FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 14th, 2020

SFSS Response to Violent Arrest of Black SFU Alumnus on December 11th, 2020

The Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) wholeheartedly condemns the violent arrest of a Black SFU Alumnus by Burnaby RCMP at SFU Dining Hall, on the evening of December 11th, 2020.

On the evening of December 11th, the alumnus was followed by SFU campus security from West Mall Centre into the dining hall, and was asked to leave as a result of unclear pandemic guidelines around student ID and presence on SFU campuses. Currently, students are not regularly being asked about their enrollment status to access SFU campus spaces. We have reason to believe that this was a targeted event on an individual whom campus security was familiar with.

This incident occurred the day after a direct conversation with the Director of Campus Public Safety around the importance of de-escalation and the dangers of calling the police on individuals who are doing no harm - particularly Black community members for whom a police interaction can often result in serious injury or even death. Our calls to SFU to protect the safety of our community members have been, and continue to be, ignored.

Rather than employing de-escalation tactics, security opted to call the Burnaby RCMP. Once RCMP arrived, the man was pepper sprayed, tasered in the head, restrained by the police officer, and arrested. This arrest cannot be separated from the reality of hightened police brutality, systemic racism, and racial profiling faced by Black community members, and the unequal enforcement of unclear campus policies. Alarmingly, this is not an isolated incident, and racial profiling incidents like this one have occurred many times before on our campuses. There is no reason that an individual should be arrested in this violent manner when causing no harm to anyone in the vicinity.

This unnecessary use of force is a threat to the livelihood of our Black community members, and SFU is fully aware of this. It is reprehensible that despite months of SFSS calling on SFU to evaluate its relationship with police, implement new training programs for campus security, and implement appropriate anti-racism programs and initiatives that an arrest like this still occurred due to the actions of campus security. How can SFU claim that our campuses are a safe place for BIPOC students and community members? Multiple Black students have reached out to the SFSS during this troubling time, feeling both unsafe, unheard, and gaslit by the statement by Campus Public Safety, incorrectly stating that "Campus Public Safety (CPS) officers always take a peaceful approach to resolve situation," which clearly did not happen on this day.

SFU Campus Public Safety must stop calling the police on Black and Indigenous students and students of colour who are not causing any harm. SFU's supposed commitments to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) mean nothing when this type of action is only performative, while continuing to ignore the trauma that continues to be faced by BIPOC members of our community.

The SFSS is requesting action be taken immediately by this University for the safety of our Black, Indigenous, and other racialized community members. We are calling for:

1. A statement and apology from the SFU President and Campus Public Safety on their complicity in allowing this arrest to occur.
2. A review on how and when campus security interacts with police.
3. Immediately re-evaluate SFU's relationship with the Burnaby RCMP, including:
    a. Disallowing RCMP recruitment on campus
    b. Not calling police on Black and Indigenous Peoples particularly when no harm to SFU community members is being caused
4. More thorough training for SFU campus security on de-escalation tactics, anti-racism, and bias awareness.

SFU community members have organized a GoFundMe page, with funds going directly to the victim to help aid any costs that are associated with this arrest, including legal support and defense fund, and any other costs that have been accumulated for them. The SFSS will continue to support our Black students and community members through this difficult and traumatizing time.

In solidarity,

Simon Fraser Student Society