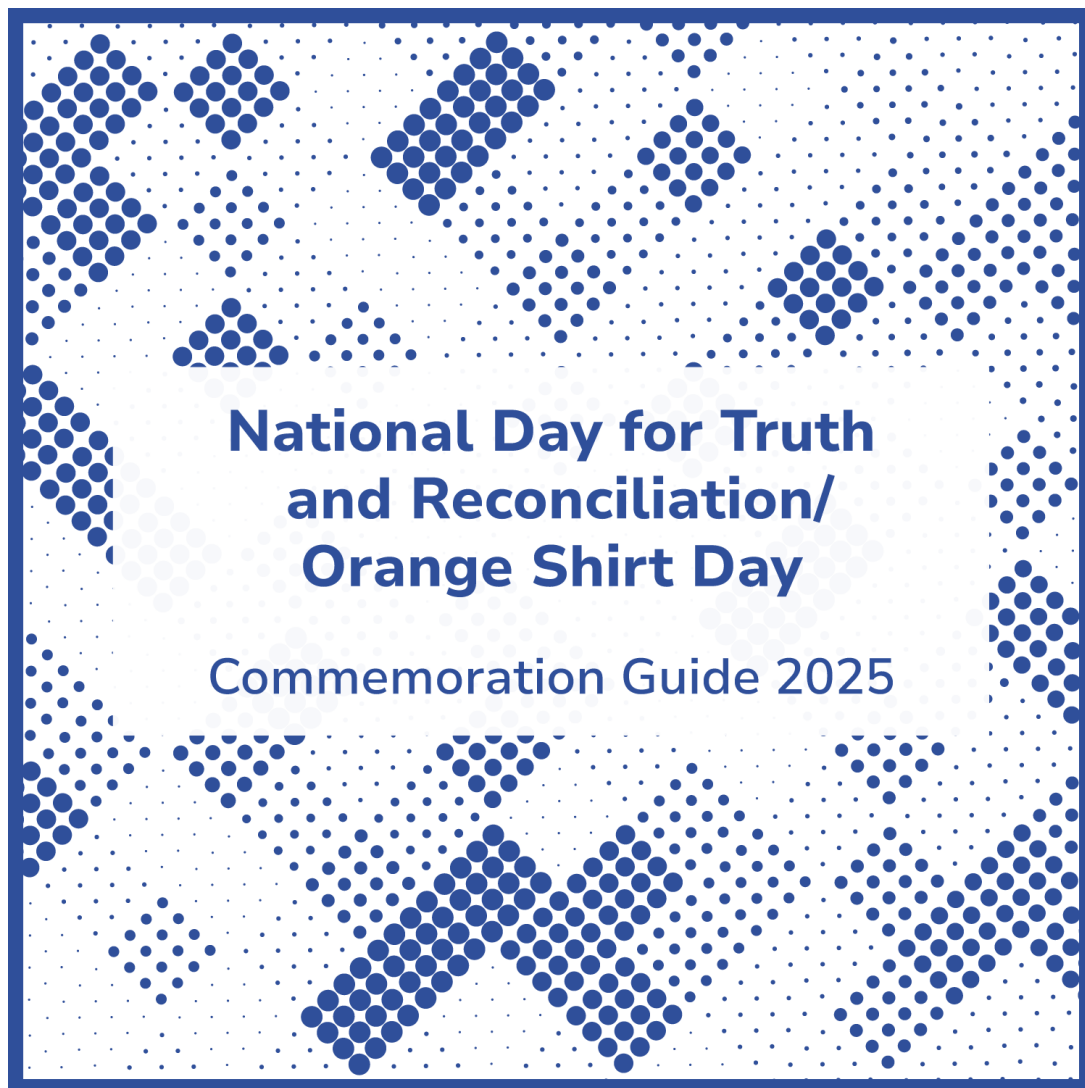




National Day for Truth and Reconciliation/ Orange Shirt Day

Commemoration Guide 2025



**Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion**

ccdi.ca

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation/Orange Shirt Day

September 30, 2025 Commemoration Guide

September 30 holds very different meanings for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. For many Indigenous communities, it is a day that brings up painful memories and ongoing impacts of colonial violence. For non-Indigenous people, it is an opportunity to confront uncomfortable truths, reflect on Canada's colonial history, and consider what active participation in reconciliation can look like.

Since 2013, Orange Shirt Day has been observed on September 30, inspired by the story of Phyllis Webstad.

In 2021, the federal government passed Bill C-5, recognizing September 30 as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a federal holiday that acknowledges the intergenerational harm of residential schools and the need for ongoing learning and action.

This year's guide is divided into two sections: Truth and Reconciliation. The first section focuses on the legacy of residential schools, the history and structures of colonization, and the realities still faced by Indigenous Peoples in Canada today. The second section offers starting points for individuals and organizations committed to meaningful and ongoing reconciliation.

The resources and ideas in this guide are not exhaustive. Instead, they are intended to prompt critical reflection, dialogue, and action in the workplace. Every person's relationship to this day will differ, and we encourage organizations to approach this work with humility, care, and a willingness to learn.

Note: A magnifying glass icon (🔍) indicates that a resource is available in the CCDI Knowledge Repository. An asterisk () indicates a recently added resource.*

The information and resources below contain information that may be disturbing to some individuals, especially to Residential School Survivors. If you or someone you know needs support, please call the 24-Hour National Survivors Crisis Line at 1-866-925-4419.

Additionally, the Hope for Wellness Help Line offers immediate help to all Indigenous Peoples across Canada. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, it offers immediate support and crisis intervention. Call the toll-free Help Line at 1-855-242-3310 or connect to the online chat at www.hopeforwellness.ca.

Facing the truth: Understanding Canada’s colonial history

Indigenous Peoples throughout the area now known as Canada have lived and thrived on these lands for thousands of years, long before European arrival. Due to the vast number of Indigenous Nations, each with their own cultures, languages, and traditions, it is impossible to group together their history. Yet, a shared principle connected many Nations: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wellbeing were deeply rooted in relationships with the land. This is reflected in frameworks such as the 4 R's ([Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility](#)), which have been drawn from Indigenous worldviews and teachings. Understanding this deep relationality helps explain why colonial policies that disrupted land-based connections, such as forced relocations and land dispossession, were not only intentional but also deeply harmful and traumatic.

What follows is a brief timeline of key decrees, policies, reports, and events that contributed to the attempted erasure and ongoing genocide of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This background is important for anyone engaging in reconciliation work today. For further information, visit [the Canadian Encyclopedia website](#) or other Indigenous-led educational sources.

Colonial timeline: A legacy of displacement and resistance

Year/Date	Event	Description
2025 (May)	Throne Speech and Indigenous response	King Charles delivers the Throne Speech to open the 45th Parliament, including a Land Acknowledgment. In response, Indigenous leaders caution against symbolic gestures without meaningful commitments to treaty enforcement, self-determination, and resource-sharing.
October– December, 2024	Indigenous-led legal and economic advancements	UNDRIP Implementation in B.C.: British Columbia advances its legal alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), including land title and co-governance agreements such as those with the Haida Nation. Economic Reconciliation : The federal government sets a procurement goal of awarding 5% of contracts to Indigenous businesses. By the end of 2024, contracts worth \$1.6 billion are awarded. Budget 2024 commits \$319.8 million to strengthen Indigenous financial institutions.

2023–2024	Commemoration and cemetery records	Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) allocates \$2.7 million to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation for school death registers and cemetery records (Calls to Action 72–73). An additional \$323 million is invested in the Missing Children and Burial Information Program , with progress reported at 60% of schools investigated and a target of 86% by March 2025.
2024 (April)	National Council for Reconciliation legislation	Bill C-29 receives Royal Assent, establishing a legally independent, Indigenous-led National Council for Reconciliation to monitor the implementation of TRC Calls to Action 53–56.
2022 (July)	Papal visit to Indigenous lands	The Pope visited Indigenous lands in Alberta, Quebec, and Nunavut and offered apologies for the church’s involvement in residential schools.
2022 (March)	Papal apology in Rome	Over 30 members of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis delegations pleaded for and received a private apology from the Pope for the Roman Catholic Church’s actions in the creation of the residential school system. The Pope promised to deliver this apology on Indigenous land.
2021 (June)	Creation of a federal statutory holiday	National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30 .
2021 (May)	First public confirmation of residential school graves	215 unmarked graves were detected at Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia.
2015	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada	Report published with 94 calls to action .
2008	Formal apology	Prime Minister Stephen Harper, on behalf of the Government of Canada, delivers a formal apology to Residential School Survivors and their families.
1997	Last residential school closes	The last residential school to close was Kivalliq Hall in Rankin Inlet in the land now known as Nunavut. Kivalliq Hall was only recently recognized as a residential school, and until then Gordon Residential School in Punnichy, Saskatchewan, which closed in 1996, was known to be the last residential school.

1987	Nora Bernard initiates class-action suit for residential school survivors	Mi'kmaw activist Nora Bernard begins organizing Survivors of the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School. Her advocacy eventually leads to the first class-action lawsuit against the Canadian government, which results in a public apology and the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
1982	Canadian Constitution Act, 1982	The Canadian Constitution is patriated, and thanks to the advocacy of Indigenous Peoples, Section 35 recognizes and affirms Aboriginal titles and treaty rights.
1880s	Beginning of federal residential school system	While the federal residential school system began around 1883, the origins of the residential school system can be traced to as early as the 1830s — long before Confederation in 1867 — when the Anglican Church established a residential school in Brantford, Ontario. Prior to this point, churches had built schools specifically for Indigenous children since the mid-1600s. For more information, visit the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada .
1763	The Royal Proclamation	Signed by King George III giving limited recognition of title to Indigenous communities and providing guidelines for negotiating treaties on a nation-to-nation basis.
1400s	Doctrine of Discovery	A means of legitimizing the colonization of lands outside of Europe. Christopher Columbus arrives in the Americas.

Orange Shirt Day and the TRC: Stories that must be heard

The creation of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation stems from [Call to Action](#) #80 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

80. 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.

This date also coincides with **Orange Shirt Day**, which grew out of a local effort to commemorate the residential school experience at St. Joseph Mission Residential School, based on a story shared by Phyllis Webstad about her residential school experience. Phyllis' story is a recollection of being six years old, proudly wearing a new orange shirt to her first day of school, and having that shirt removed and taken away, never to be seen again. You can [read more about Phyllis' story here](#).

Her story, and those of many others, are stark reminders of the deep harms caused by the residential school system, and of the resilience of Survivors and their communities. The TRC gathered thousands of these stories, bringing national attention to the lived realities of Survivors and their families. These testimonies form a collective memory that must continue to be heard, understood, and acted upon. Listening is a form of witnessing and witnessing calls for action. While September 30 is a day for reflection, it is also a time to engage meaningfully with the truths being shared.

Nora Bernard: A legacy of justice

Another story that must be heard is that of Mi'kmaw activist Nora Bernard. In 1987, Nora began organizing fellow Survivors of the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School to seek justice. Her tireless advocacy eventually led to the first class-action lawsuit against the Canadian government on behalf of residential school Survivors, filed in 2006. Two key mandates of this lawsuit were a formal public apology and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Nora was tragically killed in 2007 and did not live to witness the full impact of her legacy. Her courage and leadership were instrumental in shaping Canada's journey toward truth and reconciliation.

Ways to engage with Orange Shirt Day

Engagement with Orange Shirt Day can help deepen our understanding of the truths shared by Survivors and honour the stories that continue to shape our present. Consider the following actions:

- Read [The Survivors Speak](#) report from the TRC, a powerful collection of stories told directly by Survivors.
- Support Orange Shirt Society's efforts by [shopping their merchandise](#), watching [educational videos about Canadian Residential schools](#), or [booking a Residential School Survivor to speak at your next event](#).
- Read [What is Orange Shirt day](#) or this [beautiful and short write-up of NDTR written by Shreya Shah](#) of The Indigenous Foundation.
- Listen and Reflect on the [episode by Dr. Candace Linklater of Relentless Indigenous Woman podcast](#) offers a moving reflection on the meaning of the day: "reflect, take what you're learning and walk in solidarity with us".

- Learn with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) by browsing their [interactive map](#) of residential schools in Canada and the US and joining their free public [lunch and learns](#) the week leading up to September 30.
- Address difficult conversations and learn how to respond to [denialism](#).
- Visit the Woodland Cultural Centre, take a virtual tour of the [Mohawk Institute](#), [Canada's oldest residential school](#) or support their [Save the Evidence](#) campaign.

Taking responsibility: Working toward meaningful reconciliation

One of the key aspects of reconciliation is learning how to respect and uphold treaties. All who live on the land now known as Canada live on land that is either covered by a treaty or is unceded territory (land that was never 'ceded' or surrendered). When land is covered by a treaty, all the inhabitants of that land are responsible for upholding the guidelines of that treaty.

Activity: Map your land connection

To support deeper engagement with the section above, we invite your team to take part in this reflective activity that personalizes treaty and land awareness.

Step 1: Locate your land

Using the resources below, identify the Indigenous lands connected to your home, office, or community. Consider treaties, unceded territories, Métis agreements, and Inuit/Inuktitut areas:

- The treaty (if applicable) covering your home or office location
- The name(s) of Indigenous nation(s) connected to the land

These links can help you learn about the treaties around your office(s), staff, and home:

- [Government of Canada – Treaties and agreements](#)
- [Government of Canada – A History of treaty-making in Canada](#)
- [Government of Canada – Maps of Indigenous Peoples and lands \(including Métis and Inuit territories\)](#)
- [Treaties in Canada – Education guide](#)
- [*Experiences Canada Treaty and Land Claim Map \(PDF\)](#)
- [Experiences Canada Treaty](#)
- [Native-Land.ca](#)

If the land you live or work on is unceded, that means it is not covered by any treaties. The links listed below explain what unceded territory is and what it means for the people who live on it:

- [What we mean when we say Indigenous land is “unceded”](#)
- [Unceded land: The case for Wet’suwet’en sovereignty](#)

Step 2: Reflection

Choose one or more of the following prompts to reflect on:

- What responsibilities do I have as a non-Indigenous person living and working on this land?
- What new insights challenged my understanding of Canadian history and Indigenous relationships?
- How can I integrate this knowledge into my professional role or community engagement?

Step 3: Team sharing

Invite your team to:

- Add findings to a shared virtual map or office bulletin board
- Start a meeting with a short land acknowledgment and a reflection from one team member
- Use this activity to kick off a longer-term reconciliation working group or learning circle

CCDI offers many resources that are focused on reconciliation, as well as other resources that provide helpful background knowledge while committing to reconciliation work. We have listed some of these resources below. Please note that you will need to log into the Knowledge Repository to access these resources.

- 🔍 [CCDI Webinar: Ten years of Truth, a lifetime of action: Part one - Prioritizing Indigenous justice with action and accountability as non-Indigenous settler peoples](#)
- 🔍 [CCDI Webinar: Pathways towards truth and reconciliation - Panel conversation](#)
- 🔍 [CCDI Webinar: CCDI & IW present: Succession planning for Indigenous professionals in Canadian workplaces](#)

Commemorating September 30

If you are employed by a federally regulated company, you are entitled to a statutory holiday for National Truth and Reconciliation Day. Some provinces have also formally recognized September 30th as a statutory holiday, so this may also be the case for organizations in [Prince Edward Island](#), [Northwest Territories](#), [Yukon](#), [Nunavut](#), [New Brunswick](#), [British Columbia](#), and [Manitoba](#). Even in provinces and territories where it is not a formal holiday, some organizations may decide that closing their office is the right choice for them. For other employers, commemorating this day may look different.

Some organizations might provide a day off work to allow individuals to attend events or participate in learning opportunities independently. In contrast, others may commemorate the day together as a team via speakers, workshops, or other activities. At CCDI, our offices will be closed on September 30th to allow our staff to spend that time on independent learning, reflection, and acts of reconciliation.

There are many reasons that an organization may decide to close or not. Regardless of the decision, we have listed some ideas for meaningful engagement in reconciliation work. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and many of these activities can be done regardless of whether you have the day as a statutory holiday.

If you are not required to work, you can get out in the community and get involved by:

- **Taking part in a cultural event near you:** Many Indigenous communities and organizations host ceremonies, tours, and cultural experiences to acknowledge the significance of this day. We encourage you to connect with local Indigenous groups to find out what events are taking place. For those in Alberta, [Indigenous Tourism Alberta](#) provides listings of Indigenous-led events and experiences across the province. Please note that while most Powwows are open to all, some other events and ceremonies may be intended for Indigenous participants only.
- **Volunteering with Indigenous-serving organizations:** There are organizations across Canada that are created by and for Indigenous communities, and many of these offer information about how Canadians can volunteer with them to support their causes.
- **Supporting Indigenous artists:** Art is a very important and powerful tool that gives many Indigenous People a means of self-expression. In addition to the media listed in the [educational guide \(PDF\)](#), some organizations list Indigenous artists and art such as the [National Film Bureau](#), the [Indigenous Arts Collective](#), and the [Indigenous Art Centre](#).

If you are required to work, you can take steps towards personal reconciliation and spend time learning by:

- **Wearing an orange shirt:** You can purchase an orange shirt from an [official merchandise supplier](#) to ensure that a portion of the proceeds go to the Orange Shirt Society and other Indigenous-supporting organizations.
- **Inviting Indigenous speakers or facilitators:** CCDI has partnered with [Indigenous Works](#), a national non-profit organization founded in 1998 as a recommendation from the 1996 Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. For over 20 years, Indigenous Works partnered with organizations to strengthen their results in Indigenous employment, workplace engagement, and inclusion. Below are some additional organizations that offer workshops and speakers:
 - [Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.](#)
 - [Indigenous Inclusion, facilitated by Nahanee Creative](#)
 - [Kina8at](#) (education-focused)
 - [Naqsmist](#)
 - [*National Speakers Bureau: Indigenous Speakers](#)
 - [Indigenous Cultural Competency Training](#)
 - [Reconciliation Education](#)
 - [Speaker Bureau of Canada: Indigenous speakers](#)
- **Put effort toward the 94 Calls to action as they apply to your organization, industry, or sector:** Familiarize yourself and your team with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [Calls to Action \(PDF\)](#) and the [United Nations Declaration on Rights for Indigenous Peoples \(PDF\)](#).
- **Exploring CCDI's resource guide:** CCDI's [National Day for Truth and Reconciliation / Orange Shirt Day educational guide \(PDF\)](#) features many books, movies, and TV shows that you can view outside of your workday.
- **Listening to the [CCDI podcast](#), released on September 27, 2024:** In this episode of Leader Talks with Anne-Marie Pham, guest Elijah Blackbird, Culture Manager at The Beer Store, shares insights on Indigenous diversity, inclusion, and the importance of truth and reconciliation. Tune in to learn how cultural leadership can drive meaningful change.

- **Donating to Indigenous charities:** Canada Helps provides a [list of charities](#) that support or promote the needs of Indigenous communities. We have listed some additional charities below:

- [Alliance Autochtone du Québec Inc.](#)
- [The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund](#)
- [Indian Residential School Survivors Society](#)
- [Indigenous Works' Kocihta Charity](#)
- [Indigenous Youth Roots](#)
- [Indspire](#)
- [Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami](#)
- [Legacy of Hope Foundation](#)
- [Mikana](#)
- [Native Women's Association of Canada](#)
- [Reconciliation Canada](#)
- [True North Aid](#)

Conclusion

Truth and reconciliation are not interchangeable, they are interconnected. Reconciliation cannot begin without truth, and truth remains hollow without the actions of reconciliation.

Truth asks us to witness the lived experiences of Survivors, families, and communities impacted by residential schools and other colonial policies. It requires confronting hard realities, including the ongoing confirmations of unmarked graves and the systemic injustices faced by Indigenous Peoples. Reconciliation invites us to act, not just on one day, but every day. It lives in how we listen, how we speak up, how we change systems, and how we hold ourselves accountable. It is a long-term, relational commitment rooted in respect, repair, and reciprocity.

As we mark Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, let us remember the powerful words of Justice Murray Sinclair, the former Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, advocating for reconciliation : “There will be storms, there will be obstacles, but we cannot allow ourselves to be daunted by the task because our goal is just and it is also necessary.”