



**In Honour of the Children
of Residential Schools**

**Grades P–1 and 2–3 Teaching Supports
National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
Orange Shirt Day**

All links are active as of September 2022.

Attn: Teachers

Wela'liek/Thank you for observing Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Discussing the residential school system may evoke emotional responses from both students and teachers. It is important that the cognitive and emotional development of your students be considered and respected when choosing resources and information to be shared. As a support, we suggest the following:

- connect with your principal to discuss a home communication that reminds families about Orange Shirt Day and that student will continue to grow their learning about residential school, the trauma they caused, and the resilience of the Mi'kmaw people
- **preview/pre-read all student resources and videos with colleagues who teach the same grade level to determine content that's an appropriate match for your students**
- connect with a Mi'kmaw/Indigenous Student Support Worker, if one is part of your school's staff, to chat about your intended plans and to invite their guidance and suggestions
- allow multiple opportunities for students to talk about their thoughts and feelings
- learn along with your students, letting them know that these important truths were not previously taught in school programs and that you may have to do research together.

If you have questions or comments, please reach out to your region's Mi'kmaw Education Coordinator or email Mi'kmaw Services Branch at MIKMAQSERVICES@novascotia.ca.

Again, wela'liek/thank you for your participation and commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, actively ensuring that "Every Child Matters."

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

Since 2013, September 30th has been observed as Orange Shirt Day, a phrase coined because of Phyllis Webstad, a survivor of St. Joseph Mission Residential School in British Columbia, having had her new orange shirt bought by her grandmother taken from her when she arrived at the school. It has become a symbol of the personal stories of the tens of thousands of Indigenous children taken from their families and communities, thousands of whom never were to return home. <https://youtu.be/E3vUqr01kAk>

Beginning in 2021, September 30th will also be known in Canada as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Its name speaks to the importance of two necessary commitments all Canadians must make: to learn the truth about Canada's shared history with Indigenous peoples, including residential schools, and to act in ways that nurture ongoing relationships of Reconciliation.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2020/09/government-of-canada-introduces-legislation-to-establish-national-day-for-truth-and-reconciliation.html>
<https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/behind-national-day-truth-and-reconciliation>

Orange Shirt Day: Learning About Residential Schools Grades P and 1

Focus: Kindness/Love

Context for Teachers

Refer to the following folders in <https://ourcloud.nspes.ca/index.php/s/yfjCngGpYwo5H9N> to support building your own knowledge about the residential school system in Canada and about Shubenacadie Residential School in Nova Scotia:

- Messages from Mi'kmaw Services Branch, NS EECD
- Info about Orange Shirt Day | National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- For Teachers_Info About Residential Schools_including Shubenacadie Residential School

Mi'kmaw Teachings

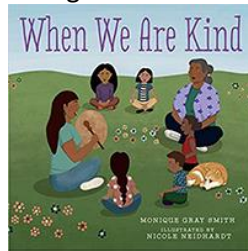
It is important to be kind to each other, to the Earth and all living things, and to ourselves; kindness is an expression of love and comes in different forms. We can feel kindness and love, and we can also act in ways that show kindness and love.

For Teachers

- Become familiar with the following books from the *Antle aq Witapk Treaty Education Series*: *Antle Loves his Antlers* and *Pikto'l Learns the Ko'jua*. These books were created for P–2 classrooms to help bring awareness and greater understanding of Mi'kmaw teachings and perspectives. They include examples of kindness and love through different actions.

Suggested Learning Experience

- Engage students in an open conversation about *kindness* and *love*.
- You may choose to include sharing the book *When We Are Kind*.



- The following guiding questions may help to further conversation towards a common understanding of *kindness* and *love*:
 - What does it mean to be kind?
 - Who is someone who is kind to you? How does that person show kindness to you?
 - Tell me a way you have been kind to someone in your family? In your community or neighbourhood? In our classroom? On the schoolgrounds or the bus?
 - How does it feel when someone is kind to you? How do you feel when you are kind to someone?
 - What does love mean?
 - How does someone show love? How does it feel when someone shows they love you?
 - How do you show love? How does a pet show love?

- Read aloud either *Antle Loves his Antlers* or *Pikto'l Learns the Ko'jua*. Provide time for students to share reactions, questions, and connections to the story.
- Prepare to take a closer look at the book a second time. Invite students to be detectives searching for clues (examples) of kindness and love as you explore the illustrations and talk about what is happening on each page.
 - For example, in *Antle Loves His Antlers*, Niskamij only wants good things for Antle. When we love someone, we want to make sure that they feel safe and protected.
 - In *Pikto'l Learns the Ko'jua*, the elder shows kindness when he gives Pikto'l the jigmagn as a gift for his hard work learning the new dance.
- The following prompts may be used to extend the conversation:
 - Sometimes we have to be an example and show others how to be kind.
 - When we are kind to someone, it can change their day.
 - Why is it important to be kind?
- Encourage and guide students to make connections between the teachings in *Antle Loves his Antlers* and/or *Pikto'l Learns the Ko'jua* and Orange Shirt Day, specifically, Phyllis's experience at the school.
 - Phyllis is an Indigenous person who went to school, far away from her home when she was a little girl. Phyllis did not get a lot of kindness and love shown to her there.
 - Compare this to Antle and Pikto'l who both have family and community members close to them who show them kindness and love.

Follow-up Activities and Discussion

- Have students use puppets to role play how kindness can be showed. What does that look like? What does it sound like? What does it feel like to receive kindness?
 - Invite conversation, asking why students chose the scenarios for their puppets.
- Emphasize that respecting Orange Shirt Day is one way to show that we care about Phyllis and all the Indigenous children who went to the schools away from their homes (residential schools).
 - Therefore, on September 30th, we wear orange shirts to remember all the children like Phyllis—we remember that Every Child Matters.
 - Wearing orange on Orange Shirt Day is a symbol of the importance of being kind and choosing to speak and act in ways that show kindness and love.

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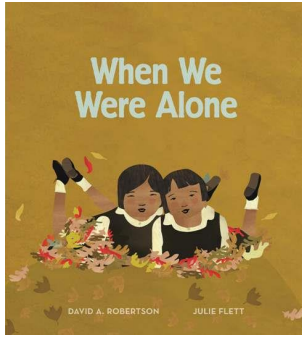
Orange Shirt Day: Learning About Residential Schools Grades P and 1

Focus: *When We Were Alone*

Context for Teachers

Refer to the following folders in <https://ourcloud.nspes.ca/index.php/s/yfjCngGpYwo5H9N> to support building your own knowledge about the residential school system in Canada and about Shubenacadie Residential School in Nova Scotia:

- Messages from Mi'kmaw Services Branch, NS EECD
- Info about Orange Shirt Day | National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- For Teachers Info About Residential Schools including Shubenacadie Residential School



When a young girl helps tend to her grandmother's garden, she begins to notice things about her grandmother that make her curious. Why does her grandmother have long braided hair and wear beautifully coloured clothing? Why does she speak another language and spend so much time with her family? As she asks her grandmother about these things, she is told about life in a residential school a long time ago, where everything was taken away. *When We Were Alone* is a story about a difficult time in history and, ultimately, a story of empowerment and strength.

For Teachers

- Become familiar with the story *When We Were Alone*. This picture book was distributed late in 2017, one copy for each grade 3 classroom in English Programs. You will notice words written in the Cree language within the story. Mi'kmaw translations are included on the inside front cover of the copies that were distributed.
- **A read-aloud recording of *When We Were Alone*, with Mi'kmaw translations for the Cree text, can be accessed here:** <https://youtu.be/7HxzhjRFR6k>
- Also, you may wish to view the 5-minute video of author David Robertson and grade 1 teacher Pamela Dirksen discussing the use of this book in an elementary classroom.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPbmCke-x8w>

Suggested Learning Experience

- Before reading the book or sharing the read-aloud recording of *When We Were Alone*, ask students to draw or show in another creative way their responses to the following questions:
 - What makes you happy? What makes you sad?
- You may wish to engage students in conversation using guiding questions such as:
 - Think of something very special to you. It may be a favourite toy or “stuffedie” or a gift that someone gave to you. How would you feel if you lost that favourite thing? How would you feel if someone took it from you and kept it, never giving it back to you?
- With your students, read aloud *When We Were Alone*. Aim to substitute the Mi'kmaw translations for the Cree vocabulary. Use this opportunity to tell students that the Mi'kmaq people were the very first people in Canada, the very first to live on the land that their school is on right now. The following suggestions may be helpful to guide the reading experience:
 - Take time with each page to explore the illustrations and talk about what is happening.
 - Talk about the relationship between the grandmother and grandchild. Invite students to comment about this relationship or their own relationship with a special family member.
 - Open conversation to talk about each of the cultural teachings that the grandmother remembers losing at the school. Ask students why they think it was important to her to find ways to remember these practices when she and other students were alone at the school.
 - Ask students questions such as:
 - What is your favourite special activity that the grandmother did as a young girl at the school and why?
 - How might the grandmother have felt when each special thing was taken from her? How would you feel if this happened to you?

- What might have happened if the grandmother had fully lost some of these special practices? How would it make her feel?
- How would other people in her family and community feel if she came back home and had forgotten these special practices? How might they help her get them back?
- Encourage/assist students in making connections between *When We Were Alone* and Orange Shirt Day; specifically, that Phyllis is an Indigenous person who went to school, far away from her home—just like the grandmother in the story. Emphasize that respecting Orange Shirt Day is one way to show that we care about Phyllis and all the Indigenous children who went to the schools away from their homes.

Follow-up Activities and Discussion

- Have students work in pairs to draw, paint, or use play dough or plasticine to re-create their favourite scene from *When We Were Alone*. Their finished pieces could be displayed in your classroom or elsewhere in your school. Also, small groups of students could use their art scenes to retell the grandmother's story to other classes who aren't familiar with the book.
- Create a class collage or quilt of brightly coloured fabric to represent the grandmother's joy in wearing colourful clothes that she wasn't allowed to wear at the school,
- Create a Garden of Honor and Respect for Indigenous children who went to residential schools. Plant real or crafted flowers in their memory.
- Have students create cards with positive messages of caring completing the phrase, "You matter to me because...." These could be for a classmate or someone in their school, home, or community. Relate the caring for others to the Orange Shirt Day saying: *Every Child Matters*.

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Orange Shirt Day: Learning About Residential Schools Grades 2 and 3

Focus: The First Day of School: Phyllis's Story

[Phyllis' Story \(orangeshirtday.org\)](http://Phyllis' Story (orangeshirtday.org))

Context for Teachers

Refer to the following folders in <https://ourcloud.nspes.ca/index.php/s/yfjCngGpYwo5H9N> to support building your own knowledge about the residential school system in Canada and about Shubenacadie Residential School in Nova Scotia:

- Messages from Mi'kmaw Services Branch, NS EECD
- Info about Orange Shirt Day | National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- For Teachers_ Info About Residential Schools_ including Shubenacadie Residential School

One residential school was St. Joseph's Mission in Williams Lake, British Columbia. It was operated by the Roman Catholic Church from 1890 to 1981 and, as with all residential schools, was funded by the Canadian government. The school was at its busiest in the 1950s when it had roughly 300 students from the surrounding fifteen First Nations in the region. Parental visits were not allowed during the school year, and students were allowed to return home for one month of the year only.

As part of a residential school commemoration project in May 2013, former student, Phyllis Webstad, told the story of her first day at St. Joseph's, as a six-year-old girl. She vividly recalled that her shiny, new orange shirt, bought by her grandmother, had been taken from her soon after she arrived at the school. Her story

prompted the realization that many residential school survivors have similar stories of loss—loss of belongings, cultural traditions and language, family and loved ones, and self-identity. Orange Shirt Day was created as an opportunity for others to remember those young students who lost so much through the residential school system, including over 3000 children who experienced the ultimate loss, that being loss of life. (NOTE: More recent sources estimate the number of deaths at over 6000.)

Context for Students

Using child-friendly language and being mindful to exclude details that are not age-appropriate, help students form a basis of knowledge about residential schools. It may help to show a map of Nova Scotia to explain the locations of the Shubenacadie Residential School and the First Nations communities in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island from which children came to attend the school. Many traveled long distances by train, leaving their families, homes, and communities. You may also want to show a photo of the school.

In order to help students gain a basic understanding of the negative effects attending residential school had on Indigenous children, it is important to find ways to use the experiences of your students to build connections. Phyllis's story of her first day of school is one which most students can relate to on some level (nervousness, excitement, fear, etc.). Most children also can relate to the loss of something that is important to them. Using student experiences as a basis of the discussion about Phyllis's story will provide them with a platform from which they can begin to build a deeper understanding about the sense of loss experienced by residential school students.

Pre-teaching Vocabulary

The Mission: As it is used in Phyllis's story, "the Mission" is the shortened name for St. Joseph's Mission Residential School.

Suggested Learning Experiences

- Sitting together in a circle, share your own memory of the first day of school, or read aloud a book about the event. (Suggested books include *Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes, *First Day Jitters* by Julie Danneberg, or *The Class* by Boni Ashburn.)
- Begin a sharing circle, asking each student in turn to share how they felt on the first day of school. (Remind students that in a sharing circle, each person speaks only when it is their turn.)
- Read *Phyllis's Story* with your students. The link is below the title of this learning experience.
 - You may prefer to share *Phyllis's Orange Shirt*, a picture book for young learners.



- Discuss the story with your students. Encourage/assist students in making connections between how they felt on their first day of school and Phyllis's experience. Share how observing Orange Shirt Day is just one way to show residential school survivors that we care about them.
 - The following discussion starters may be helpful:
 - Have students turn to a partner and retell Phyllis's story using their own words.

- Even though Phyllis’s family did not have much money, her grandmother made sure to buy Phyllis something special to wear on her first day of school. Why do you think her grandmother did that?
- Why do you think the people in charge at the residential school took Phyllis’s shirt from her? How do you think that made Phyllis feel and why?
- What effect did attending residential school have on Phyllis?
- Think of one word that describes Phyllis’s character based on what you have learned about her. Explain your choice.
- Have students choose a moment from Phyllis’s story and illustrate it or invite a small group of students to create a graphic representation of Phyllis’s story. Compile student work in a book which can be placed in the school library or display student work in the hallways.
 - In a sharing circle, have students share their illustrations or graphic story and tell how they feel about what they’ve learned.

Follow-up Activities and Discussion

- Have students brainstorm ideas for how to participate in Orange Shirt Day in the future and how to keep Phyllis’s experience in our minds throughout the entire year.
- Create a Garden of Honor and Respect for Indigenous children who attended residential schools.
- Have students create positive messages of caring for others in their school which can be shared anonymously. Relate the caring for others to the Orange Shirt Day saying: *Every Child Matters*. Share how participating in Orange Shirt Day is just one way to show residential school survivors that they matter, that we care about them.
- Role play: Have students create a skit about the loss of something that was special and important to them, something that they never again found.
- Persuasive writing: Ask students to write a letter from the perspective of a student at the time Phyllis arrived at the school. Write a letter to those who were in charge at St. Joseph’s Mission, about them taking Phyllis’s special orange shirt. Have students include reasons the shirt should never have been taken and suggest ways the school could apologize to Phyllis.

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Orange Shirt Day: Learning About Residential Schools Grades 2 and 3

Focus: Resilience

Context for Teachers

Refer to the following folders in <https://ourcloud.nspes.ca/index.php/s/yfjCngGpYwo5H9N> to support building your own knowledge about the residential school system in Canada and about Shubenacadie Residential School in Nova Scotia:

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- Info about Orange Shirt Day | National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- For Teachers_Info About Residential Schools_including Shubenacadie Residential School

The learning experiences and resources referenced here build on the key concepts of resilience. Plan to present ways in which students can strengthen their understanding of this concept and its connection to the residential school experience.

Context for Students

Using child-friendly language and being mindful to exclude details that are not age-appropriate, help students form a basis of knowledge about residential schools. It may help to show a map of Nova Scotia to explain the locations of the Shubenacadie Residential School and the First Nations communities in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the Gaspé Region of Quebec from which children came to attend the school. Many traveled long distances by train, leaving their families, homes, and communities. You may also want to show a photo of the school.

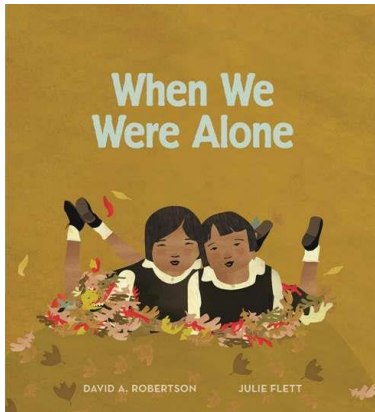
Suggested Learning Experience

Two Stories of Resilience

Have conversations that help students fully grasp the concept of resilience and its connection to the residential school experience.

- What is resilience?
 - Ask students what resilience means to them, or offer the meaning and have them put it in their own words. Invite them to talk about current or past examples of people who demonstrated resilience or challenging circumstances that would then require resilience.
- Discuss the meaning of resilience in the residential school context → the ability to overcome fear, sadness, loneliness, loss, and unkindness; to persevere and maintain cultural teachings and identity

The stories of two Indigenous survivors are presented below: *When We Were Alone*, which children might be familiar with from an earlier grade, and *Phyllis Googoo & the Ladybugs*. Each is a story of a young girl at a residential school, one a character based on historical fiction and the other a Mi'kmaw girl from We'koqma'q. Both had parts of who they were taken from them by the teachers at the schools. As young resilient girls, they creatively found ways to remember and keep safe parts of who they were, parts of *home*.



When a young girl helps tend to her grandmother's garden, she begins to notice things about her grandmother that make her curious. Why does her grandmother have long braided hair and wear beautifully coloured clothing? Why does she speak another language and spend so much time with her family? As she asks her grandmother about these things, she is told about life in a residential school a long time ago, where everything was taken away. *When We Were Alone* is a story about a difficult time in history and, ultimately, a story of empowerment and strength.

For Teachers

- Become familiar with the story *When We Were Alone*. This picture book was distributed late in 2017, one copy for each grade 3 classroom in English Programs. You will notice words written in the Cree language within the story. Mi'kmaw translations are included on the inside front cover of the copies that were distributed.
 - A read-aloud recording of *When We Were Alone*, with Mi'kmaw translations for the Cree text, can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/7HxzhjRFR6k>

- Also, you may wish to view the 5-minute video of author David Robertson and grade 1 teacher Pamela Dirksen discussing the use of this book in an elementary classroom.
youtube.com/watch?v=hPbmCke-x8w
- After sharing the book with your students, invite open discussion of their thoughts, reactions, and feelings. Guided discussion will follow the sharing of the second story of Phyllis Googoo.
- Next, share Phyllis Googoo's story of resilience.

Phyllis & the Ladybugs

As told to Naomi Pierrard by Elder Phyllis Googoo

Phyllis Googoo is an elder, language carrier, educator, and survivor. She attended the former Shubenacadie Residential School. Phyllis is from the community of We'koqma'q, which is located 255km east of Shubenacadie.

At the young age of four, Phyllis was one of the youngest children attending the school. While there, she was discouraged from speaking the Mi'kmaw language or doing anything that connected her to the culture. All the other children seemed to know the rules of the school and spoke English quite well compared to her—this made her feel lost and alone.

To comfort her in the times she missed her mom, home, and family the most, Phyllis would go to her secret spot out in the field. This is where she began her relationship with the ladybugs. This would become the most important link to not only her mother, but to her Mi'kmaw language. She would have conversations with the ladybugs in Mi'kmaw. She would speak to them, and they would speak back to her. Being down in the field, she had no fear of being heard and felt free.

Phyllis knew at such a young age how important speaking the language was and how it kept her feeling connected to her mother and community. After leaving the school, Phyllis continued her education and has since become one of the leading Mi'kmaw language carriers and educators in Mi'kma'ki. With having had such little control in that part of her life, Phyllis had the will and power to keep her language strong—with just a little help from her friends.

**Contributed by Naomi Pierrard, We'koqma'q First Nation
September 2021**

[How ladybugs helped a woman save her Mi'kmaw mother tongue | CBC News](#)

Follow-up Activities and Discussion

Engage students in comparing these two stories of resilience.

- Focus on the parts of who these little girls were (language; family; cultural ways and representation) that were taken away by the teachers at the residential schools but that each little girl found a way to keep those parts of who they are. Use this discussion to reinforce the students' understanding of the word resilience.
- Both the grandmother character and Phyllis Googoo show resilience in these stories.

- Talk about what the grandmother character did to keep her each of her cultural teachings alive when she was at residential school.
 - What did you think about her ideas in each example?
- Compare the ways in which the grandmother character and Phyllis Googoo kept their languages alive.
 - Why do you think this was important to them?
 - Research and practice how to say *hi*, *thank you*, *friend*, and *love* in the grandmother's language of Cree and in Phyllis Googoo's language of Mi'kmaw.
- Both the grandmother character and Phyllis Googoo are survivors. Discuss what that means in the context of residential schools.
 - What personality traits do you think the grandmother character and Phyllis Googoo had as little girls to be able to be resilient at such a young age?
- Phyllis Googoo lives in Unima'ki. She is a respected Elder and continues to help other Mi'kmaq learn the Mi'kmaw language and learn about Mi'kmaw culture and teachings.
 - If you and a classmate were to have a conversation with Elder Phyllis, make a list of questions you would ask her.
 - Design a postcard using drawings that show what Elder Phyllis's story means to you. Write a message to Elder Phyllis on the back of the postcard.
 - Record a video message that could be sent to Elder Phyllis, thanking her for her resilience, for helping to keep the Mi'kmaw language alive, and for sharing her story.
 - Research what it means in Indigenous culture when someone is called an Elder.

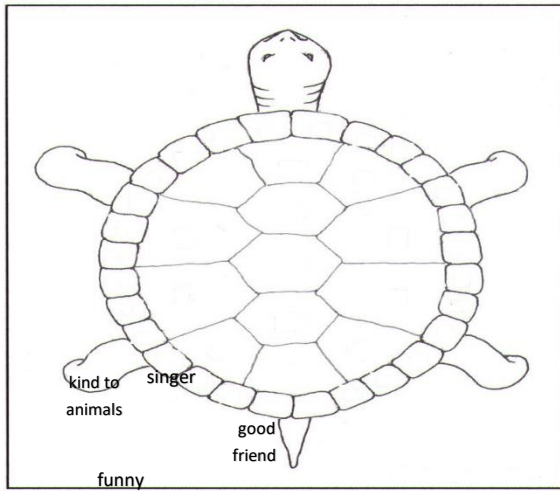
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Suggested Learning Experience

Grandmother Turtle Teachings

Provide students with the following context:

- *The Grandmother Turtle teaches the truth according to the Seven Sacred Teachings. The turtle was there with the dinosaurs; so, she remembers the original teachings from the creator. The turtle is a great example of resilience because it has been around since the time of the dinosaurs and continues to thrive today both on land and in the water.*
- Remind students of the earlier conversations about the meaning of resilience and examples they shared. (See "Context for Students" above.)
- Discuss that people who are resilient often are aware of their own talents, skills, areas of intelligence, and positive personality traits. This awareness helps build their inner strength and their confidence to face challenges and—to be resilient.
- Use the template of the turtle shell that follows to help students build their own resilience.
 - Have each student carry their own turtle shell template or secure it to their backs.
 - During a classroom walk-about, have students write positive traits, virtues, strengths, talents, etc. that that student embodies in a section of each other's turtle shells.



**Grandmother Turtle Resilience
Activity Example**

Grandmother Turtle Resilience Activity

