

Office for Systemic Justice
Canadian Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph
London, ON N6A 4X3

January 2, 2013

The Right Hon. Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

As non-Indigenous Canadians, we are keenly aware that our relationship with the Indigenous peoples of Canada is founded on colonial patterns and practices that have shaped significantly the poverty and marginalization of the First Nations peoples. In the light of this reality, we urge you, as the prime minister of our country, to engage Chief Teresa Spence in the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation process.

As you noted in the 2008 apology to Indigenous peoples, Canada has long needed a new and just relationship with the First Nations. Chief Spence's request to begin a new process of consultation with regard to the nation to nation relationship between Canada and First Nations can be seen as another opportunity to shift the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.

Chief Spence's fast is a particularly stark example of the desires for transformation that are gathering around the Idle No More movement in Canada. This movement is spotlighting the many critical issues that need to be addressed if we are truly to have reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people: poverty, housing, sanitation, water, health and education as well as water rights and land rights.

Like many Canadians, we share Indigenous concerns about these issues. In addition, we believe that the protection of aboriginal and treaty rights also can be an effective vehicle for protecting the land, water, plants and animals. It is one of many ways that all Canadians can benefit from Indigenous traditions.

We believe that this is a graced moment in Canada. We urge you to respond to both Chief Teresa Spence and the wider Idle No More movement in the true spirit of reconciliation, thereby opening all people in Canada to a future filled with hope.

Sincerely,

Sue Wilson, CSJ

Office for Systemic Justice
Canadian Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph
519-432-3781 ext. 402
swilson@csj.london.on.ca