RESTORATION OF IDENTITY
IRSS Legacy

Planning / Partner Tool
(Working Version Printed on 12" x 18" sheet)

EX28.16.5
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RESTORATION OF IDENTITY

2016 marked 140 years since the first Indian Residential Schools (IRS) were implemented (1876-1996) under the Indian Act allowing the federal government to establish Residential Schools; incorporating religious-based, industrial schools for the purpose of assimilation of Indigenous youth through education and religious institutions under official government policy. Children as young as 3 years old were removed from their home communities isolated far from parental influence, separated from their siblings (schools were segregated according to gender), forbidden to speak their first language and their culture prohibited. Our children were institutionalized in order to integrate them into Canadian society, disrupting their growth, lives and communities, and causing long-term impacts. Many children experienced excessive punishments: physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse.

The IRS Legacy project recognizes this fact and commits to work towards Truth and Reconciliation through the creation of a structure entitled the RESTORATION OF IDENTITY. The structure recreates the Turtle, symbolic of Mother Earth, acknowledges former IRS students, their Nations and Clans, and roots them back to their rightful place within creation. The Turtle climbing over a boulder structure (listing Residential Schools in Ontario) is intended to remind ALL of the struggles experienced by Residential School Survivors and to demonstrate their continued recovery and resilience.

The Unveiling Ceremony

In advance of the completion of the overall Restoration of Identity space, Toronto Council Fire is planning an unveiling event for the Turtle sculpture. On October 5, 10 & 11, 2018, one hundred thousand (100,000) attendees are expected for the 3 days of workshops, ceremonies and events. One hundred (100) teepees will be erected on Nathan Phillips Square, representing Indigenous peoples living in Toronto. The teepees will include arts and crafts, educational information and presentations, Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizational vendors.

The Turtle is a shared symbolism amongst Indigenous Nations all around the world. Organizations from Hawaii to New Zealand will be invited to the event. More importantly, this will be an opportunity for IRS survivors from across Canada to gather and to participate in an event that will honour their strength and resilience.