

September 19, 2000

Corporal Gilbert Anctio
Neguac Detachment
Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Neguac, New Brunswick

Dear Corporal Anctio,

As General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Canada, I am writing to express our grave concerns over the escalating tensions and possibility of violence in relation to the lobster fishery of Esgenoopetitj (Burnt Church) First Nation. In particular, we are alarmed to hear public statements made by non-Aboriginal fishers, who, dissatisfied with the response of the RCMP and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, have threatened to forcefully remove Aboriginal traps if current mediation strategies fail to produce an agreement.

As the RCMP, it is your responsibility to intervene to defuse tensions and to prevent the enactment of violence. Over the past year, we have heard from ecumenical observers present at Burnt Church about many disturbing instances in which the RCMP not only failed to protect the property and persons of members of the Esgenoopetitj community, but also responded in ways that endangered their lives.

Contrary to recent media reports, the Observer Team of the Atlantic Aboriginal Rights Coalition -- a team that has been maintaining a continuous 24-hour a day presence in the community of Esgenoopetitj since the fall fishery began -- has witnessed *no firearms* in the possession of warriors at Burnt Church. Unsubstantiated media allegations have created an atmosphere of heightened potential for violent reprisals on the part of non-Aboriginal fishers. It is of the utmost importance that the RCMP acts to ensure that the non-Aboriginal fishers as well as the warriors are unarmed if and when they take to the waters.

On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, I urge you to intervene at Burnt Church to ensure that non-Aboriginal fishers do not take matters into their own hands, and to ensure that the people and property of the Esgenoopetitj community are not further harmed.

We recognize that the legal, economic, and moral issues surrounding this crisis are complex. However, as Christians and as Canadians, we in the Anglican Church of Canada wish to emphasize that the RCMP has a duty to reduce the potential for further injury and violence. We know from ecumenical observers and from members of the Esgenoopetitj community that many fear that lives could be lost in the eventuality of

violent confrontation. The looming threat and anxiety of such violence is unacceptable and must be diffused peacefully, on behalf of all Canadians.

I look forward to your immediate response to this matter.

Sincerely,

Archdeacon James Boyles
General Secretary
Anglican Church of Canada

c.c. Inspector Kevin Vickers, District A Commander, RCMP
Assistant Commissioner Tim Quigley, Commanding Officer, RCMP – New Brunswick
Chief Wilbur Dedam, Burnt Church First Nation
Ms. Judy Loo, Observer Team – Atlantic Aboriginal Rights Coalition