



Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 27, 2023

City to commemorate National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day on Saturday September 30

ST. THOMAS, ON –

September 30, 2023 marks [Orange Shirt Day](#). This day honours the story of Phyllis (Jack) Webstad, a former residential school survivor who, on her first day of residential school, had her new orange shirt taken away from her. The day honours the children who never returned home and Survivors of residential schools, as well as their families and communities. Public commemoration of the tragic and painful history and ongoing impacts of residential schools is a vital component of the reconciliation process and has become an opportunity to keep the discussion on all aspects of residential schools alive.

September 30 has also been designated National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in response to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #80](#). The Calls to Action offer important direction for all levels of government to advance reconciliation and redress the legacy of residential schools. National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is a day of awareness, a day of remembrance for Indigenous people, and a day of education for Canadians.

Events with The City of St. Thomas

In steps towards more meaningful reconciliation efforts, the City will honour Orange Shirt Day with a ceremony at City Hall on **Saturday September 30, 2023 at 12:00pm (noon)**. A land acknowledgement, flag raising, and proclamation reading will take place, alongside other community stakeholders. Painted rocks will also be available for the community to place around the outside of City Hall. All community members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

The City encourages residents to join us in wearing orange to honour Indigenous families, children, and survivors who continue to be affected by the residential school legacy. Please consider buying a shirt from a local organization that supports Indigenous groups.

“We understand that this day is difficult for many members of our community. As a City, we hope our residents will take this opportunity to honour our Indigenous neighbours and their families. I encourage everyone to continue to strive towards a more compassionate and inclusive City for all and help us on our journey of reconciliation by taking the time to learn and reflect about our shared past.”, said Mayor Joe Preston.



The St. Thomas Public Library also invites the community to tie fresh ribbons along the fence in front of the library to mark the occasion. As we recognize that children are still being discovered, this year, the Library have respectfully removed previous year's ribbons, preserving them safely within the library, and will invite the community to tie new ones. [The Library webpage](#) has been updated with various educational resources - both booklists from the library as well as websites, events, podcasts, and online resources that residents are welcome to explore.

Residents can get involved online by writing a message of reconciliation on social media using #EveryChildMattersStT

For more information, learning opportunities, and resources on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, please visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/national-day-truth-reconciliation.html>

Locally, residents can connect with '[We Are Here: Awareness & Justice for Indigenous People](#),' an Indigenous-run group dedicated to raising awareness, fostering compassion, empathy, and solidarity for Indigenous communities.

City of St. Thomas Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land on which we meet is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinabek, Attiwonderonk (Neutral) and Mississauga peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

We also recognize that this land is now home to the Munsee-Delaware Nation, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation and Oneida Nation of the Thames.

This land was settled through Treaty 2, the McKee Purchase Treaty of 1790, and we, as beneficiaries of the treaty recognize our collective responsibilities to the land and water.

Mental Health Supports:

The Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS) can be contacted toll free at 1-800-721-0066. A national Indian Residential School Crisis Line has been set up to provide support for former students and those affected. People can access emotional and crisis referral services by calling the 24-hour national crisis line: 1-866-925-4419

MEDIA CONTACT:

Joe Preston
Mayor
City of St. Thomas
jpreston@stthomas.ca