

# CHILDREN'S REMEMBRANCE

The small orange belt reminded a survivor of the bricks and a window from the residential schools. Six ancient wampum beads are in the center. I see three as peace, good mind, and strength. The other three I see as:

**Okahshe:ri** - tears/eyes

**Ohronka:tha** - ears blocked

**Teiakonia'token** - obstruction in throat

Depending on where you are at.  
Either in a grief stage or the healing stage.  
At some point we can heal.

*Wampum belt interpretation offered by Glenn  
'Tehahentakwa' Hill "He cuts medicine/fields" (Mohawk Nation)*

The Residential School or Children's Remembrance Belt is a modern design created by Rich Hamell in collaboration with native leaders and educators at the Seneca Art & Culture Center in Victor New York (Onöndowa'ga:' (Seneca) Territory) to commemorate the lasting trauma of the residential school system on American Indian peoples. The color orange was chosen in association with Orange Shirt Day, an annual day of activism in the U.S. and Canada established in 2013 by Phyllis Webstad a residential school survivor. At six years old, on her first day of school, Phyllis' clothing, including an orange shirt gifted to her by her grandmother, was taken from her. The six purple beads in the belt are relics. Hand carved from quahog shells and dating back to the 17th century. These six beads may represent the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy or the council fire of home.

Hundreds of thousands of Indigenous children were taken from their families and forced into the Indian Boarding School system across both the U.S. and Canada starting in the 1880's. The founding motto of these schools was to "kill the Indian, save the Man." Children were taken when they were as young as three years old, and not permitted to return home or interact with their family until they turned 18. Effectively destroying their connections to their community, cultural practices, and language. Survivors of these schools share stories of rampant physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. In 2021, mass unmarked graves, including the remains of over 6,500 children, have been unearthed on the former school grounds.

The last of these schools closed in 1994.