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## NEWS FROM CHAPTER

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### Franciscans and Indigenous Peoples: An Urgent Appeal for Collaborative Action and Communion in a Perilous Time

*Rev. John Hebenton, Minister General, TSSF*

*Janet Fedders, Minister Provincial, Province of the Americas*

*Rt. Rev. Godfrey Fryar, Minister Provincial, Province of Asia-Pacific*

*Rev. Tim Higgins, Minister Provincial, European Province*

*Blair Matheson, Minister Provincial, Province of the Pacific*

*Rev. Dr. Michael Twum-Darko, Minister Provincial, African Province*

*Rev. Mandy Wheatley, Minister Provincial-elect, Province of Asia-Pacific*

*The Most Reverend Mark MacDonald, Indigenous Archbishop of Canada*

*Rev. Canon Jeff Golliher, Assisting Minister Provincial for Sacred Ecology, Province of the Americas*

**A**t this time of climate and ecological peril, we are urgently called to recover the Franciscan vision of a fully right relationship with all God's creation. In response to this calling—the vision of a truly sustainable and just future on this green earth—we must form new partnerships in genuine solidarity with Indigenous Peoples everywhere.

For Franciscans, this will also require our Order to take time for self-examination concerning our history of complicity in the colonization of Indigenous Peoples and the ecosystems that have been their home. An important part of the reparations that we can make is to enter into this kind of partnership now, in the spirit of true solidarity for the sake of our common future.

Therefore, we ask Franciscans of the Third Order in every Province to consider Archbishop MacDonald's appeal, below. We hope that every Fellowship in our Provinces will reflect on this appeal and find ways to consider its meaning and implications in their communities, cities, and eco-regions. Together, we can make right the wrongs that have been made in the past, and we can help to form a truly living relationship between humankind and God's creation today and for generations to come.

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#### Statement Prepared for the Provincial Ministers Meeting of the Third Order, Society of St. Francis, September 2020

*From Mark MacDonald, TSSF, National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop  
of the Anglican Church of Canada*

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**I**t is unfortunate that the Franciscan legacy has been tainted by the movement's involvement with colonization. In the urgency of humanity's present crisis, however, a new reality and possibility emerges: a reconciliation, which will acknowledge and repent of the past; a reconciliation that will bring benefit to humanity and all Creation. The threat of global environmental disaster has a unique danger for Indigenous Peoples and, at the same time, displays that their ecological wisdom and stewardship of the land are an essential part of any livable future. Indigenous Peoples, in their living relationship with the Land, are standing in a prophetic relationship to our global economic, cultural, and ecological crisis.

*cont. on page 11*

*Franciscans and Indigenous Peoples, cont. from p. 10*

*Right, Archbishop Mark McDonald, photo from Covenant, the weblog of the Living Church Foundation, October 14, 2016.*



For Franciscans, the way forward has three aspects:

- 1) **Spiritual/Moral Examination:** A sincere and dedicated communal examination of ways in which the colonial cultural-social system of the past four centuries has distorted and deformed Christian understanding and witness. This has ecological implications, in addition to a concern for Indigenous Peoples.
- 2) **Standing with Indigenous Peoples and Mother Earth:** Though greatly threatened, Indigenous Peoples now have the stewardship of roughly a quarter of the world's remaining intact eco-systems. The protection of these lands and the people who guard them is one of the most compelling human rights issues facing our global community, as well as a critical issue to planetary viability. Where do we stand in this essential concern?
- 3) **A Return to Ecological Wholeness:** Indigenous ecological wisdom is desirable in and of itself. It also brings Christians back to the ecological wholeness of our original documents and their embodiment in practice (so severely deformed by aspects of the mindset of Western modernity). This wholeness is an environment in which Franciscans should thrive, leading a movement towards a spiritual, moral, and cultural practice that will see humanity living in harmony with God and God's Creation.

