

GREY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Administration Centre

700 Mackay Street, Pembroke, Ontario K8A 8J8

Telephone: (613) 735-4111

Fax: (613) 735-3163

January 4, 2013

The Right Hon. Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Fax: 613-941-6900

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence, who has asked to meet with you, begins this new year in the fourth week of a hunger strike.

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo has invited you to join a meeting of First Nations leaders on January 24.

To the best of my knowledge, you have yet to respond to these invitations. I am writing to urge you to become personally involved in a conversation with Chief Spence and the chiefs of the First Nations.

Rather than let the situation become ever more polarized, imagine the contribution you could make in this critical moment if you were to visit Chief Spence on Victoria Island and assure her, in the name of all Canadians, of your determination to work for a better future for her and all First Nations communities in our country.

Surely that commitment is required of the Prime Minister of Canada and consistent with the apology which you delivered, on behalf of the country, in the House of Commons in 2008. As you said then, Canada has long needed a new and just relationship with the First Nations.

I know that there are many dimensions to this long-standing issue. However, in the end, it is person-to-person communication and persevering engagement that will lead to a respectful resolution.

I don't believe it is sufficient to offer, as Aboriginal Affairs Minister Duncan did, to "establish a joint working group ... to serve as a forum for clarifying the treaty relationship and exploring ways of addressing First Nations' constitutional rights."

For such an offer to have meaning, your personal response to Chief Spence and National Chief Atleo is an indispensable component.

The members of my religious community are holding you, Prime Minister Harper, Chief Theresa Spence and all concerned in this moment in our history, in prayer that the spirit of wisdom be with us as we find our way together to a more just future.

Respectfully,



Fay Edmonds, GSIC
General Superior

