



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

**Grades 7–9 Teaching Support
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 will 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 students 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
- whereas students in grades 7 to 12 may be exposed to more complex and disturbing details, connect with your school's guidance counsellor in advance of Orange Shirt Day
- 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.

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

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>

Learning About Residential Schools Grades 7 to 9

Focus: The Truth

Teachers of grades 5 to 12 are encouraged to **register for *Truth and Reconciliation Week 2021*, organized by the National Centre of Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)**. This link takes you right to the page with the free registration for educators' option through Eventbrite at the bottom. Running daily from Sept 27th to Oct 1st, and **available as a recorded option beginning 24 hours after airing and ending November 30th**, there are **many sessions with Mi'kmaw content or Mi'kmaw presenters, Phyllis Webstad, and youth Autumn Peltier and Emma Stevens (also Mi'kmaw)**. Sessions options are in English and French.

[Truth and Reconciliation Week - NCTR](#)

While the truth that needs to be told and learned about Canada's shared history with Indigenous peoples begins with colonization, the focus of this packet is on Canada's residential school system and

- its impact on more than 150,000 Indigenous children taken from their families and communities between 1831 and the closure of the last school in Saskatchewan in 1996
- its pervasive impact on families and communities then and for generations that followed
- the trauma passed on as its legacy from generation to generation
- the resilience of the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island to reclaim their personal and collective identities including their respective languages, cultural teachings, and ways of being and knowing.

Context for Teachers

Refer to the following folders in this link (<https://ourcloud.nspes.ca/index.php/s/yfjCngGpYwo5H9N>) in support of 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

Activation of Prior Knowledge

Invite students to begin the conversation about residential school.

- Use Talking Circle Rounds to as an interactive KWL about residential schools by planning them to happen three times:
 - Engage students in the 1st and 2nd rounds **before new learning begins**
 - What do you already know about residential schools?
 - What would you like to know?
 - Return for the 3rd round after students have had several opportunities to engage in new learning
 - What did you learn?
- Begin the new learning by confirming or adding to the students' knowledge by providing details from *Facts About Shubenacadie Residential School* found in <https://ourcloud.nspes.ca/index.php/s/yfjCngGpYwo5H9N>.
 - Talk about where the former school site is in reference to the Mi'kmaw communities from which children were taken.

The following prompts may be used to facilitate continued discussion, to identify areas in need of more information, and to pose questions for further study:

- Discuss the time period in Canadian history in which residential schools in operation in Canada.
- Discuss the intent of residential schools and the lasting impacts.
- Discuss the meaning of intergenerational impacts, as related to the legacy of residential schools. Examine the influence certain government policies had on the establishment of residential schools and their impacts today.

Suggested Learning Experiences

Propaganda Versus Truth

***Please preview all videos in advance of sharing with students. Some videos include content and images that are likely to evoke an emotional response.**

Share and discuss with students the following promotional video from 1955: Residential schools promotional video (2m37s) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_V4d7sXoqU

- Considering this video was filmed in 1955, how might the non-Indigenous population of the time have perceived residential schools after watching this?
 - Discuss what you feel was the government's motive for producing this promotional video.
 - Discuss the power of film and editing in this film to produce a desired response.
 - Discuss possible impact of watching this video and leaving with a positive perception of residential schools.

Share and discuss with students **your** selections from the videos that follow. Below are a number of short videos (most between 3 and 5 minutes long), all speaking to residential schools and survivor stories, countering the positive messaging of the government public service advert of 1955. **Teachers are asked to preview all and, using their professional judgment, select to share any number of the videos below to broaden students' understanding of residential school. To help with planning, the length of each video is found at the end of the title/description.**

- youtube.com/watch?v=eReBSbN-4IE
Say Your Name by Keith Secola (song played to images from *Fatty Legs*) 3m 42s
- youtube.com/watch?v=riSgg53AJb8
Every Child Matters (real time graphic representations of the narrator's overview of residential school) 5m48s
- youtube.com/watch?v=v_tcCpKtoU0
Heritage Minute: Chanie Wenjack 1m 00s
- youtube.com/watch?v=GbZDUvvy258
Death Toll (includes Justice Murray Sinclair; Dec 2015) 2m 25s
- youtube.com/watch?v=9QMZaOVOin8
Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian Residential Schools (residential school survivors visit their school as adults) 2m 55s

- [youtube.com/watch?v= D2hk7JEqI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2hk7JEqI)
Chief Robert Joseph, Part 2, survivor story 3m 15s
- [youtube.com/watch?v=T9emQAj8s94](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9emQAj8s94)
Look What They Done sung by Elmer Crane 4m 18s

Discuss the contrast between the images and messaging of each video in comparison to the propaganda video from 1955.

- Knowing what you have learned about residential school experience, discuss the irony of this promotional video from 1955 having been produced for Education Week.
- Why does the 1955 PSA video tell such a different story and experience from those of the other videos linked above?

Discuss the importance of critical viewing in terms of bias, perspective, and the importance of analysing motives with regards to the propaganda video.

What role does learning the truth about residential schools play in Canada's goal for reconciliation?

Follow-Up Activity

Students work in small groups to design a wordle or tagzedo that tells others the truths of residential schools. Visit CBC Kids and assess its approach to sharing “news” of the unmarked graves to younger children. <https://www.cbc.ca/kidsnews/post/751-unmarked-graves-found-at-former-saskatchewan-residential-school>

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Learning About Residential Schools Grades 7 to 9

Focus: Resilience

Context for Teachers

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Pre-teaching Vocabulary

Tuberculosis (TB): An infectious disease that affects the lungs, making it hard to breathe

resilience: in this context, the ability for Indigenous peoples to persevere, survive, and overcome the impacts of colonization and the multitude of government-driven policies and systems, including residential schools, and to thrive despite the barriers, trauma, and ongoing challenges in multiple forms
Synonyms: strength; resistance; survival

Resilience

Facilitate 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? Invite them to offer 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 hardships and obstacles; to persevere and maintain cultural teachings and identity

Suggested Learning Experience: Resilience

Ma'kit's Doll (pronounced MAW-git, said with a "hard g")

<https://vimeo.com/143251875>

Context for Students

Ma'kit Poulette was one of the many Mi'kmaw children from Nova Scotia who went to Shubenacadie Residential School. Although the Canadian government stated that attendance was mandatory for children ages 7 to 18, many children were much younger, including Ma'kit who was 3 years old. Ma'kit's story is another story of loss but also one of resilience. After her beloved doll was cruelly taken from her, Ma'kit created a new doll to keep her company. The locally made documentary about Ma'kit's experience will provide pre-teaching details to help plan learning experiences for students.

Ma'kit's is a story of loss, not limited to the loss of her doll. Loss was a common thread among the many who went to residential schools throughout Canada — loss of belongings, cultural traditions and language, family and loved ones, and self-identity. On Orange Shirt Day, we 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.)

Watch and discuss "Magit's Doll" (11m23s). (Note: Proper spelling is Ma'kit.) Ma'kit's story is the subject of *The Elder Youth Story Exchange Program*

<https://vimeo.com/143251875>

Follow-up Activities and Discussion

- Compare Ma'kit's and Phyllis Webstad's stories of loss while they were students at residential schools.
- Ma'kit's story needs to be told. Invite students to create a way to share Ma'kit's experience at Shubenacadie Residential School.

- Ideas may include: storyboard; graphic story; children's book; presenting the story to another class; produce a "Heritage Minute-type" video clip (Heritage Minutes: *Chanie Wenjack* as a model) and prepare a viewing guide.

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Suggested Learning Experience

Examples of Resilience

Note that the personal and community examples of resilience of Indigenous peoples are many, including examples from survivors. Mi'kmaw survivors Pi'kun Poulette and Rita Joe are two such examples. Through their gifts of song and poetry, they spoke their truths to generations of Mi'kmaw and non-Indigenous Canadians and used the power of their resilience to influence generations to come.

Pi'kun Poulette: ECMA Award-Winning Song *Forgiveness*

- Ask students as a small group or whole class to talk about forgiveness.
 - What is forgiveness? What does it mean to forgive?
 - Ask students what forgiveness means to them and to offer examples in their lives where they have forgiven others or others have forgiven them.
 - How did forgiving or being forgiven make them feel afterwards?
 - How did forgiveness help the relationship?
- Ask students in small groups to read the lyrics to Pi'kun Poulette's song *Forgiveness* (next page) and/or watch Pi'kun perform it at youtu.be/TB1rjotkBZO (3m24s) or at youtube.com/watch?v=9rJon74KePg (3m15s)

- The following questions may help guide discussion about Pi’kun’s song:
 - Discuss the experiences Pi’kun shares through his song?
 - Discuss the messages other residential school survivors may take from Pi’kun’s song to help their healing?
 - Some say that forgiveness frees the soul for both the person being forgiven and the person offering forgiveness. Discuss this from both perspectives in the context of residential school survivors. Does Pi’kun’s song support this?

Forgiveness by Pi’kun Poulette with Morning Star

*They put me in a residential school when I was six years old
 Forced me from my family and all I’d ever known
 I cried out for my Momma - but she could not hear me
 I was two hundred miles away in Shubenacadie
 They tried to break my spirit - I wouldn’t let them see me cry
 They held my head under water until I almost died
 I can still hear the screaming deep inside of me
 And I will always bear the scars of Shubenacadie
 I learned how to hate and I learned how to fight
 And love had no room in my heart of stone
 Apiksiktuaqn etamuloq (forgiveness I am asking)
 To find love I had to forgive
 With forgiveness I found love again
 Now I’ve found forgiveness and I can hold me head up high
 Mi’kmaq I am and Mi’kmaq I’ll die
 The wisdom of the elders helped set my heart free
 From the sins of the residential school in Shubenacadie
 I learned how to hate and I learned how to fight
 And love had no room in my heart of stone
 Apiksiktuaqn etamuloq (forgiveness I am asking)
 To find love I had to forgive
 With forgiveness I found love again
 I learned how to hate and I learned how to fight
 And love had no room in my heart of stone
 Apiksiktuaqn etamuloq (forgiveness I am asking)
 To find love I had to forgive
 With forgiveness I found love again
 With forgiveness I found love*

Pi’kun Poulette was from Eskasoni First Nations. He was a member of the band Morning Star and won an East Coast Music Award (ECMA) for Forgiveness, a song about his experience in residential school and his journey to forgiveness. Pi’kun Poulette passed away in 2013. He left the gift of his music and, in particular, his song *Forgiveness* to help other Mi’kmaq survivors of residential school with their healing.

Rita Joe: Renowned Poet *I Lost My Talk*

Read *I Lost My Talk* aloud to students. Mention it is written by a residential school survivor. Have students choose a word or phrase that held meaning for them and explain its significance for them and, as best they can, for Rita Joe. Listen/Look/Learn from music videos and other media presentations about Rita Joe.

I Lost My Talk

I lost my talk
The talk you took away.
When I was a little girl
At Shubenacadie school.

You snatched it away:
I speak like you
I think like you
I create like you
The scrambled ballad, about my word.

Two ways I talk
Both ways I say,
Your way is more powerful.

So gently I offer my hand and ask,
Let me find my talk
So I can teach you about me.

Familiarize students with the following references:

Orange Shirt Day
Indigenous
We'koqma'q / Whycocomagh
Shubenacadie Residential School
Eskasoni First Nation
Membertou First Nation

Rita Joe's Legacy

As a class, read Rita Joe's obituary to get closer to seeing Rita Joe for who she was. Identify 3 pre-selected phrases in the obituary for students to highlight, or they can select their own. Talk, write, or draw its connection to Rita Joe's legacy. Students may also view "*I Lost My Talk*" *Rita Joe Biography* (10m 39s) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJByYI9HO3M>

Two of Rita Joe's poems are included in her obituary. Read one or both and talk about the meaning Rita Joe may have

“Without the language, we are warm bodies without a spirit.”

- Have a student read *I Lost My Talk* aloud to your students.
- Invite students’ opinions and thoughts of the poem and its meaning.
- After a second reading, ask students to discuss the poem in small groups. They may choose from the following questions to guide their conversations:
 - How can or how does someone “lose their talk?”
 - Who is the poet referring to by using the pronouns “I” and “you”? Support your thinking.
 - How would you explain, “The scrambled ballad, about my word.” in line 9?
 - The speaker says she talks two ways. Discuss what this might mean.
 - Can you relate this to any part of your life?
 - Re-read line 12. Discuss why you think she describes their talk as “more powerful?”
 - How can one “find my talk” as is hoped in line 14?
 - What do you think the speaker would like to teach about herself? How would you listen? What do you think you would learn?

Rita Joe's Obituary

May, 2007

Rita Joe, Mi'kmaq poet

Born We'koqma'q / Whycocomagh, March 15, 1932; died Sydney, March 20, 2007

October Song, Rita Joe's last poem found on her typewriter.

“On the day I am blue,
I go again to the wood where the tree is swaying,
Arms touching you like a friend,
And the sound of the wind so alone like I am;
Whispers here, whispers there,
Come and just be my friend.”

One of Rita Joe's daughters once asked her about her ability to write poetry. “The words are floating through the air and I just catch them,” she replied. The gentle, soft-spoken Mi'kmaq poet's words touched many lives and brought her great acclaim and many honours, but she humbly described herself as a housewife with a dream to bring laughter “to the sad eyes of my people. . .”

Her journey from the reserve in Whycocomagh after she lost her mother at the age of five, included foster homes and the Shubenacadie residential school; lost years which she regretted in later life. “It was a time when you prepare for life, so that you're ready to face the world at 16,” says Murdena Marshall, a Mi'kmaq educator and long-time friend and confidant who lived near her home on Eskasoni First Nation. “She lamented in later life about missing those years, and poetry was a means of talking about it. But not in a mean way.”

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An ability to convey her thoughts through words came early. Daughter Francis Sylliboy says that once, when she was asked by a nun and the principal at the Shubenacadie school where she got the words she had written on a piece of paper on her desk, Rita pointed to her head and her heart. Sister Dorothy Moore, a Mi'kmaq nun from Membertou First Nation, who along with Rita Joe was awarded the Order of Canada for her work as an educator, was at Shubenacadie School with her in 1943 and 1944 and remembers “a very gentle girl; you couldn't help but gravitate to her.”

She often used the poem *I Lost My Talk* (see next page) in her lectures to demonstrate how deeply the residential school experience touched young Mi'kmaq who often spent years away from their families and communities. Rita began writing poetry in the late 1960s, but she didn't tell her 13 children and her husband until her work was selected for an award. Her first book, ***Poems of Rita Joe*** was published in 1978. She published another six books of poetry and received several honorary degrees and an Indigenous Achievement Award for her work.

She wanted to portray her people in a positive way, says Francis. "She wanted to pass along the positive, gentle, loving image of the Indian...."

Note: Rita Joe died from complications due to Parkinson's disease. Despite the illness and its effects on muscle control, Rita Joe continued to write during her last days.

Follow-up Activities and Discussion

Rita Joe was named a gentle girl and called the "Gentle Warrior." She was a survivor of her gentle war.

- Reflect upon the words of the song. "Gentle Warrior."
 - Discuss what it means to be a Gentle Warrior. Many would think these words don't fit together.
 - In what ways was Rita Joe a Gentle Warrior?
 - Create a Wordle (wordle.net/) to demonstrate characteristics Rita Joe embodied that made her a Gentle Warrior.
 - Illustrate an image of a Gentle Warrior.

***We Shall Remain* by Kalolin (pronounced GAL-oh-lin) Johnson**

Introduce the video *We Shall Remain*. It is the second installment of the "ABMHS Song Project" from "Allison Bernard Memorial High School" in Eskasoni, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. It is written and sung by Kalolin (pronounced GAL-oh-lin) Johnson, a recent graduate of ABMHS.

Listen/Look/Learn while viewing *Gentle Warrior*. Discuss how the song relates to Rita Joe's message.

Extension: Explore music, dance, video, and visual art as forms of **expressive advocacy**. Include performers and artists of Mi'kmaq and of other Indigenous ancestries.

Explore ways to encourage youth to learn the Mi'kmaq language, thus, actively preserving it. Propose ideas that link language preservation to music, movement, and theatre.

Grow the concept of advocacy through response-led discussion to:

- How can we teach/learn empathy in ways that inspire advocacy?
- *Every Child Matters* is the phrase associated with Orange Shirt Day. Identify ways to help others grow empathy through a better understanding of why "Every Child Matters" was chosen.
- Propose a plan to open the minds and hearts of generations filled with no information and misinformation. Discuss the challenge of "unlearning" before new learning can happen.
- Ask students to pay careful attention to the words of the song and the images presented as they watch *We Shall Remain* at youtube.com/watch?v=8jYnPr065-4
 - The following questions may help guide discussion after viewing the video:
 - What were some of the images shown in the video that instill resilience for the Mi'kmaq?
 - In what ways do you think Mi'kmaq have been resilient as individuals and as communities?

- Even though students were forced to go to residential school, what were some of the ways they may have tried to hang on to their identity, language, and culture?
- How can Kalolin influence other young Mi'kmaw like herself to be resilient?
- In what ways can non-Indigenous youth support resilience of Mi'kmaw youth?

Every Child Matters: United Nations Rights of the Child

- Have student groups research and discuss the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](https://www.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/imce_uploads/UTILITY%20NAV/TEACHERS/DOCS/GC/CRCPosterEN_FA.pdf) [unicef.ca/sites/default/files/imce_uploads/UTILITY%20NAV/TEACHERS/DOCS/GC/CRCPosterEN_FA.pdf](https://www.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/imce_uploads/UTILITY%20NAV/TEACHERS/DOCS/GC/CRCPosterEN_FA.pdf)
- View the two-page learning experience from the Manitoba Teachers' Society at mbteach.org/pdfs/pd/osd/OSD-RitaJoe.pdf
 - The following questions from the Manitoba link may help guide the students' conversations:
 - What rights from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child do you think are relevant to students who went to residential school?
 - How is a person affected when these rights are denied?
 - Discuss the connection between the UN Rights of the Child and the key message of Orange Shirt Day: **EVERY CHILD MATTERS.**

Orange Shirt Day is a day to honour the children who survived the residential school experience and a day to acknowledge the harm done by the residential school system to Indigenous children who were students. It is a day to recognize how residential school system damaged each student's sense of self-worth, self-confidence, self-esteem and well-being. Orange Shirt Day is a day to affirm our commitment to ensure that everyone around us matters.

Every Child Matters

September 30th

orangeshirtday.org/

