

# Why do we mark September 30? What's Orange Shirt Day?

Between the late 1800s and 1996, more than 150,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis children attended Indian residential schools, as a policy of the federal government. They were separated from families and communities, and forbidden from speaking their language or practising their cultures. Many were poorly nourished, and experienced physical and sexual abuse.

September 30 is Orange Shirt Day (also known as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation) and it commemorates this legacy. The Orange Shirt Day movement was started by Phyllis Webstad, a member of the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation and former residential school student, to honour Survivors and intergenerational Survivors, and to remember those children who never made it home.

At the age of 6, Phyllis was taken from her home to attend a residential school. Her grandmother gave her a shiny new orange shirt to wear. But it, and all her other clothes, were taken away, never to be seen again.

Orange Shirt Day is an opportunity for all of us to learn about the legacies of the residential school system and to work for reconciliation. On September 30, attend events in your community to honour Survivors and celebrate Indigenous ways of life. And wear an orange shirt or orange-shirt pin, on that day and on any day of the year!

As Steelworkers, we can lobby our provincial and territorial government to make September 30 a paid holiday, and bargain it into our collective agreements. You can find sample contract language in the USW Bargaining Guide for Advancing Indigenous Rights, at [usw.ca/equity-for-indigenous-people](http://usw.ca/equity-for-indigenous-people).



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For more useful information, visit the Indigenous rights section of the USW web page at [usw.ca/equity-for-indigenous-people](http://usw.ca/equity-for-indigenous-people)



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