

Four ways churches can observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

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Starting this year, Canada will have a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30. The new federal statutory holiday honours the survivors of residential schools as well as their families and communities. It's an opportunity for all of us who call Canada home to reflect, learn and act.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), after working from 2008 to 2015 to document the history of Canada's residential schools, outlined 94 Calls to Action in its final report to "redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation."

Responding to the TRC's calls to action is also part of the mandate of the Seven Commitments Working Group, which was formed in 2020 to help Evangelicals move forward in reconciliation and nurture good relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous brothers and sisters.

The TRC's 94 Calls to Action encourage a positive societal shift—one that starts inside us. Perhaps your church wants to participate in the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, but you're running out of time to prepare something. Or maybe this isn't a topic your congregation has engaged in much.

Either way, the following ideas are a good starting point. They're simple and accessible, and we hope they will invite you to continue in the work of learning and raising awareness.

Pray using this simple guide

Encourage church staff and congregation members to pause on Sept. 30 to pray for Indigenous peoples in Canada. You can use this TRC prayer guide by the Alliance Canada (the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination) as a prompt. It provides brief details on each call to action along with prayer prompts. Encourage individuals and small groups to continue to use this guide throughout the year. (You may notice the prayer guide uses "Aboriginal" to refer to Indigenous people. The preferred term has changed since the guide was written. Indigenous is now used as an umbrella term that includes all First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.)

Learn using online resources

Are people in your congregation asking how they can learn more, and you don't know where to direct them? As a starting point, you might make Sept. 30 or the days leading up to it an opportunity to point to resources at [TheEFC.ca/IndigenousRelations](https://www.TheEFC.ca/IndigenousRelations). You can also check with your denomination for any resources they have. Charity Village has also compiled a helpful list of learning tools. For more details and supporting documents on Canada's history with residential schools, visit the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation website and follow its link to the full 94 Calls to Action.

Check out the #94in94challenge social media campaign leading up to Sept. 30 by Reconciliation Thunder, a non-profit that empowers leaders to respond to the 94 Calls to Action and address institutional racism. Read the past posts and share them on your personal account or church's social media to start conversations and raise awareness.

Teach kids by reading appropriate books with them

Get the kids in your congregation involved. Suggest that parents in your church read a children's book on Indigenous history with their kids. For some title ideas, check out this CBC list of 14 books by Indigenous authors for children and youth.

Want to go deeper?

- Learn more by enrolling in Indigenous Canada, a free course from the University of Alberta. It's accessible for those who are beginning to learn and takes about 21 hours to complete (you can work at your own pace). You may want to find fellow church members, friends or coworkers who could take the course at the same time so you can discuss together what you're learning.
- Don't stop after just one course or initiative. Churches, ministries, organizations and schools can continue to engage on an ongoing basis. The EFC has outlined further action steps to continue on the process of learning and forming transformative relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
- You could even consider taking a graduate studies program on these issues or supporting someone else through such a program. Christian examples include the Master of Theological Studies - Indigenous offered by NAIITS/Tyndale Seminary or the Master of Arts in Indigenous Community Development Studies offered by NAIITS/Acadia Divinity College.

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