

## **Press Statement**

### **Guilty Verdict of Officer an Opportunity for Reform, Healing**

August 31<sup>st</sup> 2021 (Edmonton, AB) –

On Thursday August 26<sup>th</sup>, an Alberta provincial court judge released his ruling convicting Const. Michael Partington of assault. In August 2019 the constable violently assaulted an Indigenous man over a bylaw related to having a bell on his bicycle. The incident was caught on camera by a bystander, with the images contradicting numerous claims by the officers involved, as noted by the Judge.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) and its provincial affiliate, the Aboriginal Congress of Alberta Association (ACAA) call on the Edmonton Police Commission to take this opportunity to examine issues of discriminatory treatment, officer misconduct and engagement with off-reserve and non-Status Indigenous communities.

Across Canada, over-policing and structural discrimination contributes to the over-representation of Indigenous people in the prison system. Currently 32% of inmates are Indigenous, with the Office of the Correctional Investigator highlighted as a “historic high” in his 2020 report.

“This incident highlights problems Indigenous communities have long known. Over-policing, violence, and dishonest testimony from officers contribute to Indigenous people winding up in prison far more often than any other group” said Kim Beaudin, CAP National Vice-Chief. “This guilty verdict is a step towards accountability, but it needs deeper structural changes if real healing and reconciliation are going to begin”

Indigenous people in Canada face significantly higher rates of violence at the hands of police compared to non-Indigenous people. “According to a 2017 study, an Indigenous person in Canada is more than 10 times more likely to be shot and killed by a police officer than a white person”? <sup>1</sup>

“We know that issues of poverty, mental health, addiction and other socioeconomic elements are all risk factors which contribute to a higher incidence of negative interactions between Indigenous people and policing. Indigenous communities are eager to work constructively with cities and police to address these. The best way to ensure no one has to live in fear of encounters such as this is to work together, build trust and address all conflicts with truth and transparency” said President Beverly Allard, ACAA.

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***For media interviews please contact:***

Jessica Dawson

613-806-8669 / [j.dawson@abo-peoples.org](mailto:j.dawson@abo-peoples.org)

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is the national voice representing the interests of Métis, status and non-status Indians, and Southern Inuit Indigenous People living off-reserve. Today, over 70% of Indigenous people live off-reserve.