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Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)

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Provost's Statement on the Racist and Homophobic Incident at the Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre

July 3, 2020

One of my top priorities for my role as provost is advancing equity, diversity, inclusivity, and Indigeneity at Queen's. As such, I was appalled, disgusted, but unfortunately not completely surprised by the racist and homophobic vandalism at Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre this week. Indigenous and Pride flags, that were displayed to mark Queen's support for the Indigenous and LGBTQ+ communities after racist and homophobic death threats in Chown Hall last fall, were destroyed. As a member of the Kanyen'kéha:ka community at Queen's, I am deeply disturbed by this incident. That said, I am committed to not letting a small group of ignorant and bigoted people allow us to deviate from our mission to strengthen Indigeneity, support for the LGBTQ+ community, and equity issues at Queen's. In fact, such actions only deepen my resolve to move more quickly on our existing path of action to challenge both the blatant acts of hatred and the systemic barriers that exist at the University.

As I have said before, education is the most powerful tool at our disposal. Senator Murray Sinclair, former Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner and Queen's honorary degree recipient, said it best when he stated, "education is the key to reconciliation," and "education got us into this mess, and education will get us out of this mess." Thus, implementation of anti-oppression, anti-racist, and Indigenous content into our curricula throughout the university is increasingly more important. Through activities to enhance Indigeneity in all aspects of Queen's activities, I know that we have many steadfast allies of the Indigenous and LGBTQ+ communities. Each time an incident such as this happens, I remember that there are thousands of allies throughout the university dedicated to equity for all, and we will not be deterred. I call upon all those allies to take both personal and institutional actions to support all communities affected by the recent blights of racism and homophobia in our society and at Queen's.

I am also grateful to Principal Deane for his powerful condemnation of the destruction of the flags. In my role as provost, I will work steadfastly and tirelessly with him, Kanonhsyonne Janice Hill, Kandice Baptiste, and all members of Indigenous Initiatives and the Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre to further positive and welcoming spaces and initiatives for the Indigenous and LGBTQ+ communities at Queen's. Every time Queen's acknowledges being situated on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territory, we must recognize that this acknowledgement carries with it our commitment to partnership with Indigenous peoples. This is Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territory, and as an ally, Queen's will never abandon our responsibilities. We will not be divided; we will be strengthened.

The flags will fly again, not only to demonstrate Queen's pride in the LGBTQ+ and Indigenous communities but to remind us that no act of hate will deter our commitment to creating safe and equitable spaces for all.

Nya:wen kowa

Rahswahérha Mark F. Green
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