

**For immediate release  
September 23, 2016**

**SQUAMISH-LILLOOET REGIONAL DISTRICT RESOLVES TO BE  
A REGIONAL DISTRICT OF RECONCILIATION**

*SLRD invites the entire community to join in acknowledgement of Orange Shirt Day, Friday  
September 30*

**Pemberton, BC** – It was not any indication of a seasonal fashion trend that the Board and staff at the SLRD were decked out in orange for the first official day of fall.

Rather, it was an acknowledgement of the upcoming September 30 **Orange Shirt Day** - an annual reconciliation event started in 2013 in the neighbouring Cariboo Chilcotin region by the community and survivors of the St. Joseph's Mission Residential School in Williams Lake.

Grown from the story of one residential school survivor, Orange Shirt Day is becoming a national movement. Phyllis (Jack) Webstad went off to school at the hopeful age of six, wearing a brand new orange t-shirt her grandmother had scraped together the money for. On her first day of school, she was stripped of her clothes, and the special shirt was taken away, never to be returned. This was the first loss of many, and she has spent the rest of her life working through the trauma of her experiences.

Wearing an orange shirt on September 30 is a way to acknowledge the harm the residential school system did to Indigenous childrens' self-esteem and well-being, and affirm a commitment that from now on, every child matters.

Enhancing relationships with aboriginal communities and First Nations was identified last year as a priority for the SLRD, reflected in the SLRD's 2015-2018 Strategic Directions.

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released its summary report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, in December 2015, it defined reconciliation as a process of "establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behavior."

Rekindling trust, recognized the TRC Commissioners, is the single most important element of the reconciliation process, and realistically, will take many generations of effort to achieve.

At the September 22, 2016 SLRD Committee of the Whole meeting, with staff and SLRD Board members wearing orange shirts, the Board resolved to be a Regional District of Reconciliation, and to work towards turning these words into actions.

“It’s time to start the process,” says SLRD Board Chair Jack Crompton. “This resolution is a statement of intention rather than achievement. We have a long path to walk and we are eager to walk it. At the SLRD we want to nurture resilience and grow into a more respectful, inclusive region that provides opportunities for everyone.”

The SLRD will again don orange shirts on Friday September 30. It’s a simple gesture to indicate a willingness to “open new healing pathways of reconciliation”, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission urged of all Canadians.

“We encourage everyone in the region to join us on this journey, and wear an orange shirt on Friday,” says Crompton.

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**About Orange Shirt Day:** Orange Shirt Day is a legacy of the St. Joseph Mission (SJM) residential school commemoration event held in Williams Lake, BC, Canada, in the spring of 2013. It grew out of Phyllis' story of having her shiny new orange shirt taken away on her first day of school at the Mission, 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 hope for generations of children to come.  
<http://www.orangeshirtday.org/>

**About the SLRD:** Located in southwestern BC, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District is a local government federation delivering a range of regional, sub-regional and local services to approximately 38,000 residents living in four member municipalities (Lillooet, Pemberton, Whistler, Squamish) and four unincorporated electoral areas (A, B, C, D). [www.slrd.bc.ca](http://www.slrd.bc.ca)

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