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Media Release

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OKN challenges Halton residents to commit to action on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

More opportunities than ever to learn about Indigenous perspectives

This September 30, on Canada's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Our Kids Network (OKN) challenges all Halton residents to commit to learning more about Canada's Residential Schools and honouring the journey of survivors and the memory of the children who never returned to their families. It's time to do business differently!

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was established in 2021 by the federal government as a direct response to the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #80, which outlined the need for a commemorative day to honour Survivors, their families, and communities to ensure the legacy of the Residential Schools remains a vital component of the Reconciliation process. In Halton, OKN has been actively involved in developing and supporting several interactive events and programs that create opportunities for residents to engage with and learn about Indigenous culture and history.

Angela Bellegarde, OKN's Indigenous Strategy Manager, is a passionate advocate for the Reconciliation process. As a fourth-generation survivor of the Residential School System, she is keenly aware that the Truth can be uncomfortable – but also that it is where the path to Reconciliation must begin.

"We need to start from that place of uncomfortableness. When people feel uncomfortable, it means that they're learning," she said. "It's in that place of uneasiness where we can begin the really hard work."

In Halton, there are many ways people can commit to action this year. In-person events include:

- [Town of Oakville](#)
 - Outdoor Indigenous Movie Night on Sept. 23; an evening of activities, film and discussion on the Oakville Museum grounds (8 Navy Street), 6-11 p.m. Free admission.
 - Awareness walk that begins at the first orange crosswalk at Thomas and Church streets, Sept. 25 at 1:30 p.m.
 - Moccasin Trail Walk – Lions Valley Park - explore the history of the lands from an Indigenous perspective. Free.
 - Oakville Public Library [Conversation Series](#) focused on Indigenous Art, Culture, and Voices (throughout September)

- Oakville Community Foundation invites educators and students to attend [Gidinawendimin – We Are All Related](#), a stage program on Sept. 29 at Paramount Fine Foods Centre in Mississauga that will also be available to live stream.
- [City of Burlington](#)
 - National Day for Truth and Reconciliation public event at Spencer Smith Park, 4-7 p.m. will feature information booths and interactive display. Free admission.
- In the Milton area
 - [Grandmother's Voice](#) is hosting a guided medicine walk, Walk with Us and Remember the Children, on Sept. 30 at 12 p.m. and 4 p.m. at Country Heritage Park. Free admission, donations welcome.

Additional opportunities for engagement include an online panel discussion hosted by the [Downie Wenjack Foundation](#) (Sept. 30 at 1 p.m.) on Indigenous Perspectives on the Pope's Apology as well as the [Debwewin Project website](#), which features videos, cultural mapping and storytelling. The Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford (site of the former Mohawk Residential School) offers self-guided and virtual tours. Finally, YouTube features many Residential School Survivor stories – even something as simple as watching one of these short videos is a positive step in the Reconciliation journey.

“There is no time better than the present to learn the Truth, and there are so many ways to do it,” said Bellegarde. “Wherever you live in Halton, there is something for you to do to honour Residential School attendees.”

OKN Interim Executive Director Elisabeth Wells notes that as a collective impact network, OKN is uniquely positioned to reach professionals across Halton Region and provide resources as part of its Indigenous Reconciliation Initiative. Adopted in 2020, it is based on Indigenous epistemology, which encompasses the values of interconnectedness, collaboration, balance and harmony, and kindness and accountability. The [OKN website](#) is a robust resource for individuals and organizations looking to increase their Indigenous literacy and reflect on Canada's history and present from an Indigenous viewpoint.

“OKN recognizes the critical importance of Truth and Reconciliation for Halton agencies and organizations serving children, youth and families in Halton.” Wells said. “We must deepen our understanding of this history and collectively learn the Truth to be able to move towards Reconciliation. On September 30, start your Reconciliation journey by exploring some of the resources in our [online Indigenous literacy library](#).”

If you are a Survivor and need emotional support, a national crisis line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week: Residential School Survivor Support Line: 1-866-925-4419.

Helpful links:

- [OKN Indigenous Reconciliation \(ourkidsnetwork.ca\)](#)
- [National Day for Truth and Reconciliation: Time to Take Action \(ourkidsnetworkblog.ca\)](#)
- [Principles of Truth and Reconciliation PDF \(ourkidsnetwork.ca\)](#)
- [Calls to Action English PDF \(exactdn.com\)](#)
- [The Power of an Apology \(ourkidsnetworkblog.ca\)](#)
- [Indigenous community | Grandmother's Voice | Milton \(grandmothersvoice.com\)](#)
- [Woodland Cultural Centre | A Museum of Excellence](#)
- [The Debwewin Project's website launched on Treaty Day in Oakville – Oakville Community Foundation \(theocf.org\)](#)
- [Indigenous Canada | University of Alberta \(ualberta.ca\)](#)