



## *Xe xe Smun eem-Victoria Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters Ceremony is Monday, September 30 in Centennial Square*

Date: Wednesday, September 18, 2019

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 wear orange and attend the *Xe xe Smun eem-Victoria Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* ceremony (pronounced *shat shat smun am*) on Monday, September 30 from noon – 3 p.m. in Centennial Square.

The *Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* initiative grew out of Phyllis Webstad's account of having her shiny 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 *Xe xe Smun eem-Victoria Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* event, which they developed in 2015 while attending the Indigenous Studies program at Camosun College. This is the third consecutive year that the City of Victoria is supporting the event to mark the City's commitment to reconciliation. This year, event organizers have partnered with the Moose Hide Campaign, a grassroots movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and boys who are standing up against violence towards women and children.

Emceed by Bridges for Women Executive Director Victoria Lea Pruden, the ceremony will consist of a blessing of the land and welcome, followed by a flag raising and a moment of silence to honour and remember those who did not survive residential schools, as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous performances.

Guest speakers will include Steve Sxwithul'twx, Michele Mundy and the Honourable Melanie Mark, BC Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, who will each share their personal experiences with residential schools and reconciliation.

Steve Sxwithul'twx is from the Penelakut Tribe located just off Vancouver Island. He is a television producer who grew up in Duncan and is a survivor of the Kuper Island Residential School. Michele Mundy is of Kwakwaka'wakw ancestry and a member of the 'Namgis First Nation from Alert Bay, BC. She has taught Indigenous Studies at Camosun College and is the Indigenous Cultural Safety Facilitator at Island Health.

Minister Mark is Nisga'a, Gitksan, Cree, Ojibway, French and Scottish, and is the first female First Nations Member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia and the first female First Nations Cabinet Minister. Her grandparents had to go to residential school. As the first in her family to graduate high school and complete post-secondary education, Minister Mark knows the transformative power of education and is committed to breaking down barriers to education.

Mayor Lisa Helps will be joined by other special guests, including the Honourable Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, who will proclaim Monday, September 30, 2019 as *Orange Shirt Day* in British Columbia.

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.

*Xe xe Smun eem-Victoria Orange Shirt Day* T-shirts designed by artist Bear Horne, *Every Child Matters* orange blankets and *The Orange Shirt Story* children's book by Phyllis Webstad are now available for \$20 at the following locations:

- 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
- Caffé Fantastico: 965 Kings Road
- Delhi Café at 2504 Government Street
- Fernwood Yoga Den at 1310 Gladstone Avenue

These items will also be available for purchase at the ceremony (cash only). All proceeds go towards supporting this annual initiative.

The *Xe xe Smun eem-Victoria Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* event is sponsored by the City of Victoria, Moose Hide Campaign, Big Wheel Burger, Caffé Fantastico, Dheli Café, Fabricland, Fernwood Yoga Den and Red Barn Market.

*Orange Shirt Day* is an opportunity for Indigenous Peoples, 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.

The official portion of the ceremony will take place from noon – 2 p.m. All are welcome to this free event. For more information, visit: [victoriaorangeshirtday.com](http://victoriaorangeshirtday.com) or [victoria.ca](http://victoria.ca).

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Mayor Lisa Helps, City of Victoria**

"It is with profound sadness and grief, but also with hope for the future that we once again mark *Orange Shirt Day* in the City of Victoria. Orange Shirt Day is an annual opportunity for learning about Canada's residential school system, hearing the stories of courage and resilience of residential school survivors and intergenerational survivors and grieving for those who didn't make it home."

##### **Paul and Raven Lacerte, Co-Founders, Moose Hide Campaign**

"The Moose Hide Campaign is grateful to stand with *Victoria Orange Shirt Day* as we honour residential school survivors and their experience and move towards a path of reconciliation and healing."

##### **Eddy Charlie, Event Organizer, *Xe xe Smun eem-Victoria Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters***

"*Orange Shirt Day* is the day when we all come together to pay tribute to the residential school survivors for the ultimate sacrifices they made while they were in residential school. They sacrificed their language, traditions and their identity but they survived so that one day the next generation can regain that lost part of our history. Honor the survivors today."

**Quick Facts:**

- The Indian Residential School System (IRSS) operated 139 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.

— 30 —

**For More Information:**

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