

Dear sisters and members of the Incarnation Family,

At the beginning of November, we come to you from Canada...

Since 2021, 30 September has been designated as the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation to corroborate the work done by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was created in 2008 and of which our sister Mary Clare Stack was a member for the region of Red Deer (south of Edmonton) as a representative of the Catholic Church.

This commission worked on a process of Reconciliation and Truth between the descendants of the Amerindians who inhabited the continent before the arrival of the Europeans and the settlers who came after the conquests.

It was in this spirit of reconciliation that Pope Francis came to Canada on a pilgrimage of penance, as he put it, to ask forgiveness of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the Church's complicity with the governments whose aim was to wipe out the Amerindian cultures in Canada.

Our Indigenous brothers and sisters have a real concern for the land: *"the land is not seen as property or a resource; the animals, plants, mountains, hills and rivers are a community to which everyone belongs, including human beings"*. (Extract from: 'Listening to Native Ways' by Jeannette Armstrong)

For indigenous peoples, all the elements, all the beings (animals and human beings) that live on the earth and depend on it, are connected to each other, to the earth, but also to the whole universe. This brings us into a state of thanksgiving.

But the indigenous peoples are not only looking to the past, they are also looking to the future.

In the reserves, which are areas that have been set aside for them, the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot and other populations are developing ways of earning a living. Some are implementing a tourism policy to showcase their anthropological and spiritual heritage...

In the spring of 2024, the residents of the Siksika reserve will be planting 50 km of trees along their roads to reduce the force of the wind, protect the topsoil from erosion and catch more snow to increase humidity in the spring. It's all part of their efforts to adapt to climate change and reduce the risk of drought on the Prairies (wide open spaces in central Canada).

They have also entered into a partnership with Calgary Zoo because the signatories are motivated by shared values and a common appreciation of wildlife, *"Rather than just talking about the physiology of a species, we're going to talk about its influence on the spirituality of the First*

Nations. We will learn from them and they may learn from us." Clément Lanthier, CEO of the Calgary Zoo.

The people of the Blood reserve have developed a processing plant in 2022/23 to export compressed hay for Western markets. *"One of the most important principles of our ancestors was the need to provide for our own people as much as possible. We must be prepared to work and forge partnerships. By doing so, our efforts will be even more meaningful and we'll be more productive,"* says Chief Roy Fox.

Nature and its exploitation also remain a preservation objective for them. In Saskatchewan, Alberta's neighbouring province, efforts are being made to integrate reserve residents into the cultivation of grains and oilseeds on the large areas of arable land they own.

These people need to find a balance between their traditions and the new economic forms of life, because the financial powers are on the lookout to help them, sometimes at the risk of invading them and taking advantage of their cultural and spiritual riches.

We close our letter by joining in prayer with those who have to teach us respect for every element that surrounds us.

Let's turn our hearts towards the East
That's where the sun rises every day
Creator God, awaken us and help us to walk with new life

Let us turn our hearts towards the South
The warm winds from there bring us joy and comfort
Creator God, soothe our aching souls

Let us turn our hearts towards the West
To the storm that brings the cleansing rain
Creator God, heal us and our loved ones

Let us turn our hearts towards the North
Winter comes from there and invites us to rest
Creator God, help us regain our strength.

Amen

Sister Catherine and Normand (Charism Friend)
31st October 2023
EDMONTON - CANADA