

Sent late December 2012

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

I write to implore you to meet with Attawapiskat First Nation Chief Theresa Spence.

I serve as minister of the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa and I share with many other spiritual leaders throughout Canada frustration over the dire conditions which face First Nations communities and peoples.

We urge you to hear, as we do, the pain and determination that underlie Chief Spence's actions. Her pain is shared by many Indigenous communities and their leaders, and by many non-Aboriginal Canadians who wish to end the legacy of inequality and abuse, and live in justice and right relations between mainstream Canada and the First Peoples.

Unitarian Universalism is grounded in theologies that value relationship and reconciliation. We are taught that each of us has creative power that can be used to foster right relationship and build the beloved community. Conversely, that power can be used to dominate, oppress and harm others and make the beloved community that much further away from reality.

A little over two years ago your government did us proud by endorsing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration is not legally binding, but represents a commitment from your government to work with indigenous leaders to find mutually agreeable solutions to common problems. I urge you return to the spirit of that commitment

I urge you to meet in good faith with Chief Spence immediately and commit to work with her and other indigenous leaders to find sustainable solutions to what is broken in the current system.

Rev. John Marsh,

First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa