

News Release

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September 30, 2021

Statement from the Chair re: First National Day of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada

DUNCAN, BC – “Today we take time to step back and reflect on the painful past of Canada’s treatment of Indigenous people across the country. The legacy of Residential Schools and the forced reservation system have caused lasting harm and trauma to Indigenous people here in Cowichan, throughout Vancouver Island, British Columbia and across Canada.

This day honours the lost children, survivors, their families and communities. Recognition of, and reflection on, this horrific past is absolutely critical to true and lasting reconciliation. Today, we stand in solidarity with Indigenous Elders, Leaders, and community members across Canada as we move toward a better future for everyone through learning and understanding of this painful legacy.

Today is a call to action for all Canadians. We must take the time to listen and understand the impacts of past colonial practices on Indigenous communities and resolve to stand with them as we move toward healing. I stand firmly behind all First Nations as we move forward together.

Today is also Orange Shirt Day. Orange Shirt Day is an Indigenous led initiative and commemorative day to honour and remember the victims and survivors of Indian Residential Schools. This day relates to the experience of a Northern Secwepemc (Shuswap) from the Stswecem’c Xgat’tem First Nation, Phyllis Webstad, who arrived on her first day of school dressed in her favourite orange shirt. This shirt was taken from her. This has become a symbol of the stripping away of culture, freedom and self-esteem experienced by Indigenous children over generations. Today we ask all Canadians to wear orange to help raise awareness about the legacy of residential schools, show solidarity with First Nations, and honour survivors and their families.

I will be participating in Indigenous led events today, and encourage you to do the same. Take time to research, read and watch some of the many stories told by survivors. Really take in and feel those experiences. Imagine if this were your close friend or family member. Imagine if your child, brother, sister or grandchild were taken from your family and forced to abandon your culture and way of life. Taking the time to feel this empathy will help lead us to true understanding and appreciation for the pain and trauma caused by our Nation’s past.

We are stronger through understanding and collective action. A better future for all of us will come when reconciliation is realized. Let us stand together to make reconciliation the story of our generation. You have my unwavering support in this work... together.”

Aaron Stone
Chair, Cowichan Valley Regional District

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