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Salam Noor, Ph.D.
Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Dear Colleagues,

With graduation day approaching, I wanted to take this opportunity to discuss a topic of great interest to many of our Native American students and their families – the wearing of items of cultural significance such as eagle feathers, beaded caps, and stoles during graduation ceremonies.

High school graduation is a time of great excitement for students, families, and our communities as a whole. As we celebrate with our communities and pay tribute to the hard work and achievements of our students, I encourage you to put policies in place that facilitate ceremonies that are culturally inclusive and reflect and honor the diversity of our students and families.

At the Oregon Department of Education, we are committed to fostering unique government-to-government relationships with our federally recognized tribes. We have heard from our partners in the tribes and our other native students and families how meaningful it is for Native students to be allowed to wear cultural items during graduation ceremonies as a means of honoring their tribe, their community and their heritage.

We encourage you to examine your local policies and explore ways for students to honor their heritage, this includes allowing for non-disruptive expressions of Native American culture at commencement ceremonies. We fully support policies allowing students to outwardly wear items that honor their unique cultures.

These items could include, but are not limited to, eagle feathers, beads, stoles, and tribal insignias. As you review your policies, you may wish to meet with tribal leaders from your area to gain a better understanding of local needs and thoughts pertaining to graduation ceremonies.

Thank you for all you do to support educational equity in our state and to create a school environment that is culturally honoring and inclusive of our diverse students and communities.

Sincerely,

Salam A. Noor, Ph.D.
Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction

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