



MEDIA ADVISORY – For Immediate Release

Archdiocese of Toronto Allocates over \$2.7 Million to Support Eight Indigenous Healing & Reconciliation Projects

TORONTO, ON (December 12, 2023) – On this National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, the Archdiocese of Toronto announced the allocation of more than \$2.7 million to fund 8 different projects that will assist in the healing and reconciliation journey with First Nation, Inuit and Métis people. The projects range in scope from mental health support to legal services to education assistance for Indigenous people in the Greater Toronto Area and beyond.

The announcement is the first phase of support from the Archdiocese of Toronto, following the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' (CCCB) comprehensive, national pledge of \$30 million contributing to healing and reconciliation initiatives in September of 2021. The Archdiocese's \$2,768,000 allocation represents more than 45% of its \$6 million commitment (over five years) announced in February 2022.

“In his historic visit to Canada last year, Pope Francis challenged us to consider how we could add our voices to join in the life-changing efforts of healing and reconciliation,” said the Most Reverend Francis Leo, Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto. *“Thank you to all those who have walked with us and continue to do so.”*

About the projects:

Wigwamen Terrace in Toronto provides residential accommodation to over 125 Indigenous residents who are older adults and seniors. Wigwamen will receive \$475,000 over five years that will provide residents with better access to health services, navigate rapidly changing technology and maintain connections to Indigenous cultural communities and resources. *“This multi-year funding will permit us to significantly expand services,”* said Assistant General Manager Brenda Aviles.

Indigenous youth will benefit from funding for **Teach for Canada – Gakinaamaage**. The organization will receive \$450,000 over three years. Ken Sanderson, Executive Director, said the funding will *“allow local educational initiatives that support First Nations student success,”* to be developed by the Indigenous-led, Toronto based national organization. The funds will be used, *“in a way that promotes reconciliation, understanding and unity,”* noted Sanderson.

Projects were submitted locally to the Archdiocese of Toronto, reviewed by an Indigenous-led committee then formally submitted for consideration to the national [Indigenous Reconciliation Fund](#) (IRF) for final approval. The following 8 projects submitted by the Archdiocese of Toronto have been approved to receive funding through the IRF:

Aboriginal Legal Services located in Toronto, Ontario will receive \$538,000 to help fund their *Giiwedín Anang* Indigenous family dispute resolution program.

Embrace Life Council located in Iqaluit, Nunavut will receive \$250,000 over five years. The funds will be used for grief care packages to assist those mourning the loss of a loved one by suicide.

Indigenous Spirit Fund, a branch of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, Ontario will receive \$400,000 over four years to enrich their *On the Land* culture camp program curriculum. This is in addition to \$100,000 from Catholic Charities earlier this year, via its ShareLife allocation, bringing the total funding to \$500,000.

Keeseekoose First Nation located in Saskatchewan received \$30,000 in support of their “Truth Telling Gathering” earlier this year, supported also by the Archdiocese of Regina. The event was dedicated to honouring Indigenous cultures, fostering understanding and empowering communities.

Native Peoples’ Mission located in Toronto, Ontario will receive \$150,000 over five years to expand programs and outreach of the mission.

Ontario Native Women’s Association, Thunder Bay, Ontario will receive \$475,000 over five years to enhance existing programming including activities related to healing and reconciliation for Indigenous women, culture and language revitalization, education and community building and spiritual and cultural teachings with elders and knowledge keepers.

Teach For Canada – Gakinaamaage located in Toronto, Ontario will receive \$450,000 over three years. The funds will be used for their initiative to invest in local educators in First Nations schools in remote locations, benefitting more than 4,300 students annually.

Wigwamen Terrace located in Toronto, Ontario will receive \$475,000 over five years allowing the organization to hire additional support staff in order to provide their elderly Indigenous residents with assistance with navigating technology, access to mental health services and maintaining connections with Indigenous cultural and spiritual communities and resources.

The Archdiocese of Toronto remains committed to answer the call of Pope Francis in walking together on the journey of healing, reconciliation and hope with Indigenous Peoples. Those interested in learning more about the Archdiocese of Toronto’s support of the IRF or to submit a project for consideration are asked to contact John Ecker at: jecker@archtoronto.org or 416-934-0606 x 805.

The Archdiocese of Toronto is Canada’s largest diocese, stretching from Toronto north to Georgian Bay and from Oshawa to Mississauga. It is home to 2 million Catholics and 225 parish churches, with Holy Mass celebrated in more than 30 languages each week.

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