

A large, stylized orange silhouette of a t-shirt with a crew neck and short sleeves, centered in the background. The shirt is set against a light cream-colored background. In the bottom left corner, there is a circular inset showing a close-up of a woven fabric texture in shades of orange and yellow. The overall design is clean and modern, with a focus on the color orange.

# Orange Shirt Day

Online Learning:  
Paper Weaving

**Harbourfront centre**

Our step-by-step Visual Arts resource package will support you as your students create a woven paper t-shirt that responds to students' understanding of **Orange Shirt Day/National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**. This paper-weaving activity allows you and your students to reflect on how they can create safe spaces at school for themselves, their peers and the school community. Students will be encouraged to reflect on their ability to impact positive change and build a cohesive classroom community.

## Suggested Grade Range

Grade 4+

## Curriculum Links

The Arts – Visual Arts  
Language

## Key Vocabulary

**Orange Shirt Day:** Marked annually on September 30, Orange Shirt Day is a legacy of the St. Joseph Mission (SJM) Residential School (1891-1981) Commemoration Project and Reunion events in Williams Lake, BC, Canada, in May 2013. For further details, check out the following [weblink](#).

**National Day of Truth and Reconciliation:** First recognized on September 30, 2021, this day honours the lost children and Survivors of Residential Schools, their families and communities. This federal statutory holiday was created through legislative amendments made by Parliament as a public commemoration of residential schools' tragic and painful history and ongoing impacts, which is vital to reconciliation.

**Weaving:** Weaving refers to a process in textile arts/textile manufacturing where two or more threads or yarns are interlaced at right angles to create a fabric or cloth.

## Required Materials

- Orange construction paper/Bristol board (at least 8.5x11); one per student
- Additional construction paper/Bristol board (any colour) cut into 1cm thick strips (at least 4 per student; precut in advance)
- Pencil/pen/markers
- Scissors

## Optional Materials

- Additional mark making materials (pastels, crayons, pencil, crayons)
- String
- Clothes pegs
- Ruler

# Step-by-step Instructions

## Step 1

### Introduce the topic of Orange Shirt Day

Engage your students in an introductory conversation about their understanding of Orange Shirt Day. Depending on the grade level of your students, you may be introducing this concept or activating prior knowledge.

A suggested way to begin this conversation is to ask students what is significant about September 30. Students may connect to the date differently: some may recognize it as Orange Shirt Day, while others may be more familiar with the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. At the same time, some may not be familiar with either. As a reminder, a brief description and additional links to Orange Shirt Day and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation can be found in the Key Vocabulary section of this resource.

An important point to share with students is that the Residential School system meant many children were taken away from their families, attending schools far away from their homes. In Residential Schools, students were not allowed to speak their language, practice their traditions or share any aspect of their culture. Have students consider if they would feel safe in these schools.

***Please note that the conversations about Residential Schools may significantly impact some students. Please refer to our [Teacher's Resource Guides 2021](#) and [2022](#) for a list of helplines, online resources and other supports you may direct students to.***

## Step 2

### Introduce Weaving!

In this project, students will be weaving together their personal commitments to creating a safe space. Introduce the concept by asking your students to share their connections, understandings and examples of weaving. Let students know that weaving has been around for thousands of years, with evidence of weaving found in Egypt as far back as 5000 BCE. Common fibres for weaving include cotton, wool, linen, silk and polyester/nylon. Both organic and synthetic materials can be used in weaving. Examples of everyday woven products include sheets, towels, blankets and clothing.

## Step 3

### Gather Materials

To start, each student will need their own piece of orange paper, a pen or pencil and a pair of scissors.



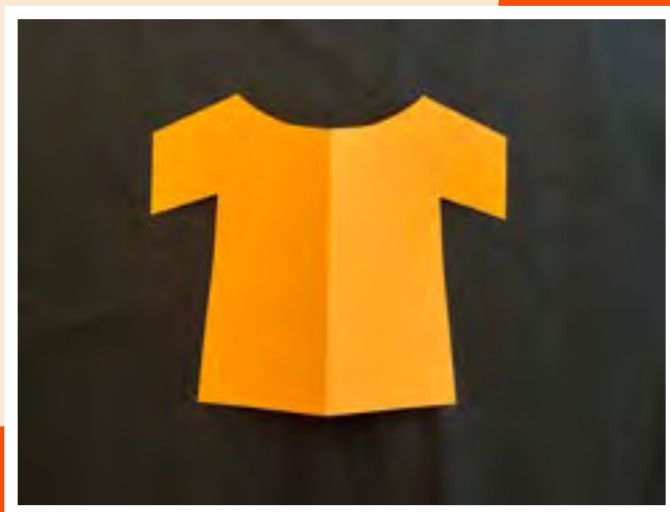


## Step 4

### Draw and cut out t-shirt shape

Fold the large piece of orange paper in half (hamburger fold). Using the fold as the centre line of the t-shirt, have students draw half a t-shirt. The t-shirt should use up almost all of the piece of paper. Once students are happy with the t-shirt outline, instruct students to cut the t-shirt out.

As a reminder, t-shirt shapes do not need to be uniform—all students are welcome to design and create their t-shirt outline as a form of individual expression. If you anticipate that some students may find the design of the t-shirt outline challenging, see the additional links to the learning section to find a t-shirt template. This template can be printed for students to trace.



## Step 5

### Prepare for weaving

With the t-shirt still folded in half, instruct students to draw a series of parallel lines approximately 1cm (about half an inch) apart, starting from the fold. These lines should stop about 5cm (2 inches) away from the edge of the t-shirt to ensure the t-shirt remains intact. Students will cut along these lines (verify student work before they cut their lines). Instruct students to put their work to the side.



## Step 6

### Brainstorm personal commitments to creating a safe space

Residential Schools were not spaces where Indigenous children felt safe, protected or able to be themselves. Their culture, language, food, beliefs, customs and ways of knowing were not respected or permitted. Students who practiced or expressed their culture were punished, often severely. Although we do not know the exact number of children who attended, we know that the intergenerational impacts of Residential Schools on Indigenous communities continue to be felt today among Survivors and their children. In recent years, almost two thousand unmarked graves have been discovered across Canada on the grounds of former Residential School sites. Many Survivors and relatives knew about or suspected the existence of these graves but were largely ignored until radar evidence appeared, highlighting the importance of having these conversations—why did so many children die and suffer abuse in these schools? Why did it take so long to acknowledge and listen to Survivors? What can we do to ensure that this never happens again?

Remind students that you would like them to feel as safe as possible in your classroom. Have students brainstorm what words, actions, objects or ideas they need to feel safe in your classroom.



## Step 7

### Write, draw or craft personal commitment to safe space strips

Have students collect strips of paper from you. Using each strip, have students write or draw a word, phrase, idea or symbol they connect with as a personal commitment to creating a safe space in your classroom.

Remind students that part of each strip will be visible, and part will end up behind another sheet of paper when they weave together their strips. Personal commitments can be said out loud or kept private, which is reflected in the weaving itself!



## Step 8

### Weave your t-shirts!

Using one strip of paper at a time, begin the weaving process. Start with the strip of paper on top of the t-shirt. Using each cut in the paper, begin to weave the paper through the t-shirt, alternating over, under, over, under and so on.



## Step 9

### Repeat for all other strips

Keep in mind that with each additional strip of paper that is added, it should alternate the starting point to ensure the t-shirt creates the desired weaving design (i.e., one starts on the top, the next one underneath it, then the next one on top, and so on.)



## Step 10

### Consolidation

Have students reflect on the activity and the importance of personal commitments to each other in your classroom. Consider displaying these woven t-shirts in your classroom (using the optional string and clothes pegs) to create a Commitment Clothesline!

## Extensions

What can the participant do to continue working on this technique or project beyond the step-by-step?

- Have students explore each other's t-shirts and personal commitment statements. How can you uphold this throughout the year?

### Additional links to learning

T-Shirt template: <https://timvandevall.com/templates/blank-t-shirt-templates/>