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FOR GENERAL RELEASE

Wet'suwet'en - Coastal GasLink conflict: Jesuits of Canada call for peaceful resolution and respect of Indigenous rights

Jesuits join the call of dozens of other religious leaders and groups

Montréal. — The Jesuits of Canada, a religious order in the Catholic Church, has urged 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".

Their call joins that of numerous other groups such as the Canadian Religious Conference, the Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada, 71 church leaders in the Anglican Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, as well as Kairos, a joint venture ecumenical program administered by the United Church of Canada. They all urge the use of non-violent means and the respect of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the resolution of this impasse.

"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," says the letter signed by Fr. Erik Oland, Provincial of the Jesuits of Canada, and sent to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Carolyn Bennett.

New models of relations

The letter stresses that, for a peaceful outcome, "the opposition of the Hereditary Chiefs must not be ignored", that "they have a legitimate voice too, as the Supreme Court's Delgamuukw decision seems to suggest". "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".

“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”, says the letter.

The Province of the Jesuits of Canada covers all 10 Canadian provinces: Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan; as well as the three territories: Nunavut, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. It also includes the country of Haiti.