenous professors who are well versed in Indigenous issues.

Recommendation: Faculties at McMaster should be consulting with ISP when incorporating Indigenous content into their course material.

Recommendation: McMaster University should ensure course development procedures for all Indigenous related courses are community-driven.

Outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report is the need for education about Indigenous culture and history as a way to overcome ignorance and racism toward Indigenous people in Canada. Specifically, institutions must facilitate Canadians to learn about the “history and legacy of residential schools in ways that change both minds and hearts”.<sup>35</sup> Thus, it is important for all students to gain a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous issues and culture, both contemporary and historical. The reach of such a requirement is not just to inform students, but also help combat systemic racism toward Indigenous people in Canada. Thus, an Indigenous course requirement (IRC) must accompany a commitment to reconciliation by universities across Canada. Valuing Indigenous ways of learning, policies, and practices are vital to an inclusive academic environment. This is referred to as Indigenizing the institution.<sup>36</sup> Indigenization also involves consciously bringing Indigenous people, philosophies, and cultures into governance, academics, research, and recruitment.<sup>37</sup>

The TRC Report Call to Action #62.ii. states that all three levels of government provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on integrating Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.<sup>38</sup> Thus having this mandated through the Federal government and the provinces would help provide a framework by which universities could follow. The exact methods by which universities implement this, however, should be up to the institution and suit the needs of that school. McMaster can achieve this goal in two ways: by improving the quality of the knowledge already being taught in non-ISP courses, and/or by ensuring all students are exposed to this information at some point in their time at McMaster as an undergraduate student. Universities who have already implemented a mandatory IRC have all done this in different ways. For example, the University of Winnipeg, after push from the University of Winnipeg Students Association, has mandated that every undergraduate student take at least one course from their approved course list.<sup>39</sup> This course list includes courses from several departments, and offers a variety of courses for students to choose from that may already be within their

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<sup>35</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. "Chapter 4: Education for Reconciliation." In *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 117. Vol. 6. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Pidgeon, Michelle. "More than a checklist: Meaningful Indigenous inclusion in higher education." *Social Inclusion* 4, no. 1 (2016).

<sup>37</sup> MacDonald, Moira. "Indigenizing the Academy." *University Affairs*, May 2016, 12-21. April 6, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2017. <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/indigenizing-the-academy/>.

<sup>38</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. "Chapter 4: Education for Reconciliation." In *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 121. Vol. 6. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> "Indigenous Course Requirement." *The University of Winnipeg* February 21, 2017. <http://uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous-course-requirement>.

course requirements.<sup>40</sup> Lakehead University has a different model, where all undergraduate students must take at least one course containing at least 50% Indigenous knowledge and/or content, regardless of department.<sup>41</sup> Other options to implement Indigenous content can be discussed with Faculties and students. Through a thoroughly researched and community-consultative process, McMaster should determine what IRC structure works best for the institution and for the learning of students.

If the process of creating an IRC is not done properly, more harm can be done than if the IRC is not created. Opponents of an IRC have stated that these course can create an unsafe environment for Indigenous instructors and students by those who do not want to be in the classroom.<sup>42</sup> At McMaster, many instructors who do not have a background in Indigenous studies have passed on misinformation to their students with the incorporation of Indigenous content as this was not done properly. This has led to students at McMaster feeling angry, upset, ashamed, and traumatized, and negatively impacting their learning experience, as reported through focus groups. This is why professors who incorporate Indigenous content into their courses should be well informed to Indigenous history and culture through a thorough training process. In addition, Indigenous course incorporations should be made in consultation with ISP and other community groups.

Consultation is an incredibly important part of this process. When non-Indigenous people make decisions that affect perceptions of Indigenous communities, this takes away from Indigenous self-determination and repeat the system of colonialism and paternalism. This is why McMaster should explore the IRC through the Indigenous Education Council, or another committee comprised of community members, Indigenous McMaster alumni, representatives from Six Nations of the Grand River, representatives from ISP, and representatives from Indigenous student groups. Ultimately, the Indigenous academic community at McMaster can create the best structure for an IRC at McMaster.

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<sup>40</sup> University of Winnipeg. "UWinnipeg Course That Fulfil The Indigenous Course Requirement." Indigenous Course Requirement. Accessed February 20, 2017. <http://uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous-course-requirement/ICR-Approved-Course-List.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> Lakehead University. "FAQ's about the Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR)." Indigenous Content Requirement. Accessed February 23, 2017. <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/ai/icr>.

<sup>42</sup> McDonald, Mande. "Unsafe Space: The Danger of Mandatory Indigenous Course Requirements." February 18, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2017. <http://www.northernpublicaffairs.ca/index/unsafe-space-the-danger-of-mandatory-indigenous-studies-courses/>.

## Diversity of Indigenous Knowledges

Principle: Students should have the ability to study a wide variety of Indigenous content from Nations across the country.

Concern: Students do not have access to resources and knowledge pertaining to a wide variety of Indigenous Nations through their course content.

Recommendation: ISP should work to include more content from Nations across Canada.

Currently, ISP offers courses that, through their content, are mainly focused on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe cultures, languages, and traditions.<sup>43</sup> As McMaster is situated on the traditional territories of these Nations, this is understandable, as instructors and community-consultation would produce content from the region. However, students would benefit from a wider focus incorporating content and information from other Nations. This would better reflect the diversity of Indigenous nations across Canada, and gives a better understanding for non-Indigenous students taking ISP courses. In addition, this allows Indigenous students from across Canada to know McMaster acknowledges their Nations culture and incorporates it into course content, making students more likely to feel supported on campus.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> "Undergraduate Calendar 2016-2017," McMaster University - Acalog ACMS™, accessed February 18, 2017, <http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/index.php?catoid=18>.

<sup>44</sup> Survey of Education Choices made by Indigenous Students, report, 2013, , accessed February 20, 2017, <http://indspire.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/indspire-survey-of-education-choices-2013-en.pdf>.

## Financing Education

Principle: Indigenous students come to university at a variety of different life stages, with many mature students attending McMaster, and should be supported financially.

Principle: Indigenous students should be financially supported by the federal and provincial governments and the University to access adequate funding to be able to attend post-secondary education.

Principle: The University should financially support the education of Indigenous students to recognize the historical contributions made to post-secondary institutions from Indigenous peoples.

Principle: All Indigenous students, regardless of formal status, should be able to access financial resources specific to Indigenous peoples.

Concern: The federal government's 2% cap on the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) has denied thousands of Indigenous students access to postsecondary education.

Concern: The federal and provincial funding available to Indigenous students is inadequate in covering the rising costs associated with secondary and post-secondary education.

Concern: The federal funding allocated to Bands is inadequate in supporting, or offering continued support, to all eligible students who wish to attend post secondary institutions.

Concern: Off-reserve, or urban Indigenous students may face barriers when accessing financial Band/government funding.

Concern: Band funding per student (federal government) is inadequate in covering living costs, including, but not limited to transportation and child care.

Concern: Funding does not take into consideration those students who require accommodations due to disability.

Concern: Indigenous students who do not have status (for a variety of different reasons) do not have access to Band funding and/or government sponsorships and bursaries.

Concern: McMaster does not provide enough financial support for students who cannot achieve funding, or are not able to pay for living expenses and tuition through existing funding.

Recommendation: The federal government should remove barriers for Indigenous students to access funding and increase funding to meet the real cost of education.

Recommendation: McMaster should develop more Indigenous specific bursaries and scholarships to provide financial aid to students who do not achieve enough through Band funding, or cannot access Band funding. These scholarships should not be limited to Indigenous students from specific Bands or regions.

Recommendation: In addition to providing bursaries and scholarships to cover the cost of tuition, McMaster should support students by providing funding for child-care support, transportation, and other living expenses.

Recommendation: The University should work in collaboration with Indigenous students on campus to create a system where funding for Indigenous students is awarded to Indigenous students.

The MSU believes that all willing and qualified students, regardless of socioeconomic status, must be able to access and excel within Ontario's system of post-secondary education. This idea extends to all student groups on campus, as any existing financial barriers should be eliminated.

In focus groups at McMaster University during the 2015-16 school year, many Indigenous students acknowledged financial barriers. Due to a fixed amount of funding given to reserves, Indigenous students often do not receive enough funding to support tuition and living costs.

Currently, a large proportion of the funding for Indigenous education comes from the Federal Government, through decisions made by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (AAND).<sup>45</sup> It can be acknowledged that in the 2014-2015 years, the government of Canada invested \$1.45 billion to First Nation elementary and secondary education programs, and \$2.6 billion over 5 years to First Nations education in 2016.<sup>46</sup> This

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<sup>45</sup> "Kindergarten to grade 12 education," Government of Canada; Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada; Communications Branch, September 07, 2016, , accessed February 17, 2017, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033676/1100100033677>.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

funding is allocated directly to Indigenous organizations such as Bands and tribal councils, or specifically designating educational organizations.<sup>47</sup> However, even with these commitments, funding for Indigenous students is still inadequate, especially when compared to funding for non-Indigenous education.<sup>48</sup> The funds allocated by the government are often given to Bands to distribute. As Sovereignty is sought, policies differ from reserve to reserve. One reserve implemented that if you did not live within 50 km from your reserve, you were not eligible for funding. This same reserve also implemented that volunteer work was required each term to receive funding. This can make things more difficult for those who are struggling trying to keep up with their academics.

The Federal Government also allocates funding to Indigenous post-secondary education through a fund called The Post-Secondary Student Support Program; however, in 1996, a 2% cap was placed on this fund.<sup>49</sup> Originally, the cap aimed to be a temporary solution to the nationwide financial deficit, but has remained. This has resulted in an inadequate amount of funding allocated to Indigenous post-secondary education, especially with the growth of the population over the last two decades.<sup>50</sup> The MSU believes that this 2% cap should be lifted, and funding should be increased to meet the real cost of education and other living costs. In addition, many students may be challenged with lack of food security. A survey conducted by Meal Exchange, a national registered charity, found that Indigenous and racialized groups, and students that primarily fund their education through government student financial assistance programs experience high rates of food insecurity.<sup>51</sup> Additional funding should ideally help to alleviate the challenges that lead to barriers to post-secondary education. An increase to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program will decrease barriers for Indigenous students who need to access Band funding, and will provide financial support to cover tuition and living costs.

In the focus group, it was also acknowledged that Indigenous students receive less funding than it seems. When comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous funding, Indigenous students consistently receive lower amounts of per-student funding as compared to non-Indigenous students.<sup>52</sup> In addition to this, per-student funding for non-Indigenous students

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., *Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Postsecondary Enrolment Rates*, report, The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, May 2002, , accessed February 17, 2016, <http://www.cmec.ca/publications/lists/publications/attachments/49/malatest.en.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> Don Drummond and Ellen Rosenbluth, *The Debate on First Nations Education Funding: Mind the Gap*, working paper, Policy Studies, Queen's University, December 2013, , accessed February 17, 2017, [https://qspace.library.queensu.ca/bitstream/handle/1974/14846/Drummond\\_et\\_al\\_2013\\_Debate\\_on\\_First\\_Nations.pdf;jsessionid=A2205CC344F78F848A0FDE2BC7C693F4?sequence=1](https://qspace.library.queensu.ca/bitstream/handle/1974/14846/Drummond_et_al_2013_Debate_on_First_Nations.pdf;jsessionid=A2205CC344F78F848A0FDE2BC7C693F4?sequence=1).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> D. Silverthorn, *Hungry for knowledge: Assessing the prevalence of student food insecurity on five Canadian campuses.*, publication, 2016, <http://mealexchange.com>.

<sup>52</sup> Chiefs Assembly on Education, October 2012, , accessed February 2017, [http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/events/fact\\_sheet-ccoe-8.pdf](http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/events/fact_sheet-ccoe-8.pdf).

has experienced growth, whereas Indigenous funding has not experienced growth to the same level.<sup>53</sup> This highlights the fact that most funding for Indigenous education comes from the federal government, whereas non-Indigenous education is addressed by the provincial government.<sup>54</sup> Students under the provincial education system tend to benefit from the responsiveness of the system, putting Indigenous students at a further disadvantage.<sup>55</sup> The federal government should work to eliminate barriers and increase funding to ensure that students can have the financial support to access education.

McMaster University can also play a role in supporting Indigenous students in their studies. Students have reported that Band funding is insufficient to covering the costs of post-secondary education, and they may face barriers to acquiring funding due to policies specific to each Band. In cases where students are not able to achieve enough funding to cover tuition and living costs, the University should offer support. This can be done through creating Indigenous specific bursaries and scholarships to cover living costs, tuition, child-care expenses and more. Currently, there are no Indigenous specific bursaries displayed on McMaster's Financial Aid webpage. Only one Hatch Scholarship exists, for students excelling in the field of engineering, of which one of two awards will be given to an Indigenous student.<sup>56</sup> ISP also provides helpful links to scholarships and opportunities for Indigenous students, however, it provides reference to external scholarships and bursaries that are not provided to students from the institution.<sup>57</sup> Syracuse University offers financial support through a Haudenosaunee Promise Scholarship, to appreciate the historical, political, and cultural legacies of the Haudenosaunee.<sup>58</sup> This scholarship covers the cost of tuition, and many living expenses, for qualified students who meet eligibility criteria.<sup>59</sup> McMaster should develop scholarships/bursaries like the one implemented in Syracuse University to support students and also acknowledge historical contributions made by Indigenous peoples. This will offer Indigenous students further financial support with education, to increase access to post-secondary education at McMaster.

Indigenous students should also be supported financially with living costs. In the 2016-2017 focus group, it was noted that Indigenous students come to university at different life stages, and may need varying support. Due to this, the [federal] government, province, and

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., *Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Postsecondary Enrolment Rates*, report, The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, May 2002, , accessed February 17, 2016, <http://www.cmec.ca/publications/lists/publications/attachments/49/malatest.en.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> "McMaster University," Faculty of Engineering - Scholarships & Financial Aid, accessed February 22, 2017, <http://www.eng.mcmaster.ca/future/schol.html>.

<sup>57</sup> "Resources," McMaster Faculty of Social Sciences, , accessed February 22, 2017, <https://indigenous.mcmaster.ca/resources>.

<sup>58</sup> "Syracuse University SU," Financial Aid, accessed February 22, 2017, <http://financialaid.syr.edu/typesofaid/scholarships/su/>.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

the University should ensure that there is adequate financial support not only for tuition, but for other costs: textbooks, cost of living, etc. Funding does not take into consideration that some students require accommodations due to disability, and that living allowances only cover a set amount of time. For students who must go on a decreased course load, the time to complete their degree will be extended and they may not have the necessary funds to complete their degree.

When ensuring that no student falls through the gaps, the University must also consult with Indigenous communities and groups to ensure that bursaries and scholarships meant for Indigenous students are not awarded to non-Indigenous students. This is important, because if you do not have to prove your Indigeneity, anyone can claim to be Indigenous just to receive benefits, which may take resources away from those who funds were meant to go to.

## Accessing Funding

Principle: Barriers to acquire Indigenous student funding through Bands and the University should be minimized.

Principle: Information on financial aid that is available to Indigenous students should be clearly accessible, transparent, and easy to understand by students.

Concern: Information on available financial assistance may not be easily accessible to all Indigenous students.

Concern: Some Bands' definition of accommodations for full time students regarding course load do not match with the University's definition, affecting student living allowance.

Concern: The release of funds from Bands do not align with important deadlines set by the University.

Concern: Variability in Band policies and allocation timelines may lead to students paying tuition late.

Recommendation: The University should be more considerate to the Indigenous student financial timeline, and provide extensions to deadlines and other accommodations.

Recommendation: The University should have greater contact with Band funding agencies, such as the Grand River Post-Secondary Education Office (GRPSEO), to be aware of certain deadlines.

Recommendation: McMaster should promote Indigenous specific bursaries to ensure that they are accessible to students (Indspire, Dreamcatcher Fund etc.)

Currently, student financial aid information is displayed on McMaster University's Student Financial Aid Scholarships website.<sup>60</sup> This includes information on scholarships, bursaries, and other financial aid support that can be achieved through the province's Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP).<sup>61</sup> Although information is displayed online, this may not be the most accessible means of information provision, as students mentioned that they had trouble finding these resources. Greater outreach can help to inform a wide

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<sup>60</sup> "McMaster Aid," Student Financial Aid Scholarships, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://sfas.mcmaster.ca/mcmaster-aid/>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

variety of students including mature and first generation students, so that they are well equipped to access financial aid. The University should help to make this information more readily available through greater outreach from additional platforms including emails, posters, or seminars. McMaster University should also work to display other sources of financial scholarships and bursaries on their website to make these opportunities more well known to students. Indspire, an Indigenous-led charity that invests in the education of Indigenous people, is one of the resources that could be more widely promoted through McMaster.<sup>62</sup> In addition, many other financial opportunities that are not currently promoted through McMaster should be added to the McMaster page.<sup>63</sup> This includes the Dreamcatcher Charitable Foundation (which funds Indigenous individuals with status).

Furthermore, students may have difficulty acquiring funding from their respective Bands due to the variability in Band policies and deadlines created by the University. Some students at McMaster access Band funding through GRPSEO, which has a series of guidelines for receiving education assistance.<sup>64</sup> To achieve many of the financial assistance allowances, students must maintain full-time status as defined by the post-secondary institution that you attend, and the minimum definition of full-time study established by GRPSEO.<sup>65</sup> For students with accommodations, these definitions may not be the same resulting in students being unable to access funding. McMaster should thus work to form a common understanding with GRPSEO and other similar education offices to have a similar understanding of how students can be supported. In addition, closer contact between McMaster and Band services can ensure that any major deadlines correspond. This proactive measure will help students to overcome barriers to achieve financial assistance.

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<sup>62</sup> "Indigenous Education is Canada's Future Growth," Indspire, , accessed February 20, 2017, <http://indspire.ca/about-indspire/>.

<sup>63</sup> "McMaster University Student Affairs," Macs Money Centre, , accessed February 20, 2017, <http://money.mcmaster.ca/money-management/paying-for-school/government-financial-aid-resources/>.

<sup>64</sup> *The 2017 Student Policy Guide To Post Secondary Education Assistance Grand River Post Secondary Education Office*, report, 2017, , accessed February 20, 2017, <http://www.grpseo.org/upload/editor/documents/StudentPolicy.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

## Transportation

Principle: All Indigenous students should be able to access transportation to be able to come to class regularly.

Principle: The increased costs and transportation difficulties associated with studying at a greater distance from home should not be a barrier to accessing education for Indigenous students.

Concern: There is a lack of accessible transportation to and from remote Indigenous communities.

Concern: Costs of commuting puts a strain on Indigenous students.

Concern: The University does not accommodate for students missing classes due to harsh weather conditions.

Concern: There is no regular bus for all post-secondary students from Six Nations, surrounding areas, and Brantford.

Recommendation: The University should consider weather hazards that may affect more remote or distant communities and should make appropriate accommodations for students.

Recommendation: The University should ensure all courses are podcasted to accommodate students who cannot attend.

Recommendation: McMaster and other post-secondary institutions should collaborate to fund bussing to Six Nations, surrounding areas, and Brantford.

Transportation to McMaster University can be a challenge for many Indigenous students who live on-reserve, or closer to a reserve community. In addition to Six Nations and Brantford, many Indigenous students may also live in surrounding areas close to the Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve including the New Credit Reserve, Haldimand County, and Brant. In focus groups in the 2016-2017 school year, students pointed out that there were a lot of barriers to transportation. They stated this may be a leading factor in dropout rates for Indigenous students. Students commented on the lack of transportation to the reserve and surrounding communities, and the dangerous weather conditions and roads in the winter time. Without a plow service, and the University being aware of weather conditions and hazards, students must often travel in dangerous weather

conditions to attend classes, or be present on campus. Commuting costs can also place a strain on Indigenous students traveling to and from campus from remote communities. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario acknowledged that financial support for travel was an area of concern for Indigenous support workers, counsellors and representatives in Ontario.<sup>66</sup> This has been a prevalent issue discussed in many reports from across Canada. A report published by the University of Manitoba acknowledged similar challenges, especially for mature students living at home who needed to travel long distances to attend post-secondary classes.<sup>67</sup> The MSU believes that the University should recognize the standards other organizations hold for Indigenous students, support workers, and counsellors.

The MSU recommends that the University should consider weather hazards that may affect more remote or distant communities and should make appropriate accommodations for students. In McMaster's Storm Emergency Policy and Procedures document, it acknowledges that even when the school is not closed for bad weather, staff who live at a distance to campus may be affected.<sup>68</sup> Staff can use personal leave time for these circumstances, however there are no similar arrangements for students.<sup>69</sup> The University should recognize that students traveling from distant or remote communities may need accommodations. In addition, the University should ensure that all courses are podcasted or recorded in the case that students cannot attend. It is recognized that the University has made great first steps to implement the ECHO360 Lecture Capture technology in many large lecture rooms across campus, however, the technology is not available in all classrooms, and not all courses are podcasted.<sup>70</sup> Podcasting courses or recording lectures will increase access to students who cannot attend, and is already a strategy suggested by Student Accessibility Services to assist students in accessing resources.<sup>71</sup> An article examining the use of lecture capture technology also noted that lecture capture assisted students in a variety of ways. It helped to relieve stress when students had to miss class, cut down on commuting time and commuting costs, and was considered very useful when students were not able to attend class, especially in the case of mature students who had family responsibilities.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd, report (Toronto: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2010), <http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Promising%20Practices.pdf>.

<sup>67</sup> F. Deer, A. De Jaeger, and L. Wilkinson, report, University of Manitoba, November 1, 2015, accessed February 14, 2017, [http://www.frankdeer.net/uploads/2/2/6/1/22612190/deer\\_de\\_jaeger\\_wilkinson\\_ksg\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.frankdeer.net/uploads/2/2/6/1/22612190/deer_de_jaeger_wilkinson_ksg_final_report.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> *Storm Emergency Policy and Procedures*, report, McMaster University (McMaster University), November 2011, accessed February 15, 2017, [http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Employee/storm\\_emergency\\_policy.pdf](http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Employee/storm_emergency_policy.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> "ECHO360 Lecture Capture," McMaster University Library, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, February 13, 2017, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://library.mcmaster.ca/cavs/updates/echo360-lecture-capture>.

<sup>71</sup> Report, Student Accessibility Services, McMaster University, January 9, 2016, accessed February 15, 2017, [http://sas.mcmaster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SAS\\_Yellowfile\\_2016-.pdf](http://sas.mcmaster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SAS_Yellowfile_2016-.pdf).

<sup>72</sup> Jovan F. Groen, Brenna Quigley, and Yves Herry, "Examining the Use of Lecture Capture Technology: Implications for Teaching and Learning," *Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 7, no. 1 (November 6, 2016): , doi:10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2016.1.8.

## Policy Statement

**Whereas:** Land acknowledgement is an important first step in decolonization and reconciliation.

**And whereas:** All Indigenous students should be made aware of academic programs through the University.

**And whereas:** There should be a strong sense of community for Indigenous students at McMaster.

**And whereas:** Indigenous students should be aware of social supports, services, opportunities, and funding designed specifically for them when they enter university.

**And whereas:** McMaster should ensure that Indigenous students have an awareness of the broad variety of services the University provides.

**And whereas:** All Indigenous students should be supported through services for Indigenous students offered by the University.

**And whereas:** Indigenous students come to university at a variety of different life stages, with many mature students attending McMaster, and should be supported through services.

**And whereas:** McMaster Child Care Centre should be accessible for all students.

**And whereas:** Indigenous students should be provided opportunities for professional development, whether through work-study opportunities or through interactions with community.

**And whereas:** Indigenous students may complete their degree at varying life stages and at varying post-secondary institutions.

**And whereas:** All students should have an understanding of contemporary and historical Indigenous issues and culture.

**And whereas:** All Indigenous content should be carefully planned and delivered by professors who have an understanding of Indigenous historical and contemporary issues and culture.

**And whereas:** Students should have the ability to study a wide variety of Indigenous content from Nations across the country.

**And whereas:** Indigenous students come to university at a variety of different life stages, with many mature students attending McMaster, and should be supported financially.

**And whereas:** Indigenous students should be financially supported by the federal and provincial governments and the University to access adequate funding to be able to attend post-secondary education.

**And whereas:** The University should financially support the education of Indigenous students to recognize the historical contributions made to post-secondary institutions from Indigenous peoples.

**And whereas:** All Indigenous students, regardless of formal status, should be able to access financial resources specific to Indigenous peoples.

**And whereas:** Barriers to acquire Indigenous student funding through Bands and the University should be minimized.

**And whereas:** Information on financial aid that is available to Indigenous students should be clearly accessible, transparent, and easy to understand by students.

**And whereas:** All Indigenous students should be able to access transportation to be able to come to class regularly.

**And whereas:** The increased costs and transportation difficulties associated with studying at a greater distance from home should not be a barrier to accessing education for Indigenous students.

**Be It Resolved That:** McMaster University should make it a practice to recognize traditional Indigenous land usage when hosting events, activities, and Senate & Board of Governors meetings.

**Be It Further Resolved That (BIFRT):** McMaster University should position the Haudenosaunee & Anishinaabe flags permanently on campus in recognition of the intrinsic Indigenous culture and land on which it participates in and resides on.

**BIFRT:** Recommendation: A “Dish with One Spoon” flag should be erected as it symbolizes the pre-colonial Wampum Treaty.

**BIFRT:** The province of Ontario should develop comprehensive academic and social support programs similar to *Making Education Work*, piloted and implemented by the Province of Manitoba to provide guidance to students as well as increase Indigenous student attendance at McMaster.

**BIFRT:** McMaster should hire dedicated Indigenous recruitment officers to help support students' transition to ISP, and McMaster University.

**BIFRT:** McMaster should increase the promotion of ISP and provide high schools across the province with additional information and resources to ensure they are well informed.

**BIFRT:** McMaster should enhance communication and collaboration/partnerships with Elders and Indigenous communities to improve awareness of programs regarding Indigenous education, and aid in the development of Indigenous-centered preparation courses and supports.

**BIFRT:** McMaster should ensure that Indigenous students (from all provinces and territories) feel welcomed upon arrival by providing students with resources, and knowledge to ease the transition into McMaster's community.

**BIFRT:** ISP & ISS should have increased visibility on campus and promotion to students at McMaster, allowing for greater accessibility and the development of a sense of community.

**BIFRT:** McMaster should ensure that demographic information (self-identified information) collected can be used by registered services to provide support to students, while ensuring that student confidentiality is maintained where appropriate.

**BIFRT:** The demographic information collected by the University should specify if a student is Inuit, Métis, First Nations, and whether they have Status or Non-Status.

**BIFRT:** Students self-identified as Indigenous should receive a package outlining services and programming offered to Indigenous students upon acceptance or each year of enrollment.

**BIFRT:** The University should keep Indigenous students aware of Indigenous clubs and groups available on campus so that they may engage in these groups and have a fuller university experience.

**BIFRT:** ISP and ISS programming and support services should be designed to support all groups of Indigenous students equally, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.

**BIFRT:** During Indigenous Program “Awareness Days”, such as in Welcome Week, ISP should invite Indigenous groups to the table to offer information to new students and to recruit new members.

**BIFRT:** To improve McMaster's ability to identify and support Indigenous students, McMaster should work with campus Indigenous groups to better define who is considered an Indigenous student.

**BIFRT:** The McMaster Child Care Centre should offer services during the hours of night class to accommodate for students enrolled in night class who require the service.

**BIFRT:** The McMaster Child Care Centre should adopt a new payment model for the exam months of December and April to accommodate student needs.

**BIFRT:** McMaster University should increase funding for further work-study placements, internships, mentorship programs, and opportunities for cultural learning.

**BIFRT:** McMaster University Registrar should work in partnership with all faculties to ensure that more credits obtained from students' previous academic experiences are valid at McMaster University.

**BIFRT:** The Federal & Provincial Governments should mandate that all post-secondary institutions implement a mandatory Indigenous course or content requirement.

**BIFRT:** McMaster University should, through the Indigenous Education Council or a newly struck committee, research and investigate the implementation of a mandatory Indigenous studies course or content for all incoming students.

**BIFRT:** The University should mandate that professors who incorporate Indigenous content into their courses receive well-formed Indigenous socio-historical training.

**BIFRT:** The University should hire more Indigenous professors who are well versed in Indigenous issues.

**BIFRT:** Faculties at McMaster should be consulting with ISP when incorporating Indigenous content into their course material.

**BIFRT:** McMaster University should ensure course development procedures for all Indigenous related courses are community-driven.

**BIFRT:** ISP should work to include more content from Nations across Canada.

**BIFRT:** The federal government should remove barriers for Indigenous students to access funding and increase funding to meet the real cost of education.

**BIFRT:** McMaster should develop more Indigenous specific bursaries and scholarships to provide financial aid to students who do not achieve enough through Band funding, or cannot access Band funding. These scholarships should not be limited to Indigenous students from specific Bands/regions.

**BIFRT:** In addition to providing bursaries and scholarships to cover the cost of tuition, McMaster should support students by providing funding for child-care support, transportation, and other living expenses.

**BIFRT:** The University should work with collaboration in Indigenous students on campus to create a system where funding for Indigenous students is awarded to Indigenous students.

**BIFRT:** The University should be more considerate to the Indigenous student financial timeline, and provide extensions to deadlines and other accommodations.

**BIFRT:** The University should have greater contact with Band funding agencies, such as the Grand River Post-Secondary Education Office (GRPSEO), to be aware of certain deadlines.

**BIFRT:** McMaster should promote Indigenous specific bursaries to ensure that they are accessible to students (Indspire, Dreamcatcher Fund etc.)

**BIFRT:** The University should consider weather hazards that may affect more remote or distant communities and should make appropriate accommodations for students.

**BIFRT:** The University should ensure all courses are podcasted to accommodate students who cannot attend.

**BIFRT:** McMaster and other post-secondary institutions should collaborate to fund bussing to Six Nations, surrounding areas and Brantford.