

This event was put on in a collaboration with: The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians including the CARE program and the Head Start program; Siletz Regalia Sharing Closet; Lincoln County School District, including Tribal Attendance Promising Practices; and the Siletz Valley School.

The Pow-Wow was led by Siletz Tribal Member youth, featuring Sahaylee Mason as head teen dancer; Naiya Mason as head girl dancer; Mac Jay head teen boy dancer; Jett Orona as head boy dancer; Tenaya Cordova as whipwoman in training; and lastly Isaiah Brandt as whipman in training. These hard earned and honorable positions reflect the dedication to culture and tribe.

Grand entries, youth dance specials and traditional activities highlighted the resilience of native communities. A nutritious lunch was provided by the Siletz Valley School culinary program. Orange shirts were distributed and worn proudly by all, symbolizing the strength of native children and the community's commitment to honoring their stories.

Orange Shirt Day, observed annually around the world, on Sept. 30. This annual recognition originated from the story of Phyllis Webstad. On that day in 1973, at six years old, Webstad was sent to a nearby residential school. Before leaving, Webstad's grandmother who was her primary caretaker, took her shopping for new clothes. Webstad chose an orange shirt for her first day at school.

Upon arrival, school authorities stripped Webstad of all her clothes, including the new orange shirt, which was never returned.

This experience would later become the inspiration for Orange Shirt Day. Today, the day serves as a broader recognition of the deep rooted trauma caused by boarding schools on the Indigenous population.

Beginning in 1800's through the 1970's, more than 400 federal Indian boarding schools operated in

the United States alone. This number does not include the many Canadian run institutions.

These institutions primarily operated through assimilation, using religious indoctrination, force and abuse. Many native children never returned home, and the effects of these policies continue to reverberate through their communities.

Traditional events like the pow-wow and honor walk, are part of an ever growing movement to acknowledge historical injustices and promote healing. National efforts, such as the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, aim to document survivor stories and support community led healing initiatives.

Locally, the Siletz Tribe's commitment to youth engagement, cultural education and community wellness reflects a hopeful future. As orange shirts and handmade posters filled the streets of Siletz, the message was clear, Every Child Matters.

The National Day of Truth and Reconciliation commemorates the hundreds of thousands, of Native American children who attended Indian Residential Schools in America, and the thousands who died under their care. While it's difficult to know the exact amount of children who passed as a result of poor record keeping, officials continue to find unnamed and unmarked graves today.

The slogan "Every Child Matters" is a call to end the oppression of native people and to normalize conversations about the traumas they endured.

The Siletz tribal CARE program is dedicated to helping victims of trauma, domestic violence, sexual abuse and assault. CARE staff member Rachelle Endres said, "We want our children to know we will not stay silent," She encourages continued advocacy in our youth saying, "We must speak up so that we can heal and not continue the generational trauma and abuse our people have endured."



Photo by Andy Taylor

Top: Siletz Head Start students waiting for the Every Child Matters March to begin

Middle: Daniel Valdes-Chavarria keeping the smudge ready while Rachelle Endres and Nahayla Cordova share a hug. Lena Cordova and Aurora Chulik-Ruff are patiently waiting

Bottom: Sophia Somes and Tehya Seltenreich dance together at the Pow-Wow



Courtesy photo

Siletz education and culture staff, attended the Every Child Matters March.

Left-to-right: Kelly Lane, Alissa Lane, Peter Hatch, Buddy Lane, Jeff Sweet, Rick Bayya and Tony Blomstrom

