



## **BUFFALO TRAIL PUBLIC SCHOOLS – BTPS Honours National Day of Truth and Reconciliation**

**NEWS RELEASE** – October 4, 2021

September 30th marked the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. Students in Buffalo Trail Public Schools were in school that day learning about the impacts of residential schools, treaty acknowledgments, ribbon skirts, and resiliency. If you had an opportunity to log on to a session, you would first notice the sea of orange. Over 300 people were wearing their new orange BTPS t-shirt with the Every Child Matters logo designed by Norah Melnyk, a grade 9 student from Delnorte-Innisfree.

The day was set up in a conference style day of learning for kindergarten to grade 12 students. We had a series of speakers and resources that day for all age groups. Starting the day with a Treaty Acknowledgement was Kevin John, from They Build Bridges. Kevin grew up in Vermilion and knows BTPS well. Debbie Semeniuk shared with students the significance of a ribbon skirt and made one while the students watched her session. Elder Kohkum Helen John shared her own personal experiences in residential school with our students and staff. Sam Demma inspired students to commit to one small consistent action, and in doing so, impacting massive change.

A teacher from Wainwright High School, Shanna McCutcheon, shared her thoughts of the day, “I thoroughly enjoyed the way Sam was able to connect his experiences to how privileged our lives have been and the need for small consistent actions to create change. Elder Kohkum Helen was incredibly brave, sharing her story and the very definition of resilience. I found her inspiring that she was able to achieve a college degree at 42 and pay off her own home when she had every reason not to continue forward. I am honoured to have had the opportunity to listen to her story.”

After learning from Kevin John about the significance of Treaty Acknowledgements, Amisk grade 3 students wrote their own. You can view the acknowledgement here: <https://www.wevideo.com/view/2391892837> and on the BTPS website.

Here is a reflection from a Grade 6 student which demonstrates the powerful message that Kohkum Helen John shared with BTPS:

Now I think.... That it is one of the most important things to learn about. That nothing should be forgotten because every child matters. Residential schools should have never become a thing. In honour of Hellen John Number 55♥

Norah Melnyk's Logo

