



June 23, 2017

An Open Letter to Highland Creek Festival Organizers and University of Toronto Scarborough

Dear Festival Organizers and UTSC,

Saturday June 17th was the annual Highland Creek Heritage Festival, a space that had intentions of offering Scarborough a space to come together with friends and family. Unfortunately, the allowance of confederate flags at the festival created a hostile environment for community members that afternoon.

The confederate flag has a longstanding history of white supremacy, and has ties to racism and slavery. Although it has specific links to the American Civil War, it has been repurposed over the years by hate groups like the KKK. Now more than ever, as a community we recognize that bigotry transcends borders. This flag is not an "American Problem", and has no place in Canada, let alone Scarborough.

Scarborough is home to a very diverse group of people, most of whom hold marginalized and racialized identities. Several community members, some of whom are students, felt triggered at what was supposed to have been a community event to bring people together. Scarborough students felt hurt by this serious oversight and the lack of action taken by the festival organizer after this incident. University of Toronto Scarborough also failed to take a stand on this incident despite being a sponsor for this event.

As representatives of just under 14,000 students at the Scarborough Campus, and as members of the Scarborough community, we demand that the following actions be taken:

1. That the Highland Creek Heritage Festival organizers consult with the people who were impacted by the confederate flags to seek ways of creating more inclusive events.
2. That the Highland Creek Heritage Festival organizers implement a clear complaint process for dealing with discrimination at the Highland Creek Heritage Festival.
3. That the University of Toronto Scarborough make a public statement condemning this incident at the Highland Creek Festival.
4. That the University of Toronto Scarborough take proactive measures to ensure that inclusivity is prioritized among their future community partners.

We all have a collective responsibility to keep our communities safe and free of discrimination. As student representatives at the University of Toronto Scarborough, we recognize that both UTSC and the event organizers have a responsibility to hold themselves accountable for their complicity, and eagerly await their responses.

Sincerely,

The Scarborough Campus Students' Union Executive:

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