

Shelburne to hold quiet reflection during low key Canada Day

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Shelburne Town Council has decided to join the growing movement of communities across the nation in scaling back this year's Canada Day celebration.

While the Town is already hosting a scaled down event, with a family drive-in movie night, Council made the decision during their meeting on Monday (June 28) to also hold a moment of quiet reflection rather than celebratory fireworks.

The call to cancel this year's Canada Day celebrations comes in the wake of the recent discoveries of unmarked grave sites at two former residential schools. In late May, the remains of 215 Indigenous children were found at a former residential school in B.C, while the discovery of over 750 unmarked graves in Saskatchewan was announced on June 24.

Shelburne Mayor Wade Mills started the discussion about Canada Day by addressing how proceeding with regular events in a normal year would be "tone deaf", "disrespectful", and "narrow-minded".

"July 1 this year, can provide a unique opportunity," said Mills. "I think we can certainly still acknowledge in perhaps a quieter, more understated way the good this country has and still does represent, while also fully and properly acknowledging the very deep and lasting shortcomings we're still wrestling with

"Canada Day, I think, must be something for all Canadians and quite frankly any true celebration can only be achieved in my mind when all Canadians are able to full take part in that," said Mills.

Coun. Kyle Fegan, who is the chair of the Town's Canada Day committee, agreed with Mills in the move to have a low key event with acknowledgment to Indigenous communities.

"It's trying to take steps forward in a partnership that is brining everybody together, which in my mind is what Canada Day should be about," said Fegan.

"The acknowledgement and silence for these unmarked graves is very important, and also gives an opportunity for those of us who may be turning a blind eye to these kinds of atrocities to sit down and reflect ? it could be a benefit in disguise.?"

MPP Kyle Seebach in an email to the Free Press said canceling Canada Day is not the response he would use.

"My view is it's a great opportunity to celebrate our country because this is a wonderful country, but also maybe this Canada Day, we should take some time to reflect on the real horrors of residential schools," he said.

Alongside the acknowledgement and quiet reflection, Shelburne town staff are also looking at lighting Town Hall orange this Canada Day, the colour used to recognize residential school victims, on Canada Day.