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Atlantic Provinces Library Association's Statement on Dismantling Racism in Libraries

The Atlantic Provinces Library Association (APLA) acknowledges there is a long history of racism against people of colour, Black people, and, particularly, Indigenous people in Canada. This history is present in all public institutions, including libraries, across the country. The effects of colonialism, slavery, the building of the reserve system for Indigenous people, the residential schools project, the Sixties Scoop: these atrocities, and many other actions, have manifested in the significant socioeconomic disparities present today.

APLA recognizes that library services have not been made available equitably and collections have not been as inclusive of the voices of Black people, people of colour, and Indigenous people, as they should have been, both historically and presently. We believe that representation matters. We recognize that public institutions such as libraries were built within a colonial lens, with only one set of voices at the table, therefore, only represent a portion of the populations libraries are meant to serve. Libraries are meant to be wholly democratic institutions, but for many, they are not, and despite the growing number of progressive library initiatives, as well as community outreach programs which reach populations who are exposed to vulnerability and oppression, we need to continue transforming library services, collections & acquisitions, as well as the bureaucratic structure of libraries.

APLA commits to listening carefully and respectfully to all people who experience oppression, and to learning how libraries can be truly open, diverse, democratic, and safe from racist and discriminatory behavior.

APLA also commits to working to ensure that neither racism nor discrimination taint libraries today or in the future. To do this, we start by fully acknowledging the historical wrongs libraries have reflected and acquiesced to with their inaction.

APLA's mandate is to promote library and information service throughout New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. In recognition of the historical inequity in serving people of colour, Black people, and Indigenous people, APLA is committing to change by:

1. Ensuring APLA adopts an intercultural lens when creating its board and programmes
2. Adding a special focus on intercultural equity, diversity and inclusion, and properly compensating experts from whom APLA learns
3. Promoting and encouraging the reconceptualizing of the terms on which libraries have historically been framed, by exploring how different worldviews celebrate reading, learning, storytelling, and community building
4. Creating a channel to hear from community members and libraries in the provinces we serve to hear how APLA can better support anti-racism efforts.
5. Supporting libraries as they carry out their missions and review their practices in a multicultural context.

APLA thanks you for joining us on this journey.