



February 9, 2021,

Dear People of the Nuxalk Nation in Bella Coola,

In the name of Jesus Christ, the one who said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me....to set at liberty those who are oppressed,” we write to you as leaders of the Pacific Mountain Regional Council of the United Church of Canada. We are watching with horror and dismay as your community experiences systemic racism within our health care system in the recent matter of COVID19 vaccinations. To watch the abuse of power played out yet again, in 2021, is completely inconsistent with what it means for Canada to enter the process of reconciliation with an open and humble heart. We grieve with you. We will use our voice when you may be silenced. And we stand with you in this gross experience of racism.

We want to assure you that the United Church of Canada, and particularly this region, is committed to living out the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Not only are we committed to the way of reconciliation within our own communities of faith and ministries, but we are also committed to calling out behaviour, actions and attitudes that are inconsistent with reconciliation in the Canadian context wherever it occurs. This commitment is embedded in our own United Church of Canada “Calls to the Church” written by the Indigenous Elders Council of the denomination.

In addition to this letter to you, we will thank Health Minister Adrian Dix and Dr. Bonnie Henry for their ongoing leadership, and to continue in that leadership, by offering a formal, written apology to the people of the Nuxalk nation. However, because we also believe apologies require actions, we will encourage them to develop an immediate vaccination program within the most vulnerable of first nations communities in the region and to communicate that plan as quickly as possible. In addition, we will call on our faith communities to pray for, and work towards the ending of systemic racism in our region.

We recognize that apologies and letters of support are meaningless if they are not followed by actions of solidarity and justice-seeking. In the Christian scriptures, the first letter of John calls Christians to not just love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. (1 John 3:18). And so with this commitment we take another step on this journey of reconciliation, trusting in the grace of the living Creator who sustains life.

In humble peace,

Rev. S. Blair Odney
President

Treena Duncan
Executive Minister

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on the ancestral and unceded territories of the hən̓d̓əm̓iḥəḥ and Skwxwú7mesh speaking peoples
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