

June 26, 2019

## VICTORIA PRIDE SOCIETY

### Statement on GVPDAC Participation in the 2019 Victoria Pride Parade

The Victoria Pride Society (VPS) strives to provide events that are inclusive, accessible and safe for all members of our community. With feedback that Victoria Pride could do better in this mission, specifically with regards to how the Greater Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) participates in the Victoria Pride Parade, we undertook a consultation of the community earlier this year. VPS would like to recognize and thank the over 500 community members that contributed to this consultation.

We overwhelmingly heard that inclusion needs to be a fundamental value of Victoria Pride. We also heard that our community broadly agrees that more work remains to be done for those who are still disproportionately impacted by poverty, homelessness, discrimination and violence.

Pride is rooted in the resistance of this kind of oppression and marginalization. We recognize the immense amount of work and perseverance over many decades of those who have fought tirelessly and built relationships that have moved our community forward.

VPS also acknowledges that not all have been able to share in these advances to the same degree. More needs to be done to realize progress for all queer people. We recognize that Pride especially needs to be a place for all to feel safe and to feel connected to the power of community.

VPS heard from community members, including those that are more marginalized, that there is still work for police to do to build better relationships and trust with marginalized queer communities and that police participating in uniform made Victoria Pride unwelcoming and inaccessible for many. As such, DAC has agreed that LGBTQ2+ and ally officers marching with the organization in the Victoria Pride Parade will not wear uniforms.

This decision is not a statement on officers wishing to participate but rather an effort to make Victoria Pride more inclusive, accessible and safe for all members of our community. It is also a recognition that there is continuing work to be done to overcome the intergenerational trauma and marginalization that still exists.

While many may disagree and be disappointed by this decision, it is our hope that we can continue to move forward together. We believe that moving forward as a community means remembering our past, celebrating resilience as well as advocating for what still needs to be done. VPS encourages all LGBTQ2+ and allies in our community to celebrate your identities, your history, your victories and our progress.

It's been 50 years since Stonewall, 25+ years of Pride in Victoria and there is a lot for us to celebrate together. Moving forward is making decisions that include the voices of our marginalized communities. Moving forward is acknowledging that whether we're marching together in our parade, celebrating at our festival or protesting in our streets, we are stronger when we do it together.

- The Victoria Pride Society