

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As September 30 approaches, the Indigenous Education Team at HWDSB invites you to join your children in wearing an Orange Shirt on this day.

### **Content Warning**

*This is sensitive subject matter. Please take the necessary steps to protect your heart and mind.*

If you have questions or concerns about the material that will be shared with your child(ren), please contact the school directly to discuss any special considerations or questions regarding your child's participation and learning opportunities. The National Indian Residential School Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day at 1-866-925-4419.

### **Why Wear Orange?**

Indian Residential Schools existed in Canada for over 160 years; the last one closed as recently as 1996. Churches and the Canadian government funded and controlled more than 250 sites.

Over 150,000 Indigenous children were taken from their families, as young as 4 years old. The schools' mission was to remove the children from the land, their Indigenous languages, cultures and ceremonies.

Those that attended these institutions experienced many forms of abuse, and were unnecessarily exposed to diseases. Thousands of children and youth died as a result and many others were never heard from again.

Before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [Final Report](#) (2015) and [94 Calls to Action](#), these truths were not widely known, heard or taught in Canadian schools.

In May 2021, we were reminded that we do not yet know the full truth when hundreds of unmarked graves were located at the St. Joseph's Mission Indian Residential School on the traditional territory of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation. This number grows as the searches continue.

Listening to survivors is key to learning these truths. Phyllis Webstad is a survivor that attended the St. Joseph Mission Residential School in B.C. On her first day of school, staff took away the new orange shirt her grandmother gave her. Wearing the shirt made Phyllis feel loved and cared for.

Wearing an orange shirt now is in honour of the survivors and the children that never returned home. The Orange Shirt represents solidarity in the commitment to helping every child know that they matter.

Please explore our Orange Shirt Day resources at [www.hwdsb.on.ca/indigenous-education](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/indigenous-education)

Miigwech. Nia:wen. Thank you.  
The Indigenous Education Team, HWDSB