

To: United Church Congregations and Affiliated Organizations within Toronto Conference

From: Restoring Relations Working Group United Church Team Members  
The Living Into Right Relations (LIRR) Circle of Toronto Conference  
Endorsed by the Executive of Toronto Conference

To Whom It Concerns:

**HELP MAKE THE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS (IRSS)  
RESTORATION OF IDENTITY LEGACY PROJECT A REALITY IN 2020!**

*The Executive of Toronto Conference approved a legacy gift of \$100,00 to this project as part of our commitment to the Calls to Action of the TRC. As we approach National Indigenous Peoples' Day, we encourage all communities of faith to prayerfully consider this request.*

The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and the 94 Calls to Action contained in the Final Report, has changed the culture of Canada. There are far more people, in every sector of society, who are aware of the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) legacy, the historic abuses that settlers and newcomers have inflicted upon Indigenous peoples in Canada, the resiliency of First Nations, Inuit and Metis people despite such historic hardships, and the promise of reconciliation that those 94 Calls to Action hold. It will take a number of generations for Indigenous peoples to truly recover their identity, languages and culture, but the journey to healing and restoration for them, and to our right relations with them, has begun, and the path is far clearer than it ever has been.

The United Church of Canada has been an active participant in right relations building for some time now, at every level of our structure, and has committed itself nationally to responding fully to the Calls to Action directed to the churches. In the Greater Toronto Area, Toronto Conference has had a long-standing partnership with Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre. After the 2015 publication of the TRC Final Report, the Restoring Relations Working Group was reborn, continuing the partnership, with representatives of the Living Into Right Relations (LIRR) Circle offering leadership to the group. While the group is now happily ecumenical and involves numerous representatives of other churches, as well as non-church individuals, we seek to continue to educate, advocate and act for right relations in our region.

In its Final Report, the TRC, in Call to Action #82, called for the establishment of a highly visible, publicly accessible structure in each provincial capital city to commemorate the victims and survivors of the IRSs. In 2016 Council Fire, acting upon the invitation and support of the Province of Ontario, named the following objective: *“To establish ... an IRSS Legacy “Restoration of Identity” Structure to be predominantly displayed in the City of Toronto to commemorate the victims and survivors of residential schools. Also, to create a complimentary inter-active Healing Garden for traditional ceremonies, gatherings, education, contemplation and the building of good relations.”*

The IRSS Legacy “Restoration of Identity” project has now not only been beautifully conceptualized, in the form of a large turtle with symbolic parts throughout as the main piece, as well as an accompanying Healing Garden, but has also been approved by City Council. It will

be installed in the south-west part of Nathan Phillips Square, south of the Peace Garden, and will be an important healing addition to the Square's landscape.

A project of this magnitude will cost many millions to plan, install, and maintain, and while government partners will be bearing the bulk of the cost, church partners have a critical part to play in making the project happen. We therefore humbly request your financial support as part of our \$2 million interfaith campaign portion of the cost of the project (see accompanying project funding document). Together we are embarking on a path to a more equitable, just relationship with this land's original peoples, and would welcome donations toward this centerpiece of that path. We would like to suggest that your Congregation consider a gift of \$250, or \$500, or even \$1000, though we would be grateful for whatever support you can provide. The planned timing of the ceremonial launch and opening is October 9-11, 2018, with the final installation of the entire project to be completed in April of 2020, so we encourage you to act as soon as possible to show your support.

In addition, we hope you might approach those within your congregation who have significant resources who might consider offering an even more substantial gift. And your church might also have significant funds beyond your operating accounts from which you might consider drawing in order to support this singular and unique project. A public recognition of all donors for this project, and a display of their names, will be done, so consider this an opportunity to create a legacy of goodwill in right relations building that will be remembered for generations. All donations from individuals will be considered charitable, and a tax receipt will be issued.

We would be pleased to answer any questions you may have about this initiative, and want to thank you in advance for your time and consideration of this important turning point in right relationship building with the Indigenous peoples of Toronto, known for centuries as the Meeting Place. If you have specific questions, you can speak to either of us through the contact information provided below.

Respectfully,

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*Please make cheques payable to "Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre," with "ROI Sovereign Wealth" in the memo line, and send them to Council Fire at the following address:*

*Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre  
439 Dundas Street East  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5A 2B1*

*All sponsors will be acknowledged in a tangible way as the project goes forward.*