

Did you know...

What is the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement?

From the 1980's on, Indigenous residential school survivors across Canada launched legal campaigns to push the federal government and churches to acknowledge the abuses and atrocities that occurred to Indigenous children while in the residential school system and to provide financial compensation to survivors.

What is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)?

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement also created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that would provide opportunities for individuals, families and communities to share their experiences. The Commission was established in 2008, with its final report released in December 2015. The report documented the tragic experiences of the approximately 150,000 Canadian residential school survivors and gave 94 calls to action.

When and why did the Indian Residential Schools start?

Residential Schools were established by the Canadian government in 1828 to forcibly remove Indigenous children from their communities and families for the purpose of assimilating them to mainstream culture and Eurocentric beliefs and values. The system included industrial schools, day schools and residential schools.

What was an Indian Day School?

Indian Day Schools operated for over a century, from the 1860s to 1990s. Similarly to residential schools, the purpose of the day schools were to assimilate Indigenous children and erase Indigenous language and culture. Children who attended Indian Day Schools faced verbal, physical and sexual abuse.

Where were the first and last Indian Residential schools?

The Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Ontario, was the first to open in 1831. The last Indian Residential School in Canada was located in Lebret, Saskatchewan and closed in 1998.

How many Indian Residential and Industrial schools were in Saskatchewan?

There were 20 Indian Residential schools and two Indian Industrial schools in Saskatchewan.

When was the first Indian Residential school opened in Saskatchewan?

The Marieval (Cowessess, Grayson) Indian Residential School operated from 1898 to 1997 and was located 24 kms north of Broadview, east of Crooked Lake in the Qu'Appelle Valley.

Who was responsible for Indian Residential schools and their students?

Between the late 1800s and 1996, the Government of Canada and church organizations operated the Indian Residential School System. An estimated 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were removed from their families, homes, languages and lands.

Who is affected by Indian Residential schools?

Today, everyone living in Canada is impacted by the legacy of Indian Residential Schools.

Learn more about Truth and Reconciliation on the [Government of Canada Website](https://www.government.ca)

If you need support, the National Residential School Crisis Line is 1-866-925-4419

Sept. 30, The Story of Orange Shirt Day

As another school year begins and Sept. 30 approaches, our awareness is brought to the legacy of Residential Schools and their impact on Indigenous communities and Canadian culture and history. It's a time when many emotions arise, traumas are relived, and losses are felt again. A time when we as individuals can further educate ourselves to understand the impacts of residential schools that affect all of us today and a time to show understanding and empathy as coworkers, neighbors and citizens.

We wear orange on Sept. 30 not only to remember and honour residential school survivors but also to acknowledge and remember those who never made it home. While many of us may know the story of Phyllis Webstad – and how her grandmother bought her a beautiful orange shirt for her first day of Residential School, only to have it taken away and never seen again – there are many still unaware of the reasoning behind the day.

The story of Orange Shirt Day started over coffee between friends in Dog Creek First Nation. Phyllis Webstad had joined a planning committee for the St. Joseph's Mission Residential School Commemoration Project. As a Residential School survivor of St. Joseph's, Phyllis had been asked to speak at the kick-off to a series of week-long events across the country to coincide with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's efforts to begin to right the wrongs of Residential Schools.

During coffee, Phyllis recalled her first day at Residential School and immediately knew what she wanted to talk about at the media announcement. On April 24, 2013, Phyllis courageously shared her story about the orange shirt that was taken from her on her first day of school, the new shirt she was so proud to wear. Little did Phyllis know that her story would be shared with the world.

Two days later, the idea of Orange Shirt Day was first presented in public during a professional development day for educators in British Columbia. It was then that September 30 was chosen as the day to wear orange in support of all Residential School children.

And so began Orange Shirt Day.

In early September 2013, Phyllis attended the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's "Reconciliation Week" in Vancouver. She was handed a bright orange flyer that read, "Orange Shirt Day, September 30." The flyer said: "Wear an orange shirt to honor the children who survived the Indian Residential Schools and to remember those who didn't."

The orange shirt is now a symbol of the stripping away of culture, freedom and self-esteem experienced by generations of Indigenous children in Residential Schools.

Educating ourselves is the first step in understanding and is an important part of growing, moving forward and changing. Orange Shirt Day is our opportunity to learn and understand the impacts of Residential Schools on all of us.

Learn more about Orange Shirt Day at orangeshirtday.org

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