



Students at Hillview Elementary School in Vernon tied 215 orange ribbons to a fence Tuesday, June 1, 2021, in honour of the children whose remains were found at a former Kamloops residential school site last week. (Brendan Shykora - Morning Star)

Vernon students tie 215 ribbons in support of residential school victims

Hillview Elementary students took lessons from the classroom to the roadside Tuesday morning

[BRENDAN SHYKORA](#) / Jun. 1, 2021 3:00 p.m. / [LOCAL NEWS](#) / [NEWS](#)

Students in Vernon tied their support for victims and survivors of residential schools in orange Tuesday morning.

Last week's discovery of an unmarked burial site of Indigenous children at a former Kamloops residential school has the country in mourning and reckoning with a dark chapter in its history.

Educators are now finding ways to connect their students with the issue in meaningful ways.

Following an idea put forward by teacher-librarian Tracey Barrie, students at Vernon's Hillview Elementary School took turns knotting 215 orange ribbons to a chain-link fence in front of the school— one for each child whose remains were discovered in Kamloops.

It's a more tangible extension of what the students have been learning in the classroom, said vice-principal Karen Rogers, and the kids have taken the activity to heart.

"I think the kids understand the seriousness of this," said Rogers, whose class observed a moment of silence yesterday

"It's part of what we do, we're always doing that education about residential schools in (our) schools, and it's part of teaching that's ongoing,"

Rogers said.

Orange shirts were donned and flags were flown at half-mast as schools throughout the Okanagan took time to pay respects to the 215 children in Kamloops, and the untold others who went through the residential school system.

“We must continue to learn about the history and ongoing impacts of colonialism, and recognize that we have a responsibility to personally and collectively answer the Truth and Reconciliation commission’s calls to action,” the Vernon School District said in a statement Monday.

“The district acknowledges the many staff, students, and families who are deeply and, in some cases, personally affected by this tragedy.”

Support is available through the Indian Residential School Survivors line at 1-800-721-0066, KUU-US Indigenous crisis line — available 24-7 (Youth Line 250-723-2040 and Adult Line 250-723-4050) and the 24-7 Residential School Crisis line at 1-866-925-4419.

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