



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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Residential school survivors remembered on Orange Shirt Day

Since 2015, HEU has recognized *Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters* to show our solidarity with Canada's Indigenous peoples as well as our commitment to reconciliation.

Observed on September 30, it's 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 sent away to residential schools – sometimes in other provinces – where they were forced to assimilate into settler culture.

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

“This is a deplorable part of Canadian history that should never be forgotten,” says HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside. “Every Canadian has a responsibility to learn about the inhumane treatment of Indigenous families who suffered, and continue to suffer, from racist attitudes.

“That trauma has impacted generations of Indigenous peoples and we all have a part to play in bringing about healing and reconciliation.”

At HEU's 2014 convention, delegates passed Resolution 21 to recognize Orange Shirt Day. Since then, the union's Indigenous Peoples Standing Committee has participated in the day by sponsoring small community schools or classrooms with predominantly Indigenous students by donating orange shirts and school supplies. Some years, the committee has also hosted a barbeque lunch with students and teachers.

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 in Williams Lake, 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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