



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GCE44 GS 133 Designating Orange Shirt Sunday for March 2025

True Document Date: March 7, 2025

1. What is the issue?

Many United Church communities of faith observe Orange Shirt Day, also known as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, but it is not designated as a “Special Sunday” in The United Church of Canada. Making this official observance would be an appropriate way to publicly honour the thousands of children we harmed through our operation of the residential institutions.

2. Why is this issue important?

Orange Shirt Day (September 30) has been observed in Canada since 2013 as a way to honour all children who were forcibly removed from their families, homes, and communities. In fulfilment of Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 80, September 30 has also been designated as a federal statutory holiday (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation) since 2021.

Orange Shirt Day and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation are observed by United Church individuals and communities of faith. On the Sunday preceding September 30th, we honour the children through worship as a public expression of our grief, and of our commitment to reconciliation and Indigenous justice. Resources are prepared by the General Council Office to support this, and the past 3 Moderators have prepared messages for the day, but the Sunday has not been placed on the list of “Special Sundays.”

In a time when we are seeing increased denialism of residential institutions and the trauma they caused, as well as continued discriminatory treatment of Indigenous children by

contemporary institutions, formalizing the recognition of “Orange Shirt Sunday” and reminding people that Every Child Matters would be an act of faithful public witness honouring the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to educate church communities about residential institutions and to speak up for justice for Indigenous children, and the sacred obligation named by the Special Interlocutor on Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites to resist residential institutions denialism.

3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?

The Executive of the General Council could:

- **direct that Orange Shirt Sunday (the Sunday prior to September 30) be so designated in the United Church’s list of Special Sunday observances**
- **Direct the General Secretary to ensure that supports and resources are available to mark the day (including but not limited to worship resources, articles and Moderator messages)**
- **encourage regional councils and communities of faith to participate in this observance.**

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