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Statement from Burlington Mayor Marianne Meed Ward on National Day for Truth & Reconciliation

Burlington, Ont. – Sept. 30, 2021 – Today serves as the inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. It is meant to be a day about listening, learning and working collectively towards healing. It is a day of reflection, to truly understand the history of the land we now know as Canada and the issues that still face Indigenous peoples from coast-to-coast.

Today is also Orange Shirt Day in remembrance of the victims of the Canadian Indian Residential School system and in honour their spirits. Wearing orange today is symbolic of the orange shirt Phyllis Webstad, of the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation and founder of Orange Shirt Day, wore on her first day of Residential School, but had it taken away and replaced with a uniform.

The discoveries of mass and unmarked graves at former Residential School sites earlier this year was a shock to many Canadians, but for others, this wasn't news, it wasn't a surprise, it was simply the truth. It is a hard truth that all of us now face with the responsibility to educate ourselves further. Part of that is listening to the survivors, their children and grandchildren who experience intergenerational trauma from the legacy of residential schools.

I'm so grateful for the spirit in which members of our city, community and Council have approached these very difficult issues and discussions. As well, I'm grateful to have met with Indigenous residents living in Burlington and Halton Region who have helped Council in our learning journey around what more we can do to implement Truth and Reconciliation in our city, as well as, what actions we can take to ensure true diversity, inclusion and reconciliation here.

The City of Burlington and Council are listening and committed to bringing actionable change at the municipal level and advocating to our provincial and federal governments for the change reflected in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action. We all live on treaty lands in Canada and that makes us all treaty people. Community members can learn more about the steps the City and Council have taken, and are planning, to honour and support Indigenous residents in our community [here](#).

The City and Council are also committed to making meaningful partnerships as part of the journey to reconciliation. I want to thank all Urban Indigenous residents of Burlington and local volunteers who have been putting on events and art installations to help educate our community – particularly the

[event organized by Urban Indigenous Peoples of Burlington](#) that is taking place today at Spencer Smith Park.

I encourage all Burlington residents to take time today to learn more about Indigenous cultures and their histories and reflect on the history of Residential Schools and how you might be able to [support the path to true reconciliation](#) – whether that be by attending today’s event or future events, reading some of the literature available at the Burlington Public Library related to Residential Schools and Reconciliation, or volunteering with or donating to a registered organization that provides support to Residential School survivors, their families and/or the preservation of historical evidence.

To urban Indigenous residents who call Burlington home, I hope that today you find moments of healing and support from the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marianne Meed Ward', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward
City of Burlington

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