

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation - A Reflection and Learning

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Like many of you, when I first came to Canada, I thought my biggest challenges would be the long winter, missing home, making friends, and learning how to settle into life in a new country. But what surprised me most was how much I didn't know, and how curious I became to learn more about the history of this land. Writing this blog is part of my journey to understand Canada more deeply, and to invite you to learn alongside me.

Every year on **September 30**, Canada observes the **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**. This is a day to honour the survivors of **residential schools**, their families, and their communities, and to remember the children who never came home.

Residential schools were government- and church-run institutions that, for more than a century, forced Indigenous children away from their families. They were not allowed to speak their languages or practice their cultures. Many faced neglect and abuse, and the impacts of these schools are still deeply felt across generations today.

The date also coincides with **Orange Shirt Day**, inspired by the story of **Phyllis Webstad**, a residential school survivor. On her first day of school, her new orange shirt was taken away - a symbol of how children's identities and voices were stripped from them. Today, the orange shirt represents remembrance and solidarity.

For international students, this day is not just another date on the calendar. It is an opportunity to learn about Canada's history, reflect with respect, and take part - whether by wearing orange, joining a campus event, or simply taking time to understand the truth and support reconciliation.

(Written by Caroline Cheng, Student Ambassador – International Student Support Group)

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