

Signing Open-Letter regarding the violent arrests of Braided Warriors on February 19, 2021

Prepared for SFSS Board by Balqees Jama (At-Large Representative) and WeiChun Kua (Science Representative)

March 12, 2021

Content Warning: This document includes description of police violence against Indigenous youths.

BACKGROUND

The Braided Warriors is a group of Indigenous youth warriors in sə́lilwə́taʔt (Tsleil-Waututh), sk̓w̓xwú7mesh (Squamish), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) territories defending the land and the people from capitalist colonial violence. They have been on the front lines protesting insurers such as AIG Insurance and CHUBB Insurance to stop insuring the Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) project.

On February 19, 2021, the Braided Warriors were violently removed and arrested by approximately 25 Vancouver Police Department (VPD) officers during a peaceful sit-in and engaged in ceremony in the BMO building, which houses AIG Insurance. Four warriors were arrested and two of which sustained physical injury but were denied medical attention while in custody for five hours.

The Braided Warriors, Black Lives Matter Vancouver, and Defund 604 Network wrote an [open letter](#) condemning the VPD and calling for accountability of their racist and violent actions. The letter currently has signatures of 33 organizations and 300 individuals.

ISSUE

The violent arrest by the VPD is unwarranted and racist; recorded footage showed VPD officers pulling Indigenous people by the hair, confiscating and throwing drums, interrupting ceremony, and violently pushing Indigenous people to the ground. Additionally, approximately 70 officers came into the building at once into the building and committed violent actions without any prior warning.

The actions committed by the VPD goes against Canada and BC's commitment to reconciliation and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and BC's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People's Act which states that Indigenous peoples shall not be subjected to and protected against all forms of violence.

CURRENT STATUS

The Braided Warriors are still land-defending and in need of support. Construction of the TMX pipeline is still ongoing, they are still protesting, and charges have not yet been dropped for Indigenous youth peacefully protesting.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

We must be consistent with our support for Indigenous peoples as they face colonial violence. The SFSS took a stance against the TMX pipeline for multiple reasons including student safety, climate justice, and Indigenous sovereignty. Even the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [called on Canada](#) “to immediately suspend work on the Coastal GasLink pipeline, the Trans Mountain pipeline and the Site C dam until ‘free, prior and informed consent’ is obtained from Indigenous peoples.”

The SFSS is also against [police brutality](#), and supported the defunding of police and RCMP and reallocating funds to social and community-based services. As an advocacy body, the Society recognizes that protesting has always been a critical part of mobilizing for meaningful societal outcomes for marginalized people.

MOTION

Whereas SFSS believes in the right to peaceful protest and assembly,

Whereas on June 1st, 2020 the SFSS issued a statement of solidarity and support to take a stand against white supremacy, stand beside Black and Indigenous people in action, and seek alternatives to calling the police in our communities especially when the threat of police violence is high,

Whereas the SFSS is located on the traditional, unceded territories of the səliłwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh), sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations on which the Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) pipeline is trespassing and being built without their free and prior consent,

Whereas the SFSS opposes TMX on the grounds of violation of Indigenous sovereignty, and supports actions of Indigenous land and water defenders against TMX,

Be it resolved that the SFSS signs and distributes the open letter regarding the violent arrests of Braided Warriors on February 19, 2021, written by Braided Warriors, Black Lives Matter - Vancouver, and Defund 604 Network.