

EASTERN SYNOD of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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October 6, 2008

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N2

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

Subject: That Canada adopt the “UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People”

I am writing to encourage your government to boldly reflect the spirit of our recent apology to our First Nations sisters and brothers by formally adopting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

At the recently concluded 12th Biennial Convention of the Eastern Synod Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the following motion was passed by the assembly:

that this synod express its support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly on September 13, 2007, and express its disappointment that the Canadian Government has chosen not to commit Canada to fulfilling our responsibilities under this universal human rights standard – the first time that Canada has sought to be exempted from a human rights standard adopted by the General Assembly. The synod encourages the Government of Canada and the Governments of all the Provinces to join with the overwhelming majority of states, jurisdictions, Indigenous peoples and human rights organizations worldwide that endorse this standard.

We believe that the people of Canada ought to join the many other jurisdictions who have found this Declaration to be a helpful “remedial instrument.” As Canadians fulfill our obligations under this Declaration we will be helped to overcome the marginalization and discrimination that so many indigenous people in Canada have faced due to “historical processes of colonization, conquest and dispossession.”

I encourage the Government of Canada, together with our Provincial and Territorial Governments, to send a clear message to both the international community and our own citizens that we, in Canada, will uphold all the rights of our Indigenous peoples.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Bishop Michael J Pryse, Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
MJP/cd

cc. The Hon. Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians
Ed Stelmach, Premier of Alberta
Gordon Campbell, Premier of British Columbia
Gary Doer, Premier of Manitoba
Danny Williams, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador
Shawn Graham, Premier of New Brunswick
Rodney MacDonald, Premier of Nova Scotia
Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Jean Charest, Premier of Quebec
Robert Ghiz, Premier of Prince Edward Island
Brad Wall, Premier of Saskatchewan
Dennis Fentie, Premier of the Yukon Territory
Paul Okalik, Premier of Nunavut
Floyd Roland, Premier of the Northwest Territories
The Rev. Susan Johnson, National Bishop, ELCIC
Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate, The Anglican Church of Canada