

Declaration of the Milton Parc Citizens Committee in solidarity with the Kanien'kehà:ka Kahnistensera

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We are gathered on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka, a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst many First Nations including the Kanien'kehà:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabe. We recognize and respect and thank the Kanien'kehà:ka for the present and past stewardship over the lands and waters that enable our gathering in the pursuit of justice today.

I'm here on behalf of the CCMP, a membership-based, non-partisan organization, which strives to build grassroots democracy and collective autonomy, to declare our unwavering solidarity with the kanien'kehà:ka kahnistensera (Mohawk Mothers) and the vibrant Indigenous communities across Turtle Island in their fight for landback.

The legacy of the Catholic church on Turtle Island is indisputably tied up in the genocide of Indigenous Peoples through residential schools and other oppressive and assimilationist practices evidenced in the thousands of unmarked graves discovered across the country to date. Confronting the reality of these unspeakable crimes involves more than just words – it requires tangible action, redistributive justice and actual reconciliation. It requires the dismantlement of the colonial oppressive apparatus.

This means taking accountability for what has been done and rectifying the on-going impacts of settler-colonialism by giving back this land to its original caretakers. This stands in stark contrast to the Pope's actions which have gone no further than apologies, empty promises and prayers. These cannot heal or help the countless lives taken and harmed by the Catholic Church. The Pope's whole visit is nothing but a \$35 million performance, courtesy of our tax dollars and the colonial state.

The Canadian state continues to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their land to this very day, one must simply look out West to the RCMP's invasion of Wet'suwet'en territory, or rather, directly behind us. Currently, the SQI and the City of Montreal is encouraging the profanation of the unmarked Indigenous graves situated on the former Royal Victoria Hospital and Allan Memorial sites, situated on unceded land traditionally known as Tekanontak. McGill University is being permitted to go forth with their greenwashed "New Vic" project in the

guise of furthering public policy and sustainability research, at the same time as their Board of Governors is currently investing billions of dollars into the fossil fuel industry, including over \$15 million into corporations funding the Coastal GasLink pipeline.

Additionally, the New Vic has been approved with little to no Indigenous or student consultation by McGill University and has been actively opposed by several groups in this community, including, but not limited to: SSMU and the kanien'kehà:ka kahnistensera. We'd also like to emphasize that this campus expansion serves no other purpose than to cover up McGill's heinous role in the MK Ultra experiments, their ongoing contributions to the fossil fuel industry and invasions of Indigenous territory.

In 2021, the Royal Vic for the Public Coalition led a comprehensive community consultation on the repurposing of the provincially-owned decommissioned Royal Victoria Hospital. This conclusion revealed the need for health and community services; social, cooperative, and transitional housing; spaces for arts and culture, and more. These demands echo those of the Kahnistensera, who want redevelopment plans to serve community needs, especially those of the local Indigenous population. It is our position that any such redevelopment to serve community needs would require the involvement and consent of the Mohawk Mothers from conception to realization. To be in full solidarity is to respect the consent and stewardship of traditional custodians of the land. We support them in their assertion that this is unceded Indigenous territory and stewardship of it should remain in Indigenous hands.

In Milton-Parc, the ongoing oppression and dispossession of Indigenous peoples can be witnessed daily through the enforcement of Canadian law on Indigenous land. In our neighbourhood, this takes form in the continued displacement of our unhoused Indigenous neighbours. A primary example of this is the construction of a fence and 24-hour surveillance around an empty lot on the corner of Milton and Parc that used to serve as a safe space for the unhoused community. These actions demonstrate the system's commitment to protecting private property rather than ensuring that the right to housing of every human being is respected. Such extractive logics are at the heart of colonial systems of governance, and constitute a driving force behind a housing crisis that affects us all.

The potential for real action rather than rhetoric has presented itself very clearly here. We have the opportunity to do something extraordinary by making amends for past atrocities. Let's begin with consultation and collaboration with Indigenous communities about what must be done with their land. This is an opportunity to do something more than acknowledge that this land is not ours. All citizens of Montreal will feel some sense of progress towards making things

right when the land is given back. It's clear that conciliatory empty politics of apology and meaningless guilty tears have done nothing. Action: concrete, courageous and strong action, is needed. Give the land back!