

The JESSIES

BLACK LIVES MATTER

June 8, 2020

The Jessie Richardson Award Society Diversity and Inclusion Committee along with the Board of Directors stand in solidarity with all those raising their voices and bravely taking a stand against racism, bigotry, and oppression. We share the community's heartfelt desire to end the cycle of white supremacy and its oppression of Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities.

The Jessies have always tried to represent the theatre community and uphold the values important to its members. We have also been complicit in perpetuating colonial systems entrenched in white supremacy that have caused the oppression and silencing of Black, Indigenous, and racialized artists. Our purpose is to celebrate our Vancouver professional theatre community and in order to do it justly, we must be able to recognize and dismantle our inherent biases and the colonial white supremacist systems that have kept Black, Indigenous, and racialized artists in marginalized positions.

We recognize there is much work to do. We are committed to listening, learning, and taking action to make positive changes for our community so that all artists, arts workers, theatre makers, and patrons, especially those whose voices have been ignored, suppressed, or silenced, can rise up and be seen and heard. We will continue to work towards greater understanding and acknowledgement of our conscious and unconscious biases, especially as it pertains to our work in jurying theatre productions and in running our organization. We will continue to look for ways in which we can support, encourage, and uplift Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities. We commit to promoting an environment for equality, representation, understanding, diversity, and inclusion to the best of our ability within the awards, our board of directors, and in whatever capacity we are able. To that end, we have begun to work with a diversity & inclusion consultant to establish ongoing training for our jurors and board members, as well as reaching out to other theatre awards organizations to listen to their best practices in the hopes of changing for the better.

We know we don't have all the answers yet and that we will stumble along the way. We need to continue to strive to be better, to learn, to support, to call in, to lift up, to shine our lights in new places, to applaud, and to celebrate.

We welcome feedback of any kind, so please do not hesitate to reach out to us at inclusion@jessieawards.com.