

THE McGill Daily

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INDIGENOUS HISTORY

SPECIAL ISSUE

McGill DAILY le délit
DPS SPD

DAILY PUBLICATIONS SOCIETY
SOCIÉTÉ DES PUBLICATIONS DU DAILY

Published by The Daily Publications Society, a student society of McGill University.

The McGill Daily is located on unceded Kanien'kehá:ka territory.



Zoe Sanguin
Staff Illustrator

THE McGill Daily
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Editorial Board

3480 McTavish St, Room 107
Montreal, QC, H3A 0E7

phone 514.398.6790
fax 514.398.8318
mcgilldaily.com

The McGill Daily is located on
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coordinating editor

Ingara Maidou

managing editor

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news editors

Justin Friedberg

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Gemma Martin-Fung, Stella Phipps

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SOCIÉTÉ DES PUBLICATIONS DU DAILY

3480 McTavish St, Room 107
Montreal, QC H3A 0E7
phone 514.398.690
fax 514.398.8318

advertising & general manager

Letty Matteo

ad layout & design

Mathieu Menard

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EDITORIAL

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"Decolonization"

According to Sium, Desai, and Ritskes in Volume 1 of the *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* journal, decolonization entails "reimagin[ing] and rearticulat[ing] power, change, and knowledge through a multiplicity of epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies." Further, "decolonization demands the valuing of Indigenous sovereignty in its material, psychological, epistemological, and spiritual forms."

However, the continued oversimplification of the term "decolonization" has watered down its meaning. When only employed as a metaphor, it loses its potency. For instance, you'll often hear people talk about "decolonizing" a syllabus or "decolonizing" their mind.

The scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang explore how the reductive use of the term "decolonization" has become normalized within social justice frameworks. They argue that activists' inability to question the word's meaning prevents them from confronting the deeper issue of continued colonialism. As a result, "The desire to reconcile [becomes] just as relentless as the desire to disappear the Native; it is a desire to not have to deal with this (Indian) problem anymore." Tuck and Yang describe this phenomenon using the phrase "settler moves to innocence," explained as "strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege."

One of the methods used in decolonization efforts is repatriation, which Professor Rebecca L. Bourgeois of the University of Alberta's Anthropology department describes as the "the return of cultural heritage [...] from institutions back to their communities." This "return of cultural heritage" is a laborious, complex process that can simultaneously conjure dark histories just as much as cherished ancestral knowledge for Indigenous communities.

Recently, a few objects have been successfully repatriated. For example, in 2023, the Royal BC Museum repatriated a Nuxalk totem pole back to the Nuxalk Nation. The totem pole was carved by the great-grandfather of the Hereditary Chief Snuxyaltwa (Deric Snow) and has a deep sense of meaning to the Nuxalk Nation. In a quote given to The Canadian Press, a

Nuxalk member said "Our history is embedded in these poles, a great history, and when they're taken, it's almost as if it's like our children were taken."

"Rematriation" has also been raised as an alternative to the word "repatriation" in academic discourse to challenge colonial institutions such as heteropatriarchy. This term highlights the various considerations needed to be made during this return of artifacts. It also demonstrates how this process can look different to every Indigenous culture as each one has different protocols and traditions that need to be respected.

In exploring the nuances of the language surrounding decolonization, the *Daily* doesn't claim to know exactly what reconciliation, repatriation, rematriation, or even decolonization itself should look like. As a publication on unceded land with an editorial board of non-Indigenous students the best we can do is to take a step back and ask ourselves: "How can we try to be more conscious of our word usage?"

If you are a non-Indigenous person reading this editorial, we ask you to do the same. Take a step back and question your place on Turtle Island. Read articles and discourse on Indigenous issues, keep up to date with local demonstrations, and draw informed conclusions. Below we have listed the scholarly sources that made up the argument of this article, and we urge you to look further.

"Towards the 'tangible unknown': Decolonization and the Indigenous future" by Aman Sium, Chandni Desai, and Eric Ritskes

"Decolonization is not a metaphor" by Eve Tuck, State University of New York at New Paltz, and K. Wayne Yang University of California, San Diego

"Rematriation: Ts'msyen Law, Rights of Relationality, and Protocols of Return" by Robin R. R. Gray

"Reconceptualizing Repatriation as the Power to Decide" by Rebecca L. Bourgeois, Kisha Supernant, and Neha Gupta

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McGill's 25th Annual Powwow

An in-depth look into what makes up the fabric of a powwow



Parker Russell
Design Editor

The origin of the powwow is unknown, but it is a relatively new tradition, started in the 1800s and popularized in North American Indigenous communities in the 1900s. In the 1830s when colonial governments implemented reserves, singing and dancing were used to keep Indigenous culture alive. Very quickly, many different forms of Indigenous practices, including powwows, were outlawed through Canada's 1876 Act. While for decades many First Nations people fought against the ban, it wasn't until after World War II that change was made. Returning veterans from the war heavily protested their right for religious freedom and practice, which led to an amendment to the Indian Act in 1951 to allow Indigenous peoples to hold traditional ceremonies. It wasn't until the 1960s that powwows became more popular as a way to create cross-cultural exchange between different Indigenous cultures and non-Indigenous people.

The 25th Annual McGill Powwow was held by the McGill Office of Indigenous Initiatives and John Abbott College at the McGill MacDonald Campus on Friday, September 18.

For McGill students on the downtown campus, the day started out grey and cold, the feeble rays of September sunlight blocked by the tall downtown buildings. However, on the Macdonald campus, summer was still in full swing; the powwow took place on Watson Field, where the surrounding trees allowed the sun to shine down on spectators in full. This joyful reminder of summer weather was the perfect preface to the powwow.

In the middle of Watson Field, a white tent reflecting the sunlight served as the centre for activities. Spectators and participants alike lined the perimeter of the tent standing or sitting on the grass and in chairs. Among the spectators were students, various members of the community, local vendors, and dancers.

The powwow was kicked off by the Grand Entry, a traditional opening ceremony, which began with all the dancers entering from the eastern corner of the tent to pay symbolic respect to the Eastern Door. The Kanien'kehá:ka (Ga-niyen-ge-HAA-ga) or Mohawk people, are the Keepers of the Eastern Door due to their traditional eastern territory spanning over parts of Quebec, Vermont, and New York. The dancers moved around the

tent in a counter-clockwise circle, as per Mohawk tradition, led by four flag-bearers, including Tom Dearhouse. He carried the Hiawatha Belt Flag, a deep purple banner set with five interconnected white shapes after a wampum belt design representing the five nations of the Haudenosaunee (Hoh-DEE-noh-SHOH-nee) or Iroquois Confederacy. Carried alongside it was the modern version of the Mohawk Warrior Flag designed for the Rotisken'rakéhte (Mohawk Warrior Society), an LGBTQ2S+ flag, and a POW/MIA flag honouring veterans. All four flags were hoisted on two centre poles under the tent. To conclude the ceremony, several different prayers were said and songs were sung.

Following the Grand Entry, participants and spectators settled into the tent for the rest of the day. One side of the tent was allocated to the emcee's table along with four drum circles, each comprising between five to ten men around a large drum. Throughout the competitions, the different drum circles alternated synchronized performances while singing. The host drum was Black Bear, co-hosted by Spiritwolf Singers, and accompanied by Ottawa River and Eagle River Singers. The different drum groups were there to accompany the different dances during the day. The host drum is the drum group that is responsible for playing during the important events, such as the Grand Entry.

Ahead of the anticipated competition dances, the emcees of the event — Lance Delisle, in English, and Marie-Céline Charron, in French — opened the floor of the tent to all present for an inter-tribal dance. A large group of schoolchildren on a field trip made up the majority of the dance, following the lead dancers in a simple movement pattern where they hopped twice on each foot to the beat of the drums.

The competitions themselves were short, but there were 12 categories in total that were divided by type of dance, gender, and age. The categories for men included Traditional, which encompasses traditional sharptight movements emulating battle-like dancing steps; Fancy, which is a non-traditional dance with more elaborate dramatic movements dance moves and regalia; and Grass, which is meant to mimic the movement of grass in both the regalis and the steps. Women have a similar Traditional category with sharptight steps; the Jingle category, which uses dresses with metal cones hanging from the

dress to add more auditory and visual elements; and finally, Fancy Shawl, which is meant to emulate a butterfly through the use of the dancer's shawls as they dance to a fast beat.

Each category began with around three to ten dancers spread out in the tent as the three judges went to each corner to observe. Once the drum went off, the dancers gave their all. For about one minute, the dancers moved all around the tent, keeping time, and showing off their tricks to the judges until the drum stopped, at which point the dancers held their finishing pose. This cycle continued about three to four times per category. After the dancing was done, the performers lined up in front of the judges.

Once it was time for the Men's Traditional category, Dearhouse — 63 years old, stepped into the circle with two other dancers. He discussed how he had chosen his regalia to honor his Ojibwe heritage and its traditional teachings. His outfit incorporated the four colours traditionally used by Ojibwe people to represent the cardinal directions: red, black, white, and yellow. Dearhouse also mentioned incorporating the concept of following the sun into his outfit. In Ojibwe culture, the sun is thought of as an elder brother. This idea resonated with Dearhouse, as an elder brother himself, and as someone who has many responsibilities as a social worker and an educator of traditional teachings. Dearhouse's regalia consisted of a bustle headpiece made of deer and porcupine, as well as bells around his legs to help him dance in time.

After the competitions ended, a short break was taken to allow dancers to rest and gave the audience the opportunity to look around at the vendors. Observers were able to browse a series of stalls set up outside of the tent that featured Indigenous craftsmakers, McGill associations, Indigenous organizations, and food.

After the break, the performances continued with the Hoop Dance. Hoop Dancing originated in the 1930s, and involves a performer who uses hoops to create shapes to tell a story. In this particular performance, the dancer recreated the motions and shapes of birds using the hoops. This was the only non-competitive performance in the powwow, so the emcees put out a rug and encouraged people to leave tips.

The powwow concluded with the announcement of the winners

Images courtesy of Parker Russell
Design Editor

for each category and the closing ceremony. The 25th Annual McGill Powwow was a beautiful event that celebrated and fostered a place for learning more about Indigenous culture. Instead of looking through the colonial lens of a textbook, take the time to go to a powwow and see for yourself what some aspects of Indigenous culture looks like. To attend, check out the McGill Annual Powwow or stay up to date with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives.



The Debate on Quebec's Next Chapter

In the first two provincial election debates, party leaders clash over affordability, public services, and the prospect of another sovereignty referendum

Lorin Kamaci
Staff Writer

Disclaimer: This article was written prior to the third debate on September 23.

The cost of groceries, access to healthcare, and Quebec's constitutional future were prominent issues discussed during the first two televised debates of the provincial election. Throughout discussions of affordability and public services, party leaders returned to a recurring disagreement: whether another term of Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government or a referendum on independence would bring greater uncertainty.

The September 15 TVA Face-à-Face brought together CAQ leader Christine Fréchette, Liberal Party leader Charles Milliard, Parti Québécois leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, Québec solidaire co-spokesperson Ruba Ghazal, and Conservative leader Éric Duhaime for an initial debate in French. They returned the following evening for the Noovo-Crève debate, also in

French, with a third debate scheduled for September 23. François Legault was absent from the stage, but his name was not absent from the debate. Fréchette began by distinguishing herself from Legault, her predecessor. However, her opponents repeatedly brought the discussion back to the CAQ's past record. After nearly eight years in power, the CAQ faced criticism from opposition leaders over its management of public funds and the state of Quebec's public services, with its rivals arguing that costly government projects had failed to deliver the improvements Quebecers needed. St-Pierre Plamondon posited that a change of government could be a chance to reduce waste, while Milliard challenged the CAQ's economic management. Fréchette disputed criticism from all four of her colleagues of the SIFA health-sector technology project, rejecting the cost figures raised as evidence to dispute her performance.

On affordability, the leaders disagreed over which costs the government should absorb and which revenues it could afford to lose. St-Pierre Plamondon defended removing Quebec's sales tax, or TVQ, from used goods. Fréchette opposed this proposal, arguing that it would deprive the government of

state-operated grocery stores, while Duhaime challenged the idea of government involvement in food retail, touching on his broader criticism of Quebec's welfare model. In their opening statements, Ghazal had called for a stronger economy after what she described as poor decisions by previous governments, while Duhaime had identified the model itself as the problem.

The topic of housing also revealed differences in candidate opinions over which campaigns could realize their promises of building more homes. The Liberals' housing plan aims to eventually build 100,000 new homes annually, through measures including wider use of prefabricated construction and faster permit approvals. However, during the TVA debate, Ghazal questioned whether the party's proposed funding plan could support its ambitions. This exchange put the practical challenge of financing and delivering new housing on the construction agenda.

Discussions around healthcare brought up a related disagreement over the public versus private provision. During the first debate, Milliard opposed Duhaime's proposal to expand access to private treatment by using public health insurance cards, arguing that taxpayers should be able to rely on the public system they already help fund. Duhaime maintained that the existing system could not stay the same. This disagreement continued the next night. As reported by *24 Heures*, St-Pierre Plamondon argued that greater reliance on private care was not an automatic solution and advocated for strengthening local community service

centres (CLSCs), while Duhaime continued to defend the private provision as having the potential to be more efficient. The future of Santé Québec was another point of contention. Ghazal pressed St-Pierre Plamondon on how quickly he could fulfill the PQ's promise of abolishing the agency, while the latter maintained that efficiency would not be an issue. Their exchange highlighted the practical question behind institutional reform: how soon would changes to the healthcare system actually be able to reach patients?

The Noovo-Crève debate also included a segment devoted to young people. According to student newspaper *Quartier Libre*, Milliard and St-Pierre Plamondon discussed youth distress, screen time, education, and artificial intelligence. When asked about taking legal action against major digital platforms' harm to adolescents' mental health, Milliard supported the idea, while St-Pierre Plamondon proposed examining its legal feasibility.

Even in the discussion surrounding young people's mental health, the referendum found its way back into the conversation. Milliard suggested that a sovereignty vote could add to young people's anxiety; St-Pierre Plamondon argued that it was a constitutional question separate from the issue under discussion.

Immigration generated a particularly sharp divide in the first debate. St-Pierre Plamondon defended the monitoring immigration levels, while Ghazal challenged his comments about second-generation Quebecers putting pressure on schools. Duhaime argued that Quebec's capacity to receive newcomers had reached

its limits, but Ghazal maintained a welcoming approach. Environmental policy also divided Ghazal and Duhaime. In the second debate, Duhaime promoted exploiting Quebec's natural gas resources, arguing that this could replace other fossil fuels. Ghazal favoured developing clean energy instead.

On Quebec's relationship with Ottawa, St-Pierre Plamondon said during the TVA debate that he would collaborate with Mark Carney and other provinces as long as Quebec's interests were respected. Milliard challenged that position, although he defended cooperation within Canada.

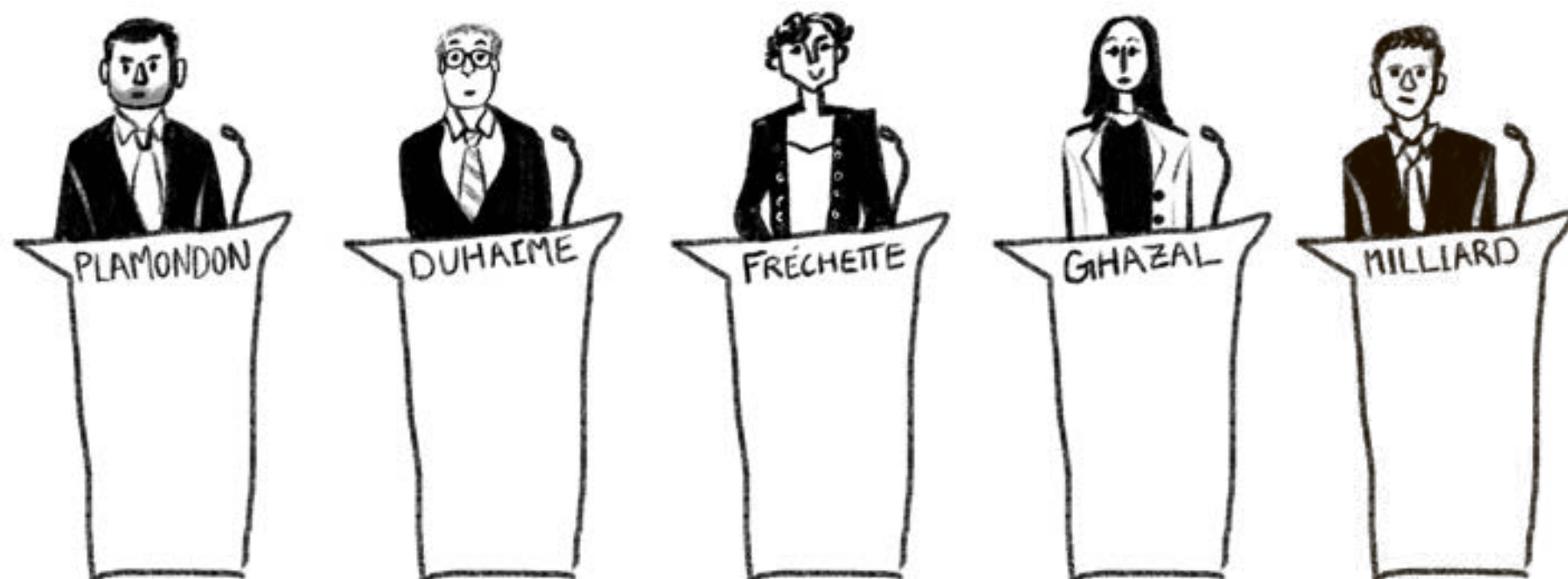
By the second evening of debates, Fréchette repeatedly questioned whether the PQ's referendum plans would create economic instability. Yet she herself faced questions about how she would vote in a referendum. Ghazal supported independence, while Duhaime argued that a referendum would weaken Quebec. The divisions therefore concerned both Quebec's constitutional future and whether reopening that question should be a priority.

McGill political scientist Daniel Béland observed in his *Policy* magazine article that crowded stages and interruptions during debates limited how fully leaders could explain their proposals. Across the first two debates, questions about grocery bills, housing, and healthcare repeatedly became questions about Quebec's political future. Their proposals also invited a more immediate question: what will change for the people paying those bills and waiting for care?

Golnar Saegh
Multimedia Editor

Fréchette began by distinguishing herself from Legault, her predecessor, but her opponents repeatedly brought the discussion back to the CAQ's past record.

French, with a third debate scheduled for September 23. Even the grocery aisle became a dividing line over the role of government. Ghazal proposed



The Art of Inuit Self Determination

Thomas Whiteley’s first solo exhibit bridges dog sledding (*qimutsik*) and Qaujimajatuqangit continuity

Mara Gibe
News Editor

Two years ago, the Canadian government issued an apology to Nunavik Inuit Peoples for its involvement in the RCMP massacre of over 1,000 Inuit sled dogs (also known as *qimmik* in Inuktitut) between the 1950s and 1960s. As part of the reconciliation program, the state allocated 45 million CAD to the Makivik Corporation (Makivik) to restore dog sledding (also known as *qimutsik* in Inuktitut) in Inuit communities, including the annual Ivakkak race.

In a CBC interview on *The Bridge* radio show, Kuujuaq based artist Thomas Whiteley (ᑕᑦᑭᑦ) describes how “a lot of effort...[has been done] to bring [dog sledding] back, but it hasn’t come back in the same way.” This is where Whiteley’s art comes in, integrating, on the one hand, traditional Inuit knowledge (*qaujimajatuqangit* in Inuktitut) and, on the other, contemporary art spaces.

This integration is notably evident in Whiteley’s first solo exhibit, “Qamutik,” at La Guilde, a non-profit art museum spotlighting the heritage of Indigenous and female artists. At La Guilde, Whiteley’s exhibit centres on a nearly 4-metre-long dog sled known as a *qamutik*, featuring “scenes of northern life...and animals.” These scenes are carved out onto the qamutik’s wooden panels and used as stamp templates to transfer the images using ink onto Japanese paper, “giving premium results... [as opposed to] linoleum,” says Whiteley. Whiteley, and his mentor, Nadine Bariteau, took two years to curate the exhibition. Bariteau taught Whiteley his printmaking skill set, as “there were no [printmaking]



“The Eternal Battle Between Dog and Raven” by Thomas Whiteley
Courtesy of Mara Gibe | News Editor

studios in Kuujuaq.” However, prints have always been present in Whiteley’s worldview; “they’ve always been in our homes,” he further emphasized, “it felt like Inuit art was printmaking and stone carvings, so it felt natural going back to that...because it was always present.” Carving was specifically passed down patrilineally in Whiteley’s family, with his father and grandfather also being woodworkers. The material has a life of its own; the wood, Whiteley elaborates, “is alive... it’s got cracks, it’s lived.” This element of vitality is further enhanced by storytelling when carving iconography. Whiteley describes how the *qamutik* — a being with a mouth, on the front of the

skis, and panels on its sides, — is “the bowels of the beast.” In this way, the wooden carvings capture mobility complementary to the practical use of *qamutik* for *qimutsik*.

Hence, *qaujimajatuqangit* directly relates to Whiteley’s lived experience, in which he grew up in “disconnect,” splitting his time between Nunavik in the north of Quebec and Quebec City in the south of the province. This distance was mended once he permanently moved to Kuujuaq as an adult. In this way, “the land inspired the artwork...[meaning there] couldn’t be one without the other.”

Whiteley’s prints also have a life of their own, as seen in “The Eternal

Battle Between Dog and Raven.” In this work, the raven (*tulugaq* in Inuktitut), who has both a role in Inuit creation stories and as a “trickster” in a multitude of Indigenous tales, appears to either be giving or taking food from the *qimmik*. While the food appears to be grain-like per the raven’s diet, the lettering featured at the bottom of the print denotes a “battle” between the animals, illustrating a conflict of interest. One can infer that instead of offering food to the raven, the food may be taken from the *qimmik* without their consent. This is particularly significant considering the raven’s shapeshifting role as a “trickster” enables it to morph into human form,

meaning that the “battle” between raven and *qimmik* is also that of man and *qimmik*, which can directly refer to the *qimmik* massacre. Although not explicitly stated, the raven’s deception may parallel the state’s “betrayal...[to] live in partnership with Inuit” and its failure to apologize for the *qimmik* massacre until 2024.

Moreover, the *qamutik* carvings are more than just tangible art; they are also vessels “of knowing.” As previously mentioned, the *qamutik* is a sled and thus, also has a practical purpose. The *qamutik* bridges art and utility as seen when Whiteley rode the sled with his cousin’s sled dog team (*qimutsiit* in Inuktitut) in the exhibition’s film. According to the Inuktitut glossary at La Guilde, dog sledding is “the action of mushing, or using a dog team and dog sled for transportation, entertainment, or sport.”

Without the *qimutsiit*, Inuit people were severed from a core aspect of their identities Whiteley illustrates how the partnership with the dogs meant security when hunting, freedom of mobility, self-determination for “men...to provide for their families,” and most of all, access to the land. Correspondingly, the *qimmik* massacre led to forced displacement and food insecurity.

Ultimately, “dogs couldn’t have lived without us, and we couldn’t have survived without them,” said Whiteley. “Dogs are partners, not pets ...It’s a symbiotic relationship.” Whiteley additionally described how one can lose their cultural traditions if they do not practice them. This sentiment best informs the importance of Whiteley’s work to revitalize “dog sledding and that kind of partnership between dog and human.”

McGill Student Theatre: Beyond Backstage

McGill’s student theatre scene has a place for you

Gemma Martin-Fung
Culture Contributor

On Friday, September 18, McGill’s very own Players’ Theatre hosted Theatre Frosh: McGill student-theatre’s crossover event of the year. It is an evening organized to introduce first-years — or anyone interested in theatre at McGill — to the university’s diverse array of performance groups. From a meet-and-greet with all the companies, including individual introductory presentations of their respective mandates, goals, and events, to an evening at Gerts Bar, it is safe to say Players’ Theatre Events Coordinator Lauren Hodgins knows how to curate an event.

As a co-representative for the Arts Undergraduate Theatre Society (AUTS), it was a pleasure to meet everyone that evening and get

the chance to speak to students about the many theatrical undergraduate opportunities within AUTS, on the level of performance and production. Alongside Players’ Theatre were other veteran companies like Tuesday Night Café Theatre, McGill Savoy Society, McGill Improv, McGill Comedy Club, and sketch group Bring Your Own Juice. Newly-founded groups Club de Théâtre Francophone de McGill, McGill Chinese Drama, and Exposition Theatre rounded out the presentations, as well as a special message from McGill’s satire magazine, *The Plumber’s Faucet*. Together, these companies form one of McGill’s liveliest student scenes; one overflowing with creativity, community, and of course, fun.

Partaking in numerous productions as an actor, stage manager, producer, and a

director has enriched my university experience far beyond what simply attending classes could do. In my very first semester at McGill, acting in one of Players’ Theatre’s mainstage shows offered me an outlet as I adjusted to university life. I know I’m not the only one who feels this way, so I spoke to a few of my peers. When asked what participating in theatre at McGill means to them, the majority echoed similar sentiments.

“I have met some of my favourite people from McGill theatre,” says Odessa Rontogiannis, Finance Director at Players’ Theatre, “and that means a lot to me.”

“The community that has been created throughout all the clubs is great,” says Elias Luz, Publicity Director at Players’ Theatre. “People find common interests, and common ground here, and I think that’s really beautiful and really

important. It’s an incredible opportunity to make friends.”

Indeed, the tight-knit theatre community at McGill is special. McGill (and some non-McGill) students across years, programs, and experience levels come together to develop a unified project, pouring their passion and creativity into something outside of school: something just for themselves and their community, offering a creative outlet and a release from the everyday stress of academic life. Luz further notes that McGill theatre is “a great way to dip your toes into the performing arts and try things out. I think that performance and creativity benefit you in your daily life. Being able to work with diverse groups of people is really important.”

Similarly, Hodgins adds, “[theatre] really helps me express myself...[and] live for the moments that truly matter.”

Are you convinced? If you are looking to get involved in this community, all of the groups mentioned above are in search of students for all roles within their productions. Whether you’re a designer, an actor, a stage manager, or something in between, there is a place for you.

Even if participating in theatre is not your thing, come see a show! Becoming a patron of the theatre is a social and low-stakes way to spend your evenings. All companies have student prices for tickets, as well as pay-what-you-can deals to ensure financial accessibility.

Tuesday Night Café Theatre and Players’ Theatre have their first productions of the year throughout November, and tickets will go on sale late October. No matter your faculty or experience levels, don’t hesitate to get involved with McGill theatre and take your bow. Break a leg!

NIIVI: A Queer Indigenous Musician on Representation and Her Experience

An interview with the musical personality incorporating Inuit culture in Montreal's alternative scene

Charley Tamagno
Copy Editor

NIIVI is a two-spirit Indigenous activist and artist from Nunavik, the northern third of what is known as Quebec. They play music incorporating Inuktitut language and cultural practices in Montreal and on tour, founded Nunavik Pride, and advocate for Indigenous rights across the province.

This interview has been edited for clarity and conciseness.

Charley Tamagno for *The McGill Daily* (MD): In *The Concordian*, you mentioned that you see yourself as an activist first and artist second. What does this distinction mean to you? Would you consider music a medium for your activism?

NIIVI (N): Definitely. I think music is my number one medium for my activism. The most important thing to me is being on the ground and being hands-on involved with the community, because if you're an activist and you're not actually doing anything in the community, then it's just performative.

My activism is my main job. The biggest way I'm doing that right now is teaching at a pre-collegiate CEGEP Prep Institute ... I'm teaching pre-colonial arts and also language revitalization through arts because we have a lot of terminology for art. I work specifically with youth from Nunavik. I also work with Nunavik Pride – I'm one of the founders. My main thing really is trying to better my community through activism.

MD: Do you spend the majority of your time here in Montreal or in Nunavik?

N: I live in Montreal right now because I'm also a student, and all students from Nunavik have to move to the city to have a higher education. I moved here when I was 16 to start going to CEGEP after graduating high school.

MD: Could you tell me your story of how you got started with music?

N: With music, it was never really a decision. Music has always been an inherent part of me, not only me as a person, but in my culture as well, even though we've lost a lot of our cultural music practices. My father, Ito Snowball, is also a musician. He goes by Sinuupa. I grew up while he was on tour. And so when I was born, it was a given that I would be in music in some way. I was born with the ability to sing. I never really made the decision to actively pursue music. It was just there.

MD: How much of your time do you split between music and being a student?

N: I think, honestly, music takes up more time than me being a student because I am fully self-managed and independent. I book all my own gigs, and that definitely takes up more time than being a student.

MD: I understand that you come from a long line of artists. So who would you say are some of the biggest influences on your music?

N: I would say my father is definitely my number one influence ... I listened to a lot of classic rock growing up and punk music. My dad[s] own songs sometimes delve into some heavier, even metal, genres, and his lyrics have always been political. I think my lyrics reflect that, and I was influenced by that in my own writing style – having a very political storytelling approach. For broader influences, I would definitely say Tanya Tagaq. She is the ultimate alternative artist.. She's a contemporary throat singer, and she's super punk, [and] really awesome, and I got to get close to her this last year. She's been such a big supporting factor to me. And I've always just really looked up to her since I was little. I would also say Beatrice Deer. She is another Inuk artist from Nunavik, I grew up with because she's friends with my dad. I have gotten closer to her since I moved to Montreal because she lives here now. She is an incredible ... multidisciplinary artist ... and I would love to be her. When it comes to musical influences, I would definitely say ... Ribbon Skirt [and] Ethereal Tomb.

MD: How does your experience growing up in Nunavik currently influence your songwriting and performances?

N: I think my experience as Inuk influences every aspect of my music, even when the subject matter isn't

highlighted the importance of our history, and not only the history of our colonization ... but the pre-colonial history: the art, the culture before we lost it. It really highlighted the importance of language and cultural revitalization ... Always the number one priority was ... the survival of our culture. And I think that reflects in my music as well.

MD: How would you say that you incorporate your culture into your music?

N: The opening song on our album is ... an ancient, traditional song – it's so old that even the Inuktitut in it is an ancient Inuktitut. I start the show in a drum circle, and I sing the song in this drum circle with the crowd, and then I run up on stage, and we all come in in the middle of the song as a band and continue it. It highlights the importance of tradition and culture, and we can honour [it] by starting every show with that. It's only something we can do whenever we have the space to do it, because I have to be able to get on the ground and interact with people in the drum circle. Also, it jumps into a more modern aspect with the full band right in the middle of it. So, it's highlighting the way that we can keep traditions while also being progressive. And then also my throat singing, that's an ancient part of our culture. It's one of the things that has been heavily intertwined with my life because I've been throat singing since I was 4 years old. I learned how to throat sing before I even knew how to sing in the usual sense. I really love including throat singing in my songs, and I also think it includes a very unique part to the sound.

MD: Have you found performing in Montreal different than when you've been in the north?

N: I think the main difference is being in Montreal, I feel the sense of responsibility to explain. A lot of the people here don't even know that we

order to survive as an Indigenous person today. But then you come to the city and then everyone is absolutely clueless about Indigenous people, and there's even people who don't know that you exist, who don't think or don't even know that Indigenous people still exist. A lot of people think that we're extinct because of colonization. It's crazy, the amount of ignorance and unknowingness of the public here. When I'm in Montreal or in any city, I treat my shows as a history lesson where I explain the context of the songs in a brief way just to be able to introduce people to this concept, and maybe open their minds and their curiosity to going and learning about it.

MD: What has been your community's response to your music?

N: There's definitely mixed reviews. Nunavik is still extremely Christian, and there is a lot of homophobia and fear of difference – there is even a fear of our culture because we were so indoctrinated into Christianity. A lot of older Inuit still believe that our culture is the mark of Satan. A lot of older Inuit still think that practicing our culture, even throat singing, is satanic. And so there are a lot of [people] that are still scared of their own culture. It's really difficult, and it's sad to see. Youth are getting out of that idea, but, as a teacher of youth, you can still see this ideology affects them. Shamanism is definitely the number one, most feared thing of our culture because we were taught that it was satanic and that even if you talk about it you're going to hell. So, even youth, whenever you say the word shaman, they get scared and they freeze up and you have to reassure them: "No, it's okay, it's okay to talk about these things." These things are not scary. This is part of who we are and it's a beautiful thing. We're still so affected by colonization [and] Christianity that we have this fear of difference, and almost this fear of ourselves. But whenever I do get support from my community – and I do have a lot of it, I do – it makes me feel as though I'm doing the right thing.

MD: How does being both queer and indigenous show up in your work and your activism?

N: I'm two-spirit, but in a more feminine way. In my culture, being two-spirit is about carrying two spirits with you. I was given my great grandmother's name, Jenny Snowball, to carry with me. And then I have my own spirit of Niivi.

I don't know if I've talked about it specifically in my music, but I definitely advocate for queer people a lot. I do a lot of activism for queer Inuit specifically because I grew up thinking that there was something wrong with me because there's absolutely zero Inuk queer representation. The only reason why I felt like it was okay was because there was one other queer person in my

community who was trans, my chosen brother ... [My chosen brother and his friend] put on the first ever Pride parade in 2020, and I joined them the next year, and we helped create the Nunavik Pride organization. One of the most important things is just having that representation and being a queer Inuk that is visible in the community, because there are so many queer Inuit who think that it's just not possible. There's so much misinformation: whenever someone comes out as queer in our community, [people claim] it's not traditional, and that's just not true. That's just Christianity speaking, and Christianity is not our culture. We've had Christianity for a while, but it's not our culture. In our original culture we had space for queer people, they were in fact important members of our society. Even our creation story is one that is extremely queer.

MD: Who is in the band for NIIVI?

N: My bandmates right now: Ollie Capello. She's the bassist. She's amazing; she's also the best visual artist ever. She's a painter and that's her main thing – she actually painted the album cover that we're gonna use, and she's probably the best visual artist that I know. Kirk Koshkin, our guitarist, he's also the lead singer and guitarist of his own band called Honey, which is how I found him. Our current drummer right now is Emilio, from a Montreal band called Dollhouse, which is also another incredible band.

It's really nice to be so involved in the Montreal music scene and have this community of musicians. It's the only way that I felt comfortable living in Montreal. When I first moved to Montreal from my hometown, I really hated it, because it felt so individualistic compared to coming from a very communitarian place.

MD: If someone were looking to delve into the world of artists from Nunavik, who would you recommend?

N: I obviously first have to say my dad, his artist name is Sinuupa. My favorite song by my dad is "Simple Man" off his *Arctic Darkness* album. It's so, so 90s. And also "Make Her Happy." That song is from the same album. It's a musician song – there's saxophone, flat bass, background singers – that song is just crazy.

And then I would say Beatrice Deer. My favorite album of hers is her newest one, the *Inuit Legends* album. I got to open for her release show that she did here in Montreal. I absolutely love it. It's basically a bunch of songs telling the story of traditional Inuit legends and it's incredible. Then I would also have to say my cousin, Kathy Aputirajuk – it's our original last name before the government decided it was going to be Snowball. Those would be my main three from Nunavik that I would recommend.

“ Being in Montreal, I feel the sense of responsibility to explain. A lot of the people here don't even know that we [Nunavik] exist, even though we're in the same province. ”

NIVVI, *Inuk artist*

necessarily about being Inuk, I just am Inuk. My experience influences the way that I live my life and [how] I am treated in life as well ... Every single part of my music is influenced by my indigeneity. Growing up in Nunavik, my family really

[Inuit] exist, even though we're in the same province. It's really weird to live in this disconnect because I know so much about Indigenous people and my culture and even other indigenous cultures ... You have to be educated in

Roundhouse Kicks

Cabot Square & Indigenous marginalization in Montreal

Isabelle Lim
Culture Editor

On one of the few precious warm days before the frigid fall chill sets in, my dear friend and fellow editor Justin and I took a short metro ride from downtown to Le Café Maison Ronde, or The Roundhouse Cafe. The Roundhouse is a sub-project of L’Itinéraire, a public organization which aims to help vulnerable peoples in Montreal.

It is also the first and only Indigenous-run cafe in the city which is surprising considering the sheer density and diversity....

It is also the first and only Indigenous-run cafe in the city which is surprising, considering the sheer density and diversity of Montreal’s cafe scene. The Roundhouse, which is right outside the Atwater Station exit in Cabot Square, does not possess the lavishly decorated storefront you might imagine with a typical cafe; nor is it, like other cafes situated along the bustling Rue Sainte-Catherine, sandwiched between a myriad of fluorescently-lit stores. Rather, the cafe operates out of a stone gazebo structure that one might not even recognize as a cafe at first glance. With no easily visible signage or in-house seating, the cafe is evidently meant for those who know to look for it. And who would know to look for it? According to L’Itinéraire’s website, The Roundhouse’s primary

mandate is to promote interactions between various Indigenous communities. This demographic was reflected in the individuals populating the small, jewel-toned round tables outside the cafe. The lunch rush meant that my food got served after a 30-minute wait, yet it was graciously topped off with a free *bannique sucrée* (“sweet bannock” pastry) for our patience.

I ordered an Indigenous Taco: bannock bread stuffed with juicy ground beef and topped with diced tomatoes and sour cream. Justin got a cappuccino and a BLT between two pieces of bannock bread. A key symbol of Indigenous culinary identity, bannock bread has historically been a quick and effortless source of carbohydrates, especially in times of hardship and food rationing. Before European settlers arrived in Montreal, Indigenous peoples made bread out of dried camas bulbs, which were then flattened and baked. Later, English and Scottish traders arrived and introduced bannock, an unleavened flour, which Indigenous peoples began to incorporate into their recipes. Now, bannock bread is an important dish in Indigenous cuisine, its recipe having been tweaked and perfected over centuries. Justin remarked on its slightly olive-y notes and density

in his BLT. Meanwhile, I noticed an imbued smokiness that was brought out in the *bannique sucrée*, which was dotted with cranberries and white chocolate. This was supposed to be an article reviewing the cafe, simply detailing my first time trying Indigenous food and promoting the presence of establishments that offer it, given that they are few and far between. However, as Justin and I sat at Square Cabot that fine Thursday afternoon, other things became apparent to us: the amount of police presence in a relatively peaceful park in broad daylight, the tents of the unhoused that peppered the area, and the array of interactions between Indigenous peoples in the hour and a half we spent there.

As I would come to learn, Cabot Square is a site where many Indigenous people congregate to resist political structures and mobilize amongst themselves. The Cabot Square Project, launched in 2014 by the Native Women’s Shelter of Montreal (NWSM), aims to provide

Cabot Square [...] is meant to be a place where unhoused Indigenous people can seek refuge and community; however, it is also where their behaviour and bodies are most surveilled and disciplined.

support, safety, and advocacy for vulnerable populations in and around Cabot Square. The Roundhouse is directly involved in the fulfilment of these objectives: it uniquely employs Indigenous people, many of



Image courtesy of Isabelle Lim | Culture Editor

whom are unhoused and/or behaviour and bodies are most under vulnerable circumstances. surveilled and disciplined. In fact, a 2023 report from the government of Quebec showed also representative of the place

Cabot Square [...] is meant to be a place where unhoused Indigenous people can seek refuge and community; however, it is also where their behaviour and bodies are most surveilled and disciplined.

that 13 per cent of Montreal’s unhoused population identified as Indigenous, despite Indigenous people only comprising 0.6 per cent of Montreal’s overall population. Therefore, issues of homelessness and Indigenous marginalization can be understood as highly intertwined. In addition, due to gentrification in Ville-Marie, more and more unhoused people are being pushed into Cabot Square. A volunteer for Resilience Montreal, an Indigenous-led organization that aims to support unhoused and Indigenous people in the area, told the *Daily* how gentrification in Ville-Marie had systematically displaced many unhoused people. According to her, this was done in an effort to raise estate value and quell dissent from business owners, who view unhoused people as liabilities. This also explains the police presence Justin and I noticed in the otherwise serene park, instead of along the busy adjacent road. Cabot Square, then, is a space defined by contradiction. It is meant to be a place where unhoused Indigenous people can seek refuge and community; however, it is also where their

that Indigenous people occupy in the greater Canadian social sphere: present, but hidden from plain sight, sidelined into corners that then come to be understood as places to be avoided. This is especially ironic considering that Canada as we know it stands on unceded Indigenous land. Indigenous people are deprived of ownership of and autonomy on land that was once theirs, all while colonial mentalities which paint Indigeneity as a threat are continually reproduced, intentionally or not. Nonetheless, we observed the hope and everyday joys ever-present in this space. People basked in the early autumn sunlight and its temporary warmth, chatting warmly and loudly. One of the employees at The Roundhouse showed us a painting he had made that read, “Happiness is not a destination, but a way of life.” While the sun is out and the “feels like” figures are above freezing, consider taking a trip down to Cabot Park and The Roundhouse cafe (if you can find it). The food is cheap, good, and most importantly, full of heart.



Image courtesy of Isabelle Lim | Culture Editor

The Road That Maybe Shouldn’t Have Been Travelled

A look at McGill’s dissonant past and mired present with regards to the Indigenous community

Elaine Yang
Features Editor

“ There is no question that the time has come for McGill to prioritize, in the most earnest and explicit way, Indigenous studies and Indigenous education...Canada must, and will, become a country where First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples and Nations are respected, honoured and valued. We understand that the hard work of reconciliation should be shouldered by us all and we have seen that McGill is prepared to do its part.”

The final report by the McGill Provost’s Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education opens with a sober optimism. It was submitted to the university’s administration in 2017 as a conclusive plan of action to align the institution with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s recommendations. At the time, McGill student athletic teams were still competing under the name “Redmen.” The name was long understood in the popular sense to be pejorative toward Indigenous people despite the university’s insistence that it only referred to the colour of the athletes’ uniforms. In the decade leading up to the report, less than one per cent of students and less than 0.5 per cent of all tenured and tenure-track professors self-identified as Indigenous. The Indigenous Studies Program, established in 2014, had only been offering courses for a handful of semesters.

Nearly a decade has elapsed since the report outlined its 52

Calls to Action, which included targets for Indigenous faculty, staff, and student recruitment as well as providing a basis to fund initiatives for Indigenous learning and student wellness. Although McGill is expanding its recruitment of Indigenous students and faculty, the change has been gradual. The current decade has seen a definitive uptick in the number of Indigenous faculty and staff hired at McGill, though relatively few of them are tenured or tenure-track professors. The report’s more symbolic Calls to Action, which included landscaping part of the Lower Field to more prominently feature the Hochelaga Rock and flying the

McGill’s wavering progress toward change for its Indigenous students and faculty emerges from a tangled and troubling history of discrimination, disregard, and antagonism toward the Indigenous communities of northeastern Canada.

Hiawatha Belt flag, a symbol of unity for the Haudenosaunee First Nations, have largely gone unanswered. The “Redmen” name was only officially dropped from all

McGill athletics teams in late 2018 following an announcement from then-Principal Suzanne Fortier.

McGill’s wavering progress toward change for its Indigenous students and faculty emerges from a tangled and troubling history of discrimination, disregard, and antagonism toward the Indigenous communities of northeastern Canada. As an institution, it had been sustained in part by the resources of Indigenous people in its early days as McGill College under William Dawson. During a period of financial hardship in the late 19th century, the school was granted a loan by the federal

government consisting of a combined \$40,000 taken from the General Indian Trust and Six Nations of Grand River Funds. The transfer of money was made without the

knowledge of any of the of Indigenous archaeological intended beneficiaries of either artifacts, including human fund, and, although McGill remains. George Mercer Dawson, eventually paid its debt in full nephew of William Dawson, had to the federal government, the also previously donated his money never found its way back personal collection of West Coast

It wasn’t until 2014 that McGill established its Indigenous Studies program, with classes becoming available in the Winter semester of 2015.

to the accounts from which it had been withdrawn. When approached by the Six Nations Council in 1988 regarding the establishment of a scholarship or bursary for students from Haudenosaunee First Nations as a symbolic repayment of the loan, representatives from McGill refused outright.

In 1919, McGill received the personal collection of affluent lawyer David Ross McCord in an endowment that would form the basis for the McCord-Stewart Museum on McTavish. McCord himself was appointed curator of the museum. Included in the collection were several thousand items retained by undocumented means, some with incredible historical and cultural importance such as a headdress possibly worn by Tecumseh in the 19th century. Several decades prior to the establishment of the museum, the Arts building had housed a display

Indigenous cultural objects to the university. He authored a book on Indigenous anthropology in 1879, in which he declared his support for the forced assimilation of Indigenous people into colonial North American society, deeming them “socially inferior.”

By the 20th century, however, McGill’s relationship with the Indigenous community at large had become undeniably more complicated. After admitting its first Indigenous pupils toward the end of the 1800s, the university found itself involved in a different way with the people of Quebec’s First Nations. As a nationally renowned institution for research and education, it was equipped with the structure and methods to aid Indigenous communities who lacked the same resources. The 1940s saw the founding of the Arctic Institute of North America, a

McGill is founded by royal charter. 1821	George Edward Bomberry, MD, becomes the first Indigenous student to graduate from McGill. 1875	The David Ross McCord collection is endowed to McGill. The collection included a 19th-century headdress said to have belonged to Tecumseh. Many of its items were obtained through undocumented and likely forceful means. 1919	McGill’s Intertribal Council of Native Students, formed several years earlier, holds a “Teach-In” to educate their malinformed classmates on Indigenous history. 1970
1860 McGill College receives a \$40,000 loan from the federal government, made up of funds from the General Indian Trust Fund and Six Nations of Grand River Fund.	1911 Joseph H. “Teronianente” Jacobs graduates as the first Indigenous student to receive funding from the federal government through the Department of Indian Affairs. He earned a Bachelor of Arts and would go on to complete his MD, also at McGill, in 1915.		1925 The Hochelaga Rock is placed by the Canadian government’s Advisory Board for Historical Site Preservation to commemorate the 16th-century Iroquois village that stood near McGill.

prominent organization dedicated to the research and preservation of northern Indigenous culture, under McGill leadership. By the 1970s, a certificate program had been established by the Faculty of Education to train First Nations teachers who would go on to work within their communities. Additional courses were being offered by McGill’s Social Work Program to revitalize the learning of Indigenous languages. The surge in nation-wide Indigenous activism in the ‘70s prompted members of the Departments of Geography and Anthropology to widen the breadth of their field research throughout Indigenous communities in Quebec. Those

Faced with the ignorance and occasional avarice of their peers, Indigenous students built solidarity among themselves, forming collectives such as the Intertribal Council of Native Students to consolidate their voices on campus.

same communities, including “Teach-In” symposium on the Eeyou (Cree) nation, Indigenous culture for the benefitted particularly from the purpose of presenting non-ecological research conducted Indigenous students with a on their territories and the clear framework and civil practical advice offered by language for discussions academics on liaising with the around their Native government. The Cree would go backgrounds and identities. on to accept advice from The ‘60s and ‘70s also saw the certain of these researchers McGill campus ecosystem

emerge as a debate stage for well-known independent Indigenous activists such as Kahentinetha Horn, who would go on to head the National Indian Council in addition to playing a prominent role in the Oka Crisis of 1990. Much of the impact of earlier Indigenous activism at McGill was registered in print, largely through student publications such as *The McGill Daily* that served as integral vehicles for protest and discourse. The *Daily* is honoured to hold certain of these materials in our archives, including advertisements for the Intertribal Council of Native Students’ 1970 “Teach-In.” Past issues of the *Daily*, beginning from Volume 1, published in 1911, are available online and in physical print in the Daily Publication Society’s offices on McTavish. While our university’s administration meanders through the Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education’s goals, more about McGill’s history with Indigenous communities as well as Indigenous activism in Tiohtià:ke can be found under *The McGill Daily* on the Internet Archive.



Advertisement for the Intertribal Council of Native Students’ “Teach-In” circa 1970
The McGill Daily archives, Volume 59

	The first Native Awareness Week was held at McGill (later became Indigenous Awareness Week.) Joseph Norton, then Grand Chief of the Mohawk Nation, spoke on issues around land claims and government petitions. 1988	First Powwow held at McGill. 2000	The Indigenous Studies program is established. Students had the option to take on a Minor in Indigenous Studies starting in the Winter 2015 semester. 2014
1975 The Faculty of Education offers workshops to teachers in Nunavik. The first teachers certified to teach Inuktitut in Quebec graduated with degrees from McGill in 1978.	1990 The First People’s House opens under the leadership of Linda Arkwright.	2013 McGill signs a pledge to follow the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.	2017 The Provost’s Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education presents its final report, comprising 52 Calls to Action to then-Acting Provost Christopher Manfredi.

Repercussions of Pregnancy

Is birth control still as liberating as it was in 1960?

Stella Phipps
Commentary Contributor

Against a climate of geopolitical volatility, environmental catastrophe, and rapid technological advancements that raise existential questions, it is no wonder that birth rates have dropped significantly in recent years. According to *The Hub*, nearly one in four women in Canada in their forties did not have children in 2024, the same year in which Canada’s total fertility rate dropped to 1.25 children per woman, a figure deemed “ultra-low” alongside countries like South Korea (0.75), Spain (1.21) and Japan (1.23). However, this downward trend can be observed from as early as 1965, just five years after the first oral contraceptive pill was introduced. Three main factors are thought to have triggered this decline in birth rates.

Firstly, women’s empowerment across the decades has shifted women’s position as mothers and caregivers to individual agents responsible for their own financial and professional wellbeing. First wave feminism granted (usually the most privileged) women the right to vote in the early 20th century. Women gained suffrage in 1918 in the UK and Canada, and 1920 in the US with the passage of the 19th amendment. Nonetheless, it wasn’t until 1960 when all women in Canada, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit women (no longer losing treaty rights in doing so), could vote, triggering a period of rapid social change in which women assumed political and professional roles outside the home. By the 1990s, women entering traditionally female fields such as teaching, nursing and clerical work declined in favour of higher qualified jobs, such as doctors, lawyers and professors. 1993 saw the appointment of Kim Campbell, Canada’s first female Prime Minister, and in 2001 the Government of

Canada officially recognized and sought to correct the gender pay gap. Hundreds of milestones have been reached in regards to women’s equality since. With more women in leadership roles than ever, it is no surprise that they are less inclined to sacrifice time, money, and potentially career advancement to raise a child.

In fact, media outlets have been quick to cover Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’ decision to freeze her eggs in order to focus on her burgeoning political career. Freezing eggs and leaving potential motherhood for later on in life is becoming a popular option for women who want to explore their career goals and personal aspirations more fully before committing to having children.

A second factor inhibiting people from having children is a cost of living that seems to keep rising exponentially. As if raising a child was not already a financial burden on families, the US’ social welfare provisions make life even harder for working mothers. The US has no federally mandated paid parental leave policy, making it the richest country in the world not to offer it., as well as one of seven countries in the world not to offer this policy. Although the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides (unpaid) leave, the criteria is strict — requiring a history of at least 12 months by a covered employer and 1,250 hours in the past year — leaving many ineligible to claim its benefits. Though 13 states as well as Washington DC have implemented paid parental leave programs, the rest of the country has far to go in this area.

Canada offers a maximum of 15 weeks maternity leave at a 55 per cent wage replacement rate, whilst Quebec runs its own plan (QPIP) allowing up to 18 weeks at a 70 per cent replacement rate. The most generous providers of maternity leave are the Nordic countries, with Sweden entitling parents to about 16 months of paid leave at 80 per cent of their salary. This includes at least 90 days of non-transferable leave, ensuring

fathers are also able to take time off. A third reason people are not having as many children as before is that child mortality has gone down considerably. This previous pattern of rapidly replacing children should also be considered when analysing a decline in contemporary birth figures.

As recently as the 1820s, approximately 1 in 2 children died before reaching the age of 15 as a result of unprecedented levels of poverty and disease. By 2020, child poverty had dropped to just 4.3 per cent. This is also a consequence of the long-term global shift from agrarian to industrial economies with a decreased reliance on child labour.

Given that more and more women are now choosing to live their lives childfree, the use of contraceptives has risen substantially to match this trend. In 2021, 874 million women used modern methods of contraception, such as female sterilization, condoms, implants and the pill. Birth control was historically an incredibly liberating tool for women, arriving in line with the second wave of the feminist movement and sexual revolution. As taboos against sexuality diminished and sex was distinguished from conception, women could better plan when or if they wanted children, giving them bodily and existential autonomy.

But did we ever consider the long-term and short-term health implications of birth control? Nearly 70 years have passed since the first artificial contraceptives became available and even with hundreds of options on the market, nearly 1 in 4 women report “life-altering” side effects of birth control. The most common effects reported by women include weight changes, mood swings, migraines, and nausea. Women using birth control containing estrogen experienced more severe effects such as high blood pressure and blood clots.

A study looking at online drug reviews for contraceptive products, such as progestin-only pills, extended-cycle pills and intrauterine devices, also found some women who took

contraceptives struggled with painful acne, affecting their self-confidence, as well as mental health problems such as mood swings and depression. One review said “I’m in shock that a small pill could do this much damage.”

Young women around McGill campus reported mixed effects when asked about their experiences with birth control. Some women on the progesterone-only pill experienced mood swings, lethargy and general hormone changes. Others taking the combined pill were satisfied with a reduction in acne and elimination of cramps but noted that they may be developing a “dependent” relationship with it, fearing the skin problems and period pains would return worse than before after getting off the pill. One woman, put on birth control to help with endometriosis, experienced a six-month period as a result of going on the pill.

And yet, women continue to take birth control because the price to pay for getting pregnant will always be higher than experiencing mild (or severe) side effects. This is not to say that all women are dissatisfied with birth control; in fact, a Drugwatch study found 49.62 per cent of women were very satisfied with their current method of birth control. It is, however, worth reflecting on the burden placed on women amid a growing pharmaceutical market that has not yet developed an effective male equivalent to the hundreds of female birth control options.

Many may say that it is biologically easier to develop birth control for women, or that there won’t be a market for male birth control. The few studies that have been done on male birth control have indicated



Jane Goodman
Staff Illustrator

successful results. One clinical trial used progestogen and testosterone injections to kill sperm in healthy adult men and observed a 98.5 per cent success rate, though adverse side effects such as acne and injection site pain were experienced and the trial was terminated early. Another study used a non-hormonal pill which was well tolerated by the men and had no adverse side effects. Though the research is still sparse, these studies suggest legitimate and effective male birth control is absolutely possible.

However, even if such an option were accessible, would women trust men to take such measures? Though one group is keen on the idea, saying “we already give birth,” other women on campus sway towards the negative, mentioning that men already disrespect the use of the condom and that they are not the ones that will experience the repercussions of pregnancy.

Nevertheless, the freedom of choice in determining if and how women take birth control is undoubtedly important in this day and age. For some, it has massively improved their quality of life, health, and reduced fears around pregnancy, whilst for others it has done the opposite. Above all, it is worth reflecting on this liberating invention from all its angles, acknowledging the potential of what modern day science might achieve for women and men globally.

Lost in Lentils

Lentil stew recipe (Adasi)

Alas, the seasons are changing. As much as I love Montreal autumn, I’ve unfortunately succumbed to the inevitable fall semester plague — my small-town immune system did not get the memo that we have moved to the big city.

In addition to popping vitamin C pills and wearing an absurd amount of layers for mid-September, another one of my tried-and-true strategies for coping with the cold is my dad’s infamous

lentil stew, or *adasi* in Farsi. Whether you’re also struggling through the cold with me or in pristine health, I guarantee that your quality of life will be greatly improved by this recipe.

Ingredients (3 servings)

800g dried green lentils
800 ml water
1/2 medium onion
1/2 medium turnip/rutabaga/
potato (optional)
turmeric
salt & pepper
olive oil

Recipe

Wash your lentils thoroughly, and strain through a sieve. Dice the onion and grate the turnip/rutabaga (if desired). If using a potato, chop into cubes.

Heat up a saucepan to medium and add olive oil. When hot, add onions with turmeric and fry until golden. Add your lentils, water, and root vegetable of choice, salt and pepper to taste. Cover and cook for 1 and 1/2 hours*.

*If you soak your lentils beforehand or use canned lentils, it will take less time to cook. If you are lucky enough to have a pressure cooker handy, my dad says you can just “throw everything in the pot and cook it for 20 minutes”.

Golnar Saegh
Multimedia Editor

