

Presentation to the House Committee on Early Childhood
and Human Services

Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act (ORICWA) implementation update

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Agenda

- I. Background
- II. ORICWA Implementation
- III. Looking ahead
- IV. Questions

Centering wellness for specific needs of tribal families and communities

“I just wanted to take a moment to say Hayu Masi (Many Thanks) for your willingness to go out on our mutual assessment when CPS worker was unavailable. We are grateful that we could collaborate and not have to do 2 different assessments, so much easier for the youth in this case.

I also wanted to send our appreciation on being able to provide supports/resource immediately. We know that every assessment is different, with different needs, however just wanted to make sure you knew that we appreciated your efforts yesterday!! Thank you”

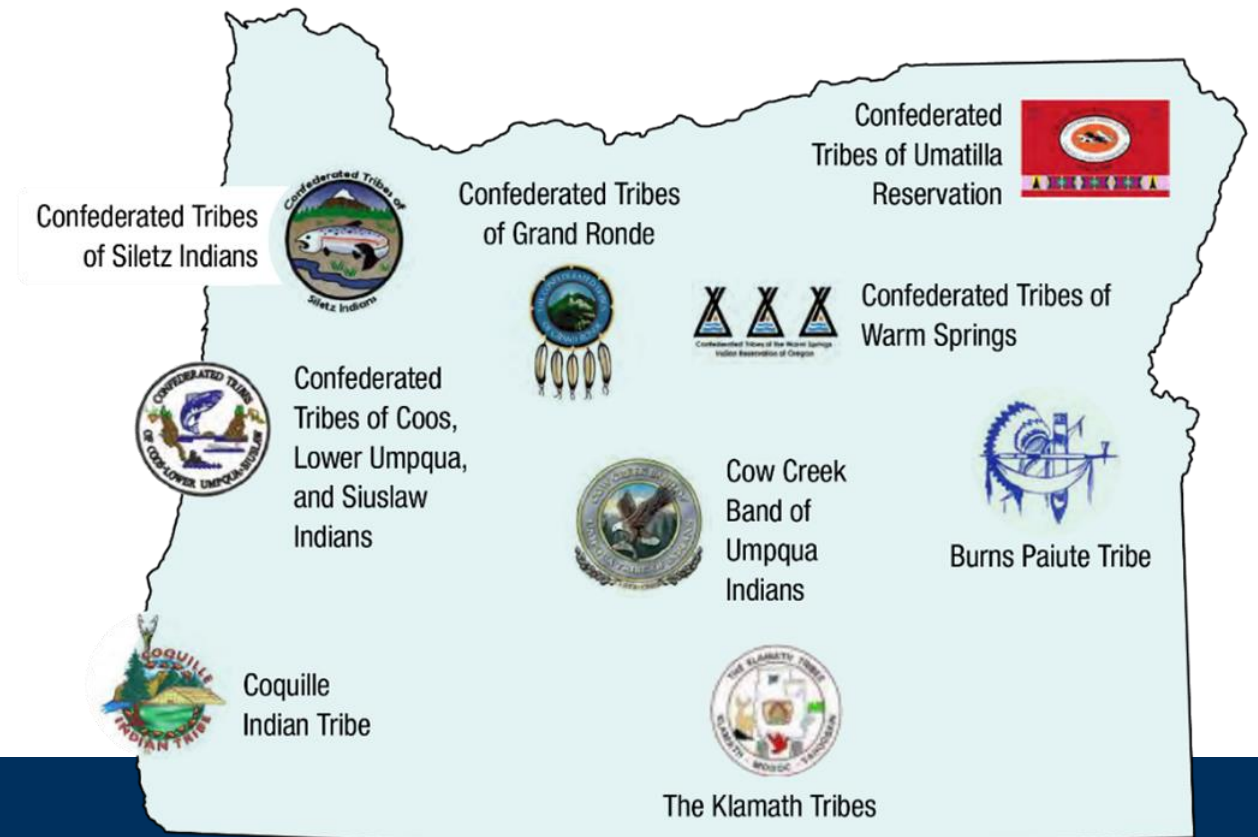
From a Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde representative.

Government-to-government relationship

ODHS is committed to:

- Honoring and upholding Tribal sovereignty
- Tribal consultation and co-creation with Tribes of initiatives, programs and services
- Aligning services to existing Tribal frameworks and activities
- Implementation of the Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act

Oregon's Nine Federally Recognized Tribes



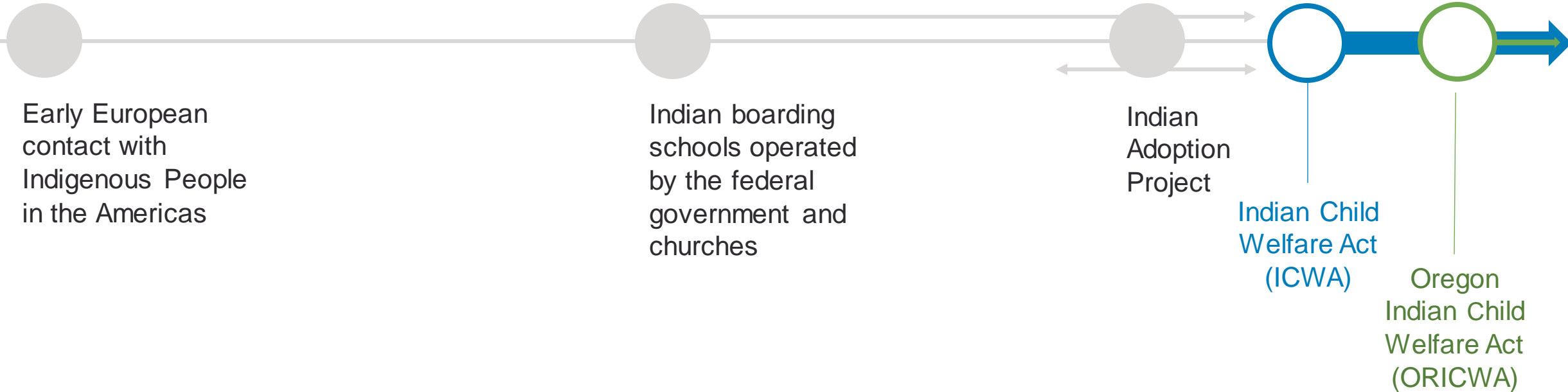
Strengthening ICWA

“When ORICWA was developed the intention was to respond to national attacks on ICWA and to strengthen relationships with the Nine Tribes of Oregon. Since then, we’ve seen greater support for ICWA nationally/statewide and growth with our relationship with Tribes.”

Adam Becenti, Tribal Affairs Director

Why ICWA/ORICWA?

Long history of actively separating Native American families



ORICWA builds on ICWA

The child's **political, cultural, social and spiritual** relationship to their Tribe must be considered in court's best-interests analysis.

Expanded **recognition of fathers**

Additional requirements around who can be a **qualified expert witness**

Provides in-depth direction related to **placement preferences**

Clarifies **active efforts** standard for keeping families together or reuniting them following a child's removal



Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act

Tribal children in Oregon continue to be removed from their homes at rates higher than non-Tribal children.

Despite the requirements under ICWA, its application in Oregon has been inconsistent.

ORICWA was written in response. It ensures that **judges, attorneys and Child Welfare workers apply ICWA to systems and practices within our state.**



ORICWA goals

Data

Tracking, measuring, learning about and reporting on ORICWA impacts

Improvement

Realizing and sustaining Child Welfare practice shifts that help tribal families thrive

Culture and equity

Preserving cultural connections among tribal children and families, strengthening active efforts to promote the stability of Tribal children and decreasing disproportionality of tribal children and families in the Child Welfare system



Spirit

Embodying the spirit of ICWA in practice, policy, relationship, and purpose

Workforce Development

Establishing consistent practice and application of ORICWA and recruiting ICWA champions

Relationships

Increasing and enhancing parent engagement and strengthening Oregon Tribal Partnerships through direct involvement with ORICWA implementation

Percent of victims of abuse remains steady

Month/Year	Total Children	% Children Identified as American Indian or Alaska Native
September 2020	9,845	4.47% were American Indian or Alaska Native
September 2021	9,494	4.59% were American Indian or Alaska Native
September 2022	7,312	3.84% were American Indian or Alaska Native
September 2023	7,026	3.94% were American Indian or Alaska Native

Of the children *identified by CPS workers as victims of abuse*, data did not show a marked change in the number of American Indian or Alaska Native children identified between January and September of 2023.

Decline in children who entered foster care

Month/Year	Total Children	% Children Identified as American Indian or Alaska Native
September 2020	2,683	5.93% were American Indian or Alaska Native
September 2021	2,282	5.35% were American Indian or Alaska Native
September 2022	2,097	4.77% were American Indian or Alaska Native
September 2023	2,060	3.67% were American Indian or Alaska Native

Of the *children who entered foster care* between January and September 2023, Child Welfare continues to see a decline in the number of American Indian/Alaska Native children.

ORICWA Implementation

Some District Highlights



District 11 (Klamath/Lake)

- Reduction of nearly 30% of Native American/Alaskan Native children in the foster care system
- One-year anniversary of the Klamath Falls ICWA
- 5-year State-Tribal Partnership GRANT between OJD, ODHS, and The Klamath Tribes. The grant award is \$2,499,999.64



District 2 (Multnomah)

Tribal Family Coaches reach out to Tribal families after a hotline call is “closed at screening”



District 3 (Marion, Polk, Yamhill)

Created ICWA Implementation commitments for improved communication with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

Early identification of Indian children and ensure Tribal notification

87%

of screeners inquired about American Indian/Alaska Native membership or enrollment according to the ORCAH Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Unit's analysis of more than 1200 calls.



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Looking ahead

ORICWA Capacity Building Initiative Goals

- Prevent unwarranted removal of tribal children from their families and Tribal community
- Children who are removed maintain a connection with their tribe and culture
- Tribal involvement in the fate of their Tribal children
- Establish minimum standards integrate Tribal social and cultural practices/customs
- Uphold Tribal sovereignty
- Placement preferences
- New workforce development partnerships to enhance staff knowledge and skills



Questions?
