

MEMORANDUM

To: Faculty, Staff, and Students, University of Toronto Scarborough
From: Professor Katherine R. Larson, Vice-Dean Teaching, Learning & Undergraduate Programs
Professor Jessica Fields, Vice-Dean Faculty Affairs, Equity & Success
Date: 16 September 2021
Re: Orange Shirt Day and Truth and Reconciliation Events - U of T Scarborough
Note: For broad distribution

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff:

We are writing to draw your attention to upcoming events at the University of Toronto Scarborough, related to Orange Shirt Day, which is held on September 30th.

The story of the orange shirt began when Phyllis (Jack) Webstad was taken to residential school at the age of six. Her orange shirt was taken from her along with her hair, language, culture, community, and rights. Phyllis's story has grown into a [commemoration project](#) and gathering for residential school survivors. This year for the first time, September 30th is being recognized as a federal statutory holiday, the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

For Indigenous members of our campus community and their families, September 30th this year may be a particularly difficult day given the ongoing confirmation of burial sites at residential schools across the country. We encourage students, faculty, and staff to take the time they need on this day. For faculty who are teaching, we encourage you to be flexible in your planning, particularly around scheduled assessments, both to support students' and your own accommodation needs, and to create space for reflection and learning in this area.

While the University of Toronto will remain open on September 30th, we encourage U of T Scarborough students, faculty, and staff to take time on this day to reflect and to consider individual and collective actions in response to the [94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) and the final report of the University of Toronto's steering committee, [Answering the Call: Wecheehetowin](#). Juanita Muise, U of T Scarborough's Indigenous Engagement Coordinator, has developed a [Calls to Action video capsule](#) inviting U of T Scarborough students, faculty, and staff to share a brief statement of what they are doing to respond to the Calls to Action.

A group of faculty, staff, and students from across the campus has been working over the summer to plan for Orange Shirt Day and the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation this year; contributors to planning include Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, Alexis Bornyk, Kelly Crawford, Joe Hermer, Dani Kwan-Lafond, Juanita Muise, Karina Vernon, the Doris McCarthy Gallery, the U of T Scarborough Indigenous Outreach Program, the Campus Farm, the Department of Sociology, the U of T Scarborough Library and the Office of the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean. Together, we have developed a series of events in late September and early October to help support learning, celebrate Indigenous excellence, and facilitate shared conversations in the spirit of reconciliation—including the importance of confronting difficult truths as the crucial first step in that process.



U of T Scarborough-specific events, which will be held both in person and online, include harvesting at the Indigenous Garden, beading workshops, drumming, talks with Indigenous artists, a circle to discuss the 94 Calls to Action, and a meeting of the Indigenous Book Club. We invite you to contribute a short recording to the [UTSC Calls to Action video capsule project](#) to showcase actions and commitments being undertaken across the campus. A tri-campus webinar about Orange Shirt Day will take place on September 30th. We also plan to set up a livestream camera at the Indigenous Garden throughout the day on September 30th to enable reflection, even if you are not able to be on campus. Please watch for further departmental initiatives and opportunities for engagement in the coming weeks.

Descriptions of events, along with registration links, are enclosed. We hope to see you there.

Warm wishes,

Katherine R. Larson

Vice-Dean Teaching, Learning & Undergraduate Programs

Jessica Fields

Vice-Dean Faculty Affairs, Equity & Success

Encl. [Truth and Reconciliation Events U of T Scarborough](#)
[Calendar of Truth and Reconciliation Events at U of T Scarborough](#)