



Residential school survivors remembered on Orange Shirt Day – September 30

On September 30, HEU will join with Canadians from coast to coast to recognize *Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters*. Members are encouraged to wear orange on that day in solidarity with our Indigenous peoples, and to show our commitment to reconciliation.

September 30 is a day to remember the atrocious treatment of more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, who were taken from their families and forced into residential schools to assimilate into the colonial culture.

This marks the time of year when Aboriginal children were removed from their homes and sent away to residential schools.

“Canada’s residential school system is an appalling part of our history,” says HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside. “As Canadians – and as members of a social justice union – we need to make a commitment to protect future generations of our children from ever experiencing the atrocious conditions of residential schools.”

“Orange Shirt Day is a time for us to unite in the spirit of respect, healing, reconciliation and hope for a safer and better tomorrow for our Indigenous peoples and all Canadians.”

Run by churches and funded by the government, residential schools existed in Canada for more than 100 years. By the time Canada’s last residential school closed in 1996, thousands of Aboriginal survivors had come forward to tell horrific stories of abuse, eventually leading to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2008.

The Assembly of First Nations continues to lobby the federal government to officially declare September 30 as Orange Shirt Day. And at 2014 convention, HEU delegates voted to recognize Orange Shirt Day.

The Orange Shirt Day movement, which started in 2013, is to encourage Canadians to wear orange in the spirit of healing and reconciliation. Orange was chosen because in 1973, a young girl named Phyllis Webstad proudly wore a new orange shirt on her first day at St. Joseph Mission Residential School, but it was stripped away from her and replaced by an institutional uniform.

For more information on Orange Shirt Day, visit <http://www.orangeshirtday.org/>.

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