

MEDIA RELEASE

CUFA BC Statement on Canada's National Day of Truth and Reconciliation

(For Immediate release – Port Moody, BC, September 29, 2023) – The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) stands in solidarity with Indigenous peoples on Canada's National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. We have a responsibility to learn about the history of Indigenous peoples and the colonial legacy of violence that tried and failed to eradicate Indigenous knowledge and ways of living by the Canadian State. We affirm our collective responsibility to confront the past, learn from it, and actively work towards a more inclusive, equal, and just future. We argue that public post-secondary institutions in BC must play an important role in this future.

“There is a greater obligation on institutions of higher education to actively work toward decolonizing and indigenizing the academy,” says CUFA BC President Dr. Kenneth Christie. “We must do better to include Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing within our society, and especially within colonial academic structures.”

“Our public post-secondary institutions are complicit in systemic racism,” says Executive Director Annabree Fairweather. “This racism results in the underrepresentation of Indigenous people within positions of leadership in our community and on our campuses, and an overrepresentation in precarious employment and experiences of discrimination.”

CUFA BC calls on faculty, administrators, staff, and students as ambassadors of the academic community to commit to ensuring our campuses are places where Indigenous knowledge and learning are celebrated, where Indigenous voices are heard, and where reconciliation is not just a concept but a reality. Together, let us take meaningful steps towards truth, reconciliation, and justice for all Indigenous peoples in Canada.

September 30 is Canada's National Day of Truth and Reconciliation was established in 2022. Since 2013, Indigenous people have called September 30th “Orange Shirt Day” in commemoration of the survivors of the Indian Residential School System (IRSS) and those who never returned home. This statutory holiday was borne of the recommendations from the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) so that Canadians may never forget the history and ongoing legacy of the IRSS.

CUFA BC offers the following recommendations toward truth and reconciliation:

- Recognize and support Indigenous colleagues and students;
- Learn about Orange Shirt Day and the Orange Shirt Society: <https://orangeshirtday.org>
- Learn the history of Canadian residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Reports and Calls to Action, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- Follow progress on implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action: <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform-single/beyond-94>;



- Incorporate relevant content in your curriculum from Indigenous sources, including
 - the Assembly of First Nations Education Toolkit <http://education.afn.ca/afntoolkit/learning-module/residential-schools/>;
 - the First Nations Education Steering Committee <http://www.fnesc.ca/learningfirstpeoples>; and
 - Sign up for the University of Alberta online course offering <https://www.ualberta.ca/admissions-programs/online-courses/indigenous-canada/index.html>;
- Encourage safe spaces for meaningful dialogue in departments, classrooms, committees, and senates;
- Adopt hiring values and practices that countervail biases and incorporate these same values and practices in tenure and promotion processes;
- Better incorporate Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing within colonial academic structures, including tenure and promotion systems;
- Foster research programmes aimed at dismantling systems of racism, discrimination, the criminalization of poverty, and state-sanctioned brutality;
- Support research funding for Indigenous faculty and graduate student research projects in BC universities;
- Give space and opportunities for the voices of members of Indigenous communities as well as marginalized communities; and
- Consider making a donation to Indigenous organizations, such as the Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSS) <https://www.irsss.ca/> or the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association of BC (IAHLA) <https://www.iahla.ca>.

For further information or comment please contact CUFA BC Executive Director Annabree Fairweather at 604-367-5856 or executive.director@cufa.bc.ca.

CUFA BC represents over 5,500 faculty members, professional librarians, lecturers, instructors, and other academics at the five research-intensive universities in British Columbia, which include University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, Royal Roads University and University of Northern British Columbia.

CUFA BC celebrates fifty years of working closely with the member Faculty Associations at each institution. Our purposes are to support high-quality post-secondary education and research in British Columbia and to advocate for the interests of our members.

