

# Every Child Matters:

## Resources for Worship, Youth Ministry, and Teaching Orange Shirt Day and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

Right Relations Ministries, Anglican Diocese of Toronto

### Survivors' Stories

*You are invited to share voices and stories from Survivors (such as the following videos or print resources) instead of **sermons** or teaching moments on a Sunday close to September 30th, or throughout the year. Lifting up the voices of Survivors is one of the most powerful acts of solidarity we can express as Christian witness.*

#### **Teachings from Phyllis Webstad, Survivor and Founder of Orange Shirt Day**

Visit this Orange Shirt Day resource hub to find excellent videos by Phyllis Webstad, the founder of Orange Shirt Day, on the meaning of this sacred day, the history of the Residential School system, and activities for children and youth.

<https://orangeshirtday.org/reconciliation-hub/resources/>

#### **"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/wherearethekids/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/>

#### ***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](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Survivors_Speak_English_Web.pdf)

**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://irsss survivors.library.utoronto.ca/home>

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

## **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.”<sup>1</sup>

“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

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<sup>1</sup> “The Survivors’ Flag”, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Winnipeg. <https://nctr.ca/exhibits/survivors-flag/>

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."<sup>2</sup>  
- *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 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.

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<sup>2</sup> "The Survivors' Flag", National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Winnipeg. <https://nctr.ca/exhibits/survivors-flag/>

## **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.**<sup>3</sup>*

### **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.*

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<sup>3</sup>"The Survivors' Flag", National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Winnipeg. <https://nctr.ca/exhibits/survivors-flag/>

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.

- *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*

# 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.*

## 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"<sup>4</sup>  
<https://nctr.ca/memorial/national-student-memorial/memorial-register/>

## 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. Anishnaabemowin now relies on the younger generations to learn and pass on our language to future generations."<sup>5</sup>

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

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<sup>4</sup> Memorial Register, The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, <https://nctr.ca/memorial/national-student-memorial/memorial-register/>

<sup>5</sup> Chippewas of Georgina Island, "Culture and Language", <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 Day<sup>6</sup>

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/>

## 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/>

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<sup>6</sup> Toronto Metropolitan University, "Ozaawaa Babigoyaan Giizhigad/Orange Shirt Day", <https://www.torontomu.ca/indigenous/events/orange-shirt-day/>