



Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Office of the Bishop

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Dear friends in Christ,

Over the past few months, the announcements of unmarked graves on the sites of former residential schools has brought to light the sad reality of a tragic part of Canada's history. My greatest prayer in this re-awakening of a painful past is that the Holy Spirit will enliven all hearts to a profound lament for the past sins of our country and our Church, and a commitment to accompaniment and relationship building. This moment in history provides an opportunity for us to move forward together in a spirit of hope on the path to healing and reconciliation.

As one small step on this journey, I am pleased to confirm that the Pastoral Centre and all parish offices and Catholic schools in the Diocese of Victoria will be closed on **September 30th, 2021** to allow staff and students to commemorate Truth and Reconciliation Day, a new federal statutory holiday which was announced in June of this year.

The creation of this National Day was one of the 94 Calls to Action released in 2015 by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The chosen date of September 30th coincides with Orange Shirt Day, which since 2013 has been an opportunity to promote awareness about the residential school system and its continuing legacy. I encourage all people in our Diocese to prepare for this first Truth and Reconciliation Day by learning more about the TRC and Orange Shirt Day, and to prayerfully consider what actions each one of us may take to promote healing and reconciliation.

As I said in my Statement of Apology and Commitment (June 3, 2021), we are all interconnected and we have a responsibility to accompany one another in the circle of life. The Diocese of Victoria humbly acknowledges the pain of the past and we accept responsibility and apologize for the role we have played in the history of residential schools. With the help of the Creator, the path forward is hopeful as we move forward in the light of a new tomorrow.

In Communion,

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Most Reverend Gary Gordon
Bishop of Victoria