



NICWA
National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting our children • Preserving our culture

PRESS RELEASE

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American Indian Child Welfare Leadership Honored at Celebration Reception at NCAI

To celebrate the recent passage of P.L. 110-351—called the most significant foster care reform in over a decade—the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) honored 11 individuals and organizations that have provided outstanding leadership toward that reform on behalf of American Indian/Alaska Native children.

NICWA has sought Congressional reform for over 17 years to correct the exclusion of tribal governments from direct access to federal Title IV-E funds, the largest source of foster care funding available. Tribal access to this fund was one of the reforms contained in P.L. 110-351, the “Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act,” which was passed by Congress and signed into law earlier this month. As a result, new services and support will be available to American Indian and Alaska Native children who have been abused and neglected.

The celebratory reception was in Phoenix, Arizona, during the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Annual Convention. Guests included tribal leaders from across the country, child welfare case managers and advocates, NICWA staff and board, and the honorees. NICWA Board Secretary Marla Jean Big Boy (Oglala Sioux) emceed the event and reported the highlights of nearly two decades of advocacy that preceded this legislative accomplishment.

“A bipartisan Congressional effort, strong support from non-Indian and Indian organizations, passionate and resolute testimony by Indian leaders and foster youth—all of these factors worked together in an election year to make new child welfare legislation into law,” Marla Jean said.

NICWA Board President Maurice Lyons (Morongo Band of Mission Indians), presented a framed certificate of achievement to the honorees. Two NICWA staff members were also recognized: Executive Director Terry Cross (Seneca) and Director of Government Affairs and Advocacy David Simmons. In addition, three representatives of the Navajo Children and Family Services ICWA Unit presented Terry and David with a certificate and gifts for their outstanding achievements on behalf of American Indian children.

Closing comments by Terry Cross focused on the next steps for tribal governments to obtain Title IV-E funds and the larger role tribes will play in the future following this historic legislative achievement, saying “I feel like I’ve been walking on air,” at the NCAI convention.

NICWA is a national nonprofit and the most comprehensive source of information on American Indian child welfare and work on behalf of Indian children and families. NICWA provides public policy, research, advocacy, information,

(Continued on next page)

training, and community development services to a broad national audience, 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 call (503) 222-4044.

HONOREES:

Chairman Frank Ettawageshik and the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians

Council Member Liz Mueller and the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe

Arlene Templer, Director for the Department of Human Resource Development and the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

United Tribes of North Dakota

Tribes of Montana

Jack Trope, Executive Director for the Association on American Indian Affairs

National Congress of American Indians

Gil Vigil, NICWA Board of Directors

The Seminole Tribe of Florida

The Morongo Band of Mission Indians

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