

March 8th 2022

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Student Activists Occupy McGill Arts Building

Tioh'tià:ke (Montreal) – Student activists from Divest McGill are occupying the McGill Arts Building to declare their solidarity with Wet'suwet'en land defenders and build towards the democratization of the University and the divestment of its endowment from the top 200 fossil-fuel companies by carbon reserve. They call on McGill to immediately divest from TC Energy, the company pushing to construct the Coastal Gas Link pipeline through unceded Wet'suwet'en territory.

"At present, McGill University, as controlled by the Board of Governors, serves capitalist, white-supremacist, settler-colonial and imperialist structures of power", they write in their action manifesto, made public on Monday.

The McGill administration has refused to answer the [calls from the #TakeJamesDown campaign](#) led by Black and Indigenous students, faculty and staff. It has not met [demands](#) of the Black Student Network for funding for Black History Month, and for funding a Black or Africana Studies department staffed by Black scholars. It continues to operate on the stolen land of the Kahnistensera, from the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, and refuses to get rid of its [\\$3,467,323](#) investment in TC Energy Corp, the company behind the environmentally-destructive Coastal Gas Link Pipeline. Furthermore, McGill University is founded on wealth built through the slave trade and colonial enterprise, including the wealth of James McGill, who [enslaved at least five African and Indigenous people, two of whom were children who died at the age of ten](#).

McGill also owns stocks enabling the bombing of Yemeni civilians (Lockheed Martin), the settler-colonial violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers (Re/Max and Oshkosh Corporation), the invasion and occupation of Iraq (Oshkosh Corporation) and the genocidal carceral regime against Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities (Puma, Foot Locker, Nordstrom and Kohl's).

Senior executives from the Bank of Montreal (BMO), Power Corporation of Canada, the National Bank of Canada, Metro, Inc., HSBC Bank Canada, and Redbourne Properties Inc all sit on McGill's Board of Governors and represent its largest voting bloc.

Members of Divest McGill say they, along with other campus groups, have tried for years to obtain change through the Board of Governors channels, by giving presentations, filing reports, making petitions, organizing rallies, and even hosting a diploma-return ceremony. The Board of Governors, they say, never intended for change to happen, and it is solely once the University has been democratized that real changes will be implemented.

"We are tired of demanding change from an institution that won't listen. We occupy this space to prefigure a democratically-led university. This space is an opportunity for us to engage in meaningful conversations with other members of our community, listen to the struggles they are facing, build trust and relationships, and organize together to change the functioning of the University." — A participant in the action, who preferred to stay anonymous

The students say they have been planning the action for months, in the hopes of escalating pressure on the McGill administration. This escalation is taking place close to the 10-year anniversary of the Divest McGill campaign and in the first year of the Democratize McGill coalition, which was launched after a successful first community assembly this fall. Organizers are hoping to inspire other students and workers in the McGill community and beyond to take action in favour of immediate divestment from TC Energy, divestment from the top 200 fossil fuel companies by carbon-reserve, and democratization of governance structures in educative institutions.

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