



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Chair and Members of the Administration, Finance and Human Resources Committee
From: Susan Farrelly – Director of Human Resources
Date: September 21, 2021
Subject: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation - September 30, 2021

Background

On June 3, 2021, the federal government passed a law which made September 30th a new federal statutory holiday called the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This law is in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action #80 which urged the federal government to create a statutory holiday to commemorate survivors, their families and communities. The day has been created to give everyone an opportunity to recognize and commemorate the legacy of residential schools, which more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were forced to attend between the 1870s and 1997.

This new statutory holiday applies to all federally regulated employers and employees. At this time, there are no plans for the Province of Ontario to declare National Truth and Reconciliation Day as a paid holiday for provincially regulated workplaces.

September 30th has additional significance due to being recognized as Orange Shirt Day. On Orange Shirt Day, residential school survivors are honoured and it is a time to reflect on the devastating damage residential schools caused to many Indigenous children's self-esteem, well-being, and identity by severing their connection to their land, their culture and their families. It also reaffirms the universal truth that every child matters.

Orange Shirt Day was inspired by the story of survivor Phyllis (Jack) Webstad. In 1973, at the age of six, Phyllis' grandmother bought her a new, bright orange shirt for her first day of school at the St. Joseph Mission Residential School in Williams Lake, BC. Phyllis felt so proud and excited wearing her orange shirt but when she arrived at the church-run school, school officials took her shirt and never gave it back.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation at the County of Wellington

The County of Wellington's Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) has recommended that September 30, 2021 be a day of learning and reconciliation for County employees. In a letter received from employee Amber Holmes, Indigenous Advisory Committee member, and endorsed by the IAC, she recommends that September 30th be a day that "We do not take in passing; we are working together to better understand our shared history, to make a statement about our commitment to knowing the truth, and to dedicate ourselves to the process of reconciliation." This also aligns with Call to Action #57 calling upon governments to provide education to public servants on this history.

At the County of Wellington, the following initiatives are occurring in recognition of September 30th as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in conjunction with the IAC:

- Bi-monthly IAC newsletter released by IAC highlighting National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and education resources available for County employees; and
- The IAC has created a T-shirt design in recognition of Every Child Matters and funds raised from the sale of the shirts to County of Wellington employees will be donated to the Anishnabeg Outreach Healing Lodge and Wellness Programme (counselling supports for Residential School Survivors); and
- A virtual Lunch and Learn will be held on September 30th and hosted by the IAC focusing on Phyllis (Jack) Webstad's story as well as the stories of other residential school survivors. This session will be recorded and made available on The Well for further viewing; and
- 10 copies of Gord Downie's "Secret Path" have been ordered and will be given away to County employees in a draw; and
- Promotion of Indigenous Canada training to all County of Wellington employees. This is free training offered online through the University of Alberta.

Furthermore, in recognition of the important work of the IAC members and supporting their further development, the County is investing in the members by allowing them the opportunity to enroll in an online training bundle through Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. Topics to be covered include Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Consultation and Engagement, Indigenous Employment: Recruitment and Retention, How to Negotiate with Indigenous Peoples as well as Working with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This training will further enhance the IAC members' knowledge and understanding relating to Indigenous Relations.



Recommendation

“THAT the report ‘National Day for Truth and Reconciliation - September 30, 2021’ be received for information.”

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Farrelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Susan" being more legible than the last name "Farrelly".

Susan Farrelly
Director of Human Resources

Resources:

1. [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action](#)
2. [SECRET PATH - GORD DOWNIE and JEFF LEMIRE](#)
3. [University of Alberta - Indigenous Canada | Coursera](#)