



Xe xe Smun eem-Victoria Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters Virtual Ceremony is September 30 at Noon

Date: Monday, September 28, 2020

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — The public is invited to wear orange and tune in to the *Xe xe Smun eem-Victoria Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* virtual ceremony (pronounced *shat shat smun am*) on Wednesday, September 30 at noon on the [City of Victoria Facebook page](#). *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 *Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* initiative grew out of Phyllis Webstad's account during a commemoration in Williams Lake, BC in 2013, of having her shiny new orange shirt taken away on her first day of St. Joseph Mission residential school. 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 have organized a virtual ceremony this year due to COVID-19. For the past three years, the *Xe xe Smun eem-Victoria Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* ceremony has provided an opportunity for the community to come together in Centennial Square.

Filed in advance, the virtual ceremony is emceed by Victoria Lea Pruden, an *Âpihtawkosisân*/Michif knowledge keeper and healing and cultural safety advocate from the Métis Nation. The ceremony includes a land acknowledgement, followed by the raising of the *Orange Shirt Day* flag and a moment of silence accompanied by 15 drum beats to honour those who did not survive residential schools. Visual artist and performer Nicole Mandryk sings the traditional Anishinaabe healing *Bear Song*.

Guest speakers include Tsartlip Elders May Sam and Skip Sam who share their personal experiences with residential schools and reconciliation. Sadly, Elder Skip Sam passed away shortly after filming.

Other special guests include Mayor Lisa Helps, Phyllis Webstad, Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry and Aboriginal Health Physician Advisor Dr. Danièle Behn Smith, and Eddy Charlie and Kristin Spray who 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 books about *Orange Shirt Day* by Phyllis Webstad, Carey Newman and Kirstie Hudson, are available for purchase online and at a range of local venues. For more information, visit victoriaorangeshirtday.com.

The *Xe xe Smun eem-Victoria Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* is supported by the City of Victoria, District of Oak Bay, District of Saanich, Camosun College, Phyllis Webstad, Carey Newman, Kirstie Hudson, Medicine Wheel Education, Orca Book Publishers, Big Wheel Burger, Caffe Fantastico, Delhi Restaurant, Discovery Coffee, Fernwood Yoga Den, Moss Street Market and Victory Barber & Brand.

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. For more information, visit: victoriaorangeshirtday.com or victoria.ca.

Quotes:

Mayor Lisa Helps, City of Victoria

“Although we can’t gather in person to mark *Orange Shirt Day* this year, we can each wear orange to demonstrate our support and commitment to learning more about Canada’s residential school system and the harm it caused. It’s important that we hear the stories of courage and resilience from residential school survivors – and grieve for those children who didn’t make it back home.”

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

“I’m pleased we can still gather virtually this *Orange Shirt Day* 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. Xe xe Smun eem means "Sacred Children" in the Cowichan or Quw utsun language. Honour the survivors.”

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.

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For More Information:

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