

# HONOURING TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

A GUIDE TO OBSERVING SEPTEMBER 30TH



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On March 9, 2023, the Province of British Columbia passed legislation to make September 30 a statutory holiday. In mid-August, RoadSafetyBC reached out and asked how to feature this day in their newsletter in a way that honours Indigenous voices and honours the spirit of the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. Recognizing that reconciliation is a shared journey and responsibility of every Canadian, here are some of the many ways that each of us could commemorate the day individually and/or collectively.

# TRUTH

Seeking opportunities to learn the truth of our shared history through Indigenous voices is an integral part of honoring the day. This day is providing space and time for you and family to participate in local and/or online Indigenous led events:

- The National Center for Truth and Reconciliation is offering a series of FREE virtual lunch and learn sessions throughout Truth and Reconciliation Week 2023 to facilitate learning for Canadians on topics related to Truth and Reconciliation. [Register today!](#)
- Indigenous Tourism BC has an [event page](#) that lists some of the events that the public are welcome to.
- And, if you are in Victoria, you can [participate in the Victoria orange shirt day](#). They are also a great source to buy orange shirts for you and/or family and friends.

Truth and Reconciliation Day overlaps with [Orange Shirt Day](#), so it is common for people to wear an orange shirt on September 30th. Part of this action is reciprocity by buying an orange shirt from an Indigenous artist and/or business. Note many large chain corporations now sell orange shirts and it's recommended to buy directly from an Indigenous artist and/or business to ensure proceeds go to them.

For those introverts, September 30th can be a day of learning whether that's watching a movie, reading a book, listening to the podcast—entering in by whatever topic most interests you... hockey, rock and roll, sports, culinary arts, history. The University of British Columbia has the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Center and has a [great platform](#) for delving in depending on what aspects of society interests you.

As you go through this day of learning, I encourage you to make time to sit with the feelings that come up, acknowledge them, and let them go with an exhale. Spend some time outside, open your heart, body and mind to what Mother Earth has to offer. Make time to reflect, integrate, and let go so you can be ready to make acts of reconciliation.

# RECONCILIATION

This is an invitation to explore practicing reciprocity in action for the privileges that many of us have gained by being visitors to these territories within what is now called B.C. When it comes to the reconciliation journey and where to start, feelings of uncertainty and overwhelm are common. Here are some frequently asked questions and the answers I offer in support.

## WHAT FIRST ACTION CAN I TAKE?

Often, many people do not know where to begin. Informing your actions, at the very beginning, by honoring the agency and expertise of Indigenous people and Nations is a wise place to start.

This aligns with a key recommendation from [Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#) – “Recognizing expertise not as ‘special training’ but as ‘culture,’ ‘love,’ and ‘compassion,’ that is, in honoring the expertise and agency of Indigenous families – is fundamental to repairing the hurts done by violence and restoring security.”

“Including the voices of those with lived experience must be done “in ways that are meaningful, in ways that are sustainable, and in ways that allow for them to not just tell their stories, but to be active members of creating supports for other survivors.” Indigenous women, for instance, know their communities and the gaps, challenges, and barriers to support that they face. This knowledge and the voices of Indigenous women must be included from the beginning of any initiative that aims to improve their lives. This is a critical and vital step in any kind of program development, any kind of resource development that is going to be done, particularly when it comes to trauma-informed services.”

“Approaches to honoring agency and expertise must be met with the resources to do so, centering the knowledge and experience of those whose lives have been shaped by colonial violence and its various forms of economic, social, and political marginalization.”

## WHERE TO FIND THIS AGENCY AND EXPERTISE?

There are many great Indigenous centered resources out there now. From **150 acts of reconciliation** to the First Nation Health Authority's document "**It starts with me - Key Drivers and Ideas for Change**" that have both individual and collective actions that people can take to cultivate culturally safe and inclusive spaces . Some of my favorites are:

- Encourage self-reflective exercises for staff on potential cultural biases and assumptions. For example, encourage people to reflect on a core question at the end of the day (Was I inclusive? Was I respectful? What can I learn?), or provide mentoring and coaching support.
- Develop complaints mechanisms that include First Nations traditional ways of managing issues and complaints. For example, peace-making circle process, smudging, cedar brushing and so on.
- Develop and utilize measures to assess cultural safety and humility across an organization or program, as a part of quality improvement.
- Involve First Nations community members in the design/review of improvement projects, programs and services.
- Learn about the First Nations communities in your area: local history; modern and traditional governance and political structures; fishing, hunting and gathering activities; spiritual practices; tribal council affiliations; and role of Hereditary Leaders and Elders.

Whether you are in a leadership position or not, amplifying these system change ideas within your circles of influence may plant the seed for someone who is a leadership position to embrace the opportunity to be a leader within the realm of reconciliation in action.

One key action each of us could take is to wear a moose hide pin every day and become a Champion within your circles of influence.

In closing, I offer gratitude for reading to the end. You may have had a moment or two of feeling overwhelmed; this and any other feelings that arose are a valid response. A key practice of this path is self-care. This is an invitation to listen to your body, and approach with empathy and kindness. This path improves our relationship with ourselves, each other, and the land. It can help us to do our jobs better, it supports the mental health and well-being of those around us, and it's implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and Action Plan.

Quyanak, thank you,

*Learn more:*

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