

To the University of Lethbridge community

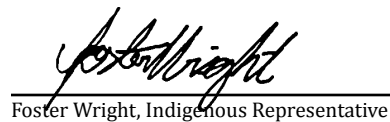
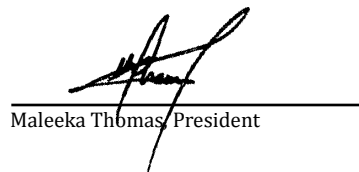
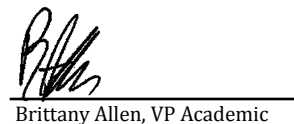
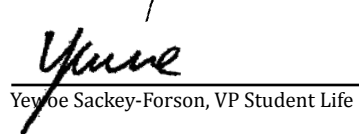
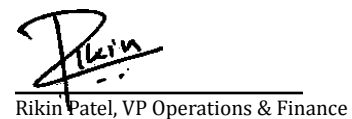
September 30th is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, as well as Orange Shirt Day. This day marks an annual reminder to reflect on and recognize the harm and intergenerational trauma that the Residential School system perpetrated in the lands that are now called Canada.

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation became a national day of recognition after the final report from the Truth and Reconciliation commission in 2015. The Government of Canada passed Bill C-5 in 2021 to recognize September 30 as a federal statutory day. This bill was the result of the government upholding TRC Call 80, which called upon the government to collaborate with Indigenous people to establish a statutory day to honour Survivors, their families, communities and to ensure public commemoration of the history of residential schools. This day recognizes the genocide against Indigenous people and the struggles communities continue to face as a result of the residential school system. Beyond today, it is important that we as treaty people, recognize the tragic legacy that residential schools have left, the children that were stolen, their families and communities that were left behind, and the survivors of these institutions.

Orange Shirt Day officially began in 2013, inspired by Phyllis Webstad's experience at the St. Joseph Mission Residential School near Williams Lake, BC. In 1973, Phyllis was wearing a brand new orange shirt, gifted to her by her grandmother, for her first day of school. Upon arrival, staff at the school stripped her of her belongings, including her orange shirt, dressed her in the school uniform, and Phyllis never saw her shirt again. Phyllis's story inspired a national movement to recognize residential school survivors, their experiences, and show a commitment to the belief that every child matters.

Today serves to honour the diverse cultures, experiences, voices, and histories of First Nation, Metis, and Inuit people. We are all individuals who live, work, learn, and play on Indigenous lands. It is important to reflect and honor the resilience, wisdom, and enduring spirit of Indigenous communities. We are all treaty people, and have a commitment to upholding and honouring treaty agreements and the TRC's 94 Calls to Action for reconciliation. As students, we have a responsibility to educate ourselves about Indigenous history, culture, and traditions. We must challenge the myths and stereotypes that persist and seek to understand the realities faced by Indigenous peoples. By doing so, we can foster a more inclusive and compassionate society and campus community. This is not possible without a collective effort from all of us, one in which we engage in meaningful dialogue and conversations with actionable measures and steps towards ensuring Truth and Reconciliation.

Yours in solidarity,

  
Foster Wright, Indigenous Representative  
Maleeka Thomas, President  
Brittany Allen, VP Academic  
Rachele Preston, VP External  
Yeyo Sackey-Forson, VP Student Life  
Rikin Patel, VP Operations & Finance