

Every Child Matters

Resources for Honouring Orange Shirt Day and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation 2024

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Peace be with you,

If you are new to the diocese, would like more information about Right Relations ministries, have any questions, or would like to get more involved please reach out to me here over email.

The information in this letter and resource package may be **triggering or upsetting for some** because it contains content related to the abuse of children, genocide of Indigenous Nations, and deaths of children at Residential Schools. If you or an Indigenous community member in your parish require immediate support, please reach out to the following support lines: The Indian Residential School Survivors Society's 24/7 Crisis Support Line: 1-800-721-0066 The 24-hour National Indian Residential School Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419

How can your parish honour Orange Shirt Day and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation? Throughout the fall, I invite you to engage multiple learning opportunities presented in this resource package and on or close to September 30th encourage your community to wear orange in honour of those who attended Residential School and those who never returned home again.

This December will be **nine years** since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its Final Report in 2015. Nine years since the horrific truths of church-run Residential School were documented against decades of systemic denial. Nine years since the courageous voices of Survivors shook the world. Though the power of their voices resound, in the year 2023 *none* of the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were completed by any levels of government or church parties.¹ Many Survivors and Elders have spoken of the injustice of reports collecting dust on our shelves and the spiritual imperative for all on this land to see themselves as active participants in the work of truth and right relations. Over the next year Right Relations ministries will audit and recommend action steps to ensure the Anglican Diocese of Toronto is fulfilling our responsibilities to the Calls to Actions of the TRC. Taking time as a parish community to learn about the truths of Residential Schools and colonialism are part of our responsibility to Call to Action #59:

“We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church’s role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools,

¹ Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby, “Calls to Action Accountability: a 2023 Status Update on Reconciliation”, Yellowhead Institute, 2023. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/YI-TRC-C2A-2023-Special-Report-compressed.pdf>

and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were necessary.”²

As Anglicans we have a responsibility to learn and share the truth of genocide against Indigenous families and Nations. The national Anglican Church states that “between 1820 and 1969, the Anglican Church of Canada administered about three dozen residential schools and hostels for Indigenous children.”³ After the Indian Act of 1876 Canada aggressively enacted policies to criminalize nomadic life-ways, confine Indigenous people to small reserves of land, and made it illegal for Indigenous people to organize, govern, raise their own children, and practice their faith, language and cultures. The closest Anglican-run Residential School to our diocese is the Mohawk Institute; it is documented that 97 Indigenous children died while students at the Mohawk Institute, and the Survivors Secretariat is currently investigating unmarked graves and additional missing children.

Survivor’s testimonies at the TRC illuminated horrific conditions in Residential Schools. The TRC’s “Missing Children and Unmarked Burials Project” confirmed 3,200 documented deaths of Indigenous children in Residential Schools, over half of which the cause of death was *not* recorded.⁴ As the TRC acknowledged this was just the beginning of identifying thousands of missing Indigenous children who never returned home from Residential Schools, this work has been continued by the Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor. The Interlocutor was appointed by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General to document missing and deceased Indigenous children at Residential Schools, their unmarked graves, and develop frameworks with Survivors and the families of missing children to support this important and sacred work going forward. Their 2024 report “Sites of Truth, Sites of Conscience: Unmarked Burials and Mass Graves of Missing and Disappeared Indigenous Children in Canada” states:

“The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) provides indisputable historical evidence of genocide, crimes against humanity, and mass human rights violations in the Indian Residential School System. The supposedly benevolent goal of assimilating Indigenous Peoples into settler

² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, Winnipeg, 2015, page 7.

³ The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, “Historical Sketch for Anglican Residential Schools,” <https://www.anglican.ca/tr/schools/>.

⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada’s Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015, page 19. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume_4_Missing_Children_English_Web.pdf

colonial Canadian society proclaimed by government leaders, church officials, and bureaucrats for well over a century masked a more sinister reality. Thousands of Indigenous children were subjected to violence, abuse, disease, and neglect in these institutions, and many of them died. Their death rates were far higher than those of non-Indigenous school-aged children. When they died, government and church officials often did not return the children to their families and communities for burial. They were buried instead in cemeteries at the institutions, often in unmarked and mass graves that were sometimes dug by other children. Many of these cemeteries and burial sites are neglected, abandoned, and unprotected. Families were provided with little information about what happened to their children.”⁵

As Anglicans, we have been called upon to lift up our responsibility to break through the Residential School denialism that is spreading throughout our society, to remember the children who never returned home from Residential School, and to commemorate their lives. This resource package seeks to empower you, as leaders in your communities, to provide opportunities for the truths of Survivors of Residential School to be lifted up and honoured. The Special Interlocutor states:

“I urge all Canadians to not be bystanders. Each of us must stand up and speak out. We must insist that these missing children, who were abused and neglected during their lives, now be treated with the respect and human dignity they deserve. We need to work together as we move forward. Let us honour and support all the Survivors, Indigenous families, and communities leading this Sacred work and keep the Spirits of the children foremost in our hearts and in our minds.”⁶

Amen.

In your parish, on or close to Orange Shirt Day/National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, I invite you (when appropriate in your liturgical context) to hold solemn silence in honour of children who did not return home from Residential School, and for those who still lay in unmarked graves. Pray for Survivors, families, all impacted, and all who are doing this work of recovery of missing Indigenous children. Learn, witness, and

⁵ Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor, “Sites of Truth, Sites of Conscience: Unmarked Burials and Mass Graves of Missing and Disappeared Indigenous Children in Canada”, 2024, pages 7-8. <https://osi-bis.ca/osi-resources/reports/>

⁶ Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor, “Sacred Responsibility: Searching for the Missing Children and Unmarked Burials”, Interim Report, 2023, page 4. https://osi-bis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Interim-Report_ENG_WEB_July11.pdf

teach about the truths of Survivors. Create a memorial with the young people of your parish in your sanctuary. Respectfully attend local events in honour of Orange Shirt Day and Truth and Reconciliation. Purchase an orange shirt from an Indigenous-led organization. Engage prayers for Orange Shirt Day, made available in English, Mandarin, Japanese, Cantonese, and Tamil by the Bishop's Collaborative for Right Relations. Read the reports from the Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools and speak out against Residential School denialism.

We are witnessing a time of apathy towards to the ongoing legacy of colonialism, genocide denialism, and an international degradation of the inherent rights of children, from Turtle Island, to Palestine, to Sudan, and many places around the world. As many of us witness live-streamed horrific acts of violence against children, we may feel disempowered to speak out against ongoing genocides and the abuse of children. If you are feeling isolated in these feelings of grief and vicarious trauma, please reach out- you are not alone. As preachers, teachers, and celebrants of the good news of the Resurrection of Christ we have been given a fragile trust and responsibility in our communities. Throughout the fall and year to come, I encourage you to engage this resource package, preach and teach about this sacred work, set up a memorial in your sacred space, and take up commitments to the path forward of truth, repatriation, and reparations that Survivors have marked.

In closing I offer reflections from the Special Interlocutor's report "Sacred Responsibility":

"Survivors have shared their truths for decades about the unmarked burials of children who died while being forced to attend Indian Residential Schools, but for far too long these truths have been dismissed or ignored. Within Indigenous communities, these truths are well-known; they have been shared over the years in whispers and hushes, in tears, and in ceremonies. Many Survivors, families, and communities have been searching for these children and trying to locate their burial sites for many years. In the 1960s and 70s, Alfred Kirkness, a Survivor of the Brandon Indian Residential School, worked tirelessly to identify the location of the original cemetery containing the unmarked burials of missing children. In 1986, Survivor Albert Lightning and others began searching for the cemetery located at the Red Deer Industrial School in Alberta. In 1992, Albert Lafferty, a Métis resident of Fort Providence, began research on the Fort Providence Indian Residential School cemetery in the Northwest Territories.

These and other early efforts to find and protect the burials of the children received little or no support from Canada or the church entities that operated

these institutions. Some local media brought attention to the concerns related to individual sites, yet regional and national media were, for the most part, absent. Government and church officials were silent. Why was this?

- Was it because they refused to confront the ugly truths about what really happened at these “schools” which are now, more appropriately, recognized as “institutions of genocide”?
- Was it simply apathy or callous indifference to the grief and suffering of those seeking answers?
- Was it because they held little value for Indigenous children when they were alive and felt that they mattered even less after they died?
- Was it because Canada and the church entities, as defendants in several criminal and civil court cases filed by Survivors, were reluctant to reveal any information related to the institutions to limit their liability?
- Was it because Canada sought to avoid charges of genocide and other breaches of international law and protect its global reputation as a just and peaceful society?

Canada’s legal framework created a culture of impunity. The TRC found that “Canada’s laws...fostered an atmosphere of secrecy and concealment...and the law...became a shield behind which churches, governments, and individuals could hide to avoid the consequences of horrific truths.”⁷

This September and the year to come, may we honour our responsibilities to Indigenous Nations, Survivors, and the children who never returned home from Residential School.

Sincerely,

Rev. Leigh Kern
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⁷ Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor, “Sacred Responsibility: Searching for the Missing Children and Unmarked Burials”, Interim Report, 2023, page 15. https://osi-bis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Interim-Report_ENG_WEB_July11.pdf

Every Child Matters: all ages visual reflection and orange hearts memorial creation resource

This resource has been created with young people in mind, but the activities and voices of Residential School Survivors that is lifted up can also be adapted into an interactive sermon or small group meeting.

Activity A.

The Survivors' Flag

Background:

"During summer 2021, discoveries of massive unmarked graves found on the grounds of former residential schools sparked heartfelt responses of mourning throughout Canada and from across the globe. As members of the public inquired about how they could show respect, many Survivors discussed remembrance and the creation of a Survivors flag as a salient and accessible symbol to honour the lives impacted by the residential school system."⁸

"The Survivors' Flag is an expression of remembrance, meant to honour residential school Survivors and all the lives and communities impacted by the residential school system in Canada. Each element depicted on the flag was carefully selected by Survivors from across Canada, who were consulted in the flag's creation."⁹
- *The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, "The Survivors' Flag"*

Visit [the Survivors' Flag online exhibit](#) created by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. The exhibit contains powerful reflections from Survivors on the symbolism, sacred stories and meaning imbedded in the Survivors' Flag that they co-created. Purchase [a lawn sign](#) for your parish (**Flags are reserved to be used exclusively by Survivors and their communities**) or share the flag image on a screen

⁸ "The Survivors' Flag", National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Winnipeg. <https://nctr.ca/exhibits/survivors-flag/>

⁹ "The Survivors' Flag", National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Winnipeg. <https://nctr.ca/exhibits/survivors-flag/>

or print out with your young people and reflect on its sacred imagery and teachings together.

Honouring the Children and their Families

Opening discussion questions and teaching:

How does God feel about children?

What makes you feel loved?

What makes a happy family?

For over 150 years Indigenous children were taken from their families by the Canadian government and churches, and many of them never returned home again. Today we honour them and remember their lives, and the pain they and their families endure. We remember how the Residential Schools hurt Indigenous families for generations. The Survivors' Flag was created by children who survived Residential Schools and grew up to courageously tell their truth. Today we honour and remember the sacred truths of these Survivors. As a church and followers of Jesus we pick up our responsibility to respect the sacred truths of Survivors and fulfill our commitments we have made through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Some of the [Calls to Actions from Survivors](#) are that Churches remember and share the truth about Residential Schools. Today we will centre and listen to the words of Survivors.

Reflect on the Sacred Imagery and Teaching of the Survivors' Flag



What do you see in The Survivors' Flag?

As people reflect on the images they see in *The Survivors' Flag*, share with them notes from the online National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation resource on the meaning of the **family, children, seeds below the ground, the tree of peace, cedar branch, cosmic symbolism, the Métis Sash, the Eagle Feather and the Inuksuit**.¹⁰

Listening to the Truth of Survivors

Let's learn from the Survivors who helped create this flag about the truth and teachings it carries.

*Read aloud (or have young people read) select quotes from the Survivors' on the meaning of the flag to them. The following quotes from Survivors are sourced from the online exhibit of *The Survivors' Flag*, created with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. Visit the online resource for more reflections from Survivors.*

I would look at the night sky and wonder if my Mother and family could see the same stars. I felt connected to them as I prayed to go home and I sent my love through the stars. It is important that the design tell our stories as Survivors, including things that we drew strength and comfort from.

- *Kukdookaa Terri Brown, Tahltan Nation, attended Yukon Hall and Coudert Residence*

For thousands of years, Inuit used inuksuit as markers for survival and the North Star for navigation. Their inclusion in this design carries this meaning – that our culture withstood colonial onslaught and our traditional ways will continue to guide us.

- *Jack Anawak, Inuk Survivor who attended Chesterfield Inlet Residential School*

It was important to include more than one child in the design as often whole sibling groups were taken from their parents, younger siblings, grandparents, and community. The whole family unit was harmed by this system in different ways. This image rewrites our future – it is about hope, healing and family reunification.

¹⁰"The Survivors' Flag", National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Winnipeg. <https://nctr.ca/exhibits/survivors-flag/>

- Janet Longclaws, Ojibway & Dakota Survivor who attended Brandon Residential School

As Survivors we have carried the memories of our fellow students who died at residential schools for entire lifetimes. We now acknowledge these little ones woke up the Nation. What is our responsibility to these children now and how do we prevent the world from falling asleep again? Their inclusion in the design not only acknowledges the memory of them, but also reminds others never to forget them.

- Garnet Angeconeb, Ojibway Survivor who attended Pelican Residential School

The Haudenosaunee Tree of Peace depicts the bringing together of the various Indigenous Nations across Canada as we remember the residential school children. We, as Survivors, can find some comfort and renewal, united in this common goal.

- Dawn Hill, Mohawk Survivor who attended Mohawk Institute Residential School

Activity B.

Orange Hearts Memorial in Honour of Children who Never Returned Home from Residential Schools

*"For the child taken, for the parent left behind."
Truth and Reconciliation Commission Interim Report, 2012.*

In your Sanctuary you are invited to create an Every Child Matters wall memorial. Place orange hearts around a sign in the centre that says a statement such as: Every Child Matters; We remember the children who did not return home from Residential School; or "For the child taken, for the parent left behind."

The Survivors' Flag is flown by Survivors and their families. In our sacred space today we will create together an Every Child Matters memorial to honour and remember the children who did not return home from Residential Schools. Generations tried to silence Indigenous people who survived Residential Schools, let us commit to speaking out and sharing the important truths we have been learning from the courage of Survivors.

Create a centre for the memorial and decorate it. It may say a statement such as: Every Child Matters, For the children who did not return home from Residential School, or "For the child taken, for the parent left behind."

Cut out and decorate orange hearts to honour Indigenous families, to remember the truth Survivors have taught us, and remember all of the children and families who were hurt by Residential Schools.

As we decorate the hearts, let's remember what we talked about at the beginning of our gathering, the sacredness of children to God. May the lives of all children be honoured and respected.

When appropriate, have the young people assemble the memorial in your sacred space.

Honour Local Anishinaabek Stories and Language

Learning activity for young people: hear stories from community members about the history of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation and learn how to say some words and phrases in the Anishnaabemowin language

When we acknowledge the territory that the diocese of Toronto exists on, we recognize the local First Nations: The Mississaugas of the Credit, the Chippewas of Rama and Georgina Island, Mississaugas of Scugog Island, Hiawatha, Alderville, and Curve Lake First Nations. All these First Nations are Anishinaabek whose traditional language is Anishnaabemowin. In honour of the Indigenous languages that the Residential School system sought to silence, visibilize Anishnaabemowin in your parish.

From the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation Waaseyaagmiing Anishinaabek:

“It is important to start with the fact that Anishnaabemowin faces extinction. The effects of colonization, the residential and Mission school system, and the child welfare system in Canada have been devastating to our language, and in turn our People and identity.

Our language and culture were originally passed on orally by our Elders and older family relations to the younger generations. This has now

changed. Anishinaabemowin now relies on the younger generations to learn and pass on our language to future generations.”¹¹

Click here to access Anishinaabemowin learning videos: <https://georginaisland.com/culture-language/>

Engage these Anishnaabemowin learning resources with young people in your parish, and together create and up signs about Orange Shirt Day in Anishinaabemowin around your church.

Ozaawaa Babigoyaan Giizhigad: Orange Shirt Day

Abinoojiinyag Gchi-piitendaagziwag: Every Child Matters

Debwewin miinwaa Boonendamowin Giizhigad: Truth and Reconciliation Day¹²

To continue learning more from the Chippewas of Georgina Island, read aloud [the History of Georgina Island by Susan Hoeg](#) as she tells the story of her community.

Read more stories at the Georgina Island Storytelling Project:

“Join us as we share stories about our home and community, Georgina Island First Nation. Our proud heritage is a living tribute to our ancestors and Chippewa people.”

<https://georginaisland.com/stories/>

Memorial Register

Prayerfully read the names of children who died at Residential School, whose memory is being honoured by The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation through on ongoing memorial. “There are additional names of children waiting to be found that are not included within this register. There remains an extensive amount of work to be done to find all the children that never returned home and their burial sites”¹³

<https://nctr.ca/memorial/national-student-memorial/memorial-register/>

¹¹ Chippewas of Georgina Island, “Culture and Language”, <https://georginaisland.com/culture-language/>.

¹² Toronto Metropolitan University, “Ozaawaa Babigoyaan Giizhigad/Orange Shirt Day”, <https://www.torontomu.ca/indigenous/events/orange-shirt-day/>

¹³ Memorial Register, The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, <https://nctr.ca/memorial/national-student-memorial/memorial-register/>

Survivors' Stories

The Survivors Speak, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015.

This report presents testimonies from Survivors accounts from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Survivors_Speak_English_Web.pdf

"Our Stories... Our Strength"

In this online and accessible video archive by the Legacy of Hope Foundation, listen to Survivors tell their stories. <https://legacyofhope.ca/wherearethechildren/stories/>

"Survivors Share Their Truths"

Visit this resource and click on the video "Survivors Share Their Truths" to learn from Survivors of the Mohawk Institute. <https://survivorssecretariat.ca/>

Survivors Stories: "The following stories are told from the perspective of Indian Residential School Survivors. As a part of their healing journey, these Survivors have chosen to tell their stories. Some Survivors have chosen to not speak about their experiences, and we respect this decision. It is important for all Canadians to hear these stories and to understand what occurred in these institutions." This online resource contains accessible videos, written testimonies, and radio interviews from Survivors from the 39 Anishinabek First Nations in Ontario. <https://www.anishinabek.ca/survivors-stories/>

"Indian Residential School Survivors' Storybase"

"The Indian Residential School Survivors' Storybase is a project that seeks to bring together the multitude of Stories from Residential School Survivors available online in one searchable format. These items are created by organizations external to the University of Toronto Libraries, and this collection brings them together and places them in conversation.

We hope that by using this resource, students, educators and community members will be able to more easily find these Stories and listen to them, in order to reflect on the Indian Residential School System and ongoing settler relations with Indigenous peoples and gain a deeper understanding of both the personal and societal impacts of residential schools." This resource database also contains age appropriate resources about Residential Schools for young people, and a section on processing emotions when engaging traumatic subject matter. <https://irsssuvivors.library.utoronto.ca/home>

Resources on Indigenous Protocols: With Respect and Honour

Teaching Young Children about Residential Schools

Read this manual by the Gord Downiw and Chanie Wenjack Fund to learn about educating young children about the legacy of Residential Schools. <https://downiewenjack.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Teaching-Young-Children-about-Residential-Schools-Guide.pdf>

Indigenous Protocol Guidebook

Want to learn about how to be more respectful of Indigenous peoples? Visit this resource from Trent University for chapters on terminology, offering tobacco, giving honorarium, and more. <https://www.trentu.ca/fphl/sites/trentu.ca/fphl/files/documents/TrentU%20-%20INDG%20Protocol%20Guidebook%202023.pdf>

“Elders: Invitation Protocol & Resources” by Dr. Nicole Bell, <https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge/elders-invitation-protocol-resources>

“How and When to Invite Indigenous Speakers to the Classroom” by Skylee-Storm Hogan and Krista McCracken, <https://activehistory.ca/blog/2019/01/14/how-and-when-to-invite-indigenous-speakers-to-the-classroom/>

Events

Check out your local library, the closest First Nation or Friendship Centre near you, or your local community centre for more local events for Orange Shirt Day and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in your area.

Pwaaganigaawin/Pow Wow at Toronto Metropolitan University

September 12th 7pm:

[Virtual Pow Wow Etiquette Teachings](#)

Please join us virtually for Pow Wow etiquette teachings by Bob Goulais. If you have never been to a Pow Wow before or want to learn how to attend respectfully, please register for this incredible learning opportunity.

September 13th, sunrise to 5pm Pwaaganigaawin Pow Wow

All are welcome to a day of beautiful ceremony, drums, singing, and many Indigenous vendors and information booths. <https://www.torontomu.ca/indigenous/events/pow-wow/>

Woodland Cultural Centre

The former Anglican run Residential School the Mohawk Institute offers in-person and virtual programming that I encourage your parish to register for, such as their virtual tour of the Mohawk Institute (\$13 per person, 1.5 hour long zoom session). <https://woodlandculturalcentre.ca/osd-2024/>

Grassy Narrows River Run

September 18th 2024, 12pm

Walk in solidarity with Grassy Narrows First Nation, who continue to live with ongoing affects of mercury poisoning due to environmental racism in their territory. Visit their Action Toolkit to learn about the history of the First Nation and why they are asking for your solidarity and support. "On September 18th, 2024 at 12pm we invite you to walk with Grassy Narrows youth and community members to show that we are with them on their path to achieve mercury justice and freedom! Grassy Narrows people are powerful leaders in the movement for Indigenous sovereignty and environmental justice. They have shown that together we can fight for justice against all odds and make real gains. But so much is still needed to right the wrong of mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows. [RSVP here](#) to say that you will show up in solidarity and walk with them in their fight for justice." <https://freegrassy.net/river-run-toolkit-september-18th-2024/>

Toronto Council Fire Indigenous Legacy Gathering 2024

September 27-30th in Nathan Philips Square and Spirit Garden Opening

Visit Nathan Philips Square between September 27th and the 30th for a vibrant gathering of Indigenous communities, music, culture, language, and the opening of a permanent memorial Spirit Garden. www.councilfire.ca

Trent University and Peterborough Honouring Truth and Reconciliation Day

Visit this virtual resource for a multitude of learning opportunities and resources for those in the Peterborough region: <https://www.trentu.ca/truthandreconciliationday>