



December 2, 2016

To the church:

Since 2012, our crest has included the Mohawk words *Akwe Nia'Tetewá:neren*, meaning “All My Relations.” These words capture a crucial principle for the United Church: the idea that all of creation is connected, and that we have a responsibility to respect all with whom we share the earth, whether that is other people, other beings, or the lands and the water. As we seek reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, so must we continue to seek reconciliation with all of creation.

We had dared to hope that such principles also underlay the Canadian government’s stated commitments to Indigenous rights and climate change. That hope was dashed on November 29 when Prime Minister Trudeau announced the government’s decision to approve the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline.

As we were called to do by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, The United Church of Canada has adopted the principles, norms, and standards of the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) as the framework of reconciliation. We understand those principles to include the right to self-determination, the right to participate in decision-making, and the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). We were encouraged when the Government lifted permanent objector status to the Declaration in May and announced that it intended to fully implement it.

Now, Trans Mountain has been approved despite the clear opposition to it by some First Nations through whose territory it runs, contrary to the principles, norms, and standards of the Declaration. In fact, the [recent report of the Ministerial Panel on the pipeline](#) has concluded that “Even among those people who had negotiated benefit agreements and signed letters of support with Trans Mountain, most said that their rights were not respected and that their concerns about impacts were ignored or, at the very least, minimized.” The report also acknowledged that some First Nations experienced “divide and conquer” tactics, and that there was a lack of clarity on who had the right to consent. We do not understand such a process to be within the framework of reconciliation.

Neither do we see this decision as being within the framework of climate justice that Canada committed to in Paris in 2015. With the ratification of the [Paris Agreement](#), Canada committed itself to hold global warming to no more than 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts that limit the temperature increase even further. We appreciated the



government's climate leadership in announcing the phasing out of coal-fired electricity by 2030, consultations to develop a clean energy fuel standard, and the carbon tax.

Now, however, we fail to see how Canada will be able to fulfill its fair share of carbon emission reductions under the Paris Agreement, as the Trans Mountain Pipeline increases emissions between 14 and 17 megatonnes upstream and approximately 74 megatonnes downstream, outstripping the 53 megatonnes of carbon emission reductions announced to date.

As a people of hope, we believe that seeking to live with respect in creation can provide us with life in abundance. We are committed to ongoing efforts to reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions, to accompany partners in the global South who bear the greatest burden of climate change, and to ensure a just transition for energy workers as we shift to a renewable energy economy. We know firsthand from United Church people who work in the fossil fuel industry and are experiencing layoffs and employment uncertainty that such change will not be easy. We pledge our support to accompany them in that transition.

We also remain committed to the possibility of a Canada marked by reconciliation between settler and Indigenous peoples. When the United Church announced its adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework of reconciliation, we said, "We know, not just in our hearts and minds, but where our faith resides, that this is the path we are meant to be on together." We are committed to that journey.

We are disappointed in the decision to approve Kinder Morgan. But we will continue to honour All Our Relations. And we will be encouraged in this by these words from our Song of Faith:

Divine creation does not cease
until all things have found wholeness, union, and integration
with the common ground of all being.
As children of the Timeless One,
our time-bound lives will find completion
in the all-embracing Creator.
In the meantime, we embrace the present,
embodying hope, loving our enemies,
caring for the earth,
choosing life.

All My Relations,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jordan Cantwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. Jordan Cantwell
Moderator/Modératrice
The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada