



For close to two decades, SMUFU has been an active supporter of the SMU Northern Ireland Peace Education programme. In partnership with Peaceful Schools International (PSI), this experiential learning programme saw hundreds of Saint Mary's University students gain hands-on experience in the areas of peace education and conflict resolution and provided an outlet for the participants to engage with and share that knowledge with thousands of elementary students here locally and in Northern Ireland.

Yet, last spring, SMU senior management, without any substantial consultation with the individuals directly involved in managing the Northern Ireland program or long-time financial contributors such as SMUFU, SMUSA, the Alumni office, Global Learning & Intercultural Support, various Deans and individual university departments, decided that the university 'could simply not afford it'. They withdrew financial support to the initiative while others were mandated by the interim VPAR to halt any 'in kind' support to the students participating in the program.

We contend that these decisions have hindered significant learning and outreach opportunities on the international stage and locally. It should be noted that not one individual representative from SMU acknowledged Dr. Hetty van Gorp's letter to the Board of Governors and Senate. This is an insult to the founder of PSI, honorary doctoral recipient (SMU) and the legacy of her work and international respect.

For 2023-2024, PSI has received over \$90,000 from the successful submission of applications for funding under the "Reconciliation Fund" - Department of Foreign Affairs in Ireland. Significant portions of this grant, managed by the former Coordinator of Experiential Learning: Peace, Reconciliation and Development and PSI were intended to support SMU students, faculty and staff with opportunities to engage in experiential learning modules in Northern Ireland with partners from Yale University.

This funding was awarded to PSI based on the long-term success and positive impacts of the SMU Northern Ireland Peace Education programme. Locally, for years, PSI and members of the Northern Ireland Peace Education programme were encouraged by SMU administrators to engage with Indigenous communities here in HRM on a variety of peace education themed projects – including a children's book written by local Indigenous children. The Irish government was supportive of efforts to integrate our local Indigenous communities into the work conducted in Northern Ireland. Actions by SMU administrators have completely halted progress

in these opportunities for maintaining and developing relationships with the Indigenous communities.

We appreciate that university administrators have a right to make decisions. However, if such decisions are justified on financial grounds in the context of threats circulating that we're heading for bankruptcy, that is a different matter. Increased transparency about our institutions finances and programmatic decisions based on the purported precarity of our university's finances is needed.

We are seeking:

1. A management audit; an evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of our institution's management processes, systems, and practices.
2. An express apology and clear explanation of decisions taken by SMU Admin concerning PSI and N Ireland program sent to Dr. Hetty van Gorp from the Chancellor and President.
3. An explanation, in writing, detailing the process in which SMU decided to withdraw its support for the Northern Ireland program, both financial and the in-kind support offered by the Office of Global Learning.