



National Indian Child Welfare Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians Invests in Defending the Indian Child Welfare Act

(Portland, OR, December 21, 2017)—The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) acknowledges and thanks the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians (Gun Lake Tribe) of Shelbyville, Michigan, for their generous \$10,000 donation to support defending the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). ICWA provides important legal protections for Native children and families to prevent the unnecessary removal of children from their homes.

ICWA provides guidance to state and private child welfare agencies and state courts on how to effectively work with Native children and their families that have become involved in the state child welfare system. Prior to passage of ICWA, between 25%–35% of all Native children were removed from their families by state and private child welfare agencies; of these, 85% were placed outside of their families and communities—even when fit and willing relatives were available.

Since the passage of ICWA, removal and placement rates of Native children have decreased, and tribal nations, armed with the recognition of their sovereign right to participate in state child custody proceedings involving their children and families, have made dramatic gains in collaborative tribal-state relationships and improving the overall practice of how state and private agencies work with Native children and families. Even with these sizeable improvements and the 2016 ICWA regulations and guidelines that clarify the law's implementation, significant pushback from anti-tribal and anti-ICWA groups intending to eliminate the gains over the past 40 years and make it easier to remove Native children from their families and place them in non-Native homes is taking place. Gifts from important partners like Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians are critical and make it possible for us to continue to defend this important law despite a well-funded and resourced opposition.

In presenting the donation to support NICWA's work to defend ICWA, John Shagonaby, Senior Director of Governmental Affairs, Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, said, "The Tribe recognizes the important work that NICWA does to protect Native American families and Indian children throughout Indian Country. We hope these funds will be used to further the noble mission of your organization.... We would like others to also choose NICWA as a worthwhile cause for charitable donations." NICWA board president Gil Vigil responded, "It is gifts from individuals and tribes like Gun Lake that give NICWA the resources to stand up to attacks on ICWA from well-resourced opponents who are intent on stripping away its' protections. We thank the Gun Lake tribal leadership for investing in the Native children and families now and for generations to come by making this generous gift to NICWA."

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About The National Indian Child Welfare Association

NICWA works to support the safety, health, and spiritual strength of Native children along the broad continuum of their lives. The organization promotes building tribal capacity to prevent child abuse and neglect through positive systems change at the state, federal, and tribal level. For more information, visit www.nicwa.org.