



BUFFALO TRAIL PUBLIC SCHOOLS – Norah’s Logo – National Day for Truth and Reconciliation – September 30

NEWS RELEASE – October 18, 2021

September 30th, 2021 marked the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Buffalo Trail Public Schools began planning for Orange Shirt Day (previously the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was known as this) in the spring of 2021. BTPS and the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee facilitated a division-wide Orange Shirt Day logo contest to coincide with discussions in the classrooms about the legacy of residential schools and the importance of knowing Canada’s history. The winner of our Orange Shirt Day Logo contest was Norah Melnyk, a grade 8 student from Delnorte-Innisfree.



On September 30, Buffalo Trail Public Schools planned a division-wide student day and brought in speakers for all K-Grade 12 students that day. Norah, now a grade 9 student, spoke to other students that day about the symbolism behind her logo. The true meaning of the symbols and colours are described by Norah below. Here is her speech to our students. We share this as she was amazingly brave

to speak to other students across BTPS and shared a very impactful message. Her impactful speech is now shared with you. BTPS could not be more proud of this young student.

The Shadow of a Child - by Norah Melnyk

Hello, good day everybody.

First of all, I'd like to thank Katrin Heim from BTPS for presenting this amazing opportunity to me. I am so beyond honoured to be speaking today, and to be a part of something so important with all of these extraordinary people.

I am so touched by all the responses I've been receiving over the past months from viewers of my piece. It is a tremendous honour, and very important to me as an artist that my piece evoked real emotion in many people's hearts, especially about such an emotional and troubling topic in Canada's history. I cannot describe the amount of sympathy, respect, and pain I feel for residential school survivors, and the hundreds of Indigenous Canadian children buried in unmarked graves on former residential school grounds across Canada.

Another thanks to BTPS for choosing my logo to be on the orange shirts of our school district this year. Having my art represent such an important day this year is something that I will keep close to my heart for the rest of my life.

I was invited today to speak a bit about the symbolism behind my logo, and what led to its creation.

Last Spring, about a week after the reports of the 215 Indigenous children found buried at the Kamloops residential school surfaced, me and my classmates who were interested, were asked to create and submit Orange Shirt Day logos early for Orange Shirt Day in the coming fall in light of the discovery of the "missing" children.

As I am never one to pass up an artistic opportunity, I began deliberating ideas for my logo. Being unfamiliar with creating logos, I researched already existing logos that had been on orange shirts in the past, and found that they almost all included the words "EVERY CHILD MATTERS". I researched the phrase, and I began building my logo around those three words.

The two feathers forming the "A" in the word "MATTERS", is meant to be a symbol generally reflecting Indigenous culture in a way that many people, including those who aren't too familiar with the culture are able to recognize as such. I thought that the feathers were a perfect compositional element that ended up conveying my message perfectly, which leads me to my next element:

The shadow reflecting from the feathers is obviously that of an Indigenous child, which the feathers show, as well as emphasize the importance of their culture to them as a person. Although it is

only one shadow, of one child, it is meant to symbolize all the residential school survivors, and the hundreds of deceased children who sadly never made it home.

When I first heard of the discovery of the 215 children in Kamloops, I was absolutely speechless. I had an overwhelming amount of sympathy for these children, their families, and the survivors who grieved when they heard the news. I was in a state of horror and disbelief for the next few days, silently thinking about this atrocity.

When we were assigned this project, all I had on my mind was the 215 children, and I built my logo with the focus solely on them and memoriam for them. The reason I decided to depict an Indigenous child as a shadow rather than the child themselves, is because it is meant to symbolize children who died in residential schools. A shadow, because they are now no more than a memory, to grieve and to respect and to remember.

After my logo was chosen, I was contacted by Mr. Kevin John of the They Build Bridges Association to organize a meeting between us to discuss my logo, and his interest in using my logo and adding his association's logo as well. As we were discussing the symbolism behind the logo, he talked about how it affected him emotionally, and he explained to me what meaning he found in the shadow of the child. In the shadow, Mr. John saw the impact residential schools left on survivor's lives. To him, it symbolized how survivors are now a shadow of who they were before their time at residential schools. Before being stripped of most, to all of their culture and identity. He brought another very important meaning to my logo, and made it equally about survivors and non-survivors. I thank him for further opening my mind to new perspectives, even in the art that I created myself, and for taking the time to speak with me that day.

I'm very proud to be wearing this shirt that is so much more than a piece of orange cotton, and with my own art displayed on the front. I am so grateful that I was able to be a part of this, the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, it means so much to me and my family that I was granted this opportunity. Thank you all so much for being here and for taking the time to listen to me speak, thank you for inviting me today, and thank you for putting time into this extremely important cause.

Have a wonderful Truth and Reconciliation day, and I hope that you take part in commemoration of all the lives affected and taken by the residential school system. Thank you.