

December 14, 2022

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister and Privy Council
80 Wellington St.
Ottawa, ON K1P 5K9

Subject: Open letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

Dear Justin Trudeau,

As Elders, part of our role is to listen to the young ones.

We are writing today to implore you—in this critical moment of decision making at COP 15—to listen to what the youth across this country are telling us.

For generations upon generations, Indigenous people have been making clear that the economic model imported by force to these lands is profoundly unsustainable and unjust. It requires the exploitation of people and endless extraction from the lands, from the natural systems that all our lives depend on. This economic system, which has required the ongoing theft of our lands in an endless quest for more resources, is the same system driving the climate and biodiversity crises that threaten us all.

For decades, environmentalists and scientists have also been adding their voices to this call for a swift transformation away from a Canada based on extraction and exploitation to one based on respect, care, and regeneration.

And over the last decade, the youth have risen up and never before has the clarion call for transforming this country been so loud and so clear. As Elders, we've watched them as they've been organizing in every city and town, striking, educating their communities, blockading, risking arrest. They do this because they know, better than anyone, what is at stake.

The youth are calling on you, Justin, to wake up to this moment—to use your power to do what needs to be done. They have made abundantly clear that climate leaders don't build pipelines; that the days of logging old growth must end; that people committed to reconciliation do not put Indigenous people in jail for defending their lands and waters; that it is the moment to choose life. So far you have failed to do so.

You have said over and over that you are working to balance the economy and the environment. But the youth see through this rhetoric and ask you to take a side: *their side*. They are asking you to defend life and to defend their future. To do this, you need to choose to value their lives over profit, over economic growth, and over votes.

This could be your moment, Justin. COP-15 in Montréal could be the defining moment of your legacy as Prime Minister. This could be the moment you find the courage to turn away from corporate, extractive interests and their lobbyists and instead, with your whole heart, join the urgent fight to protect this beautiful living earth and act in solidarity with the youth who are rising.

As your Elders, we are telling you to stop serving corporate interests and instead, listen to the youth. If you decide to build your legacy around listening to the youth and defending life rather than perpetuating extractivism, we offer these key actions you can take right now.

- Place a permanent moratorium on old growth logging.
- Stop all construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure, including but not limited to the Coastal Gas Link and TransMountain pipelines.
- Stop surveilling, policing, and criminalizing youth and Indigenous land defenders who are opposing extractive development.
- Work towards Land Back. Instead of offering up endless Crown Land for extractive development, give it back to the Indigenous Peoples from whom it was stolen.
- Take all federal funds that would have been spent on propping up and policing new extractive development, and reallocate this to Indigenous communities to implement their own self-determined climate solutions and non-extractive livelihoods.
- Actively support a transition away from the capitalist economic system that requires endless economic growth and instead invest in other forms of economics that are grounded in the understanding that we live on a planet with finite resources.

Sincerely,



Elder Bill Jones,
Pacheedaht Nation



Dr. Kenneth Deer
Honorary Doctor of Laws
Kahnawake



Wet'suwet'en Elder
Indigenous rights advocate, chef and educator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Suzuki". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Suzuki" clearly distinguishable.

Dr. David Suzuki
Scientist, broadcaster, author and grandfather