



CARRIER SEKANI  
FAMILY SERVICES

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **CSFS STANDS IN UNITY WITH BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT**

Carrier Sekani Family Services stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, following the death of George Floyd while in the custody of police in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It is time to support our allies and a time to reflect on the lives of the CSFS Nations we serve in Northern B.C.

President of Carrier Sekani Family Services, Chief Corinna Leween, says the issue of racism resonates with Indigenous people across Canada and in our Carrier Nations. "similar to the experiences, injustices and racism faced by the Black movement, First Nations have faced these challenges for over 500 years."

Mary Teegee, Executive Director of Child and Family Services at CSFS, says we can no longer be complacent with this behaviour and systematic discrimination: "Indigenous people have a long history of injustice. We, regardless of ethnicity, must no longer tolerate injustices perpetuated by colonial violence."

Floyd's death at the hands of police in the U.S. is a stark reminder of discrimination that Indigenous people face each and every day, including those who live in CSFS Member Nations. Chief Leween says "it is evident, many First Nations (people) are imprisoned, face prejudices and inequality." Just as concerning is the number of Carrier men who have died in recent years, while incarcerated.

In 2003, RCMP were criticized in a report for the use of stun guns and restraints in the death of Prince George man, Clayton Willey. Recently, the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) recommended charging 5 Mounties over the 2017 death of 35-year-old Dale Culver who died following a struggle with officers. The IIO is now investigating the recent death of Everett Patrick, a Lake Babine Nation member who died in custody following an incident in downtown Prince George.

Teegee says that we cannot remain silent any longer: "The protests occurring around the world denouncing the abhorrent murder of yet another Black man is a cry from humanity saying enough is enough. How can we claim to be a fair and just society if the most

marginalized people can be killed at the hands of individuals who wield power and are there to protect us?”

While CSFS recognizes many police officers are virtuous and work well with Nation members, Teegee says it comes down to us to change: “We are no longer talking about changes to government policies, to funding, to the policing and judicial systems – we are talking about changes that need to occur within each individual who wields power over another person. We stand with our brothers and sisters to raise awareness about colonial violence we endure each and every day in Canada.” Similarly, Chief Leween adds “Education starts at home and is the responsibility for all citizens.”

CSFS invites all Members to join the protest at Prince George City Hall at 2:00pm this Friday to support the Black Lives Matter movement. As we are still in the midst of a pandemic, we will be practicing physical distancing guidelines, such as wearing a mask and keeping two metres apart, and encourage others to do so.

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*42-year old Everett Patrick, member of the Lake Babine Nation died while in custody April, 2020.*