

# PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 17, 2021

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## TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION AT THE LIBRARY

Throughout the month of September, Stratford Public Library is providing resources and activities to support our community and help make a difference in the way Indigenous peoples are served in Canada. You will also see staff wearing orange shirts and buttons to honour residential school survivors and show a commitment to Truth & Reconciliation.

The **Messages of Solidarity** postcard campaign, which was developed in conversation with the Indigenous community in Stratford, gives library customers the opportunity to write to their elected representatives about specific actions the government can take towards Truth and Reconciliation.

Families are also invited to register for **Orange Shirt Day Literacy Kits** which will help facilitate meaningful conversations about Residential Schools and the legacy they have left behind.

Stratford Public Library have also been working to reduce systemic barriers within the organization by removing colonial language from the subject headings in the Perth County Information Network catalogue. These changes affect Stratford, St Marys, North Perth, Perth East, and West Perth.

“Our catalogue is a digital representation of our collection, and of the people we serve. Subject terms should reflect the names that people use for themselves,” says Krista Robinson, Systems Librarian.

SPL’s technical services department has replaced more than 1,500 antiquated and inappropriate subject headings with ones that accurately represent and reflect the knowledge of Indigenous peoples including, for example, replacing the subject heading ‘Indians of North America’ with the term ‘Indigenous Peoples’.

“Traditionally libraries follow official subject headings provided by the Library of Congress and Library and Archives Canada, however these have a colonial bias, and many of these subjects are seen today as racist, discriminatory and just plain incorrect.” says Sherri Bennewies, Library Technician. “For instance, Native American creation stories get sorted with folklore or fairytales, while Biblical tales are in the nonfiction section.”

Another important step was the adoption of a territorial land acknowledgement by the Library Board at their September meeting. This land acknowledgement will be used at the start of public meetings, celebrations, or other official events and programs.

“With this land acknowledgment, we aim to recognize and show respect to local Indigenous peoples and to honour their history, knowledge, culture and rights. Making land acknowledgement statements is an important step in the journey towards reconciliation.” Says Julia Merritt, library CEO.

Libraries are named in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s 94 Calls to Action. SPL will continue to move forward in implementing these calls by changing as an organization and facilitating community learning on Truth and Reconciliation.

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If you would like more information about this topic, please contact **Krista Robinson at 519-271-0220 x112** or [kr Robinson@pcin.on.ca](mailto:kr Robinson@pcin.on.ca)

