



ROCK YOUR ROOTS: WALK FOR RECONCILIATION

Information for Newcomers



BACKGROUND

The Walk for Reconciliation gathers Indigenous, non-Indigenous and newcomer peoples in Saskatoon to demonstrate their commitment to truth and reconciliation. Participants are invited to “Rock Your Roots” by wearing cultural regalia or carrying signs that celebrate their heritage. The walk is preceded by Indigenous ceremony and led by Residential School Survivors who are honoured through this experience. An international cast of singers, dancers and musicians celebrate the diverse cultures of Saskatoon along the route of the walk.

The Rock Your Roots: Walk for Reconciliation took place from 2016 to 2019, when we gathered **5,000 people on the South Saskatchewan River**. It was cancelled in 2020 due to covid. In 2021, participants walked on their own or in small groups according to covid regulations to continue the legacy of honouring survivors and committing to truth and reconciliation.

In 2022, the Walk was moved to **September 30** which is known as Orange Shirt Day! See more details about the history and significance of this day below.

INTERESTING FACT:

At the end of 2017, part of Victoria Park was renamed “Reconciliation Circle” to recognize this site as an important location for Truth and Reconciliation in our city. Annual gatherings here include National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21) and the Rock Your Roots: Walk for Reconciliation (Sept 30).

WALK WITH US

Join us in person on Saturday, Sept 30. The Rock Your Roots: Walk for Reconciliation begins at 10 am in front of the offices of the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI) at 315 Avenue M South.

EVENT DETAILS

The Rock Your Roots: Walk for Reconciliation starts at CUMFI (315 Avenue M South). From 8am – 10am CUMFI serves a pancake breakfast, which is free and welcome to everyone!



At 10am we begin walking and the route will take approximately 35 - 45min to complete. The walk is led by Residential School Survivors and this event is a way to honour them and their families. At the completion of the walk, there will be a stage, with speakers and cultural performances. The event will end by noon. Snacks will be available in the park, and bus transportation can take people back to the start location of the walk.

What are we walking for?

Rock Your Roots is a celebration of Indigenous culture. It also celebrates the many people that have worked to preserve that culture throughout Canada's continued history of colonialism.

What is colonization?

Colonization refers to the process of establishing control over the Indigenous people of an area. Many countries around the world have their own unique experiences with colonialism. When settlers from Europe first arrived in Canada, they tried for many years to erase the culture of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit people that originally inhabited this land. While colonization has changed form many times over the centuries, its legacy continues to harm Indigenous people to this day.



What are Residential Schools?

Residential schools were boarding schools set up by the Government of Canada and different religious organizations. Their main goal was to eliminate Indigenous culture by assimilating Indigenous children into European culture. The first residential schools opened in 1894, and it took until 1997 to close the last one.

The Residential School experience meant that they became cut off from their cultural roots, families, and identities as individuals. Attendance was law, and they were often taken by government officials from their homes forcibly.

Food such as vegetables, fruits, and meat were not available to the children attending residential school. Often, the children were not fed enough food, which interrupted their growth process. Children who went to residential school faced unsafe living conditions and did not receive the support that is needed when a child is growing. More than 150,000 children were forcibly sent to residential schools since the 1880s, and many survivors are still with us today.

What is reconciliation?

Reconciliation refers to the work being done to heal the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. It is founded on the understanding that Indigenous people have been unjustly treated and continue to face racism and discrimination. Reconciliation involves healing that relationship, addressing racism, and paving a new path forward where all people are equal and valued.

What is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created in 2008 to inform all Canadians about what happened in residential schools.

The TRC documented the truth of Survivors, their families, communities, and anyone personally affected by the residential school experience. This included First Nations, Inuit and Métis former residential school students, their families, communities, the churches, former school employees, government officials and other Canadians. Why was this important? Because before we can reconcile, we must all listen to and acknowledge the truth.

During the TRC, three commissioners travelled the country and listened to countless testimonies from Residential School Survivors. They developed 94 Calls to Action that needed to be addressed to right the wrongs of the past and involve everyone in knowing the truth and moving forward in reconciliation.

What is the significance of September 30?

September 30 is recognized as Orange Shirt Day. The Orange Shirt Day movement was started by Phyllis Webstad, a member of the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation and former residential school student, to honour Survivors and intergenerational Survivors, and to remember those children who never made it home. Find out more about Phyllis' story at <http://www.orangeshirtday.org>.

In 2021, the Canadian government named September 30 as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This was a direct response to one of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' Calls to Action (#80), that asked for a national holiday to "honour First Nations, Inuit and Métis Survivors and their families and communities and to ensure that public commemoration of their history and the legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process" (Statutes of Canada, Chapter 11).

How can we get involved in Truth & Reconciliation?

All Canadians – whether your family has lived here for a few months or for several generations – are all part of the movement towards Truth and Reconciliation.

Newcomers to Canada play a special role in making sure that future generations of settlers have a positive relationship with Indigenous peoples. Here are some ways you can get involved:

Listen and Learn

- Learn the Treaty territory and history of the land where you live.
- Watch films and read books about Indigenous issues or created by Indigenous artists!
- Visit BeAConnectR.com for resources for finding and responding to Calls to Action

Show Up

- Be on the look-out for Indigenous-centred events in your community, but be sure those are open to non-Indigenous visitors first by contacting event organizers. Ask if there is any protocol that should be followed. Your questions are welcomed! Your presence at these events is a great way of showing solidarity.

Share

- Stand up for racial justice when you have the opportunity. Build your knowledge and skills so that speaking up when needed becomes easier. Be willing to engage in difficult conversations.
- Talk about what you're learning with friends, family, and community.

For more information and resources from the TRC, visit <https://nctr.ca> and <http://www.beaconnectr.com>

Conclusion

Today, residential schools do not exist. The last residential school in Saskatchewan was closed in 1996. However, the children who endured those schools are now grown-up. Many are still dealing with the trauma they were forced to experience as a child. We call them Survivors. The children of Residential School Survivors often experience intergenerational trauma, which is what happens when untreated trauma-related stress is passed on to second and subsequent generations. Following are some resources so you can get engaged in healing and change in your community.

More Resources

1. VIDEO (7 minutes) Hear one survivor talk about his experience and share the origins of Walking for Reconciliation. <https://youtu.be/Qd6h0Aqo8KY>

Eugene Arcand (Cree from Muskeg Lake) shares about his experience at Residential School and how Sunday walks were the only opportunity to see relatives and friends of the opposite gender. When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission took place, the survivors held walks as part of the process of remembering, healing and building a new future.

2. VIDEO (6 minutes) Learn about the origin of Reconciliation Saskatoon and the Walk for Reconciliation!

National Indigenous Peoples 'Day. Check out this video from the Walk for Reconciliation in 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YbzuEi-XqM>

3. Use ConnectR, an online tool to help people find and respond to Calls to Action and move forward on a path of truth and reconciliation: www.BeAConnectR.com

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