

Orange Shirt Day, Every Child Matters

September 30

Join us and hundreds of others across Canada and wear an orange shirt on **Wednesday, September 30** to honour the children who survived the Indian Residential Schools and remember those that didn't. **Every Child Matters**. We will wear orange shirts in recognition of the harm the residential school system did to children's sense of self-esteem and well-being, and as an affirmation of our commitment to ensure that everyone around us matters.

The Story Behind Orange Shirt Day

"I went to the Mission for one year. I had just turned 6 years old. We never had very much money, and there was no welfare, but somehow my granny managed to buy me a new outfit to go to the Mission School in. I remember going to Robinson's store and picking out a shiny orange shirt. It had eyelets and lace, and I felt so pretty in that shirt and excited to be going to school! Of course, when I got to the Mission, they stripped me, and took away my clothes, including the orange shirt. I never saw it again, except on other kids. I didn't understand why they wouldn't give it back to me, it was mine! Since then the colour orange has always reminded me of that and how my feelings didn't matter, how no one cared and how I felt like I was worth nothing. I finally get it, that the feeling of worthlessness and insignificance, ingrained in me from my first day at the mission, affected the way I lived my life for many years...I want my orange shirt back!"

Phyllis (Jack) Webstad, Dog Creek, BC <http://youtu.be/ll1pUrK29MM>

This orange shirt taken from one child, is a symbol of the many losses experienced by thousands of students, and their families and communities, over several generations including: loss of family, language, culture, freedom, parenting, self-esteem and worth and painful experiences of abuse and neglect. Wearing orange shirts are a symbol of defiance against those things that undermine children's self-esteem, and of our commitment to anti-racism and anti-bullying in general.

The date was chosen because it is the time of year that children were taken from their homes to residential schools, and because it is an opportunity to set the stage for anti-racism and anti-bullying policies for the coming school year. Orange Shirt Day is also an opportunity for First Nations, local governments, schools and communities to come together in the spirit of reconciliation and hope for generations of children to come.

Wearing an orange shirt and promoting the slogan, Every Child Matters, is an affirmation of our commitment to raise awareness of the residential school experience and to ensure that every child matters as we focus on our hope for a better future in which children are empowered to help each other. Let's not forget the children but honour them on September 30th.

See: Orange Shirt Day - Resources and Ideas (for classroom ideas)

Visit: Orange Shirt Day facebook page and add your event photos
<https://www.facebook.com/orangeshirtdayeverychildmatters>

Learn more:

Legacy of Hope <http://www.legacyofhope.ca/>

Reconciliation of Canada <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/>