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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stavely Elementary School, Stavely, Alberta

Stavely students connecting with Indigenous experience through Project of Heart

Grade five and six students from [Stavely Elementary School](#) will participate in the launch of “[Project of Heart](#)”, an activity commemorating the lives of thousands of Indigenous children who died, went missing or were harmed during their time in residential schools.

The inspiration for the event, taking place **Thursday, January 19 at Stavely School**, came when teacher Julaine Guitton wore an orange shirt to school for [Orange Shirt Day](#), in recognition of the residential school legacy. Guitton’s students were eager to know more about the history of the schools.

“The students in my class had many really thoughtful questions, and approached the subject with such respect, heart, and an honest desire to learn that I felt compelled to provide opportunities for them to follow their questions,” says Guitton.

Guitton contacted Georgina Henderson, First Nations, Metis and Inuit Success Coordinator for Livingstone Range School Division, who visited the class and helped launch plans for the Project of Heart event.

“What started as Orange Shirt Day unfolded into a natural expansion of the students’ interests, passion, commitment and inquiry. I have been captivated by their thoughtfulness, integrity and love for learning and for their fellow man,” Henderson says.

The project connects with the grade five social studies skills outcomes, including Canadian history. Guitton values the real-world learning opportunities for students provided by this project.

“I feel like Project of Heart is going to help my students [engage in] reconciliation with our First Nations neighbours in ways that will resonate with them long past their time in my classroom,” she says.

Stavely Elementary principal, Kathy Charchun, is proud of the work her students have done in partnership with the First Nations community, in what she describes as a “collaborative, overdue journey toward truth and reconciliation.”

“I look forward to our grade 5/6 class sharing their experience and knowledge with our greater school population to ensure that all of us at Stavely Elementary School are more informed and more involved on this path,” says Charchun.

Family, guests and media are invited to share in the special day, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. Attendees will learn more about the project from students and guest speakers including Guitton, Henderson, Charchun and Piikani elder Eric Crow Shoe, who will offer an opening prayer and share stories from his time as a student at [St. Cyprian residential school in Brocket](#).

The event will be held in the grade 5/6 classroom, beginning with the opening prayer. Light refreshments will follow and an opportunity for media to speak to students and Livingstone Range teaching and administrative personnel.

Julaine Guitton and Georgina Henderson are both enthusiastic about the potential for long-term significant change as a result of the students' work with Project of Heart.

"The students are on a journey and committed to building new relationships with the Indigenous people to build a better and stronger Canada through a collective effort," says Henderson.

Guitton says, "When all is said and done, I hope that students can look back on their time with me and remember the ways they were empowered to grow, learn and develop as people."

For further information, please visit/contact:

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