



NEWS RELEASE

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Snuneymuxw First Nation and the City of Nanaimo recognize Orange Shirt Day

September 30, 2019 marks Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters

Summary

Orange Shirt Day is a legacy of the St. Joseph Mission residential school commemoration event held in Williams Lake, BC, Canada, in May 2013. It grew out of Phyllis Webstad's story of having her shiny new orange shirt taken away on her first day of school at the Mission residential school, and it has become an opportunity to keep the discussion on all aspects of residential schools happening annually.

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. It also gives teachers time to plan events that will include children, as we want to ensure that we are passing the story and learning on to the next generations. Orange Shirt Day is also an opportunity for First Nations, local governments, schools and communities to come together in the spirit of reconciliation and renewed hope that living in harmony and prosperity are the lived experiences right now for our children, and generations to come (www.orangeshirtday.org). The imposition of residential schools on to Indigenous peoples as a form of education for over 100 years was an abhorrent Canadian policy that has caused real significant injustices upon Indigenous peoples, a legacy that will take centuries to correct.

To recognize this important date, City of Nanaimo and Snuneymuxw First Nation proclaim September 30, 2019 as Orange Shirt Day, displaying unity denouncing Canadian policy for residential schools and solidarity with residential school survivors. The City of Nanaimo Mayor and Council and Snuneymuxw Chief and Council, as well as staff will be participating in activities to bring awareness to honor and remember residential school survivors and their families. City of Nanaimo encourages community members to learn more about the legacy of residential schools and wear orange on this day.

Strategic Link: *Governance Excellence:* To develop a culture of excellence around governance management and cost effective service delivery by continuing to work with Snuneymuxw First Nation to address issues of mutual interest.

Key Points

- On September 30, 2019, the City of Nanaimo will recognize Orange Shirt Day.
- Orange Shirt Day is a legacy of the St. Joseph Mission residential school commemoration event held in Williams Lake, BC, Canada, in May 2013. 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.
- To recognize this important date, City of Nanaimo Council and Staff will be participating in activities to bring awareness to honor and remember residential school survivors and their families.

Quotes

“Orange Shirt day is an important opportunity for us to stand together with Snuneymuxw First Nation to acknowledge the devastating impacts of residential schools on thousands of Indigenous children and many generations of their families. In June of this year, Nanaimo Council unanimously endorsed a plan to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action #57 to ensure that City staff, as public servants, are provided with opportunities to learn more about the dark history of residential schools on our neighbours and friends from Snuneymuxw and other Indigenous Communities. On September 30th we are providing opportunities for our staff and encourage the wider community to learn the truth of residential schools through the eyes of survivors like Phyllis who at six years old was stripped of her special orange shirt on her first day at residential school and who in later years bravely told her story. Without first having a deep understanding of the truth of past harms towards Indigenous Peoples, we cannot achieve true reconciliation and harmony between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. We honour the strength and resilience of Snuneymuxw and many other Indigenous Communities who have survived despite the impacts of government policies intended to erase their cultures. Going forward, we strongly encourage every member of our community to learn more about their role in Canada’s commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. Together we have the power to keep our schools, work and public spaces are safe and free from racism and bullying for every child and adult.”

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo

"Snuneymuxw way of life is strong and will continue to be passed to the next generation. The history of Canadian residential schools is full of harm and injury to our people that is at the front of our minds. Canada forcibly removed our children from their homes, their families, and put them in residential schools to try and extinguish our Snuneymuxw culture and way of life. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission raises the Canadian consciousness about the truth of Canadian residential schools and outlines what must be done to resolve the injustices. We have to be mindful of this reality and work together to resolve the social injustices. Our people are strong survivors of residential schools. Snuneymuxw First Nation is extraordinarily resilient and steadfast in our determination to ensure our people are recognized and respected. The new Snuneymuxw school is the benchmark for how quality education is delivered to everyone. I know that the path we are on is one of renewed hope and optimism. We can all live

harmoniously together and have a good life. We will continue to forge a reconciliation path with Canada that addresses the harmful legacy left behind from residential schools: Every Child Matters”

Michael Wyse
Chief
Snuneymuxw First Nation

Links:

Learn more about Orange Shirt Day
<http://www.orangeshirtday.org/>

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