



Orange Shirt Day Resources



United Way
East Ontario

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES
IN PRESCOTT-RUSSELL, OTTAWA,
LANARK AND RENFREW COUNTIES

ORANGE SHIRT DAY

September 30th

Created for the Indigenous Employment Advisory Leadership Table,
led by United Way East Ontario and the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition

Orange Shirt Day and the Story of Phyllis Webstad

From United Way East Ontario's environmental scan, [The Employment Gap for Indigenous Youth in Eastern Ontario](#), we learned about the importance of creating safe, culturally sensitive places of employment when attempting to successfully recruit Indigenous youth. Ensuring cultural safety is key in fostering supportive environments and relationships. It goes beyond cultural awareness (acknowledgement of one's own and other cultures), cultural sensitivity (accepting of other difference), and cultural competence (using academic, experiential, and interpersonal skills to understand difference). Cultural safety also involves a component of self-reflection to recognize our own cultural lens and develop empathy and advocacy to move towards understanding and positive change. Below is a list of Orange Shirt Day resources along with Phyllis Webstad's story that you can use to create a culturally safe and sensitive work environment that will not only attract Indigenous youth but also ensure their successful retention.

Orange Shirt Society

www.orangeshirtday.org

Orange Shirt Day - Canadian History and the Residential School System

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFbLMNgTXeI>

September 30th has been declared Orange Shirt Day annually, in recognition of the harm the residential school system did to children's sense of self-esteem and well-being, and as an affirmation of our commitment to ensure that everyone around us matters.

Phyllis (Jack) Webstad's story in her own words...

I went to the Mission for one school year in 1973/1974. I had just turned 6 years old. I lived with my grandmother on the Dog Creek reserve. We never had very much money, but somehow my granny managed to buy me a new outfit to go to the Mission school. I remember going to Robinson's store and picking out a shiny orange shirt. It had string laced up in front, and was so bright and exciting – just like I felt to be going to school!



When I got to the Mission, they stripped me, and took away my clothes, including the orange shirt! I never wore it again. I didn't understand why they wouldn't give it back to me, it was mine! The color orange has always reminded me of that and how my feelings didn't matter, how no one cared and how I felt like I was worth nothing. All of us little children were crying and no one cared.



I was 13.8 years old and in grade 8 when my son Jeremy was born. Because my grandmother and mother both attended residential school for 10 years each, I never knew what a parent was supposed to be like. With the help of my aunt, Agness Jack, I was able to raise my son and have him know me as his mother.

I went to a treatment centre for healing when I was 27 and have been on this healing journey since then. I finally get it, that the feeling of worthlessness and insignificance, ingrained in me from my first day at the mission, affected the way I lived my life for many years. Even now, when I know nothing could be further than the truth, I still sometimes feel that I don't matter. Even with all the work I've done!

I am honored to be able to tell my story so that others may benefit and understand, and maybe other survivors will feel comfortable enough to share their stories.

Today...

Phyllis Webstad is Northern Secwepemc (Shuswap) from the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation (Canoe Creek Indian Band). She comes from mixed Secwepemc and Irish/French heritage, was born in Dog Creek, and lives in Williams Lake, BC. Today, Phyllis is married, has one son, a step-son and five grandchildren. She is the Executive Director of the Orange Shirt Society, and tours the country telling her story and raising awareness about the impacts of the residential school system. She has now published two books, the "Orange Shirt Story" and "Phyllis's Orange Shirt" for younger children.



She earned diplomas in Business Administration from the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology; and in Accounting from Thompson Rivers University. Phyllis received the 2017 TRU Distinguished Alumni Award for her unprecedented impact on local, provincial, national and international communities through the sharing of her orange shirt story.





Ottawa Specific Agencies

For additional information regarding local Indigenous organizations in Ottawa, please visit the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition website: <https://www.ottawaaboriginalcoalition.ca/>

Please note that the above list of resources is not exhaustive but can be used for initial exploratory learning

