

September 27, 2018

Toronto celebrates Indigenous legacies of resiliency and vitality

The Indian Residential School Survivors (IRSS) Legacy Celebration, the first of its kind in Canada, will create common ground from October 9 through October 11 for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to honour residential school survivors and their families by sharing in this memorable event.

Produced by the Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre in collaboration with the City of Toronto, this free three-day gathering will feature Indigenous songs, stories, language, food, performances, installations and demonstrations for all ages.

"We are pleased and proud to be able to host and help produce this important event at Nathan Phillips Square," said the Mayor of Toronto. "It is essential that reconciliation moves from discussion into action and this celebration provides a forum for that evolution to occur."

"This gathering is significant as it is scheduled around the new lunar moon cycle, which represents a positive energy force in addition to our harvest cycle, a time to acknowledge and give thanks for all that we are provided and a part of," said Andrea Chrisjohn, Board Designate (ohkwali clan, On[^]yota'a:ka), Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre. "And, to celebrate the resiliency, change and growth of our people."

IRSS Legacy Celebration Program highlights will include:

- Two evening performances (Oct. 9 and 11) by Juno Award-winning Mohawk Six Nation singer-songwriter/piano player Murray Porter. His song "Is Sorry Enough?", co-written with his partner Elaine Bomberry, is a powerful residential school survivor anthem.
- An October 9 evening of hand drums and healing songs by Indigenous women to honour survivors and inter-generational members through a reaffirmation of identity ceremony.
- An October 10 evening screening of the award-winning film "Indian Horse," which was adapted from Richard Wagamese's award-winning novel. This moving and important drama sheds light on the dark history of Canada's residential schools and the indomitable spirit of Indigenous people. More information at <http://www.indianhorse.ca/>.
- More than 20 large painted teepees across the Square will host drop-in workshops, information sharing and interactive experiences (such as Wampum belt teachings). In addition, there will be a tent dedicated for residential school survivors to use as a meeting space.



- Traditional performances and cultural teachings will also take place on the main stage and visitors can purchase Indigenous food, arts and crafts in the Indigenous Marketplace.

All are welcome to attend the public and free events. Visitors will have the opportunity to explore, learn and participate in countless Indigenous activities. To help preserve the individual's experience, a passport will be provided to document what they have learned. For more information and programming visit <https://irsslegacy.com/>.

The (IRSS) Legacy Celebration aims to create awareness of the IRSS Legacy Project, led by Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre in collaboration with the City of Toronto.

This public space initiative will consist of a turtle sculpture called the "Restoration of Identity sculpture" and a "Teaching, Learning and Sharing and Healing space". The project, to be permanently featured on Nathan Phillips Square, is anticipated to be completed in 2020.

The 6 foot (two metre) tall turtle sculpture represents many First Nation creation stories as it embodies Turtle Island, also referred to as Mother Earth. The turtle stands on a 3 foot (1 metre) tall boulder, which will list the 17 residential schools that once operated in Ontario. Further project plans and a turtle sculpture replica will be unveiled on October 9 during the IRSS Legacy Celebration.

The IRSS Legacy sculpture was developed in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action 82, which calls upon provincial and territorial governments, in collaboration with survivors and their organizations, and other parties to the Settlement Agreement, to commission and install a publicly accessible, highly visible, residential schools monument in each capital city to honour survivors and all the children who were lost to their families and communities.

Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre is an autonomous, vibrant cultural agency that involves and serves the Indigenous community with confidence for and commitment to their well-being. It is an active member of the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres. More information can be found at <https://www.councilfire.ca/>.

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