



# ORANGE SHIRT SOCIETY

## *Every Child Matters*

January 2025

Dear Friends,

As CEO and a founding member of the Orange Shirt Society, I am honoured to share a message with you regarding the 2026 Graduating Class events. This is history in the making!

Orange Shirt Day - Every Child Matters was founded in Williams Lake in May 2013, with our first ever event held September 30, 2013. Graduates in Williams Lake, and many other areas, are the first graduates to have had Indian residential school learning their entire school experience of kindergarten to grade 12! I am nearing 60 years old; people my age often did not learn about what happened to us when they were in school. This is why the graduating class of 2026 in Williams Lake, and many other places in Canada, is so special!

These graduates will be our next bankers, doctors, lawyers, judges etc. They will go out into society with the knowledge of what they learned. In my experience of visiting schools and telling my orange shirt story - students have empathy, and they really care. I look forward to witnessing the societal change in attitude and behaviour toward Indigenous peoples.

The 2026 Graduating Class events will let Canadians know that change is happening. For Indigenous people, we can look forward to being treated with respect and understanding.

My hope is to have Graduating Class events in the years following 2026 as well, as some did not start their Orange Shirt Day – Every Child Matters events in 2013.

What started as an idea, turned into a dream and now will become reality! I look forward to celebrating the Graduating Class of 2026 with you.

With gratitude,

Phyllis Webstad  
CEO and Founding Member, Orange Shirt Society

*Please contact Venta Rutkauskas, Orange Shirt Society Events Coordinator, to learn how you can be involved in commemorating graduates and future changemakers for Truth & Reconciliation in your communities. Email [events@orangeshirtday.org](mailto:events@orangeshirtday.org) or call (778) 267-1534.*