

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation/Orange Shirt Day 2022

The Hue of Hope

Orange Shirt Day founder transformed a frightening childhood episode into an occasion to unite in the spirit of reconciliation.

Phyllis Webstad, who lived with her grandmother at Dog Creek reserve in central British Columbia, used her memory of her first day of school to create a powerful platform to help us talk about one of the most difficult subjects we share as Canadians.

In her children's book, *The Orange Shirt Story*, Webstad describes her residential school experience. She was sent to St. Joseph's Mission near Williams Lake, B. C., and, on her first day of school, she wore a shiny, new orange shirt.

Then six years old, she had chosen the bright and bold colour because it represented the promise and excitement of learning. However, when Webstad arrived at school her shirt was removed, never to be returned. And the clothing wasn't the only thing taken from her that day — she also lost her sense of self.

Webstad is Northern Secwépemc (Shuswap) from the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation and has earned diplomas in business administration and accounting. But perhaps most notably, in 2013 she helped to found Orange Shirt Day to honour the experience of residential school survivors and their families.

Since then, on September 30, participants across the country are encouraged to wear an orange shirt to acknowledge this painful piece of history. School boards use the event to teach children about residential schools, and each year more communities hold parallel activities such as walks, public lectures, and film screenings.



Phyllis Webstad, author of *The Orange Shirt Story*, wears an Orange Shirt Day T-shirt. UVIC PHOTO SERVICES

Geraldine Catalbas, a Grade 11 student from Ponoka, Alberta, designed the Official 2022 Orange Shirt Day. She'll receive a prize and a chance to meet Phyllis Webstad, from the nonprofit Orange Shirt Society, this year on September 30.



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The new design "honours the children who lost their lives in residential schools and reflects the impacts of their deaths and the Survivors' triumphs The shoelaces wing out and transform into an eagle that symbolizes their "freedom in the heavens and fight through difficult times."