

21 June 2020
Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle
2500 Don Reid Drive
Ottawa ON K1H 2J2

The Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1S 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

As the country prepares to start up the economy after the long pause of confinement, this is an opportunity for new beginnings, since it has been demonstrated that many can work together for the common good. The Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle encourages you to reclaim the cooperative moment of breakthrough in the recent negotiations with the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs. It was good that these parties came to some agreement over measures that begin to implement the Supreme Court's 1997 *Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa* decision. We join our voice with those of other spiritual leaders who have been calling for peaceful and respectful dialogue.

The Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle is a Catholic coalition of Indigenous people, bishops, lay movements, clergy and institutes of consecrated life engaged in renewing and fostering relationships between the Catholic Church and Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The Circle began in 2016 as a Catholic response to the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

More progress needs to be made across the country in practical implementations of First Nations rights and title over their lands and traditional territories. Indeed, the blockades and other solidarity actions are signs of frustration with the slow progress of reconciliation. For example, it has taken 23 years to start implementing the *Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa* decision. We therefore encourage your government to use this new moment to continue dialogue in the spirit of the Court's judgement and related decisions.

Indeed, respectful and unpressured dialogue that respects each party's ways of proceeding, and an atmosphere that supports such dialogue, are important spiritual aspects of moving forward in a good way. Sustaining a spiritual dimension in dialogue may slow things down, but in the long run we believe it is the best way to keep all the parties engaged and to maintain respect for reconciliation. Such a spiritual approach, with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework, will also help to build a common public understanding of Indigenous and Treaty rights. This leads to a foundation for reconciliation, ecology and economic development that respects the land. In this good way we can all build a better future together.

Led by Indigenous people themselves, Canadians –including the Christian churches– have come a long way in the work of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. There

is still much more of the way to be walked. We therefore urge you to continue to dialogue, consult and reach common decisions in calm, respectful ways, which are spiritual ways.

With gratitude for your dedication to the common good and to the demanding work of public service, we are

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Chatlain".

Archbishop Murray Chatlain, co-chair
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rosella Kinoshameg".

Rosella Kinoshameg, co-chair
Wiikwemkoong First Nation

CC. The Honourable Andrew Scheer
Leader of the Official Opposition

National Chief Perry Bellegarde
Assembly of First Nations