



Orange Shirt Day Sept 30

Information provided by the Canadian Unitarian Council



What is Orange Shirt Day?

As a young girl Phyllis Webstad wanted to wear her new orange shirt on her first day at St. Joseph's Residential School in Williams Lake, BC. The shirt was taken from her as part of the intake process, and that loss has come to symbolize all that was lost as a result of residential schools. Phyllis started Orange Shirt Day to use her experience of loss and powerlessness to remind us that Every Child Matters and to honour the strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples and their loved ones who survived the Residential School System imposed on them by the Canadian Government and Christian Churches. Orange Shirt day is a call to action for TODAY, urging Canadians of all walks of life to ensure that Indigenous youth and their families receive the resources needed to heal from past traumas, thrive in the present, and excel in the future.

Quick Facts on Residential Schools in Canada

- Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their homes by Royal Canadian Mounted Police. 1
- 150,000 Indigenous children were taken from their families. 3
- 90 to 100% suffered severe physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. 1
- There was a 40 – 60% mortality rate in Indian residential schools. 1
- Residential schools date back to the 1870s. 3
- Over 130 residential schools were located across Canada, and the last school closed as recently as 1996. 3

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- Two-thirds of Canadians believe (and four in ten **strongly** believe) that Canadians with no experience in Indian residential schools have a role to play in reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and all Canadians. 2

1. 1 Dr. Bryce Report 1907, Medical Inspector, Department of Indian Affairs
2. 2 2008 National Benchmark Survey, Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada
3. 3 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

From [Reconciliation Canada's website](#)

Marking this day with your congregation

We encourage you to use Orange Shirt Day as an opportunity to be in the spirit of openness and reconciliation with your congregation/group. Below you will find some resources that you can draw from to get started and some ideas to help you mark the day.

- Include one or more of the resources below in a church service in September.
- Consider how you can reach out to Indigenous groups, communities and organizations as a meaningful gesture that expresses collective remorse.
- If local events are planned by the Indigenous community, consider offering to help with logistics, promotion or other tasks as a gift of service.
- Educate yourself and others about the impacts of trauma (personal, cumulative and historical), racism and lack of opportunities for Indigenous communities. Find ways you can help.
- Many First Nations do not have access to the same quality educational opportunities, water or housing that non-Indigenous peoples have. Consider learning about these things in your area.
- Our child welfare system is disproportionately filled with Indigenous children which perpetuates unhealthy cycles and often puts children at risk. Consider learning about the rates of Indigenous children being apprehended in your area.
- Share stories and writings that tell the stories of residential school survivors and the legacy impacts of this trauma.
- Participate in the CUC's Truth Healing and Reconciliation initiatives to learn more.
- Support Orange Shirt Day by donating or buying orange shirts to support local groups.

Resources to get you started

[Orange Shirt Day Official Site](#)

Recorded message from Orange Shirt Day founder, [Phyllis Webstad](#)

The poem [Reconciliation](#) by Rebeka Tobobundung

Animated personal reflection by [Chief Robert Joseph](#)

Moving recitation of [I Lost My Talk](#) written by Rita Joe, performed by Gabrielle Nebrida-Pepin

Written poem and analysis of [I Lost My Talk](#) by Rita Joe for Orange Shift Day



Information about the [Residential School System](#) (Note there are also materials for younger people)
Short video of [Stories of Residential School Survivors](#)

Places to purchase orange shirts to support ongoing reconciliation work. Note, there may be groups in your local area hosting events and selling shirts to support their causes.

[Orange Shirt Day](#)

[Dream Catcher Promotions](#)

Questions?

Please feel free to reach out to us at reconciliation@cuc.ca

