

Orange Shirt Day worksheet **A2+**



Indian Horse Productions

a. Watch the trailer or the extract from the film *Indian Horse* and **find out** about residential schools. Who are the main characters? What happens to them?

b.1. Read the first part of the text (l.1-l.13) and **find out** what measure taken by the Canadian government separated First Nations children from their families and homes. **Give details** about the context.

2. Explain why these institutions are described as 'abusive'. How were these children isolated from their communities and cultures?

c. Find out about the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission". How long did it take the Canadian government to create such a commission? What are the main goals of such an initiative?

d.1. Read Phyllis Webstad's testimony. **Explain** why her orange shirt was and still is so important to her.

2. Find out what 'Orange Shirt Day' consists of and how it contributes to the effort of truth and reconciliation. **Can you think** of other possible initiatives?

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS HISTORY

1 From the 1880s, for upwards of 100 years, the Canadian government worked in tandem with the church-run schools to forcibly remove Indigenous children from their families, communities and Nations and put them into notoriously abusive institutions called Indian Residential Schools (IRS). The purpose of the schools was to eliminate parental involvement in the spiritual, cultural and intellectual development of Indigenous children. More than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were forced to attend these schools many of which were hundreds of miles from their home.

Children as young as five-years-old were taken far away where they were punished for speaking their own languages or practising their traditions.

10 In 2007 the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history, began to be implemented. One of the elements of the agreement was the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to facilitate Reconciliation among former students, their families, their communities and all Canadians. [...]

THE ORANGE SHIRT THAT INSPIRED A MOVEMENT

15 In September 1973, when Phyllis Webstad was only 6 years old, she was living with her Granny on the Dog Creek Reserve. Her Granny had managed to save enough money to buy her a new outfit for school. Phyllis remembers her shiny orange shirt, and her shiny 6-year-old self who felt so excited to be going off to school.

20 This excitement, her orange shirt, and the rest of her clothes were stripped from her when she got to the Mission. She says: "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 no one cared and how I felt like I was worth nothing. [...]"

Today September 30th is celebrated as Orange Shirt Day. The date was chosen because it is the time of year in which children were taken from their homes to Residential Schools, and because it is an opportunity to set the stage for anti-racism and anti-bullying policies for the coming school year.

25 Phyllis Webstad says, "Seeing elementary school kids in Orange shirts, realizing they are learning the history of the First People of Canada and my grandchildren will grow up knowing, that was a real big moment for me last year. I'm just glad that non-native people are learning so they can have a different attitude and behaviour."

Visit www.angeshirtday.org to learn more.

Extract from www.indianhorse.ca