RATIONALE FOR THE *"REACHING OUT"* MONUMENT

The graceful "Reaching Out" Monument is a remarkable work of art, visually and socially. It clearly works to respond to aesthetic, emotional and spiritual needs of individuals and society.

The incidence of child abuse in Canada is staggering. We hear tragic stories in the media daily. The statistics are mind-boggling. Unfortunately, the stories are true and the statistics are probably underestimated. This tragedy implores a public response.

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A fundamental premise of Dr. Irving's Monument vision was that people who have confronted abuse have a special wisdom that can assist others. Their triumphs over the challenges of adversity make them role models for all of society. The messages on the quilt squares of the Monument speak of compassion and the desire to make a difference.

The Monument as good art speaks from heart and soul to heart and soul to:

- Make us feel the awe and wonder of standing in front of great art;
- Honour and validate all Canadians who struggle to find health and happiness despite what they have suffered;
- Tell children that we want to empower them and keep them safe;
- Provide care givers who are at risk encouragement to turn to help and support;
- Make the issue of child abuse more visible and affirm to all that we **<u>can</u>** do something about it;
- Provide hope.

During our 1999 Cross-Canada Tour we met a woman who had lived with the secret of child abuse until major heart surgery in her mid-sixties. The life and death risk of the upcoming surgery compelled her to unburden to her surgeon the night before her operation. The woman had been abused as a child, had grown up, married, raised several children. She never told her husband because of the shame she felt, the way people judged victims at that point in time and her concern that if she had told him, years earlier, he might not have married her. When we met, she and her shocked husband were in therapy and on the way to recovery of themselves and their marriage.

She told us her story because she felt that the Monument was telling the story for everyone who, like her, had been silenced. The Monument spoke to them and for them. "Reaching Out" is a healing Monument whose time has come!