



YMCA Canada Statement for National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day 2023

The following statement refers to the Indian Residential School System. A National Indian Residential School Crisis Line has been set up to provide support for residential school Survivors and others affected. People can access emotional and crisis referral services by calling the 24-hour national crisis line: 1-866-925-4419.

September 30, 2023 is the third annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, as well as [Orange Shirt Day](#). National Day for Truth and Reconciliation honours the thousands of Indigenous children lost to the residential school system, Survivors, and their communities. Orange Shirt Day was initiated by Phyllis Webstad sharing her experiences as a residential school Survivor. On this day, we are called on to engage in learning and dialogue about the colonial violence enacted by the state and church-run residential school system, and its ongoing intergenerational and community harm. Both dates also invite genuine commitment to respond to the [Truth and Reconciliation Calls for Action](#).

Today, YMCA Canada wishes to express solidarity with Indigenous communities, and reflect upon our ongoing need to engage in a process of Truth and Reconciliation. We continue to mourn and bear witness as more unmarked graves are recovered across Canada. We want to acknowledge the pain that each recovery means for Indigenous communities, including Indigenous YMCA staff, volunteers, and members.

As one action towards reconciliation, YMCA Canada raised \$31,590 for the Orange Shirt Society through the sale of orange shirts this year. We remain focused on our work of revising our recruitment practices to address the underrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples on our National Board of Directors. To mark this day, YMCA Canada held a national webinar for YMCA staff across the country to further our learning and reflection opportunities.

In addition, this year, at our Public Policy Forum, we engaged with the Yellowhead Institute to learn from a co-author of their report, [Calls to Action Accountability: A 2022 Status Update on Reconciliation](#). We also learned about the barriers and challenges to achieving Truth and Reconciliation. According to the report, as of 2022, only 13 of the 94 TRC Calls to Action had been completed. As the report points out, many Survivors are aging, and there are fears that meaningful progress will not be enacted in time for them to witness. The report also provides valuable information about promising practices for settler institutional leadership, such as equitably sharing the obligations of reconciliation to lessen the burden on Indigenous Peoples. We remain committed to taking this obligation seriously and working ethically with Indigenous communities.

This National Day of Reconciliation, YMCA Canada encourages all non-Indigenous individuals and organizations to act in solidarity with Indigenous communities, including our own leadership, staff, volunteers, and members. The process of reconciliation requires that non-Indigenous individuals and settler-led Institutions recognize and reflect upon their ongoing responsibilities to the Indigenous nations of the land. This work must be done not just today, but every day.