

MEMORANDUM

To: Executive Council

From: Tom Duever, Interim Vice-President, Academic and Provost; and
John Lewis, Interim Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Relations

Subject: Commemorating National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day

Date: August 4, 2026

Colleagues,

Indigenous Days of Significance are important moments for the University of Waterloo community to recognize, honour, and make space for the histories, cultures, responsibilities, and lived experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. These days are not simply symbolic. For many Indigenous students, faculty, and staff, they are connected to ceremony, community obligations, grief, remembrance, healing, cultural identity, and responsibilities to family and Nation.

September 30, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day, carries particular significance. It is a day to honour the children who never returned home from residential schools, Survivors, their families, and communities, and to acknowledge the ongoing intergenerational impacts of the residential school system. It is also a day when universities have a responsibility to create meaningful opportunities for learning, reflection, and action in support of truth and reconciliation. Similar approaches at other institutions emphasize the importance of making space for students, faculty, and staff to participate in commemoration, learning, and reflection on September 30.

We ask Deans, unit heads, instructors, supervisors, and managers to support the participation of students, faculty, and staff in National Day for Truth and Reconciliation events. This includes allowing members of our community to absent themselves from class, meetings, placements, or work responsibilities without academic or employment consequences. Where possible, please avoid scheduling tests, assignment deadlines, meetings, or other mandatory activities on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Please share this message clearly within your faculties, departments, schools, and units, and approach related requests with flexibility, respect, and care. Supporting participation in these days is an important expression of Waterloo's commitments to Indigenous inclusion, well-being, and reconciliation.

Thank you for your support.