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March 4, 2016

Honorable Bishop Skylstad:

The Upper Columbia United Tribes - comprised of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Colville Confederated Tribes, Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, and the Spokane Tribe of Indians – respectfully thank and honor you and the members of the Pastoral Letter Steering Committee.

Paramount to the Tribes has been your long-lasting and continuing steadfast support, promotion and education of ecological spirituality.

Thank you for your clear guidance on tempering the view of stewardship with human ecology – recognizing that humans are limited to managing uses of the land and water, but not the land and water itself – with your firm direction that Mother Earth governs us, not the other way around.

In addition, we extend our gratitude to you for your understanding and teachings on the synergy between the health of the Earth, and our own health. We thank you for your outreach and unceasing efforts with the Columbia River Pastoral Letter, Pope Francis's Encyclical Laudato Si: On Care of Our Common Home, with the Faith Community, public, and the Tribes. We thank you for the underlying message of these efforts that matches the ageless Tribal teaching that "What We do to the Earth, We do to Ourselves."

The Tribes are especially blessed by your query of whether "we" have ever asked the Tribes for forgiveness. The importance of this recognition - especially in the absence of any formal apology to the Tribes from the United States and Canadian governments - runs deep in the lives and spirits of Tribal Peoples and their governments.

For these and many other reasons, and with deep reverence, it is an honor to thank you and the Pastoral Letter Steering Committee for all of your efforts to promote stewardship and justice in decisions about the Columbia River.

Respectfully,

D. R. Michel, Executive Director
Upper Columbia United Tribes