

Oregon Department of Human Services Office of Tribal Affairs

2023 Orange Shirt Day Press Kit

- **Background on Orange Shirt Day**
- **Call to Action**
- **Teams/Zoom Background**
- **Press Release Template**
- **Message from We Are Here
Oregon Native Employees
(WAHONE) Resource Group**

For more resources visit [ODHS Office of Tribal Affairs Webpage](#)

Orange Shirt Day Press Kit 2023

Background:

Orange Shirt Day is celebrated annually on September 30 in honor of the indigenous Canadian children who were sent to residential schools and forced to assimilate into the dominant Canadian culture. This year the Oregon Department of Human Services Office of Tribal Affairs and the We Are Here Oregon Native Employees (WAHONE) Resource Group invite you to honor Orange Shirt Day on Friday September 29, 2023. American Indian and Alaska Native communities have honored Orange Shirt Day in solidarity as many of tribal families were subject to the same residential boarding school system that was referred to as the “Indian Boarding School System” in the United States.

According to the U.S. Department of the Interior’s 2022 report, between 1819 and 1969, the federal Indian boarding school system operated more than 400 schools across 37 states or then-territories, including in Alaska and Hawaii. More than 40 of these boarding schools were in New Mexico – the third highest in the United States, behind Oklahoma and Arizona. As early as 1859-1860, boarding schools were established on reservations in Washington and Oregon, the first at Fort Simcoe on the Yakama Reservation in Washington. In 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.

The federal Indian boarding school system deployed systematic militarized and identity-alteration methodologies in an attempt to assimilate American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children through education, including but not limited to renaming Indian children from Indian to English names; cutting the hair of Indian children; discouraging or preventing the use of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages, religions and cultural practices; and organizing Indian and Native Hawaiian children into units to perform military drills.

The annual Orange Shirt Day opens the door to global conversation on all aspects of the Residential/Indian Boarding School system. It is an opportunity to create meaningful discussion about the effects of these schools and the legacy they have left behind. A day for survivors to be reaffirmed that they matter, and so do those that have been affected. Every Child Matters, even if they are an adult, from now on. This day reminds us to support the survivors and stand against all forms of racism, including systemic racism, and bullying in our societies.

Call to Action:

With support from the Oregon Dept. of Human Services Tribal Affairs Unit and the WAHONE (We Are Here Oregon Native Employees) Resource Group, we are asking you to wear Orange on September 29, 2023.

We ask that you participate in our Orange Shirt Activities by doing one or all of the following things:

- Use the ODHS Orange Shirt Day [Teams/Zoom Background HERE](#)

- Post a picture of you wearing Orange on Facebook, LinkedIn, and/or Twitter
 - Please tag ODHS
 - Facebook: ORHumanServices
 - Facebook: ODHSEspanol
 - LinkedIn: orhumanservices
 - Twitter: @ORHumanServices
 - Use the Hashtags **#ODHSOrangeShirtDay #OregonOrangeShirtDay #EveryChildMatters**
 - Use one of the prompted statement in your caption:
 - *Today I wear Orange in solidarity of First Nations, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians affected by Residential Indian Boarding Schools.*
 - *I am wearing Orange because I am honoring (name of person, name of family, name of tribe) that was affected by the Residential Indian Boarding School System*
 - *I am wearing Orange in solidarity of the impacts of Residential Indian Boarding Schools on the Nine Tribes of Oregon*
 - *Today I learned (share information you found about [residential boarding schools here](#)) and I am wearing Orange to honors families impacted by Residential Indian Boarding Schools in Oregon and throughout the U.S. and Canada.*
- Send your post and photograph to Tribal Affairs Communication specialist Tony Aaron Fuller at tony-aaron.fuller@odhs.oregon.gov to be part of a photo campaign within internal ODHS partners

Hashtags:

#ODHSOrangeShirtDay #OregonOrangeShirtDay #EveryChildMatters

Sample Posts (Modify to personalize them based on your own experience) :

Today I wear Orange for #ODHSOrangeShirtDay in solidarity of First Nations, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians affected by Residential Indian Boarding Schools. #EveryChildMatters #OregonOrangeShirtDay

I am wearing Orange in solidarity of the impacts of Residential Indian Boarding Schools on the Nine Tribes of Oregon #ODHSOrangeShirtDay #OregonOrangeShirtDay #EveryChildMatters

News Release

Date: xx/xx/2023

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, 2023 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.

The annual ODHS Tribal-State ICWA Conference, will be held in Grande Ronde from Sept. 27-29, 2023. The conference focuses on training and education related to ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act) and ORICWA (Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act). Conference attendees are encouraged to wear orange on Sept. 29, the final day of the conference.

“Orange Shirt Day represents an Indigenous movement throughout the United States and Canada,” said Adam Becenti, ODHS Office of Tribal Affairs 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.”

to reconciliation, healing and government-to-government collaboration when working with Oregon Tribes to support the needs of Tribal children and their families.”

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]

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 September 30, 2023, WAHONE would like you to stand united with us on Friday September 29, 2023 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 Friday September 29, 2023

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.

There are many resources that we hope you can review this month should any curiosity come out of our communications. Here is a start to that list:

Please add what you can here...

<https://www.cbc.ca/books/new-picture-book-by-orange-shirt-day-creator-phyllis-webstad-to-explore-meaning-of-every-child-matters-1.6882158>

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/every-child-matters-september-30-orange-shirt-day>

<https://redi.med.ubc.ca/we-are-children-of-indian-residential-school-survivors-awakening-our-spirits-our-purpose-our-confidence/?login>

<https://orangeshirtday.org/reconciliation-hub/resources/>

<https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/teach/kill-indian-him-and-save-man-r-h-pratt-education-native-americans>

https://www.amazon.com/Boarding-School-Seasons-American-1900-1940/dp/0803264054/ref=mp_s_a_1_1?crid=2HWTCFM4UJJVP&keywords=boarding+school+seasons+board+child&qid=1681418716&prefix=boarding+school+seaso%2Caps%2C198&sr=8-1

<https://www.amazon.com/Middle-Five-Indian-Schoolboys-Omaha/dp/0803279019>

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/search-for-childrens-remains-resumes-at-former-native-american-boarding-school-in-nebraska>