



Message from Mayor Wayne Redekop

This year, for the first time, the federal government has designated September 30th as a National Day of Truth and Reconciliation to recognize the terrible legacy of residential schools in Canada. It is important that we all take the time to learn about and reflect on the unimaginable experiences of our Indigenous people as a result of the residential school system in our country.

It is a tale of tragedy that lasted for well over a century. Children were forcibly taken from their families by government agents or the police; it was an offence for Indigenous people to protest against residential schools or to seek grievance against the government; children suffered physical and emotional abuse. When parents persisted in protesting the abduction of their children, the government passed legislation prohibiting any Indigenous parent from interfering in the education of their child in residential schools. The government passed a law requiring Indigenous people to first obtain government permission to sue the government, and then required anyone wishing to represent Indigenous people in court to first obtain government permission.

The new holiday fulfills one of the 94 calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, intended to honour survivors, families and communities that suffered the residential experience and to ensure that the legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process. The Town of Fort Erie will be recognizing the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation by closing municipal offices and encouraging everyone to participate in the Orange Shirt campaign supported by the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre and Fort Erie Diversity and Inclusion Coalition.

September 30th has been observed as Orange Shirt Day across Canada since 2013 to commemorate the Indigenous children who were taken from their homes and placed in residential schools. The orange shirt represents the clothing that Phyllis Jack wore on the day she was taken from her family at six years of age to attend a residential school. It was taken from her, thus denying her the comfort of association with her family.

I encourage all residents to actively participate in the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation and to learn more about residential schools, reflect on how we can confront our past, atone for past injustices to our Indigenous brothers and sisters and embrace the opportunity to include everyone in the life of our broader community.

Mayor Wayne Redekop

