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As The United Church of Canada, we are Christian communities of faith made up of many people, some who are Indigenous and some who are Settler. We respect each other. We have adopted the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), and are committed to the paths of truth and right relations. We recognize and respect the traditional spirituality of Indigenous peoples. In the spirit of these commitments, we as Moderator and National Indigenous Elders' Council, are writing to you together today.

We have come to yet another point of conflict in the history of Canada's relationship with the Indigenous peoples of this land. Decisions have been made by Canadian courts, the government of British Columbia, and the Government of Canada that are pushing a pipeline through the traditional territory of the Wet'suwet'en people without their consent.

The hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en are opposed to this pipeline. They believe that their Aboriginal title to the land and their right to free, prior, and informed consent, are not being respected. They are also concerned about the immediate and long-term impact the pipeline will have on the land and the global environment.

There are others in the Wet'suwet'en communities, including Chiefs and councils elected under the Indian Act, who believe that the pipeline needs to be built, and are supporting it for the benefits it will bring to the community and the country.

This difference in interpretation of who makes decisions is a collision of Indigenous and colonial law. We believe it is being used by governments and the pipeline company as a wedge to push this project through. We believe this must stop, and be replaced by genuine dialogue honouring the sacredness of the land and Indigenous people.

If right relations between Indigenous and Settler peoples is to have any chance, then Canada must, in compliance with Article 27 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, respect Indigenous peoples' decision-making according to their laws and traditions.

Indigenous and Settler groups across Canada have joined in protest to support the hereditary chiefs. Over the past few weeks we have seen protests escalate, especially as the RCMP has been enforcing court injunctions and making arrests on Wet'suwet'en traditional territory. Some have expressed frustration at the inconvenience these protests create. We urge those who feel that way to consider the ongoing violation of Indigenous rights and disrespect for the sacredness of the land that has forced Indigenous communities to be moved to such actions.

This is what our Settler commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples requires.

This is what our Settler commitment to reconciliation requires.

This is what our Settler commitment to be followers of Christ requires.

In the spirit of all people and the land, we pray that the sacred trust we have been given be protected now and for future generations.

All my relations/Christ's peace

The Right Reverend Dr. Richard Bott
Moderator

Cheryl Jourdain
Acting Executive Minister
On behalf of the National Indigenous Elders Council