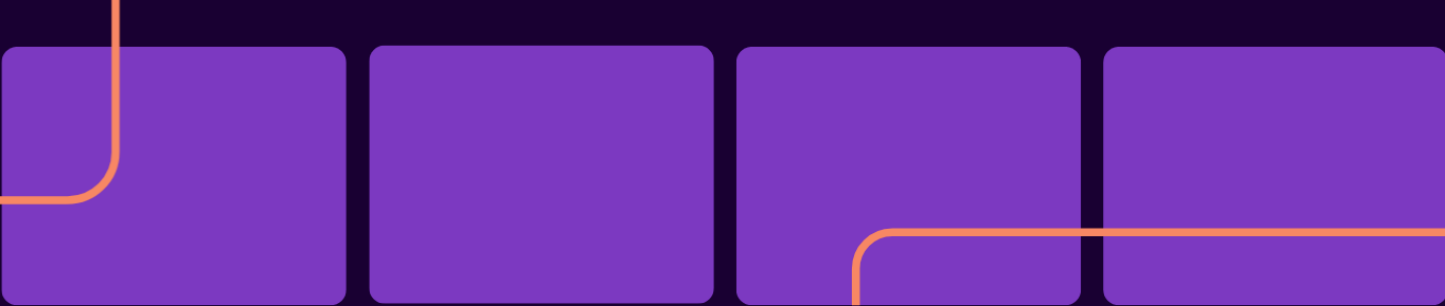




Concordia Indigenous Research Advisory Circle (CIRAC)

A community-driven report on the structure and purpose of Concordia's first Indigenous research advisory circle.

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1. Context

Concordia University acknowledges the importance of advancing reconciliation and building meaningful relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. Through the Indigenous Directions Action Plan (IDAP), Concordia has made a formal commitment to undertake concrete actions aimed at the decolonization and indigenization of the institution. This includes supporting Indigenous-led research and enhancing the capacity for community-based research.

In 2023, reconciliation and relationship building actions were approved by the Vice-President, Research and Graduate Studies (VPRGS) Dominique Bérubé and the Research Executive Team. Following this, a Terms of Reference document was drafted, with input from and approval by Manon Tremblay, Senior Director, Indigenous Directions, and Jason Lewis, University Research Chair in Computational Media and the Indigenous Future Imaginary and Co-director, Indigenous Futures Research Centre (IFRC). The process of establishing the mandate was co-led by the IFRC and the Office of the Vice-President Research, Innovation and Impact (OVPRII), with funding from a Canada Research Chair Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (CRC EDI) stipend to support the engagement of a consultant.

In 2025, the consultant was tasked with advancing these commitments by gathering data and creating a report to support and guide the creation of a research advisory committee—Concordia Indigenous Research Advisory Circle (CIRAC) to advance “the ethical, reciprocal and meaningful conduct of Indigenous research, in partnerships with Indigenous communities” (Indigenous Directions, 2021, p. 46).

2. CIRAC Purpose & Goals

As per the original Terms of Reference, the CIRAC will provide high-level strategic guidance on Indigenous research and knowledge mobilization at Concordia, ensuring that Indigenous research, research creation, and research training at Concordia University are conducted respectfully, centering Indigenous voices, peoples, and perspectives. While being less prescriptive than an ethics board, CIRAC can offer guidance on research projects, initiatives, and partnerships that involve or impact Indigenous communities, ensuring they align with ethical and culturally sensitive research practices.

This includes aligning efforts with the goals and recommendations outlined in:

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s [Calls to Action \(2015\)](#)
- Universities Canada’s [Principles on Indigenous Education \(2015\)](#)
- Concordia University’s [Indigenous Directions Action Plan \(2021\)](#)
- Canada Research Coordinating Committee’s [Setting new directions to support Indigenous research and research training in Canada \(2019-2022, extended to 2026\)](#)

Based on the findings of this data gathering process that informed this report, it is recommended that CIRAC be a diverse group of individuals with expertise in various areas relevant to Indigenous research. It should also include in its processes, whether as CIRAC members or an advisory, Elders and Knowledge Holders and from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. Members will be appointed for a renewable term of 3 years, following a nomination and selection process facilitated by the OVPRII in collaboration with the Indigenous Futures Research Centre and existing CIRAC members. The process to select the initial CIRAC members is not yet established.

3. Consultation Team

Gathering comprehensive feedback on the mandate from Indigenous research community members such as Indigenous faculty, graduate student researchers, research support staff, Elders and Knowledge Holders as well as non-Indigenous faculty engaged in research with Indigenous communities, was led by a team that included a consultation lead and two research assistants. The feedback and resulting recommendations will inform the CIRAC's structure, operations, and priorities, ensuring it reflects community needs and aspirations.

By establishing the consultation team, the IFRC and OVPRII secures essential community input that ensures the CIRAC's foundation is grounded in respectful and reciprocal engagement. This approach aligns with Concordia's broader commitments under the Indigenous Directions Action Plan and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, fostering a collaborative environment for advancing Indigenous research, scholarship, and community well-being.

To facilitate this feedback process, three positions were funded through a Canada Research Chairs Program EDI Stipend:

1. **Consultation Lead (CL):** Reporting to the IFRC co-Directors, and in communication with the Senior Advisor, Institutional Equity and Recognition Initiatives in the OVPRII, the CL led the data gathering process and developed the consultation framework, including methodologies, methods, and timeline.
2. **Research Assistants (RAs):** Two research assistants shared the roles of **Coordinator & Assistant Facilitator (CAF)** to support the CL in designing the framework, arranging the interviews, and supporting the CL in conducting interviews; **Outreach & Archivist (OA)** to support the CL and CAF in all aspects of the project, including note-taking, and creating and maintaining an archive of the consultation process.

The consultation lead supported by the RAs designed, conducted, and analyzed a multi-method online survey as well as individual interviews to capture experiences within Concordia. This included nuanced opinions, suggestions, and concerns regarding the CIRAC's potential role, governance, and activities and provided recommendations for the formation of the CIRAC.

4. Desired Outcomes

1. An ample evidence base capturing the IFRC membership's and broader Indigenous community's perspectives on the potential of the CIRAC.
2. Clear, community-informed recommendations to refine the CIRAC's structure, membership selection, priorities, and operational plan.
3. Strengthened trust and engagement between the IFRC, the OVPRII, the broader Indigenous community, and Concordia University's leadership.

5. Methodologies

This report is the outcome of an internal process initiated and overseen by the IFRC, mandated by the Office of Research, in which we critically examine various existing frameworks (academic, governance and research) at the University. We implemented an independent ethics framework based in Indigenous research methodologies.

The data gathering is guided by the relational methodologies that exist within the Michif and Nêhiyaw teachings of the lead consultant, Dr. Mel Lefebvre. The Michif and Nêhiyaw kinship ethics of wâhkôhtowin (Wilson, 2008) and the Michif visiting and governance methodology of keeoukaywin (Gaudet, 2019), informed the consultation team's caring and respectful approach with participants, being mindful of participants' generosity of time and knowledge, while considering the variety of Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews and lifeways each participant shared.

The IFRC's mission is to respond to community-identified needs and dreams, and in growing the capacity of Indigenous researchers with the ability to conduct research in ways that are grounded in community knowledge, values and culture. The IFRC welcomes all researchers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who engage in research that prioritizes the co-generation of knowledge that is of direct use to Indigenous peoples and our communities.

The IFRC is an environment where Indigenous methods for knowledge recovery, discovery, and transmission are respected, and where faculty can learn different Indigenous research frameworks from one another while educating students in those methods.

6. Methods

Using the conversational method identified by Cree scholar Margaret Kovach (2010) as well as quantitative methods, the consultation team developed open-ended semi-structured interview questions for both an online survey and follow-up interviews, allowing for dynamic, spontaneous conversation co-led by both the consultation team and participants.

6.1. Archiving data

The archiving of data was discussed before engagement with participants began. The consultation team wanted to ensure as much ongoing consent and safety for participants and their knowledge as possible within the allotted parameters.

A password-protected Google Drive to store files will be used in the short-term with longer-term plans being storage on an external hard drive and eventual deletion after a maximum of five years.

Transcription of interviews was done through Zoom recording and Microsoft Word voice-to-text with editing done by the RAs so that knowledge was not stored or accessed through online transcription softwares.

6.2. Consent

Participants have ongoing consent options in terms of their knowledge and file use. Before engaging with the online survey, participants chose their desired level of anonymity and the option to participate in individual interviews. Participants were given the option throughout the data gathering process to shift their level of anonymity, which included three options:

- (1) full anonymity identifiable only by demographic (i.e. faculty, student, staff, etc.),
- (2) semi-anonymous using only initials, and (3) fully identifiable using their full name. Before individual interviews, participants were given consent forms with the parameters and goals of the process as well as the levels of anonymity to choose from. The consultation team also committed to sharing a draft of each participant's data so that changes could be made if needed before print and dissemination.

6.3. Online survey

6.3.1. Timeline

The consultation team began by analyzing the possible strategies to gather data within a timeline of six months—July to December 2025, being mindful of limitations in terms of target audiences' summer vacation as well as the challenges related to the beginning of fall semester. An online survey using Mailchimp and Google Forms was a good starting point to gather as much data as possible within the first three months of the timeline (July, August, September 2025) with the goal of beginning individual interviews in October 2025.

6.3.2. Participants

It was decided that potential survey participants would need to have a past or present affiliation with Concordia University to ensure a foundational understanding of and experience with Concordia's Indigenous research needs. Using the membership list of Concordia's Indigenous Futures Research Centre (IFRC) as a base, the consultation team identified Indigenous and non-Indigenous Concordia affiliates as well as some participants who the team knew to be directly involved in supporting Indigenous researchers yet were not IFRC members. The majority of invited participants are Indigenous to Turtle Island (Canada).

6.3.3. Survey Questions

Survey questions included identifying participant roles in community, at the university and/or as an affiliate, whether they are Indigenous or not, and to which Nation they belong. Through a series of multiple choice or short answer questions (listed below),

the consultation team was able to identify strengths and weaknesses of the Indigenous research experience at Concordia, which we could then bring forward for exploration in individual interviews.

- Demographic information
 - What is your area of work and/or practice?
 - Do you identify as Indigenous or non-Indigenous?
 - If you identify as Indigenous, what is your Nation, community or tribal affiliation?
 - Are you a/an
 - Elder
 - Knowledge Holder
 - Concordia Undergraduate Student
 - Concordia Graduate Student
 - Concordia Alumni
 - Concordia Faculty
 - Concordia Staff
 - Non-Indigenous person working with community/researchers
 - Other
- What area of Indigenous research at Concordia do you feel needs the most improvement or attention, and why?
 - Governance (community engagement, ethics, protocols, etc.)
 - Indigenous research & scholarship (pedagogy, knowledge systems, research creation, training, mentorship, etc.)
 - Student life (mentorship, empowerment, opportunity, etc.)
 - Faculty & staff experience (Indigenous representation, hiring, recruitment, training, retention, etc.)
 - Knowledge mobilization & dissemination (community engagement, partnerships, resources, publishing, etc.)
- Further information
 - What population or group of people would you like to hear more from in Indigenous research spaces?
 - Name up to three people affiliated with Concordia that you think we should speak to about Indigenous research and indicate, if possible, their area of work/practice.
 - Would you be interested in a face-to-face / online interview (up to one hour) to give more feedback on the advisory circle's structure, operations, and priorities?
 - Is there anything we missed in this survey that you would like to mention?

6.3.4. Survey Dissemination & Promotion

The first iteration of the survey was sent out via a link from a dedicated email address (ifrc-consultation@concordia.ca). This was followed by scheduled social media posts through the IFRC Instagram and Facebook pages and those of the consultation team to garner more engagement. The consultation lead also sent 29 survey emails from their own email account to potential participants who they know personally, enacting principles of wâhkôhtowin and keeoukaywin in terms of established relationships that require ongoing cultivation, respect, and gratitude. Three follow-up iterations of the survey were sent to all potential participants by email and reminders posted to Otsenhákta Student Centre's Facebook page and published in the IFRC newsletter in early September 2025. The survey deadline was communicated as September 12, 2025.

In total, 98 Concordia affiliates were contacted with 28 participating in the survey.

6.3.5. Interviews

Once the survey data was collected, the consultation team identified major themes and trends, which informed the topics and questions for the individual interviews. These conversations took place on Zoom for ease of recording and eventual transcription via Microsoft Word. Interviews began at the beginning of October 2025 with dates being offered on weekdays at various times. Within the interviewing timeframe of October, the consultation team estimated that a maximum of nine interviews could be conducted, transcribed, and analyzed before beginning to write this report due for dissemination at the end of 2025.

Participants who identified themselves in the survey as open to being interviewed were listed in a Google data sheet and organized by name, institutional demographic, and nation. With 20 potential interviewees, the consultation team selected nine to be contacted attempting to balance representation by nation, demographic, and relationship to the university in terms of research specialty, longevity, and engagement.

Each interview was conducted by the consultation lead with one RA present who noted major themes and potential quotes, identified any unexplored ideas, and provided support. Some interviews began with a short welcoming prayer led by the consultant lead as well as expressing gratitude for the participant's engagement in the process. On days with lower capacity, the consultant lead began by welcoming and thanking the participant. All interviews then addressed consent and anonymity before the conversation got underway. Each interview lasted approximately one to one-and-a-half hours and ended by informing participants that another layer of consent would follow by ensuring the draft would be shared with them to incorporate any changes to their quotes before publication.

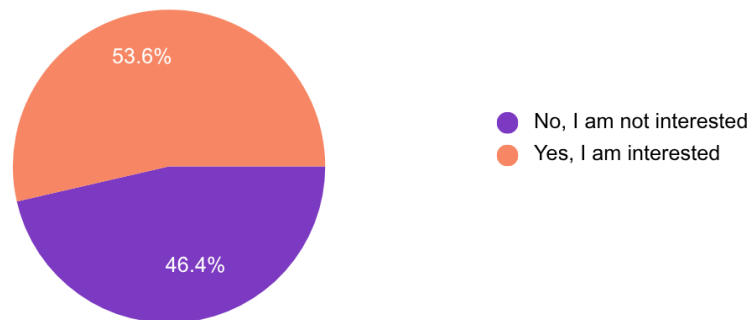
7. Findings

7.1. Survey Findings

Just under a third of the 98 Concordia affiliates contacted responded to the survey. Some participants expressed gratitude for starting this initiative and others expressed concern that the CIRAC would be a duplicate of past or current initiatives. Overall, participants were generous with their experiences and perspectives, ranging from critical to supportive. These responses informed the questions for the next phase of interviews. Survey participants were asked if they would like to take part in the interviews with just over half of the 28 respondents indicating yes.

Would you be interested in a face-to-face / online interview (up to one hour) to give more feedback on the advisory circle's structure, operations, and priorities?

28 responses



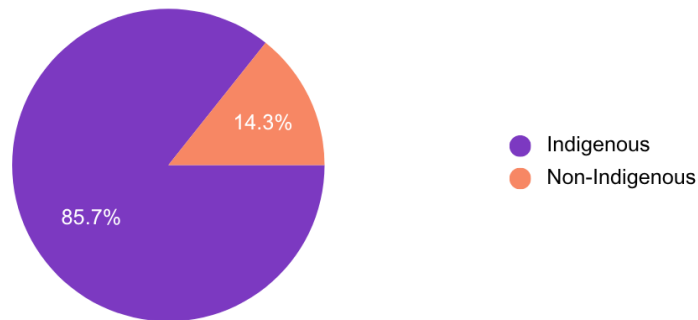
7.1.1. Demographics

Participants had backgrounds in various disciplines and fields inside and outside of the university such as:

- [Arts and Cultural Practices](#) (visual arts, fine arts, art history, contemporary dance, cultural arts work, artist-run centers, curatorial work, and research-creation);
- [Indigenous Education and Knowledges](#) (teaching and learning, journalism, Indigenous education, Indigenous knowledges, and decolonization and Indigenization of curriculum and pedagogy);
- [Community Engagement and Well-being](#) (Indigenous community engagement, counselling, well-being, violence recovery, prevention of violence against children and youth, and youth work);
- [Environmental and Land Stewardship](#) (environmental protection, Indigenous-led conservation, environmental stewardship, and land/water-based material practices);
- [Management and Capacity-Building](#) (capacity-building, management, housing, and community infrastructure).

Do you identify as Indigenous or non-Indigenous?

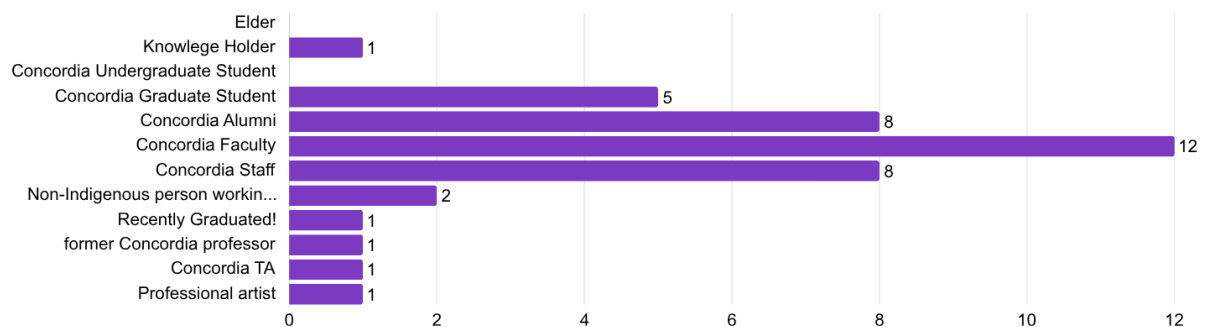
28 responses



The majority of respondents are Indigenous to Turtle Island with most representing Concordia faculty, then alumni, staff, and graduate students. Some participants identified as more than one of these demographics. A minority of respondents are Indigenous to other parts of the globe as well as two respondents who identify as non-Indigenous.

Are you a/an

28 responses



7.1.2. Questions & Themes

The following are the main themes presented as questions to the survey participants. Once answered, the consultation team was able to narrow these down to more detailed themes and questions to bring forward into the individual interview process. We asked the participants what area of Indigenous research at Concordia needs the most improvement or attention, and why. We listed five sub-categories for them to list their answers under:

1. Governance (community engagement, ethics, protocols, etc.)
2. Indigenous research and scholarship (pedagogy, knowledge systems, research creation, training, mentorship, etc.)
3. Student life (mentorship, empowerment, opportunity, etc.)
4. Faculty and staff experience (Indigenous representation, hiring, recruitment, training, retention, etc.)
5. Knowledge mobilization and dissemination (community engagement, partnerships, resources, publishing, etc.).

7.1.2.1. Governance

Participants indicated that governance of Indigenous research at the university needs more integration of and guidance by Indigenous values, ways of doing research, principles like [CARE](#), and research driven and informed by communities' strengths.

Research projects should be identified and guided by the community, throughout all stages of research, and more accountability is needed by the university and researchers themselves, ensuring that expectations are met and future possibilities discussed.

Seven participants did not respond to the governance question. Among the remaining 21 participants, nine reported that ethics review processes, although necessary, inadequately reflect Indigenous protocols and lifeways. This lack of integration was described as resulting in unnecessarily prolonged and repetitive explanations. An additional nine participants identified the need for broader improvements to ethics processes.

Some participants had concerns surrounding the institution's values. One participant questioned why medical and family emergency absences would need approvals. While two participants raised issues related to accountability in later stages of research partnerships and Indigenous identity fraud, respectively.

In terms of the CIRAC's potential to influence governance at Concordia, participants expressed concern about the possible power of such a circle and how balanced representation will be needed in terms of demographics, disciplines, and nations. Indigenous identity verification processes also came up as an area where governance is needed. One participant clearly expressed that the CIRAC should not include non-Indigenous people.

7.1.2.2. Indigenous Research & Scholarship

Ten participants did not offer any feedback in this area of the survey. Of the remaining 18, the most prominent themes identified were mentorship and retention. Half of the survey participants expressed the need for more mentorship and training opportunities to support Indigenous graduate students particularly in relation to the continued decrease in Indigenous faculty and supervisor availability. This lack of support in turn creates feelings of isolation and alienation as well as delays in graduation timelines.

Participants indicated strong interest in accessing consistent robust research and teaching opportunities, Indigenous graduate courses, training on understanding methods and methodologies, centralization of and ease of access to information, and in-person knowledge exchange across disciplines. Open and ongoing dialogue with the wider Indigenous community beyond Concordia is seen as necessary to Indigenous research to create a wider network and increase support for land-based research and Indigenous-led pedagogy. Participants felt that the overall capacity to develop these initiatives depends on improved funding and Indigenous professor retention.

7.1.2.3. Student Life

As the consultation team expected, many of the participants' responses flowed into each other with repeating themes, demonstrating just how connected all of these realities are for Concordia Indigenous research affiliates.

Eleven participants did not identify "Student Life" as an area needing improvement or attention. Seven respondents specifically indicated that mentorship and support for Indigenous graduate students is needed. A clear desire was expressed for more intentionally organized networking, peer support groups, and gathering with faculty to encourage more leadership and research opportunities. Some participants indicated that attracting and retaining Indigenous students' needs attention through holistic support systems grounded in cultural awareness.

Designated space for FPST students was mentioned, which would include Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, as well as the importance of respect, support, and accommodating different knowledge systems and approaches. One participant mentioned the opportunities and possibilities the IFRC could provide now that it has grown "large enough to comfortably host students" with the responsibility to further support students in various ways.

Specific barriers to student life were identified as housing, food, and general stability. One faculty member identified a link between the inability to hire graduate teaching assistants and the lack of union membership, contributing to ongoing instability.

Additionally, one non-Indigenous participant stated that "expanding programs that empower students and connect them with community-focused projects would provide stronger pathways for leadership."

7.1.2.4. Faculty & Staff Experience

Ten participants chose not to respond to this theme. Of the remaining 18, sixteen clearly emphasized the need for increased Indigenous hiring across all university departments and/or the implementation of retention strategies grounded in cultural safety and awareness. Two responses were vague or unclear. One participant highlighted that the university's lack of preparedness to support existing Indigenous faculty and staff has resulted in "crippling" workloads. Another explicitly connected the university's responsibility to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls-to-Action in education to the broader need for Indigenous hires.

One participant specifically emphasized the need for the university to provide greater support for contract lecturers by ensuring payment for both course development and teaching, noting, "I have turned down numerous requests to lecture in the past three years because of this."

Many participants highlighted that Indigenous representation among faculty is critical to Indigenous student success. They emphasized that "stronger efforts in recruitment, retention, and cultural safety training are needed to build a more supportive and inclusive environment," with one participant noting a particular need for increased Inuit representation.

7.1.2.5. Knowledge Mobilization & Dissemination

Effective knowledge mobilization and dissemination in Indigenous research at Concordia relies on fostering meaningful connections and collaborations. Participants emphasized that advancing Indigenous scholarship requires deliberate engagement with existing relationships within the university, across departments, and with Indigenous communities and organizations, to create a more inclusive and supportive research environment.

Eleven participants chose not to respond to this theme. Of the remaining 17, fifteen emphasized the need for collaboration and community building both within and across departments, particularly through strengthened partnerships between the Office of Indigenous Directions, the IFRC, and the Office of Community Engagement, as well as intergenerational learning between Indigenous faculty and students. Participants also highlighted the importance of extending connections beyond Concordia, citing organizations such as the Indigenous Organizational Advisory Table (IOAT) and the Montreal Indigenous Community Network, which could support initiatives like Indigenous student employment. Building these partnerships would enhance the university's capacity to support Indigenous faculty, students, and staff while reinforcing community engagement.

Participants shared the need for better ways to disseminate information for stronger community engagement, more streamlined dissemination practices within Indigenous research spaces, and accessible publication channels for research results. The creation of a Concordia subsite featuring Indigenous-engaged research was also suggested to increase visibility. Funding was cited as one of the main obstacles to more abundant, consistent offerings for the Indigenous body.

7.1.2.6. Representation in Indigenous Research Spaces

Understanding whose voices should be included in Indigenous research is critical for addressing representation, centering community perspectives, and ensuring that research is guided by those with relevant cultural knowledge, lived experience, and scholarly expertise. The consultation team recognizes that representation is a critical issue in urban Indigenous spaces, and Indigenous research is no exception. Notably, this survey question was answered by all participants.

Seven participants emphasized the importance of engaging Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island (North America), while three highlighted local Indigenous communities, reserves, and community partners. Three participants expressed a desire for greater engagement with Inuit and northern Indigenous communities, and two noted interest in hearing from more Métis voices.

Six participants want to hear from Indigenous graduate students from all faculties, emerging Indigenous scholars, and students, including those who have recently graduated and are pursuing paths outside of academia or applying for faculty positions. Three participants indicated they want more engagement with youth as "Youth voices are vital for shaping future-oriented research priorities", however it was not specified whether they would be students or youth in general.

Five participants highlighted Elders—including residential school survivors—knowledge holders, and language keepers as possessing extensive cultural knowledge and guidance critical to informing Indigenous research, as well as experience integrating Indigenous and Western academic knowledges.

Other participants noted the value of engaging Indigenous voices from the arts and culture sector, land defenders, CEGEP and schoolteachers, faculty, and individuals who have achieved stability for themselves and their families through research.

One participant stated specifically that they do not want to engage with “reconnecting people with Indigenous ancestry who exploit opportunities for Indigenous community members, not settlers with Indigenous research subjects, not performative allies.”

7.1.2.7. Concluding Remarks from Survey Participants

To conclude our survey, participants were asked if they would be interested in an online individual interview (up to one hour) to give more feedback on the advisory circle’s structure, operations, and priorities. 53.6% said yes.

Text boxes were provided for participants to share any concluding thoughts or issues not covered in the survey. Sixteen participants left this section blank, while others highlighted the need for greater freedom to seek funding directly from the Canadian government, increased funding access for Indigenous graduate students, and additional support and understanding specifically for Métis graduate students.

One participant emphasized that Indigenous graduate students should be engaged respectfully as professionals and knowledge holders, with ethical compensation for their contributions to prevent exploitation. Another participant would like to see the part-time faculty union adopt TRC recommendations, decolonization, ally training, and pro-Indigenous support.

Increased intergenerational discussions around Indigenous research would allow younger generations to learn from current faculty, was suggested by one participant. Another expressed interest in engaging with the Indigenous “Youth Research Team” at Concordia, though this group is not familiar to the consultation team. A third participant noted the need for greater clarity around CIRAC’s mandate to prevent duplication of services. Appreciation for the survey and the overall effort of this initiative was offered by two participants.

7.2. Interview Findings

Once all the survey responses were compiled, the team identified three general trends and common concerns, which informed the crafting of the semi-structured interview questions:

1. The first concerned the *attraction and retention* of Indigenous scholars, faculty members, undergrad and graduate students;
2. The second focused on *mentoring relationships* between Indigenous students and faculty;
3. The third centered around *funding*, both for students and faculty.

Adding to these three main themes, participants were also asked about their thoughts regarding the CIRAC's role, especially as it pertains to the Circle's governance.

The interviews proved enlightening with participants grateful for the opportunity to be part of the CIRAC process and offering personal stories of experiences with the institution that have supported their research or are in need of improvement as well as hopes for the future for Indigenous research at Concordia. The semi-structured interview and conversational method allowed for pointed questions as well as spontaneous discussion with the consultation lead picking up on areas of interest or concern expressed by participants and delving further to explore the roots of each topic. As predicted, the interviews reflected more personal experiential narratives and some deeper insights from those with longer relationships to Concordia.

7.2.1. Demographics

The majority of the nine interview participants are faculty members with the remaining participants being graduate students, alumni, staff, and one community Elder. All participants have extensive experience within Concordia or as supporting members of Concordia's Indigenous body. Representation in terms of Indigenous nations extended from across Turtle Island (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities) and beyond.

7.2.2. Themes

7.2.2.1. Retention

Support was expressed for Concordia's efforts in establishing Indigenous Directions and its Action Plan as a path forward to a more "equitable and inclusive future, where Indigenous peoples, knowledges, research and scholarship are prioritized and celebrated" (Indigenous Directions, 2021). Some of the goals outlined in the Plan have been achieved and still others have yet to be accomplished. Concordia is seen by some participants as welcoming to Elders, a second home for students, supportive of Indigenous research, and open to various kinds of interdisciplinary practices as well as providing solutions to funding community events like feasts and gifting protocols. While there have been celebratory moments, participants were overwhelmingly critical of the internal systems of the university that fail to support the Indigenous cohort. This is demonstrated through the loss of Indigenous faculty members, which directly affects Indigenous students, in particular graduate students, who are finding themselves with limited or no supervisory support:

The problem with retaining Indigenous faculty has a direct impact on Indigenous grad students...They're losing their supervisors who are going to other universities or are just dropping out of academic life. Then they have to start over and find someone else. And I feel like that's so discouraging for them. They don't have the support that they would need from that supervisor to be able to continue [graduate studies] ...

It was also indicated that the "heavy turnover" of Indigenous faculty and staff, leaving the institution or moving on to different roles, means that the initiatives they started for Indigenous students through project-specific funding leave with them or disappear, creating inconsistency in student support such as mentorship and funding, a breakdown

of established relationships, and gaps that remain unfilled or forgotten.

One student experienced more robust support at the bachelor level:

I would say Concordia was better at supporting Indigenous students at the bachelor's level. And then all forms of support disappear or become inconsistent at graduate studies. So even research, awards, or opportunities haven't been consistent...There were things that existed a couple of years ago that I was expecting to still be around...

For faculty members it was stated that Indigenous representation (faculty and students) and awareness of Indigenous issues in the university as a whole is not where it should be. Without the necessary representation within the faculty, Indigenous faculty members are left wondering if the institution is really committed to Indigenizing the institution. As a faculty member put it:

...prioritizing people from the territory isn't part of the hiring. I'm not sure how this can be done legally, but it is what makes sense when you're working with the idea of Indigenizing the institution. It must reflect the territory on which it resides.

Unfortunately, the lack of Indigenous faculty has left Indigenous students unsupported, which affects their ability to do their research. This has led some Indigenous grad students to seek out non-Indigenous supervisors:

I don't have an Indigenous supervisor. I haven't wanted one mostly because of seeing my peers' experiences. All of them that had Indigenous supervisors, their supervisor has gone on sabbatical, has gone on a stress leave, has left academia altogether, and they've all been in situations where they're not getting the support that they need because their supervisor is too extended or not there...

Without enough Indigenous faculty, Indigenous students are experiencing lack of support, faculty exodus, unavailability, long wait times in establishing a supervisory relationship, and more. One participant indicated that having a non-Indigenous supervisor has allowed for more consistent support:

I don't feel like I had that much support on the mentoring side during my master's, but in my PhD, I have a new supervisor. I've had to change my supervisory committee members a few times and I feel so well supported...I have very regular opportunities to meet with my supervisor and my committee members, much more than when I was doing my masters...in my current supervising dynamic and relationship, I feel like it's much more community-focused, academic publishing-focused, it's about the youths, we're always speaking with youths. It's my field, my discipline, and I feel like we are very much in the same discipline now and that allows me to have more of that mentorship.

Students, staff and faculty noted that Indigenous-focused programs lack both diversity and enough faculty to support the growing number of Indigenous students, especially those pursuing research-creation work. The graduate-level Individualized Program (INDI) has seen increased enrollment, but the department lacks the capacity

needed for students to succeed. One student described struggling to connect with a supervisor whose background did not align with their work, which speaks to the need for more Indigenous faculty across all disciplines. For one faculty member, they have begun to work with more non-Indigenous scholars as their Indigenous peers are “spread too thin.”

It was noted by one faculty member that the number of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students engaging with Indigenous research is growing and both groups are seeking out Indigenous faculty to teach and guide them:

We’re definitely at a point now where the question of more Indigenous Faculty members isn’t just about where are there full-time slots at the university but it’s like if we want to continue to grow our number of Indigenous graduate students, we need more Indigenous Faculty...Because the University...doesn’t account for the fact that a lot of people are like, ‘I want an Indigenous person as my supervisor or at the very least on my committee if I’m going to be doing Indigenous research.’ And non-Indigenous students are doing the same thing...

These experiences point to a larger issue: without more Indigenous faculty and better-resourced departments, students are left without the guidance and understanding they need. Expanding hiring and improving retention of Indigenous faculty and providing education around Indigenous realities more broadly is essential to creating stronger, more culturally-safe and supportive research creation environments for Indigenous students and faculty.

7.2.2.2. Cultural Safety

Cultural safety has been brought up by many participants as something that significantly hinders and impacts their research, hiring, retention of Indigenous staff, and overall wellbeing. We have identified two key areas where cultural safety is a concern: (1) teaching and research (dismissal and tokenization), and (2) classroom and reporting (traumatization and re-traumatization).

One Indigenous faculty member who experienced such difficulties stated that:

...bringing [Indigenous course] content—it puts me in an unsafe zone, constantly. And not just with students, but with colleagues. When I’m in a co-teaching environment, it’s been very unsafe for me a number of times where I’ve had colleagues say something out loud—very loud—in front of an entire classroom that completely undermines virtually what we’re doing there...

This same faculty member shared an experience in which a non-Indigenous staff member dismissed their research topics and methodologies:

...I had an interaction with somebody during my first week [at Concordia], who worked for the faculty, asked me what my research was about, I told them...they said ‘you know you could drop all that research now that you’re here, ‘cause no one cares.’ Literally told me, this person in an administrative role, not a researcher, knows nothing about my research area, knows nothing about research, felt safe enough to say to me, as a new faculty member, ‘you know you can drop that now.’

There is growing concern among faculty about tokenization and the way Indigenous participation is handled in academic research settings. In some cases, Indigenous researchers are brought into projects only after funding has been secured, and it becomes clear their involvement is more about optics than real collaboration. This sense of tokenization runs deep, and is tied to broader systemic issues such as, again, not enough Indigenous hires, limiting real inclusion.

The emotional and cultural burden of safety is placed on Indigenous researchers working within the university, and the Indigenous people they seek to bring in. Much of the EDI work tends to fall disproportionately on Indigenous faculty and "needs to be recognized as labour and accredited as service or credited towards offsetting course loads..." These moments reflect deeper structural patterns that must be meaningfully addressed. One faculty member reflected on the difficulty of inviting Indigenous knowledge keepers into academic spaces when they themselves do not always feel fully supported: "If I can't keep myself safe, how can I invite somebody else in?" This statement underscores the personal risks that Indigenous scholars continue to navigate and points to broader institutional conditions that remain insufficiently responsive to Indigenous needs and safety.

One faculty member indicated that Indigenous representation within the part-time faculty union is scant and when seeking to hire Indigenous community members and students, there are union policies that create barriers to their employment, which hinders the growth of a larger Indigenous cohort and, by extension, the creation of culturally safer spaces within the academy.

...a lot of the processes and policies are really non-functional...And the biggest one for me that I held on to is working with the part-time teachers union and being able to hire Indigenous faculty. It just was stunning how racist their process was for me. And they would say, oh no, it's not, we're not racist. We just want you to hire people that are in our union. And I'm saying, well, there's no Indigenous people in your union, you're on Haudenosaunee land. I want to hire people from the community and I want to hire students, but Concordia has a policy where you can't hire your students to teach a class, for example...So our Indigenous students have to go get a job at McGill...

They also noted that the complaint process at Concordia for BIPOC students and faculty when experiencing racism from mostly non-Indigenous faculty and staff led only to a "faulty" and "re-traumatizing" process that is lengthy with little to no recourse or justice. With unsafe classrooms and ineffective recourse, Indigenous students get discouraged, "You give up faith in authorities and faith in the system, but the system, those processes, they just protect the perpetrator and their rights... And so students typically, they just leave, they just drop out..."

This feeling of discouragement can be amplified by inflexible administrative systems at Concordia, such as the new integrated information system for Human Resources (HR), Financial, and Procurement services at Concordia, UNITY, which can delay payments and so negatively impact Indigenous students' financial situation.

...now everything is getting tied together in UNITY... card stops working, you lose access to some online resources, because it's all tied together now...they become less and less flexible. And your Indigenous student population is one of those populations that, on average, needs a lot more flexibility than other populations.

7.2.2.3. Mentorship

Indigenous graduate students shared their need for more academic mentorship. While “social support” for Indigenous students seem to be generous and are appreciated, Indigenous graduate students feel they need guidance on academic trajectory, funding possibilities, grant writing, navigating university bureaucracy, and more access generally to advice over and above engagements with their supervisors. The inadequate amount of Indigenous faculty (given the demand) inevitably leads to fewer mentorship opportunities and is therefore impacting research and funding opportunities for students.

While peer-to-peer support is appreciated, many peers are functioning at the same depth of knowledge and so are unable to provide each other with the guidance needed. It was suggested by an Elder that students create the mentorship initiative themselves and bring it to the university or an outside Indigenous organization to access more guidance and support.

One Indigenous faculty member indicated that, while not a formal process, they and their peers keep an eye out for Indigenous students and

...all individually do this task of locating [Indigenous] students that come through our faculty and folding them in. Or at least going and introducing ourselves and making sure that they are connected or know that we're here to support them.

Another faculty member stated that they are very focused on co-creating with youth and Two-Spirit people:

My approach to research, I have a number of different styles and approaches, but a lot of it...is like youth centered. So I'm making sure whenever we have a panel discussion or a research project or we're publishing articles, they're always co-created with youth...And it's up to us to create that safety, that platform for youth to have a voice...And I work alongside people that are really trying to make that possible for Two-Spirit folk.

Indigenous students at all levels need mentorship and preparation for careers in research and beyond.

7.2.2.4. Funding

A challenge for all the participants is funding: knowing how to access different sources of funding, pockets of funding that run out, how to write grants, finding out who to speak to about the funding opportunities as well as the bureaucratic processes required for fulfillment are all major obstacles to funding.

One funding support identified at Concordia as consistent albeit general is the Grad Pro Skills initiative in the School of Graduate Studies, a “co-curricular professional

development program offers all graduate students access to free training and resources [to]...optimize your graduate school experience, acquire employer-sought skills and prepare for your next career move” (Professional Skills, 2025). While consistently available, some participants noted that Grad Pro Skills does not provide detailed guidance for scholarship applications. Conversely, another graduate student praised the program for being tailored to each step of the research process and accessible when needed.

Not only a challenge for Indigenous students, but faculty as well needs more support around grants and proposals: reviewing of grants and proposals, providing feedback and strategy, what to do with a grant once successfully awarded, how to go about the ethics process in order to accept the funds, and guidance in general would be appreciated, especially for more junior faculty.

In the research area, there’s just not enough capacity to really fully support faculty as they’re doing their work. And I don’t mean money! I mean literally like somebody that can review proposals and give you feedback. Somebody that can look at the feedback you got from your failed grant and help you figure out and strategize how to redo it.

It was pointed out by a graduate student that now that they are well into their academic career, they know so much more and wish they were able to access that knowledge through a mentor much earlier, “[...] now that I’m in my later years, I’ve noticed a lot of things that I would have been like “oh, you know, I’ll apply to do that!”, but it’s only for the first four years of your PhD. Similarly, another felt that the funding processes and knowledge mobilization around what funds are available, particularly information on scholarships and awards requiring departmental nomination, played a role in their inability to acquire funding, “Just financially, there’s a lot of things that I did not get to benefit and part of it is my department fumbling, but also just a lack of I guess transparency on those processes.”

And another graduate student made a connection between their supportive supervisor and the ability and confidence to apply for funding even within a looming deadline:

When I went into my program I had not applied for the SSHRC and I felt like I had missed the train on that, and it was about three weeks before the SSHRC deadline, and she said ‘[Graduate student’s name], give it a try. If you don’t get it this year, we’ll try next time, that’s ok. Just try.’ It was supportive, it just gave me the push that I needed, I got it, which is crazy to me, and it’s not something that I would have done if I didn’t have that kind of push or support.

There is a clear correlation between the role the Indigenous body and wider university administration play in the funding success of Indigenous students and faculty. Adhoc gatherings of students by staff or students themselves have been somewhat effective, yet there needs to be practical, transparent, consistent knowledge mobilization and initiatives in order for students and faculty to be successful in their research journeys.

7.2.2.5. Connections & Collaborations

The Indigenous Futures Research Centre (IFRC) was established as part of the Indigenous Directions Action Plan to support “Indigenous-led research and [build] capacity for community-based research,” with a longer-term vision of attracting and retaining Indigenous graduate students and nurturing their academic careers. While the IFRC has made significant progress toward these goals, some participants noted that its current orientation and membership is design- and arts-focused and would benefit from creating bridges to departments across the university, to reflect and support a broader range of experiences and knowledges.

Participants expressed a desire for greater accessibility to the work of Indigenous researchers in order to expand the collective knowledge base, facilitate peer citation, and centralize research outputs within a shared “repository.” The creation of sustained working groups was also suggested as a way to “showcase what people are doing,” identify research gaps, and provide the continuity necessary to address complex issues: “You need the longevity of a working group to be able to get into it to understand complex problems.” While the IFRC contributes to this vital work, in particular through its annual Symposium, participants emphasized the need for broader representation and engagement from Indigenous peoples across the entire university.

Some participants also identified the need for dedicated physical spaces for Indigenous graduate students. One alum noted that a designated study space within the Otsenhákta Student Centre (OSC) or the library would be beneficial, while another highlighted that because the OSC primarily serves undergraduate students, a graduate-specific space would better reflect shared realities and experiences. As one participant explained,

When I go to the OSC now, it's the conversations the 19 year olds are having, it's not the kind of conversation that I would be having with my peers at 30 years old or something like that. And there isn't really a space as an Indigenous student...at Concordia University...so that I can have that commiserating experience...through my master's...

Existing places like the SHIFT Centre, the IFRC and the OSC were cited as possible sites to gather, network, and provide peer support, yet they still lack a space specific to Indigenous graduate students.

An Elder interviewed shared what they had heard over the years through students at Concordia: that they would like a place of their own beyond the OSC to “to grow medicines, to have ceremonies, to just feel like that's the community, instead of being thrown in the big concrete building with everyone else.” The Elder also stated that Indigenous students come from a variety of communities and “coming to the city, it's very overwhelming, there is a culture shock and folks feel alone...how do we support each other as now an urban Indigenous individual? There is that piece between ‘this is my safe place,’ ‘this is where I am now,’ ‘how do I adjust?’ and ‘how do I bring my voice there?’”

7.2.2.6. Community Engagement

The interview responses reveal a tension between the university's institutional approach to Indigenous research and the relational community values that guide Indigenous methodologies. Several participants described an ongoing sense of disconnect, noting that when institutional representatives discuss partnerships with Indigenous communities, the conversation is often shaped by business priorities. One interviewee contrasted these perspectives clearly, explaining that business-minded people seemed focused on "finding a partner, like tomorrow, to sign an agreement... They're after money," while their own Indigenous perspective was "giving that power to communities, social justice." This highlights a sense of speaking "two different languages" and illustrates a deeper misalignment in goals and values, and it becomes even more apparent in reflections on large-scale research initiatives: quote

"...Concordia has been super proud of the Voltage project, which is like multi million dollar project that involves many many researchers. And there's a component of creating collaboration with Indigenous businesses and communities. But the way that like the director of that whole network of researchers, has been talking about communities is very like transactional... So it's like Concordia is marching forward, doing something not in the way that communities would want to, and they are like very much like being so proud of the ways that they are leading research."

Even with these critiques, one participant acknowledged that there are places within the institution where community engagement is handled with care, describing warm, respectful interactions with faculty and staff: "I've always been greeted warmly... very attentive, polite," suggesting that some meaningful practices exist but are inconsistent and rely heavily on individual champions rather than being embedded structurally across the institution.

One participant raised concerns about the limited presence of Indigenous people in academic events intended to highlight Indigenous research, stating that while presenting at an Indigenous-focused symposium where "there wasn't that many Indigenous people present in the space," they were forced to recalibrate their talk to address Indigenous realities in a Canadian context. At the follow-up gathering, they noted there was a large non-Indigenous white presence, leading them to question whether Indigenous students or community members felt the event was truly for them. They reflected that the outside, broader Indigenous community should be more present and involved: "Indigenous people, even Indigenous people outside of academia...should be the audience."

These perspectives depict the university as still operating within Western institutional logics that emphasize efficiency, scale, and visibility. This orientation often conflicts with Indigenous approaches grounded in reciprocity, patience, and shared authority. As one interviewee put it, the two sides can feel like "two different worlds." While individual efforts within the university have fostered respectful engagement, the broader system continues to reproduce practices that limit Indigenous participation and fail to cultivate the conditions necessary for genuine co-creation.

7.2.2.7. Ethics

As a mandatory component of the research process, the ethics application and approval system is widely recognized as necessary. However, participants reported encountering numerous barriers that fail to account for the cultural lifeways of Indigenous students and faculty. One Indigenous staff member noted that other universities are experimenting with alternative approaches to ethics review, including the direct involvement of Indigenous researchers, in an effort to shift existing structures and explore more culturally safe approval processes.

...other universities...have started putting in place a specific research ethics board, for all research that touches in any way shape or form on Indigenous knowledges. And they are also talking about like more conversational ethics, where instead of applying for ethics, it would be a conversational and iterative process: once you start your research, you would also need to like go back and validate your practices .'Cause that's one issue-- people get the clear off, they go in community, and then there are no mechanisms to confirm that research is led ethically.

Another participant suggested that the CIRAC be involved in or even take over ethics reviews as a way to Indigenize the process:

I didn't really mind that they kept coming back with questions per se, but I could see...the questions came out of a different worldview...it was just indicative of a different way of thinking...And if this new Indigenous advisory could either take over or inform in terms of worldview, the people that are on the mainstream ethics board, that could be helpful.

In contrast, two participants expressed concern that introducing an additional layer of ethics review could further complicate the already tedious nature of the current process. One faculty member emphasized that the existing ethics framework remains inadequate, as it presupposes a settler research stance, and suggested that researchers require clearer guidance to understand both the necessity and inherent complexity of ethics review, while noting that revising ethics questions to better reflect researchers' existing relationships with Indigenous communities could improve the process for Indigenous scholars. Although this participant identified CIRAC as a potential contributor to such a shift, they also noted that the current lack of Indigenous faculty available to serve on the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) limits this possibility, underscoring the recurring issue of a broader need for increased Indigenous faculty hiring.

7.2.2.8. Governance & the Circle

During the interviews, participants were asked about the types of representation they would like to see within CIRAC and how its governance could be structured once the circle is established. Participants consistently emphasized that the circle should be guided by Indigenous values rather than institutional bureaucracy. They stressed the need for an environment that fosters relationship-building, support, and dialogue—"to not make another level of bureaucracy... but to have more circles, food, talking, support." This grounding also includes strong territorial awareness, with one participant highlighting that

representation must reflect “First Nations, non-status, Métis, Inuit, but also pay attention to being on Haudenosaunee land. And I think Inuit really deserve a lot of space.” Forming the circle should be an intentional, organic process guided by teachings: “If you put this call out, those folks will come together...it’s got to be very organic.”

The majority of participants indicated that the circle would benefit from including trusted, non-Indigenous allied researchers to ensure the inclusion of a range of ideas and perspectives. At the same time, non-Indigenous participation must be carefully limited and based on deep, proven relationships with Indigenous communities. One faculty member felt that while non-Indigenous people do not necessarily have a role on an Indigenous advisory circle, a non-Indigenous dean, for example, could listen in to create greater understanding and awareness, but not shape or influence decisions. One participant stated “if [non-Indigenous people] have a lot of experience... good allies, that definitely makes a big difference,” while another held a firmer stance: “I believe non-Indigenous people don’t have a role whatsoever in Indigenous research,” which was linked to the historical and ongoing colonial practice of extractive research and power dynamics. Even among those open to the participation of non-Indigenous allies, their role was framed as supportive rather than directive.

Representation in the circle must reflect both diversity and depth of experience. Participants envisioned cross-disciplinary involvement—“from different fields, history... anthropology... cross-disciplinary”—and emphasized the importance of including Indigenous faculty, Elders, youth, and researchers from community. Most participants emphasized that Indigenous faculty, as the primary creators of research, are central to the circle and possess a critical understanding of the academic challenges inherent in research processes. Elders and knowledge keepers were regarded as essential guides with some participants suggesting a broader circle of Elders that could be consulted annually rather than asking them to sit on the advisory circle year-round.

Students’ realities and research needs emerged as another key focus. Participants emphasized that the circle should support Indigenous students navigating research obligations and grant processes, particularly at the graduate level. It was considered crucial that the circle reflects the lived experiences of Indigenous students in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal: “what comes from the circle has to reflect and accommodate the reality of the students that are at Concordia.” Participants also highlighted the importance of including representatives from each student level and suggested that a representative from the Office of Research (OOR) attend monthly to facilitate communication between the circle and the OOR.

Finally, participants stressed the need for the careful selection of members who embody respect, legitimacy, and community accountability. The circle must include people who treat one another “with kindness and dignity,” and great care must be taken to avoid including individuals who lack authentic grounding—“there are pretend Indians...you need to know who their teachers are...it’s like an ‘Indigenous CV.’” Members should possess genuine connections to community and land-based knowledge, ensuring the cultural integrity of the circle’s work. As one participant summarized, membership must reflect both competence and values: “People who actually have a research background...people who have relationships with their research subjects or topics.”

8. Challenges & Limitations

The data gathering process proved effective, generative, and yet, not without challenges. At the survey level, we found that initiating the data gathering process in late summer/early fall was difficult as the target group was either on vacation or beginning the semester. For the interviews, as participants' views became more transparent, their desired anonymity grew from being fully named to complete anonymity due to the often critical nature of their comments and potential reprisals. Capturing sensitive topics, such as colonial power dynamics and systemic inequities, required careful navigation to respect confidentiality and cultural safety. Time and budget constraints limited the number of participants the consultation team could interview, and some groups may have been underrepresented. Participants' limited availability due to teaching, research, coursework, and other professional or personal responsibilities, further shaped the consultation process.

9. Recommendations

Coming back to the stated mandate of the Concordia Indigenous Research Advisory Circle (CIRAC), which positions the CIRAC to provide high-level strategic guidance on Indigenous research at Concordia, the CIRAC is responsible for the following:

- **Provide strategic advice and recommendations to the OVPRII** on matters related to Indigenous research, scholarship, and knowledge mobilization, such as programs, policies, guidelines, and processes;
- **Review and assess progress made in achieving the goals** related to Indigenous research and research training in the Indigenous Directions Action Plan;
- **Offer guidance on research projects, initiatives, and partnerships that involve or impact Indigenous communities**, to ensure they align with ethical and culturally-sensitive research practices.

The following data-driven recommendations are to be presented directly to the OVPRII, IFRC leadership, CIRAC planning team, and relevant Concordia offices to refine the CIRAC's structure, priorities, and operational plan, and strengthen the trust and engagement between the broader Indigenous community, the IFRC, and Concordia University's leadership.

***It is highly recommended that the report and follow-up be brought back to the participants (survey and interview) so as to remain transparent, and in consultation/dialogue with Indigenous research affiliates and the broader Indigenous community.**

9.1.Guiding Indigenous Research Practices

Participants expressed a clear desire for Indigenous research at Concordia to be grounded in Indigenous values, protocols, and community-driven priorities. CIRAC can help shape this direction by:

9.1.1. Articulating guiding principles for Indigenous research that draw on Indigenous relational worldviews such as reciprocity, community accountability, and CARE principles—and offering these principles as reference points for faculty, students, and research units.

9.1.2. Providing cultural and methodological guidance to researchers seeking to work with Indigenous communities, ensuring that research questions, processes, and outcomes remain community-driven and beneficial to those communities.

9.1.3. Supporting interdisciplinary and community-led approaches to research by fostering opportunities for dialogue across departments and identifying ways to strengthen land-based, creative, and relational methodologies already present within Concordia’s Indigenous cohort.

9.2.Ethics and Research Oversight

A consistent concern expressed throughout consultations was the need to improve the ethics review process to reflect Indigenous research realities. CIRAC can help advance these improvements by:

9.2.1. Advising the university’s ethics committees on the development of culturally responsive ethics (questions, definitions, expectations, etc.) that recognize Indigenous lifeways, relational methodologies, and existing community relationships.

9.2.2. Identifying procedural barriers Indigenous researchers face and recommending structural or procedural adjustments that could foster more accessible, culturally safe pathways through ethics.

9.2.3. Supporting clearer communication about the purpose of ethics review and providing guidance to Indigenous researchers on navigating ethics protocols.

9.3.Mentorship, Capacity Building, and Academic Support

Interview and survey participants consistently emphasized that mentorship, particularly for Indigenous graduate students, is a critical need. CIRAC can help strengthen mentorship and academic support by:

9.3.1. Creating a framework for an Indigenous mentorship initiative that supports Indigenous graduate students and faculty across all stages of research, including funding navigation, grant writing, ethics preparation, and/or supervisory relationships.

9.3.2. Identifying gaps in supervisory capacity and advising academic units on areas where additional Indigenous faculty representation or allied supervisory support is needed.

9.3.3. Offering culturally informed guidance to graduate programs on how to better support Indigenous graduate students in ways that recognize their knowledge, lived experience, and professional expertise.

9.4. Indigenous Faculty Hiring, Retention, and Cultural Safety

Concerns about Indigenous faculty departures, workload pressures, and cultural safety emerged frequently in the data. CIRAC can support more stable and culturally safe conditions by:

9.4.1. Offering recommendations on Indigenous hiring priorities across disciplines, including gaps in representation that directly affect student success and supervision, and strategies for cluster hiring.

9.4.2. Advising on retention strategies that recognize the cultural, emotional, and service labour often expected of Indigenous faculty.

9.4.3. Identifying patterns of cultural unsafety, tokenization, or racism and offering guidance to relevant units on culturally grounded responses.

9.5. Student Life and Wellness

Participants' descriptions of student experiences revealed the interconnected nature of academic, cultural, emotional, and material supports. CIRAC can contribute to improved conditions for Indigenous students by:

9.5.1. Advocating and strategizing for Indigenous student wellness, such as housing insecurity, food access, and navigating administrative systems, and advising the university on potential solutions such as partnering with relevant community organizations.

9.5.2. Recommending the creation or enhancement of Indigenous-specific student spaces, including options for graduate students such as dedicated areas to gather, study, and support each other.

9.5.3. Supporting culturally grounded wellness approaches, including access to ceremony, Elders, land-based spaces, and intergenerational learning.

9.5.4. Encouraging initiatives that help Indigenous students transition to life in the city and find community, support, and belonging within Concordia.

9.6. Knowledge Mobilization and Dissemination

Participants highlighted the need for stronger visibility of Indigenous research and clearer pathways for sharing knowledge within and beyond the university. CIRAC can help by:

9.6.1. Advising on the development of a centralized Indigenous research repository or platform that showcases Indigenous-engaged research across Concordia.

9.6.2. Supporting culturally appropriate and community-centred dissemination practices, including storytelling events, workshops, community reports, and non-academic publications.

9.6.3. Encouraging more collaboration between Indigenous and allied bodies within the university such as Indigenous Directions, IFRC, the Office of Community Engagement to foster learning and knowledge-sharing.

9.6.4. Identifying gaps in knowledge dissemination that may disproportionately affect Indigenous graduate students and early-career researchers, and recommending strategies to improve access as well as building bridges across university departments and disciplines.

9.7. Community Engagement and Partnerships

Across both the survey and interviews, participants emphasized that Indigenous community relationships must be guided by Indigenous values rather than institutional timelines or business priorities. CIRAC can support respectful and reciprocal community engagement by:

9.7.1. Offering guidance on community engagement protocols that emphasize relationship building, reciprocity, long-term commitment, and community benefit.

9.7.2. Reviewing potential community partnerships and advising on whether proposed collaborations align with Indigenous community values and needs.

9.7.3. Supporting the creation of spaces where local Indigenous communities, Elders, and youth can engage meaningfully with Concordia researchers and students.

9.7.4. Identifying opportunities for the university to strengthen existing relationships through Indigenous-led initiatives rather than top-down institutional strategies.

9.8. Governance and Formation of the CIRAC

Participants expressed strong views about how CIRAC should be formed, operate, and remain accountable. Within this mandate, CIRAC can:

9.8.1. Develop guidelines for its own membership grounded in relational accountability that reflect Indigenous diversity—First Nations, non-status Indigenous peoples, Métis, Inuit, local Kanien'kehá:ka representation—and include students, faculty, Elders, and community researchers.

9.8.2. Recommend transparent criteria for participation, including community grounding, research experience, ethical practice, and demonstrated relationships of care and responsibility.

9.8.3. Consider appropriate roles for non-Indigenous allies in ways that centre Indigenous authority and decision-making power.

9.8.4. Propose the formation of a broader Elder advisory circle, ensuring Elders are not overburdened while remaining honored for their knowledge and guidance.

9.9. Long-Term Vision for Indigenous Well-Being at Concordia

The CIRAC has the potential to support Indigenous Directions in guiding a holistic vision for Indigenous well-being within the university. In this role, CIRAC can:

9.9.1. Recommend ways to enhance awareness of Indigenous realities through consistent educational initiatives for the broader non-Indigenous Concordia community, resulting in more cultural safety for the Indigenous cohort.

9.9.2. Support existing Indigenous wellness approaches that integrate academic, cultural, and emotional supports that are guided by Indigenous community values and recommend others when confronted with gaps in these support networks.

9.9.3. Identify areas where long-term funding and structural stability are needed to ensure that Indigenous initiatives do not disappear with staffing changes or project-based funding cycles.

9.9.4. Support intergenerational exchanges, undergraduate and youth engagement, and culturally grounded teaching and learning practices that contribute to the long-term flourishing of Indigenous research and community life at Concordia.

10. Conclusion

In reflection, the findings of this collaborative data-gathering process indicate that Indigenous research at Concordia is shaped by both meaningful institutional commitments and persistent structural barriers. Participants consistently emphasized the interconnection among the themes identified by the consultation team—governance, ethics, mentorship, retention, funding, cultural safety, and representation—making it clear that challenges in one area often compound difficulties in others. These interrelated barriers critically affect the Indigenous cohort’s ability to sustain and advance significant, world-class Indigenous research. While bodies like Indigenous Directions has undertaken important and commendable work that has generated momentum, participants emphasized that sustained, institution-wide change is required.

With this in mind, CIRAC is well positioned to translate these findings into sustained and consistent action. However, its legitimacy and effectiveness will depend on ongoing, relational consultation with those most impacted by Indigenous research policies and practices—from undergraduate students to senior faculty and members of the wider community—while remaining responsive, avoiding duplication of existing efforts, and staying grounded in Indigenous values as it advances meaningful, long-term structural change.

Participants shared their vision of the future of Indigenous research at Concordia and unanimously expressed a future in which Indigenous knowledges and community relationships are not only respected but embedded across research, teaching, and

institutional practices. Participants expressed hope for a university where Indigenous peoples are meaningfully supported through culturally grounded mentorship, improved ethics and governance systems, expanded funding pathways, and strengthened representation across all programs and research areas. They imagine a future in which Indigenous spaces flourish as vibrant hubs of learning, collaboration, and care, and are guided by their own Indigenous lifeways. Ultimately, participants’ hope is for a relationship with the university that uplifts Indigenous peoples and their scholarship, and ensures that Indigenous research grows in depth, visibility, and impact for generations to come.

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