



Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters to be Recognized September 30 in Centennial Square

Date: Tuesday, September 19, 2017

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — A grassroots event that recognizes the survivors of residential schools – and acknowledges those who did not – is growing in support across Canada and will take place in Victoria on Saturday, September 30 from noon – 4 p.m. in Centennial Square.

Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters grew out of Phyllis Webstad's account of having her sparkly new orange shirt taken away on her first day of St. Joseph Mission residential school. She shared her story during a community commemoration in Williams Lake, BC in 2013. At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in Vancouver two weeks before, the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair had encouraged Webstad to share her story with others. Since then, *Orange Shirt Day* has become an annual opportunity to keep the discussion happening on all aspects of residential schools.

Residential school survivor Eddy Charlie and friend Kristin Spray are organizing the *Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* event in Victoria, which they developed in 2015 while attending the Indigenous Studies program at Camosun College. This year, they are partnering with the City of Victoria and Bridges for Women Society to mark the City's commitment to reconciliation.

The community and the media are invited to attend the free event, emceed by local artist Bear Horne who designed this year's *Orange Shirt Day* T-shirt. A First Nations blessing and welcome will begin at 1p.m., followed by a flag raising in Centennial Square and speeches by Councillor Gary Sam of the Songhees Nation and Chief Andy Thomas of the Esquimalt Nation. Mayor Lisa Helps will be joined by Minister of Education the Honourable Rob Fleming, *Orange Shirt Day* founder Phyllis Webstad, and Kwantlen Nation musician and public speaker Luke Dandurand, who will share their journeys through reconciliation.

Event organizers Eddy Charlie and Kristin Spray will speak to the importance of raising awareness about residential schools to honour the close to 4,000 children who died, and the sacrifices that were made by 150,000 residential school survivors and their families across Canada.

First Nations singer Hannah Gentes and the City of Victoria Indigenous Artist in Residence Lindsay Delaronde will perform at the event. The Greater Victoria Public Library will have a booth featuring educational materials on residential schools.

Starting Wednesday, *Orange Shirt Day* T-shirts will be available for \$20 at Big Wheel Burger's three locations: Westside Village at 172 Wilson Street, Cook Street Village at 341 Cook Street, and Gateway Village at 703-711 Vernon Avenue. Get your shirt early as they are in limited supply. All proceeds will go towards the production of more T-shirts to increase awareness of this important initiative.

As *Orange Shirt Day* falls on a Saturday this year, the City of Victoria will recognize it on Friday, September 29 by inviting City staff to wear orange to work that day.

Orange Shirt Day is an opportunity for First Nations, local governments, schools and communities to come together in the spirit of reconciliation and hope for generations of children to come. September 30 was chosen because it is the time of year in which children were taken from their homes to residential schools.

Quotes:

Mayor Lisa Helps, City of Victoria

“Recognizing *Orange Shirt Day* is an important step in the City’s ongoing work towards reconciliation. We’re inspired and moved to be supporting Eddy and Kristin in organizing this important event. I invite Victoria citizens to wear an orange shirt on September 30 to create awareness of the impact of residential schools on Indigenous peoples in our community and across Canada.”

Victoria Lea Pruden, Executive Director, Bridges for Women Society

“Bridges for Women Society is proud to support Orange Shirt Day Victoria, and we believe in supporting all people impacted by residential schools. As an organization that assists survivors of intergenerational trauma, we encourage all Victorians to come out and stand in support of *Orange Shirt Day*, truly reconciliation in action!”

Eddy Charlie, Event Organizer, Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters

“Reconciliation is a relationship formed that benefits the paths that everyone shares. We are all educators and learners. We should strive to help each other, and care for the idea that each word we utter creates one chapter of a book that defines our character.”

Learn More:

- Phyllis Webstad and *Orange Shirt Day*: www.orangeshirtday.org
- *Orange Shirt Day* Facebook event: www.facebook.com/events/172290286671889/
- For more information and speaker bios: www.victoria.ca
- Attachments: Photos of *Orange Shirt Day* T-shirt design by artist Bear Horne

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