



## METROPOLITAN URBAN INDIAN DIRECTORS GROUP

May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020

To All Our Relations -

This letter has been written on behalf of the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors Group (MUID) – a collaborative of some thirty American Indian organizations operating within the Twin Cities metropolitan area of Minnesota (*please see the attached organizational listing*). The purpose of this communication is to state our collective response to the tragic death of George Floyd on Monday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

In no uncertain terms, the membership of this collaborative strongly condemns the murder of one of our fellow citizens, at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department. Furthermore, MUID condemns the ongoing and systemic racist ideologies that continue to run strongly through the department like a virulent and lethal pathogen. This disease of spirit is actively polluting the minds of some of the rank and file to the point where they are no longer able to perform their tax payer funded jobs with any degree of professionalism, or with any legitimate capacity to restrain themselves from brutalizing and murdering fellow human beings. To this we collectively and loudly proclaim **NO MORE**.

The murder of George Floyd was an unmitigated and horrific tragedy that has brought shame onto our community. Without question, it was a complete failure of any form of moral decency or the most basic expressions of humanity by officers who have taken an oath to “serve and protect”. The eyes of the world are now upon us. How we come together to permanently rectify this situation and prevent it from happening again is now paramount. However, we must first acknowledge that this unspeakable act of evil is not new, that in fact it is a recurring problem suggestive of a deeper systemic sickness.

The MPD has a long history violence against indigenous people and people of color. The American Indian Movement was founded in Minneapolis in 1968 as a direct response to unchecked brutality being perpetrated by the Minneapolis Police Department upon our community members. In 1992, two members of our community were forcibly constrained into the trunk of a Minneapolis Police Cruiser. In 2008, the officer who killed George Floyd, Officer Chauvin shot and wounded an individual during a domestic violence call, and then again in 2011, Officer Chauvin shot and injured a man at Little Earth. In 2015 Jamar Clark was murdered at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department. Sadly these are just some examples of many such incidents.

Still, in 2020, the MPD are openly murdering black and brown people in broad daylight without hesitation, and without any concern from the open shouts of local bystanders who pleaded for the life of Mr. Floyd – who were in essence pleading for the lost humanity that had apparently vacated the four responding officers. And these are only the most high profile symptoms of the spirit of hate and racism in our police department. There have been so many more instances that while not making the papers, left undeniable scars on our people. No more. We demand action and improvement, nothing less.

We reject outright as false the defense of the MPD that contends that the actions of a handful of depraved individuals cannot overshadow the department as a whole. Any attempt at minimizing such pervasive sickness by localizing it to a “problem few” is in actuality a demonstration of willful ignorance, and perhaps an act of complicity. It minimizes the scourge of lethality that these “few” repeatedly wield upon our people. Moreover, it neglects the fact that the Minneapolis Police Department provided the very context within which these attitudes were developed and potentially cultivated into full maturation. The department itself was either too inept to detect these sick individuals before they were given free rein to commit atrocious acts of murder in broad daylight, or worse yet, the department actively fostered and endorsed these attitudes and then turned them loose onto the public.

As has been established within the public record, two of the terminated officers involved in the murder of Mr. Floyd have already been involved in numerous previous shootings of civilians, as well as stood accused within previous police brutality lawsuits that were eventually settled out of court. This demonstrates a clear pattern of behavior either endorsed by the MPD, or a chronic and severe negligence by the department to root out and remove such dangerous and sick individuals from further service. Either way, all indicators of contact tracing points towards the MPD as the very source point for this infection that continues to spread and kill.

The Minnesota State Attorney General Keith Ellison praised the immediate termination of the assailants responsible for the murder of Mr. Floyd, explaining that the move as necessary “to clean the wound”. We agree with the Attorney General’s characterization that the perpetrators represent a dangerous bacterium that left untreated, will continue to infect the society as a whole. The time is now to make wholesale and discernable changes to the department lest we all succumb to the death that continues to seep out of local precincts onto our streets, and into our homes.

The membership of MUID stands in support of the recent actions and words taken by Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, but strongly urge further, demonstrable actions to be undertaken.

MUID calls on the swift and vigorous prosecution of the four offending (and now terminated) officers complicit in this murder to the fullest extent of the law.

MUID stands with the African American community, and all other communities regularly target for violence by the MPD.

We believe that this department wide sickness emanates directly from leadership - specifically the President of the Minneapolis Police Federation. Mr. Bob Kroll has a long history of bigoted and ignorant remarks in the press, and public displays of allegiances with known purveyors of racism. Mr. Kroll has repeatedly and openly propagated racist ideology within the public sphere while serving on the Minneapolis Police force. The vitriol emanating from the words of Mr. Kroll are the very same ideology represented within the infected minds of the responding officers who murdered George Floyd, and for all the others who have brutalized black and brown people with impunity while wearing a badge. We therefore also call on the immediate termination of Bob Kroll from the Minneapolis Police Department. By retaining his position amongst the force, Mr. Kroll is able to retain his position as the union lead. This by its very nature serves as a powerful signifier to those "problem few" within the Minneapolis Police Department that they have a benefactor in a position of authority, and by virtue of his position, will protect them at all costs, no matter how villainous or lethal their exploits become on the streets of Minneapolis against the very citizens they have pledged to protect.

MUID demands these recommendations will be implemented without delay. MUID also demands that more strategies will need to be developed and implemented to properly protect black and brown people from its own police force that it subsidizes.

Great strides have been made in recent years under the leadership of Minneapolis Chief of Police Medaria "Rondo" Arradondo to bolster a more positive relationship between the Minneapolis Police Department and the Urban American Indian community. MUID and our community appreciate the positive, long-term partnerships and relationship within the MPD, especially in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Precinct. MUID stands ready to work with Chief Arradondo and his officers to create positive, sustainable, systemic change with the MPD.

Additionally, MUID will continue to engage with the Native community, and with all stakeholders to create a collaborative and *sustained* efforts to combat these very serious issues now gravely impacting the Minneapolis American Indian population.

Let us start to heal. Let us move forward in peace and harmony. Let us see what we can create together.

*"I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world.*

*And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being.*

*And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all children of one mother and one father.*

*And I saw that it was holy.”*

- *Black Elk, Oglala Lakota (1863-1950)*

Wopila Tanka, and Chii Miigwetch

Contacts:

**Robert Lilligren** – President and CEO of Native American Community Development Center (NACDI) / Chair of MUID

[rlilligren@nacdi.org](mailto:rlilligren@nacdi.org)

**Mary LaGarde** – Executive Director – Minneapolis American Indian Center (MAIC)/ Vice Chair of MUID

[mlargarde@maicnet.org](mailto:mlargarde@maicnet.org)

**Dr. Joe Hobot** – President and CEO – American Indian OIC (AIOIC) /Letter Author

[joeh@aioic.org](mailto:joeh@aioic.org)

**Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors Website:**

[www.muidmn.org](http://www.muidmn.org)

*Listing of Voting Member Organizations within the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors Group:*

1. All Nations Indian Church  
Marelene Heglema - Pastor
2. American Indian Community and Development Corporation  
Michael Goze, CEO
3. American Indian Movement Interpretive Center  
Clyde Bellecourt – President and CEO
4. American Indian OIC  
Dr. Joe Hobot - President & CEO
5. The Circle Newspaper  
Cat Whipple – Managing Editor
6. Division of Indian Work  
Louise Matson- Executive Director

7. Dream of Wild Health  
Neely Snyder - Executive Director
8. Indian Health Board  
Dr. Patrick Rock - President & CEO
9. Indigenous Peoples Task Force  
Sharon Day- Executive Director
10. Little Earth of United Tribes (LERA)  
Jessica Rousseau- Executive Director
11. MIGIZI  
Kelly Drummer – President & CEO
12. Minneapolis American Indian Center  
Mary LaGarde - Executive Director
13. Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center  
David Nicholson – Interim President & CEO
14. Mni Sota Fund  
Kit Fordham – President & CEO
15. Native American Community Clinic  
Dr. Antony Stately - CEO
16. Native American Community Development Institute  
Robert Lilligren – President & CEO
17. Nawayee Center School  
Joe Rice – Executive Director
18. New Native Theater  
Rhiana Yazzie - Artistic Director
19. Upper Midwest American Indian Center  
Gertrude Buckanaga – Executive Director

*Listing of Ex-Officio Member Organizations within the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors Group:*

1. Bois Forte Urban Office
2. City of Minneapolis – American Indian Community Specialist
3. Fond Du Lac Urban Office

4. Hennepin County Medical Center – American Indian Advocate
5. Leech Lake Twin Cities Office
6. Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Urban Office
7. Minneapolis Public Schools – Department of Indian Education
8. Minnesota American Indian Chamber of Commerce
9. Red Lake Twin Cities Embassy
10. White Earth Nation Urban Office