

NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

VERONICA APPIA

This year, for the first time, Sept. 30 will be observed as a statutory holiday to commemorate the horrific legacy of residential schools in Canada.

Here's what you need to know about the new holiday and the meaning behind it.

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE HOLIDAY?

The new stat holiday is called the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. It is meant to be a day for Canadians to spread awareness of and reflect on the tragedies experienced by Indigenous people as a result of the country's former residential school system.

WHEN WAS THE HOLIDAY CREATED?

The federal government passed Bill C-5 in June, to allow for the creation of this stat holiday. The holiday is in line with one of the 94 calls to action of The Truth and Reconciliation Com-

mission, which states: "We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process."

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SEPT. 30?

Since 2013, Sept. 30 has been observed as Orange Shirt Day across the country — a day, created by residential school survivor Phyllis (Jack) Webstad, on which Canadians wear orange shirts to commemorate the Indigenous children who were taken from their homes and placed in residential schools.

According to the Orange Shirt Day website, Sept. 30 was selected for being around the time that those children were taken from their homes.

The colour orange is significant because it was the colour of Webstad's shirt on her first day of residential school — a shirt that was taken away from her once she arrived.

HOW IS NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION MEANT TO BE OBSERVED?

As this is a day of awareness and commemoration, the day "may present itself as a day of quiet reflection or participation in a community event," according to the Canadian government.

WHO GETS THE DAY OFF?

Sept. 30 is a statutory holiday and will operate the same way as other statutory holidays in the country: a paid day off for those who work in federally regulated jobs. Federal offices, as well as banks, will be closed on this day.

The residential schools crisis line is available 24 hours a day for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of a residential school experience. Support is available at 1-866-925-4419.



Metroland file photo
Nine-year-old Elyse Tidridge raises an orange shirt up the family's flagpole. Sept. 30 is National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a new federal statutory holiday meant for Canadians to spread awareness of and reflect on the tragedies experienced by Indigenous people.

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