



## **Pilgrim Team Visit to Indigenous Communities in the Arctic**

**26-28 April 2021**

### **Background/description**

Indigenous Peoples are in the frontline of climate change impacts. In the Arctic – a region which is heating up twice as fast as the global average – Indigenous Peoples face threats of food insecurity due to declining animal and plant life, erosion of traditional livelihoods and ways of living, desecration of ancestral sites, as well as social and cultural dislocation.

Spanning parts of North America and Europe, the Arctic is rich in oil and mineral reserves. While the region's isolation has offered some protection from rampant economic exploitation, the melting of sea ice poses a further risk – easier access to coveted resources. Even though most government figureheads in the region are Indigenous, major decisions around resource extraction are being made in the world's financial and corporate centres with little regard for local communities' wellbeing and ecological consequences.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit Indigenous communities in the region hard. In some parts, infection and fatality rates are higher than average due to poor access to healthcare. And the impacts on the local economy have been devastating. Even before the pandemic, unemployment rates in these areas were already 2 or 3 times higher than during the Great Depression. Communities survive through hunting, herding, and fishing – ancient ways of living that are increasingly undermined by a warming climate.

The Doctrine of Discovery, used to legitimise colonisation of Indigenous Peoples, has had an enduring impact on communities and churches in the Arctic.

At the same time, Indigenous Arctic wisdom offers alternative visions, spiritual resources, and concrete practices to mitigate, adapt and build resilience to the defining challenge of our time.

### **Objectives and methodology**

The Pilgrim Team Visit (PTV) to the Arctic has the following aims:

- expressing solidarity with Alaskan Native Peoples, Inuit and Sami communities that are impacted by climate change, extractive activities, and COVID-19 (*via negativa*)
- learning about world views and spiritualities that celebrate and are intricately linked to the Arctic ecosystem (*via positiva*)
- discussing restorative and reparative approaches and ways of living (*via transformativa*).

The PTV will follow a hybrid approach with physical accompaniment from local participants where possible and with virtual accompaniment from international participants.

### Provisional programme

Date/time	Activity
26 April 2021 08h00-11h00 Alaska time/ 11h00-14h00 Winnipeg time/ 18h00-21h00 CEST	Virtual visit to Alaskan Native Peoples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blessing/prayer</li> <li>• Video presentation</li> <li>• Wellness break</li> <li>• Panel presentation or storytelling</li> <li>• Online discussion</li> </ul> Link to join: <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87102762543?pwd=YTdFRkN6OWh0V3hBTfM1OGVvdIFTdz09">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87102762543?pwd=YTdFRkN6OWh0V3hBTfM1OGVvdIFTdz09</a>
27 April 2021 08h00-11h00 Winnipeg time/ 15h00-18h00 CEST	Virtual visit to Inuit communities in Canada <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blessing/prayer</li> <li>• Video presentation</li> <li>• Wellness break</li> <li>• Panel presentation or storytelling</li> <li>• Online discussion</li> </ul> Link to join: <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81877607935?pwd=ZVg5emZzeFQzME9JV2xCUjZuNmF1QT09">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81877607935?pwd=ZVg5emZzeFQzME9JV2xCUjZuNmF1QT09</a>
28 April 2021 08h00-11h00 Winnipeg time/ 15h00-18h00 CEST	Virtual visit to Sami communities in Finland, Norway and Sweden <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blessing/prayer</li> <li>• Video presentation</li> <li>• Wellness break</li> <li>• Panel presentation or storytelling</li> <li>• Online discussion</li> </ul> Link to join: <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86408139367?pwd=WXppSEUyWFoxR3phd0tsNWVxT3lVUT09">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86408139367?pwd=WXppSEUyWFoxR3phd0tsNWVxT3lVUT09</a>

## Participants

### WCC Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace Reference Group

- Rev. Fr Andrzej CHOROMANSKI, Roman Catholic Church
- Rev. Dr h.c. Cornelia FÜLLKRUG-WEITZEL, Bread for the World
- Rev. Dr Solomon RONGPI, Council of Baptist Churches in North East India
- Rev. Dr Jione HAVEA, Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga
- Arch. Mark MACDONALD, Anglican Church in Canada (local host)

### WCC Ecumenical Indigenous People's Reference Group

- Rev. Mari Valjakka, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland (local host)

### WCC Working Group on Climate Change

- Joy KENNEDY, Canadian Interfaith Fast for Climate
- Others to be named

### WCC Ecumenical Disability Network

- Rev Linda BIGLER
- Rev Lisa MCKEE

### WCC staff

- Dr Louk ANDRIANOS, WCC/Greek Orthodox Church
- Sophie DHANJAL, WCC
- Rev Henrik GRAPE, WCC/Church of Sweden
- Athena PERALTA, WCC (lead)
- Marcelo Schneider, WCC (communications)