

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation: A Brief Overview

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SMEFT Meets ChEFT Workshop

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Land Acknowledgement

TRIUMF is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) People, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

Disclaimer

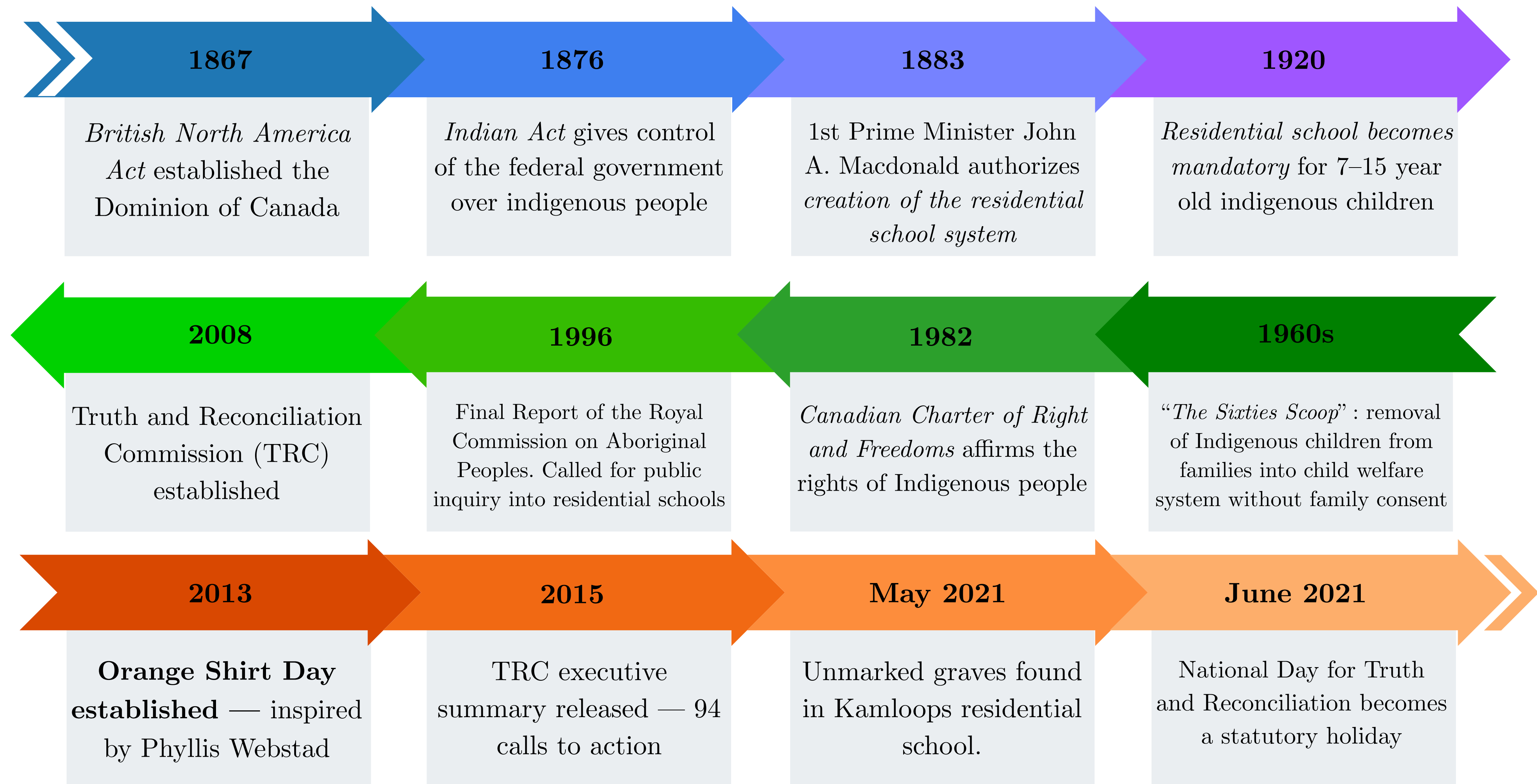
I am not an expert on this topic!

What you see here is based on my own reading and understanding of the history between Canada and Indigenous people. I highly encourage you to seek resources to learn about this vast topic on your own.

For this talk, I will *focus only on what the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is.*

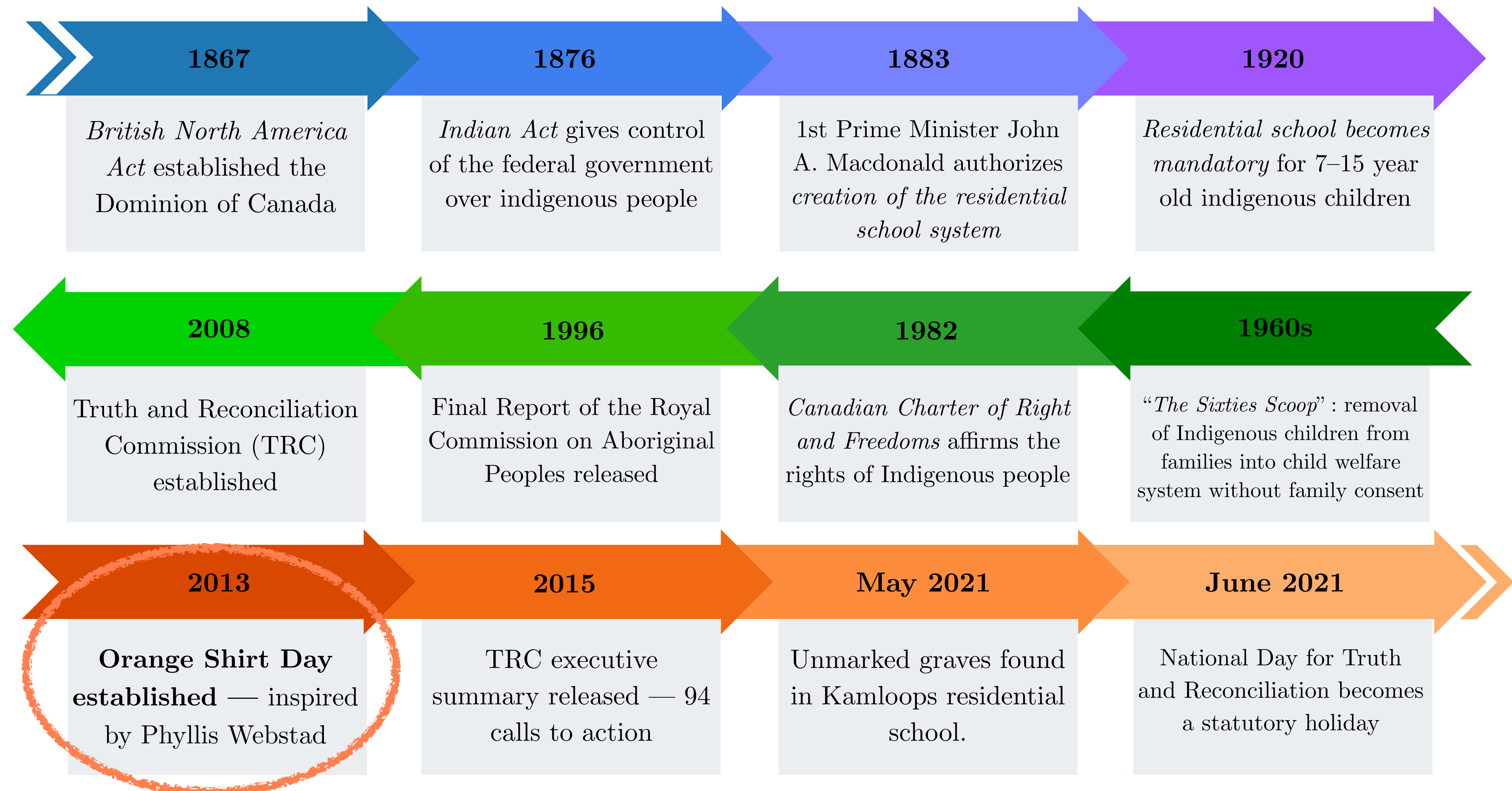
A Bit of History...

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation concerns the history between Canada and Indigenous people



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Orange Shirt Day

Orange Shirt Day is a precursor to National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (T&R Day), and was first established in 2013

- Four questions to quickly address:
 - What is Orange Shirt Day?
 - Why orange shirts?
 - Why September 30th?
 - Why T&R Day?

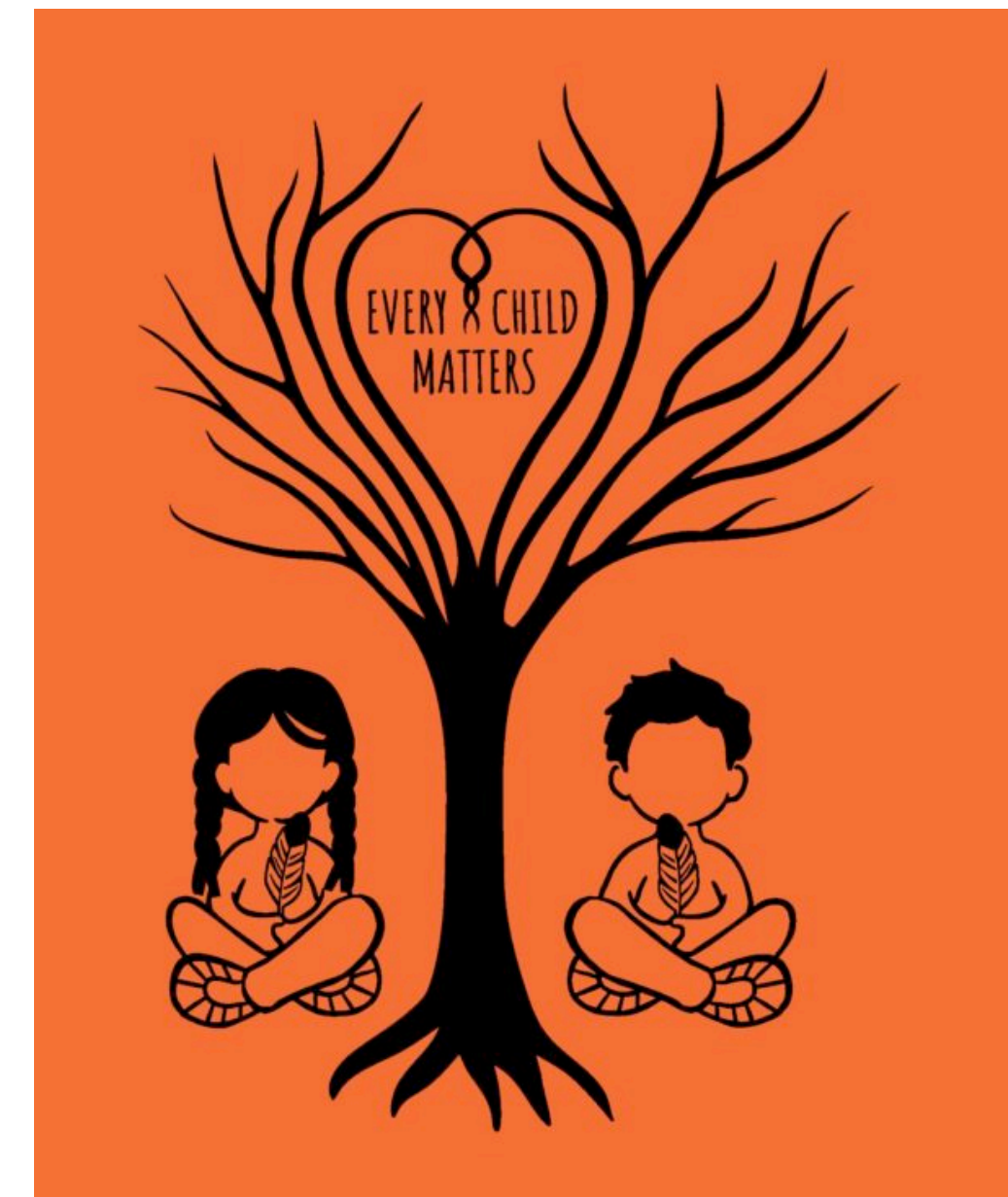
1. What is Orange Shirt Day?

- Briefly: remembrance and reflection; acknowledging the survivors, their families, and the intergenerational impacts of residential schools
- From Orange Shirt Society: “The annual Orange Shirt Day on September 30th opens the door to global conversation on all aspects of Residential Schools. It is an opportunity to create **meaningful discussion** about the effects of Residential Schools and the legacy they have left behind. A discussion all Canadians can tune into and **create bridges** with each other for **reconciliation**. **A day for survivors** to be reaffirmed that they matter, and so do those that have been affected. **Every Child Matters**, even if they are an adult, from now on.”
- The orange shirt symbolizes the loss of culture, freedom, and self-esteem that many Indigenous children experienced.



2024 Every Child Matters
T-shirt Design by Aliyah Bautista

2025 Every Child Matters
T-shirt Design by Sloane Cameron



2. Why Orange Shirts?

- Inspiration for using orange shirts due to **Phyllis Webstad** — a Northern Secwepemc (Shuswap) author and activist.
- Personal story told in 2013 at St. Joseph Mission Residential School Commemoration Project and Reunion events in William Lake, BC. Recounted “**her first day at residential school when her shiny new orange shirt, bought by her grandmother, was taken from her as a six-year old girl.**” This story became a symbol of the experience of indigenous children in residential schools.
- From Phyllis’ Story: “The color orange has always reminded me of that and how my feelings didn’t matter, how no one cared and how I felt like I was worth nothing.”



3. Why September 30?

- Orange Shirt Day is observed on September 30th.
- Sept. 30 was chosen because residential school academic year typically started around end of September, and a time of the year when Indigenous children were historically taken from their homes to residential schools.

4. Why National Day for Truth & Reconciliation?

- 2008: Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established to document the history and impact of residential schools.
- 2015: TRC released their executive summary and *94 calls to action in June 2015. Call to Action No. 80*: “We call upon the federal government...to establish, as a statutory holiday, a *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation* to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.”
- 2018–2020: bill introduced in Parliament to make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday but were tabled for different reasons.
- May 2021: discovery of unmarked graves in Kamloops and other residential school renewed calls for a national holiday.
- June 2021: House of Commons agreed to fast-track a bill to make Sept. 30 a statutory holiday — *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation*

Participating in T&R Day

- Wear an orange shirt to commemorate the children affected by residential schools
- Attend local events. Events around Metro Vancouver - [CBC article](#), [Vancouver Sun article](#), [Page 55 of B.C 2025 Events Listing](#)
- Learn about the history and legacy of residential schools. Read the 94 calls to actions.
- Read, listen, and watch indigenous content.
- Support indigenous owned businesses:
 - <https://www.indigenousbc.com/stories/indigenous-shopping-and-responsible-wishlists/>
 - [Salmon and Bannock](#) - Vancouver's only Indigenous-owned and -operated restaurant.
- Discuss reconciliation with friends, family, coworkers, etc.
- Land Acknowledgment

Land Acknowledgement

- In Canada, land acknowledgements are **important acts of reconciliation that recognize the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples** and honor their ongoing relationship with the land.
- Have become a common practice in government meetings, educational institutions, and public events.
- They are part of a broader **effort to bring visibility to and begin addressing historical injustices faced by Indigenous communities**, including colonization, residential schools, and broken treaties.
- This is one action of honouring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on lands in Canada from time immemorial.

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Land Acknowledgement

- Whose land have I been on?
 - I was born in Miami, FL and did most of my education in Miami.
 - Graduate school in Santa Cruz, California.
 - Postdoc at Carleton University in Ottawa, ON.
- Lets go to native-land.ca — online map of indigenous territories

Very Incomplete List of Resources

- If you are interested in learning more about National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, events, etc
 - *Orange Shirt Society* - <https://orangeshirtday.org/orange-shirt-day/>
 - *National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation* - <https://nctr.ca/> , <https://nctr.ca/exhibits/residential-school-timeline/>
 - *Truth and Reconciliation Report*
 - *94 Calls to Action*
 - *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada* - <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/>
 - *Information about Musqueam people* - <https://www.musqueam.bc.ca/>
 - *Signal Fire Documentary - 10 Calls to Action for Natural Scientists* - <https://www.signalfirefilm.ca/>
 - *Indigenous Tourism BC for events* - indigenoustourismbc.com
 - *Events around Metro Vancouver* - [CBC article](#), [Vancouver Sun article](#), [Page 55 of B.C 2025 Events Listing](#)

Thanks!



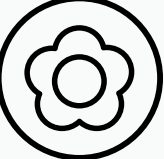
NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

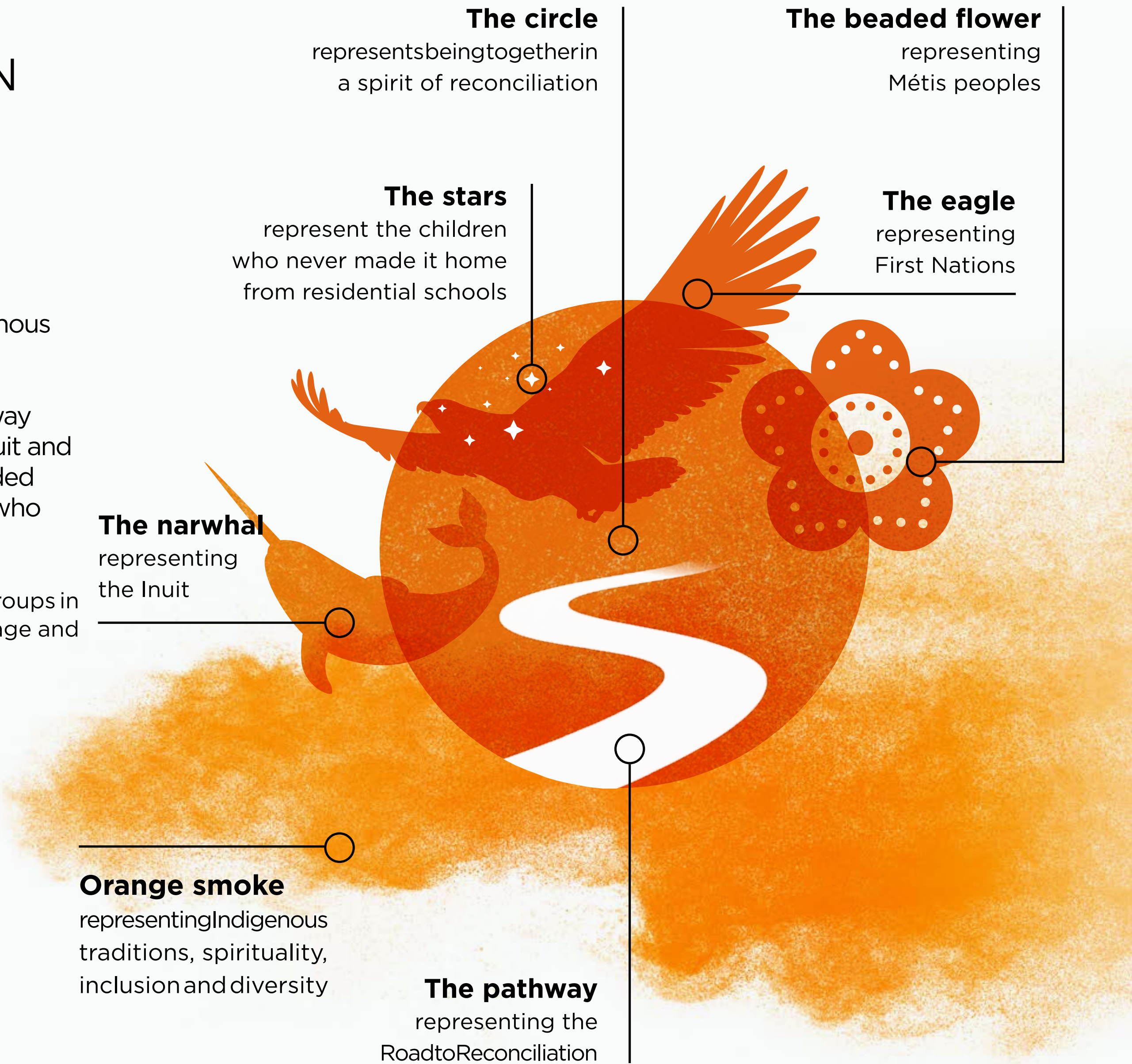
DESCRIPTION OF VISUAL ELEMENTS

Among the various visual elements illustrating Indigenous cultures, the circle is at the centre, which represents being together in spirit of reconciliation. The orange colour represents truth-telling and healing. The pathway represents the road to reconciliation. First Nations, Inuit and Métis are represented by the eagle, narwhal and beaded flower in the image. The stars represent the children who never made it home from residential schools.

***Smoke** is used in different ways by all three Indigenous groups in Canada. Whether it is to smoke fish and meat, to burn sage and tobacco or for sacred ceremonies, it is a significant symbol in Indigenous culture.

DESCRIPTION OF THE THREE ICONS

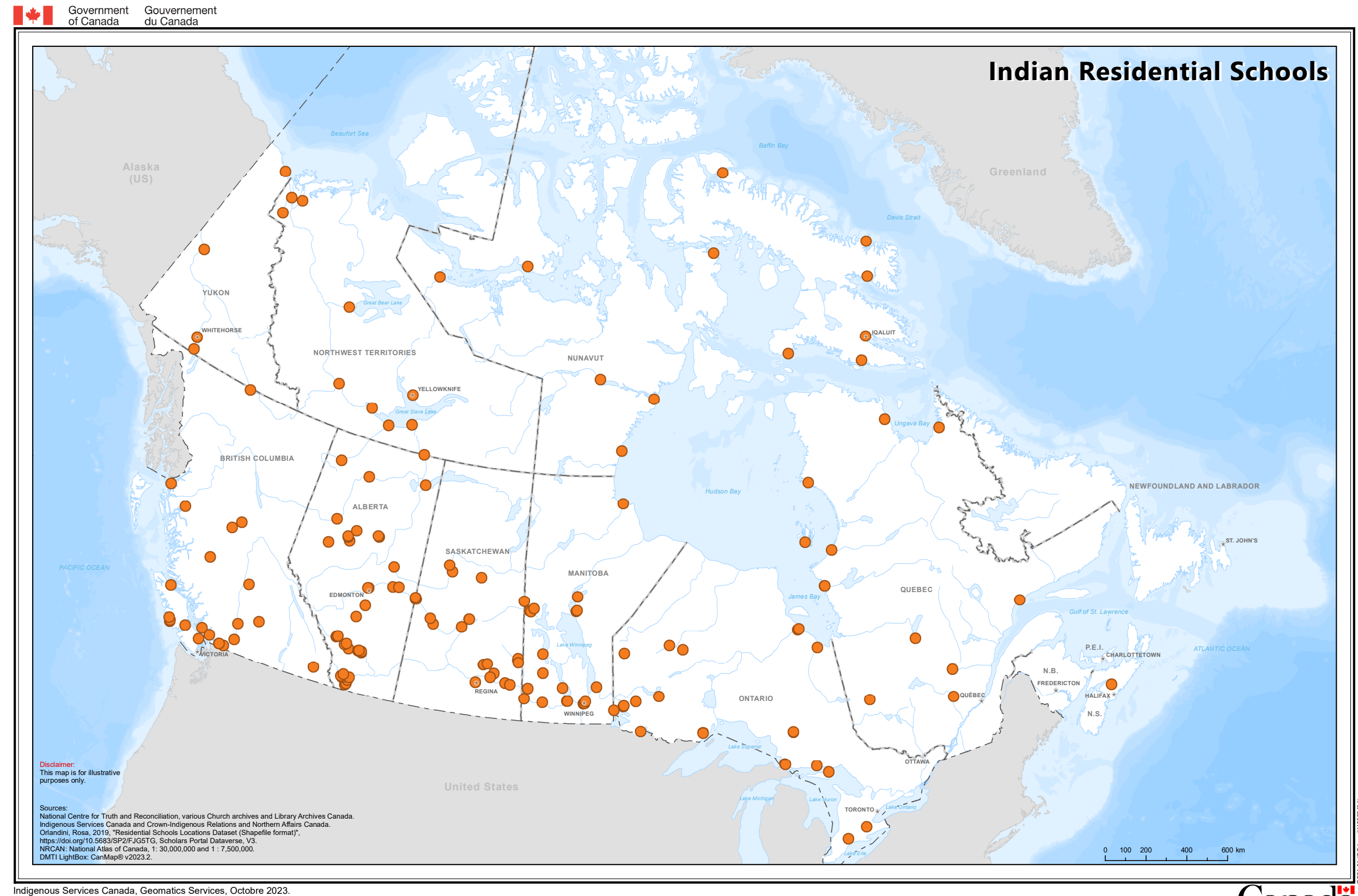
-  **The eagle** to represent the First Nations
-  **The narwhal** to represent the Inuit
-  **The beaded flower** to represent the Métis peoples



Residential Schools in Canada

- Government-funded schools run by churches to educate and assimilate indigenous children into Canadian Society
- ~150,000 indigenous children attended residential schools
- Over 130 residential schools operated between 1831 and 1996, with 80 schools operating at a single time in 1930.
- First: The Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Ontario (1831)
- Last: The Gordon Residential School in Punnichy, Saskatchewan closed in 1996

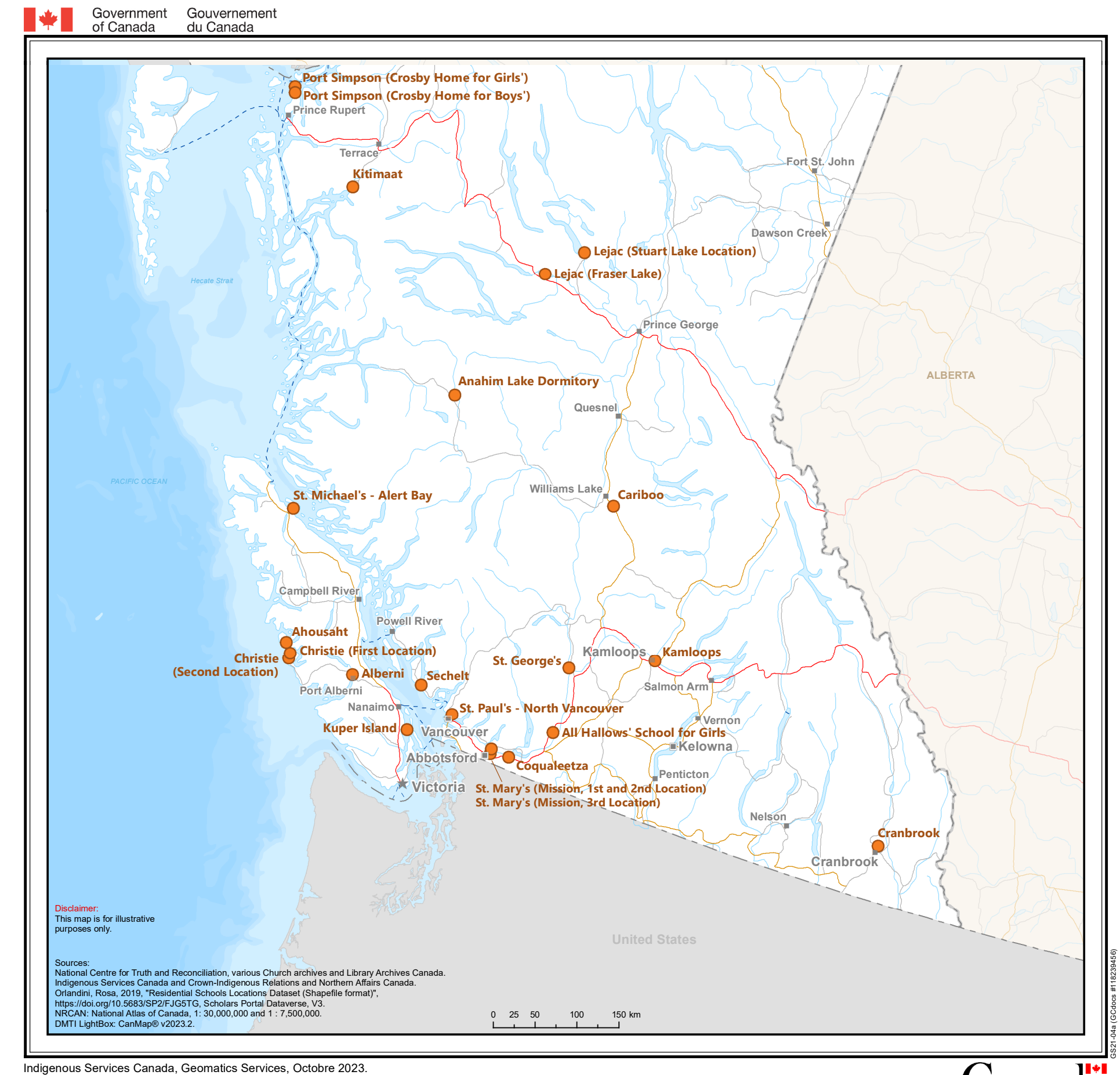
Indian Residential Schools Interactive Map



Residential Schools in BC

- 18 federal/church-operated residential schools
- Notable residential schools:
 - St. Joseph's Indian Residential School in William Lake, BC. Where the inspiration from Orange Shirt Day comes from.
 - Kamloops Residential school - hundreds of unmarked graves found in 2021

Indian Residential Schools Interactive Map



94 Calls to Actions

- **94 Calls to Action** are a set of recommendations issued by the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)** in 2015. These calls aim to address the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.
- Two main categories:
 - **Legacy:** Actions to redress the legacy of residential schools and address ongoing issues.
 - **Reconciliation:** Actions to build a new relationship based on mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
- Key Themes:
 - **Child Welfare:** Recommendations to reduce the number of Indigenous children in care and ensure culturally appropriate services.
 - **Education:** Calls to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.
 - **Language and Culture:** Efforts to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages and cultural practices.
 - **Health:** Actions to close the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.
 - **Justice:** Recommendations to extend the statutes of limitations and to reaffirm the independence of the RCMP. They also speak to the need to develop culturally appropriate justice systems.
 - **Reconciliation:** Calls to promote public education and awareness about Indigenous histories and cultures; create better relationships between the Canadian government and indigenous people.