



TOPIC: Canada Day

DATE: June 29, 2021

The City joins communities from coast to coast to coast to acknowledge the suffering endured by thousands of First Nation, Métis and Inuit children sent to residential schools as well as their families and communities.

The flags at all City of Vaughan facilities are currently at half-mast in memory of the 751 First Nation, Métis and Inuit children who were uncovered in unmarked graves on the site of the former Marieval Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan. The flags will remain lowered for 31 days, or one hour for each child, including on July 1. On May 31, the flags were also lowered for nine days in memory of the 215 children discovered on the Kamloops Indian Residential School grounds in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory.

On July 1, we will begin pre-recorded virtual events at 1:50 p.m. with 15 minutes of visuals acknowledging the residential schools and the victims and survivors. Residential schools were imposed upon the Indigenous people in Canada and date back to the 1870s. More than 130 residential schools were established across the country. The last school closed in 1996. These government-funded, church-run schools were set up to eliminate parental involvement in Indigenous children's intellectual, cultural and spiritual development.

More than 150,000 First Nation, Métis and Inuit children were placed in these schools during this era, often against their parents' wishes. Many were forbidden to speak their language and practice their culture. Abuse within the schools was widespread. While there are an estimated 80,000 former students living today, the ongoing impact of residential schools has been felt throughout generations and has contributed to social problems that continue to exist.

The exact number of children who died at school may never be known. We will likely continue to uncover more sites, such as the ones in Kamloops Indian Residential School and at Marieval (Cowessess) Residential School. As an organization, we are committed to ongoing discussions, learning and work towards the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action.

Acknowledgment is the first of many steps on the long road to reconciliation to which we are committed. The City updated the Council-approved [Indigenous Land Acknowledgement](#) on June 22. The City of Vaughan is situated in the territory and Treaty 13 lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. These lands are also the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee. Vaughan is currently home to many First Nation, Métis and Inuit people.

On June 11, 2008, the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Government of Canada, delivered a formal apology in the House of Commons to former students, their families, and communities for Canada's role in the operation of the residential schools.

Every Sept. 30, the City recognizes Orange Shirt Day to acknowledge the harm that the residential school system imposed on First Nation, Métis and Inuit children's sense of self-esteem and well-being. It is a vivid reminder of the need for ongoing discussions and work towards the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action.

The City also recognizes National Indigenous History Month in June through our Cultural Heritage Events program as well as National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21 as part of Vaughan's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

The Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of a residential school experience. Support is available at 1-866-925-4419.