

**Letter sent by the Moderator of The United Church of
Canada,
in response to recent events in Burnt Church, NB.**

*Margaret Tusz-King, spokesperson
Aboriginal Rights Coalition-Atlantic Observer Project
September 21, 2000 Fax sent, September 21, 2000*

The Right Honourable Jean Chretien
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Centre Block, Parliament Building
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Jean Chretien:

I am writing on behalf of The United Church of Canada members to lend our support to concerns raised by the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC) - Atlantic Observers in Burnt Church and The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) over the fishing crisis at the Mic'Kmaq Fishery on the Miramichi Bay at Burnt Church.

We have received information from the Assembly of First Nations that a large-scale para-military enforcement intervention including the DFO, RCMP and possible military assistance is being planned. We are concerned that this will lead to a serious confrontation with possible violence and injuries to citizens.

At the recent meeting of the General Council of The United Church of Canada (AUGUST 11 - 20, 2000) the following resolution was passed: "that the United Church declares our intention to walk with both non-Native and Aboriginal peoples who seek a path to reconciliation and a common vision for the preservation of lobster stocks and their joint livelihood; commend those people of faith who have attempted to create cross-cultural dialogue in the communities of Esgenoopetitj/Burnt Church in recent months; and call upon the Government of Canada to abandon policies which exclude non-Native fishers from sharing in the management of the fisheries, and to develop policies that promote dialogue on community-based management for the non-Native and Aboriginal fisheries of Atlantic Canada"

We offer our prayers and commitment to help build public understanding and support for a non-violent response and solution to the crisis at Burnt Church. We urge you, in turn, to put every effort into negotiating a process towards a non-violent, speedy and just settlement.

We look to you to pursue a negotiated settlement that meets the needs of the native

fishing communities at Burnt Church. With a prompt intervention a potentially violent situation can be prevented. This intervention should include:

Minister Dhaliwal resuming talks with the Esgenooetitj First Nation (EFN, Burnt Church) and the Maritimes Fisherman Union. The DFO refraining from seizing the traps, and waiting for the Native fishers to remove them by October 7th

The RCMP and DFO preventing non-native fishers from acting on their own. The government through the RCMP offering safety and protection to all of the communities involved in this dispute, including Esgenooetitj First Nation (EFN, Burnt Church), as they struggle to remain calm in the midst of escalating threats of violence.

Respectfully yours

The Right Rev. Marion Pardy
Moderator, The United Church of Canada

c.c. Hon. Herb Dhaliwal, Minister of Fisheries and Ocean
Hon. Robert Nault, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs