

June 22, 2017

To: School Board Program Directors

Kwe'/Hello,

Many schools throughout the country have included Orange Shirt Day in their September events lists since it began in 2013. Participation in this day is an opportunity to increase awareness about the thousands of Indigenous children across Canada who were forced from their homes to attend residential schools. Acknowledging this day provides an active invitation for our students to participate in reconciliation.

Orange Shirt Day is grounded in the story of Phyllis Webstad who attended residential school in Williams Lake, British Columbia, in 1973 and 1974. Phyllis was only six years old. She recalls the excitement she felt while preparing to go to school, even though it meant being removed from her family home. Her grandmother bought Phyllis a new outfit for the occasion, which included a shiny orange shirt. In Phyllis's words, "the shirt was bright and exciting — just like I felt about going to school." Upon arriving at St. Joseph Mission Residential School, her new clothes were taken from her and replaced by the school uniform. Phyllis never saw her orange shirt again. The loss of the shirt was the first of many losses for Phyllis and for thousands of other Indigenous children forced to attend residential schools.

This coming September, schools in the Atlantic Provinces will receive information packets to support their participation in the 2017 Orange Shirt Day. We invite your involvement. As wearing pink has become an anti-bullying statement, our hope is that a similar widespread impact can be realized through Orange Shirt Day and that wearing orange on or near September 30<sup>th</sup> will become known as a commitment to reconciliation and actively ensuring that "Every Child Matters."

Sincerely,



Wyatt White  
Director of Mi'kmaq Services Division

c. RCH Coordinator