



Statement on Systemic Racism and Police Brutality

June 5, 2020

Recently we have seen protests across the world against police brutality, white supremacy, the dehumanization of black people, along with the structural and systemic racism it engenders. The unjust deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and those before them have likewise outraged our fellow Canadians and Albertans, as well as caused unimaginable grief and sadness. We cannot afford to be silent, but more importantly, Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) individuals cannot afford us to be silent; being silent is being complicit to the violence that they face. Graduate students across Alberta stand in solidarity with their black community members here and abroad. ab-GPAC stands firm in the belief that protests are necessary to demand positive change to address systemic racism and dismantle white supremacy.

Unfortunately, Canada is no stranger to white supremacy and violence against racialized groups of individuals. Canada exists on stolen land and has pursued a campaign of genocide against indigenous peoples ever since its inception, from forced displacement, residential schooling, and environmental racism. Black populations in Canada have likewise faced colonial and settler violence, such as slavery, the disenfranchisement, and the destruction of their communities, such as Africville in Halifax. Police brutality and apathy have contributed to loss and pain to black and indigenous Canadians, most recently Regis Korchinski-Paquet in Toronto - the starlight tours in Saskatoon that led to the deaths of Rodney Naistus and Lawrence Wegner in 2000.

We must acknowledge the past, but also face the present reality of Canada's systemic racism against black and indigenous peoples, and how police brutality disproportionately affects them; black Torontonians are 20x more likely to be shot by the police, and in Winnipeg where indigenous people make up 60% of victims in fatal police encounters. Our membership will listen to and empower BIPOC voices, and will help them champion for justice in Alberta, and across Canada. To that end, we call on the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada to make meaningful change and help fight against systemic racism by addressing the structures in our society that enable and perpetuate police brutality in this country and province. We call on our institutions to remember their duties of Truth and Reconciliation, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Together we can make meaningful change, and build a legacy of a healthier community, and to demonstrate in good faith that black lives matter, and diversity should be leveraged as a unifying factor in our society.