



## *Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* Ceremony is Sunday, September 30 in Centennial Square

Date: Friday, September 21, 2018

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Orange Shirt Day is a grassroots event that encourages Canadians to learn about and acknowledge the harm that the residential school system had on generations of Indigenous families and their communities. The public and media are invited to attend the *Orange Shirt Day* ceremony that will take place on Sunday, 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, during a commemoration in Williams Lake, BC in 2013. Since then, *Orange Shirt Day* has become an opportunity to keep the discussion happening about 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. For the second consecutive year, they are partnering with the City of Victoria and Bridges for Women Society to mark the City's commitment to reconciliation.

Emceed by Bridges for Women Executive Director Victoria Lea Pruden, the ceremony will consist of a First Nations blessing and welcome, followed by a flag raising and a moment of silence to honour and remember those who did not survive residential schools. Live music will be performed by the ANSWER Drum Group and singer Hannah Gentes.

Guest speakers will include Chief Ron Sam of the Songhees Nation and Hereditary Chief Edward Thomas of the Esquimalt Nation, with storytelling by husband and wife team Alex and Nella Nelson. Alex was inducted in the B.C. Sports Hall of Fame for his work with the North American Indigenous Games and the Aboriginal Sports and Recreation Association of B.C. Nella Nelson recently retired having worked 40 years for the Victoria School District – 10 years as a teacher and 29 years as the district administrator for Aboriginal education.

They will be joined by Mayor Lisa Helps and special guests. Event organizers Eddy Charlie and Kristin Spray will speak to the importance of raising awareness about residential schools to honour the more than 4,000 children who died, and the sacrifices that were made by 150,000 residential school survivors and their families across Canada.

As *Orange Shirt Day* falls on a Sunday this year, the City of Victoria will recognize it on Friday, September 28 by inviting City staff to wear orange to work that day.

*Orange Shirt Day* T-shirts are 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. All proceeds will go towards the production of more T-shirts to increase awareness of this important initiative.

*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**

"Understanding the harmful impacts of residential schools is important to the City's ongoing work towards reconciliation, and we are honoured to be supporting the second annual *Orange Shirt Day* ceremony in Victoria. I invite citizens to wear an orange shirt on September 30 to create awareness of the impact of residential schools on the Indigenous peoples in our community and across Canada."

##### **Victoria Lea Pruden, Executive Director, Bridges for Women Society**

"Bridges for Women Society is honoured to support *Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* in the City of Victoria. We are a trauma-informed community agency that supports those impacted by Residential and Day School attendance, and many intergenerational survivors impacted by this profound experience of trauma. We look forward to joining with Eddy Charlie, Kristin Spray, Mayor Lisa Helps and Indigenous Elders, Leadership and supporters on September 30."

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

"Healing must be done together or all that we accomplish prevents positive growth as a community. Coming together is just the beginning."

#### Quick Facts:

- The Indian Residential School System (IRSS) operated 130 schools across Canada from 1831 to 1996.
- For more than a century, Indigenous children in Canada were taken from their homes and communities, and placed in institutions called Residential Schools. These schools were run by religious orders in collaboration with the Federal Government of Canada, and were attended by children as young as four years of age.
- More than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were forced to attend these schools, some of which were hundreds of kilometers from their homes. The cumulative impact of residential schools is a legacy of unresolved trauma passed from generation to generation and has had a profound effect on the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.

#### Learn More:

- Phyllis Webstad and Orange Shirt Day: [www.orangeshirtday.org](http://www.orangeshirtday.org)
- Facebook event: [Victoria Orange Shirt Day](#)
- For more information and speaker bios: [www.victoria.ca](http://www.victoria.ca)
- Attachment: Photo of *Orange Shirt Day* T-shirt design by artist Bear Horne

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