

2019 CONFERENCE REPORT

37th ANNUAL PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

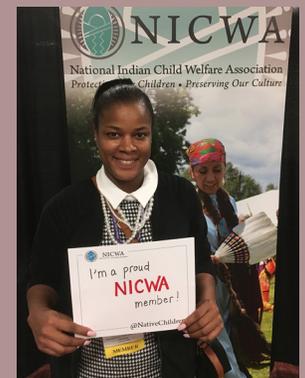
National American Indian Conference on Child Abuse & Neglect



Our Families, Our Future

Celebrating 40 Years of the Indian Child Welfare Act

March 31–April 3, 2019 • Albuquerque, New Mexico



37th ANNUAL PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

National American Indian Conference on Child Abuse & Neglect



Our Families, Our Future

Celebrating 40 Years of the Indian Child Welfare Act

2019 conference by the numbers:

- \$219,663 raised
- 1,552 attendees
- 923 new members
- 826 app users
- 252 tribes represented
- 158 presenters
- 77 workshops
- 51 sponsors
- 45 states and provinces
- 43 exhibitors
- 5 raffle prizes
- 2 dance groups

Our 37th Annual Protecting Our Children National American Indian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, held in Albuquerque, New Mexico on March 31 – April 3, 2019, was our most successful conference ever! With your support, we broke records. We are pleased to share our final report with our sponsors. The following are highlights of activities and outcomes over our four-day training event.

Membership Meeting and Reception

Every year, we kick off our conference with a membership meeting and reception which is underwritten by our Sacred Circle sponsors. The evening includes over 250 members, a report from our board of directors, awards ceremony, and a cultural performance from our host region. The highlight of our membership report was delivered by our Executive Director, Dr. Sarah Kastelic (Alutiiq), emphasizing the public education and media engagement work through our Protect ICWA Campaign over this last year. We were pleased to honor Stephanie Benally (Diné) as our 2019 Member of the Year for her work advocating for improvements to the foster care system in Utah and increasing the number of Native children in kinship placements. Additionally, NICWA awarded our annual member Wisdom Circle Scholarship to Candi Marcantel (Muscogee Creek Nation), a court appointed special advocate supervisor from Omaha, Nebraska. The evening's cultural activity was performed by the Pueblo of Pojoaque Hoop Dancers. Their youth dance and culture program focus on the traditional hoop dance in which the dancer displays images of animals, plants, and the circle of life, sacred to Native people.

Conference Workshops and Panels

Throughout this four-day conference, NICWA hosted 77 workshops on subjects inspired by our theme "Our Families, Our Future: Celebrating 40 Years of the Indian Child Welfare Act." We received many applications from our call for presenters beginning in September, and the conference space allowed us to accommodate more workshops, and in turn, provide more learning opportunities for our conference goers. In fact, many workshops were full, with up to 150 people in attendance per workshop. The most popular workshops focused on skill-building. Workshops featuring program innovations, particularly tribal-state collaboration, were well received.

The opening plenary session of conference showcased keynote speaker Regis Pecos (Cochiti), who described our sacred responsibility to our children, and the New Mexico Tribal Indian Child Welfare Consortium (23 tribes), who described their experience organizing across their state to advocate for Native children and families. Attendees were particularly inspired by



Member of the Year, Stephanie Benally (Diné) and Executive Director, Sarah Kastelic



Pueblo of Pojoaque Hoop Dancer, performed during Membership Reception



Attendees who gave in the Paddle Raise during Banquet Dinner were gifted a cedar paddle

Thank you! Your support made this year's conference possible.

their advice on building partnership and unity amongst their diverse membership and sharing how they cope with stress in their work. Many direct service providers felt this panel resonated deeply with their own experience. The momentum of our first day carried through to panels the following days with plenary sessions dedicated to ICWA courts and their ability to improve ICWA implementation led by Sheldon Spotted Elk (Northern Cheyenne), director, Casey Family Programs, and the final day's rallying presentation about efforts to defend ICWA from ongoing legal attacks, including review of the *Brackeen (Texas) v. Bernhardt (formerly Zinke)* case by Dan Lewerenz (Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska), staff attorney, Native American Rights Fund; NICWA Executive Director Sarah Kastelic; and Chrissi Nimmo (Cherokee), deputy attorney general for the Cherokee Nation.

Banquet Dinner Celebration

Thanks to our host sponsor, Seminole Tribe of Florida, the banquet dinner was a moment of celebration where conference registrants gathered on the final night of the conference. The evening's program began by welcoming Julia Bogany (Tongva) to the stage to accept the Champion for Native Children Award. Julia spent over two decades working for her tribe and Native communities at large, participating in Indian child welfare meetings at the Los Angeles County Children's Court and chairing the ICWA tribal communication and engagement committee. NICWA recognized her commitment to and perseverance for Native families and children. Emcee Leroy "Buster" Silva (Laguna Pueblo Nation), community coordinator with the Notah Begay III (NB3) Foundation and former educator, led the night's activities, including the Grand Prize Raffle drawings of a Surface Pro and all-inclusive trip to Las Vegas sponsored by our Four Direction supporters. NICWA was humbled by the outpouring of support during the paddle raise portion of the evening where NICWA invited, in the tradition with special significance and connection to Native peoples in the Northwest, financial support of our work. All who gave were gifted with a cedar paddle. The banquet dinner ended with a hilarious performance by comedian Adrienne Chalepah (Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma). Adrienne is a stand-up comedian, writer, and mother of four with a decade of professional stage experience. Ultimately, the evening was an unforgettable celebration with friends and colleagues.

NICWA gratefully thanks our new and returning conference sponsors!

We appreciate your partnership in strengthening the well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native children and their families by increasing the knowledge, skill set, and resources of people who seek to improve the lives of and outcomes for Native children and youth.

We hope you will mark your calendars for next year's conference taking place on March 29–April 1, 2020, in Denver, Colorado. Our call for conference presenters launches September 2019.



What attendees are saying:

"I feel that I am walking away from this conference with more knowledge about what NICWA is about and feel a stronger connection to my Native culture. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this!"

"Through this beautiful conference it was further instilled into my work how important it is to acknowledge healing, invite in our spirits to help us, and to remember to listen intently to our elders."

"[I plan to] take this information back to my community, share it with community members, employees, and outside agency partners so we can better serve our children and families."



Banquet Dinner Emcee Leroy "Buster" Silva
(Laguna Pueblo Nation)



Julia Bogany (Tongva) accepts
2019 Champion for Native Children award



Comedy performance by Adrienne Chalepah
(Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma) for conference attendees

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