

NATIONAL DAY for Truth And Reconciliation

In observance of the National Day for *Truth and Reconciliation*, September 30th will now be a statutory holiday. Federally regulated workplaces like Canada Post will be closed, to commemorate the tragic legacy of residential schools in our country. This date coincides with Orange Shirt Day, which began in 2013, and involves wearing orange shirts to honour Indigenous children forced to leave their families to attend residential schools.

The holiday comes in the wake of discovering the remains of more than 1,300 Indigenous children in unmarked graves at former residential schools since May of this year. Appallingly, we know there are many more yet to be found.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was set up in 2008 to document the effects of residential schools on Indigenous people, released a report in 2015 with 94 Calls to Action. One action was for the federal government to establish a statutory holiday to honour residential school survivors, their families and their communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of reconciliation.

While many of us are familiar with the term, there may still be confusion over what it means and who is responsible for reconciliation. There is fear that reconciliation will simply become a buzzword, a trend, or a box to be ticked by politicians during election campaigns. Reconciliation is a complex, multi-faceted process. It means Indigenous history education for all. It means food security, clean drinking water, and basic human rights on reserves.

It is an acknowledgement of the intergenerational pain and suffering caused by residential schools. It is implementing **ALL** 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation report. And so much more.

The legacy of residential schools and colonialism continue to negatively impact Indigenous communities today. Indigenous children are over-represented in foster care, while Indigenous adults are over-represented in prison. Women and girls are abducted and murdered at a rate that would not be tolerated if the same were happening to settlers. Land and water rights have been stripped. The list goes on.

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You may be wondering how a day off for federal workers honours residential school survivors. It's up to you to make the most of it. CUPW encourages members to use the day to educate yourselves. Attend an event in your community or virtually, read the Truth and Reconciliation Report, speak with and listen to elders. And don't limit yourself to learning for just one day.

Reconciliation requires more than a national holiday. Indigenous Peoples continue to suffer from ongoing colonial practices. In solidarity with them, it is our duty to work toward dismantling colonialism in this country and help to repair the damage done. Our ongoing task is to learn about the injustice of colonialism, and take seriously the 94 Calls to Action emanating from the Truth and Reconciliation Report.

In Solidarity,



Dave Bleakney
2nd National Vice-President

