

Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre
Referendum Package 2022

Part A – Contact Information

1. Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre
2. Campaign Manager Information
 - a. Delaney Benoit



e. 15dmb2@queensu.ca



Part B – Group Description

Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre (FDISC) strives to be a home away from home for Indigenous students. FDISC provides holistic support (emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental) to Indigenous students at Queen’s University by offering cultural counselling, academic advising, support services, feasts, social, and cultural activities. FDISC has a staff compliment of six who are available to provide support for Indigenous students throughout their post-secondary education journey – from their application to career search following graduation. Our centre acts as a home away from home for Indigenous students and includes a full kitchen, laundry services, library, study and lounge spaces. Throughout the pandemic, 4D has been responsive to the needs of our students by altering our regular events/programs to virtual formats, continuing to be readily available to students, changing spaces in the centre to be bookable study rooms, and designing new virtual programming based on student feedback. With the most recent to return to remote delivery, our physical centre on campus is closed but FDISC staff remain committed to providing the programming, services, and community spaces our students are accustomed to.

All of the programs, services, and events offered at FDISC are free for Indigenous students, thus a student fee greatly assists in offsetting program costs. The student fee we receive contributes to our feasts and cultural programming offered at the Centre whether these programs are occurring in person or virtually. Our cultural programming includes workshops such as moccasin making, leather mitten making, drum-making, beaded earrings, pottery, and basket-making. Our recurring weekly programming includes gratitude and sharing circles, Gather Together program workshops, group counseling programs, drumming circles, lunch & learn teachings, and beading circles. We also facilitate larger events monthly including our ‘Frybread Friday’ feast and student led events hosted by our 4D Social Ambassadors. The fee also assists with our SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement) programming which supports Indigenous graduate students at Queen’s find community and build skills. In particular we host a week long writing retreat in the spring that allows them to focus on their writing and self-care.

Part C – Budgetary Breakdown

Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre (FDISC) welcomes and appreciates the support provided by the fee that SGPS collects on our behalf. The fee directly benefits Indigenous graduate students and enhances the programming that we are able to offer as a result including our annual SAGE writing retreat, care packages, biweekly SAGE writing circles, and more. The fee will also offset the program costs for our cultural workshops.

Part D – Student Fee Questionnaire

1. Why is your group seeking a fee?

Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre, as our vision states, is committed to enhancing the wellbeing of Indigenous students. As shown in the Queen’s Student Experiences Survey (2021), many Indigenous students attending Queen’s University do not feel safe on campus, have considered leaving Queen’s, and feel like they need to hide some aspects of their identity to fit in on campus. This research speaks to the growing need for Indigenous students to have spaces such as the FDISC where they can receive culturally specific support and build community. Programming at the FDISC such as individual and group counselling, Indigenous peer mentors, advising, and cultural workshops are designed and facilitated to support the overall well-being of Indigenous students as they navigate the post-secondary environment.

2. What direct benefit will SGPS members derive from granting your group a fee?

Indigenous members of SGPS will benefit from the programming that we offer for them at FDISC. This includes our cultural and academic programming that we offer all students, as well as our SAGE program that is specific to Indigenous graduate students. Although the FDISC is currently working remotely, we continue to offer the same SAGE programs such as the writing circle and writing retreat through virtual spaces and content. FDISC has also acted as a support service to the Queen’s campus for many Indigenous related activities, initiatives, and knowledge with specific programming being open to all Queen’s students or the broader Queen’s community. As the primary recognizably Indigenous space on-campus, many campus partners, staff, and faculty rely on FDISC to provide them services such as research assistance, teaching support, classroom presentations, outreach to community, and committee work and participation.

3. How is the dollar value of the fee related to the benefit you are proposing to provide?

All Indigenous students, regardless of where they are in their personal journeys, are welcome at FDISC. We feel that the \$1 fee allows us to continue to ensure our programs and events are open and accessible to Indigenous graduate students who seek support in learning more about themselves, navigating the post-secondary environment, or finding community while they are away from home. The Queen’s community benefits greatly from the programs, events, and

services we offer as it meets several of the recommendations of the Queen's Truth and Reconciliation Task Force Final Report. This allows all of campus to engage in meaningful work around reconciliation and support the success of Indigenous students.

4. When was your group established?

The Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre was established in 1996 with funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities. The centre and moved to 146 Barrie Street in 2000. In October 2018 based on student demand our space was renovated and doubled in size to include 144 Barrie Street. Our Centre was born out of the need to provide culturally relevant support services for Indigenous students at Queen's University. Given the low numbers of Indigenous students in post-secondary education, the university recognized the need to provide space for Indigenous students. The Centre has increased from two staff to six full time staff and a greater presence in the Queen's community and we are seeing an increase in the use of the Centre.

5. If you have a collected a fee in the past, what initiatives and/or opportunities have you provide the Queen's Community with the collected funds?

Four Directions offers weekly programming including gratitude and sharing circles, group counseling programs, drumming circles, lunch & learn teachings, and beading circles. We also facilitate larger events monthly including our 'Frybread Friday' feast and student led events hosted by our 4D Social Ambassadors. Last year during the pandemic, we also purchased academic supplies, stress relief items, traditional Indigenous medicines, and self-care items to create exam care packages for Indigenous graduate students.

We also provide specific support to the Indigenous graduate student population through the SAGE program. SAGE provides a supportive network of like-minded graduate students who mentor each other and engage in dialogue surrounding their research. Through the SAGE program, Indigenous graduate students are able to engage with programming such as the biweekly SAGE writing circle and the SAGE Writing Retreat which both support Indigenous students in their coursework/research, allows them to consult with Indigenous Elders, promotes self-care, and builds accountability.