



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Further to the announcement of the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops (CCCB) of a five-year \$30 million National Campaign to support Indigenous healing and reconciliation initiatives on September 27, 2021, I am pleased to announce that the Diocese of Saint John is launching a financial appeal in union with the Atlantic dioceses to do our part in assisting towards this goal. A regional fundraising goal for this appeal will be determined by the CCCB and communicated to you in the next few weeks.

We have shared in the collective grief and the desire to dedicate ourselves towards tangible efforts to assist residential school survivors. There is a strong desire among the people of God to walk in solidarity with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, who continue to suffer the trauma of the residential school system. Over the past few months, I have heard from many people wanting to contribute financially towards the important cause of healing and reconciliation.

It is important that our efforts are informed by meaningful conversation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. We have been reaching out to Indigenous leaders across the diocese and will be working together over the next few months and years to strengthen our relationship and seek their wisdom on this fundraising appeal and on how the diocese can best support the good people of our seven Indigenous communities: Wotstak First Nation (Woodstock), Esgenoôpetitj First Nation (Burnt Church), Pilick First Nation (Kingsclear), Metepenagiak Mi'kmaq First Nation (Red Bank), Natoaganeg First Nation (Eel Ground), Sitansisk First Nation (St. Mary's), and Welamukotuk First Nation (Oromocto). These conversations are important steps forwards, reminding us that all efforts to address the wounded relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the Catholic Church must begin by listening.

We are launching this fundraising appeal on December 12, the National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, and in honour of Our Lady of Guadalupe, on her traditional Feast Day. Our Lady of Guadalupe holds great significance to Indigenous Peoples. Her apparition to Saint Juan Diego as an Indigenous woman was a great moment of healing that inspired the conversion of millions of Indigenous Peoples to the Catholic faith within ten years of this miracle. This fundraising appeal and commitment to educational, cultural, healing and reconciliation initiatives that demonstrate the impact of residential schools are tangible expressions of our commitment to walk with the Indigenous Peoples of this land along the pathway of hope.

A special collection will be taken up for our Indigenous Solidarity Fund on Sunday, January 30, 2022, and then on an annual basis the last Sunday of January. Special envelopes will be provided to the parishes in January. You may also contribute to this fundraising appeal anytime on our website via cheque or email money transfer (<https://dioceseofsaintjohn.org/donations>).

“The eternal Father has sent his Son to reveal to us the mystery of our living in this world and of our journeying to the everlasting life that is to come. In the Paschal Mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have been reconciled with God and with each other. Jesus Christ is our peace (Cfr. Eph. 2, 14).” (Pope John Paul II, meeting with Indigenous Peoples of Canada, Fort Simpson, September 20, 1987). With our eyes fixed on Jesus who is the healer of every division and the source of our hope, we ask our Creator to bless us as we journey together towards healing and a renewed relationship with our Indigenous Peoples.

United in prayer and reconciliation through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Riesbeck".

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

December 8, 2021
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception