



*The Church of the Holy Trinity is a community of people who express Christian faith through lives of integrity, justice, and compassion. We foster lay leadership, include the doubter and marginalized, and challenge oppression wherever it may be found.*

*Mission Statement, 2010*

Friday February 7, 2020

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

In solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en, and in defense of indigenous sovereignty across Canada, we call upon the government of Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to immediately cease their occupation, arrests, and trespassing on Wet'suwet'en sovereign territory.

At Holy Trinity, we have tried, as an urban community, to do what we can for true reconciliation and renewal of relationship. Our Anglican denomination has taken responsibility for the harms to indigenous people of which it has been a part. We wish to believe the government of Canada when you spoke in response to the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And yet, you seem intent on continuing to aggressively support the destruction of indigenous communities and sovereignty. This must stop.

In a public statement made this week, the RCMP asserted that they will arrest any persons who will not leave their camps on unceded Wet'suwet'en territory. Wet'suwet'en law precedes and supersedes Canadian law on Wet'suwet'en land. The militarized forced removal of Wet'suwet'en from their own territory, for the economic benefit of fracked natural gas Coastal GasLink's 670km pipeline is consistent with the colonial practices of genocide. These unlawful occupations and tactics violate the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Wet'suwet'en Clan Chiefs hold sole title to their unceded territory and unanimously do not support the construction of the pipeline. The pipeline project would mar the landscape, cutting down trees, harming migration patterns of animals, and putting the entire watershed at risk of a pipeline leak and contamination. We are deeply concerned about the militarized arrests, pressure and trespassing presence of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on Wet'suwet'en sovereign territory. We are alarmed by the RCMP's establishment of an "Exclusion Zone"- which infringes on freedom of movement of the Wet'suwet'en Nation, exclusion of media from witnessing and documentation, and bars clan members from accessing their lands. These acts of intimidation, occupation, and restriction are harmful and takes us back to an era in which Indigenous people were treated like prisoners on their own territory. In our community, we continually see those who have been damaged by colonialism and being forced from their lands. This must stop.

We assert that the RCMP do not hold the jurisdiction or right to arrest sovereign Wet'suwet'en people on their own unceded Nation and territory. The practice of forced

relocation, arrest, detention, and criminalization of Wet'suwet'en, Indigenous peoples, and their allies on Wet'suwet'en land is an egregious and shameful violation of international law. We call upon the RCMP and Canadian government to respect Wet'suwet'en Clan law, cease their surveillance, occupation, and militarized violence on Indigenous land.

It is time for the government of Canada to stop talking about reconciliation and take meaningful action. The continual prioritizing of the interests of private sector and resource extraction over the rights of Indigenous Nations, laws, treaties, lands, and waters, condemns our collective well-being and future. We call upon the RCMP and government of Canada to immediately halt all violations and assaults on Indigenous water and land defenders. We stand with the Wet'suwet'en and their allies who have made significant sacrifices on the front lines of this violation on their territory. We honour and respect their commitment to defending the wellbeing of the waters, lands, creatures, people, and sovereignty of Wet'suwet'en.

Sincerely,

Church of the Holy Trinity,  
Trinity Square, Toronto