

# **Oregon Department of Human Services Office of Tribal Affairs 2024 Orange Shirt Day Press Kit**

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## **Orange Shirt Day Press Kit 2024**

**\*\*Embracing Tribal Culture and Diversity on Orange Shirt Day\*\***

Orange Shirt Day serves as both a remembrance and a celebration of resilience, taking place annually on September 30. This significant day honors the Indigenous children of Canada who endured the harrowing experiences of residential schools, where they were pressured to abandon their rich cultural identities in favor of assimilation into the dominant Canadian society. This year, the Oregon Department of Human Services Office of Tribal Affairs, along with the We Are Here Oregon Natives Employees (WAHONE) Resource Group, invite you to join in honoring Orange Shirt Day on Monday, September 30, 2024.

American Indian and Alaska Native communities stand in solidarity on this day, acknowledging that many tribal families faced the devastating impacts of the residential boarding school system, often referred to as the “Indian Boarding School System” in the United States. Each story, each experience, is woven into the intricate tapestry of Tribal culture—a culture that thrives on diversity, resilience, and the indomitable spirit of its people.

According to the U.S. Department of the Interior, from 1819 to 1969, over 400 Indian boarding schools operated across 37 states, leaving an indelible mark on numerous Indigenous communities. In New Mexico alone, more than 40 boarding schools echoed stories of displacement, echoing the history of schools established in neighboring states, including Oregon and Washington. Notably, among these institutions is Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon, which stands as the oldest continuously operated off-reservation boarding school in the United States, dedicated today to nurturing the diverse legacies of American Indian and Alaska Native students.

The federal Indian boarding school system employed harsh and systematic methods aimed at erasing the identities of Native children. They were stripped of their names, their languages, and their cultural practices—a stark reminder of a painful past. Yet, within these stories lies the inspirational strength of Tribal communities, who continue to celebrate and honor their rich traditions and vibrant cultures.

Orange Shirt Day opens the door to crucial conversations about the impacts of the residential/Indian boarding school system, creating a platform for meaningful dialogue around the legacy that persists today. This day is not only about remembering but also about uplifting survivors and affirming their stories and experiences. Every Child Matters—a mantra that resonates profoundly, reminding us that the journey toward healing includes every individual, no matter their age.

On this day, let us stand together in solidarity, honoring the diversity that enriches our world and forging connections built on understanding and respect. It is a call to support survivors and to actively combat all forms of racism, including systemic injustice and bullying. Together, we can cultivate a society that cherishes the beauty of Tribal culture and diversity, ensuring that our collective past paves the way for a brighter, more inclusive future.

## **\*\*Join Us in a Powerful Stand for Change!\*\***

On September 30, 2024, we invite you to wear Orange in a unifying act of solidarity, inspired by the support of the Oregon Dept. of Human Services Office of Tribal Affairs and the WAHONE (We Are Here Oregon Native Employees) Resource Group. Together, we can honor the resilience and strength of American Indians, Alaska Natives, First Nations, and Native Hawaiians affected by Residential Indian Boarding Schools.

Here's how you can inspire others and be part of this meaningful movement:

### **Adorn your digital space**

Use the ODHS Orange Shirt Day Teams/Zoom Background (right click and save image below).



### ODHS ORANGE SHIRT DAY SEPTEMBER 30, 2024



### Share the message

Post a picture of yourself proudly wearing Orange on Facebook, LinkedIn, and/or Twitter!  
Remember to tag ODHS:

- Facebook: [ORHumanServices](<https://www.facebook.com/ORHumanServices>)
- Facebook: [ODHSEspanol](<https://www.facebook.com/ODHSEspanol>)
- LinkedIn: [orhumanservices](<https://www.linkedin.com/company/orhumanservices>)
- Twitter: [@ORHumanServices](<https://twitter.com/ORHumanServices>)

Use our hashtags to amplify your voice: #ODHSOrangeShirtDay #OregonOrangeShirtDay #EveryChildMatters

### Include a heartfelt caption

Choose one of the prompts below to express your commitment to this cause:

- *"Today I wear Orange in solidarity with First Nations, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians affected by Residential Indian Boarding Schools."*
- *"I am wearing Orange to honor [name of person, name of family, name of tribe] who was affected by the Residential Indian Boarding School System."*
- *"I am wearing Orange in solidarity with the impacts of Residential Indian Boarding Schools on the Nine Tribes of Oregon."*
- *"Today I learned [share information you found about residential boarding schools] and I proudly wear Orange to honor families impacted by these schools in Oregon and across the U.S. and Canada."*

### Join the Photo Campaign

Send your post and photograph to our Tribal Affairs Communication Specialist, Tony Aaron Fuller, at [tony-aaron.fuller@odhs.oregon.gov](mailto:tony-aaron.fuller@odhs.oregon.gov) to be featured in a photo campaign within our internal ODHS partners.

YOUR voice matters! Together, let us stand in solidarity and make an impact. Let's wear our Orange with pride, showing that Every Child Matters.

**#ODHSOrangeShirtDay #OregonOrangeShirtDay #EveryChildMatters**

## Support Local Klamath Tribal Artist with Orange Shirt!

Shuína Skó (meaning "Singing Spring" in the ewksiknii language) is a creative and passionate poet who prioritizes their Indigenous culture as a way to honor their ancestors, community, and the next seven generations to come.

They are one of the most sought-after Indigenous spoken word poets in Turtle Island (North America) and have performed spoken word poetry, given keynote speeches, and provided workshops throughout the United States and Canada.

Shuína's passion is rooted in a desire to empower Indigenous



people, create avenues for positive societal change, and share the vibrancy of their culture through storytelling.

After completing a Bachelor of Science in Applied Psychology, Shuína Skó went on to gain over 10 years of professional experience providing direct mental/behavioral health services to children and families within marginalized communities.

This involves working closely with Tribal and State Child Welfare agencies regarding the Indian Child Welfare Act

(ICWA).

To purchase the Shuína's original 2024 Every Child Matters are, visit the following links:

Every Child Matters:

<https://www.redbubble.com/shop/ap/164508765>

Orange Shirt Day Hummingbird:

<https://www.redbubble.com/shop/ap/164508900>





## Press Release Template

Date: xx/xx/2024

Contact: [AGENCY PRESS CONTACT HERE]

### **Support a National Call to Action for Truth and Reconciliation on the impacts of Indian Boarding Schools by wearing an orange shirt on Sept. 30**

(Salem) – Orange Shirt Day on Sept. 30, 2024 is a day for truth and reconciliation on the impacts of the Indian Boarding School system. It opens the door for a global conversation about all aspects of the Indian boarding school system and how it forced Indigenous populations to lose their cultural identities through policies of forced assimilation. It is an opportunity to create meaningful discussion about the effects of these schools and the legacy they have left behind.

Staff at the [INSERT STATE AGENCY] will be wearing orange to honor the survivors and victims of the federal Indian boarding school system.

[INSERT STATE AGENCY] commitment to dismantling all forms of systemic racism is led by reconciliation and collaboration with all Tribal communities within Oregon and is strengthened by our Equity North Star, which is our agency wide vision that leads to a more equitable Oregon for all.

“Orange Shirt Day represents an Indigenous movement throughout the United States and Canada,” said Sherril Kuhns, ODHS Office of Tribal Affairs Interim Director. “Orange Shirt Day is a call to action, but more importantly is an opportunity to honor the lives that were lost and those who survived this atrocity.”

[INSERT QUOTE OF SUPPORT FROM STATE AGENCY LEADERSHIP HERE.]

*Example: “We will be wearing orange to honor the survivors and victims of the Indian Boarding School system and to recognize the trauma it caused for generations of Tribal families and children,” said Aprille Flint-Gerner, ODHS Child Welfare Director. “In Oregon our Child Welfare Division’s Vision for Transformation commits us to doing the work of dismantling racism that creates disparate outcomes for Tribal children and families. Our commitment is to repair, improve and move forward in partnership with the Nine Tribes of Oregon.”*

According to the U.S. Department of the Interior’s 2022 investigation report, between 1819 and 1969, the federal Indian boarding school system operated more than 400 schools across 37 states or then-territories. During this time thousands of Indigenous children were separated from their families and placed in the school system, many did not survive. The investigation identified marked and unmarked burial sites at approximately 53 different schools across the school system.

The federal Indian boarding school system deployed systematic militarized and identity- alteration methodologies in an attempt to assimilate American Indian and Alaska Native children through education, including but not limited to renaming Tribal children English names; cutting the hair of

Tribal children; discouraging or preventing the use of Tribal languages, religions and cultural practices; and organizing children into units to perform military drills.

As early as 1874, a boarding school was built at Warm Springs in Oregon, and others were later constructed at Siletz, Grand Ronde, Klamath, and Umatilla.

Today, Chemawa Indian School, located in Salem, Oregon is an accredited high school that serves American Indian and Alaska Native students. Chemawa is the oldest continuously operated off-reservation boarding school in the United States.

About [INSERT YOUR AGENCY HERE]

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## Message from We Are Here Oregon Natives Employees (WAHONE) Resource Group

The We Are Here Oregon Natives Employee (WAHONE) Resource Group has a vision where ODHS respects and honors our traditional values of the Native communities that exist in our state today. We are committed to strengthening and enhancing Tribal community relationships and cultural knowledge.

We would like to call your attention to upcoming observances that fulfill that vision. Later this month is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, also known as Orange Shirt Day. This international movement recognizes Tribal children and families who were impacted by the Federal Indian Boarding School policies of the last century. Due to the use of technology, such as ground penetrating radars, many unmarked graves of Tribal children have been confirmed. Even in Oregon, at the federally ran Chemewa Indian Boarding School, families and activists are still finding unmarked graves. The boarding school campaign endorsed by humanitarians of their days was “kill the Indian, save the man.” The forced assimilation created harm that the government or church officials would not admit until decades later. This lack of acknowledgment has been going on for over a hundred years even though many of our relatives shared these experiences and stories of great loss. Some Tribal families never saw their stolen children ever again and some of those children, didn’t know they were stolen until later into their adult lives.



Even with the bodies being recovered and finally returned to rest in our communities, people have denied these events. As these bodies are being recovered from the grounds of former boarding school sites, we acknowledge that these Tribal children were placed far away from their community, family, and traditional land. It is a stark reminder of the horrific events the government and religious institutions enacted against our communities.

Orange Shirt Day is Monday September 30, 2024, WAHONE would like you to stand united with us and wear orange shirts. It is our way of honoring survivors of cultural genocide. Our hope is to see a government agency that serves Tribal children and families, recognize these events and honor the survivors. Yet, we cannot forget the role we played then and the one we play now in the process of assimilation.

The story of the orange shirt comes from a student who was forced to attend a boarding school. On the student’s first day, she wore an orange shirt as a symbol of pride because it was gifted by a relative specifically for her first day of school. At boarding school the shirt was forcibly removed, and she never saw it again.



As we grow our understanding of the impacts our combined histories and change our practice to respect all humans, we must understand how the replacement of cultural practices have damaged relationships both inside and outside of the communities we serve. We are hopeful that our agency will begin to recognize their own accountability as we build collaborations to support and restore what we have damaged. This is why you will see WAhONE members wearing orange on Monday September 30, 2024.

This international movement has multiple names. Orange Shirt Day, National Day of Truth & Reconciliation, or National Day of Truth and Healing are just a few. But no

matter the name, the intention is the same. We seek to acknowledge the true stories of our relatives and create a path to healing.

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