



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association

Protecting our children • Preserving our culture

PRESS RELEASE

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Issues of fairness and justice for American Indian foster youth the subject of national child welfare conference

Thirty years following the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and months after the passage of historic child welfare reform and funding access for tribal foster care programs, the question of creating better programs to serve American Indian/Alaska Native foster (AI/AN) children and at-risk youth gains greater empowerment among program staff and tribal leadership.

For over 500 social workers, case managers, clinic staff, advocates, juvenile court administrators, and students, the "Protecting Our Children" National American Indian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect is an experience of learning, connections, and renewal.

Sponsored by the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), the annual conference will have 60 workshops and a few "collaborative discussion groups" among participants about improving social services for American Indian youth and families, according to Isla Dane, NICWA event manager. The conference will be in Reno, Nevada, April 19-22, 2009, at the Peppermill Resort Casino.

New this year is a pre-conference institute focusing on Canadian-U.S. border child welfare issues. Titled, "Collaboration and Commonalities between Canadian and United States Child Welfare Practice," the special institute includes a poster session and special guest speakers. The cost is \$50 in addition to the regular conference attendee rate.

The conference has been a centerpiece of NICWA for over 25 years. The AI/AN child welfare advocacy organization's fundamental purpose has been to improve the social services provided to Indian communities through legislative reform and representation, technical training of social workers, program planning that is culturally relevant, research of Indian child welfare indicators, and compliance with ICWA.

The presenters represent child welfare advocates across the U.S. and Canada from universities, tribes, and urban Indian communities. The conference theme, "Access to Prevention, Protection, and Treatment: A Matter of Fairness,

Justice, and Action," will be represented in the 60-plus workshops during the week. Special keynote speakers at this date include Frank LaMere (Winnebago), who received the Peacemaker of the Year award from the Nebraskans for Peace for his work to stop the illegal flow of alcohol onto the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and has been active in state/national politics since 1987; and Tabitha Whitefoot, assistant director of Portland State University Native American Student Community Center and the college's Education Equity Program. Other speakers are in the process of being confirmed for the conference.

Exhibition and vendor spaces are still open. Interested businesses and artists should contact Laurie Evans, NICWA project support, at laurie@nicwa.org, or call 503.222.4044, ext. 124, for a vendor application. Advertising space in the conference program book is open until February 27; contact Laurie for more information.

NICWA is a national nonprofit and the most comprehensive source of information on American Indian child welfare and works on behalf of Indian children and families. NICWA provides public policy, research, advocacy, information, training, and community development services to a broad national audience, including state child welfare agencies and other organizations, agencies, and professionals interested in the field of Indian child welfare. Their website is www.nicwa.org or you can call 503.222.4044 for more information.