



February 17, 2022

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Further to my letter of February 2, 2022, which provided information from the CCCB to assist us with our diocesan efforts contributing towards the CCCB's five-year \$30-million National Campaign to support Indigenous healing and reconciliation initiatives, I would like to provide additional clarification about the grant application process.

At a recent meeting of the Atlantic bishops, it was determined that each diocese would be responsible for establishing a local/Diocesan Project Committee. This committee would be responsible for reviewing and discerning grant applications to support local projects and initiatives according to the following priorities, which also reflect the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and desired funding initiatives:

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

Following consultations with local Indigenous leaders, it was felt that having a Diocesan Project Committee reviewing and discerning local project applications rather than a regional/Atlantic Committee would be much more effective, not only to strengthen sincere relationships with our local Indigenous communities but also to ensure that local needs are supported. The Diocesan Project Committee would ideally include representatives of the seven Indigenous communities in our diocese and possibly a few additional lay people, who will work together to identify projects that will contribute to ongoing healing and reconciliation.

I would like to reiterate that whatever funds are collected through our parishes or diocese will be used for local purposes to assist our Indigenous communities.

I hope these further details will help you as you prepare for our first planned special collection on the weekend of February 26-27. Additional information from the CCCB regarding the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund to support projects across Canada can be found at the following link: <https://www.cccb.ca/media-release/canadas-bishops-announce-indigenous-reconciliation-fund-to-support-projects-across-canada/>. I also invite you to consult the Indigenous Relations tab on our diocesan website, which contains further resources for educational purposes (<https://dioceseofsaintjohn.org/indigenous-relations>).

To assist parishes in responding to questions regarding the national fundraising campaign, as well as the role of the former Catholic Entities Party to the Indian Residential School Settlement, I invite you to consult the attached Questions and Answers document prepared by the CCCB. Additional information on the previous campaign by the CCEPIRSS can be found at the following link: <https://www.cccb.ca/indigenous-peoples/indian-residential-schools-and-trc/canadas-bishops-provide-update-on-indian-residential-school-settlement-agreement/>.

Once again I express my confidence that given this additional information, parishes will find themselves in a good position to ensure a successful start to this important campaign, which responds to the strong desire of our diocesan faithful to contribute financially towards journeying with our Indigenous brothers and sisters in the ongoing work of healing and reconciliation in every region of the country.

Special Collection Envelopes have been sent to parishes to be used at Masses for the weekend of February 26-27. You may also contribute to this fundraising appeal at anytime on our website via cheque or email money transfer (<https://dioceseofsaintjohn.org/donations>).

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,

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

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John