

Kaya Learns about the Orange Shirt Day by Jasmine Benedict

Long ago, before the land now called Canada was settled by people from other places, there were many different Indigenous nations living across the land. Each nation had their own traditions, beliefs, and stories, passed down through generations. One such story is about National Truth and Reconciliation Day, which is celebrated on September 30th every year.

In the story, there was a young girl named Kaya who lived in a small Indigenous village with her family. Kaya loved spending time with her grandmother, who would tell her stories about their ancestors and the teachings they had passed down through the ages. One day, as Kaya was sitting with her grandmother by the fire, she asked her about a colorful orange shirt hanging on the wall.

"That shirt belonged to your great-grandmother," her grandmother said. "She used to wear it on her way to school every day. She was taken away from her family and sent to a residential school, where she was not allowed to speak her language, practice her culture, or even wear her own clothes. The shirt reminds us of the harm done to our people by the residential school system, and the need for healing and reconciliation."

Kaya was saddened by her great-grandmother's experience and wanted to know more. Her grandmother explained that Every Child Matters, a movement that seeks to honor the memory of Indigenous children who were taken from their families and sent to residential schools. These schools were run by churches and the Canadian government and aimed to assimilate Indigenous children into Western culture. The children suffered abuse, neglect, and trauma, and many never returned home.

"Orange Shirt Day is an annual event that raises awareness about the history and legacy of residential schools," her grandmother continued. "On this day, we wear orange shirts to honor the survivors of residential schools and to remember those who did not make it home. It is also a day to reflect on how we can work towards healing and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples."

Kaya listened carefully to her grandmother's words and felt a deep sense of gratitude for the sacrifices made by her ancestors. She realized that National Truth and Reconciliation Day was a time to remember the past, honor the present, and look towards a brighter future for all people in Canada.

From that day forward, Kaya wore her own orange shirt on September 30th every year and shared her grandmother's stories with others. She knew that by honoring the truth of the past, she could help build a better future for everyone.