

Bill C-5 presentation

November 16, 2020

History of IRSSS

In 1994, the Indian Residential School Survivor's Society (IRSSS) was formed and now has 8 regional offices in BC. Our team of RHSW (Resolution Health Support Workers) and Elders incorporate traditional healing practices and protocols when working directly with survivors and their families in various capacities. IRSSS services include:

1. Crisis counselling;
2. Crisis support;
3. Emotional support and cultural care;
4. Workshops /presentations to schools, business, aboriginal and non-aboriginal organizations on a variety of topics. (Colonialism, History and Impacts, Understanding Trauma, Anger Management, Grief and Loss, etc.);
5. Missing and Murdered Women's Programming (since 2019); and,

6. Indigenous Youth Justice Coordinator (2020)
who will work with intergenerationally affected
indigenous youth offenders in the system.

Since 1994, IRSSS, has worked to counter the lasting legacy of the Indian residential school and its direct impacts on our communities. The impacts from 126 years of residential schools not only affected the 150,000 who went to residential school but also their family members which we call “Intergens”. The affects destroyed our familial bonds, as well as disintegrated our cultural and linguistic bonds that tied us together as a community.

IRSSS provides services that redress the legacy of the IRS. There is much more work still to be done. Joe Norris, an elder board member states that they took away our culture and language. Out of 285 band members in his community, there are only 2 remaining language speakers. And Byron Joseph, our Chair, also an elder says “It’s not about us – it’s about our families.”

In 2015 when the TRC Report came out it was received with overwhelming support by IRSSS since it was a 6 year process that reflected what 7,000 Survivors had to say. The TRC recommendations were pivotal in advancing the

process of Canadian reconciliation and in particular, these survivors called for an independent National day for truth and reconciliation. This recommendation was critical and, more specifically, TRC Recommendation # 80 states:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honor Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

IRSSS believes there must be a way to make this a reality and a historic holiday that will focus on the history of the IRS and its impact on our people.

IRSSS supports this National Day and would like to see how Canadians can move use it as a more reconciliatory day.

It is our hope that this national holiday will be set aside on Sept 30th to provide education and information on the past history of IRS. ie. **Residential School Survivors Day or Orange Shirt Day. It is our hope that this national day will be set aside. We understand that Sept. 30th may be problematic, and that perhaps June 21st may make more sense.**

It should be an educational day for Canadians to acknowledge survivors and move toward reconciliation rather than a celebratory day.

It is about the truth about what has happened in history in residential and educating the public about the truth.

Therefore, in order to right the past, we must begin by recognizing and implementing a day that recognizes our IRS survivors and:

1. Includes an acknowledgement and commemoration of the IRS survivors;
2. Includes an educational component that will include information on what that date is about; and,
3. Is inclusive;

It the belief of IRSSS that TRC's statement that "without truth, justice and healing, there can be no reconciliation."