



OLGC CO-CHAIRS STATEMENT on NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY JUNE 2024

We, the co-chairs of Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle, on behalf of the Circle, encourage the Catholic community and all people in Canada to answer the call of Elders and Knowledge Carriers across the land to mark National Indigenous Peoples Day as a day of prayer for spiritual unity. Let us give thanks together for the graces of reconciliation that we have been experiencing. While there is a long way to go to build right relations on Turtle Island, we must not lose sight of what has transpired, especially since the penitential pilgrimage of Our Holy Father Pope Francis, that can lift our hope on high.

The visit of the Holy Father was of course a great gift, and it continues to bear fruit in the action of the local Church in union with Indigenous partners and through the commitments made by the Bishops of Canada in their pastoral letters to First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples of Canada and to the People of God broadly. These commitments have been concretized in many ways including the work that is being supported by the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund. We are grateful for what is being accomplished, the relationships that are being built, and the peace that is growing among us.

We can not lose sight of the great intergenerational grief we continue to carry collectively, each in our own way, and must not falter in our search for a complete reconciliation based on truth. Our hearts are burdened as on May 27th of this year, we marked the third anniversary of the discovery by the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc band of what appear to be unmarked graves at the site of the Indian residential school that operated on its territory for 85 years. As a Circle of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Catholics, we are guided by the seven grandfather teachings which remind us that Truth is not best pursued in isolation. Ancient wisdom challenges us to hold firm as well to Respect, Humility, Bravery, Honesty, Wisdom, and Love, so we may reach a truthful and Spirit-led understanding that supports healing and fosters renewed relationships.

We are faced not only, or even primarily, with a scientific or forensic task. Ours is a spiritual task where we look to each other to hold our pain and grief until it is transformed by our Creator. Knowledge Carriers and spiritual guides, drawing on Christian and Indigenous traditions, as well as those of other believers, have taught us that grief repressed or denied can reveal itself in physical, emotional, psychological and even spiritual harms. That same grief when shared, though never forgotten, can be



*Our Lady of
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healed and broaden the whole field of compassion. We pray for continued dialogue to mitigate the pain of facing our collective history and current reality, so that through the strength of our Father and Creator, we may all continue to be vulnerable and patient as healing replaces division among us.

All my relations,

Tom Dearhouse

Donna Geernaert, S.C.