

SETTLERS TAKE ACTION

UNDERSTANDING ONGOING **SOLIDARITY** WITH THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF THIS LAND

FROM #215CHILDREN TO NATIONAL
DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

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Indigenous Rights, including our community amplification posts!

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Please direct all inquiries to our founder at Samanta Krishnapillai at **Founder@OnCanadaProject.ca**

Existing in solidarity is an ongoing commitment

In late May it was announced that by using ground-penetrating radar, members of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Nation had recovered* the bodies of 215 children in unmarked graves behind a residential 'school' in Kamloops, B.C.

When we take ourselves back to those first days after we found out the truth, we remember **a visceral feeling of nausea and overwhelming grief** as non-Indigenous folks realized that these children were ripped from their families, homes, cultures and way of life, to go to state-sanctioned and church-operated 'schools' where they were subject to violence and harm. That thousands of these children, some as young as three years old, never came back from these 'schools.'

The truth of the federal government and various church's disregard for the human rights of *children* paired with the blatant white supremacy of the very notion of these 'schools' shook many of us non-Indigenous folks to our core.

*We intentionally use the word recovered, because these children weren't really 'missing'; Indigenous peoples of this land have been telling us for years that their children were killed at these 'schools'.

Existing in solidarity is an ongoing commitment

As more and more bodies were recovered at Residential schools,' our collective understanding as non-Indigenous folk started broadening.

We learned that **over seven generations** of Indigenous people continue to feel the indescribable effects of personal and intergenerational trauma to this day. **We learned that this is not a historical issue, it is a current one.**

We learned that what we had been taught about Indigenous people of this country was wrong and that our country had intentionally designed our systems so we would never learn the truth.

We as non-Indigenous folks **collectively vowed to sit with the discomfort of the truth**, and exist in solidarity with the Indigenous people of the land we now call Canada.

The digital age and social media, coupled with the standstill nature of the pandemic, has increased the amount of non-Indigenous folk who are aware of Canada's truth.

The question becomes, now that we know better, how do we do better? Both as a country, and as non-Indigenous individuals.

Let's fast forward to September 30, 2021.

Orange Shirt Day is observed on September 30 and is a grassroots initiative that started in 2013 and originated from the story of Phyllis Webstad from the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation. On this day, Indigenous folks remember and reflect upon the children who died in these 'schools' and the survivors.

This year, the government named September 30 the National Day for Truth & Reconciliation. Many non-Indigenous folks will observe this day by wearing an orange shirt to show solidarity with the Indigenous people of this land.

But to be clear, **wearing an orange shirt doesn't make you an ally.** Neither does skipping Canada Day celebrations nor just giving a land acknowledgement. Indigenous communities need *ongoing* solidarity and a rejection of performative measures from politicians, governments, and non-Indigenous folk.

We know you care about the issues that need ongoing solidarity too because prior to the election, you told us the issues you cared most about were the **climate crisis, systemic racism, houselessness and wealth inequality** - all of which cannot be sustainably solved without involving and centring **Indigenous voices and leadership.**

These issues are human rights-related, and therefore inherently Indigenous issues because they systemically disproportionately affect Indigenous people.

All our sectors need Indigenous leadership, because all human rights issues are Indigenous issues.

Do you care about police reform and a criminal justice system that provides equitable justice?

- Advocate for systemic reform and Indigenous leadership via defunding and abolishing the current police and 'justice' system in favour of one that doesn't disproportionately affect Indigenous (as well as Black) folk.
 - An Indigenous person is 10 times more likely than a white person to be killed by the police.
 - In 2016, Indigenous Canadians represented 25% of the national male prison population and 35% of the national female prison population - despite only making up 4.9% of Canada's population.

Do you think women should be able to walk places without being murdered?

- Advocate for our government and country to enact ALL the Calls to Justice from The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
 - Indigenous women are 12 times more likely to be murdered or go missing than any other women in Canada.

All our sectors need Indigenous leadership, because all human rights issues are Indigenous issues.

Do you care about the climate crisis?

- Advocate for Indigenous leadership and decision-making around issues affecting our environment and climate because Indigenous folk are the original caretakers of this land
 - #IndigenousResistance has stopped or delayed greenhouse gas pollution equivalent to at least 25% of annual U.S. & Canadian emissions.

Do you care about child welfare?

- Advocate for systemic reform and Indigenous leadership around child welfare and the foster care system.
 - Indigenous children make up 7.7% of Canada's population but account for 52% of the children in the foster care system.

To be clear, these systems disproportionately affect Indigenous people because **they were designed to**. The examples and statistics above are a non-exhaustive list of systemic violence against Indigenous folks. They illustrate how our colonial system has historically harmed and continues to disproportionately harm Indigenous people. This has happened through **direct action**, such as the creation of residential 'schools' *and* **indirect action** - such as failure to co-create systems with Indigenous leadership.

Non-Indigenous Folk are Treaty Partners

The conversation around truth and reconciliation has traditionally been framed as one between the government and Indigenous folk, but **non-Indigenous folks are treaty partners and therefore a critical part of this discussion.**

As treaty partners, we have a **responsibility** to demand our leaders enact all 94 Calls to Action *and* enact these 94 Calls to Action **in our own lives.** This includes our homes, communities, schools, and our workplaces. When non-Indigenous folk collectively show up as true treaty partners, it'll force high-speed action from our government instead of the dial-up/buffering speed that they seem to be taking with these 94 Calls to Action.

We know that feels like a lot, but doing this is what active allyship is. This is how you push past performative allyship and actually exist in solidarity with the Indigenous peoples of this land.

This is how you *mean it* when you wear an orange shirt today.

We won't lie to you and say it'll be easy, but that doesn't mean it isn't the right thing to do. We're figuring out what active allyship looks like for us, both as people and as a project, and we are learning that it takes ongoing learning and reflection. The more we practice it, the better we get at it. We invite you to join us in being proper treaty partners.

Active Allyship with Indigenous Folks

Here is a non-exhaustive list of ways you can be an active allyship.



- De-center whiteness from your social media by following Indigenous creators and elders.
- Connect with all levels of your elected officials and ask that they enact the 94 Calls to Action. Ask how the policies they are bringing up support Indigenous sovereignty, ask if they've consulted Indigenous leaders.



- Challenge friends, family, and community members with outdated stereotypes to become active allies since they are treaty partners too.
- Use your social media platform to normalize conversations around Indigenous rights.



- Many things we learn in school are stolen and whitewashed from Indigenous practices—Google "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Blackfoot Nation"
- Ask that your teachers and professors decolonize their lesson plans and attribute teachings from Indigenous folks accordingly.



- When conducting business, choose Indigenous-owned companies as partners, vendors, etc.,
- When a potential employer asks you in an interview if you have any questions, ask them how they enact the calls to action in their organization.

Enacting 94 Calls to Action In Your Life

We can all take action to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action. Visit CBC's interactive Beyond 94 to understand our progress on each action. Here are examples of different calls to action you can advocate for:



CALL TO ACTION 22:

We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian healthcare system to recognize the value of Aboriginal* healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.



CALL TO ACTION 16:

We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.



CALL TO ACTION 1:

We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care.

Next Steps for Treaty Partners

Learn About Whose Land You Live On

Remember Land Acknowledgements? Take it a step further by actually learning about whose traditional territories you live on. Check out **Native-Land.ca** for an interactive map.

Do Your Research

Now that you know whose traditional territory you live on, the next step is to actually learn about the Indigenous People who were the land's original caretakers.

Read the Truth and Reconciliation Report

Take a look at the complete list of recommendations made by the landmark report released in 2015.

Be a Good Treaty Partner

Find ways to enact 94 Calls to Action and practice active allyship as you work to decolonize yourself, your community, your school and your workplace.

Connect with your Elected Officials

Tell them to stop talking about how much they care and to actually take action. Ask them directly what they are doing to make a change. www.oncanadaproject.ca/findyourrep

Check out www.OnCanadaProject.ca/SettlersTakeAction

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