

September 30, 2021

OSSTF/FEESO Acknowledges the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

Today is the inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a day established in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action. Today, OSSTF/FEESO members across the province are wearing orange shirts or other various orange items to honour and remember the experiences and loss of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children who were stolen from their families and placed in residential schools. In addition, we acknowledge all the other destructive and oppressive laws, policies, and systemic structures, past and present, that attempted to eliminate Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island.

The day comes in the wake of the discovery of the remains of more than 1,300 Indigenous children in unmarked graves at former residential schools across Canada. While these discoveries are appalling and will no doubt continue to increase, perhaps what is even more appalling, is the fact that it took these events to force many government officials and people living on this land to stop denying the truth told by Indigenous Peoples for generations.

OSSTF/FEESO wants to formally and publicly renew our commitment to the Calls to Action and embrace the opportunity to learn, unlearn, and commit to action.

Indigenous communities continue to suffer from the legacy of residential schools and colonialism. Acknowledging the intergenerational pain and trauma caused by residential schools is important, but true reconciliation requires the implementation of **all** 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation report.

OSSTF/FEESO views reconciliation as a journey, not a destination, something that can only occur when all settlers embrace the opportunity to learn the truth and actively engage in the act of conscious decolonization of systems, thinking, actions and words. This includes the Ontario education system and, internally, the systems and structures within our Federation at the local and provincial levels.

Members are encouraged to commit to finding ways to address the Indigenous-related misconceptions and stereotypes in their classrooms, schools, worksites, and broader communities.

We must build relationships with Indigenous communities to create school communities where Indigenous children feel respected and experience a positive sense of belonging so they can experience greater success both in and out of school. This requires an understanding of, and incorporation of, Indigenous perspectives of learning and appropriate resources reflective and respectful of local Indigenous communities.

Improving Ontario's education system requires a shared commitment to work collaboratively by everyone interested in student success. Today, OSSTF/FEESO renews our commitment to listening, learning, reflecting, and change to enhance publicly-funded education and create schools and communities where all students and staff, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, can learn, work, and succeed.

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