Equity, Community Building, and Critical Thinking

PGSS Equity Education for PGSAs and Councilors
Facilitator: Emil Briones, PGSS Equity Commissioner 2017-2018
LAND RECOGNITION

We acknowledge the traditional keepers of this land, the Kanien’keha:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

We remember that Tiohtia:ke (Montreal) is the site of many injustices against the rightful owners of the land and that it is also the place that we learn and live today.

Flag: from Haudenosonee Confederacy Website
Ground Rules:

1. Respect – selves, each other, time (make space for others to speak), sensitivity to the nature of the content

2. Try to keep comments and anecdotes hypothetical rather than personal

3. If words or concepts are unclear, make note of them and ask when the facilitator check for questions.

4. Be mindful of context and varied experiences and realities.

5. Safety vs. Discomfort – threats to safety are not the same as discomfort. There can be learning and understanding in these moments. Equity work is difficult, challenging, and not a “neutral” process.

6. Time Outs and Self-Care
Today’s Facilitator:

Emil Briones, PGSS Equity Commissioner 2017-2018

Some things I do
1. Facilitate the PGSS Equity and Diversity Committee
2. Policy work and the “nitty-gritty” institutional work; representation on governance bodies both at the PGSS and University level
3. Report to Council and PGSS general constituency; keep my finger on the “pulse” of the community, specifically with regards to equity-seeking groups
4. Some programming and events that hone in on anti-oppression and equity work as per the PGSS stance on equity
FROM THE PGSS EQUITY WEBSITE: What is **Equity and Diversity**?

The PGSS **treats equity and diversity as two sides of the same coin**. Our community is diverse, as a matter of fact, by virtue of encompassing a variety of individuals who identify and are identified with a multitude of social groups. But our commitment to diversity requires more than simply acknowledging the fact of diversity. It requires us to **recognize that, both historically and presently, certain groups of people are systematically denied access to education or the opportunity to participate on equal terms in the University community, whether as students, professors or members of University staff**. These groups include, but are not limited to:

- Ethnic minorities
- People whose first language is neither English nor French
- Indigenous peoples
- People of minority sexual orientations and gender identities
- People of underprivileged socio-economic status
- People with disabilities
- Visible minorities
- Women
- Francophones at McGill

PGSS is committed to promote the participation of these groups in all aspects of campus life, because it sees diversity as an asset, something we gain from. But this commitment cannot be effective without an equally strong commitment for equity. Our commitment for equity stems from an **awareness of the past and present marginalization** of certain groups that underpins the lack of access and respect in society for those groups, and corresponds to the privileging of other dominant groups within society.

We recognize that **different individuals and different groups face particular challenges** which demand more than equality, pure and simple; equity means that specific problems demand solutions specifically catered for the affected individuals.

As such, equity does not always mean equality.

Working for equity and diversity includes prompting the **creation of policies and actions that change these disparate power relations and to remedy the negative impacts they cause**. PGSS is committed to taking on a leadership role on issues of equity and diversity within the PGSS membership by advocating for inclusiveness and social and economic justice through recognition, respect, numerical representation, accountability, and responsibility. As such, the PGSS Policy on Equity and Diversity was adopted.
University Policies and Regulations

The Secretariat posts, on this webpage, Policies and Regulations that have been approved by the University's governing bodies (Board of Governors and/or Senate). The posting of other types of documents is subject to approval by the Secretariat and restricted to documents that have broad University impact. To submit a request, please fill out the following form.

Please note that Policies and Regulations are reviewed and modified on a regular basis. Approved changes are updated by the University Secretariat.

For other unit/faculty-level regulatory documents, please refer to the following websites:

- For procedures and guidelines relating to the recruiting, hiring, appointing, conditions of employment, salary, leaves and retirement of academic staff, please visit the Academic Personnel Office website.
- For financial policies and regulations, please visit the Financial Services website.
- For tuition information and policies, please visit the Students Accounts website.
- For building policies, please visit the Campus and Space Planning website.
- For staff pay, benefits, pensions and retirement, personnel policies and procedures (labour relations), please visit the Human Resources website.

For any questions about this site, please contact the University Secretariat.
COLONIALISM AND INDIGENEITY

Why a land recognition?

Think about what you have learned in elementary, secondary or tertiary education about the **Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island** (North America)?

What was talked about, and what was not talked about?

Why do we talk about colonialism as a **thing of the past**?
*The last residential school did not close until 1996 (Gordon Residential School in Saskatchewan)!
**The 60’s Scoop
***Current state of child welfare and the disproportionate and inequitable treatment of indigenous children
COLONIALISM AND INDIGENEITY

The COLONIAL PROJECT is ongoing

Our respective contexts of being in this land are unique and unequal (think about migrant workers and refugees) – if one is not Indigenous, one is a settler.
SOCIAL LOCATION:
Let’s start by asking ourselves some simple, but critical self-reflection questions.
THINKING THROUGH SOCIAL LOCATION

We arrive at a place like McGill carrying different stories, histories, and experiences

ACTIVITY: MOVE FORWARD/MOVE BACK
VISIBLE OUTCOMES e.g. microaggressions, individuals’ actions (visible part of iceberg)

INSTITUTIONS e.g. health care, education, popular culture (the water that keeps the iceberg afloat)

SYSTEMS e.g. colonialism, white supremacy, racism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism (the invisible part of the iceberg, it is what structures what we see and interact with in our daily lives)
VISIBLE OUTCOMES e.g. microaggressions, individuals’ actions (leaves and branches)

INSTITUTIONS e.g. health care, education, popular culture (trunk)

SYSTEMS e.g. colonialism, white supremacy, racism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism (roots)
Why?
INFOCUS: RACE, RACISM, RACIALIZATION

Race is a social construct.

Science has demonstrated that two people of different races can be more genetically similar than people of the same race.
RACE

Nevertheless, a social construct that informs historically and systemically scaffolded lived realities.

White supremacy

Anti-blackness

Tokenism
IN FOCUS: ANTI-BLACKNESS

Why do some talk about the “end” of slavery as the marker of a “post-racial” society
IN FOCUS: ISLAMOPHOBIA

Thinking through what is happening in the world right now and what are the implications?

How can we support?
**INTERSECTIONALITY**
A term coined by critical race feminist scholar and lawyer, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw – referring to the various axes of identity (race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability etc.) that inform how we are positioned in society, each component inextricable from another (Crenshaw, 1991)

**UNBREAKAPARTABILITY**
“...oppressions are intersectional and affect all of us in complex and overlapping ways, the many forms of struggle for human liberation cannot be broken apart”
(LA Crew, 2009; as cited in Berger & Dixon, 2009)
ACTIVITY

WHAT DOES A “CANADIAN” LOOK LIKE?

Imagine a “Canadian”

Write down what this person looks like, what they do, what they are – describe them in as many ways as possible

If you were to draw this person, what would that image look like?
AXES OF IDENTITY

What do you think about when you reflect on your identity?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIVILEGED</th>
<th>OPPRESSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Indigeneity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cis-gendered</td>
<td>Racialized/Of Colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Women and Femmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid to High Economic and Social Capital</td>
<td>Trans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able-bodiedness</td>
<td>LGBTQIA+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and Masculinity</td>
<td>Low Social and Economic Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Dis)abledness</td>
<td>Neurodiversity/Neuroatypicality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intersectionality is the belief that oppressions are interlinked and cannot be solved alone.

Oppressions are not isolated. Intersectionality now!
POWER AND PRIVILEGE

What is POWER?

What is PRIVILEGE?

What kinds of power and privileges do we enjoy by being at a place like McGill? And you personally? Think your own histories/identities etc.
POWER DYNAMICS & COERCION

Physical coercion

Social coercion

Economic coercion

Other types of COERCION?
THINKING THROUGH GENDER AND SEXUALITY

We have to think about gender as something beyond what it defined by what body parts look like, what clothing someone wears, who someone is attracted to if at all.

*Gender, like race, is something that is socially constructed, but has very real impacts on people’s lives and society as a whole*

A good place to start: let people *self-identify* and *honour them*, think through your own assumptions, and for those who are heterosexual and/or cis-gendered, reflect on ways one might be privileged in society.
THINKING THROUGH GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Artist, fashionista, and activist Ayishat Akanbi

Millennials aren't creating new gender identities they're only giving language to ones that have always existed under the burden of shame.
GENDERED VIOLENCE

Rape Culture
Origins of term from 1970’s United States; Feminists of the time used this term to encapsulate the pervasiveness of rape and how it informs social attitudes with regards to GENDER and SEXUALITY e.g. normalizing POWER DYNAMICS

You might or might not have also heard these words...
Transmisogyny, Misogynoir, Transphobia, Homophobia, Femmephobia, Toxic Masculinity

Cis-hetero-normativity, Patriarchy
Stop Thinking Like a Perpetrator:
4 Ways to Better Support Survivors of Sexual Violence
By J. Utt (2014)
1. Sexual assault is “a matrix of behaviours”
2. Allowing survivors to NAME their experience
3. Healing is a spiral
4. Embrace Survivor-Centered Logic
BUILDING A CULTURE OF CONSENT & SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support, and Education (OSVRSE)
Website: http://www.mcgill.ca/osvrse/

Further trainings in Responding to Disclosures, and other support resources

McGill Policy Against Sexual Violence

The Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education provides confidential, non-judgmental and non-directional support and education to students, faculty and staff of all genders who have been impacted by sexual violence.

Our office is committed to working towards the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence while fostering a culture of consent at McGill.

Sexual violence and its consequences disproportionately affect members of social groups based on their intersecting experiences of oppression. Our work is informed by a survivor-centred, feminist and intersectional lens, and we seek to empower individuals impacted by sexual violence in making informed decisions based on their identified needs.

[Links to additional resources]
IMAGINARY LINES SEPARATING CAMPUS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

How are we implicated in social injustices, even unknowingly?

What steps do I need to take to participate in social change?

Using our power for social change and lifting up others.
ALLYSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY, INFORMED EMPATHY

What does being an “ally” mean to you?

As people who benefit from being a part of an elite institution, how can we leverage our collective privileges to help those with less power and privilege?
**IMAGINARY LINES SEPARATING CAMPUS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY**

“education for a higher purpose than professional advancement” (Austin, 2009, p. 113)

Using our power for social change and lifting up others

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Who</strong></th>
<th>... benefits from this?</th>
<th>... have you also heard discuss this?</th>
<th>... would be the best person to consult?</th>
<th>... will be the key people in this?</th>
<th>... deserves recognition for this?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What</strong></td>
<td>... are the strengths/weaknesses?</td>
<td>... is the best/worst case scenario?</td>
<td>... is most/least important?</td>
<td>... can we do to make a positive change?</td>
<td>... is getting in the way of our action?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where</strong></td>
<td>... would we see this in the real world?</td>
<td>... can we get more information?</td>
<td>... do we go for help with this?</td>
<td>... will this idea take us?</td>
<td>... are the areas for improvement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When</strong></td>
<td>... is this acceptable/unacceptable?</td>
<td>... will we know we’ve succeeded?</td>
<td>... has this played a part in our history?</td>
<td>... can we expect this to change?</td>
<td>... should we ask for help with this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why</strong></td>
<td>... is this a problem/challenge?</td>
<td>... should people know about this?</td>
<td>... has it been this way for so long?</td>
<td>... have we allowed this to happen?</td>
<td>... is there a need for this today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How</strong></td>
<td>... is this similar to ______?</td>
<td>... does this benefit us/others?</td>
<td>... does this harm us/others?</td>
<td>... do we see this in the future?</td>
<td>... can we change this for our good?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intent vs. Impact
By: Jamie Utt (2014)
“what does the intent of our action really matter if our actions have the impact of furthering the marginalization or oppression of those around us?

BEING CALLED OUT/IN
by Lukayo Faye Estrella
Social Equity and Diversity Education Office
EQUITY, ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY RESOURCES AT MCGILL

PGSS Equity, SSMU Equity, MCSS Equity
Social Equity and Diversity Education Office (SEDE)
First People’s House
Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support, and Education (OSVRSE)
Harassment Assessors & Senior Equity and Inclusion Officer
Joint Board-Senate Subcommittees on Equity (Racialized Persons, First Peoples, LGBTQ+, Women, Persons with (Dis)abilities, Family Care)
Union for Gender Empowerment
Labour Unions and Associations (AMUSE, AMURE, MCLU, AGSEM, MUNACA, MUNASA)
Black Students’ Network (BSN)
Queer McGill, Queer McGill Post-Graduate Students’ Group
Sexual Assault Centre of McGill Student Societies (SACOMSS)
Office for Students with (Dis)abilities(OSD)
Scholarships and Student Aid Office (SSAO)
Counselling and Mental Health Services (CMHS)
Quebec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG) McGill
McGill Office of Sustainability
NO ONE IS PERFECT, PEOPLE MAKE MISTAKES, FORGIVENESS IS PART OF COMMUNITY BUILDING

ALL WE ASK IS YOU REFLECT, CRITIQUE, AND DISCUSS 😊
QUESTIONS?

Can be submitted in confidence to EMAIL ADDRESS
Sources/Acknowledgement


Special Thanks:
Emily Yee Clare, Student Housing and Hospitality Services
Shanice Yarde, Alan Vicaire SEDE Office
Joint Board-Senate Subcommittees on Equity (First People’s, Racialized & Ethic Persons, Queer and Trans Peoples, Women, Persons with Disabilities)