

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation an opportunity to reflect on harmful legacy of residential schools

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, recognized on September 30, provides an opportunity for Canadians to reflect on the harmful legacy of Canada's residential school system. This is the first year this day is being federally recognized; however, it was originally established in 2013 as Orange Shirt Day. Phyllis Webstad shared her story of her favourite orange shirt being taken upon arrival at St. Joseph's Mission Residential School and this began a movement across Canada to honour communities, Survivors and families impacted by the legacy of residential schools.

The passing of Bill C-5 fulfilled the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #80. It was unanimously supported by the House of Commons in June 2021 after going through multiple revisions, and being stalled by Conservative Senators in 2019.

The National Day of Truth and Reconciliation is an opportunity for us to reflect, become educated and take action to address past and current injustices against Indigenous Peoples, while centring Survivors, their descendants and those who never made it home. It is a day to mourn the loss of the children whose bodies were recovered this year, those still to come home, and all those affected by both the direct and intergenerational impact of residential schools.

Racial injustice did not end with the closing of residential schools; it continued through the Sixties Scoop, the criminal justice system, child welfare system, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), and the lack of access to clean drinking water. It is important to acknowledge these systemic issues that are rooted in white supremacy, and the work that still needs to be done.

In 2015, ETFO endorsed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [Calls to Action](#) and remains committed to supporting educators, communities and students in continuing these conversations. While we renew our call to demand action for reconciliation and justice, we also know this is a moment to engage in learning, but talking about residential schools requires care.

It is important that we approach this learning in culturally safe and trauma-informed ways to ensure we do not unintentionally perpetuate colonial violence and harm. ETFO's [Healing Conversations resource](#) supports educators in discussing residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and MMIWG.

As we work to create spaces that are safe and inclusive for all, we must go beyond performative acts. We must demand justice and commit to continuing the work of reconciliation by taking actions like the following throughout the year:

- reading the [Calls to Action](#);
- reading [Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG](#);
- reviewing the [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#) website and resources;
- learning about [Indigenous histories](#) in Canada and contemporary issues;
- supporting First Nations, Métis and Inuit [artists](#) and [authors](#); and
- [visiting virtual museums](#).

Other resources to support educators in their unlearning, learning and re-learning are available on etfofnmi.ca.