



ONTARIO ALLIANCE OF CLIMBERS

Until now, we had not issued a statement in support of Black lives following the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others at the hands of racially motivated violence. Historically, we have limited our public statements to land management access issues. However, our members need to know that as an organization, we support equality. **Black Lives Matter. Indigenous Lives Matter.** There is no room for debate here.

Systemic racism is not unique to the United States; discrimination against Black and Indigenous peoples is prevalent in Canada's past and present as well. We acknowledge that climbing is not immune to systemic racism, which affects members of our community in both subtle and overt ways. We also recognize that access to the outdoors and the resources to climb are luxuries that are not available to everyone equally.

We would like to thank our community members who reached out to us about our stance on recent events. We hear you. We apologize for not speaking up sooner. We are learning, and we are changing.

We changed our name to the Ontario Alliance of Climbers because we want to unite the Ontario climbing community. Being representatives of our community, we cannot ignore important social issues that impact our members.

We have a lot to learn about how systemic racism affects our ability to ensure access for our members, and how we can work to dismantle it. Areas of influence we've identified include:

The groups we work with

We will pay attention to the companies and organizations we accept support from, and those that we support. We will refuse to work with anyone who fosters racist or discriminatory behaviours. We will also help elevate outdoor initiatives which support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and equality in climbing when we are able to. If you are interested in contributing something in this realm, please reach out to us at info@ontarioallianceofclimbers.ca. We'd be happy to work together to find a way to assist you.

The events we host

We have a zero-tolerance policy for racist and discriminatory behaviours at our events. All OAC functions are safe spaces for our community. We will work to promote diversity and inclusion at our events, and we will investigate ways to lower barriers for entry.

The composition of our board of directors

We acknowledge the lack of diversity on our board of directors. This is something we cannot change without your help. We are a small, volunteer run organization filled with people who are passionate about climbing and climbing access. We want you to know that we are not just welcoming of all volunteers, we *encourage* your participation. Help us by getting involved. Take a seat at our table. We want to hear what you have to say, so that we can understand how to represent the community best. Please join us. Send an email to info@ontarioallianceofclimbers.ca if you would like to get involved.



Our community involvement

We have decided to create a Nominations Committee to actively reach out to community members to get involved with us. As a volunteer organization, we are always eager to have more voices join us. Unfortunately, not everyone is aware of the opportunities to get involved. We'll take a more active role in soliciting the public when we think someone may offer a different perspective or skill set, and we'll work to increase our diversity. Please feel free to nominate community members you think would be an asset in our continued fight for open access!

Our continued growth and education

We know that the movement doesn't end when the protests do. This is a lifelong learning opportunity. We will make race and inequality subjects of ongoing discourse. We have always kept an eye on international crag access issues to stay informed and to learn from activities elsewhere. It is our responsibility to add issues of inequality which impact the outdoors to our discussions, whether they have occurred locally or far from home. We will continue to help each other learn by sharing resources and having tough conversations.

The messages we share on social media

We do our best to ensure that our messaging is always thoughtful, considerate, and respectful. We have made efforts to showcase the diversity of the Ontario climbing community in our posts, and will continue to do so. If you have images you would like to share with us, please tag @ontarioallianceofclimbers or send them to submissions@ontarioallianceofclimbers.ca. We love having the opportunity to meet our members and celebrate the outdoors with them. Moving forward, we will no longer be silent on issues of equality. There is no room for racism and discrimination in our sport. Please help us when we make a mistake. We are learning, just as many of you are.

There are many resources others have already created to help us learn to be better allies for BIPOC in the outdoor community. If you are looking to understand how you can help, please consider these materials that we have found to be insightful:

<https://www.outdoorresearch.com/blog/article/how-to-be-an-ally-in-the-outdoors>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/sponsored/rei-2018/five-ways-to-make-the-outdoors-more-inclusive/3019/>

<https://www.saltlakeclimbers.org/news/2020/6/11/racism-and-racial-justice-at-and-beyond-the-crag>

We look forward to continued progress in the fight for equity. We will do our best to keep the needle moving in the right direction. The outdoors is a place for all, and we look forward to seeing you out there.

Sincerely,

The Ontario Alliance of Climbers

Randy Kielbasiewicz, Co-Chair
Mike Penney, Co-Chair
Patrick Lam, Director
Mike Makischuk, Director

Kacy Wilson, Director
Tony Berlier
Jessica Best
Tyler Coffin

Jeremy Fortier
Dustin Johnston-Jewell
Jenna Rines
John Vellone

