On Wednesday, 30 September, I invite you to join me in marking Orange Shirt Day – a national event to honour and remember the at least 150,000 children taken from their families and forced into residential schools. I encourage members of the UTM community to wear orange as a symbol of a collective commitment to reconciliation. Staff, faculty, and librarians can also change their virtual background or use an icon online, available for download from U of T's Orange Shirt Day site.

The symbol will express support for survivors of residential schools, for those who didn't survive, and for the countless families who still experience intergenerational trauma today.

UTM can deepen that support by learning. The UTM Indigenous Centre, in partnership with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, UTSC Indigenous Initiatives, First Nations House and Hart House, will present tomorrow a virtual event featuring Niigaan Sinclair, PhD, a professor of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba. Professor Sinclair will deliver a keynote talk about the impacts of the residential school system on Indigenous communities. The event runs from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Zoom: attendees should pre-register for the session here.

For those looking for other ways to build awareness and have meaningful discussions, UTM's Indigenous Centre also offers ongoing services and programs, including the monthly Lunch & Learn. The centre is a space where Indigenous communities can connect with one another and where non-Indigenous communities can reach out to learn more about Indigenous cultures.

By marking this important day and building awareness of the history of residential schools, UTM can take an important step in realizing one of my priorities as Principal. Tomorrow, as in the years to come, UTM should deepen its connection with Indigenous communities and build a University more deserving of Indigenous faculty, staff, librarians, and students.

Professor Alexandra Gillespie
Vice President and Principal
University of Toronto Mississauga