APNS Statement on Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination

The Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia (APNS) would like to add our voice in solidarity with others committing to stand against the legacy of systemic racism and injustice that continues to impact Black people living in Canada.

APNS also acknowledges the ongoing struggle of Indigenous people across the country against racism and discrimination, and the oppression faced by other communities including people of colour and LGBTQIA+, especially those living with disability or mental health issues. APNS recognizes that while these are not the same struggle, they are all reinforcing and challenge our collective humanity. We acknowledge their similar roots stemming from systemic issues that include white supremacy, settler colonialism, gender discrimination and sexism. We also recognize that the struggle against the ongoing systemic racism is a burden disproportionately carried by Black, Indigenous and racialized individuals and communities.

APNS denounces the systemic racism and discrimination which have served to impose barriers to equal participation by diverse communities in the fabric of our society. APNS is committed to supporting equality, inclusion and celebrating diversity. We have a responsibility to support justice and fair treatment of all individuals regardless of their race, religion or sexual orientation. We must listen, educate ourselves, engage in conversations and most importantly stand up when we witness unacceptable racist behavior and acts of violence.

APNS acknowledges that many minority communities struggle with barriers that reduce the likelihood of people from diverse communities becoming psychologists in Nova Scotia. That, in turn, increases the barriers to minority communities receiving psychological services by those who may better understand and relate to diverse clients. If, indeed, they are able to access psychological services at all, due to financial barriers or bias through the long-standing social and economic inequalities inherent in our political, judicial and healthcare processes.

Furthermore, as psychologists we are well aware of the negative impact associated with racial bias on the health outcomes of minorities including increased levels of anxiety, depression, heart disease and diabetes to name a few. We also know that a new traumatic event can reawaken prior traumas for people, families and communities.

As a profession, the Code of Ethics, which guides the science, practice and education of psychology, rests on the principle of anti-discrimination and respect for the dignity of persons. We have a responsibility to be informed of the underlying causes of racism inherent in our society. A crucial step toward a more just society is in the thoughtful understanding of grievances and refusal to accept divisive language that perpetuates violence. We urge psychologists to consider these issues and increase their awareness of the ways that the system creates and reinforces the marginalization of people of Black, Indigenous and minority communities.

Through our research, teaching and applied work we as a profession can work each day to foster a community of inclusiveness, respect, and solidarity among our members and with the broader community. While awareness and respect are crucial for supporting Black people during this time, the discipline of psychology has a responsibility to act. Valuing diversity is simply not adequate for promoting tangible change. We call on leaders and members of our profession in educational, public, and private settings to join in a concerted effort to speak out against oppression and play a role in the constant striving for equity and justice for marginalized communities.

APNS is committed to finding ways to work toward racial and social justice. We all have a lot to do, but as a starting point, here are two links:
Canadian government resources:

https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/anti-racism-engagement/resources.html

Google-based resources:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BRlF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VlBO-QgirITwCTugSfKie5Fs/mobilebasic

A message from the Executive Committee, Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia