
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2023IRR0006-000152
Feb. 7, 2023

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Ministry of Labour

B.C. will formally recognize National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

VICTORIA – The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation will be enshrined in B.C. law to honour the strength and resilience of residential school survivors and remember the children who never came home.

This new provincial statutory day of commemoration responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action No. 80, which called on the federal government to establish a holiday to honour survivors, their families and communities. If passed, British Columbia will join Canada, Prince Edward Island, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and the Yukon as jurisdictions that have designated Sept. 30 as a statutory holiday.

“One day there will be no survivors left in Canada. What is forgotten is often repeated,” said Phyllis Webstad, Orange Shirt Day Society. “With the federal government passing legislation to make Orange Shirt Day, September 30th, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and now the B.C. provincial government announcing this legislation today, it will help to ensure that what happened to us will never happen again and will never be forgotten.”

If passed, more British Columbians will be able to get involved in advancing reconciliation by participating in local commemoration or education events, having important conversations with their families, their friends and their communities, and finding meaningful ways to learn more about shared history.

“Many British Columbians have been marking Orange Shirt Day with humility, respect and reflection in their own ways for years,” said Premier David Eby. “Today, we are taking the important step to enshrine this day in law to acknowledge the wrongdoings of the past, and to take meaningful action toward reconciliation.”

Harry Bains, Minister of Labour, said: “This is an important step in our commitment to lasting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in B.C. Having a provincial statutory holiday means more workers across the province will now be able to observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, joining those in the public sector and in federally regulated jobs who already had this opportunity.”

The Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation sought feedback from Indigenous Peoples on how best to observe this day in B.C. The Ministry of Labour also consulted with employers and workers.

“For decades, Indigenous leaders have called upon governments to publicly recognize the harms caused by residential schools, Indian Day Schools and Indian hospitals, as well as the Sixties Scoop,” said Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. “This

day is about taking time to reflect on the experience of residential school survivors and their families, while learning about and honouring the strength, resilience, and contributions of Indigenous communities in our province.”

Quotes:

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president, Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBIC) –

“UBCIC welcomes and heartily applauds this critically meaningful step by the Province of B.C. to join the federal government in observing September 30th as a provincial statutory holiday for Truth and Reconciliation. UBCIC stands with the survivors, intergenerational survivors, and B.C. First Nations who have advocated for the adoption of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action No. 80 in B.C. For this day to truly be meaningful, it requires healing and capacity for change; we still need to see broader acknowledgment of the harms of the residential school system along with significant investments into public and private education, former residential school site investigations, and into commemoration, remembrance events and memorials led by First Nations to bring healing to our people and change for our future generations.”

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, B.C. Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) –

“The B.C. Assembly of First Nations welcomes the news that the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation will be made a statutory holiday in B.C. This is a day for all British Columbians, Indigenous people and our non-Indigenous neighbours to reflect and breathe life into what reconciliation means, and take steps to build a better future together. It recognizes the struggles that we First Nations peoples have had to face, and clarifies the role that settlers can play in reconciling our relationship. As BCAFN Knowledge Keeper, Dr. Robert Joseph has said: ‘Reconciliation is for all Canadians!’”

Robert Phillips, First Nations Summit Political Executive –

“We commend B.C. for declaring September 30th, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR), a provincial statutory holiday. NDTR provides Canadians an important opportunity to learn about, and reflect on, the terrible legacy of residential schools in Canada and to recognize the devastating impacts that colonialism has had, and continues to have, on Indigenous communities. It provides an opportunity for Canadians to stand with us in partnership to break down the systemic colonialism and racism that still exists today. B.C.’s declaration is an important indicator of the government’s commitment to work in partnership towards reconciliation.”

Chief Robert Joseph, Reconciliation Canada –

"The bill being introduced today, to mark September the 30th as a statutory holiday, is profound. It will inspire us all to advance reconciliation. The cause of freedom from across the generations will be invoked in perpetuity. This bill will serve as a foothold in mitigating despair and hopelessness and we can all celebrate every year.”

Charlene Belleau, First Nations liaison with B.C. –

“Today, Indigenous Peoples are having to stand and relive the horrific and traumatic Indian Residential School experiences of our ancestors. Many of our children never came home. Our

ancestors prepared us for this difficult time and gave us medicines and ceremonies to heal so that our children will stand with the rest of the world. On September 30th, each and every British Columbian needs to acknowledge the sad legacy of B.C. Indian Residential Schools and its impact on generations of Indigenous Peoples, families and communities. Be prepared to stand with us, walk with us and heal with us.”

Wahmeesh (Ken Watts), elected Chief Councillor, Tseshaht First Nation –

“You cannot have Reconciliation without first the Truth, so let's ensure that this day is not just another holiday, but a day to educate British Columbians, honour Indian Residential School survivors and those who did not make it home. Tseshaht First Nation would like to say, ‘Kleco, Kleco’ (thank you) to the Province of B.C. for stepping up and taking action to create a better future for all.”

Lissa Dawn Smith, President, Métis Nation British Columbia –

“The Province of British Columbia continues to lead the way in Canada’s commitment to upholding both the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action. Few people know that the colonial legacy of residential schools affected Métis children. We have our own stories to tell about the residential school experience. Our children were taken from their families, and this hurtful legacy continues to impact our Nation today. We commend the Province for taking this significant step in the reconciliation journey.”

Angela White, executive director, Indian Residential School Survivor Society –

“Thank you to the province for the continued efforts toward truth and reconciliation. This day provides a collective commitment for all British Columbians to learn through truth telling, and in many cases, for people to re-learn and reflect on the history of First Nations people. Every healing journey is sacred, and the healing will continue for First Nations people. Let’s go beyond the 94 calls to action and be inclusive to Indigenous people beyond September 30.”

Eddy Charlie, Orange Shirt Day Victoria –

“It makes my heart feel good to know and witness the people on the lands pushing each other to reach out to begin speaking of reconciliation and making it happen. We need to find our way together. The lands and the people need to react to each other in kind ways for reconciliation to take root. What we need to understand is, you cannot ask people to coexist by having one side bend their wills and give up their freedoms and rely on a solution that is only good for one side. What we need from each other is to stop blaming each other and engage in meaningful conversations with one person at a time. Everyone knows that violence begets violence and breeds more hatred. We need to find our way together. Reconciliation is not at the end of the conversation; it must always be moving like a strong current of the rivers of the lands.”

Christine Bergeron, CEO, Vancity –

“Advancing reconciliation means to recognize and acknowledge the harms done to generations of Indigenous people in Canada. In formally recognizing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, the B.C. government has taken a step on the path of redress and healing. This day of reflection is a time to honour the strength and resilience of survivors,

their families and communities and commit ourselves to end the ongoing inequities and injustices experienced by Indigenous people. Every one of us has a role to play in that process.”

Learn More:

For more information about the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/national-day-for-truth-and-reconciliation>

Read the federal government’s initiative here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/national-day-truth-reconciliation.html>

Learn more about obligations for employers:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/statutory-holidays/qualify-for-statutory-holiday-pay>

Watch a video about recognizing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LcSNcN3GzI>

Learn more about Orange Shirt Day: <https://www.orangeshirtday.org/>

Two backgrounders follow.

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BACKGROUND 1

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National Day for Truth and Reconciliation facts

- The proposed legislation will designate Sept. 30 as a provincial statutory holiday beginning this year and for every year thereafter.
- The Employment Standards Act will also be amended, as it sets out the legislative powers to allow for “statutory holidays” as mandated days off, unless required to work, in which case an employee is then paid premium rates.
- Employees under B.C.’s Employment Standards Act are eligible to be paid for a statutory holiday after they have been employed for 30 calendar days and have earned wages on 15 of the 30 days before the statutory holiday.
- In British Columbia, provincial public-sector employers, including public schools, have recognized the federal holiday on Sept. 30 since 2021.
- In many cases, collective agreements require employers to recognize federal statutory holidays.
- In June 2022, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, First Nations Summit and B.C. Assembly of First Nations passed resolutions in 2022 calling on the B.C. government, in consultation and co-operation with Indigenous Peoples, to make Sept. 30 a statutory holiday.

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BACKGROUND 2

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Supports available to Indigenous Peoples

The following supports are available to Indigenous Peoples:

- National Indian Residential School Crisis Line:
 - Provides supports for former residential school students and those affected
 - Access emotional and crisis referral services
 - Call the 24-hour national crisis line: 1 866 925-4419
- Hope for Wellness Helpline:
 - Offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention by phone or online chat to all Indigenous Peoples across Canada
 - Call toll-free 1-855-242-3310 or start a confidential chat with a counsellor at www.hopeforwellness.ca
- The KUU-US Crisis Line Society:
 - Provides crisis services for Indigenous Peoples in B.C.
 - Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, toll-free across the Province at 1 800 588-8717
 - Alternatively, individuals can call direct into the Adult/Elders line at 250 723-4050 or the Children/Youth Line at 250 723-2040
 - More information is available at www.kuu-uscrisisline.com
- Métis Crisis Line:
 - A service provided by Métis Nation British Columbia
 - Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, toll-free across the Province at 1 833 638-4722

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