



**Statement from the Executive Committee
of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
regarding the Corporation for the Catholic Entities Party
to the Indian Residential School Settlement**

The Executive Committee of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) wishes to address recent reporting on the Corporation for the Catholic Entities Party to the Indian Residential School Settlement (CCEPIRSS). As a Committee, we have been profoundly saddened by the recent uncovering of unmarked burial sites and wish to play a meaningful role in the journey towards healing and reconciliation. This journey requires long-term commitment, but we are encouraged by recent progress, which includes the confirmation of a meeting between Pope Francis and a delegation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit survivors, knowledge keepers, and youth this December.

We have made every effort to be transparent about the Church's role in the residential school system, however, obtaining and assessing information has been much slower than expected. Notably, CCEPIRSS is no longer operational and we have had difficulty finding definitive information on settlement discussions, as the CCCB was not party to the agreement. Having said that, we have spoken to Indigenous leaders, clergy, and legal counsel who were involved and are able to clarify a few important matters.

Most notably, the Canadian Bishops have not and would not redirect funds meant for settlement payments to residential school survivors away from their intended use. We understand that these payments play an important role helping survivors respond to the lasting pain caused by residential schools and we wish to play a meaningful role in the healing process. As part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), our understanding is that the federal government agreed to paying compensations to survivors directly, whereas Catholic entities agreed to support a range of programs that would advance healing and reconciliation. We are told that these included cash payment contributions, in-kind services, and a national "best efforts" fundraising campaign, which were guided by the advice and contributions of Indigenous leaders, with regular updates provided to the Government of Canada.

Our research indicates that all the agreed upon cash payment contributions were provided, with the majority sent to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the Legacy of Hope Foundation. The "in-kind services" that Catholic entities worked on were overseen by a multi-party panel with appointments from the Assembly of First Nations, Catholic entities, and the Government of Canada, to ensure projects were sufficiently valuable to the Indigenous communities that they were intended to reach. There was enthusiastic uptake on these efforts across the country, with Catholic entities substantially exceeding their goal. While these services are no longer measured, many of them continue to operate to this day as part of a meaningful and ongoing dialogue

between Catholic and Indigenous communities. The “best efforts” campaign represented a sincere, national push to engage Catholics and non-Catholics in fundraising projects that would advance healing and reconciliation. This work included outreach to major donors, regional committees tasked with engaging local businesses, and pew collections across the country. It did not yield the results that many had hoped for. The Bishops of Canada, for their part, are looking at creative new ways to support fundraising efforts across the country.

Reconciliation is a long and ongoing journey that inspires our work every day, however, it is the CCCB’s understanding that the Catholic entities party to the IRSSA honoured all their settlement obligations. We will continue to provide updates on fundraising, education, and reconciliation initiatives taking place as this important work progresses.

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