



### ❖ What is Orange Shirt Day?

Orange Shirt Day, created in 2013, was born out of the experience Phyllis Webstad had while attending the St. Joseph Mission school. Phyllis is a member of the Secwepemc (Shuswap) Nation and of the Canoe Creek Indian Band located between Kamloops and Williams Lake, BC.

### ❖ Why is Orange Shirt Day Important?

Orange Shirt Day honours residential school survivors and provides an opportunity to remember the children who did not survive. Every September 30th people across Canada wear orange shirts as part of their act of reconciliation, remembrance, and recognition.

### ❖ Who is Phyllis Webstad?



Phyllis is the creator of Orange Shirt day. Read her story below:

*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, 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 wore 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.angeshirtday.org/phyllis-story.html>)*



## How can you prepare?

- ❖ Preparing for Orange Shirt Day is important. Remember this is a difficult, emotional time of year for many people, take the time to prepare in a good way.

Here are some things you can do:

### For K-3

- ❖ Read *When We Were Alone* by David A. Robertson or *Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola Campbell. Use one of these books to introduce the topic of Residential Schools.



When a young girl helps tend to her grandmother's garden, she begins to notice things that make her curious. Why does her grandmother have long, braided hair and beautifully colored clothing? Why does she speak another language and spend so much time with her family? As she asks her grandmother about these things, she is told about life in a residential school a long time ago, where all of these things were taken away.



In just four days young Shi-shi-etko will have to leave her family and all that she knows to attend residential school. She spends her last days at home treasuring the beauty of her world; the dancing sunlight, the tall grass, each shiny rock, the tadpoles in the creek, her grandfather's paddle song. Her mother, father and grandmother, each in turn, share valuable teachings that they want her to remember. And so Shi-shi-etko carefully gathers her memories for safekeeping.

- ❖ Next have students share something that is important to them, students can use something from the classroom, or draw a picture. Have students place their item in a box or bin. Talk about what item they put in the bin and why it is important to them. Cover the bin and ask the children how they would feel if all of these important things were taken away? They may feel, angry, sad, some may not even know what they feel. This is how it was for Nókomo, Shi-Shi-etko, Phyllis, and many more.
- ❖ After the activity introduce students to Orange Shirt Day and Phyllis Webstad. You can do a number of things to make the connection to Orange Shirt day:
  - Talk about Phyllis and share how her story is similar to Nókomo or Shi-Shi-etko.
  - Use the talking points on the reverse of this page to talk about Orange Shirt day
  - Use the QR code to share Phyllis's video story with your class.
  - After the video have your students talk about their first day of school. What were their feelings? Was their experience the same or different than Phyllis' first day?



## Wrapping up – This is why we remember and participate in Orange Shirt day

- ❖ All of the things that were taken from Phyllis and many other children are really important to all of us. Family, language, our environment, the way we look and the things we do; they are the things that make us who we are and help us feel safe and secure in the world. It is wrong to take these things away from anyone, especially children. Participating in Orange Shirt Day is our way of making it right, and making sure it never happens again, it is our act of reconciliation, remembrance, and recognition.