



News Release

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For Immediate Release

#FirstAlaskans4BlackAlaskans

July 8, 2016

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – First Alaskans Institute (FAI), a statewide Alaska Native nonprofit organization, stands in solidarity with the local organizers of the 'Black Lives Matter' peaceful protest and prayer being held July 8, 2016, at 8 p.m., at the Sears Mall parking lot. This peaceful gathering is in response to the national events and brutality against black Americans, including the deaths of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Philando Castile in St. Paul, Minnesota.

In America, African American men are disproportionately targeted by police brutality, an experience all peoples of color can relate to and our Native community is not immune from. The outrage caused by the deaths of black men such as Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner led to the creation of the Black Lives Matter movement which advocates and stands for dignity, justice, respect, and calling for the end of violence. The movement has raised awareness about the deeply seeded institutional racism that continues to plague our nation and our criminal justice system today. To be Alaska Native is to understand the roots and consequences of how these forces of injustice have damaged and shaped our lives and communities, lifting up Black Lives Matter amplifies the experiences of our own peoples and the very need for us all to come together.

In Alaska, there have been many efforts to address racism and violence through the work of local leaders, agencies, and countless others. Since 2010, FAI has engaged in a project called Advancing Native Dialogues on Racial Equity (ANDORE), hosting healing dialogues and advancing equitable policy solutions in order to elevate racial equity as a shared value of all Alaskans. The project utilizes Native values as a framework for having heart to heart discussions, and are open for all who would like to participate. This is long term, transformational work, which we invite the community to be part of.

"Like many of you, the tragic shooting of police officers and the endangerment of peaceful protesters in Dallas remains heavy on all our hearts, we cannot afford to stand idle as such injustice unfolds right before our eyes," said Elizabeth Medicine Crow, FAI President/CEO, "No life extinguished in these circumstances brings any peace, nor does it end the cycle of race violence in this country. At times it may feel that there is nothing one can do, but that is not true. We can start here, at home in Alaska having the difficult dialogues and doing the hard work to build community rather than tear it down. Tonight the Black Lives Matter movement is convening a peaceful and prayerful protest and Alaska can be a place that leads the country by linking our arms, offering support, not condoning or fanning the flames of disharmony, but rather engaging in dialogue, and supporting our fellow community members."

At FAI, we believe we can grow understanding and healing to move beyond the pain of our country's history of oppression. We are proud to see the organizers of the event working alongside local government officials and the Anchorage Police Department to be part of this important event. We also thank the APD for stepping forward during this time to help protect all citizens' right to peacefully protest and ensure that tonight's rally remains, as intended, a peaceful gathering.

If you would like to contribute to the advancement of racial equity, please consider participating in local events that advance equity aimed at creating a safer world. To learn more about and engage with the ANDORE project, please send an email to info@firstalaskans.org.

First Alaskans Institute works to advance Native peoples through community engagement, information and research, and leadership development. Our Vision is Progress for the next 10,000 years, and our mission is: True to identity, heritage, and values, Alaska Natives are informed and engaged in leading the decisions that shape the future.

www.firstalaskans.org

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