

PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

PACBIC



ANNUAL REPORT TO THE MCMASTER COMMUNITY
2015



PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY (PACBIC)

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PACBIC was established in 2002 in response to the third goal of McMaster's strategic plan, *Refining Directions*: 'to build an inclusive community with a shared purpose'¹. The University's commitment to inclusion was amplified in the principles set out by President Deane in 2011 in *Forward with Integrity: A Letter to the McMaster Community*², and most recently reiterated in the emphasis on 'building an inclusive community, promoting equity and fairness, and celebrating our rich diversity' in *Forward with Integrity: The Next Phase* (2015)³.

PACBIC contributes to these institutional objectives in its advisory capacity. It acts as a hub open to all the University's constituent groups for exchange, discussion and the generation of ideas for redressing within McMaster's orbit the systemic barriers that characterize our wider society. PACBIC provides advice to the President and directs its questions and recommendations to relevant offices, groups and individuals on campus that have the authority and resources to implement change, adjust practices and advise on the processes involved.

By documenting its ongoing work in this report (which spans September 2014 – December 2015), PACBIC hopes to engage everyone in the campus community in working toward the inclusive and just institutional practices to which the University aspires.

PACBIC'S MANDATE & ORGANIZATION

Mandate

The key elements of PACBIC's mandate read as follows:

Identify and anticipate issues affecting equity-seeking communities (including but not limited to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, members of racialized communities, newcomers and refugees, members of diverse faith communities, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ-identified individuals, and women) both within the University and relevant to those seeking access to the University, and advise the President on such issues.

¹ http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/html/opr/reports_documents/main/reports_documents/refining_directions.html

² <http://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/images/forwardwithintegrity.pdf>

³ http://www.mcmaster.ca/presidentsoffice/documents/FWI_The_Next_Phase_15Oct2015.pdf, p.5.

Provide a forum for discussion, reflection and learning on issues of inclusion, equity and community-building and, in keeping with the spirit of the University, create spaces for respectful debate on important social issues.

Provide reports and make recommendations for action to the President, the University Planning Committee (UPC) and other relevant University bodies in order to channel advice through the University structure and thus sustain a University culture that advances equity and inclusion.⁴

Enhancing inclusion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) peoples on campus continues to be a particular focus for PACBIC, mirroring the University's priority⁵ to address the under-representation of FNMI peoples and foster the integration of indigenous perspectives into the University's academic activities. The approval this year of the new undergraduate degree program in indigenous studies was an encouraging development in this pathway and one that PACBIC has eagerly supported.

Membership

PACBIC's membership includes students, staff and faculty – a mix of both individual members and representatives of organizations and groups key to its mandate. Membership is organized through a nomination process and members are appointed by the President. The formal membership is constituted to secure diverse representation from across campus and is the committee's base (see Appendix A for list of members for 2014-2015, 2015-2016). However, all members of the McMaster community are welcome to participate and meetings are open. PACBIC is chaired by a faculty member who is supported by student and staff vice chairs, currently: Jane Aronson (School of Social Work), Nishan Zewge-Abubaker (MSU Diversity Services) and Andrew Pettit (Department of Athletics and Recreation).

Working Groups

PACBIC's activities are organized through working groups that take up particular issues or facets of inclusion and include both members of PACBIC and individuals with relevant experience and responsibilities on campus. Each group is supported by the expertise of a staff member from the Office of Human Rights & Equity Services (HRES). The Provost's Office provides a small annual budget to support working groups' initiatives and PACBIC-related events (listed in Appendix B).

Currently active working groups include:

- **Access and Accommodation**
Convenor: Rhonda Moore, Manager Lyons Media Centre
HRES Resource Person: Raihanna Hirji-Khalfan, Accessibility Specialist
- **Employment Equity**
Convenor: Wayne Lewchuk, faculty member in School of Labour Studies
HRES Resource Person: Pilar Michaud, Senior Human Rights Officer
- **First Nations, Métis and Inuit Priorities**
Convenor: Rick Monture, Director of the Indigenous Studies Program

⁴ <http://pacbic.mcmaster.ca/documents/pacbic-tor-april-30-2014-final.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/publications/vision/McMasterAgreement.pdf>

HRES Resource Person: Glenn Walsh, Complaint Resolution & Equity Specialist/Michelle Poirier (on leave).

- **Inter-Faith Issues**

Convenor: Carol Wood, Ecumenical Chaplain

HRES Resource Person: Vilma Rossi, Senior Program Manager

- **Mental Health, Equity and Inclusion**

Convenor: Marie Vander Kloet, Educational Consultant MIETL

HRES Resource Person: Raihanna Hirji-Khalfan, Accessibility Specialist

- **Priorities & Planning**

Convenor: Jane Aronson, faculty member in School of Social Work

HRES Resource Person: Vilma Rossi, Senior Program Manager

- **Race, Racialization & Racism**

Convenors: Ameil Joseph, faculty member in School of Social Work & Kojo Dampitey, member OPIRG Board of Directors

HRES Resource Person: Glenn Walsh, Complaint Resolution & Equity Specialist

- **Violence Against Women/ Gender-Based Violence**

Co-Convenors: Amber Dean, faculty member in English & Cultural Studies & Hayley Regis, Coordinator, MSU Women and Gender Equity Network (WGEN)

HRES Resource Person: Vilma Rossi, Senior Program Manager

Enhancing equity and inclusion on these various dimensions of experience on campus requires change in university policies, practices and conversations – endeavors that typically involve the work of the many offices, groups and individuals with whom PACBIC collaborates and consults and vice versa. Highlighted below are some of the areas in which PACBIC and its many partners have worked over the past year.

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS AND SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES

A sub-committee initiated in fall 2014 by PACBIC's Inter Faith Issues Working Group worked tenaciously and consulted widely on the design of the *Policy on Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous & Spiritual Observances*⁶ (RISO) and on its navigation through the University's approval processes. Effective from September 2015, the policy brings McMaster into alignment with provisions in the Ontario Human Rights Code and with the many other universities that already have such policies in place. The absence of a policy in the past and thus the lack of a clear basis of entitlement to accommodation for McMaster's diverse student body has been a longstanding concern for members of various faith and indigenous communities on campus, as well as for the numerous offices and individuals who saw the need for a transparent and consistent system-wide response and procedure (e.g. Associate and Assistant Deans, Registrar, Ombuds, Chaplaincy).

Many people contributed to the policy's development including Associate Deans, Office of the Registrar, Ombuds Office, Indigenous Studies Program, Muslim Students Association, Jewish Student Life/Hillel

⁶ <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-Observances.pdf>

McMaster, MSU Diversity Services and the Office of Human Rights & Equity Services. HRES worked with constituency groups and the various Faculty offices to facilitate the process with a RISO form.

Dr. Remi Warner, Senior Policy Analyst with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, was invited to speak on the "Principles and Practicalities of Religious Accommodation" on April 29th, 2015, in order to draw attention to the work of the Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances Policy Development Committee and to begin the process of education with regard to religious, Indigenous and spiritual observances at Mac.

REDRESSING INEQUITIES IN EMPLOYMENT

Concerned by the lack of attention and resources devoted to employment equity at McMaster, PACBIC's Employment Equity (EE) Working Group undertook some research in 2013 to explore the practices of other Canadian universities in this arena⁷. McMaster's online presence on employment equity was found to be strikingly limited when set beside seven comparator universities, each of which had a correspondingly active employment equity program. The resulting recommendation that an EE Specialist be hired was acted on with the appointment in June 2015 of Shylo Elmayan in Human Resources. PACBIC and the Working Group have been delighted to work with her as she develops a survey to gather data on current staff and faculty characteristics. The data will inform our understanding of the representation of diversity in the University's workforce, enable the tracking of progress over time and focus attention to equity-conscious recruitment, hiring and ongoing employee development.

The University's willingness to appoint a specialist in employment equity this last year is a significant indicator of a long-term commitment to addressing this issue. However, this appointment is only a first step in moving to employment equity at McMaster. It will take all of us to ensure that our hiring represents the diversity of our society. Once a fuller picture is obtained of the characteristics of University staff and faculty, the EE Working Group looks forward to advocating for programs to inform staff and faculty of what they can do to advance employment equity and helping to develop the tools that will make this a reality.

IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

The severe winters of 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 exacerbated barriers faced by members of the campus community who use wheelchairs or have mobility constraints. PACBIC's Access & Accommodation Working Group brought together the various offices and bodies with experience and responsibility in this area (Facility Services, AccessMAC, Parking & Security) to update and improve Facility Services' Campus Snow/ Ice Removal Plan.

PACBIC also urged the development of an Accessibility App, the beginnings of which were designed as a Life Sciences student project by Nick Schoenhoff in 2014. Over the past year and with support from Student Affairs, Nick developed the App much more fully. From initially identifying barriers created by snow and ice, he created a system that provides for live updates regarding all kinds of barriers on campus (caused, for example, by rainfall, construction, maintenance hazards, obstructions caused by events planned without attention to access). The app allows users (students, staff and faculty) to drop a

⁷ <http://pacbic.mcmaster.ca/EmploymentEquityWorkGroupReportPACBIC2014.pdf>

pin on areas where barriers exist and Facility Services and Security Services are then able to update the map when issues are resolved. Looking ahead, PACBIC will be eager to see how the App is used and supported in an ongoing way and, in the longer term, how physical barriers to accessibility are removed rather than simply better navigated. The app can be downloaded via iTunes at:

<https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/cartographr/id1028928453?mt=8> or on Google Play at:
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.gurupowered.cartographr>

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Attention to sexual and gender-based violence at McMaster has been heightened over the last two years as a result of incidents on this and many other university campuses and public attention to the persistence of ‘rape culture’. This heightened attention, together with the recommendations of the *‘It’s Time’* project in which McMaster partnered with the Hamilton YWCA and the Sexual Assault Centre for Hamilton & Area (SACHA)⁸ and the announcement in March 2015 of the Ontario government’s Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence⁹, prompted the University to develop a Sexual Violence Response Protocol¹⁰ and appoint a Sexual Violence Response Coordinator.

PACBIC’s Working Group on Violence Against Women / Gender-Based Violence contributed significantly to supporting the development of the Protocol, drawing forward the knowledge and experience of relevant campus and – crucially – of student groups (including the Anti-Violence Network, the McMaster Student Union, the MSU Women and Gender Equity Network) and ensuring that the University’s initiatives recognize the differential impacts of violence for different groups and communities as a result of their social locations and intersecting identities. The Working Group is now collaborating with Meaghan Ross (the Sexual Violence Response Coordinator) as she assumes her role in implementing the Response Protocol, designing the associated website and undertaking education and training to assist all members of the university in providing a consistent and supportive first response to people disclosing sexual violence.

Looking ahead, PACBIC and the Working Group will contribute and advise on the University’s development of a Sexual Assault Policy – a soon-to-be legislated requirement of all Ontario universities on which ongoing student input is an expectation.

With policies and protocols in place, the working group will shift focus to monitoring their implementation, as incidents on other Canadian campuses this year have taught us that sensitive, consistent, survivor-centred implementation of response protocols, support services and policies is an even greater challenge than the development of protocols/policies themselves.

⁸ Ross, M & Siddiqui, A. (2014). *End Violence Against Women on Campus; It’s Time- Key Recommendations*.

⁹ Government of Ontario (2015). *It’s Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment*.
<https://www.ontario.ca/document/action-plan-stop-sexual-violence-and-harassment#!/>

¹⁰ McMaster University (2015). *Sexual Violence Response Protocol*. <http://svrp.mcmaster.ca/docs/svrp-sept-2015.pdf>.

DIVERSIFYING FOOD ON CAMPUS

PACBIC's Interfaith Issues Working Group continues to advocate for a wider range of food options that meet faith-based dietary restrictions. With the assistance of McMaster Hillel, a supplier of kosher sandwiches and desserts was located this year and they are now available on some weekdays – a partnership between Hospitality Services and Hermes Kosher Bakery in Toronto. Hospitality Services and the Union Market have also been urged to increase their offerings of packaged foods that meet halal and kosher requirements.

Progress on this issue has, however, been slow and tends to be framed exclusively as a financial matter rather than a matter of equity and accessibility. It is, thus, quickly thwarted by the argument that catering to a few is too costly. However, even framed in only financial terms, it is likely that greater diversity in food services would draw forward more students and employees from communities whose opportunities and full participation at McMaster are presently impeded.

CHALLENGING RACISM ON CAMPUS

In March 2015 in response to ongoing conversations on campus about intersectional forms of racism, and barriers to inclusion faced by diverse groups of people of colour, Indigenous, Métis, First Nations and Inuit communities, PACBIC formed a Working Group on Race, Racialization & Racism.

The group has generated much interest and, layered into its early work, have been local and global events and heightened campus concerns about Islamophobia and the institutional discrimination illuminated by the Black Brown Red Lives Matter movement. The group is in the process of clarifying its objectives and reaching out to catalogue the anti-racism work already being done on campus. Planning is underway for a McMaster wide event to facilitate dialogue (with the help of a guest speaker/facilitator) with regards to the current and prior initiatives on campus that have worked on issues pertaining to racism. The purpose of the event would be to have people discuss their positions and projects related to anti-racism work on campus, hear about others, and begin to foster the building of a sense of community and possibly some networks across these individuals and groups.

GATHERING IDENTIFYING DATA ETHICALLY AND WITH TRANSPARENT PURPOSE

PACBIC has been attentive to a range of concerns about the categorizing and use of data that the University gathers from and about students during their pathways through their programs. Some of the concerns were prompted by the redesign of McMaster's information technology and the introduction of MOSAIC. In 2014, for instance, and with guidance from HRES and the Trans Advisory Group, care was taken to ensure that gender identity was inclusively designated and that trans members of the campus community saw themselves included in response options if they wished to self-identify

Attention was also needed in MOSAIC's design to the use of self-identification data supplied by indigenous learners. In spring 2014, PACBIC's FNMI working group, in collaboration with the Registrar's Office, the Dean of Students, the Office of Institutional Research & Analysis and the University Secretariat worked together to develop an approach to FNMI self-identification that assured learners privacy and aggregation in internal and external reporting. Regrettably and despite widespread opposition (at McMaster, from the Indigenous Education Council and the University President), the

provincial government passed legislation effective August 2015 ¹¹ that now gives the MTCU the authority to compel universities to provide potentially highly sensitive personal information about their students (e.g. information they provide on FNMI identity, disability status). The MOSAIC screens on FNMI self-identification were therefore revised over the summer in order to reflect the changes and make sure that future students will know how their information may be shared and used.

Looking ahead, it will be important to see how government reporting requirements are actually operationalized and, with the input of the groups and communities potentially jeopardized, ensure the integrity and ethics of the University's processes.

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH AN INCLUSION LENS

Mental health issues and concerns about the sufficiency of supports on university campuses continue to receive increasing attention in discussions of the welfare of post-secondary students and, in 2014, McMaster launched its Student Mental Health Strategy. This important response, like that on many campuses, takes the form of valued (and often strained) health services and wellness programs and is complemented by student-led initiatives focussed, for instance, on peer support and challenges to the stigma associated with mental health disabilities.

At the time of the Strategy's launch, President Deane noted the importance of also asking ourselves about the systemic factors that may heighten mental distress and how some of the University's practices, together with assumptions rooted in the wider culture and knowledge systems, may exacerbate them. It is on these systemic and cultural processes that PACBIC's working group on Mental Health, Equity & Inclusion focuses its attention. The group's work builds on the now large body of scholarship in Critical Disability Studies and the burgeoning interdisciplinary field of Mad Studies. By fostering dialogue about contested and diverse understandings of mental distress, the working group aims to articulate implication for teaching, learning, working and campus culture.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

UNIVERSITY PRACTICES THROUGH AN INCLUSION LENS: A LONG TERM PROJECT

Among the developments listed above are some important and encouraging markers of progress to which many people on campus have contributed. It is important, however, to understand these markers as way-stations in a long-term project, not as ends in themselves.

This point, always underscored in literature and research on inclusive organizational change¹², highlights the importance of ongoing questioning about how effectively inclusive changes in policy and procedure are actually integrated into the detailed workings of the university and how well their objectives are actually met. For example: how well a new policy is actually put into practice and integrated into routine

¹¹ Government of Ontario (2014) Child Care & Early Years Act. <http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/14c11>

¹² Ahmed, S. (2012). *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Duke University Press: Durham, N.C.

organizational practices; whether barriers to accessibility are being removed or merely better communicated for those impeded by them; whether data on inclusion and diversity are not merely recorded to meet accountability requirements or secure funding, but also put to use to redress prior exclusions and think critically about the organizational practices that reproduce them. In the coming year, PACBIC will monitor these and other unfolding initiatives with such questions in mind – very much in the spirit of McMaster’s principled commitment to radical questioning:

*Principle 5: To that end (valuing original thought and innovation) we will not only reaffirm the importance of radical questioning at the heart of the academic enterprise, but we will ensure the integrity of our work by bringing a critical view to all our practices – those which bear directly upon education and research as well as those less directly related to it.*¹³

INTEGRITY OF STRUCTURE & PROCESS

In the coming year, PACBIC will also be attentive to the important questions of ‘integrity of structure and process’ that President Deane raised in *The Next Phase*. In PACBIC’s domain, his questions lead us to examine how well the University’s organizational structures and processes support its equity and inclusion objectives. The work of PACBIC and MSU Diversity Services are acknowledged in *The Next Phase* and the Office of Human Rights & Equity Services is, of course, critical to the University’s work toward these objectives. There is, however, no senior administrative position charged with responsibility and expected to have expertise in this area – something that many other universities have and that, arguably, ensures that issues of equity and inclusion are knowledgeably represented at higher levels of decision-making.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Appreciation is expressed to:

- The many individuals and offices that contributed to PACBIC’s work in the past year
- The staff of Human Rights & Equity Services for the expertise they offer to the working groups, and the administrative resources and institutional knowledge with which they support all PACBIC’s activities.
- Some former PACBIC members and HRES staff who made particularly important contributions: Pearl Mendonça, Ayshia Musleh, Tomee Sojourner, Raphael (Raffi) Szajnfarber, Sarah Quayyum, Ismael Traore.

¹³ <http://www.mcmaster.ca/presidentsoffice/principles.html>

APPENDIX A

LIST OF PACBIC MEMBERS, 2015-2016

Executive Members	Position
Jane Aronson	Chair
Andrew Pettit	Vice-Chair (Staff)
Nishan Zewge-Abubaker	Vice-Chair (Student)
Organizational Members	Contact
Aboriginal Students Health Sciences	Danielle Soucy/ Jordan Carrier
African Caribbean Faculty Association of McMaster	Juliet Daniel
Athletics & Recreation	Theresa Burns
Chaplaincy Centre	Carol Wood
Canadian Union of Public Employees	Chandra Kavanagh
Employee Health	Carrie Allen/ Monica Poulin
Graduate Studies	Andrea Cole/ Peter Self
Human Resources	Wanda McKenna
Indigenous Studies Program	Rick Monture
McMaster Graduate Students Association	Lucia Myongwaon Lee
McMaster Hillel	Judith Dworkin
McMaster Institute for Innovation & Excellence in Teaching & Learning	Beth Marquis
McMaster Muslim Students Association	Umer Javed
McMaster Students Union	Ehima Osazuwa
McMaster Students Union Diversity Services	Ryan Deshpande
McMaster University Academic Librarians' Association	Lynne Serviss
McMaster University Faculty Association	Marshall Beier/ Nancy Bouchier
Ontario Public Interest Research Group	Kojo Dampney
Queer Students Community Centre	Emily Smith
Student Accessibility Services	Tim Nolan
Student Wellness Centre	Roseanne Kent/Melissa Fernandes

UNIFOR 5555	Jim McAndrew
Individual Members	
Albina Veltman	Faculty
Alise deBie	Student
Amber Dean	Faculty
Ameil Joseph	Faculty
Eulene Victoria Bomberly	Student
Jennie Anderson	Staff
Joanne Buckley	Staff
Karen Sutton	Staff
Lynn Stewart	Staff
Marie Vander Kloet	Staff
Nicole Virgin	Staff
Rhonda Moore	Staff
Sandra Colavecchia	Faculty
Sarah Dickson	Faculty
Sarah Jama	Student
Wayne Lewchuk	Faculty
Non-Voting Members	
Ombuds Office	Carolyn Brendon

LIST OF PACBIC MEMBERS, 2014-2015

Executive Members	
Jane Aronson	Chair
Andrew Pettit	Vice-Chair (Staff)
Sarah Quayyum	Vice-Chair (Student)
Organizational Members	
Aboriginal Students Health Sciences	Danielle Soucy
African Caribbean Faculty Association of McMaster	Juliet Daniel
Athletics & Recreation	Theresa Burns
Chaplaincy Centre	Carol Wood
Employee Health	Carrie Allen
Graduate Studies	Andrea Cole/ Peter Self

Human Resources	Wanda McKenna
Indigenous Studies Program	Rick Monture
McMaster Graduate Students Association	Lucia Myongwaon Lee
McMaster Hillel	Raphael Szajnfarder
McMaster Institute for Innovation & Excellence in Teaching & Learning	Beth Marquis
McMaster Muslim Students Association	Ammar Ahmed
McMaster Students Union	Teddy Saull/ Jacob Klugsberg
McMaster Students Union Diversity Services	Nishan Zewge-Abubaker
McMaster University Academic Librarians' Association	Lynne Serviss
McMaster University Faculty Association	Marshall Beier/ Nancy Bouchier
Ontario Public Interest Research Group	Kojo Dampney
Queer Students Community Centre	Daniel McGuire
Student Accessibility Services	Tim Nolan
Student Wellness Centre	Pearl Mendonça
UNIFOR 5555	Jim McAndrew
Individual Members	Membership Type
Jennie Anderson	Staff
Eulene Victoria Bomberly	Student
Joanne Buckley	Staff
Sandra Colavecchia	Faculty
Alise deBie	Student
Amber Dean	Faculty
Sarah Jama	Student
Ameil Joseph	Faculty
Wayne Lewchuk	Faculty
Rhonda Moore	Staff
Allison Sekuler	Faculty
Karen Sutton	Staff
Lynn Stewart	Staff
Ismaël Traoré	Student
Albina Veltman	Faculty
Nicole Virgin	Staff
Non-Voting Members	Contact
Ombuds Office	Carolyn Brendon

APPENDIX B

PACBIC SPONSORED OR SUPPORTED EVENTS

MCMASTER INDIGENOUS STUDENT COMMUNITY ALLIANCE (MISCA) CULTURAL GATHERING, September 25, 2014. MISCA celebrated the 25th Anniversary of Indigenous Student Groups on campus. Hundreds of students, faculty, staff and community members enjoyed free samples of traditional cuisine along with musical and dance performances by First Nations, Inuit and Métis performers. The event brought diverse groups of people together and warmly welcomed new students to the McMaster Indigenous community.

INTERFAITH SHABBAT DINNER, November 7, 2014. McMaster Hillel/Jewish Student Association invited members of the McMaster community for a traditional/explanatory Friday night dinner. The purpose of the evening was to bring various interfaith and spiritual communities together in order to discuss individual practices while celebrating the similarities and shared experiences that unite communities.

CITY HALL & THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM: POSSIBILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES, November 10, 2014. Campus members, community organizers, local politicians and advocates gathered to discuss if and how City Hall could be engaged in the ongoing struggle against racism. The event was particularly relevant following Hamilton City Hall's decision to defer an anti-racism resource centre pilot project.

MSU OPEN ACCESSIBILITY FORUM, November 27, 2014. The MSU hosted its 1st Annual Open Accessibility Forum with a specific focus on *The Accessibility of Learning*. This event featured guest speakers, David Lepofsky (Chair, AODA Alliance) and Tim Nolan (Director, Student Accessibility Services), small-group breakout sessions, and a broad full-group discussion.

MSU WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY NETWORK (WGEN) LAUNCH, January 29, 2015. The McMaster Students Union launched the Women and Gender Equity NETWORK (WGEN), a new pilot service with the goal of creating a safe campus environment for women-identified individuals, trans people, and survivors of sexual assault. The launch included two presentations: Darkmatter hosted “#NotYourTrans101” - a creative workshop about various ways of theorizing and engaging in political organizing around gender. Renowned trans-activist, Susan Gapka, discussed experiences of being Trans* in academia and how barriers that Trans* students face could significantly impact the quality of education that they receive.

CELEBRATING INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AT MCMASTER; FROM GRASSROOTS TO STUDENT SUCCESS PANEL, March 9, 2015. Since its inception in 1992, many learners have come through the Indigenous Studies Program. Campus and community members were invited to join ISP in a panel discussion with Indigenous students and faculty who shared stories about their university experiences and discussed how McMaster could improve and build upon past, and current student support and success.

CUPE 3906 SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN ACADEMIA AND THE WORKPLACE FORUM, March 15, 2015. Philosophy professor and trans activist, Dr. Rachel McKinnon, presented the keynote address entitled, “Allies Behaving Badly”. The Forum also provided a platform for graduate students to present their

ideas and to engage those in attendance in conversation about the causes, impacts and prevention strategies related to sexual harassment.

CELEBRATING QUEER PEOPLE OF COLOUR, June 20, 2015. Matapa World Music and Art Organization & space between presented this event, opened to everyone, featuring dance, drag, spoken word, and musical performances by queer artists of colour and aimed at creating a space that celebrated the art of queer, trans* and two-spirit people of colour.

MSU ACCESSIBILITY WEEK - Colour Blind Awareness-Raising Event, September 22, 2015. This event provided a forum for discussion and learning about colour-blindness. Nearly 300 million people in the world are colour-blind. At this event, participants were able to try on special glasses that enhance colour vision for those who experience colour blindness.

2015 INDIGENOUS CULTURAL GATHERING, September 24, 2015. This year's Cultural Gathering featured a welcoming pow wow, Inuit and Métis performances, traditional food tasting, a silent auction and participation prizes.

BLACK LIVES MATTER: THE RALLYING CRY OF THE NEW MOVEMENT AGAINST RACIST POLICE VIOLENCE: A CONVERSATION ON BLACK LIVES MATTER, CARDING AND INDIGENOUS STRUGGLES, September 24, 2015. The McMaster University event - one of several held in Hamilton - featured Alicia Garza, co-founder of #BlackLivesMatter, a national organizing project focussed on combatting anti-Black state sanctioned violence; Vanessa Watt, Mohawk and Anishnaabe lecturer and George Knia Sigh, founder and president of the Osgoode Society Against Institutional Injustice.

THE POLITICS OF STORY/TELLING OUR STORIES WITH ELI CLARE, October 21-22, 2015. Eli Clare, acclaimed activist, writer and poet whose work focuses on the intersection of disability, gender, class and race presented an **Evening Public Lecture: "The Politics of Story"**. Through critical analysis, poetry, and storytelling, Eli Clare explored the politics of using story to entertain, educate, diagnose, and make money. Eli also facilitated a **Workshop for People with Disabilities: "Telling Our Stories: Empowering or Frustrating?"** This workshop unpacked how the repeated requests directed toward those who are disabled, mad, or chronically ill in order to educate, explain, and get access/accommodations can be empowering, frustrating/exhausting/shaming/burdensome.

MSU LEADERSHIP SUMMIT FOR WOMEN, October 24, 2015. The Leadership Summit for Women is an annual intergenerational community-wide event that aims to create a safe space for the diverse voices of women, Trans* individuals, and their allies. The 2015 conference theme was "Make it Happen Hamilton." Throughout this daylong conference, the organizers engaged participants in discussion about the issues impacting women today. The overall goal was to develop the delegates' leadership skills and to facilitate conversations about meaningful change in our organizations, communities, and society at large.

MSU ACCESSIBILITY FORUM: BREAKING THE STIGMA, October 21, 2015. The 2015-2016 Accessibility Forum was themed around "Breaking the Stigma", with a focus on how (dis)abilities, chronic medical concerns and mental health issues/ madness affect every aspect of student life. Presentations and round table discussions highlighted such topics as: disability, sexuality and gender identity; self-advocacy and the accommodation process; and responsible allyship

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. This day is commemorated annually across the country on December 6th; however, McMaster's event was held on December 4, 2015 and included the 2nd annual men's walk; A Panel on Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women featuring Bev Jacobs, Norma General & Aileen Joseph speaking of the personal and political dimensions of violence against Indigenous women and a Commemorative Service to remember the 14 women murdered in 1989 at École Polytechnique, the five women murdered while members of campus and the over 1200 missing or murdered Indigenous women in Canada.