



## National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

This Thursday will mark the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in what is now called Canada. This day is recognized as a federal holiday, however, it is not a day of merriment or celebration. It is a day for people to take the time to learn and reflect on the impacts that Residential Schools have had on the Survivors and the generations that follow. September 30<sup>th</sup> has been collectively known as Orange Shirt Day by many Indigenous peoples. It speaks to the experience of Phyllis Webstad, a Residential School Survivor from Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation. In 2013, she told her story of how the excitement for her first day of school was crushed as she was stripped of her brand new orange shirt and replaced with a bleak and depressing uniform. The coldness and neglect that the children faced daily is only the starting point to understanding what it must have been like to be taken away from their families and forced to live in these Institutions which were devoid of love and nurturing. Today, we honour the journey of thousands of Residential School Survivors by wearing an orange shirt on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called on the government to establish a statutory holiday in the Call to Action #80, which reads: We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

The government, along with many Indigenous people, selected September 30<sup>th</sup>. We recognize that it has been a sorrowful summer for Indigenous communities across Turtle Island as work is being done to locate the unmarked graves of the far too many children who did not survive Residential Schools. It has been especially hard on those who never got to see loved ones return home. The intergenerational harm and the legacy of Residential Schools is long and it will take many generations yet to come to understand the severity of the wounds that this has caused to Indigenous people. We implore you to take this time to educate yourself and your family on the experiences that Residential Schools Survivors have shared. It will be difficult and at times painful to sit with these truths, but the strength and resiliency these children carry with them into adult years can give us all hope while reminding us that we have a responsibility to support them however they need.

David A. Robertson has curated a list of recommended books that we can read to help educate ourselves and others. Please follow this [link](#) to see some of the stories.