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NEWS

What is the story behind Pink Shirt Day in Canada? Here's how you can take part on Feb. 28

The annual anti-bullying event sees people come together and wear a pink shirt to school or work as a symbol of their stance against bullying.



By **Iain Colpitts** Online Editor Insidehaltoncom

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Pink Shirt Day is on Feb. 28.

Clifford Skarstedt/Peterborough Examiner

Did you know Feb. 28 is Pink Shirt Day across Canada? The annual occasion sees people come together and wear a pink shirt to school or work as a symbol of their stance against bullying.

The theme of this year's campaign is Lift Each Other up, focusing on more acceptance and awareness of those that have been impacted by bullying.

Here's what you should know about Pink Shirt Day and about bullying.

How did Pink Shirt Day begin?

After a new student at a Berwick, Nova Scotia school was bullied for wearing a pink shirt in 2007, Grade 12 students David Shepherd and Travis Price bought 50 pink shirts and encouraged their classmates to wear them.

In recognition of this act of kindness, Nova Scotia proclaimed the second Thursday of September Stand Up Against Bullying Day.

It spurned other similar proclamations, such as provincial Anti-Bullying Day in B.C. on Feb. 27 (declared in 2008) and May 4 as United Nations Anti-Bullying Day (declared by the United Nations in 2012.)

Now, the last Wednesday each February is Canada's national Pink Shirt/anti-bullying day.

Many countries now recognize specific days for raising awareness about the prevention of bullying and promoting kindness and inclusion.

How you can celebrate Pink Shirt Day

In addition to encouraging students to wear a pink shirt, schools can sign up to view the Pink Shirt Day Canada national broadcast, a 40-minute show with several time slots for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Staged by the WITS Program Foundation, this year's show will be hosted by Maya Kara and WITSup the walrus and feature special guests, including hip hop dance duo and 2022 America's Got Talent semifinalists Funkanometry, Canadian Olympic gold medalist swimmer Maggie Mac Neil and Seabacola Beaton, co-author of graphic novel Andy's Tribal Canoe Journey.

It may not come to you in time for this Pink Shirt Day, but you can also support the cause by ordering WITS' 2024 pink shirt, featuring artwork designed by Brooke Gillam from Oromocto First Nation in New Brunswick.

What is bullying?

According to Public Safety Canada, bullying is defined as acts of intentional harm repeated over time in a relationship where an imbalance of power exists. This can take various forms, including physical, verbal and cyber (online bullying).

According to Statistics Canada's 2019 Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth (CHSCY), the majority of Canadian youth aged 12 to 17 (71 per cent) reported experiencing at least one form of bullying through the year.

What is cyberbullying?

Kidshealth.org defines Cyberbullying as the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass or target another person.

This can be in the form of online threats and mean, aggressive or rude texts, social media posts or messages or posting personal information, photos or videos that can hurt or embarrass someone else.

Jasmine Daya, a personal injury lawyer in Toronto, said cyberbullying has manifested into something far worse than bullying because you don't have to be in the same physical space as someone to be a victim.

"You could be halfway across the world and if there's something said about you online, it follows you regardless of where you go," she said.

"In significant cases before, a person might just change schools and escape the attacks, but now things move at lightning speed."

Is bullying illegal?

According to the Criminal Code of Canada, there is no specific provision in the Criminal Code for bullying or cyberbullying.

However, a number of Criminal Code offences may apply to instances of bullying or cyberbullying, depending on the nature of the activity involved.

These offences include criminal harassment (section 264), uttering threats (section 264.1), intimidation (subsection 423(1)), mischief in relation to data (subsection 430(1.1)), unauthorized use of computer (section 342.1), identity fraud (section 403), extortion (section 346), false messages, indecent or harassing telephone calls (section 372), counselling suicide (section 241), defamatory libel (sections 298-301), incitement of hatred (section 319) and child pornography offences (section 163.1).

Daya adds that if a school or workplace is made aware of bullying occurring on its property or using its wifi, it has an obligation to resolve the issue and take steps to remedy the issue to the best of its ability.

"If they ignore the issue or don't take steps to remedy the issue, they can most certainly be liable from a civil perspective," she said.

Some resources if you or someone you know is being bullied

[Public Safety Canada](#)

[Kids Help Phone - 1-800-668-6868](#)

[Canadian Centre for Child Protection](#)

[Canadian Red Cross](#)

[RCMP Centre for Youth Crime Prevention](#)

Some anti-bullying charities you can donate to

[WITS Program Foundation](#)

[CKNW Kids' Fund](#)

Bullying Canada

No Time For That

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- With files from the Toronto Star



Iain Colpitts is the online editor for thepeterboroughexaminer.com and northumberlandnews.com.

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