

McMaster University Indigenous Ancestry Verification Guidelines

Overview and Purpose

In response to recent national discourse on Indigenous ancestry verification, an Indigenous-led committee, formed through the Indigenous Education Council at McMaster University, has implemented a set of guidelines and process for Indigenous Ancestry Verification. These guidelines are designed to ensure that processes such as Indigenous student awards, program admissions, and recruitment of Indigenous faculty and staff are conducted with integrity and respect.

For the purposes of Indigenous Ancestry Verification at McMaster University, the term “Indigenous” encompasses First Nation, Métis, or Inuit individuals. Additionally, this definition extends to include the U.S. context, encompassing American Indians/Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

McMaster University acknowledges that the identification of who is or is not a member of an Indigenous community can only be determined by the community itself, not by the University. Therefore, the Ancestry Verification process relies on Indigenous students, staff, and faculty to submit documentation that aligns with the criteria outlined in this document. In cases where an individual lacks a citizenship or membership card, additional documentation may be submitted for individual review by an Indigenous-led committee.

Indigenous Ancestry Verification at McMaster University serves the sole purpose of assessing eligibility for specific scenarios outlined in this document and does not extend to verification processes external to the University. It is essential to emphasize that verification does not determine an individual’s Indigenous identity. Indigenous students who self-identify but do not meet the criteria for Indigenous Ancestry Verification, will not be excluded from accessing other resources and programs offered by Indigenous Student Services and the Indigenous Health Learning Lodge.

The principles used to guide the creation of the Indigenous Ancestry Verification Guidelines are outlined in Appendix A.

Use of Ancestry Verification at McMaster University

Indigenous Ancestry Verification may be used by McMaster University in the following scenarios:

- Scholarships, awards, and bursaries targeted for Indigenous learners.
- Facilitated admissions streams for Indigenous learners.
- Hiring of Indigenous faculty or staff for roles where priority is given to Indigenous hires, or roles that are restricted to Indigenous hires.
- Hiring of Indigenous faculty or staff for positions where there is no priority given to Indigenous hires, but the candidate chooses to self-identify as part of the hiring process.
- Hiring of Indigenous guest speakers, visiting professors, or community partners.
- Prizes, titles, or endowed chairs awarded to Indigenous faculty members.
- Any other process where an individual with Indigenous ancestry may receive benefits or material advantage.

Indigenous Ancestry Verification may be used in addition to other application criteria and does not guarantee offers of admissions; successful applications for scholarships, bursaries, or awards; offers of employment; or other benefits or material advantage.

Documentation to support Indigenous Ancestry Verification

All documentation submitted for purposes of Indigenous Ancestry Verification will be overseen by the Indigenous Education Council and accessed by members of the Indigenous Ancestry Verification Committee only.

In cases where documentation does not provide sufficient information for Indigenous Ancestry Verification, individuals may be asked by the Indigenous Ancestry Verification committee to participate in interview questions that allow the individual to share further information on their Indigenous ancestry, community, or nation.

The name of the individual must match the name on all documents submitted for verification. In cases where an individual's name does not match the document submitted for verification, individuals must also submit an original legal name-linking document, such as a change of name certificate, marriage certificate, or divorce order, that links the previous name with the current name.

A. First Nations

First Nations individuals may submit one of the following to meet the criteria for Indigenous Ancestry Verification:

- Secure Certificate of Indian Status
- Certificate of Indian Status
- Temporary confirmation of Registration
- Official First Nations-issued identification document

American Indians/Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians

- Documentation of citizenship or enrollment with a U.S. Tribe; Certificate Degree of Indian Blood; Tribal Enrollment or ID card

In the absence of a government - or band-issued document as listed above, First Nations individuals may submit one of the following for review by the Indigenous Ancestry Verification Committee:

- Written confirmation of membership from a federally recognized band.
- Documentation that confirms a parent, grandparent, or great-grandparent's name has been entered in the Indian Registrar according to the Indian Act, or on the band list of an individual band; must be accompanied by a long form birth certificate.
- Signed affidavit from the individual which outlines their current familial relationship to the First Nation, including the specific name of the community, as well as their relationship to and name of the enrolled community member; must be accompanied by a long form birth certificate.

B. Métis

Métis individuals may submit one of the following to meet the criteria for Indigenous Ancestry Verification:

- Citizenship card issued from the Manitoba Métis Federation
- Citizenship card issued from a Métis registry recognized by the Métis National Council
 - Métis Nation of Alberta
 - Métis Nation British Columbia
 - Métis Nation of Ontario
 - Métis Nation Saskatchewan
- Membership card from one the Métis Settlements of Alberta

In the absence of a citizenship or membership card as listed above, Métis individuals may submit one of the following for review by the Indigenous Ancestry Verification Committee:

- Written confirmation of Métis identity from a recognized provincial governing body.
- Proof that a grandparent or ancestor's name has been entered in a registry recognized by the Métis National Council; must be accompanied by a long form birth certificate.
- Signed affidavit from individual outlining their Métis identity in the absence of government/registry-issued document. The statement should describe their current membership, citizenship, or family relation to a current Métis community. This should include the specific name of the community, and how they are related and/or enrolled as a community member; must be accompanied by a long form birth certificate.

C. Inuit

Inuit individuals may submit one of the following to meet the criteria for Indigenous Ancestry Verification:

- Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. card (NTI card/land claim beneficiary card)
- Documentation from one of four Inuit regions in Canada (Inuvialuit, Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut), or Inuit communities in Alaska

In the absence of an NTI card, land claim beneficiary card or documentation as listed above, Inuit individuals may submit the following for review by the Indigenous Ancestry Verification Committee:

- Proof that an ancestor's name has been entered in a recognized Inuit roll

- Written statement from individual outlining their Inuk identity in the absence of government/beneficiary document. The statement should describe their current membership, citizenship, or family relation to a current Inuit community. This should include the specific name of the community, how they are related and/or enrolled as a community member.

Compliance

The Indigenous Ancestry Verification guidelines apply to all members of the University community. Individuals who are found to have knowingly falsified information or documents provided to the Indigenous Ancestry Verification committee may be subject to disciplinary action within the University's applicable jurisdiction. Such disciplinary action shall follow the appropriate procedures as outlined in the relevant University policy, collective agreement, or legislation, as applicable.

Members of the McMaster University community include, but are not limited to, students (applicants, graduate, undergraduate, and continuing education), staff and faculty members, medical residents, volunteers, visitors (including visiting professors), and institutional administrators and officials representing McMaster University.

Privacy

Personal information collected to support indigenous ancestry verification is managed in compliance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, McMaster's [Privacy Management Policy](#), and [Notice of Collection, Use and Disclosure Statement](#). Access to personal information is restricted to university employees whose duties require such access to process verification requests. For more information on how McMaster University manages personal information, check out the [Privacy Office website](#). Questions on the collection of personal information to support the Indigenous Ancestry Verification process may be addressed to iec@mcmaster.ca

APPENDIX A: Principles for Indigenous Ancestry Verification

The following four principles are influenced by the Anishinaabek, Nehiyawewak, & Haudenosaunee Nations. We recognize that other Nations have similar principles and/or others that inform protocols that guide our responsibilities to one another. These principles are reflected in the current McMaster Indigenous community members and the territories we inhabit. As a living document, the Ancestry Verification Protocol can be adapted to reflect the ongoing diversity of Indigeneity at McMaster University.

These guiding principles support our work in creating an Indigenous ancestry verification method. We understand that Indigenous ancestry verification is a complex and colonial facet of academia. We respect those Indigenous people who have been dispossessed or displaced from their ancestors. We will do our best to understand those requesting verification who may not be able to present a 'legitimate' or government-issued 'card'. We see these principles as reciprocal and while the Ad hoc Ancestry Verification Committee shall hold ourselves to these values, anyone seeking verification shall honour these principles as well.

Debwewin/tapwewin/tokenskeshera'/Truth and Truthfulness

This principle honours the value of openness, transparency, honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness. As we work through the verification process, ad hoc (when necessary or needed) members will do their best to come to the table with open hearts and minds. There are alternative ways to verify/prove ancestry and we promise to be guided by this value of truth and truthfulness. Truthfulness creates and nourishes social bonds and community. Truth telling is interconnected with dependability, consistency, and confidentiality.

Kina Ndawendaagnag/wâhkohtowin/tehotirihwayendwá:kon/Kinship & Good Relations

This principle outlines the responsibility that we share as Indigenous Peoples to be a good relative. We each carry a responsibility to our seven generations, three generations before today's generation and three generations in the future. We must carry ourselves and act accountably with all these generations in mind. Our actions today have reverberating effects for future generations.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin/miyo-pimâtisiwin/Ka'nikonhri:io/Living a good life & having a good mind

Mino-bimaadiziwin, the idea of 'living a good life' or 'living well,' is central to the Anishinaabe Seven Grandfather Teachings. However, the concepts within Mino-bimaadiziwin can be found in other Indigenous cultures, such as in the Haudenosaunee notion of Peace, Power, and Righteousness. The ideals contained within Mino-bimaadiziwin permeate through our guiding principles, however, highlight Fairness, Balance, Harmony, Health and Wellness as these are at the forefront of developing and implementing a policy of Indigenous ancestry verification.

Zhawenjigewin/kisêwâtisiwin/Ateniteróntshera'/Kindness

This principle emphasizes that this work is done with respect for one's own journey of identity and belonging. Traditional teachings on humility explain that no one knows everything; and in this case, no one has the best or perfect description of their identity. To show kindness when receiving someone's identity story means exercising humility, empathy and at times compassion. Some may feel vulnerable to share or receive a personal story. To show kindness means to focus on someone's identity story and how it relates to the job or award criteria; avoiding processes that make judgements on the whole person.