

NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, ORANGE SHIRT DAY

SEPTEMBER 30 MARKS THE NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, a time to honour the children who never returned home from residential schools, those who survived, their families and Indigenous communities. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the lasting impacts of colonialism and recommit to the ongoing work of reconciliation.

September 30 is also recognized as Orange Shirt Day, an Indigenous-led movement inspired by the story of Phyllis Jack Webstad, whose orange shirt was taken from her on her first day at a residential school. Her story has become a symbol of the loss of identity, language, culture and belonging experienced by generations of Indigenous children. The message “Every Child Matters” reminds us that reconciliation requires both remembrance and action.

Learning from the past is an important part of healing and reconciliation. The healthcare system has played a significant role in the colo-

nization of Indigenous Peoples, contributing to generations of inequitable treatment, mistrust and, ultimately, poorer health outcomes. Advancing reconciliation requires us to examine these systems, challenge the structures that continue to create barriers, and work toward healthcare that is culturally safe, equitable and shaped in partnership with Mi’kmaw and Indigenous communities. The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation reminds us that this work extends beyond Sept. 30 and must be embedded in how we advocate and deliver care every day.

Connection to Doctors Nova Scotia’s work

Doctors Nova Scotia (DNS) recognizes that decolonizing healthcare is ongoing work, and acknowledges that there is still much to learn and much progress to be made. The association’s EDI(R)A Framework provides a foundation for this work by strengthening relationships, fostering accountability, and supporting Mi’kmaw and Indigenous self-determination.

Over the past year, DNS has continued to strengthen relationships with Mi’kmaw partners, Mi’kmaw and Indigenous physicians, and physicians working in Mi’kmaw and Indigenous communities while also advancing reconciliation within the organization. This work has included:

- advancing the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, with a focused commitment to three Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action where DNS can

make a meaningful impact as a physician association

- launching an internal Land Acknowledgement Guide to support staff in delivering land acknowledgements that are intentional and connected to action
- strengthening relationships with Mi’kmaw communities through the EDI(R)A Engagement Tour, including visits to Indigenous health centres and engaging with physicians working in Indigenous communities

Reconciliation is a shared responsibility. By learning from Indigenous voices, reflecting on our own work and building respectful relationships, each of us can contribute to advancing truth and reconciliation. Doctors Nova Scotia remains committed to this journey and to continuing the work of reconciliation in partnership with Indigenous communities.

Resources

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada – Calls to Action
- Video: The Story Behind the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Orange Shirt Day



Find more EDIRA resources, videos and tools in the DNS SharePoint EDIRA Hub.