

# Indigenous Strategic Directions

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL MCMaster INDIGENOUS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

MCMaster UNIVERSITY 2021



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# Preamble

The publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action set in motion a shift in the way all Canadian institutions relate to Indigenous peoples. McMaster University has a desire and responsibility to enhance the experience of Indigenous Peoples on campus and beyond. With respect to the Indigenous strategic priorities identified for McMaster University in this document, it is understood that reconciliation efforts are an *ongoing process* of dismantling colonial regulatory environments and not simply a singular event or series of events. Implementation of TRC recommendations should be tracked to measure McMaster's performance in responding to the calls to action.

Because culture lives in language, it is important to understand from the outset how terms like Indigenous, self-determination, community, equity, diversity and inclusion are imagined in this report. The term 'Indigenous' is simplistic. It fails to recognize the distinct nationhood of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe Peoples as well as the many other cultural groups at McMaster such as the Métis, Cree and Inuit. However, no other single word substitute for 'Indigenous' was considered appropriate: its use here is qualified to inclusively represent the many language groups and ethnic variation of Indigenous Peoples. In addition, the term community is used in the most inclusive way possible to refer to Indigenous peoples *wherever* they live, congregate or organize no matter how simple or sophisticated. Community is recognized as a group of people who gather to create change no matter how humble their resources.

The concept of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as expressed through the McMaster-wide initiative should be considered in the most generous and honorable terms where *all* feel welcome to be freely *self-expressed, heard and understood*. Still, equity initiatives alone will never achieve Indigenous reconciliation goals. The notion of 'equity' was perhaps the most difficult term to shape within an Indigenous context. Equity is a natural by-product and not an end unto itself if we adhere to the principles and values of the Seven Grandfather Teachings, Two Row Wampum and Dish with One Spoon agreements. Equity operationalizes a common Indigenous value expressed by the term 'all my relations', where inclusive environments ensure that everyone is respected, difference is celebrated, and relationships are upheld and guarded by respect, trust, sharing and reciprocity.

Finally, self-determining Indigenous leadership is characterized as meaningful direction setting and decision making and, when taken together, will significantly improve representation in every faculty and at every level of operation. While it is understood that colonial structures and systems must be

disrupted or dismantled, the language here is decidedly focused on Indigenous rights as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The strategic directions contained here are imagined as a McMaster University campus-wide approach sustained by a broad network of institutional and other allies within and beyond the university. Informed, ethical support from allies to implement this plan is characterized by:

- A fulsome understanding that *everyone* has been impacted by colonialism;
- Recognition of the enormous contemporary relevance of Indigenous cultures, worldviews and ways of knowing where traditional Indigenous knowledge, science and andragogy is used across many disciplines and as a framework for creatively resolving contemporary challenges (e.g., climate, social and legal);
- Indigenous self-determination is sustained by a significantly better balance of opportunity, power and resources; and
- Indigenous leadership aligns with the primacy of the collective and is true to cultural principles and goals.

This work was financially supported by the Provost at McMaster University. Investments of time and energy from a variety of senior administrators, Indigenous scholar leaders and staff at McMaster sustained momentum above and beyond the funding received from the Provost.



# Section 1 Introduction by IEC/MIRI

*On behalf of the Indigenous Education Council (IEC) and the McMaster Indigenous Research Institute (MIRI), it is our pleasure to offer the results of our strategic planning efforts resulting from a series of engagement strategies that included several meetings and a community engagement survey.*

The key goals of the process were to refresh vision and mission statements and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks over the foreseeable future. The process has revealed action priorities that are in alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and aim to advance strategic goals for the immediate future.

The overarching aim is increased visibility and value of Indigenous cultural relevance and andragogy at every level of university operation with an enduring commitment to a culturally safe campus for Indigenous students, staff and scholars. To invest strategically and inspire more cohesive relationships, the advancement of Indigenous leadership in research, education, student experience and governance is necessary. To ensure clarity, Indigenous leadership is characterized as meaningful direction setting and decision making *everywhere* on campus.

The IEC and MIRI want to acknowledge and thank all of the Indigenous scholar leaders who maintained or contributed to this effort as well as the Indigenous staff, students and community members who generously gave of their time and offered ideas that will create a university environment that supports reconciliation and self-determination.

# Section 2 Vision and Mission Statements

## Vision Statement

McMaster University has respectful, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous peoples that uphold their rights and self-determination in the academy and territory.

## Mission Statement

To uphold Indigenous leadership in education and research in ways that guarantee Indigenous rights to self-determination and reconciliation.

# Section 3 Opportunities and Threats

*The environment at McMaster and in the region is changing rapidly, and the ability to be flexible in the immediate and indeterminate future is critical to ensuring strategic direction.*

Of particular interest is Canada's unqualified adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action and McMaster's equity, diversity and inclusion efforts. An overview of the context in which these strategic directions will be operationalized over the immediate future is offered in Table 1. All of the opportunities and threats have the potential to influence research, education, student experience, leadership and governance. ➔



**Table 1: Opportunities and Threats**

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action</li> <li>• United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</li> <li>• Brighter World Research Initiatives</li> <li>• Santee Smith, First Indigenous Chancellor</li> <li>• EDI Strategy at McMaster</li> <li>• Sustainable funding for Indigenous undergraduate summer scholar’s program</li> <li>• MIRI nurturing Indigenous students to consider graduate studies (IUSRS)</li> <li>• Vice President Research who recognizes Indigenous priorities as key</li> <li>• Possibility of an Indigenous Associate Vice President</li> <li>• Senior Indigenous positions on campus (i.e., Associate Dean Indigenous Health, Faculty of Health Sciences)</li> <li>• Robust committed resources for student recruitment</li> <li>• Tri-agency Council contributions</li> <li>• Six Nations Polytechnic accreditation (e.g., Bachelor’s in Ojwehoweh Languages)</li> <li>• Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Inquiry Report</li> <li>• New President of McMaster</li> <li>• Development of Indigenous themed arts program</li> <li>• Community organizations need Indigenous talent</li> <li>• Guidance and influence of Faculty of Health Sciences Knowledge-Helpers</li> <li>• Establishment of Indigenous Health Learning Lodge in the Faculty of Health Sciences</li> <li>• Uncertain funding under strategic mandate agreement</li> <li>• School of Arts curriculum updates</li> <li>• Indigenous spaces on campus</li> <li>• Collaboration with sciences, technology, engineering, arts and math</li> <li>• EDI aspirational goals and consultation with Indigenous scholars</li> <li>• Six Nations Polytechnic recruitment</li> <li>• Indigenous pre-doctoral fellowship tenure track positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal number of Indigenous faculty</li> <li>• Informal and unclear Indigenous decision making in university administration</li> <li>• Non-tenured Indigenous faculty</li> <li>• Non-Indigenous leads on McMaster’s Indigenous files</li> <li>• The burden of negative colonial impacts in Indigenous communities</li> <li>• Nestlé operations in southern Ontario and its impact on water shortages</li> <li>• Four-year 24-billion-liter sewage leak into Chedoke Creek (Hamilton, Ontario) and cover up by Hamilton municipal council</li> <li>• Transition in senior leadership at McMaster</li> <li>• Unstable and chronic underfunding of post-secondary education for Indigenous learners</li> <li>• Student funding is not always indexed to inflation</li> <li>• Colonizing influences on mental health</li> <li>• Stress related to informal Indigenous leadership roles and burden of service work</li> <li>• Lack of affordable housing</li> </ul>

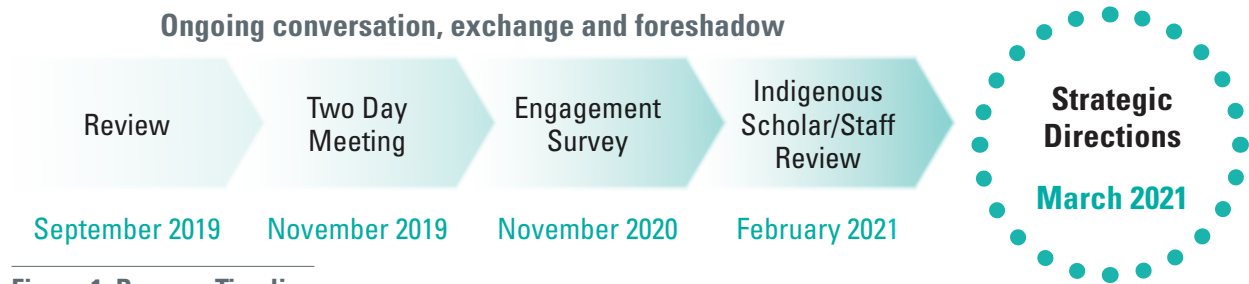
# Section 4 Strategic Directions

*It is worthy to note that there is ample evidence of many underlying strengths upon which all strategic directions can rest.*

The strategic directions, presented below, were generated through conversations on campus using three key engagement strategies:

- 1) face-to-face meetings;
- 2) a broad-based survey of key stakeholders including students, faculty, staff and community members where community included Indigenous organizations in the region (on- and off-reserve); as well as
- 3) ongoing investment of a core editorial committee of Indigenous scholar and staff leaders.

Resulting from this consultation, convergent themes were prepared into a final draft that was submitted to the Indigenous caucus of the IEC for review. The process timeline is represented in Figure 1. ➔



**Figure 1: Process Timeline**

Input toward developing a strategic focus for Indigenous initiatives on campus was evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Advances and empowers Indigenous scholars, students, staff and communities
- Guards and protects Indigenous cultural integrity at McMaster
- Responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action; and
- Upholds the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Strategic goals are organized under the headings Research, Education, Student Experience, and Leadership and Governance as components of an integrated system with synergistic potential. Short- and long-term goals are in chronological priority by reading left to right in Figures 2-5, and while the goals are in sharp focus, suggested actions offer a broad range of possibility. These strategic directions emerge as immediate priorities: but they are not fixed. Instead, in keeping with a key tenet of Indigenous knowledge, which is always in flux and reflects the change within the world around us, these strategic directions are an ever-evolving vision of an academy that recognizes the value of Indigenous cultures and self-determination. As environments (internal and external) are always changing, the triggers to re-evaluate these priorities are stated in the closing remarks.

It is worthy to note that there is ample evidence of many underlying strengths upon which all strategic directions can rest. The environmental strengths and weaknesses shared here are best imagined as an impressionist painting of a point in time toward greater Indigenous leadership at McMaster rather than an exact photograph. Historical progress toward increasing the visibility and value of Indigenous culture and andragogy at McMaster is clear in Table 2. This progress is the result of dedicated Indigenous scholars, students and staff and forward-thinking university administrators who have broken barriers to open possibility. This track record serves as proof that the goals imagined here are within reach for McMaster University. Over time and with appropriate communications of these ideas, it is anticipated that many leaders will be inspired by these strategic directions and ensure their uptake on campus and beyond. McMaster can be an institutional ally in the transition toward a more hospitable academy for Indigenous scholars and students domestically and internationally. ➔

**Table 2: Timeline of Indigenous Leadership at McMaster University**

Date	Initiative
1989	McMaster First Nations' Student Association established; President's Committee on Native Students established; First targeted recruitment strategies in Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississauga of New Credit
1991	Indigenous Studies Program established; Indigenous Student Counsellor hired full time
1992	President's Committee on Indigenous Issues; First McMaster University Indigenous Action Plan; School of Social Work Aboriginal Admissions Process accepted by the Senate
1993	First cohort of Aboriginal students accepted with Social Work Aboriginal Admissions process
1994	Curriculum expansion to forty-two units per year
n.d.	Arts and Sciences sets aside two seats for Indigenous students; Partnership with Six Nations Polytechnic formalized; Partnership with Grand Erie Six Nations Clinical Education Center
2000	Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Studies
n.d.	Health Science Coordinator hired to amplify the participation of Indigenous students in medical education
2001	Aboriginal Issues Committee established in School of Social Work
2002	Aboriginal Directions document published; Native Students Health Sciences Office established
n.d.	Aboriginal admissions program established for Faculty of Medicine
2005	Native Students Health Sciences Office renamed Aboriginal Students Health Sciences Office
2006	Indigenous Affairs Liaison established to facilitate positive relations between McMaster First Nations' Student Association and the McMaster Student Union
2007	Indigenous pre-doctorate, tenure track position was accepted in Senate; pre-doctorate fellowships for Indigenous students established
2009	Aboriginal Education and Post-Secondary Action Plan; Thirty-six Indigenous medical students have graduated or are in training; Four faculties have Indigenous-specific programming and services; First candidate in Indigenous pre-doctorate tenure track position begins
2010	Wilson Institute for Canadian History appoints CLA specializing in Indigenous History
2012	Indigenous Education Council and Indigenous Health Taskforce established; Partnership with Six Nations Polytechnic to establish first cohort of Registered Practical Nursing to Bachelor of Science - Nursing
2013	McMaster Indigenous Graduate Student group established; Paul R. MacPherson Chair in Indigenous Studies established
2015	Indigenous Student Services established as a standalone office; Second Indigenous pre-doctorate tenure track position is filled
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McMaster Indigenous Research Institute established</li> <li>• Indigenous Studies Program evolves to four-year Honours baccalaureate</li> <li>• Outdoor teaching classroom established</li> </ul>
2017	Indigenous admissions self-identification policy is passed for Faculty of Health Sciences; Thirty-two undergraduate/graduate/post-graduate programs in Health Sciences have facilitated admissions process for Indigenous applicants
2019	Appointment of McMaster's first Indigenous Chancellor; Office of the Registrar admissions communication includes land acknowledgement
2020	Indigenous Alum elected as President of the McMaster Alumni Association
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associate Dean, Indigenous, Faculty of Health Sciences</li> <li>• Establishment of Faculty of Health Sciences, Indigenous Health Learning Lodge</li> </ul>

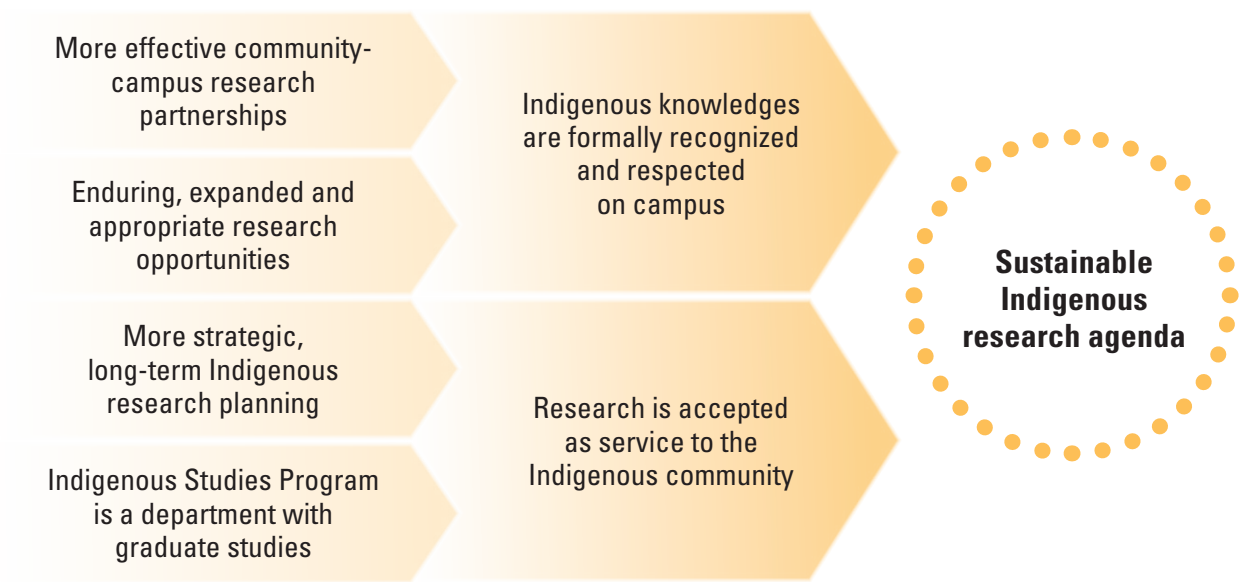
## 4.1 Research

Over time, there has been an increasing number of Indigenous scholars at McMaster engaged in community-focused research who use Indigenous approaches to research. Despite the advancement of Indigenous research methodologies, they remain the exclusive domain of Indigenous scholars. Ideally, the value of diverse Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, ethics and cultures are more widely adopted and used with western approaches. When western and Indigenous epistemologies are used in ways that allow for their fullest expression and complementarity, the result is stronger than any singular focus (i.e., two-eyed seeing). Similarly, the principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®) over Indigenous research processes has gained significant traction nationally and is widely respected by Indigenous scholars.

However, sustainable funding for an Indigenous research agenda that is maximally aligned with the aspirations of Indigenous Peoples remains elusive. Stronger connections to a broader domestic and international network, equitable opportunities to be appointed as research chairs, tenured and supported with research assistance would boost Indigenous scholarship. Finally, without departmental status, the Indigenous Studies Program is prohibited from offering graduate programs and associated research opportunities. This research context potentially limits how McMaster attracts, hires and retains future Indigenous scholars, staff and students to campus. It is understood that movement toward departmental status will require closer examination by all parties to determine the more practical aspects of this development.

All faculties need to ensure equitable opportunities for Indigenous scholars to apply for Research Chair positions, and all faculty recruitment offers should explore how to include a Chair appointment. Setting aside at least five Indigenous Canada Research Chairs would accelerate Indigenous leadership and scholarship in ways that contributes to broader university goals. Accountability measures need to be in place to ensure that Indigeneity is connected to community and is legitimately verified. Indigenous leadership in selection and recruitment processes needs to be in place to ensure *rightful* assignment of Indigenous candidates to this role.

Finally, McMaster Indigenous Research Institute's funding is coming up for renewal in June, 2021, and the five-year faculty commitment ends in June, 2022. The need for increased awareness education and training regarding Indigenous research methodologies and research with Indigenous populations is an important focus for faculty, students and Brighter World research initiative stakeholders across the university. Reinvigorating the Institute with committed long-term funding would support Indigenous scholarship and self-determination and contribute to the ongoing hosting of the Indigenous Undergraduate Summer Research Scholars program. To advance McMaster as a university with a global reputation for Indigenous scholarship, the following strategic goals and actions are highlighted in Figure 2 and Table 3. ➔



**Figure 2: Research Strategic Directions**

**Table 3: Research – Strategic Directions**

<b>Affirm McMaster’s Indigenous Research Institute</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster supportive leadership orientation process to support new MIRI director who can rely on visible, enduring, adequate space and sustainable funding;</li> <li>• Profile MIRI as a hub for local Indigenous communities to have their research needs and priorities addressed;</li> <li>• Review research impact more broadly through Indigenous knowledge systems; and</li> <li>• Consider the specific research and community engagement opportunities of undergraduate, graduate students and faculty.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthen response to contemporary Indigenous research priorities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise the profile of Indigenous researchers, community research priorities and methods;</li> <li>• Build capacity in the community and among scholars in Indigenous research methods;</li> <li>• Create community research officers/navigators to support the research process from design to knowledge translation and exchange phases;</li> <li>• Emphasize climate change, water and the use of Indigenous traditional knowledge in the research agenda and respond to an Indigenous ever-evolving driven research agenda;</li> <li>• Establish an Indigenous Scholar in Community Fellowship;</li> <li>• Make resource commitments to Indigenous research done by Indigenous scholars;</li> <li>• Build research capacity at the community level with more collaborative protocols; and</li> <li>• Continue to foster community engagement in the Indigenous Undergraduate Summer Research Scholars program that best supports community research aspirations. ➔</li> </ul>

### Respect, support and reward Indigenous scholarship

- Develop an inclusive and high-functioning academy where Indigenous epistemologies can function with moral independence or co-exist, merge and interplay with western science;
- Advance the Indigenous Studies Program to departmental status with graduate studies;
- Enhance administrative support for Indigenous institutions and scholars;
- Ensure equitable opportunities for Indigenous scholars to apply for Research Chair positions with selection processes that are inclusive and congruent with emerging Indigenous self-identification guidelines;
- Ensure research funding agencies understand and support Indigenous research methodologies;
- Recognize Indigenous cultural imperatives of community collective service in tenure reviews;
- Provide time release to Indigenous scholars involved in multiple community research projects as well as writing retreats to guarantee time for publishing;
- Develop innovative, equitable and competitive recruitment packages together with well structured and systematically funded orientation that address the needs of Indigenous scholars;
- Accredite experiential graduate work for students, youth and community members engaged in research;
- Develop an easy access primer of Indigenous andragogy, epistemology, traditional knowledge and meaningful engagement (include theory, methods, ethics and protocols as well as principles and process of meaningful engagement); and
- Ensure funding and job security to establish a campus environment that is attractive to Indigenous scholars and staff.

## 4.2 Education

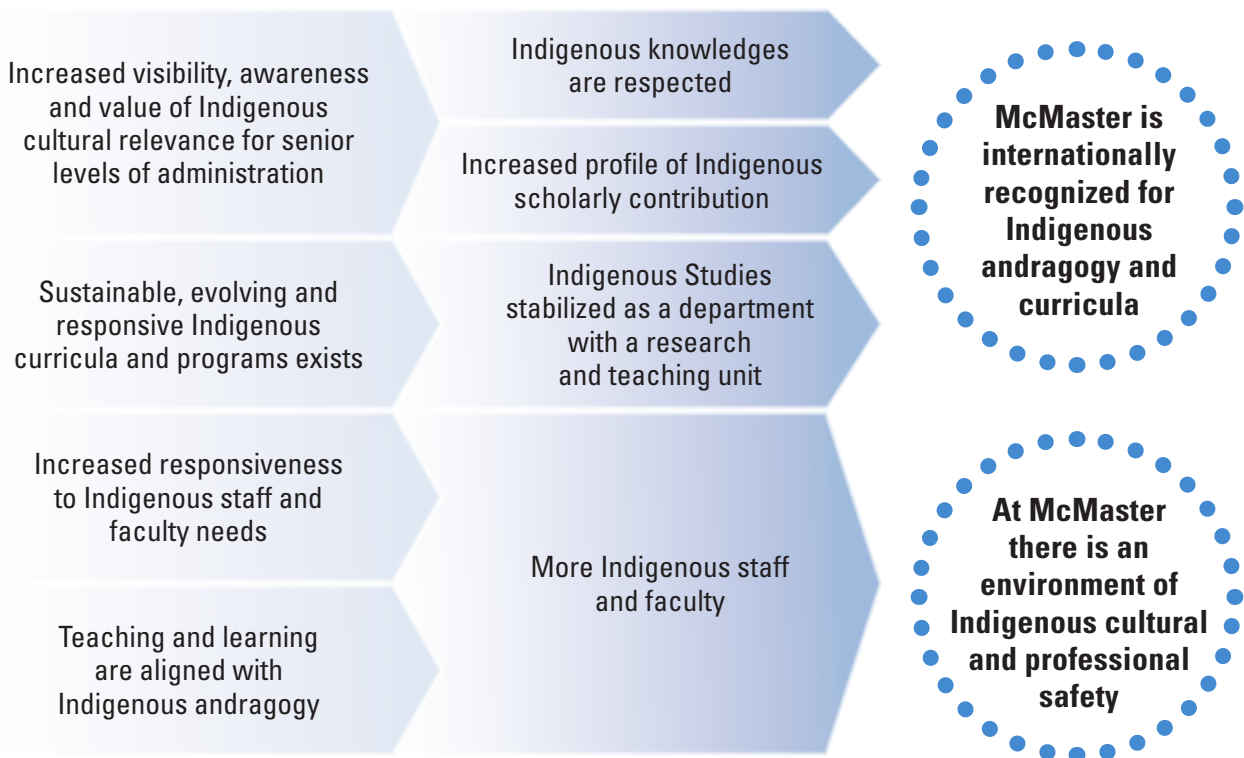
McMaster has a three-decade long record of leadership in Indigenous studies and scholarship with one of the longest-standing programs in Canada. The Indigenous Studies Program is growing but more than half of all courses offered must be taught by sessional lecturers and CLAs. To thrive and grow Indigenous scholarship on campus, the program needs departmental status, permanent faculty (i.e., not cross appointed) and a graduate program. Indigenous Studies with official departmental status could stabilize Indigenous scholarly contributions as a fully functioning teaching unit where directors of Indigenous studies are tenured. As a rule, the presence of Elders on campus together with cultural safety training efforts and materials are celebrated assets. In addition, the roles of IEC and MIRI were acknowledged as important strengths, and the contributions of Indigenous scholars are visible in recruitment literature and on McMaster's website.

Strategic Indigenous recruitment and retention will enable McMaster to further its Indigenous studies leadership in Canada and expand the impact of educational and research programs. This goal is directly and inextricably linked to the amplification of Indigenous representation at the faculty level. Indigenous faculty, student and staff recruitment and retention could also be bolstered by more formalized accommodation of community engaged research (i.e., principle of

affinity), better alignment of workload to career stage, sufficient administrative support, and annual/extended research leave supporting Indigenous community engagement.

To support a sustainable, responsive environment for Indigenous scholars, there is a need for a program/policy review process as well as greater self-determination when recruiting and retaining Indigenous scholars. While there are tenured Indigenous faculty at McMaster, there are very few departments offering tenure to Indigenous scholars. The range of course offerings could be expanded to include Indigenous content, including a focus on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action. All courses would benefit from greater integration or use of Indigenous culture, literature, and decolonizing and Indigenous methodologies.

Participants noted that Indigenous curriculum materials (i.e., books, journals, archives and videos) could all be stronger and that dedicated workspace, technology and resources are still needed. The strategic goals and recommended actions are highlighted in Figure 3 and Table 4 respectively.



**Figure 3: Strategic Directions for Education**





**Table 4: Education Strategic Directions**

<b>Amplify the expression of Indigenous culture and self-determination</b>
<p><b>Andragogy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revitalize Indigenous languages and cultures (e.g., cultural programs, Indigenous curriculum, Indigenous andragogical approaches, etc.) while upholding self-determination;</li><li>• Profile Indigenous cultural contributions in all courses ensuring that Indigenous scholarship is advanced across a broad spectrum;</li><li>• Advance experiential or hands-on learning in real time with Indigenous knowledge keepers;</li><li>• Update course content extending beyond colonial history to include Indigenous languages, Haudenosaunee or Anishinaabe law;</li><li>• Create student experiences where land, culture and language are integral;</li><li>• Establish an Indigenous sustainability degree within the appropriate faculty with land-based learning at Six Nations Polytechnic;</li><li>• Across all faculties, mandate an Indigenous studies course for all that includes content related to the treaty relationship, Two Row Wampum and the constitutional enshrinement of Indigenous rights;</li><li>• Expand access to Indigenous course content (timing, range and platforms for content); and</li><li>• Align all decision makers, particularly Deans, to guarantee the inclusion of Indigenous epistemology and andragogy in the academy.</li></ul>
<p><b>Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Educate all senior administrators on the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Report;</li><li>• Create openings and possibilities for the expression of Indigenous self-determination in ways that maximally align with UNDRIP and TRC by Deans and Department Chairs;</li><li>• Strengthen the authority of the IEC and finalize recruitment of Community Co-Chair role;</li><li>• Determine and monitor degree of inclusivity in IEC process and share and distribute the workload with subcommittees;</li><li>• Clarify how Indigenous knowledge will be respected, co-exist, merge and interplay with western science; and</li><li>• Account for wealth creation and distribution associated with land and resources in addition to land acknowledgements.</li></ul>
<p><b>Indigenous Scholars and Staff</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hire significantly more tenure-track Indigenous faculty using accelerated diversity hiring model (e.g., cluster hire) with shared funds;</li><li>• Advance the Indigenous Studies Program to departmental status with graduate studies;</li><li>• Create an Indigenous Staff Circle that links with Indigenous Health Learning Lodge and expand the Learning Lodge model to all faculties;</li><li>• Develop principles and practices to address ethnic fraud in scholarship awards and in admissions;</li><li>• Transition temporary staff roles in Indigenous systems on campus into permanent positions;</li><li>• Review program/policies on developing new policies that respond to challenges and barriers identified in the review to ensure Indigenous health practitioners feel highly valued and supported; and</li><li>• Offer more professional development/leadership training for staff and faculty. ➔</li></ul>

### Strengthen accountability

- Conduct an audit to determine McMaster's compliance with anti-racism ideals, UNDRIP and TRC calls to action;
- Measure McMaster's performance based on action and investment related to historical recommendations made by Indigenous scholars and leaders;
- Review human resource policies and make amendments that amplify Indigenous representation; and
- Establish and pilot a Black, Indigenous, People of Colour employee resource group with the African-Caribbean Faculty at McMaster and other select partners.

### Reinforce connection to Indigenous communities

- Renew relationship with Haudenosaunee Confederacy and strengthen relationship with Anishinaabe nations;
- Create and foster partnerships with McPherson Institute to advance strategic action much like the education primer under development: next steps would include an Indigenous research primer and an Indigenous andragogy primer;
- Renew dialogue with Six Nations Polytechnic and Indigenous Knowledge Centre; and
- Establish a mechanism for more face-to-face communication with Indigenous communities.

## 4.3 Indigenous Student Experience

Many strengths were noted that support the attainment of strategic goals identified for Indigenous students' experience including but not limited to:

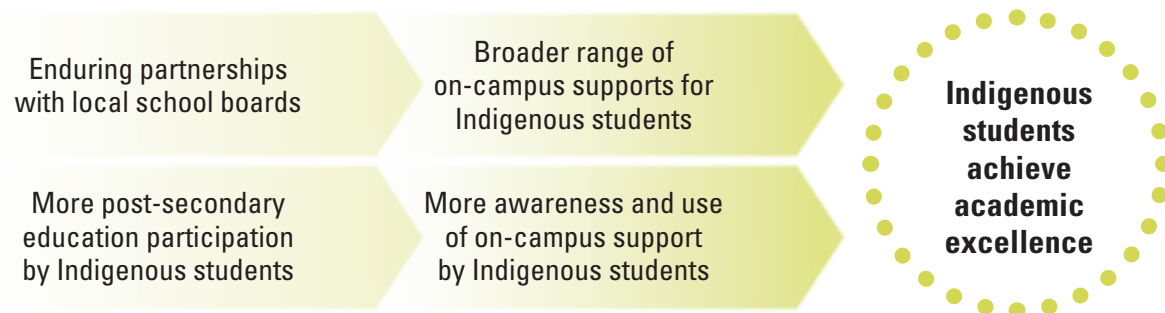
- Positive, long-term relationships with local schools;
- Indigenous cultural programming on campus;
- Indigenous-specific admissions processes for social work and health science faculties;
- Value of scholarships and bursaries available to Indigenous students;
- Indigenous undergraduate and graduate groups;
- Indigenous speaker's series, tours and student's centre; and
- Full-time access and student services role.

Increasing access and success in post-secondary education requires supporting Indigenous student experiences with greater cultural safety. Many of the goals that have been classified under education in this document will also apply to the student experience. Although the sheer numbers of Indigenous students have increased over time (from 379 in 2012 to 512 in 2020), their representation on campus has diminished (1.7% of the total McMaster student population in 2011/2012 to 1.6% in 2019/2020). Transparency is needed regarding how many Indigenous students receive offers, how many accept those offers and whether or not McMaster is able

to retain Indigenous students once they arrive. Securing this data is complicated by the lack of a meaningful Indigenous identification process that eliminates fraudulent claims of Indigenous identity.

There is room for improvement in recruiting rural and remote students as well as providing distance (e.g., community-based satellite campuses and e-learning courses) and land-based learning opportunities. Coordination and centralization of Indigenous student supports, housing and transportation services, as well as Indigenous representation on admissions committees for other faculties beyond social work and health sciences could be strengthened. Finally, a more up-to-date assessment of student needs and additional full-time positions for an Indigenous liaison or student services officer would allow McMaster to better meet current and long-standing needs.

A better student experience would be supported by an expanded, sustainable team of dedicated staff that could attend to the strategic goals and suggested actions highlighted in Figure 4 and Table 5 respectively.



**Figure 4: Strategic Directions for Indigenous Student Experience**



**Table 5: Student Experience Strategic Directions**

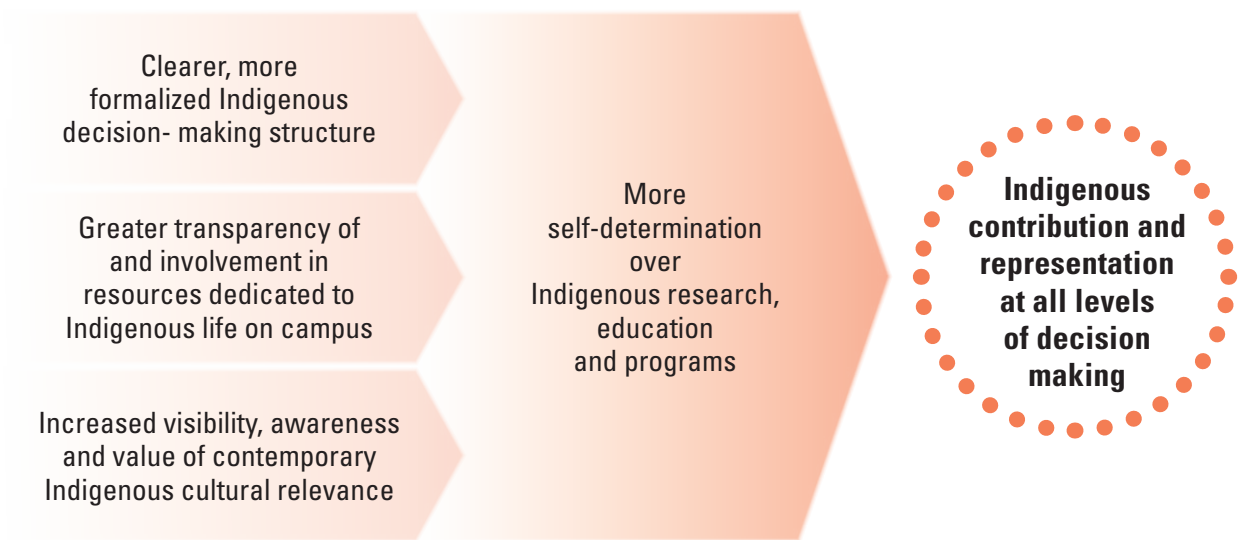
<b>Amplify Indigenous admission</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase outreach and connections with secondary students (i.e., Six Nations, Hamilton, rural and remote communities) during admissions and their transition to campus;</li> <li>• Review and adapt admissions criteria to better support Indigenous inclusion;</li> <li>• Implement secondary assessment process and improve communication;</li> <li>• Use and report on collected disaggregated Indigenous self-identification data during admissions process; and</li> <li>• Change criteria for acceptance to McMaster considering a broader range of experience and skill.</li> </ul>
<b>Expand and stabilize support systems that guarantee Indigenous student success</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on student mental health and wellbeing;</li> <li>• Ease the transition from high school to campus with more personal, supportive connections (e.g., link Social Sciences' Inquiry courses targeting first year students) where students can feel heard, understood and valued;</li> <li>• Recognize and address how lateral violence affects all Indigenous people on campus with practical supports like reinforcing the Indigenous values of respect, inclusion and collectivity in the learner experience and develop an Indigenous Peoples Code of Conduct;</li> <li>• Hire at least one full-time equivalent to expand opportunities for mentorship, access with Elders and Indigenous faculty, recreation, social events, leadership and skills development. (e.g., tutoring), housing, family and child care;</li> <li>• Improve communications to ensure all Indigenous learners are aware of the supports available and to generate dialogue and feedback from students;</li> <li>• Establish protocols and principles for student self-identification data and ancestry verification when confirming Indigenous identity;</li> <li>• Secure funding for existing services, expand the Indigenous Student's Services office; and</li> <li>• Create an Indigenous student's centre, Indigenous student government and greater student representation in all Indigenous systems and structures at McMaster.</li> </ul>

## 4.4 Leadership and Governance

Indigenous leadership at McMaster has been strong over the decades as indicated by the timeline of progress in Table 2. There are several Indigenous entities with significant influence in matters related to students, education and research. Many Indigenous advisory bodies (e.g., Indigenous Education Council, McMaster Indigenous Research Institute, Joint Advisory Indigenous Consultation Group) have direct lines of communication with the President. Still, the degree of Indigenous leadership in major resource allocations (at least \$1.6 million annually) remains informal and unclear. Indigenous leaders (staff, faculty and students) must be made aware of the fullest suite of decisions being made about Indigenous life on campus (e.g., faculty hires, CRC appointments, curricula, distribution of resources, etc.). On a foundation of complete transparency, Indigenous influence in these decision-making processes can be amplified in ways that are consistent with TRC Calls to Action as well as Canada's unqualified adoption of the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

While the Post-Secondary Education Fund for Aboriginal Learners transfer agreement obligates McMaster to maintain an IEC to ensure meaningful Indigenous engagement in decision making, more resources are needed to meet McMaster's ongoing commitment to TRC Calls to Action. Although there is an IEC representative Senate appointment, it is as *observer only*; thereby silencing Indigenous voice at the academic level. To amplify Indigenous voice in the interim, more ongoing and active participation by the President in the IEC process and continued regular meetings with the Provost are required. McMaster should also guarantee that representatives from Indigenous communities and organizations have *direct* access to the Board of Governors and the Senate by reserving a board seat for an Indigenous representative selected by Indigenous scholar leaders at McMaster with the support of Governors and Senators or through representation from the President as a member of the Indigenous Education Council.

Figure 5 illustrates the direction for more meaningful, shared decision making that integrates Indigenous leadership at the highest levels of McMaster governance. Table 6 offers the strategic action to achieve desired results. While the exact structure for more formalized participation in decision making is under development, the end goal is to ensure that a more collective Indigenous voice is heard, understood and formally and effectively represented in decision making. To resolve ambiguity about how Indigenous leadership can be advanced, the suggested governance structure where the role of community, Indigenous scholarship and IEC as a centralized point for decision-making authority with the President is offered in Figure 6. The possible appointment of a Vice President (VPI) is also illustrated in Figure 6 by a dotted line; however, it is important to qualify that an VPI role would not advance without significantly more review and clarification of the role's responsibilities. ➔



**Figure 5: Leadership and Governance Strategic Directions**

**Table 6: Indigenous Leadership Strategic Actions**

<b>Advance Indigenous decision-making authority at all levels</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and maintain a Two Row Wampum relationship beginning with Indigenous contribution and access to all levels of decision making;</li> <li>• Consider the fullest suite of decisions being made about Indigenous Peoples and identify who is making these decisions, with what evidence or advice, and clarify the degree of Indigenous influence and leadership in major resource allocations;</li> <li>• Guarantee an Indigenous representative that operates at the Senate level with full decision-making authority;</li> <li>• Proceed cautiously toward the appointment of an Indigenous Vice President with an environment scan that explores fullest range of possibility;</li> <li>• Expand decision-making authority for current Indigenous advisory structures (e.g., IEC); and</li> <li>• Support Indigenous leadership and teams by hiring an Indigenous communications specialist.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthen the Indigenous Education Council</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement community Co-Chair and Elder for IEC and revise budgets accordingly;</li> <li>• Add regular professional development related to Indigenous education and research;</li> <li>• Redesign and re-launch an IEC webpage where it is clear how information is shared with IEC and how it is used;</li> <li>• Reinstate the staff position at IEC;</li> <li>• Delegate financial resource review together with approval of university-wide Indigenous initiatives and investments at McMaster to IEC and MIRI; and</li> <li>• Guarantee the financial sustainability of IEC. ➔</li> </ul>

### Build transparency, accountability and synergy

- Educate all current and incoming senior administrators on the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the TRC;
- Conduct an audit in collaboration with the Equity, Inclusion and Diversity office at McMaster to determine compliance with anti-racism ideals, UNDRIP and TRC;
- Support widespread communication of contemporary Indigenous Strategic Directions;
- Develop cultural humility within McMaster's communications teams to foster greater Indigenous cultural competency in all communication regarding Indigenous issues and education;
- Measure McMaster's reputation for Indigenous scholarship;
- Clarify the opportunities and risks of alignment with McMaster's EDI strategy for everyone;
- Ensure that the content and decisions taken at all meetings related to Indigenous life on campus are widely accessible, transparent and explained;
- Illustrate what other supportive academic environments do to respond to Indigenous leadership and initiative;
- Ensure cross appointments are aligned with the career aspirations of Indigenous scholars;
- Create opportunities for the broadest cross fertilization of ideas between Indigenous groups on campus; and
- Open all Indigenous meetings across all faculties so that Indigenous scholars, students and staff can participate informally including, but not limited to, creating a more harmonized communication approach.

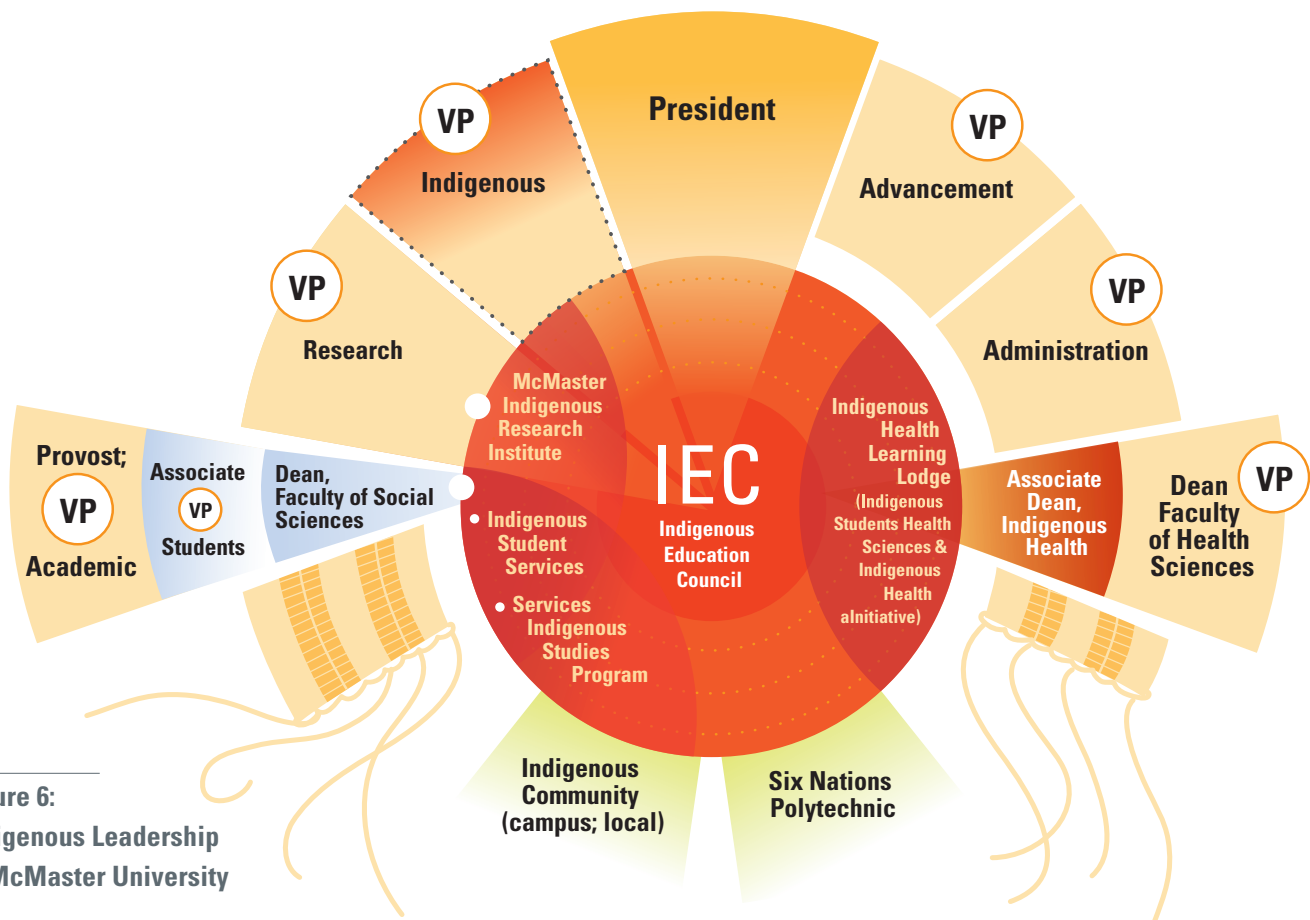


Figure 6:  
Indigenous Leadership  
at McMaster University

# Section 5 Potential Partnerships

*Everyone who finds inspiration in this emerging and evolving vision of an academy that reinforces Indigenous cultures and scholarship is welcomed to contribute.*

We know that the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action require *everyone* to rise, on campus and beyond. Partnerships in this endeavor are imagined broadly to include those on campus who can advance these goals as well as other funders and collaborators regionally and nationally. This is not a comprehensive list of potential partners but it is the beginning of a wide network of community, federal and campus-based contributors. ➔



## Community Partners

Indigenous community leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers also can play a role in holding McMaster to account for responding to these strategic directions. Other key community organizations that could advance these goals include:

- Community Representatives (local research committees or individuals who represent local or urban communities on research studies);
- Hamilton Regional Indian Centre;
- Six Nations Polytechnic;
- Deyohahá:ge: Indigenous Knowledge Centre;
- Chiefs of Ontario; and
- De dwa da dehs nye>s Indigenous Health Centre

## Federal Partners

Federal partners are seen primarily as funders or champions and include but are not limited to:

- Health Canada;
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research;
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council;
- National Sciences and Engineering Research Council;
- Assembly of First Nations;
- Métis National Council;
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami;
- Native Women's Association of Canada; and
- Heritage Canada.

## Research, Education and Student Experience Partners

Many on campus and beyond also have significant influence to move forward on these strategic priorities. They include but are not limited to:

- President
- Vice Presidents
- All Deans and Associate Deans;
- Vice President Administration;
- Vice President Research;
- Associate Vice President - Equity and Inclusion,
- Canada Research Chairs at McMaster;

- Department Chairs;
- Research and Ethics Review Boards;
- McMaster Board of Governors and Senate;
- Directors;
- Provost;
- Employment Equity and Labor Relations at McMaster;
- The Management Group Committee;
- Director of the Indigenous Studies Program;
- Indigenous employment and training organizations;
- Indigenous students and student groups;
- Student Support and Case Management Office;
- Sr. Advisor Equity and Inclusion (Student Affairs);
- Equity and Inclusion initiatives at McMaster, provincially and nationally;
- Indspire;
- Associate Vice President - Students and Learning;
- Registrar;
- Indigenous Student Services;
- Indigenous Health Learning Lodge & Indigenous Students Health Sciences;
- Faculty positions that advise on admissions; and
- McMaster Student Union reporting to the Indigenous Education Council.

Depending upon the internal uptake of the strategic actions identified here and a more fulsome assessment of resources needed, more partnerships can be imagined.

# Section 6 Closing

The strategic directions identified here are based on several assumptions that should be explicitly stated. While existing teams on campus may be able to move on the recommendations with operational plans that begin immediately in the spring of 2021, some goals will require the support of *new* leaders (e.g., Deans of every faculty) and external funding partners. It is also assumed that a stable governance structure will exist to manage, administer and monitor the performance of effort toward strategic objectives. It is implicitly assumed that the academy is ready for changes that advance Indigenous leadership and self-determination.

These strategic directions have been vetted by an internal committee established to advance cultural safety and Indigenous leadership at McMaster. A broader engagement process has been undertaken with other on-campus and community stakeholders listed in Appendix A – Community Stakeholders. Due to the pandemic, the engagement process occurred either through telecommunications or survey.

These strategic directions were born at time of rapid change and considerable upheaval in work and study. Priorities will be revisited if the uptake and enrolment in these strategic directions are so great that expansion is unrealistic or if partnerships and alliances do not materialize. Similarly, changes in staffing, leadership and political climates may lead to a shift. Early performance measurement of these efforts may also suggest that different strategies are needed to reach desirable goals.

## Appendix A – Community Stakeholders

<b>Six Nations</b>	
Jock Hill	Haudenosaunee Confederacy Council
Rebecca Jamieson	President, Six Nations Polytechnic
Elva Jamieson	Knowledge Holder
Sara General	Indigenous Knowledge Centre
Lori Davis-Hill	Director, Six Nations Health Services
Mark Hill	Six Nations Elected Band Chief

<b>Mississauga of Credit First Nation</b>	
Evan Sault	Band Councillor
Kim Sault	Knowledge Holder
Rachelle Ingrao	Director, Social & Health Services
Pat Mandy	Former Chief Executive Officer of Local Health Integration Network (Hamilton-area); Hamilton Police Services Board Member
Murray Waboose	Director of Education, Anishinabek Nation

<b>Urban Indigenous Community</b>	
Audrey Davis	Executive Director, Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
Constance McKnight	President, Coalition of Hamilton's Indigenous Leadership
Jolene John	Indigenous Liaison, Hamilton Wentworth District School Board
Constance McKnight	Executive Director, Aboriginal Health Centre
Melissa Button	Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board
ed@nativewomenscentre.com	Executive Director, Native Women's Centre
Shelly Hill	Senior Project Manager, Indigenous Urban Strategy – City of Hamilton



[indigenous.mcmaster.ca](http://indigenous.mcmaster.ca)