

Monday, September 28, 2020

Orange Shirt Day: Greater Victoria Schools honour residential school survivors and their families

VICTORIA, BC – Students and staff will wear orange on Wednesday, September 30th to recognize and remember the children and families who have been affected by residential schools.

Orange Shirt Day was inspired by Phyllis Webstad’s story of having her new orange shirt taken away when she entered St. Joseph Mission Residential School in 1973. The orange shirt was a special gift she had received from her grandmother. Ever since, the colour orange has been a reminder for Webstad of the incident that continues to stay with her. Her experience has been shared broadly creating an opportunity to reflect and raise awareness about the residential school legacy.

Each year, schools participate in activities and/or classroom discussions with a focus on steps towards reconciliation. This has been an annual tradition since 2013, the inaugural Orange Shirt Day.

This year, Grade 5-12 students can also participate in a virtual event from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to honour residential school survivors, their families and communities. To register: bit.ly/OrangeShirtDayVirtualEvent

“Public education holds a special responsibility to enable truth and reconciliation. In order to live up to this responsibility, we must continue to create culturally responsive learning environments, engage in truth-telling, have gratitude for knowledge sharing, and celebrate the success and resilience of Indigenous people,” said Board Chair Jordan Watters. “By learning about and reflecting on the experiences of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families, we can support renewed relationships in our communities characterized by the principles set out in the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*: justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith. Orange Shirt Day is an important opportunity to have conversations about our collective history and renew and inspire a commitment to advancing the practise of Canadian reconciliation.”

“Our District’s renewed Strategic Plan focuses on bringing understanding and appreciation of Indigenous worldviews, histories and perspectives,” said Superintendent Shelley Green. “It is incredibly important that we recognize the past and weave Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into our schools. We want to educate all students and build their intercultural understanding. We strongly encourage everyone to wear an orange shirt to demonstrate our District’s commitment to reconciliation.”

To review Greater Victoria's Strategic Plan: www.sd61.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/91/2020/06/GVSD61_StrategicPlan2020-2025.pdf

-30-

For more information contact:

Lisa McPhail

Communications & Community Engagement
Greater Victoria School District No. 61
Office: 250.475.4103

One *Learning* Community

