

January 17, 2019

Dear friends in Christ,

Statement of Support for Indigenous Rights and Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples

On behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), I wish to reaffirm our church's support for the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to free, prior and informed consent.

In 2015, the ELCIC National Convention repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery and committed to walking with Indigenous peoples in their ongoing efforts to exercise their inherent sovereignty and fundamental human rights. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) identified the UN Declaration as the framework for reconciliation in Canada.

Recent events on Wet'suwet'en land, including the arrests at the Gitdimt'en checkpoint on January 7, 2019, remind us of the ongoing need for reconciliation and for a true nation-to-nation relationship. Court injunctions and police enforcement should not be used as alternatives to the commitment, patience, good-will and true consultation that is required in order to ensure that free, prior and informed consent is achieved.

Senator Justice Murray Sinclair, former Chair of the TRC, has said that, "because it took us so many generations to get to this point, it is going to take us at least a few generations to be able to say that we are making progress."¹ As members of the ELCIC, we admit that we have much to learn and we are committed to a long journey. We can begin by seeking new paths for discerning together how to live on the land wisely and how to use resources responsibly. We give thanks for the voices that remind us of the spiritual significance of our relationships with the land and with each other.

I invite you to join me in this ongoing prayer:

Creator: teach, guide and lead us on the path to reconciliation. Strengthen our conviction to uphold all rights of Indigenous peoples. Fill us with patience, respect, understanding and hope as we engage our neighbours and seek to discern how to live faithfully together and in healthy relationship with the earth. Open our eyes to the ways of peace. Amen.

Yours in Christ,



The Rev. Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

¹ Justice Murray Sinclair, What is Reconciliation, TRC Video, www.vimeo.com/25389165