

## A DAY TO LISTEN - PHYLLIS WEBSTADT

Hello, everyone. My name is Phyllis Webstadt. I am from the Canoe Creek Dark Creek, First Nation. I am coming to you today from the land of the Shuswap people in Williams, Lake B.C. I am third generation Indian residential school Survivor. I grew up with my grandmother and when I turned six it was the thing to do to send me off to residential schools. She had sent her ten children. So in July of 1973, when I turned six, Granny got me ready as well to go to Saint Joseph, where we just call it the mission. We went to town here to Williams Lake, and I chose a shiny orange shirt to wear. Got to the mission, and my shirt was taken. No matter how much I cried or objected, they wouldn't give my shirt back. And that's where every child matters comes from. It's how I felt when I was there that year at residential school that nobody cared whether us kids were crying, that we were lonely, maybe we were hungry, we were sick, we were sad, and we were five, six-year-olds and there were no adults there to make things better for us.

That's where I learned that my life depended on me. And it's really hard today to ask for help and to accept help even. I'll be turning 54 next month and it's still hard. I am here and I get emotional about this because my grandmother survived. That's why we see Survivors, because we lived through this. We wear orange September 30th to honour residential school Survivors and their families and to remember those that didn't make it home. The residential school history is not only Indigenous history. This is Canadian history. It's no longer acceptable for Canadians to not know this history. And I'm glad that this history is being taught in schools starting preschool, elementary, high school, colleges, and the children in the schools are going home and talking to their parents about it. So parents are learning.

I hear people say the discovery of the children in Kamloops and my aunt and others, the families, they've known where the bodies are. And it's more of a confirmation than a discovery. So I choose to use that word now instead. Right now I know the orange shirt is being worn by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people after the confirmation of the 215 children in Kamloops. And I hear orange shirts are going to be worn for Indigenous Day on June 21st and even on July 1st. So it's gone way beyond September 30th and we chose September 30th because September is the month that the children were taken away from the very beginning.

It's like the whole orange shirt movement, I've heard it called, has been divinely guided. It's like the ancestors are behind this. When I see anyone wearing an orange shirt, what it means to me as a Survivor is that you care. It's like a little bit of justice. Many of the people involved in what happened will never go to jail. They'll never be dealt with. And for me, as a Survivor, before I leave this earth, it's good to know that you are learning about this and that you care about what happened to us. So when you're wearing the orange shirt or you see an orange shirt, remember, that's what it was meant for, to create conversation and honour residential school Survivors and their families and to remember those that never made it home.