



October 22, 2020

Grace and peace, in Jesus' name.

In the church, we are familiar with covenants as agreements we make with each other and with God to live together in harmony. We understand the importance of keeping covenants, and, when they are broken, seeking ways of healing the relationships that have been damaged.

The Peace and Friendship Treaties of the Maritimes and Gaspé were covenants between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, designed that both peoples might live together in peaceful co-existence on the same territory. The Treaty of 1752 between the Crown and the Mi'kmaq of Eastern Nova Scotia states that the Mi'kmaq "shall not be hindered from, but have free liberty of Hunting and Fishing as usual."

The Supreme Court of Canada affirmed this right in the 1999 *Marshall* decision. In doing this, the court was not granting new rights to the Mi'kmaq; it was naming those rights as already existing, and that they were rights that Canada must honour.

Likewise, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples reminds non-Indigenous people of their responsibility to respect Indigenous Peoples' rights to livelihood, to lands and resources, to decision-making, and to be free from discrimination.

Currently, the Mi'kmaq of Sipekne'katik First Nation, asserting their treaty right to a fishery in Saulnierville, NS, are confronted with destruction of property, lobster traps, and their catch; intimidation and physical violence; bias in the media; and racism from non-Indigenous peoples.

As a church that has repudiated colonial doctrines and committed itself to Indigenous rights, to the ongoing work of building right relations, and to opposing racism in all of its forms, we cannot remain silent.

We believe it is the responsibility of non-Indigenous people to turn away from racism and violence, and to honour the Treaties made in their names. We acknowledge that we still have work to do on this in our own church, but have learned from the work already done that there is no other moral or ethical choice.

We believe it is the responsibility of the Canadian government, on a nation-to-nation basis, to ensure that Treaty rights and the rights enumerated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are implemented and respected, and we call on them to take appropriate action to ensure these rights.

On Friday, October 23, a small group of faith leaders will meet with Mi'kmaq people and supporters at Saulnierville to offer prayerful support as we seek to do our part to honour the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1752. As they do so, at 2:00 p.m. AST, we are asking you to join with Region 15 in pausing and praying the [prayer](#) they have offered at this time.

In Peace and Friendship, we seek to live together with our relatives and neighbours in Mi'kmaki.

Christ's peace,

The Right Reverend Dr. Richard Bott
Moderator

The Reverend Murray Pruden
Executive Minister, Indigenous Ministries
and Justice