Statement of Support for Indigenous Students, Staff, and Faculty

An important joint statement by Kanyen’kéhaka (Mohawk) people in leadership positions at Queen’s University:

It has been a difficult year for Indigenous, racialized, and LGBTQ2S+ members of the Queen’s community. As Kanyen’kéhaka (Mohawk) people in leadership positions at Queen’s, we want to share our reflections and our hope for moving forward on a better path. We each hold different roles and responsibilities within the university, but we approach our work with the shared values and experiences of living in, and coming from, Tyendinaga, and with a connection to our Haudenosaunee ancestry. To write this message, we came together in our traditional ways to discuss how we could support positive action at Queen’s and to condemn all acts of hate on our campus. Although our methods and viewpoints differ in some ways, we are each guided by the Haudenosaunee principles of peace, power, and righteousness—leading with a good mind and a good heart—to find partnership and consensus.

The recent acts of racism at Queen’s and around the world have been extraordinarily painful to witness, experience, and endure. However, these incidences have also reminded us of the responsibility and power that we all have to create a more open and just society. We know that real and lasting change is possible at Queen’s because we have already seen it happen, in many small and large ways. We remain committed to this work, but to truly shift the culture at Queen’s, we need everyone to do their part. In the tradition of the longhouse, Clan Mothers and leadership can set a good path, but it is the responsibility of everyone within the community to show leadership and model respectful behaviour. As leaders in the Queen’s context, we commit to modelling respectful behaviour by speaking in respectful ways, apologizing for mistakes, and carrying a good mind to work with all in the Queen’s community to make campus a safer place. We call on all in the Queen’s community to join us in these seemingly small but profoundly meaningful actions to make a difference.

Every member of the Queen’s community has a responsibility to approach one another with respect and kindness. These responsibilities and commitments were made when the university accepted the Tehontatenonsonterontahkwa Friendship Wampum Belt that was presented on behalf of the Clan Mothers at Tyendinaga and the Katarokwi Grandmother’s Council. The Tehontatenonsonterontahkwa is now placed at the head table during every Senate meeting as a reminder that Queen’s sits on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory, and as a reminder of the commitments the university made when accepting the Tehontatenonsonterontahkwa. Those commitments mean that each of us has a personal responsibility to nurture good relations with each other and with all Indigenous peoples and communities, particularly students, staff, and faculty. In the spirit of the Tehontatenonsonterontahkwa, we ask that you reflect on how you approach your work, your relationships, and your actions at Queen’s to ensure they are anti-racist in practice.

As the Director of Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre, I commit to listening to and responding to the needs of Indigenous students at Queen’s and to expanding services where needed. This will include working with campus partners to fill gaps in service and develop partnerships to better support the needs of Indigenous learners. I will also work to ensure the physical safety of all Indigenous staff, faculty, and students that come to 4D. I will continue to call out acts of hate in all forms and call on community members who are willing to listen and act to make lasting change on campus. Finally, I commit to using my voice to support and welcome all QTBPOC students at Queen’s.

As the Associate Vice-Principal (Indigenous Initiatives and Reconciliation), I commit to guiding the advancement of Indigenous education, research, and programming at Queen’s, to pursue the establishment of a sweat lodge for the benefit of students, staff and faculty of Queen’s, and to continue to lead the implementation of the Yukwananitshentaha Aakenjigemi Extending the Rafters Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Task Force Report recommendations. This work is done by building strong relationships with faculty, staff, and students across campus as well as with Indigenous communities locally and regionally.

As the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic), I commit to working with the Principal, the Associate Vice-Principal (Indigenous Initiatives and Reconciliation) and other members of the leadership team to champion and support meaningful change at Queen’s, including integrating Indigenous histories and perspectives into curricula and programming. I also commit to listening to diverse voices, and to building relationships across the university and with the community to honour and uphold Queen’s commitments to Indigenous peoples.

We call on everyone in the community to join us in making your own commitments in the spirit of Queen’s responsibilities to the agreements signified by the Tehontatenonsonterontahkwa Friendship Wampum Belt.

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