



Why Orange Shirt?



The story of Phyllis Webstad from the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation.

Phyllis recounted her first day of residential schooling at six years old when she was stripped of her clothes, including the new **orange** shirt her grandmother bought her, which was never returned. The **orange** shirt now symbolizes how the residential school system took away the indigenous identities of its students. She wore it proudly on her first day at a church-run residential school in Williams Lake, B.C. But then school authorities stripped her of her clothes, cut her hair, and took her shirt away. She never got it back.

"The colour **orange** has always reminded me of how my feelings didn't matter, how no one cared," she writes. "I went to a treatment centre for healing when I was 27 and have been on this healing journey since then. 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."

The purpose of wearing orange is to show a unified step towards reconciliation and building stronger relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

It is estimated that between four to six thousand children died at residential schools.

Wearing an **orange** shirt reminds us of the impact of residential schools still felt today.

Residential schools are not far in the past; the last one closed in 1996. As **Webstad's** story attests, many survivors are still coping with the trauma from their time at the schools, including physical and sexual abuse. The intergenerational impact is still felt through communities. **Orange** Shirt Day was created as an opportunity to discuss the effects of residential schools and their legacy. It honours the experiences of Indigenous Peoples, celebrates resilience, and affirms a commitment that every child matters.

[Click on the below links for more information/events](#)

- [The story of orange shirt day](#)
- [Phyllis Webstad Orange Shirt Day Presentation](#)
- [Remember me, September 30](#)
- [Here directly from survivors of these schools](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)