

Orange Shirt Day



Orange Shirt Day walkers in Wetaskiwin

On September 30th all across Canada people wear orange t-shirts to remember those who went to Residential Schools and especially those who did not return. The last day of September has now become for many a day to remember and honour the survivors of Indian Residential Schools. Orange Shirt Day for Every Child Matters.

Back in 1973 a little girl named Phyllis excitedly got ready for her first day of school. I remember that feeling of excitement and curiosity. Who would be my teacher? Would I make any friends? Phyllis was also getting ready to go away for school. She was a little BC First Nations girl headed off to the Indian Residential School in Williams Lake, BC. Here are Phyllis' own words describing her experience:

I went to the Mission for one school year in 1973/1974. I had just turned 6 years old. I lived with my grandmother on the Dog Creek reserve. 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. I remember going to Robinson's store and picking out a shiny orange shirt. It had string laced up in front, and was so bright and exciting – just like I felt to be going to school!

When I got to the Mission, they stripped me, and took away my clothes, including the orange shirt! I never saw it again. I didn't understand why they wouldn't give it back to me, it was mine! The color 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. All of us little children were crying and no one cared.

(<http://www.orangeshirtday.org/phyllis-story.html>)

Phyllis shared this story with a group of survivors, children of survivors and allies a

number of years ago. In 2013 a group from Williams Lake decided to declare September 30th Orange Shirt Day to honour all the children who went to Indian Residential Schools, those who survived and those who didn't. They wanted it to become a day that would allow families, both Indigenous and settler, to talk about what happened.

A number of people and parishes across our diocese have taken part in wearing orange shirts and also taking part in walks in their communities. If you are interested in planning something for Orange Shirt Day please don't hesitate to get a hold of [Fiona Brownlee](#).

Resources

<http://www.orangeshirtday.org/>

<http://safeandcaring.ca/orangeshirtday/>