

Presented by the Arizona Office of Indian Education



Tribal Regalia Protocols: A Legal and Cultural Toolkit for Graduation Ceremonies

January 14, 2026





Office of Indian Education

**An office in the Division of School Improvement
within the Arizona Department of Education**

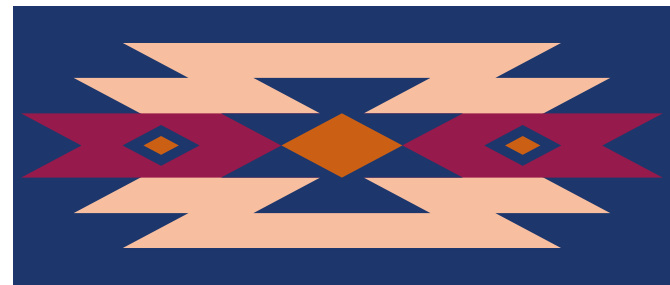
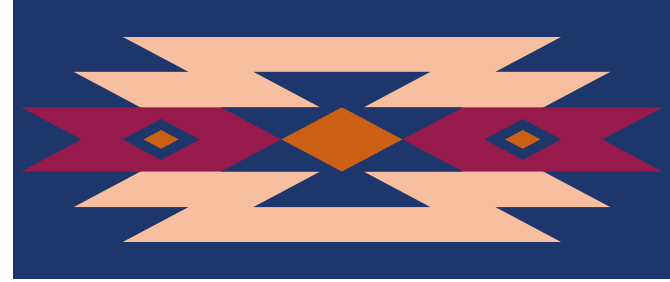
Partners with internal and external entities to provide resources and professional learning for Arizona Educators serving Native American students

Offers technical assistance in collaboration with all ADE units who interact with Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

Encourages and fosters parental involvement in the education of Native American students

Administers federal and state programs to meet the educational and cultural needs of Arizona Native American students

Arizona Revised Statute 15-244



ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES



A.R.S. 15-341 A. #33 General powers and duties; immunity; delegation

A.R.S. 15-710 Instruction in state and federal constitutions, American institutions and history of Arizona



A.R.S. 15-348 Dress code policies; traditional tribal regalia; objects of cultural significance; graduation ceremonies; definitions

FLOW OF THE HOUR

Understand why tribal regalia and objects of cultural significance are protected under A.R.S.15-348



Learn about the OIE Tribal Regalia Graduation Toolkits and their uses



Share examples of regalia and objects of cultural significance to inform decision making

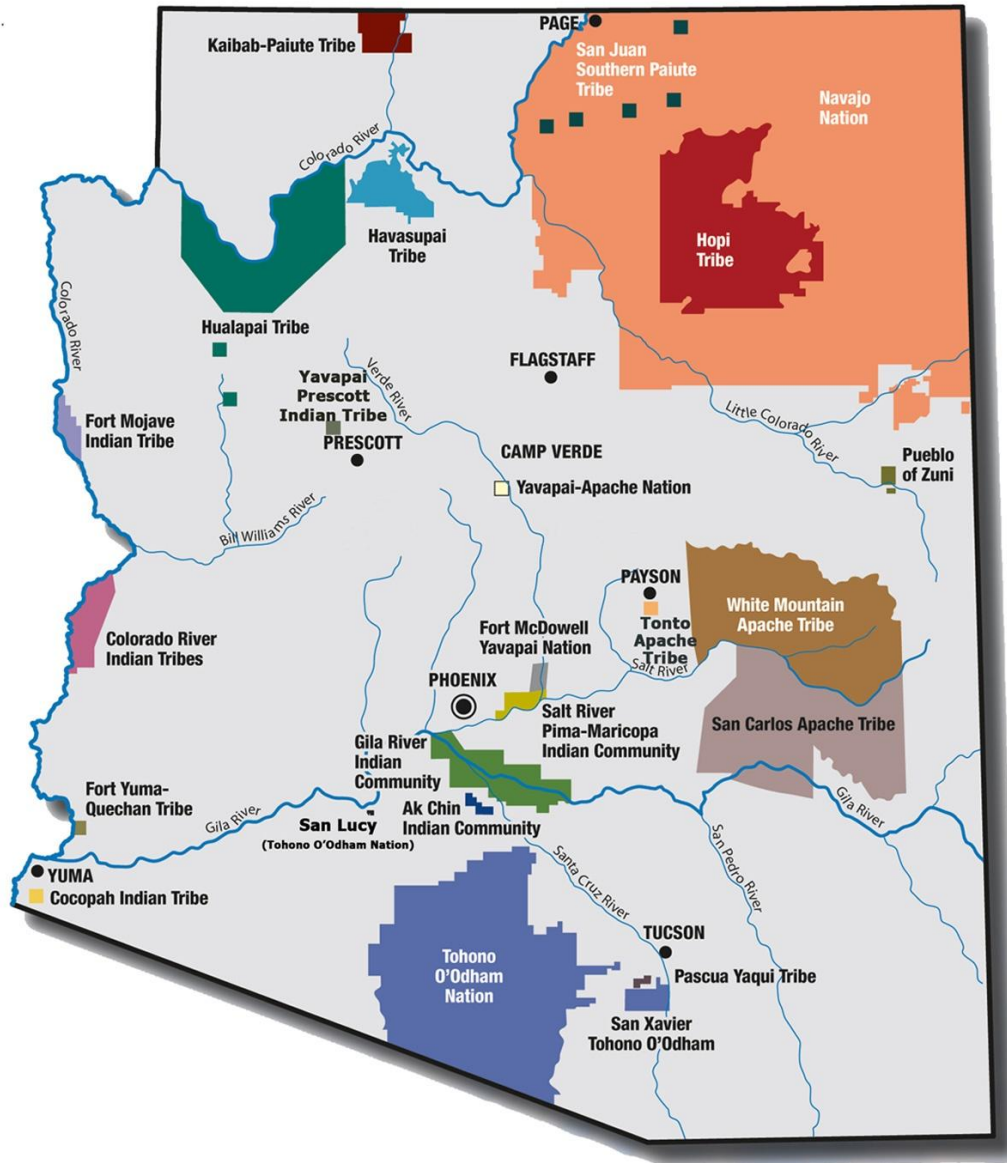


Explore graduation checklists and best practices that will support your ceremony, staff, and students



**Why are Native American
people specifically named in
Arizona education policy?**

22 Federally Recognized Tribes in AZ



1. Ak-Chin Indian Community
2. Cocopah Indian Tribe
3. Colorado River Indian Tribes
4. Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation
5. Fort Mojave Indian Tribe
6. Gila River Indian Community
7. Havasupai Tribe
8. Hopi Tribe
9. Hualapai Tribe
10. Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians
11. Navajo Nation
12. Pascua Yaqui Tribe
13. Pueblo of Zuni
14. Quechan Indian Tribe
15. Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
16. San Carlos Apache Tribe
17. San Juan Southern Paiute
18. Tohono O'odham Nation
19. Tonto Apache Tribe
20. White Mountain Apache Tribe
21. Yavapai-Apache Nation
22. Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe

Tribal Sovereignty

- The **inherent** authority of Indigenous tribal **nations** to govern themselves within the borders of the United States.
- Tribal sovereignty includes the **inherent** right to govern one's community, the ability to preserve one's culture, and the right to control one's own economy.
- Native peoples and governments have **inherent** rights and a **political relationship** with the US government that does not derive from race or ethnicity.

Source: *Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction*, National Congress of American Indians
Learn more at <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/professional-development/recorded-webinars>

Connections to Indian Education



As a component of the “**Trust Responsibility**” of the Federal Government

Federal Trust Responsibility and Education

“A long-standing political relationship between the United States and Tribal Nations, anchored in the U.S. Constitution, federal treaties, laws, statutes, and regulations, forms the bedrock of Trust Obligations. For generations, education has been explicitly recognized in treaties as a central pillar of the United States’ obligation to Tribal members/citizens. These treaties and other legal duties guarantee access to education and affirm the political status of Tribal Nations, ensuring that any program designed to benefit Tribal citizens aligns with these foundational promises.”

-ASU American Indian Policy Institute



National Indian Education ...

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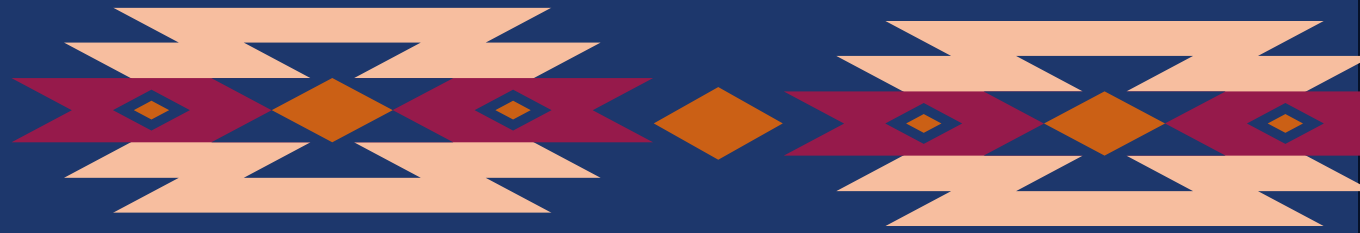
In response to NIEA's letter regarding Executive Order 14190, the U.S. Department of Education clarified that American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian histories are not classified as DEI or CRT, and that Native-serving education programs will continue.

NIEA appreciates the Department's response and the opportunity to meet with leadership. We look forward to continued engagement and to supporting the Department's efforts to visit and consult with Indian Country and Native Communities.

To read the full response, visit:

<https://www.niea.org/administration-updates>

[#NativeEducation](#) [#TribalConsultation](#)
[#FederalPolicyUpdate](#) [#NIEA](#)



National Indian Education Association Social Media Post

April 29, 2025





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

April 25, 2025

Mr. Jason Dropik
Executive Director
National Indian Education Association
1514 P Street NW, Suite B
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Dropik:

Thank you for your letter to former Acting Secretary Denise Carter on January 31, 2025, advocating for local control of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian education programs. Your letter was referred to the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and I am pleased to respond.

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) does not develop curriculum to ensuring curriculum remains a local decision. In fact, the Department's education decision-making being local by returning education to States. In the position of the Department that American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian history is not classified as diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) or critical race theory (CRT), and the Department will not treat Native history as DEI or CRT.

The United States has a unique political and legal relationship with Indian Tribes, as set forth in the Constitution of the United States. We continue to deliver on all statutory grant programs that support American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students and are identifying ways to deliver support while reducing bureaucratic red tape and ensuring parental rights remain a national priority.

Education will always be a local responsibility, and we look forward to visiting and consulting with Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and Native Hawaiian Organizations and their leadership to empower high-quality education for all students.

Sincerely,

Hayley B. Sanon
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
and Acting Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

www.ed.gov

400 MARYLAND AVE., SW, WASHINGTON, DC 20202

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

The United States has a unique political and legal relationship with federally recognized Indian Tribes, as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, treaties, executive orders, and court decisions. We continue to deliver on all statutory grant programs that support American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students and are identifying ways to deliver support while reducing bureaucratic red tape and ensuring parental rights remain a national priority.





Tribal Regalia and Items of Cultural Significance in Education Policy

Legal & Historical Context A.R.S. 15-348

House Bill H.B. 2705 (2021)

- Signed by Governor Ducey
April 20, 2021
- Passed and signed with an
emergency measure
- A.R.S. 15-348

Toolkit Origin Story

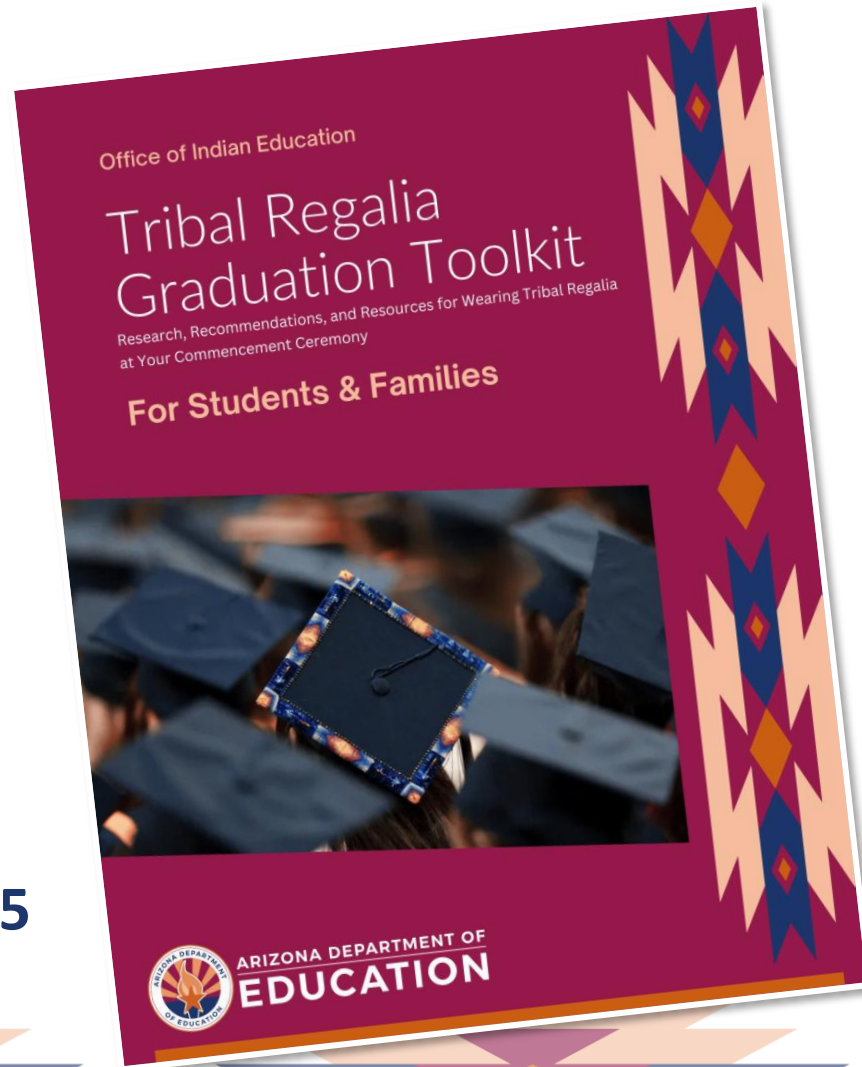
- Letter from Navajo Nation Council
May 22, 2024
- Response from Tome Horne,
Superintendent & Michelle Udall,
Associate Superintendent

15-348. Dress code policies; traditional tribal regalia; objects of cultural significance; graduation ceremonies; definitions

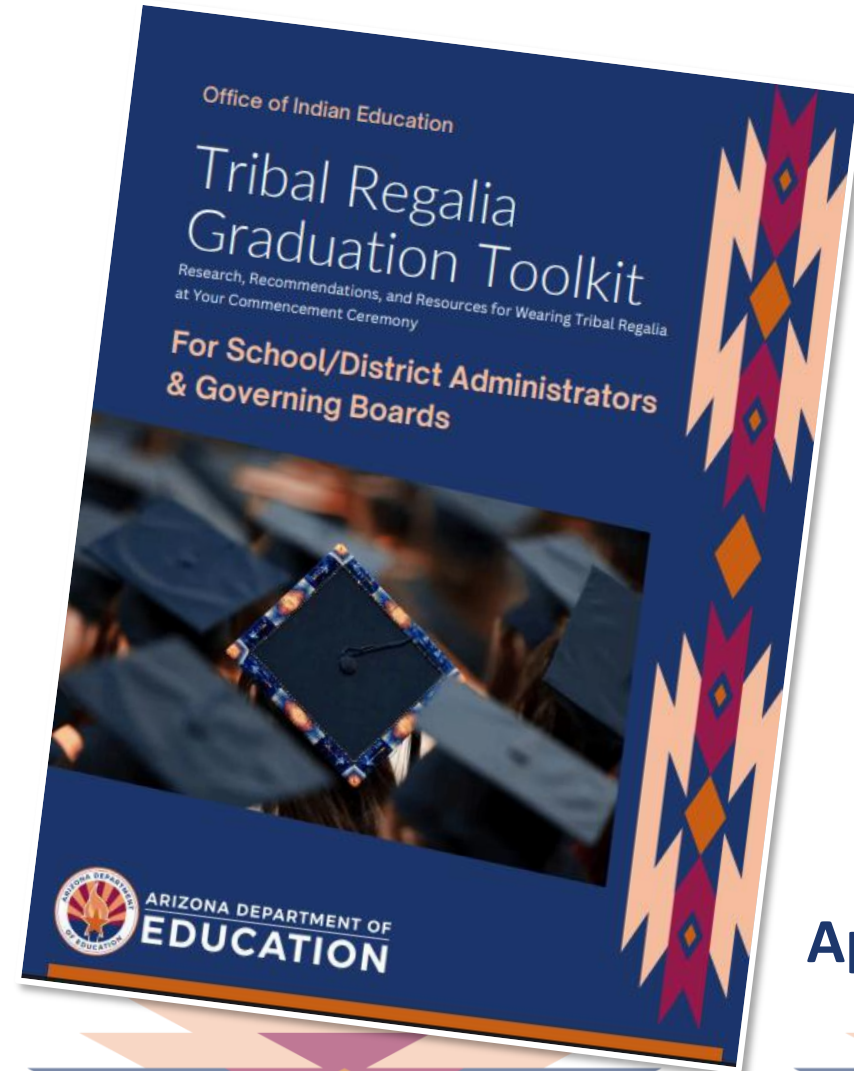
A. A school district governing board, a charter school governing body or any public school may not prohibit a student who is a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe or who is eligible to be enrolled as a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe from wearing traditional tribal regalia or objects of cultural significance at a graduation ceremony.

B. For the purposes of this section, "objects of cultural significance" and "traditional tribal regalia" include an eagle feather or eagle plume.

Arizona Tribal Regalia Graduation Toolkit



April 9, 2025



April 17, 2025

Arizona Tribal Regalia Toolkit

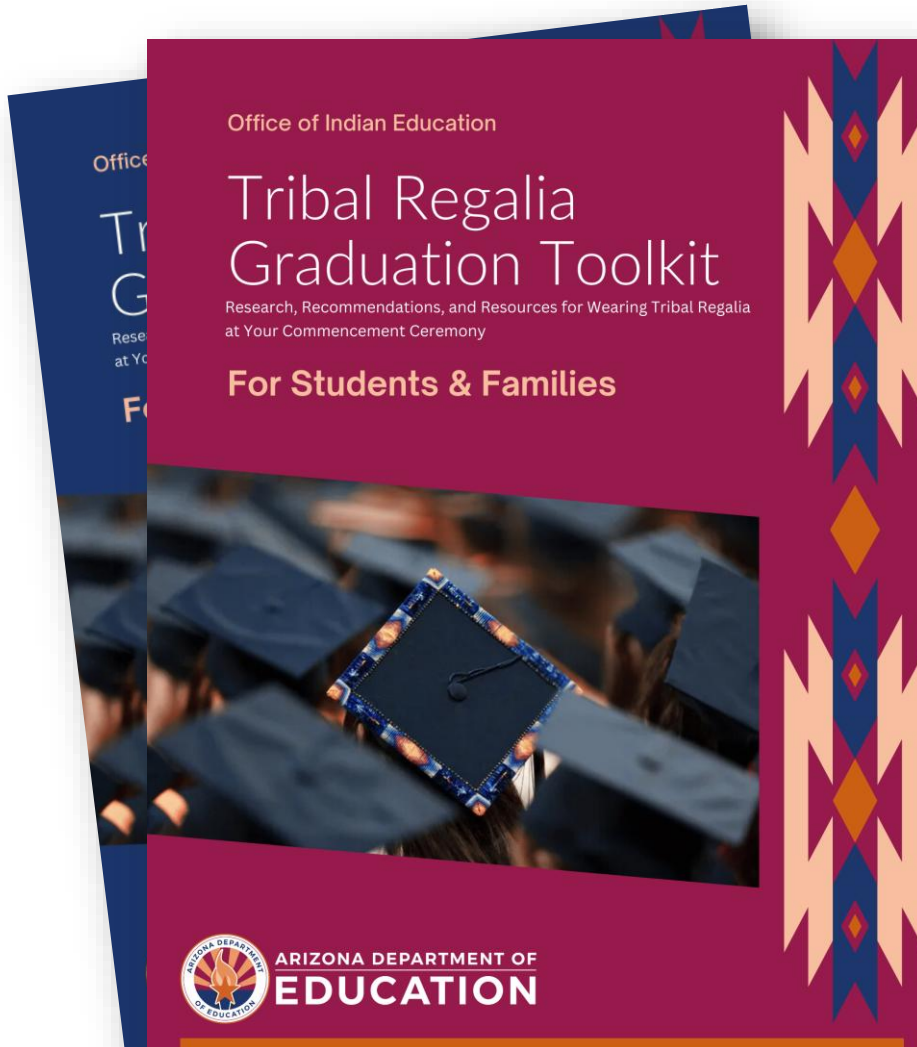
View the
Toolkit



Audience:
Students and Families

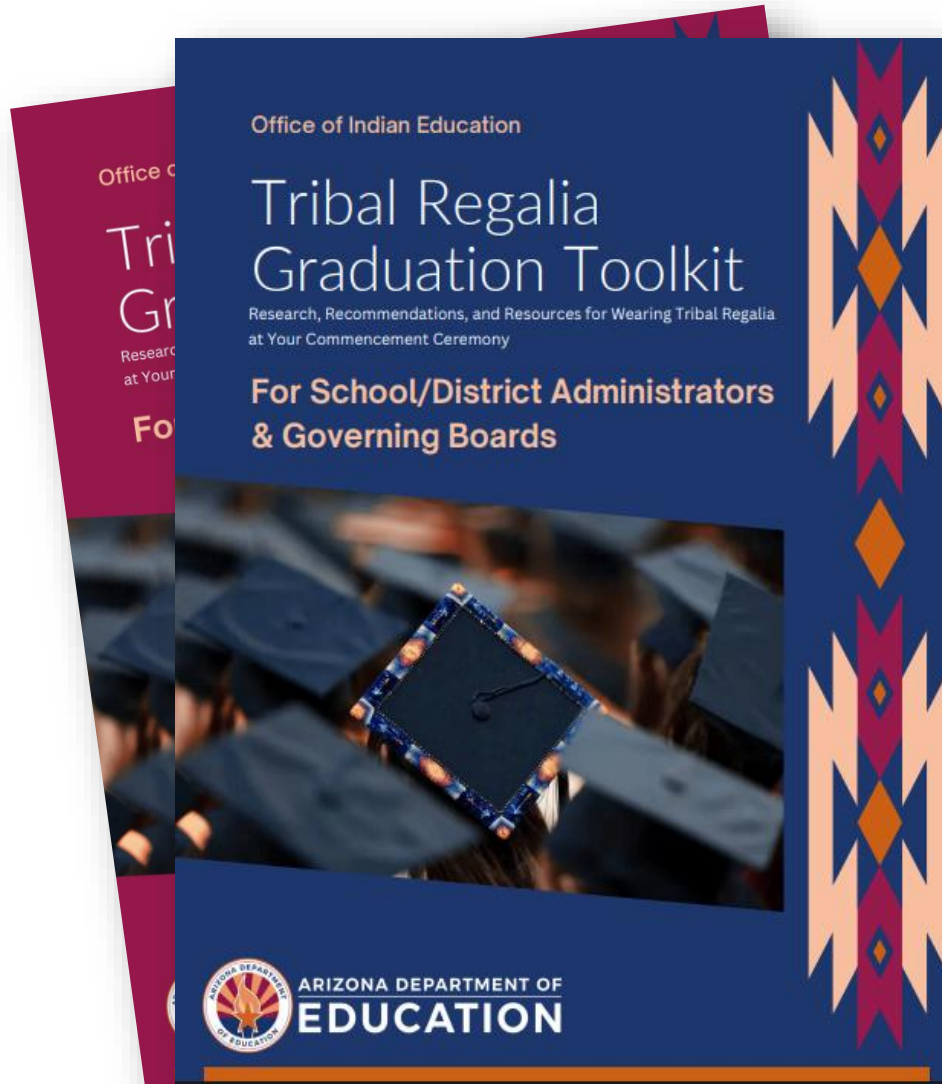
Highlights:

- Letter from Superintendent Tom Horne
- State and federal policy that protect the right to wear tribal regalia in graduation ceremonies
- **Many** examples of tribal regalia
- Decision making chart for families
- Fillable letter
- State and national resources for Indigenous students and families



Arizona Tribal Regalia Toolkit

View the
Toolkit



Audience:

School/District Administrators and Governing Boards

- Public
- Charter

Highlights:

- Letter from Superintendent Tom Horne
- State and federal policy that protect the right to wear tribal regalia in graduation ceremonies
- **Many** examples of tribal regalia
- Fillable letter notice
- **Checklists for School Boards & Schools**
- **Resources regarding policy and penalty for removing eagle feathers**



Major Take-Aways for School District Administrators and Governing Boards

Tribal Regalia & Objects of Cultural Significance

§ 15-348 - Dress code policies; traditional tribal regalia; objects of cultural significance; graduation ceremonies; definitions

A. A school district governing board, a charter school governing body or any public school may not prohibit a student who is a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe or who is eligible to be enrolled as a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe from wearing traditional tribal regalia or objects of cultural significance at a graduation ceremony.

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What Counts as Traditional Tribal Regalia and Items of Cultural Significance?

There is no “list”

Regalia will look different overtime, between communities, and families

- Contemporary vs. historical
- How the item was acquired
- But it's pop culture imagery?

Guidelines sometimes conflict with A.R.S. 15-348

- Moccasins, flip flops
- Stoles
- Blankets, staffs, fans etc.

Examples of Tribal Regalia

Please note that these images were provided by tribal members and are intended solely as examples. This is not a comprehensive list and should not restrict the items students plan to wear on graduation day.

Beadwork

Native American beadwork is a traditional art form that uses colorful beads to create jewelry and adorn clothing, headwear, footwear, and other significant items. The styles, colors, patterns, and motifs vary based on region, tribe, and occasion. Some beadwork includes animal imagery, as animals are considered sacred and highly respected in many tribal nations based on traditional beliefs. Others may include floral patterns, and other sacred imagery. The beadwork may have been created or commissioned especially for the graduate by a relative or their community.



Body Art

Face painting and tattoos have long been a sacred tradition within Native American communities, connecting them to ancestral heritage, social standing, and a connection to the spiritual world. Markings on the skin tell a story and hold deep symbolic meanings, representing a unique aspect of the wearer's spiritual and cultural heritage.



Bald & Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d)



- Enacted in 1940
- Prohibits anyone without a permit from possessing eagle parts
- Includes fines and imprisonment as consequences
- Amended several times
- 1994 Presidential Memorandum (Bill Clinton)
 - Acknowledged sovereignty and “religious” freedom for Native Americans
 - Acknowledged eagles and their parts are sacred
 - Federal agencies directed to:
 - Collaborate with tribes
 - Respectfully collect/send remains to repositories
 - Create clear guidelines and permit applications for access



What the Bald & Golden Eagle Protection Act Means to Schools & Staff



- Native American students have the legal right to possess eagle feathers for cultural and religious purposes
 - This right is not transferable to anyone who removes the feather
- A non-tribal citizen in possession of that eagle feather is now in violation of the law
 - Individuals face fines of up to \$100,000
 - Organizations may be fined up to \$200,000





Check Lists and Best Practices

School Board Preparation



Do you know Arizona Revised Statute A.R.S 15-348?

15-348. Dress code policies; traditional tribal regalia; objects of cultural significance; graduation ceremonies; definitions

A. A school district governing board, a charter school governing body or any public school may not prohibit a student who is a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe or who is eligible to be enrolled as a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe from wearing traditional tribal regalia or objects of cultural significance at a graduation ceremony.

B. For the purposes of this section, "objects of cultural significance" and "traditional tribal regalia" include an eagle feather or eagle plume.



Have you checked your dress code policy. Does it include *traditional tribal regalia; objects of cultural significance; graduation ceremonies*?



If so, does your dress code policy regarding tribal regalia in graduation include the language: "a student who is a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe or *who is eligible to be enrolled as a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe...*"



If so, does your dress code policy regarding tribal regalia in graduation include the language: "objects of cultural significance" and "traditional tribal regalia" include an *eagle feather or eagle plume.*"



Are you aware of the penalties for removing an eagle feather or plume from a Native American individual?

Native American students have the legal right to possess eagle feathers for cultural and religious purposes. However, this right is not transferable to anyone who removes the feather, as doing so violates federal law. Individuals who unlawfully take eagle feathers can face fines up to **\$100,000**, while organizations may be fined up to **\$200,000**.



If changes need to be made to your district's dress code policy, what steps will you take to support a revision?



Have you communicated your dress code policy to all district personnel prior to graduation ceremonies?



POLICY



PROCEDURE



School Preparation



Arizona Revised Statute A.R.S 15-348

Do you know the details of A.R.S 15-348 regarding tribal regalia at graduation ceremonies?

15-348. Dress code policies; traditional tribal regalia; objects of cultural significance; graduation ceremonies; definitions

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Dress Code Policy



Does your dress code policy include **traditional tribal regalia; objects of cultural significance; graduation ceremonies**?



How are the dress code policies around Native American Students wearing tribal regalia at graduation communicated to all staff and volunteers?



Written Procedures

Are the procedures for allowing tribal regalia at graduation documented?



Training

How are staff and volunteers trained in the procedures for tribal regalia at graduation?



Have staff and volunteers been informed and trained in the procedures for Native American students wearing tribal regalia at graduation this year?



Are all staff and volunteers aware of the penalty for removing eagle feathers or eagle parts from a Native American Student?

Native American students have the legal right to possess eagle feathers for cultural and religious purposes. However, this right is not transferable to anyone who removes the feather, as doing so violates federal law. Individuals who unlawfully take eagle feathers can face fines up to **\$100,000**, while organizations may be fined up to **\$200,000**.



Enforcement and Monitoring

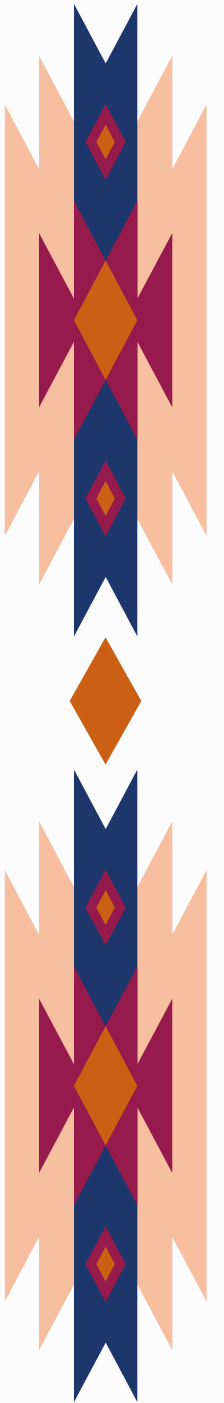
Are the procedures enforced and monitored on the day of graduation?

What Else Can be Done to Prepare?

How are families notified about graduation guidelines? How often is this done?

How do you educate ALL families about A.R.S. 15-348?

Do you stay connected to the ADE Office of Indian Education?

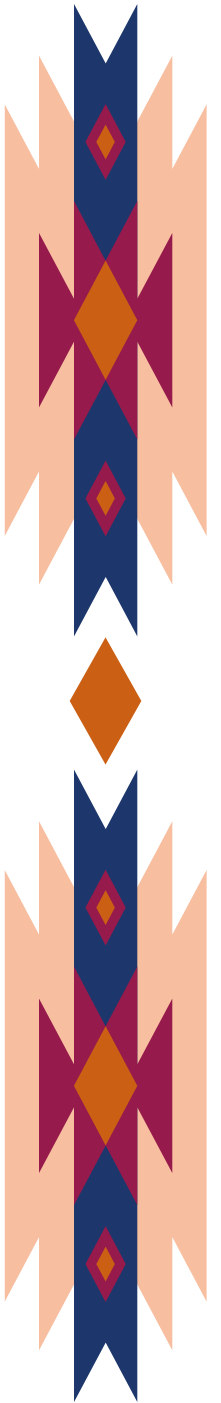


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- Updates, events, scholarships, resources, and more!
- For teachers, administrators, parents, and students.



Thank You!



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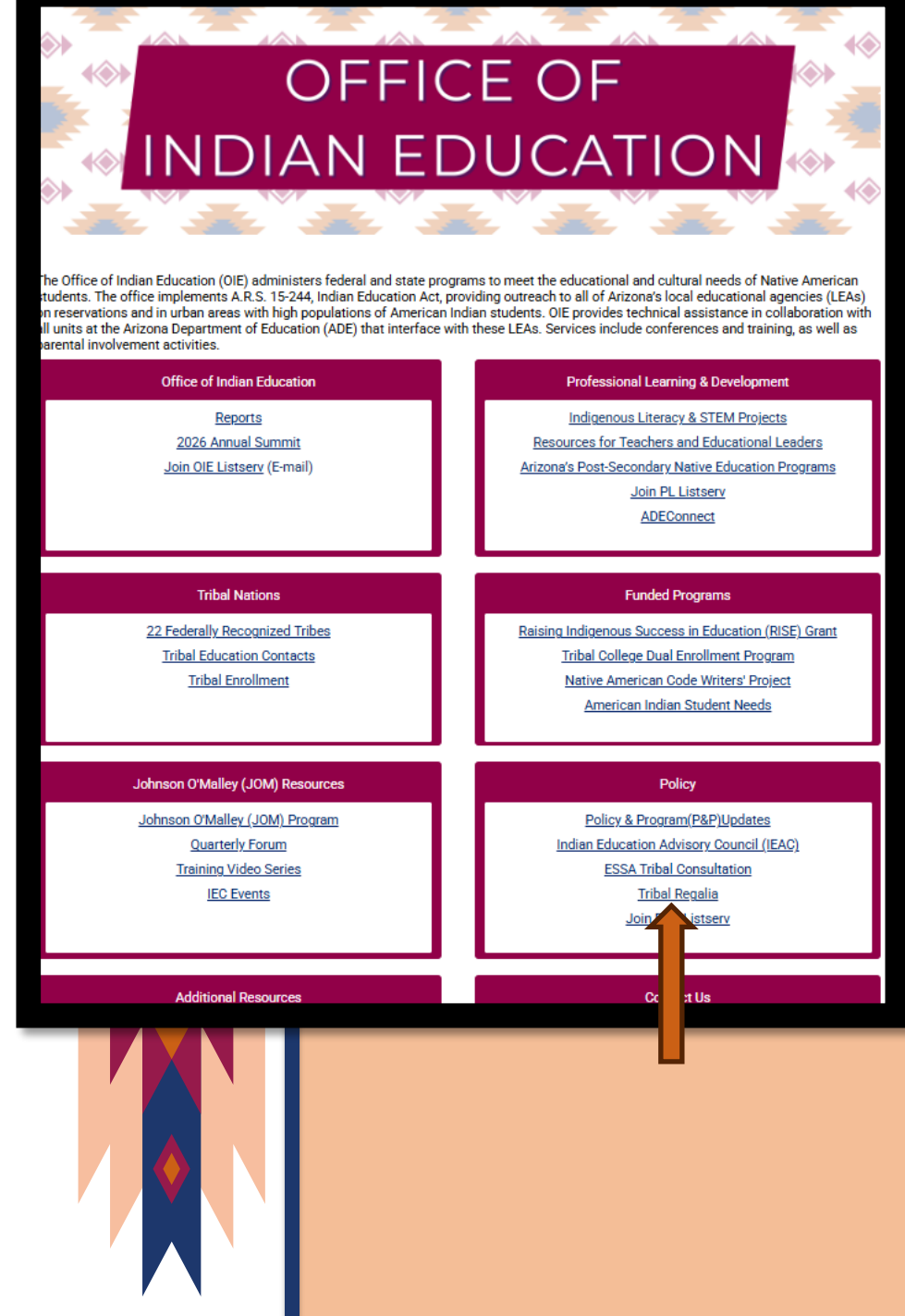
Email

indianeducation@azed.gov



Website

<https://www.azed.gov/oie>



Let's Review

- Native Americans are a political group not a racial or ethnic group
- A.R.S. 15-348 affirms Native American students' political status
- We cannot put parameters on regalia and items of cultural significance at graduation
- We can make a plan for these items to be worn at graduation
- Print out your OIE Tribal Regalia Graduation Toolkits
- Print out the checklists found on page 30 & 31 of the blue Toolkit
- Complete checklists with appropriate teammates
- Develop communication strategies for NA families and the general population
- Stay in touch with the Office of Indian Education for updates and to share successes



QUESTIONS?