



## **STATUS OF INDIGENOUS STUDENTS POLICY PAPER AND NEXT STEPS: REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

*Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance*  
March 2021

### **Prepared by:**

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### **With:**

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**Special thanks to:** Candice Martin and Sophie Laroque, Laurentian Indigenous Student Circle

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The work that we have done up to this point has been supported by a number of people who have taken their time to teach us, share their insights, provide feedback, and help to facilitate conversations with a board network of students.

We would like to thank the students who have participated in our feedback processes to date, including those who have completed the online feedback form, the students who met with us from Trent University (Durham GTA and Peterborough campuses), and those who have shared their concerns with us directly. Your feedback and perspectives have, and will continue to be, essential in the work we do moving forward.

We would also like to thank the staff and student leaders on our campuses who have been instrumental in our learning and ability to facilitate many of the conversations we have, and will be having, to inform this work. In particular, we would like to thank:

Emily Daniel, Student Support Coordinator, Indigenous Student Centre, Wilfrid Laurier University

Melissa Ireland, Director, Indigenous Student Services, Wilfrid Laurier University

Delaney Thomas, President, Indigenous Student Association, Wilfrid Laurier University

Erin Hodson, Indigenous Curriculum Specialist, Wilfrid Laurier University

Banakonda Kennedy Kish Bell, Laurier's Elder-In-Residence at Laurier University's Lyle S. Hallman Masters of Social Work program

Zeeta Lazore Cayuga, Community Enhancement Coordinator, Western University Indigenous Student Centre

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## BACKGROUND

### OUSA General Assembly approval of Indigenous Students policy paper

First revision since publication of Truth & Reconciliation Report

Concerns raised about adequacy of consultations and inclusion of Indigenous voices

Steering Committee directed to return to campuses and solicit feedback on the policy paper from Indigenous students

### Progress made on recommendations in 2018 Report

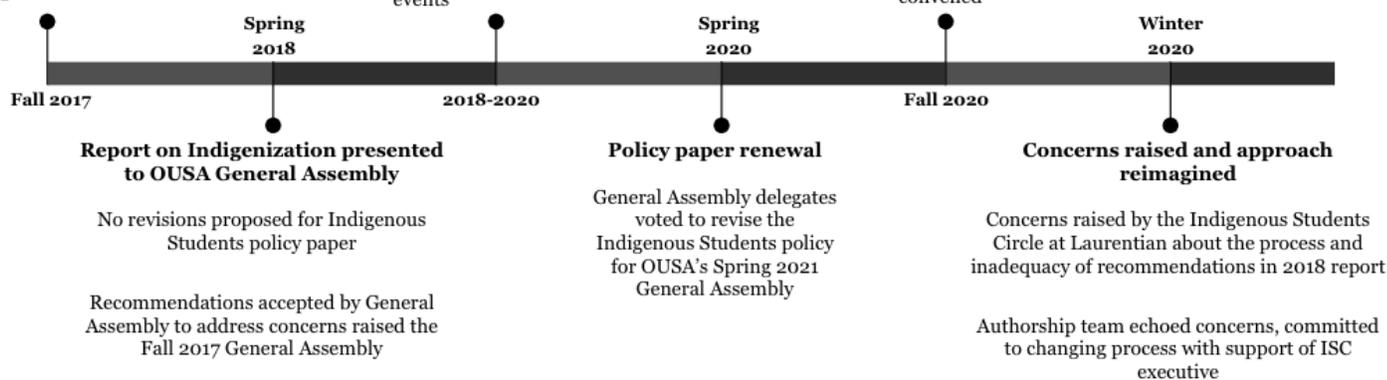
Examples include:

- the creation of a resource package to educate Steering Committee members
- Revision of OUSA's Equity Impact Assessment
- Implementation of land acknowledgments at all OUSA events

### Initial work on policy paper

Initial consultations conducted at Laurier, McMaster, Queen's, Trent Durham, and Western

Research package summary prepared and authorship team convened



*Timeline of Key Events 2017-2020*

At OUSA's 2017 Fall General Assembly, delegates approved the Indigenous students policy paper, available [here](#). This policy paper was substantially revised from the previous version as this was the first revision since the release of the [Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#).

The 2017 paper identifies concerns and offers recommendations to support Indigenous students in accessing and succeeding at Ontario universities. The policy paper was informed by consultations with Indigenous student groups, Indigenous student service centres, and member student associations, and the research and authorship of the paper was completed by a mixed team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

During the approval process leading up to the Fall 2017 General Assembly, students raised concerns about a lack of adequate consultation with stakeholders, specifically with Indigenous students. In response to these concerns, the policy paper was passed with the caveat that Steering Committee members would return to their respective campus groups to receive policy feedback, determine whether the paper needed major amendments, and develop expectations for future policy development and consultations – all of which would be presented to the Spring 2018 General Assembly.

At OUSA's 2018 Spring General Assembly, no major changes were recommended by the Steering Committee based on their additional consultations. The extent to which these additional consultations were conducted is unclear, although current concerns raised by students at OUSA member schools suggest that the consultations conducted between Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 were also inadequate. The

result was that no revisions were proposed (or subsequently made) to the policy paper as approved in Fall 2017.

At the 2018 Spring General Assembly, Steering Committee accepted seven recommendations – prepared by then OUSA President, Andrew Clubine, and Steering Committee member Ryan Deshpande – intended to improve the policy paper authorship process, how OUSA engages and represents Indigenous students, and how indigeneity can be incorporated into OUSA’s operations. The recommendations can be found in the April 2018 Report on Indigenization, available [here](#).

The OUSA President and Executive Director were given the responsibility of ensuring the recommendations in the Report on Indigenization are pursued. Beginning in the summer of 2018, OUSA Home Office staff, under direction of the President and Executive Director, began work towards meeting these recommendations.

As a first step, an “Unsettling OUSA Resource Package” was developed to support Steering Committee members to gain the foundational knowledge necessary to begin this work. This resource package is provided to all Steering Committee members as part of their “onboarding” or training. It was last updated in June 2020, and can be found [here](#). Included in the resource package are materials to support the development of land acknowledgements, which following the first recommendation in the Report on Indigenization are implemented at meetings of the General Assembly and other public events.

The second step that was taken was the revision of the Equity Impact Assessment tool – following the seventh recommendation in the Report on Indigenization – which is a tool used in the policy process that guides authors and researchers to consider the intended and unintended impacts of policy on vulnerable and underrepresented groups. The most recent revision of the Equity Impact Assessment was completed in June 2020, and can be found, along with the goals of the Equity Impact Assessment, [here](#).

The remaining recommendations from the Report on Indigenization are intended to inform OUSA’s policy writing process on future iterations of the Indigenous Students policy paper, stakeholder relationships, and Steering Committee onboarding and composition. A document tracking progress towards each recommendation can be found [here](#). Please note that action on each recommendation is on hold as the focus has shifted to the current process detailed below. Following review and recommendations that come out of the current process, activity on the 2018 recommendations will resume and/or be amended to meet the new objectives.

#### INITIAL 2021 POLICY PAPER PLANNING – FALL/WINTER 2020

At OUSA’s Spring 2020 General Assembly, delegates decided on the policy papers that would be revised and presented to the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 General Assemblies for approval. The current version of the Indigenous Students policy paper (approved in 2017) will expire in April 2022, and it was decided that a revised version of this paper would be presented to the Spring 2021 General Assembly.

The Indigenous Students policy paper was slated for the Spring 2021 General Assembly (rather than the Fall 2020 General Assembly) to allow OUSA’s Steering Committee time to conduct meaningful and comprehensive consultations with Indigenous students and student groups, Indigenous student service centres, and other appropriate stakeholders in the Summer and Fall of 2020, and Winter of 2021. Initial consultations were conducted on the Laurier, McMaster, Queen’s, Trent Durham, and Western campuses in Fall 2020.

In December 2020, we convened as an authorship team for the first time. We are a mixed team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors, and our original group included OUSA President, Julia Pereira, and student author Emily DuBois Brooks representing Laurier, and Steering Committee member Malek Abou-Rabia and student author Alyssa Trick representing Laurentian. Our original composition met the second recommendation in the Report on Indigenization to ensure that there be at least 50 percent Indigenous authorship on future versions of the Indigenous Students paper.

During these initial planning meetings, we (Emily and Alyssa) raised concerns that we had heard from Indigenous students on our campuses, and concerns that we held ourselves, about the inadequacy of the recommendations guiding the process and the lack of Indigenous leadership and decision-making authority in the process.

Specifically, we were concerned that 50 percent Indigenous authorship is insufficient to support Indigenous self-determination, and that “one off” consultations and singular conversations with stakeholders, particularly with Indigenous students, would not allow for the input and relationship-building necessary to ensure that the policy process and subsequent recommendations meet Indigenous students’ needs and moves away from the traditionally colonial process employed in post-secondary and advocacy spaces.

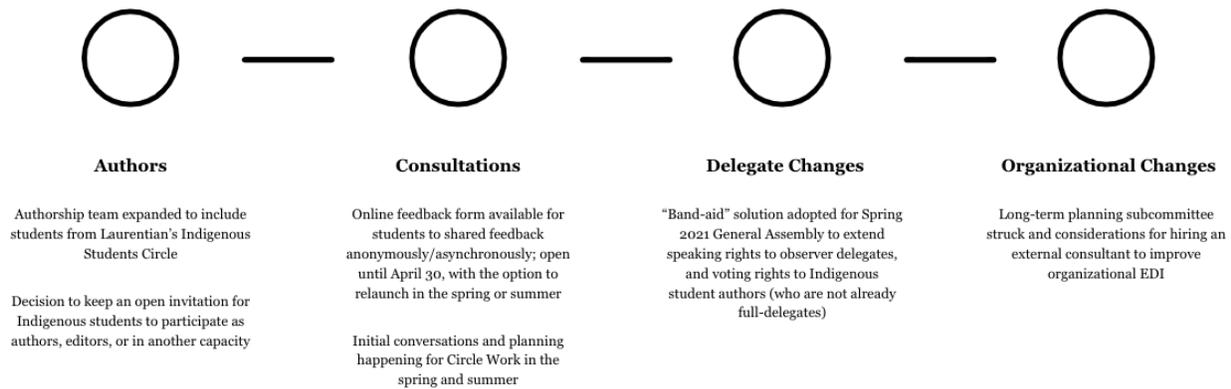
Students from Laurentian’s Indigenous Students’ Circle were also vocal about the importance of ensuring that the research, consultation, and policy writing process be Indigenous-led, and expressed their interest in being part of the process.

In response to these concerns, we decided to take a step back and take a more inclusive and Indigenous student-driven approach to the paper development. Following the leadership of Emily and Alyssa, we opened up opportunities for Indigenous students to join the authorship team in various capacities, based on interest and availability.

We also made plans with Indigenous student representatives to conduct Circle Work, led by Indigenous student authors, with Indigenous students at each of OUSA's member schools. The Circle Work is intended to inform the next steps in the policy process as well as the policy paper itself. The next steps in the policy process have intentionally been left vague based on a recognition that they must be informed by the Circle Work and led by the Indigenous students who participate in this process.

As a result, we decided that we would not present a revised policy paper at the Spring 2021 General Assembly and would instead focus our attention on improving the policy process and developing a report that will inform the next steps of the policy process to be undertaken in the summer and fall of 2021.

## WINTER 2021



### *Key Decisions Made in Winter 2021*

In January 2021, we (Julia and Emily) met with representatives from Laurier's Indigenous Student Centre to discuss how to best engage students on the Laurier campus. Representatives included Emily Daniel, Student Support Coordinator; Melissa Ireland, Director, Indigenous Student Services; Delaney Thomas, President, Indigenous Student Association; and Erin Hodson, Indigenous Curriculum Specialist.

We had initially planned to hold Talking Circles, but were concerned about doing so having not had experience in this area. We were also concerned that we would need to stray from some of the guiding principles of this approach, such as needing to take notes which is traditionally not done in a Talking Circle and the fact that these discussions would need to take place virtually as a result of COVID-19. The representatives from the Laurier Indigenous Student Centres suggested that these discussions take a similar approach, using the less-formal term "Circle Work", which would allow for the format to be adapted to the current circumstances. Additionally, we wanted to be able to credit participants with authorship and therefore to engage in notetaking to best capture participant's points and perspectives. The representatives from the Laurier Indigenous Student Centres suggested using a written disclaimer in any posts/emails to participants as well as a verbal disclaimer at the beginning of the Circle Work to simplify our process while still maintaining a welcoming environment for our participants.

They also discussed the inclusion of Elders and Knowledge Keepers as valuable and beneficial community members, and whether OUSA would be able to provide a budget for this work, which would allow the team to include an Elder or Knowledge Keeper to support these sessions, as their participation rate is usually around \$400. Finally, we were given a new contact who works in decolonizing student spaces on the Laurier campus and is a familiar face to a lot of the Indigenous students who participate in events through the centre. It was suggested that she help lead the Circle Work at Laurier as it would help cultivate a welcoming and trusting environment.

At the same time, our authorship team opened up to include the executive members of the Indigenous Students Circle at Laurentian University. At this time, four students from Laurentian's Indigenous Student Circle joined the authorship team, Connor Lafortune and Page Chartrand as co-authors, and Candice Martin and Sophie Laroque providing additional support for the team. We held an initial meeting on January 21, 2021 to discuss what the next stage of the process might look like. The primary focus of the meeting was on the importance of broad consultations with students and stakeholders at OUSA member schools, as well as Indigenous high school students, local First Nations, and other communities. We

discussed how best to engage students and address barriers to engagement, including the history of over-consulting and the lack of action that can be frustrating and a deterrent from future engagement.

We used this time to create a general plan for next steps, which included: (1) conducting preliminary research to identify where consultations and survey results have been published to avoid over-consultation; (2) drafting a survey to collect feedback from both high school and university students; (3) drafting outreach materials to make initial connections for Circle Work; (4) preparing materials to introduce OUSA to potential contributors and to illustrate the value of participating in this process; and (5) developing a list of potential stakeholders to consult that includes Indigenous students at OUSA member schools through student associations, Indigenous student groups, and Indigenous student centres, as well as Indigenous high school students, and student and community members from local First Nations.

On January 29, 2021, we, along with OUSA's Executive Director Eddy Avila, were invited to present to the Council of Ontario Universities' Reference Group on Indigenous Education (RGAE). We provided information about OUSA and shared context for the current policy process. Members of RGAE flagged important considerations for the policy and consultation process, including: the importance of ensuring students providing feedback are able to do so anonymously; the need for consent forms for any student consultations; recognizing that not all Indigenous students will be familiar with Indigenous methods, and may need information about what Circle Work is and some preparation; the importance of offering compensation, such as an honorarium or financial compensation to contributors; engaging with a broad range of stakeholders, including those who do not come to post-secondary directly from high school and students in precarious financial situations; and the possibility of including recommendations to support part-time and graduate students to align with the ways in which Indigenous Student Centres provide support to students. RGAE also flagged a recommendation in the 2017 Indigenous Students policy paper that would have unintended negative impacts on Indigenous students should it be implemented, and this recommendation was subsequently removed from OUSA's advocacy.

On February 5, 2021, we met to provide updates on the work being done and to discuss next steps. At this meeting we decided that, while it is important to conduct consultation work with stakeholders beyond the post-secondary sector, specifically when it comes to concerns around access and relationships between institutions and local communities, it would be most feasible and effective to focus on feedback from Indigenous students at OUSA member schools in the month leading up to OUSA's 2021 Spring General Assembly. We decided that additional consultations would be conducted in the spring and summer of 2021, allowing more time for planning and relationship building, a significant gap from the previous policy writing process.

As a result of this decision, we shifted our focus to the implementation of Circle Work at both Laurentian and Laurier as well as the opportunity to develop an online feedback form where students could provide their comments anonymously or asynchronously. OUSA Steering Committee and Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) Vice President Education, Megan Town, had expressed the desire for such a form recognizing that Circle Work might not be an appropriate medium for soliciting feedback with Waterloo students at this time. WUSA staff offered to support the development of such a feedback form, and a meeting was set for the following week.

On February 20, 2021, we met with WUSA staff and provided feedback and comments to improve a draft feedback form that had been prepared. An important outcome from this meeting was the recognition of the harm that researchers have inflicted on Indigenous individuals and communities through the use of surveys and other data collection tools. We decided that this recognition be conveyed in an

“Acknowledgement” section at the start of the form, with clear information about when and how the information shared would be used. Using the feedback and comments from this meeting, we edited the feedback form in preparation to be launched on February 24, 2021.

At the same time, OUSA’s Steering Committee decided to hire two interns for summer 2021. One of the positions would be OUSA’s standard summer research intern – a position that supports the general research goals of the organization. A second position, the special projects internship, was created specifically to continue the work being done through this process and support the development of the Indigenous Students policy paper and internal policy review. OUSA implements equitable hiring practices for all positions, and the special projects internship was targeted specifically for Indigenous students.

At the February 23rd meeting of OUSA’s Steering Committee, a \$4000 budgetary allotment was approved to compensate Indigenous students for their participation in providing feedback. \$2000 was allocated to provide 400 respondents with \$5 gift cards for feedback provided through the online form, open February 24-March 10. The remaining \$2000 was allocated to provide 100 participants with \$20 each for participation in virtual Circle Work.

At that same meeting, the Steering Committee discussed how to best ensure that Indigenous students could be included in the General Assembly. Discussion ensued surrounding the problems associated with a proportional representation model at General Assembly and how key members of our team, namely Indigenous authors from Laurentian’s SGA/AGE, would not be permitted to speak during breakout sessions, nor vote to approve this very report at Plenary. This is due to the nature of the current bylaws and operating policies of OUSA. As a result, the Steering Committee decided to pass the following motions as a way to ensure equitable representation from Indigenous students and ensure that we, the authorship team, would be able to fully participate in the General Assembly without limitations, and vote to approve this report. The motions include:

1. BIRT OUSA enable speaking rights for Indigenous full-member observers during Plenary of Spring 2021
2. BIRT OUSA enable voting rights for the Indigenous authorship team during Plenary of Spring 2021
3. BIRT OUSA enable speaking rights for full-member observers in all of the breakout sessions during the Spring 2021 GA

Additionally, these conversations highlighted the challenges associated with OUSA’s bylaws and operating policies, which will continue to be problematic moving forward when navigating and passing policy papers that are identity-based by nature. With the understanding that the above motions are considered a “Band-Aid solution” to a much larger problem, the Steering Committee also struck a subcommittee to determine the long-term considerations regarding representation at future OUSA General Assemblies.

The long-term planning subcommittee, composed of Steering Committee members Megan Town, Nathan Barnett, Julia Pereira, Mackenzy Metcalfe, Malek Abou-Rabia, and Executive Director Eddy Avila, met for the first time on March 10th, 2021. The group decided to move forward with investigating the option of hiring an external consultant who specializes in organizational structuring that centres equity, diversity, and inclusion. The group shared consensus that the challenges of a yearly rotating Steering Committee would make it challenging to commit to a thorough review, nor is Home Office appropriate to task with such a review, as to not overburden the full-time staff. As a result, the subcommittee determined that hiring a neutral body to provide recommendations and opportunities for inclusive bylaws and operating

policies would be beneficial. Communication with the Canadian Centre for Equity and Inclusion (CCDI) is ongoing to facilitate a meeting to determine if these consultants would be the right fit for OUSA.

On February 24th, 2021, we distributed feedback forms to Steering Committee members to share with Indigenous students on their campuses, with the intention to close the forms on March 10th ahead of the Spring General Assembly. After the feedback form was launched, however, we recognized that the tight timeline for providing feedback was a barrier to student participation and that if the intention was to make the process as inclusive as possible and to remove any unnecessary labour from the students who chose to participate, more time should be provided. Extending the timeline would also address a concern that was heard from some OUSA member schools, including Brock, Trent Durham, Laurier, and Laurentian, that Indigenous students were feeling burnt out and experiencing consultation fatigue, something we did not want to exacerbate. Therefore, we have decided to leave the feedback form open until April 30th, 2021, with the option to re-launch the form in the spring and summer months.

These concerns, along with the recognition that it was necessary that deadlines did not take precedence over a meaningful consultation and paper process, led us to decide to hold Circle Work sessions in the spring and summer months. Instead we, with the support of OUSA's Steering Committee members used this time to continue outreach and to build relationships with Indigenous students and groups on OUSA campuses.

On February 24th, 2021, we (Emily and Julia) also met with Melissa Ireland, Director of Indigenous Student Services at Laurier to further discuss Circle Work and identify Elders who would be interested in supporting this work. Melissa identified Banakonda Kennedy Kish Bell, Laurier's Elder-In-Residence at Laurier University's Lyle S. Hallman Masters of Social Work program, in the Indigenous Field of Studies, as a potential Elder who may be interested. Banakonda agreed to support the Circle Work, and communications are ongoing to plan the future session.

On March 5th, 2021, OUSA hired Emily DuBois Brooks, a member of our authorship team in the position of Summer Special Projects Intern. In this role, Emily will be continuing the work she has been doing on this paper full-time, beginning May 10th, 2021. Since this process will be ongoing and continue beyond the 2020-2021 Steering Committee's term, a solidified transition and contingency plan will be necessary so the relationships, meaningful conversations, and work will not be lost.

On March 11th, 2021, we (Emily and Julia) met with representatives from Laurier's Indigenous Student Centre to discuss Elder hosting and protocols to prepare for upcoming Circle Work.

On March 12th, 2021, Julia and OUSA VPHR and Trent Durham Student Association (TDSA) Vice President, Nathan R. G. Barnett, met with Indigenous students from Trent University Durham GTA. This meeting was an opportunity to connect directly with students, introduce OUSA and the policy process, and to hear from students. The students shared a number of concerns along with the support they would like to see from their institution and the provincial government. Some students expressed an interest in continuing these conversations, and we will be setting up either a Circle Work session or additional feedback opportunities based on their interest.

On March 17th, 2021, Julia met with Zeeta Lazore Cayuga, Community Enhancement Coordinator at the Western University Indigenous Student Centre Staff. She shared some important feedback to support student engagement, both broadly and specific to student engagement at Western University. Zeeta shared that she would be willing to support Circle Work and student engagement at Western, and we will continue conversations and planning to begin this work in the spring and summer.

The work that we have done these past four months have been instrumental in preparing us for the next steps in this process. The close of this report discusses our recommendations and next steps for the policy process in more detail, but we will be continuing to foster the relationships we have built, collaborate and consult with students and other Indigenous stakeholders, and use what we learn to ensure that OUSA is able to effectively and meaningful represent Indigenous students in their advocacy.

## WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

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This is a new approach for OUSA, and will require revisions of both common practices and internal policies. The goal of this first stage of the process was to begin to build relationships with a network of Indigenous students and staff at OUSA member schools so that moving forward we can solicit feedback through online feedback forms and engage in Circle Work, the outcomes of which are necessary to inform the final policy paper to be presented in Fall 2021.

The following section provides some of the foundational elements that will guide the work OUSA does moving forward, namely “Guiding Principles” and “Concerns Face by Indigenous Students”. The guiding principles will inform the work OUSA does, both externally through policy recommendations and advocacy, as well as internally in terms of organizational structure, policies, and practices. The concerns identified provide the high-level themes that will guide the concerns that will be addressed in the policy paper.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles are intended to guide the policy development process as well as the long-term planning work being carried out internally.

- Open and active listening to Indigenous peoples;
- Inclusion of various voices;
- Not tokenizing voices (one “Indian” perspective);
- Pluralizing the cultures included (utilizing all nations);
- Make an effort to include French-Indigenous people (not just Métis);
- Continuous communication with Indigenous people throughout the process
- Doing the work in an Indigenous fashion (forgetting bureaucracy);
- Create land acknowledgements in collaboration with Indigenous people, but it is the responsibility of non-Indigenous people to initiate and present them;
- Self-education for those who do not understand Indigenous histories, it is not up to an Indigenous person to educate you on their issues;
- To not expect every Indigenous person to have the same thoughts/views/experiences;
- Recognize diverse histories of Indigenous peoples, and that many may hold onto their rage.

### IDENTIFICATION OF CONCERNS FACED BY INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

As outlined above, the consultation process has been extended to allow for meaningful engagement and to reduce barriers for student participation. However, based on preliminary consultations conducted in the fall of 2020, research done in the fall of 2020, discussions and feedback from Winter 2021, and our experience as Indigenous student leaders, we have identified the following high-level concerns and themes that will help to guide the next stage of the policy development process.

- Being heard - having a voice on campus/in classes;
- Leaving parts of yourself behind for the sake of safety (assimilating into the larger group in certain contexts);
- Being graded differently because of your Indigenous experiences/identity;
- Having to constantly speak on behalf of ALL Indigenous people (Tokenization);
- Having to educate your peers/not having a teacher interject;
- Not having a place on campus/in classes/within friend groups;
- Not being seen/seeing yourself;
- Not having access to adequate resources and information;
- Being in Indigenous classes but being surrounded with non-Indigenous people;
- Having racist Indigenous classes translated in French.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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The decolonization of university spaces must include the implementation of Indigenous methodology in our core processes of consulting student data, and applying this data to create inclusive and applicable policy that serves to implement change. Highlighting and including Indigenous methodology in our processes not only works to implement the decolonization of OUSA's represented member campuses, but ensures a foundational decolonization of OUSA's own methodology, reports, measures, policies and publications. In order to dedicate our work to effective decolonization and reconciliation efforts, we recognize and respect that our methodology must lead this course of action by example. Indigenizing the university space doesn't solely include the decolonization of physical space, but also the recognition of the value of Indigenous representation, culture, methodology, and equality within the academic and public sphere. Honouring Indigenous methodology through our process ensures that many Indigenous students' voices are heard, represented, respected, and included within each process and policy in order to create safe spaces for Indigeneity to thrive. In previous Indigenous Student policy papers, there were surveys used to engage and understand the needs of students, and these results guided past principles, concerns, and recommendations. However, low student engagement and a lack of Indigenous leadership and representation at OUSA resulted in a lack of necessary inclusive representation, which sacrificed the authenticity of the paper.

Going forward, the two methods used to engage students are driven and facilitated by Indigenous student leadership. The Circle Work method is a meeting for Indigenous students and Indigenous centre members, facilitated and led by an Elder, which allows for Wholistic discussion about Indigenous student experiences in the university space. There will be brief notetaking of main themes discussed, but it will not be a focus, and student anonymity will be upheld. Further, including many Indigenous community members in the consultation process of determining the best course of action in our methodologies ensures that many Indigenous voices and experiences are represented. The Circle Work is set to occur during the late Spring of 2021, in order to support and respect student schedules, since it is most important that we engage as many student voices as possible. During this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, our Circle Work and process meetings must remain virtual, and we respect that many students are facing added stress during this last part of the Winter 2021 semester.

The other method of student engagement utilized throughout our process is an online feedback form, in which all questions have been created by our authorship team, in consultation with students from Laurentian's Indigenous Student Circle and members of Laurier University's Indigenous Student Centre to ensure that the questions are relevant and appropriate. The feedback form aims to understand

experiences and areas of improvement that Indigenous students need for a more safe, comfortable, healthy, anti-racist, accessible, and inclusive environment. The feedback form will be shared with Indigenous people from local high schools, communities, and universities in order to understand how university spaces can be more accessible to, and inclusive of, Indigenous people. It is recognized that issues pertaining to inclusivity and accessibility must be inquired and discussed amongst Indigenous peoples of many experiential backgrounds and perspectives, not just those who are currently attending university, in order to have a well-rounded approach to policy recommendation. The survey aims to identify a complete array of concerns from a variety of Indigenous voices and experiences.

The concern regarding potential issues with utilizing a feedback form that mirrors a survey was discussed thoughtfully, and we are committed to honouring the possible impacts on Indigenous students in utilizing this practice. We are dedicated to prioritizing reconciliation through our processes, which involves our sensitivity and devotion to understanding how the history of abuse and colonialized methodology used to exploit Indigenous people must be recognized. There is a history of abuse through the collection of data from Indigenous people, and students may be uncomfortable with participating in a feedback form. We are committed to remaining sensitive to the history of abuse and trauma onto Indigenous people and their families, and it is vital that we embrace these conversations and take these concerns seriously. In order to honour our goal of reconciliation and decolonizing methodology within the academic space, we ensured that all questions are optional, anonymity is granted, and there is a discussion piece included in the feedback form for students to observe that details where the information is going and how it will be used. Importantly, the information students choose to share in the feedback form will not be collected and used for research purposes, but rather to inform our work and ensure their voices are included. The creation of a feedback form, as well as the intent to offer Circle Work on each campus, is intended to ensure that students can contribute their feedback in a manner that is as accommodating as possible. Indigenous university students who are comfortable and interested in contributing to the project have the option to choose how much they contribute and the method of contribution. As well, in order to honour Indigenous voices, experiences, and equality within the academic space, Indigenous students have the option to be recognized as authors on this paper through their contributions.

Normally, OUSA follows strict deadlines to ensure the productivity and timeliness of publishing policies. However, in order to include Indigenous authors, Elders, and community members as vital participants in the process, our team had to reject OUSA's original deadlines in order to honour the process of learning about and including Indigenous cultural processes and understanding the necessary steps towards reconciliation. The process of completing our methodology and processes is continuing into the Fall semester of 2021 in order to respect that these processes can't be rushed, and must be done with the understanding that learning and understanding Indigenous student experiences takes time and care. Our aim is not to perform activism but to adopt change and challenge our processes in order to implement authentic change to our processes. The relationships built between Indigenous authors and OUSA's authorship team have developed meaningfully, and patience is a vital piece of this process in order to address how this paper can honour reconciliation authentically and permanently.

It is paramount that we honour Indigenous voices, methodology and experiences in each process and study performed, not only at OUSA, but within the discussions and studies of each academic institution. By creating processes that value Indigenous rights and contributions, it will aid in reconciliation and normalize carefully considering Indigenous needs and culture within both the micro interactions and macro systematic processes. We understand that OUSA, along with all institutions, organizations, companies, services, and spaces, must hire Indigenous students and compensate Indigenous people for their voices, time, and cultural and educational input. Going forward, OUSA has hired one of the Indigenous student authors on this paper, Emily DuBois Brooks, as a Summer Intern onto this project

full-time in order to help carry the project onwards. The process of decolonizing space is an everyday battle for many Indigenous people, who must navigate colonial processes and educate people on racialized experience and history. In order to value Indigeneity, we must create and prioritize space for Indigenous voices and cultural expression. Reconciliation is a responsibility we are dedicated to, and this involves creating policy that is authentic and inclusive of the needs of Indigenous students, and suggesting policy that is detailed and implementable so that change occurs. Policy change begins here, with us, not simply in our papers, but in our devotion to allyship in OUSA’s processes and hiring practices to reflect social, cultural and academic inclusivity.

Further, to address compensating Indigenous students for their contributions, OUSA has dedicated \$4,000 towards compensation for students who participate in the feedback or in Circle Work (or some variation of an “in-person” discussion). Moving forward, it will be important that OUSA build in compensation structures to ensure that students are not expected to provide free labour in this area, recognizing the emotional and social toll that these conversations and this work can and does have. This also includes compensation for Elders and Knowledge Keepers who support us in this work, and others who commit their time to participating in our efforts.

**SUMMARY OF NEXT STEPS**

| <i>Timeline</i>       | <i>Deliverable</i>  | <i>Action Items</i>  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Spring 2021           | Additional consultations completed                                | Circle Work, online feedback form for all OUSA member schools<br><br>Connect with high schools, First Nations, and local communities to share survey with students/members |
| Summer 2021           | Prepare Steering Committee and authors for Fall 2021 deliverables | Follow principles in this report for completion of Indigenous Students policy paper<br>Plan for decision-making approach at Fall General Assembly                          |
| Fall 2021             | Complete Indigenous Students policy paper                         | Draft policy paper and incorporate feedback from Indigenous students   |
| October/November 2021 | Approval of policy paper  | Present Indigenous Students policy paper to OUSA General Assembly  |