



January 9, 2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On January 28, 2022, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) established a registered charity whose Board of Directors is comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders to support and advance healing and reconciliation initiatives and to manage the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund (IRF). This Fund accepts contributions from dioceses across Canada towards the \$30 million financial commitment made by Canada's bishops in September 2021. In the IRF's first year of operation, the Board approved 18 projects. As of December 2023, the IRF has approved over 130 projects from across Canada. You can read about many of these exciting projects on the IRF's newly unveiled website (<https://irfund.ca/en/welcome/>).

Chief Wilton Littlechild, Cree Chief and Residential School Survivor notes that, "the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund is a critically important effort in support of the path of healing and reconciliation between the Catholic Church and Indigenous Peoples." To assist in this important work, the Diocese of Saint John takes up a special collection for the IRF annually at the Lord's Day Masses on the last weekend of January. Your generous financial support of the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund will be part of our action plan moving forward to support various initiatives for healing and reconciliation involving our Indigenous brothers and sisters. The funds that we collect as a Diocese are contributed to the IRF to be allocated towards various local projects and initiatives according to the following priorities:

- Healing and reconciliation for communities and families;
- Culture and language revitalization;
- Education and community building; and
- Dialogues for promoting Indigenous spirituality and culture.

You may contribute to this fundraising appeal using the special collection envelopes in your boxed sets at Masses for the weekend of January 27-28. You may also contribute at anytime on our website via cheque or email money transfer (<https://dioceseofsaintjohn.org/donations>). Additional resources including a link to the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund are available on our diocesan website, <https://dioceseofsaintjohn.org/indigenous-relations>.

I am counting on your continued prayer and collaboration as we advance the cause of healing and reconciliation for our Indigenous sisters and brothers. Entrusting ourselves to the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we ask God, our Creator, to bless all efforts towards healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and a renewed fellowship.

United in prayer and solidarity,

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC  
Bishop of Saint John