



Media Contact:
Randa Bassil, Communications Coordinator
randa@ourkidsnetwork.ca, 905-630-5263

Media Release

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National Indigenous History Month: An Opportunity to Learn, Reflect and Connect

June is National Indigenous History Month in Canada – and this year, more than ever, it represents an opportunity for Halton residents and organizations to start a journey of discovery, understanding, and connection with Indigenous teachings and culture.

The area now known as Halton, is covered by five treaties with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. It is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, the Attiowonderonk, the Huron-Wendat, and the Mississaugas. Today, the land connects people of many different backgrounds, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. All who live here have an important role to play in the stewardship of the land, the recognition of distinct identities in it, and the creation of a society that is based on mutual respect. Halton Our Kids Network (OKN) is dedicated to these goals and has taken a leading role in our community as Canada rises to the challenge of understanding the Truth of our history and creating a path to authentic Reconciliation.

We Can No Longer Bury Our Heads in the Sand

OKN's Indigenous Reconciliation strategy manager, Angela Bellegarde, recognizes that the events of the past year have brought Canada to a unique turning point, and that National Indigenous History Month is an opportunity for deep reflection and exploring uncomfortable truths about our own perceptions of our cultural identity.

“A year of grieving has just happened with the recovery of the 215 bodies at a site formerly known as an Indian Residential School. It has had a tremendous impact. In Canada, we can no longer say this happens somewhere else, that we don't treat people like that,” Bellegarde said of the discovery of unmarked graves in Kamloops last June, and the graves that continue to be found at Residential School sites across the country. “I think there have been some uncomfortable truths unveiled through this process.”

She points out that feeling uncomfortable is not a bad thing; it can be an opportunity for change and growth. “In the past year, there have been many people who have put their hand up and said, ‘I want to know more. What more can I do?’”

Halton Organizations Role in the OKN Indigenous Strategy

As a region, Halton is unique in that there are no Indigenous agencies, political bodies, Friendship Centres, or cultural centres located within its boundaries. This makes OKN's [Indigenous Reconciliation Initiative Strategic Plan](#) a valuable resource for the entire community. Formally launched three years ago, the plan is centred on the concept of Truth as a foundation to effect

authentic change. All of its work is based on the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (NTRC) [94 Calls to Action](#) and is guided by the values of interconnectedness and collaboration, balance and harmony, kindness, and accountability. Because it operates on a collective impact model, OKN can extend and leverage its resources to organizations in the community that otherwise would be unable to afford or implement an Indigenous Reconciliation Strategy on their own.

An example of this is an exciting new initiative that will enable 1,000 of OKN's protocol partners to enrol in 4 Seasons of Reconciliation, a web-based professional development program offered by First Nations University. OKN member organizations have been invited to attend the course, which offers a cost-effective way to incorporate Indigenous Reconciliation professional development strategies across the region.

"We're really excited as an organization to bring this to Halton Region and for OKN to be the sponsor/driving force around that," said Bellegarde. "All of OKN's protocol partners are involved, and because we're a collective impact model we can really leverage our resources and extend them to other organizations who may not be able to undertake an initiative of this size."

"It really is important that Halton has that baseline truth as told by Indigenous people – and there is no better time than the present to learn the truth. There are so many ways to do it."

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Things you can do:

Explore OKN's [Indigenous Reconciliation resources](#)

Read and reflect on the TRC's [94 Calls to Action](#) and [10 Principles of Reconciliation](#)

Read blogs by community leaders

Tour the site of a Residential School at [Woodland Cultural Centre](#)

Support Indigenous-owned businesses

Visit an Indigenous art exhibit or music/dance performance

Enrol in the [University of Alberta Indigenous Canada](#) course

Learn about your community's Indigenous policies and advocate for change

Helpful links:

[OKN Indigenous Reconciliation \(ourkidsnetwork.ca\)](#)

[153 Principles of Truth and Reconciliation pages 4 and 5.pdf \(ourkidsnetwork.ca\)](#)

[Calls to Action English2.pdf \(exactdn.com\)](#)

[OKN Indigenous Reconciliation \(ourkidsnetwork.ca\)](#)

[National Indigenous History Month: Reminiscence and Revelation of a Non-Indigenous Person |](#)

[Using the power of relationships, research and knowledge to help kids thrive](#)

[\(ourkidsnetworkblog.ca\)](#)

[The Power of an Apology | Using the power of relationships, research and knowledge to help](#)

[kids thrive \(ourkidsnetworkblog.ca\)](#)

[Indigenous community | Grandmother's Voice | Milton \(grandmothersvoice.com\)](#)

[Woodland Cultural Centre | A Museum of Excellence](#)

[The Debwevin Project's website launched on Treaty Day in Oakville – Oakville Community](#)

[Foundation \(theocf.org\)](#)

[Indigenous Canada | University of Alberta \(ualberta.ca\)](#)