



We prepare for tsunamis.

The [Shoalwater Bay Tribe](#) lives on the southwest coast of Washington State, just west of Tokeland, Washington. They are a small tribe, with approximately 120 members living on the Shoalwater Bay Indian Reservation. Although they are few in number, the tribe has made emergency preparedness a priority. One way that this priority shows itself is in the work the tribe has done to prepare for tsunamis.

To survive a tsunami, people living and working at Shoalwater Bay need to make a half-mile dash to the safety of higher ground. But how could the tribe make sure that everyone knew the evacuation route?

Lee Shipman, Emergency Management Director for the Shoalwater tribe, attends the Washington State/Local Tsunami Work Group sponsored by the Washington State Emergency Management Division. This group convenes emergency response personnel from all the coastal counties, cities, and tribes in Washington State. It was through this workgroup that Shipman learned of a “Yellow Brick Road” walk that nearby Aberdeen, Washington, had conducted to prepare for an evacuation in the event of a tsunami. Then, members of the Quinault Indian Nation conducted a similar walk and invited Shipman to attend.

Even before participating in the walk, Shipman knew she wanted to organize a similar walk for her community, but she knew she would need help. "We are small, and I knew we couldn't do it alone. But our partners also can't do it alone either, so we rely on each other."

By the time the finishing touches had been put on the first Shoalwater Bay Tsunami/Health Walk on August 13, 2012, 19 partners from around the surrounding area had agreed to participate. The Shoalwater Bay Police Department, North Cove Fire Department, and South Beach Ambulance were present. The State Emergency Management Department staffed a booth that educated participants on what to do with tsunami debris. (Tsunami debris was a hot topic due to the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami the previous year.) Another booth along the route educated participants about diabetes and diabetes prevention. Local dental and medical care providers also participated.

Shipman and her colleagues made a conscious choice to reach out to the tribe's young people. Tribal youth 12 – 18 years old learned how to use radios and during the event were stationed along the route to send an alert if anyone needed assistance. Almost 300 people took part in the event, including participants from other tribes as well as people living in neighboring communities. The tribe's nutrition department served a healthy lunch at the end of the walk.

When asked what they learned from the event, Shipman says, "One of the things we gave away was a little card that had all of our local radio stations listed on it. Everyone was thrilled to get that radio card. We didn't expect this. We'll be updating this card and distributing it again." (The Shoalwater Bay Indian Reservation was the first area in Pacific County to receive an All-Hazard Alert Broadcast Siren. When the siren broadcasts an alert, it directs listeners to tune into local radio stations for additional information.)

Another Shoalwater Bay Tsunami/Health Walk is planned for August 15, 2013. Shipman is looking forward to the event. She says, "Emergency preparedness has brought all of us together, not just tribal members, but surrounding areas too. If I'm proud of anything at all, that's what I'm most proud of."