



# ORANGE SHIRT DAY

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In September 1973, Phyllis (Jack) Webstap was six years old and was set to attend St. Joseph Mission Residential School – she was excited for her first day. Her grandmother, who she lived with at the Dog Creek Reserve, had bought her a new shirt for the occasion: it was shiny and orange with a lace at the collar, and Phyllis had picked it out herself. On her first day, wearing her new orange shirt, she arrived at the school. Upon admission, she and the other children were stripped of their clothes. Her orange shirt, and all of the other clothes, were never returned.

Phyllis' story of her stolen orange shirt serves as an educational narrative and symbol for the abuse and trauma endured by Indigenous children who attended Residential 'Schools'.

Orange Shirt Day originated in Williams Lake and is the legacy of the May 2012 St. Joseph Mission Residential School Commemoration Project and Reunion. It began as a project

that brought together former students and their families from the Secwepemc, Tsilhqot'in, Southern Dakelh and St'at'imc Nations, and was supported by the Cariboo Regional District, mayors and municipalities, school districts, and other civic organizations.

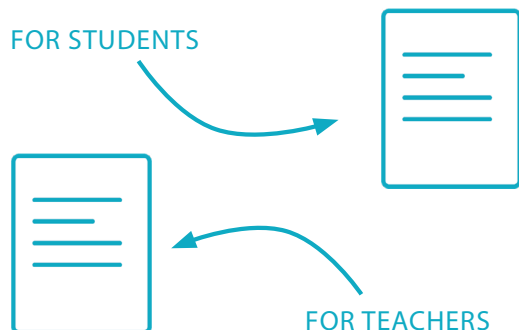
**Orange Shirt Day** is observed across BC on September 30, the time of year when children were taken from their homes to Residential 'Schools'. This day, near the beginning of the school year, can serve as a time for meaningful discussions about the impact of this experience. Parents with children, teachers with students, and Principals with staff can introduce conversations about the inter-generational trauma that has affected Indigenous communities, how we can decolonize spaces and how we can create pathways to reconciliation. This is a day when a precedent can be set in schools for anti-racism and anti-bullying policies.



St. Joseph Mission Residential School - Northern BC Archives

We encourage all school leaders in BC to participate in **Orange Shirt Day** in order to amplify Indigenous stories and experiences. If you are unsure of where to start, here are some resources and ideas for activities.

Make sure teachers and students are supported. The Orange Shirt Society has created a handout that can be sent home with children, which you can find here.



Provide teachers with information on lesson plans, reading materials, and activity ideas, which have been broken down by age and grade.

Get inspired by the Orange Shirt Society's ideas for school activities:

## READ

Invest in books by Indigenous authors, read their stories, and read their stories to students.



## WATCH

Play an informative video and start a discussion around 'Every Child Matters'; ask questions based on age and grade.



Video from Orange Shirt Society



Video from Shaw TV Northern BC



Video from First Nations Education Steering Committee

Find more video resources about Residential 'Schools' and Reconciliation for Grades 10, 11 & 12 on the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) website. There is even a *First People 10-12 Teacher Resource Guide* that staff and high school teachers can access for lesson planning.

# CRAFT

Have children trace their hand, then write in the hand a word or phrase that represents what they can do to help others feel like they matter.



Brainstorm single words with children that describe how you are supposed to feel in school. Have the students write a word on a decorative piece of paper – perhaps shaped as a bird, or a flower – and allow them to colour and decorate their art. These messages can turn into a beautiful display, and be a lesson in how to treat classmates and make others feel safe.

Decorate paper orange shirts with the words 'Every Child Matters'

Make 'Attachment Hearts' that students and educators can share with the people that are important to them. Here is a [step-by-step guide](#) on how to make them:

# ATTACHMENT HEARTS

Attachment Hearts are made from soft fabrics, like flannel. The fabric is cut into the shape of a heart and partially sewn closed, and one of the four medicines — cedar, sage, sweet grass or tobacco — are tucked inside before the heart is sewn fully closed.

The attachment heart is a soft, tactile object that someone can rub; rubbing the heart will be pleasant to the touch and will also release the scent of the medicine that has been stuffed inside. Attachment hearts can be used to help increase well-being and relieve anxiety or sensory issues.

# WRITE

Organize a letter writing campaign to the Prime Minister of Canada, asking the federal government to honour Orange Shirt Day and to commit to fair and equitable access to education for Indigenous children.

Whether through individual letters written by high school students, or a collaborative class letter led by a teacher, students can learn the importance of democratic communication. Do not worry about cost: postage to the Prime Minister is free!

Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

[Find the contact form](#)

# BUY

Buy an orange shirt or orange shirt lapel pin for OSD. The Orange Shirt Society has an [online shop](#) where you and your staff can purchase shirts that are printed with a design created by a Cree student from Dawson Creek. The proceeds, in part, go to OSS to support awareness.

OSS has partnered with Tribal Roots Imports to produce beaded Orange Shirt lapel pins. These pins are hand beaded and partial proceeds benefit OSS.

*Our gratitude to  
the Orange Shirt  
Society for resource  
information for  
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