

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. The schools' mission was to remove the children from the land, their Indigenous languages, cultures, and ceremonies, many never to return home.

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.

Yet in May 2021, the stories, and truths from Indigenous families and the extensive section on missing children and unmarked burials in the TRC final report were affirmed 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, and more locally relevant, the search began in November 2021 at the Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Ontario. For more information, please access Recovery, Reclamation and Revitalization — Survivors' Secretariat ([www.survivorssecretariat.ca](http://www.survivorssecretariat.ca)).

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.



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On Friday, September 30, 2022, we wear orange to honour the story of Phyllis Webstad, who in the early 1970s had her orange shirt taken away on her first day at the St. Joseph Mission (SJM) Residential School in British Columbia.

As we learned in the May 2022 statement marking the first anniversary of the discovery of 215 unmarked graves at Kamloops Indian Residential School, the orange shirt has become “a symbol for Indigenous peoples of resistance and survival and for Canadians, an act [of] solidarity with Indigenous Peoples.”

We encourage you to wear orange on Friday, September 30 to honour the children whose lives were lost as well as survivors, families and communities experiencing intergenerational trauma, and as a personal commitment to engage in education, commemoration, and healing/wellness in the spirit of Truth and ReconciliACTION.

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

Nya:wen. Miigwech. Thank you.

The Indigenous Education Team, HWDSB