



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
**STUDENTS'
UNION**

IDENTITY MATTERS 2: ANCESTRAL DIVERSITY & ABORIGINALITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In September 2017, this department released 'Identity Matters! A Study of Undergraduate Involvement and Leadership in Student Government at UAlberta.' The Identity Matters study focused on the role of gender (the experiences of women and gender-diverse students), but also applied an intersectional lens, primarily around race.

The Identity Matters 2 project aims to help stakeholders understand and support Aboriginal and POC students who are interested in leadership roles, with the aim of improving representation at all levels of student governance. All quotes are from anonymous Aboriginal and POC students unless otherwise noted. 350 Aboriginal students and over 2,100 POC student contributed to this research.

“Differences don’t have to divide, they can bring us together. While ethnicity may bring challenges, it also bring forth differing perspectives and allows for diversity.”

AWARENESS AND INTEREST

- Aboriginal students tend to have great interest in involvement and leadership, but are not interested in many of the options they see, and report lower involvement in campus life. They tend to feel **lower interest in faculty/department associations**, particularly in Engineering, Science, and Nursing.
- POC students tend to have great interest in involvement and leadership, but are far more likely to feel **unaware of their options**.
- Both Aboriginal students and POC students are significantly more likely to consider seeking a leadership role if they are involved in campus life.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

- Many racialized students feel they struggle to be taken seriously as leadership candidates. They relayed a wide variety of negative or challenging experiences. Gender also plays a significant role here, as explored in the first Identity Matters report.
- Aboriginal and POC students face the same primary obstacles as other students: lack of time and lack of knowledge of the position.
- POC students are far more likely than other students to feel a **lack of confidence in their skills (e.g campaigning, public speaking, debating) or qualifications**.
- Aboriginal students are far more likely than other students to cite **a lack of mentorship, encouragement/support, funds, volunteers, and campaign organization options**. They are far less likely than other students to feel a lack of confidence in their skills or qualifications.
- Support for **students who parent** may make a significant difference in many Aboriginal students’ ability to hold leadership roles.



ACHIEVING A LEADERSHIP ROLE

- Among students who are involved in campus life, Aboriginal and POC students are **far more likely** to consider seeking leadership roles.
- Despite barriers, one large survey found that POC students are **slightly more likely** than other students to hold leadership roles (e.g. in clubs or department/faculty associations). However, they may be **less likely to find 'higher-level' leadership roles**.
- Aboriginal students are **significantly less likely** than other students to hold leadership roles. However, Aboriginal students **who get involved** in campus life have roughly the same rate of leadership participation as other students.
- Lack of consistent and concrete data affects analysis of representation within **Students' Council**. In recent years, Aboriginal students have been underrepresented, while POC students have typically made up 30% to 40% of Councillors.
- As far as can be determined, no Aboriginal student has ever served as an **Executive**.
- POC representation on the Executive Committee has varied widely by decade and position. The last thirty years have seen major POC representation in the VP Student Life/Internal portfolio. The Presidency has seen significant representation over the past decade. Students of colour, however, remain **consistently underrepresented** in all other Executive portfolios.
- The hope is that positive and successful experiences in other roles and contexts (Stride training, faculty/department/residence associations, Students' Council, Aboriginal Student Council, etc.) will lead to better representation among the Executives, for both Aboriginal and POC students.

TIMELINE AND PREMISE



When exploring students' experiences with seeking and finding leadership positions, Identity Matters (November 2017) found that gender was a much more significant factor than race. However, SU staff began preliminary research on a follow-up study, and reassessed the original Identity Matters data starting in November 2018.

Identity Matters 2 explores the experiences of two sometimes-intersecting groups, applying a gender lens when possible:

- Students who self-identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit in the context of surveys. For brevity, based on the language used in the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee (ARRC) recommendations, the report refers to this group as 'Aboriginal students.' This report encompasses 350 Aboriginal points of contact.
- Students who identify as members of visible minorities or as persons of colour (other than Aboriginal students). For brevity, the report refers to this group as 'POC students.' This report encompasses over 2100 POC points of contact.

In April 2019, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee issued 60 recommendations to inform SU practices and advocacy. ARRC referenced the Identity Matters report and suggested that the SU should "undertake a comparable study...on the role race, ethnicity, and Aboriginality play in leadership and student governance at the University of Alberta." Identity Matters 2 explores how race, ethnicity, and Aboriginality play a role in student involvement and pursuit of leadership roles.

"I see the greatest needs in the University's treatment of Indigenous people...Acknowledging that we gather on treaty land is great and all but if we don't do anything to incorporate Indigenous leadership and culture in our school, instead commemorating whiteness and colonialists everywhere, those acknowledgements mean nothing."

In parallel with ARRC's development of these recommendations, the SU conducted new research and reexamined original Identity Matters data for additional insights. Where Identity Matters focused on the experiences of several dozen students who had already attained leadership positions, Identity Matter 2 uses quantitative data to explore factors that drive engagement and success in finding leadership roles.

The original data framed the term 'leadership role' subjectively, including a broad spectrum of positions within the SU, faculty associations, department associations, residence associations, clubs, and University governance. The SU's most recent Discovering Students in Governance (DSiG) report identified over 1100 student leadership positions, not counting leaders in 450+ clubs. Faculty and department associations alone accounted for more than 600 positions.

We hope this report leads to stronger POC and Aboriginal representation within Students' Council and the Executive Committee. This goal should not be understood as exhaustive, exclusive, or prescriptive: we do not wish to devalue other leadership roles that students may find equally impactful and meaningful, any more than we

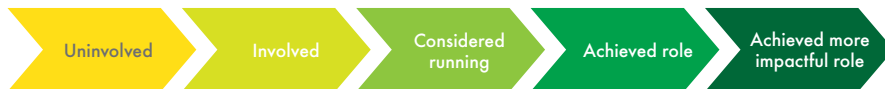


wish to 'silo' students in leadership roles specific to their identities. (For example, Aboriginal students should have strong representation within both Aboriginal Students' Council and the Students' Council of the SU.)

"Gone must be the days where Indigenous Peoples are led down the track by those who 'know what's best for them.'"

—Ry Moran, Director, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

Therefore, Identity Matters 2 conceives of the path to leadership in a generalized way that focuses on students' subjective experiences. Respondents had the freedom to perceive the concepts of campus involvement and leadership as they saw fit.



Students can come to a variety of leadership roles from any number of paths. Some of those paths may bring more structural advantages than others. Supporting students regardless of their path - their preexisting experiences and connections - will increase equality of opportunity and strengthen the democratic process. Ideally, this report will prompt changes and innovation that support potential leaders regardless of their path to leadership.

SOURCES AND DEMOGRAPHICS



OVERVIEW OF SURVEYS

This report draws from new qualitative and quantitative research, and also revisits the data used in the first Identity Matters project, for a rough total of 7300 points of contact. Unlike the original report, Identity Matters 2 does not concentrate on a relative handful of students who have won elections. The new approach allows for a stronger understanding of how diversity of ancestry influences access to opportunities, interest in participation, and students' perceptions of their own prospects.

NAME	DATE	POINTS OF CONTACT	ABORIGINAL	POC
Survey 1	Jan 2017	1959	95 (5%)	639 (33%)
Survey 2	July 2018	122	7 (6%)	33 (27%)
Survey 3	Nov 2018	216	16 (7%)	69 (32%)
Survey 4	Dec 2018	5042	232 (5%)	1361 (27%)
TOTAL	N/A	7339	350 (5%)	2102 (29%)

Quantitative sources for Identity Matters 2

- **Survey 1** was a supporting source for the first Identity Matters report. It focused on factors affecting students' decisions to become involved in campus life and student leadership, and the barriers they faced. Survey 1 was carried out by what was then known as the Department of Research and Political Affairs.
- **Survey 2** polled student leaders within faculty/department associations, Students' Council, and other important representative bodies. Survey 2 was carried out by Discover Governance.
- **Survey 3** served as part of the public consultation for the recent Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy. Though less focused on student leadership, it produced several useful qualitative responses about the priorities of marginalized students. Survey 3 was carried out by the new Department of Research and Advocacy.
- **Survey 4** was the SU's comprehensive annual undergraduate survey, redesigned in 2018 and carried out by the new Department of Research and Advocacy.

All four surveys had relatively robust demographic sections that allowed students to indicate whether they identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit (FNMI) or Aboriginal, and whether they identified as members of a visible minority or as persons of colour. Exact wording varied by survey.



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Perhaps the first person of colour to serve as an Executive was Vivian Suey (Vice President, 1947-1948), whose parents immigrated from southern China. It is vital that racialized students, especially women and the gender-diverse, see better representation in leadership positions.



CHALLENGES TO DISTINCTIONS-BASED ANALYSIS

We recognize that aggregate information risks painting the needs of all POC and Aboriginal students with the same brush. This is an innate challenge in the type of research we undertook: a high-level demographic picture of trends in a Western model. We strongly recommend that any service providers or advocates who use this data do so in consultation with the students they aim to serve.

“The aggregation of data can oversimplify the picture and flatten necessary dimensions of analysis. Collectively, witnesses cited how appropriate data collection and dissemination has to be informed by Indigenous knowledge, definitions, and experiences, within a distinctions-based approach.”¹

Thousands of students with diverse ancestries, cultures, genders, and lived experiences identify as visible minorities or persons of colour (POC). Likewise, the surveys did not distinguish between First Nations, Métis, and Inuks, especially through a gender lens, mainly due to the risk of very small numbers creating non-representative token samples. This is already an issue with Surveys 2 and 3, which saw proportionate but small response from Aboriginal students, as outlined above. Distinguishing within these samples would, in some cases, produce numbers small enough to jeopardize the privacy standard for disclosure.

The same is often true for distinguishing the experiences of Aboriginal women and gender-diverse students. While their experiences are included in this report, singling them out would be a privacy issue with much of the data we have. Just as importantly, it would yield numbers that are not statistically significant, meaning they would not create reliable patterns that we could apply to the campus population. For these reasons, although we included some of these subdivided numbers (e.g. the rate of Aboriginal women who both participated in campus life and had interest in leadership roles) for clarity or context, we did not exhaustively explore the intersections of race, Aboriginality, and gender.

To partially address these limitations and for a more personal level of context, this report draws from the surveys’ extensive text responses, and from Identity Matters’ original interviews with women of colour in leadership roles. As with the quantitative data, the team reexamined the original qualitative material with this report’s priorities in mind. While we believe the data offer valuable insights, we also believe that the intersections of race, Aboriginality, and gender deserve further research in the context of student leadership.

DISTINCTIONS: INUIT AND MÉTIS POPULATIONS

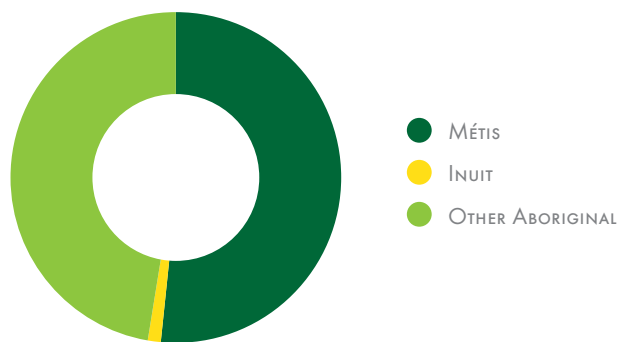
Distinction within the FNMI/Aboriginal student body is a prime example of the challenges explained above.

¹ ‘Reclaiming Power and Place,’ the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (volume 1a, page 531)



According to the 2018-19 Annual Report on Undergraduate Enrolment, total self-identified Aboriginal/Indigenous enrolment is 1,175, or 3.7% of the student body. Of those, per numbers provided by First Peoples' House and the Registrar's Indigenous Recruitment office, 604 identified as Métis and 15 identified as Inuks. Out of 350 Aboriginal points of contact (some of which likely recurred, as any given student could have taken any or all of the surveys), around five respondents could have been Inuks and around 180 could have been Métis, if proportions hold reasonably true.

APPROXIMATE PROPORTIONS OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS per Fall 2018 enrolment data



Note that the above chart is an approximation based on self-declaration under status, non-status, Bill C-3, and Bill C-31 designations; in simplest terms, it includes all students who self-declare as First Nations, Aboriginal, Indigenous, Métis, or Inuit. This group's needs and experiences are far from homogeneous. By and large, however, we believe we have approached their survey responses in a way that reflects shared needs and experiences with reference to engagement and student leadership.

"More than any previous generation, today's young Inuit will need education systems that are high reaching if they are to participate in the unfolding prosperity of this country...This is the greatest social policy challenge of our time. Some 56 per cent of our population is under the age of 25, so improving education outcomes is imperative."²

An upcoming student census will hopefully offer more granular information on the distinct circumstances and needs of Inuks and Métis students, giving the SU a foundation for further research and engagement. The specific needs of undergraduate Inuks, beyond the scope of this report's leadership-focused research, certainly require further study. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is a national organization that represents all Inuks, including the 700+ Inuks in Edmonton (per the most recent national census) and the 15 undergraduate Inuks at the University of Alberta. ITK's Inuit Statistical Profile 2018 shows that Inuit undergraduates are likely to have overcome disproportionate challenges already. Any effort to engage Aboriginal students more meaningfully in student leadership must recognize that Inuit students can face special and significant barriers.



RESEARCH TEAM LIMITATIONS

While students of colour have been well-represented in our research team, none of our department's analysts are Aboriginal. To address this challenge, and in keeping with the principle of 'nothing about us without us,' we have taken a three-pronged approach:

- 1) We studied the ARRC Recommendations, including key priorities, themes, and language. Many of the recommendations speak directly to our research and played a foundational role in shaping this report. We thank ARRC for providing a road map to understanding the needs of Aboriginal students.
- 2) We attempted to build cultural competency through the Indigenous Canada MOOC (as outlined in the ARRC Recommendations) and extensive reference to the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada. We thank First Peoples House, the Registrar's Indigenous Recruitment Office, and the SU's FNMI Initiatives Coordinator for providing assistance, key context, and data.
- 3) Above all, we focused on the voices and experiences of our 350 Aboriginal points of contact. When we draw inferences or extrapolations, we note them as such; our preferred approach is to let the students speak for themselves, either verbatim or as statistical patterns. We thank the hundreds of Aboriginal students who contributed their time to this research project.

AWARENESS AND INTEREST



How aware are these students of options that interest them? How much do they want to get involved in student governance organizations or leadership positions?

3 su.ualberta.ca/media/uploads/148/Fl-NAL_IdentityMattersReport_F.pdf p.11

POC STUDENTS

By and large, POC students are slightly more likely than other students to get involved and to seek leadership roles.

Q [Survey 1]: **Are you/have you ever been involved in campus life (student groups, representative associations like department associations, faculty associations, students' council, students' union, etc.)?**

POC students: 59%

Non-POC students: 52%

Q [Survey 1, if the answer to the previous question was 'yes']: **Have you ever considered seeking a leadership position in the time you have been involved in campus life?**

POC students: 59% (56% women, 64% men)

Non-POC students: 48%

Likewise, within the 5000-student sample of Survey 4, POC students were slightly more likely than other students (26% vs 23%) to want to get involved through their faculty/department associations, which rely on hundreds of elected leadership positions. Compare this to the original Identity Matters project's surveys of faculty association executives:

Overall visible minorities were more likely to be interested in running for such positions than Caucasians, irrespective of gender...It is likely that the experience of being a visible minority influences willingness for further leadership roles. This supposition is based on interview data in which participants of colour (including women) indicated being motivated by experiences of discrimination (self-experiences or witnessing), desire for social change and social justice, and inspired by the representation of people of colour in important political positions.³

Survey 4 also showed that POC students are far more likely (50% vs 43% of non-POC respondents) to say that they are not aware of involvement options that interest them. For unknown reasons, that discrepancy is much higher among domestic students: domestic POC students are especially unlikely to know of any involvement options that interest them. Considering that 'lack of knowledge of the position' is a very common obstacle to running for office for all students, it seems that many POC students simply may not know what their options are. The SU should continue to support faculty/department associations in giving students a better idea of what leadership roles are available, and what those roles entail.



ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

Aboriginal students are much less likely to get involved in campus life, which impacts overall likelihood of seeking and achieving leadership roles. However, when comparing involved Aboriginal students to involved non-Aboriginal students (including most POC students), Aboriginal students are much more likely to consider seeking a leadership role.

Q [Survey 1]: **Are you/have you ever been involved in campus life (student groups, representative associations like department associations, faculty associations, student's council, students' union, etc.)?**

Aboriginal students: 47%

Non-Aboriginal students: 54%

Q [Survey 1, if the answer to the previous question was 'yes']: **Have you ever considered seeking a leadership position in the time you have been involved in campus life?**

Aboriginal students: 62% (50% women, 75% men)

Non-Aboriginal students: 51%

In Survey 4, only 19% of Aboriginal students (compared to 24% of non-Aboriginal students) wanted to get involved in student life through their faculty/department associations. These associations include more than 600 student leadership positions. Also, Aboriginal students were significantly less likely than non-Aboriginal students to be interested in associations within the faculties of Nursing (17% vs 24%), Science (12% vs 22%), and Engineering (9% vs 22%). (As a caveat, the number of Aboriginal students involved is quite small; for example, out of 33 Aboriginal respondents in the Faculty of Science, too few were interested in their faculty or department associations to meet privacy thresholds for disclosure.) This relative lack of interest in faculty/department associations may carry over to the SU level. Within the 5000-student sample of Survey 4, Aboriginal students are somewhat less likely to vote in SU Executive elections (29% vs 34%).

"Be you and own who you are but run on your merit, not what boxes you tick."

For context, Aboriginal students tend to know their options and know what they want. When asked (in Survey 4) why they aren't more involved on campus, Aboriginal students were far less likely (38% vs 45%) to say they are not aware of options that interested them. Aboriginal students feel aware of the possibilities, but are still less involved than other students. One possible interpretation is that Aboriginal students have greater-than-average interest in involvement and leadership, but tend to become unimpressed with the relevance or environment of associations and/or the SU. Remember, though, that once Aboriginal students get involved in campus life, they are significantly more likely than other students to consider leadership roles. Further research is warranted.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES



Beyond the obstacles already discussed, what barriers do racialized students face?

HIGH-LEVEL PATTERNS

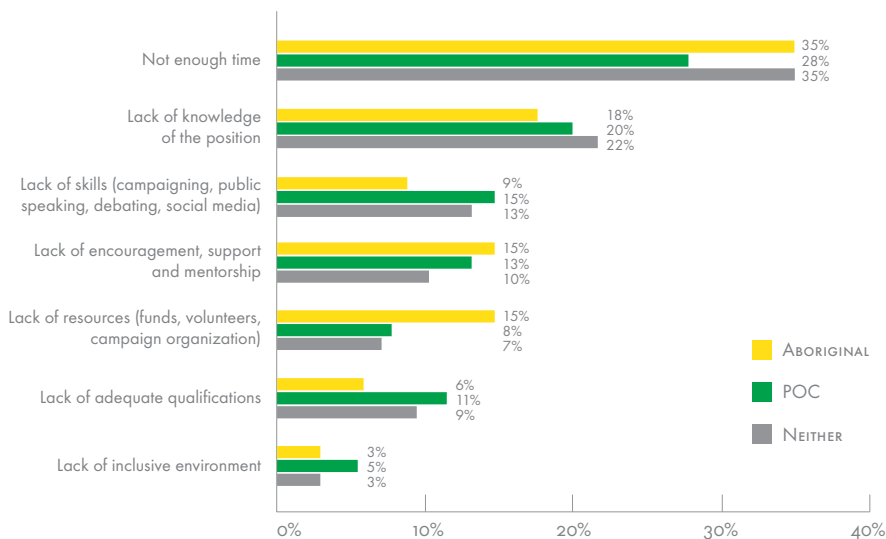
Aboriginal students are somewhat more likely to cite a lack of encouragement, support and mentorship, and far more likely to cite a lack of resources. (Survey 1 left the terms ‘encouragement,’ ‘support,’ and ‘mentorship’ open-ended and subjective.) POC students are more likely to focus on a self-identified lack of skills and qualifications. Overall, Aboriginal and POC students tend to face similar challenges.

Q [Survey 3]: What EDI issues should be top priorities in policy, service provision, and/or advocacy? Where do you see the greatest needs?

A: Educating others, services that offer opportunities to learn, services that offer support and advice.

OBSTACLES TO PURSUING CAMPUS LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Format: Choose all that apply. Source 1 (n~1900)



THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE

Language plays a role in some POC students’ uncertainty about skills (construed as, for example, public speaking and debating). Quantitative responses suggest that these students are not alone. In Survey 2, which polled students who already hold leadership roles, 20% indicated that their first language was not English. Typical answers include Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese, or undifferentiated), Bengali, and several southeast Asian languages.

Obviously a student’s first language does not determine their English proficiency, but some POC and Indigenous students do experience language or accent as barriers,



even sources of discrimination. One POC candidate, a Chinese international student, noted that the only people who ever spoke with her on the campaign trail were other Chinese students. Domestic students did not even respond when she asked them to vote. Note that, per the Registrar's 2018-2019 enrolment report, one of every ten University of Alberta undergraduates is a Chinese international student.

LACK OF SUPPORT AND INCLUSION

Within the categories of 'lack of encouragement, support and mentorship' and 'lack of inclusive environment,' racialized students shared a wide variety of negative experiences.

"I never get chosen for anything I apply for."

"I was told, 'This is not your year to shine.'"

"I felt that I was deemed not appropriate for the role."

"[A white woman told me,] 'You are a minority woman, running against two white men, you will not win.'"

"In this campaign, people did not seem to have a lot of trust for me in comparison to the other candidates."

"You will feel invisible and visible at the same time."

"I want to be qualified and recognized by other reasons and not by race."

"Prepare for it to be the worst."

"When I identified as an international student...my other experiences and other dimensions of my qualifications were simply ignored."

Some racialized respondents also noted that they felt expected to represent all students who shared their identities, including a double burden of race and gender. One international student struggled with anxiety because she worried that, if her campaign failed, people would judge not only her but also other students from her home country.



The question of ‘white-passing’ also makes a difference for many students’ likelihood of pursuing and achieving leadership roles, apart from Aboriginal-specific roles like a seat on ARRC or ASC. (This information is anecdotal rather than statistical, as our surveys did not attempt to discuss whether a given participant felt that the ability to pass as white was a factor in their identity and/or experiences.) Some Aboriginal or POC students who can pass as white may not publicly self-declare in the context of a leadership race, out of a rational fear of damaging their chances of winning. Likewise, Aboriginal or POC students who are visibly non-white may be less likely to seek and find leadership roles. All these factors can easily create intersectional barriers when combined with gender. These challenges are no surprise to those affected. Any program initiatives arising from the ARRC recommendations will need to take these questions into account.

GENDER CHALLENGES

The first Identity Matters report focused heavily on gender, particularly through an intersectional lens. As a result, note that many of the anecdotes and patterns contained in this report are especially applicable to women and non-binary students. For further information about the specific challenges these groups face, including some of the specific needs of Aboriginal women, we refer the reader to both Identity Matters and to the 2018 Undergraduate Survey Report (which covers Survey 4 in detail).

For example, a special challenge disproportionately affects many Aboriginal students (and particularly women): parenthood. At minimum, this would fall under the headings of ‘not enough time’ and ‘not enough support.’ Survey 4 indicated that Aboriginal students are over three times more likely than other students to be parents of dependent children. Survey 4 also found that Aboriginal students are more likely to cite family commitments (23% vs 17% of non-Aboriginal students) as a primary obstacle to involvement, even though Aboriginal students are far less likely to live with parents or guardians. The ARRC Recommendations identified advocacy for students who parent as a top priority.

To that end, the SU’s 2019 Executive Compensation Review Committee recommended that “[c]hildcare support should be made available on an as-needed basis. The ECRC feels this is an important way to decrease the financial barrier of running for an Executive position...we recommend creating a specialized fund for childcare in the event that there is an Executive who needs childcare to be subsidized in order to perform adequately.” Further support for students who parent may have a disproportionate positive impact on many Aboriginal students’ participation in leadership roles.

ACHIEVING A LEADERSHIP ROLE

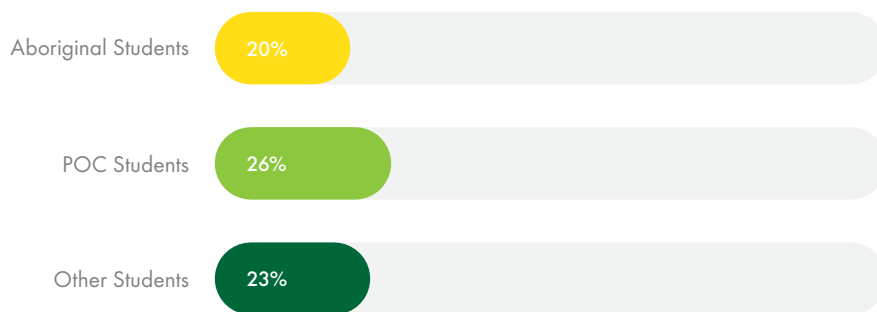


How many racialized students achieve leadership roles in campus life (as defined by students themselves) despite the obstacles they face?

In Survey 1, Aboriginal students are significantly less likely than non-Aboriginal students to hold leadership roles (19.7% vs 24.3%), as small disparities add up at every step along the way. Meanwhile, POC students are slightly more likely than non-POC students to hold leadership roles (26.0% vs 22.9%). (The true numbers may be lower on all counts, as more-engaged students may be more likely to take SU surveys.)

HOW MANY STUDENTS HAVE HELD LEADERSHIP ROLES IN CAMPUS LIFE?

Survey 1 (n~1950)



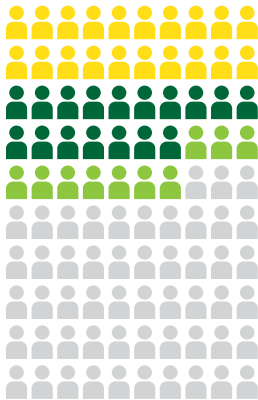
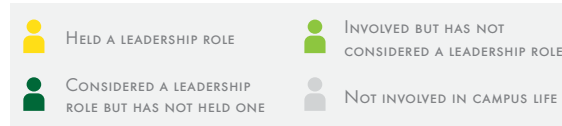
Remember that subjective 'leadership roles' can include everything from clubs and residence associations to faculty associations and Students' Council. Some participants suggested that different demographics may have different concepts of what constitutes a 'leadership role,' a question that our data does not explore.

As noted above, Aboriginal and POC students who get involved in campus life are far more likely than other students to consider seeking leadership roles. Aboriginal and POC students who get involved have roughly the same rate of leadership participation as other students.

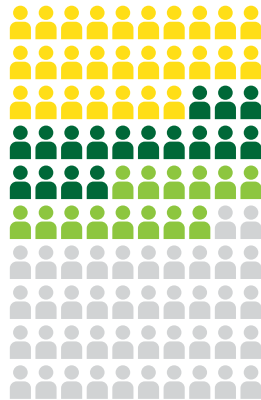


INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

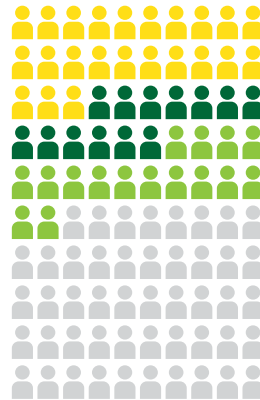
Survey 1: (n~1950)



Aboriginal students as 100 people

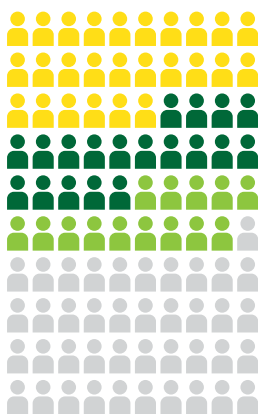


Students of colour as 100 people

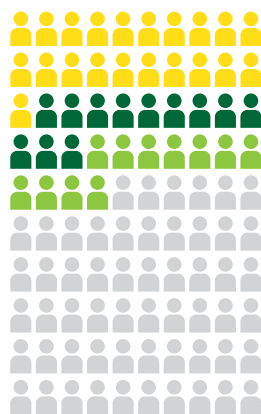


All other students as 100 people

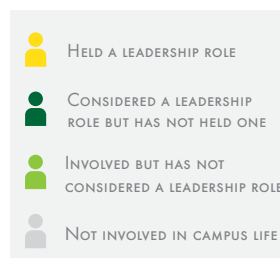
These results display a degree of gender-based disparity. Women of colour are slightly more likely than men of colour to consider a leadership role (without having achieved one) or to get involved in campus life. Aboriginal women are less likely than Aboriginal men to get involved or to consider a leadership role without holding one. However, they are somewhat more likely than Aboriginal men to actually hold a leadership role. The obvious inference is that, when Aboriginal women aim to lead (within Survey 1's broad construction of leadership roles), they often succeed.



Women of colour as 100 people



Aboriginal women as 100 people





‘HIGHER-LEVEL’ ROLES

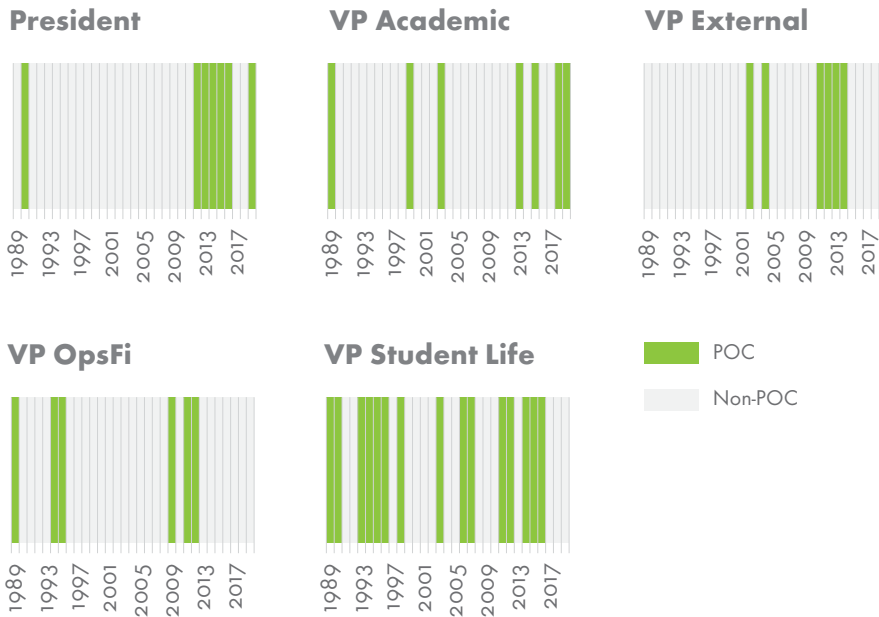
A student’s growth toward more meaningful and impactful roles can take as many forms as there are students. However, to inform targets for institutional growth, we need to examine just how many racialized students are reaching the ‘highest’ (or at least most visible) levels of student leadership, such as Students’ Council, General Faculties Council, or executive roles in faculty associations.

In 2018, the SU Discover Governance department began formally surveying student officials for demographic information. The first survey (Survey 2) reached over 120 points of contact out of 1100 leadership roles, not all of which had been filled, for an estimated response rate of 12-14%. 6% of Survey 2’s respondents identified as Aboriginal, consistent with the proportions in other surveys and somewhat higher than the proportion of Aboriginal students in the entire student body. The number of respondents was too small for this variation to carry much weight, but it certainly lends itself to optimism. Meanwhile, 27% of respondents identified as POC, somewhat lower than the proportions in other surveys (30-33%). It appears that, even though POC students are more likely to participate in leadership roles in general, they may be less likely to find higher-level leadership roles.

In recent years, Discover Governance’s review of available information suggests that Council has averaged 30-40% POC, but has only seen minimal Aboriginal representation. (One exception would be the 2018-2019 Council, which included three Aboriginal Councillors.) Systematic evaluation of Council’s racialized demographic makeup in past years is not yet possible in the same way as Identity Matters evaluated gender proportions. Future efforts comparable to Survey 2, as well as a new project through Discover Governance, will give the SU a consistent longitudinal picture of Council’s makeup, and a better understanding of representation at the highest levels.

This lack of concrete representation data also affects assessment of the Executive Committee, five full-time student employees who answer to Council. From historical research, however, it appears that no self-identified Aboriginal student has served as an Executive since the SU’s founding in 1908.

POC students are reasonably well represented among Executives, but only in recent years. A review of Executives from 1989 to 2019 showed the following distribution with a reasonable degree of confidence. Based on photographic evidence and other research, this chart is an approximation that does not necessarily reflect how any given Executive self-identified.

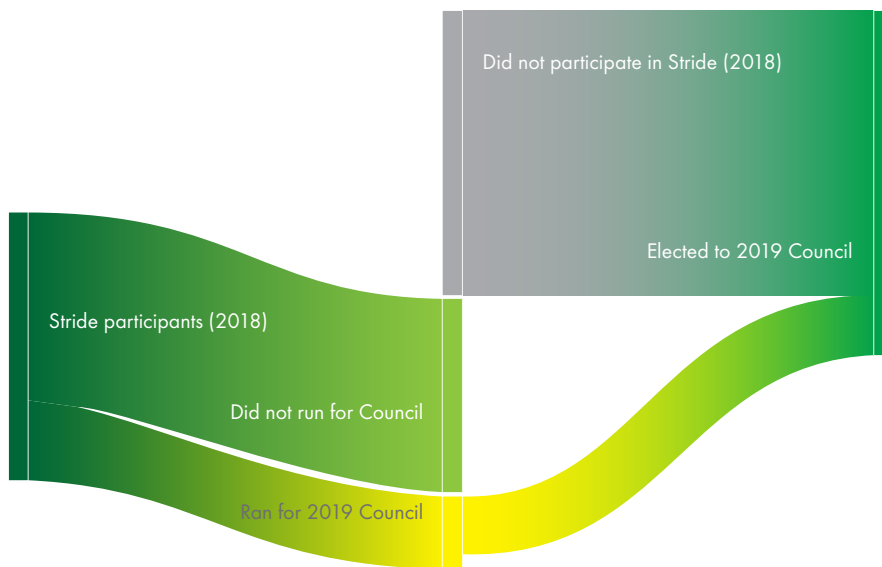


Students of colour, particularly women, have been reasonably well represented in the VP Student Life portfolio and in the recent Presidency. The same has not been true in the other portfolios. Visibly and self-identified POC Executives were especially rare until the 1980s, reflecting gradual improvements in equity, diversity, and inclusion over time. The woman who may have been the first POC Executive (Vivian Suey, Vice President 1947-1948) took office almost forty years after the founding of the SU. In short, even though representation has improved, there is still significant room for progress.

NEXT STEPS: STRIDE



The same ARRC Recommendations that helped inform this report also suggested creation of a Stride-like program focused on POC and Aboriginal students. Stride encourages and supports women and gender-diverse potential candidates for student office. Informed by the first Identity Matters report, Stride has made a significant impact on gender parity in student representation and has proven to be an effective model. In January 2019, the University of Prince Edward Island Students' Union became the second SU to run the Stride program. Many recent participants at the University of Alberta have found success in Council elections:



The surveys cited by this report have demonstrated some of the specific challenges faced by Aboriginal and POC students, information which could help shape a Stride-style program, as recommended by ARRC. Students have outlined their needs and uncertainties, typically around essential civil society skills with applicability far beyond elected student office. It appears that, if service providers and advocates want to encourage POC students to run for office, skills like campaigning, public speaking, debating, and effective social media use would be a strong place to start. Programming could also touch on how students understand 'being unqualified' for a role, and whether that conceptualization is realistic. Meanwhile, many Aboriginal students could benefit from mentorship programs and programming that helps them learn volunteer recruitment and campaign organization.

However, it seems clear that challenges and opportunities for Aboriginal and POC students are intrinsically linked to community identity, and often to gender identity as well. Students do not simply progress through successively 'more important' roles, but often find their own paths and goals related to leadership. Where Stride has focused on preparing students to run for elected roles, a new program could easily apply a broader, community-based scope. A program like this could encompass representation on Student Council and the SU Executive roles, but also look beyond them.