



February 18, 2020

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Bennett;

The Jesuits of Canada urge the Government of Canada to work assiduously toward a peaceful resolution of the conflict now underway in the traditional territory of the Wet'suwet'en People.

It is commendable that there have been consultations with the elected Chiefs and Councils about the passage of a natural gas pipeline through Wet'suwet'en territory and that they have given their consent. Yet the opposition of the Hereditary Chiefs must not be ignored. They have a legitimate voice too, as the Supreme Court's Delgamuukw decision seems to suggest. Indeed, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Canada has ratified, states in its Article 32.2:

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.

Pope Francis, in his recent apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, also speaks of the "...right of the original peoples to the land and its boundaries, and to self-determination and prior consent..." (paragraph 14).

The conflict on Wet'suwet'en territory highlights the need for a fundamental change in relations between the Government of Canada and Indigenous Peoples, as well as for an ethical and legal framework to integrate the short term good of economic development into the long-term good of ecological sustainability and integrity, which should include Indigenous wisdom and free participation.

Reconciliation, and even the sustainability of our land, requires a transition from colonial structures and relations to new models of Indigenous self-determination and participation in Confederation. An end to violent removal of unarmed Indigenous people who seek to defend their land and rights would be a good step toward a decolonized shared future.

With every good wish and prayer for your work for the common good, and with gratitude for your commitment to the demanding work of public service, I am

Sincerely yours,



Rev. Erik Oland, S.J.
Provincial Superior
Jesuits of Canada / Jésuites du Canada

