



Media Release

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National Day for Truth and Reconciliation an opportunity for reflection and education

Halton Region, Ontario – The inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is a watershed moment in Canadian history, and as September 30 approaches Our Kids Network (OKN) encourages all Halton residents to use the occasion as an opportunity to honour the lives of Indigenous people and engage in deep reflection on the impact of the Residential School System on their families, culture, and language.

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was announced by the federal government in June, as a direct response to the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #80. The Commission outlined the need for a commemorative day to honour survivors and their families and communities to ensure the tragic history and legacy of the Residential Schools remain a vital component of the Reconciliation process.

OKN Indigenous Lead Angela Bellegarde is a fourth-generation survivor of the Residential School System. She notes that the inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is a meaningful piece of the process for moving forward. "We want people to understand deeply and make movement forever, and deeply reflect and think about the impact," she said. "Remember the families whose children were taken, and the children who never made it home. Think about how we would feel in those circumstances. This is what happened."

Although the Residential Schools are closed now, their legacy continues. Like many other First Nations people, Bellegarde has had to relearn her language and traditions – a direct result of the government's mission to "take the Indian out of the child." In her role at OKN, she works to develop Indigenous education programs and resources to improve Indigenous literacy among professionals who work with children, youth, and families.

Uniquely positioned to reach professionals across Halton Region, OKN adopted its Indigenous Reconciliation Initiative four-year strategic plan in 2020. It is based on Indigenous epistemology, which encompasses the values of interconnectedness, collaboration, balance and harmony, and kindness and accountability.

Executive Director of Our Kids Network, Christine Hartley describes OKN as a collective impact network of diverse people focussed on building the capacity of community organizations that support children, youth, and their families. "OKN is an excellent connector, and its research and resources are developed very specifically to support the work of professionals," said Hartley. "The work we are doing to further Indigenous literacy is significant to the wellbeing of all children and youth in Halton."

Even though Halton has five treaties and is Traditional Territory for many Indigenous peoples, there are no Indigenous agencies, reserves, or friendship centres within its borders. This means not only fewer resources and support for Indigenous residents, but also fewer sources for non-Indigenous residents to find information and learn more. Bellegarde indicates there is a strong desire within the community to learn Canada's true history and make change.

“I do see that people, especially in Halton, really want to know more,” she said. “They are angry that they didn’t learn this in school. They are asking questions. OKN community partners include 80 member organizations; if the staff at each organization went through a basic level of education on Indigenous history and culture, it would have a huge impact.”

Find out more about the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action](#)

Learn about OKN’s [Indigenous Reconciliation Initiative](#) and Indigenous Reconciliation Initiative [Strategic Plan](#)

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.