

# NICWA NEWS

Quarterly Newsletter • Fall 2020



The **LATEST**

INSIDE

*Systems Change*





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The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) is a private, nonprofit, membership-based organization dedicated to the well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native children and families. Headquartered in Portland, Oregon, NICWA serves tribes, individuals, and private organizations throughout the United States and Canada by serving as the most comprehensive source of information on American Indian child welfare and acting as the only national Native organization focused on building tribal capacity to prevent child abuse and neglect.

### Our Mission

The National Indian Child Welfare Association is dedicated to the well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native children and families.

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*NICWA News is the quarterly newsletter for members and donors of the National Indian Child Welfare Association. Membership is available in multiple levels starting at \$35.*

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# Message from the Executive Director

Dear NICWA Members, Sponsors, Donors, and Friends,

Greetings from the board of directors and staff of the National Indian Child Welfare Association. When NICWA was founded in 1983 as the Northwest Indian Child Welfare Institute, our focus then, as it is today, was to strengthen the well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native children and families. Our first conference helped to clarify what NICWA stood for and what our work would be. Our vision—that every Native child must have access to community-based, culturally appropriate services that help them grow up safe, healthy, and spiritually strong, free from abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation, and the damaging effects of substance abuse—helped us determine where we could best intervene to produce better outcomes for children and families. These conversations explicitly guided NICWA's interrelated and mutually reinforcing work.

At our first conference, in Newport, Oregon, our members helped us arrive at a core set of beliefs to guide our buckets of work. First, we believe there are people working in every Native community to protect children and strengthen families. They need the best information and training available to do that job well, so NICWA provides high-quality, culturally specific information and training.

Second, we believe every Native community has people who want to do something to improve the lives of children. NICWA's job is to support them. We partner with tribal and urban Indian communities to facilitate systems change. Through community development projects and principles, we consult, train, and provide technical assistance onsite to support child welfare programs, children's mental health programs, and tribal community organizations.

Finally, we believe American Indian and Alaska Native tribes need the rights and resources to protect their children and maintain the integrity of families. NICWA's advocacy and research activities stem from this belief. We advocate relentlessly for tribes and empower and support them to draw on their sovereign authority, steward scarce resources, and support the safety and well-being of children. Our advocacy work is only as effective as our ability to use data to make the case for the resources our communities need and the important role tribal governments play in the lives of their citizen families and children.

This issue of NICWA News highlights our decades of experience working with tribal communities to facilitate intentional systems change at the community, and ultimately family, level. We'd love to hear from you by email or on social media about how you've experienced NICWA's services and the impact of our work to change systems to better support Native families. Please reach out to us at [info@nicwa.org](mailto:info@nicwa.org) or tag @NativeChildren on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) and @nicwa1983 on [Instagram](#).

With gratitude for our work together for children,

*Sarah F. Kastelic*

Sarah Kastelic, PhD  
(Alutiiq)



## COVID-19 Relief Bill Stalls in Congress

House and Senate Democrats continued to negotiate with the White House and Senate Republican leadership on a coronavirus (COVID-19) relief bill (CARES Act 2.0) in August but were unable to reach an agreement before leaving for political conventions. The parties were far apart with major disagreements over the total amount of funding for the relief bill and provisions related to funding for mail-in voting, food assistance, unemployment benefits, and funding for states and local governments. Senate Republicans introduced a second COVID-19 relief bill in August with \$1 trillion in funding, while the Democrats in the House passed their bill with \$3.5 trillion of spending earlier in May. Before leaving Washington, DC, for the August recess, Democratic leadership offered to reduce their funding target from \$3.5 trillion to \$2.5 trillion if the administration and Senate Republicans would agree

of these executive actions, many in Congress and elsewhere realize these will have little impact compared to a comprehensive relief bill approved by Congress.

Requests from Indian Country for the next COVID-19 relief bill were sent to congressional leaders earlier this summer and contain a wide variety of requests involving funding and policy changes. The requests were developed early as the pandemic began to spread in the United States with tribes and a variety of Native organizations, like NICWA and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), contributing provisions. Within the larger set of relief bill requests for Indian Country, some specifically address human service needs related to COVID-19. These needs include additional funding for tribal Indian Child Welfare Act programs,

BIA Welfare Assistance, one-time access to Title XX Social Services Block Grant funds and a variety of other federal human service programs, and increased flexibility on how to use federal funding to meet community needs.

## **Tribal nations must receive support proportionate to the level of need in their communities that provides enough flexibility so they can adequately address both short- and longer-term concerns.**

to that amount, but an agreement was not reached. As the election nears, it will likely become more challenging for Congress to reach an agreement and pass another COVID-19 relief bill.

The administration, indicating their frustration on the inability to reach an agreement in Congress on a COVID-19 relief bill, issued executive actions in August to extend some unemployment benefits, continue suspension of student loan repayment, defer payroll taxes, and review federal resources that may be used to prevent evictions and foreclosures. Legal scholars have questioned the legality of some of these executive actions as they propose actions that typically only Congress has the authority to make. In addition to possible legal challenges to some

Existing disparities in tribal citizens' access to critical services have been amplified by the pandemic. Tribal nations must receive support proportionate to the level of need in their communities that provides enough flexibility so they can adequately address both short- and longer-term concerns. NICWA is working closely with NCAI, tribal nations, and other Native advocacy organizations to address human service needs in congressional proposals. You can find more information on the next round of COVID-19 relief bills in NICWA's Child and Family Policy Update at [www.nicwa.org/policy-update/](http://www.nicwa.org/policy-update/).

## NICWA Provides New Resources

### on COVID-19 Impacts in Indian Child Welfare

As the pandemic spread in March, NICWA began to provide resource materials related to the impact of the pandemic in tribal communities, particularly impacts to Native children and families in state or tribal child welfare systems. We began with a series of four monthly COVID-19 webinars. In March, we addressed how tribal child welfare programs could organize and respond to the immediate and changing needs and restrictions incurred because of the pandemic. In April, our webinar topic was how tribal nations could maximize the use of available funds in the CARES Act (H.R. 748) for human services. June and July webinars included panels of tribal and state child welfare program managers discussing how they were adapting to the pandemic. They shared the promising practices they were creating to ensure continuity of care for Native children and families in their care. NICWA will continue the webinar series in September, focusing on the interface between child welfare and education, as well as address other program areas in future webinars. You can find recordings of the webinars at [www.nicwa.org/coronavirus/](http://www.nicwa.org/coronavirus/).

Check out NICWA's [COVID-19 Resources](#) for families, tribal leadership, program managers, and advocates on legislation, administrative policy, funding, and examples of how other jurisdictions are addressing specific issues.

You can find these and general COVID-19 resources at [www.nicwa.org/coronavirus](http://www.nicwa.org/coronavirus). We regularly share resources through email and social media, so please subscribe on our website and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. If you have ideas about how NICWA can provide further information and support related to COVID-19, please email us at [info@nicwa.org](mailto:info@nicwa.org).



## Interconnectedness of NICWA's work

### Community Development: Child Welfare & Children's Mental Health

- Systems change to better serve families and children
- Community-level outcomes for children and families

### Government Affairs & Public Policy

- Advocacy
- Policy analysis and education

Well-being of Native children and families

### Information & Training

- Events and training activities
  - Publications/curricula
- Requests for information services

### Research

- Literature review and meta-analysis
- Secondary data analysis
- Original research
- Program evaluation

NICWA's work is interrelated and mutually reinforcing. An example is the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Circles of Care program. In the mid-90s, NICWA conducted **research** that revealed the high level of unmet mental health needs of Native youth in the Northwest. NICWA **advocated** for funding for tribal governments and urban Indian centers to meet the needs unaddressed by mainstream mental health agencies. Consequently, SAMHSA (1) created the Circles of Care program, a dedicated funding stream for tribal governments and urban Indian programs to develop a System of Care program, and (2) reserved System of Care funds for tribal grantees. NICWA's **advocacy** also included access to culturally competent technical assistance, and since we already knew the community needs, NICWA became the **technical assistance provider**. NICWA was able to support tribes in building the capacity to create Systems of Care to meet the mental health needs of Native youth, including drawing on their culture as the primary resource for their children.

## New Research Study for Native Children

American Indian and Alaska Native children are disproportionately placed into the foster care system compared with other racial and ethnic groups. Nationwide, Native children are overrepresented in state foster care at a rate 2.6 times greater than their proportion in the general population. To address this problem in state child welfare systems, we need accurate data. Better understanding the experience of children and families in the child welfare system can help to effectively reduce disproportionality of foster care placement of our children by identifying key places to intervene.

Together with our partners from the Cowlitz Tribe, Child Trends, Casey Family Programs, and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, NICWA is launching a Positive Indian Parenting (PIP) pilot evaluation. For more than 30 years, the culturally specific parenting curriculum developed by NICWA has been used across Indian Country and among First Nations in Canada. This pilot study will evaluate delivery of the PIP curriculum to 60 families in Washington State—one of the 15 states with the highest disproportionality rates—with target

outcomes of children's and adult caregivers' well-being. Not only will this research explore the effectiveness of PIP in helping to prevent child abuse and neglect for the families in the study, it will play a critical role as the foundation for a larger national study which may establish PIP as an evidence-based practice. Establishing PIP as an evidence-based program would open new avenues for the sustainability of this unique, culturally based parenting skills program as tribes would be able to fund PIP delivery with the increasing pool of federal and state funding streams that require the use of evidence-based programs.

*The traditional teachings included in PIP provided strengths to Native families for centuries, but they were nearly lost before being compiled into this curriculum. While it has been recognized as a cultural best practice for decades, I'm pleased that the effectiveness of our work can now be tested.*

— Terry Cross (Seneca), curriculum author, technical assistance provider, and senior advisor and founder at NICWA

# Systems Change

Individuals, communities, and state and federal systems change

## Supporting Individuals: Systems Change Starts with Families

Every day, families come into contact with the child welfare system, and often the interactions are steeped in ethnic and racial biases. For Native families, the child welfare system—where generations of Native children were systemically removed from families, forcibly assimilated, and deprived of their communities, culture, languages, and so much more—perpetuates historical trauma.

In the 1950s–1970s, the child welfare system was one of many vehicles that state and federal governments used to force the assimilation of Native children. During this period, 25–35% of all Native children were separated from their families—and 90% of children removed were placed in non-Native homes.

We believe that the best way to protect children is through services that preserve and strengthen their families and extended families. Our Request for Information (RFI) program is one important pillar to achieving this.

NICWA receives over 1,000 requests for information each year, and we respond by providing telephone support and resource materials for families. With compassionate support, we help relatives and community members navigate the child welfare system, access meaningful services, and advocate for their relatives. This work to directly support and equip families with information is an intervention to keep families together whenever possible. While we work to address child and family well-being at the individual level, addressing immediate family needs, as described below we simultaneously address child and family well-being at the structural level, focused on longer-term systems change by providing training and technical assistance and through our advocacy. If you or someone you know would like to reach out to NICWA through our RFI program, please visit NICWA's website at [www.nicwa.org/request-information/](http://www.nicwa.org/request-information/).



## Championing Systems Change at State and Federal Levels

State and federal systems change entails addressing the well-being of children and families at the structural level. It complements work to address the individual needs of families involved in the child welfare system and the work that tribes themselves are doing to decolonize tribal child welfare. Systems change at the state and federal levels requires building coalitions to address the best interest and well-being of Native children and families. As codified in the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), the best interests of each individual child involved in the system includes recognitions of the importance of their family, community, and culture.

The Protect ICWA Campaign was established by NICWA, the [National Congress of American Indians](#),

the [Association on American Indian Affairs](#), and the [Native American Rights Fund](#). Together, we work to serve and support Native children, youth, and families through upholding ICWA. The Protect ICWA Campaign works to inform policy, legal, and communications strategies with the mission to uphold and protect ICWA.

As ICWA litigation continues in state and federal courts across the nation, we will continue to respond to new cases, challenge active opponents of the law, and advocate for accurate and meaningful reporting on child welfare in Indian Country. NICWA upholds and protects ICWA and other federal and state laws that are meant to protect our children, families, and tribes.

## Supporting Communities: Tribally Driven Systems Change

In tribal communities, there may be a very different approach to child welfare than in mainstream child welfare agencies. As the nation calls for child welfare systems reform, we need look no further than tribes. In most tribal communities, the rich cultural heritage is the foundation for a flourishing, natural safety net that keeps children safe. Traditional beliefs about the sacredness of children, our collective responsibility to protect and nurture them, and culturally based child-rearing approaches create the conditions in which the well-being of children is the focus of the whole community—not just parents. This set of beliefs and practices is the foundation for decolonizing and redesigning child welfare. Child welfare is not just a formal system that intervenes when parents are not able to take care of their children. A decolonized child welfare program intervenes before children are hurt or abandoned. It intervenes in the process of passing down trauma, and, instead, provides an opportunity for people to heal.

**How can we get there?** The [Touchstones of Hope movement](#) for reconciliation in child welfare provides a path forward. Touchstones provides principles and a process for reorienting child welfare away from a judgmental, adversarial system focused on child removal toward a recognition that when we ask individual parents to solve the structural problems like lack of housing, lack of mental health treatment, and unemployment in a case plan, we're setting them up for failure.

The Touchstones process involves Indigenous and non-Indigenous people truth-telling about the harm the child welfare system has done to families, acknowledging that a new path forward is necessary, restoring by making changes to redress harm and ensure it doesn't happen again, and relating by working respectfully together towards our vision of a new system. (continued below)



Used in both the U.S. and Canada, it's guided by five principles:

- self-determination—Indigenous people are in the best position to make decisions that affect their community;
- culture and language—should be the foundation of theory, research, policy, and practice;
- holistic approach—recognition and reflection of the distinct realities of the whole community, including culture (traditions, spirituality, and social customs), language, environment, and socioeconomic factors;
- structural interventions—standing up to injustices and protecting the rights of all people, including children and youth; and

- non-discrimination—Indigenous peoples should have equal access to resources and services that are responsive to their needs and their unique cultural context.

The Touchstones of Hope framework can help us realize the transformative visioning for a different kind of child welfare system and the required systems change to ultimately support child well-being and thriving families. We do not have to accept the status quo in tribal child welfare systems, and the tools we need are already available and in our communities.



## Tribal Systems of Care Graduation

A children's mental health system of care is a direct example of facilitating system change at the community level.

A system of care is a coordinated network of community-based services and supports that are organized to meet the challenges of children and youth with serious mental health needs and their families. Families and youth work in partnership with public and private organizations to design mental health services and supports that are effective, that build on the strengths of individuals, and that address each person's cultural and linguistic needs.

On August 18, 2020, NICWA hosted a virtual graduation ceremony to honor the four remaining communities of NICWA's 20-year technical assistance work with tribal systems of care. We celebrated our support of communities striving for their vision for young people and communities' dedication to system reform to improve the lives of children, youth, families in their communities. Over the last five years of this contract, we have worked together and witnessed significant positive change with youth-centered services and sustainable programs providing services across vast distances.

Congratulations to the systems of care listed on the right. Thank you for helping children, youth, and families thrive at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life.



*Pictured: Mescalero Apache Tribe's System of Care Staff*

- **Mescalero Apache Tribe's Systems of Care**
- **Sinte Gleska University's System of Care, Tiwahe Glu Kini Pi, or "Bringing the Family Back to Life"**
- **Pascua Yaque Tribe's System of Care, Sewa U'usim**
- **Tanana Chiefs Conference's System of Care**

## American Indian and Alaska Native Grandfamilies Toolkit

Both inside and outside the foster care system, American Indian and Alaska Native children are more likely to live in grandfamilies—families in which grandparents, other adult family members, or close family friends are raising children with no parents in the home—than any other racial or ethnic group.

For the past three years, NICWA has partnered with [Generations United](#) and [A Second Chance Inc.](#) to work closely with a group of Native and African American grandfamilies to elevate their voices in advocating for their unique needs and culturally appropriate services.

Part of our work together was to create a toolkit designed to give resources and tips to child welfare agencies, other government agencies, and nonprofit organizations, so they can better serve all Native grandfamilies regardless of child welfare involvement. The toolkit explores some unique strengths and challenges of these grandfamilies, which agencies and organizations need to recognize in order to provide culturally appropriate supportive services.

Native grandfamily members informed the direction and topics for the toolkit, gave feedback on drafts, and contributed personal stories and photos to be included. While the toolkit's intended audience is service providers working with

grandfamilies, it includes many resources that may also be useful to grandfamilies themselves as well as cultural context that may be valuable to many who work with Native populations. You can find and download the toolkit on NICWA's website at [www.nicwa.org/latest-news/](http://www.nicwa.org/latest-news/).





## How can I support NICWA?

Now more than ever we are grateful for the members, donors, and advocates that have made NICWA strong for the past 36 years. COVID-19 has created much uncertainty—but our dedication to our mission to strengthen the well-being of Native children and families is steadfast and relentless.

Here are two ways you can help support our work:

**Set up a recurring monthly donation!** Even small donations—like \$5 or \$10 a month—can help us immensely as they give us the stability we need as we plan our services for the community.

**Host a Facebook fundraiser!** With just a few clicks, you can set a goal and share it with your friends and family. Birthday fundraisers do especially well. We raise thousands of dollars each year from Facebook from dozens of small fundraisers which make a huge impact on our work.

Thank you for joining together as a community to make sure generations of Native children will be protected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

# Champion for Native Children

Do you know an incredible leader, social worker, case manager, or foster parent in your community who is doing awesome work to benefit Native children?

Nominate them for the 2021 Champion for Native Children award.

The awardee will be honored at NICWA's 2021 Protecting Our Children Conference on April 11 – 14, 2021.

[www.nicwa.org/champion-native-children/](http://www.nicwa.org/champion-native-children/)

## Supporting the Well-being of Native Students During the Pandemic via Child Trends

Authors: [Brandon Stratford](#) and [Deana Around Him](#)

As students return to school, either in person or online, school leaders are increasingly considering how to [leverage school mental health and social and emotional learning \(SEL\)](#) to foster the [supportive relationships](#) and [coping skills](#) that research has demonstrated can buffer the effects of adversity. As school leaders make decisions about resources and trainings to support students during and after the pandemic, it is important to recognize that American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian (AI/AN/NH) students may have been [disproportionately affected](#) by the health and economic effects of the pandemic. AI/AN/NH students may also come from communities that offer access to important cultural strengths and resources for mitigating pandemic-related stressors. School leaders should be aware of the disparities in who is most impacted by the pandemic as a first step to supporting students and their families. It is critical they understand that [historic inequities](#)—including a [lack of data](#)—have made it difficult for tribal governments and leaders to effectively respond to the pandemic. Additionally, for many students and families, the deaths, illness, and economic uncertainty brought about by the pandemic have likely exacerbated current and [historical traumas](#) that are the result of generations of systemic, government-sanctioned oppression.

Awareness of these disparities and inequities should also be paired with recognition of the resilience that exists within AI/AN/NH communities. An understanding of both the challenges and strengths should be built not only among school leaders, but across staff at all levels. School leaders should also facilitate a move beyond awareness to action by reaching out to students and families in their community who identify as AI/AN/NH to ensure their voices are at the center of all discussions.

School leaders can also invest in [interventions and approaches](#) that acknowledge and draw on the unique strengths of AI/AN/NH communities to support students. There are promising culturally grounded interventions such as the [Bicultural Competence Skills Program](#), which focuses on substance use prevention with a strong emphasis on developing a positive identity. A few rigorously evaluated interventions have also been adapted for Native youth and families, including [Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools](#) (CBITS) and [Families and Schools Together](#) (FAST). Ultimately, AI/AN/NH students and families should be involved in decisions about which interventions are the best fit for their particular school community.

Child Trends has additional publications to help policymakers, program staff, and parents support children during the COVID-19 pandemic at [www.childtrends.org/research-topic/covid-19](http://www.childtrends.org/research-topic/covid-19).

## Welcome NICWA's New Board Members!



**Robin Sigo**  
Board Member

Robin Sigo is a member of the Suquamish Tribe in Washington State, where she serves as treasurer on the Suquamish Tribal Council and director of the Research and Strategic Development Department. Robin has a passion for tribal child welfare, with a background in social work and as a tribal foster parent, decades of research experience in tribal youth prevention and adverse childhood experiences, and sustained advocacy for tribal child welfare and mental health issues. As a tribal council member, Robin is focused on upholding tribal sovereignty, budget planning, community mental health, strategic planning, and addressing poverty. Most importantly, Robin is a mother to four amazing kids ages 10–19.



**Stephanie Weldon**  
Board Member

Stephanie Weldon is a member of the Yurok Tribe in California and is also Tolowa and Karuk. With more than 15 years of experience developing and administering social service programs in tribal, county, and state settings, Stephanie currently serves as ICWA specialist for the California Department of Social Services. Her goal is to provide culturally grounded prevention and intervention services to promote healing and wellness, and her passion is to advocate for tribal families and for tribal sovereignty. Stephanie is the mother of six Yurok children ages 7–25, has one grandchild, and has been married to her husband of 13 years.

## Reaching More People with Virtual Trainings

*I appreciated the various ways of learning. The white board, the chat box, the breakout rooms, the movement were all great ways to make zoom work! I loved the stories!*

March marked the beginning of a season characterized by unpredictability in schedules and routines as a result of the pandemic. NICWA experienced this in full force when we pivoted the 38th Annual Protecting our Children Conference to a virtual platform in just a few weeks.

Plans quickly changed as all training events moved from in person to virtual, and NICWA staff didn't skip a beat. The first training to be delivered virtually was the June Training Institute's Enhancing Basic Skills in Tribal/First Nations Child Welfare. With five 90-minute interactive virtual sessions, community members

learned the basic skills in Indian child welfare, equipping them for work in the field.

Since then, NICWA has received many requests to provide training virtually for other curricula. Among the most popular has been two trainings: Positive Indian Parenting and Working with Substance-Abusing Families. Positive Indian Parenting is a training of trainers that prepares tribal and non-tribal child welfare personnel to train American Indian and Alaska Native parents using a culturally specific approach. Working with Substance-Abusing Families is a recently updated curriculum that trains participants using a collaborative service model which engages child welfare workers, the courts, and behavioral health providers. Both trainings employ creative and innovative solutions to a virtual training.



*A lot of the trainer's advice was already helpful in talking to clients this week and last. The storytelling piece has already been helpful several times even outside of work. Modeling the classes was very important for practicing how to lead the classes ourselves.*

Find more information on upcoming virtual events at [www.nicwa.org/training-institutes](http://www.nicwa.org/training-institutes) or email us to schedule a virtual training in your community at [training@nicwa.org](mailto:training@nicwa.org).



# Membership



1,065

Current Members



426

Member Webinar  
Attendees



45

States & Provinces  
Represented



156

Tribal &  
Organization Members



909

Individual Members



8

Member Webinars  
in 2020



39TH  
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**PROTECTING  
OUR CHILDREN**

Connectedness, Resilience,  
and Persistence

## 2021 Protecting Our Children Sneak Peak

We are excited to begin our 39th Annual Conference season. The 39th Annual Protecting Our Children Conference will be NICWA's first-ever hybrid conference. Save the date for April 11–14, 2021, for a simultaneous online and in-person event in Seattle, Washington!

## Member of the Year Update

The Member of the Year and the Wisdom Circle Scholarship were designed to honor the amazing work of our members. Unfortunately, the Wisdom Circle Scholarship has had a very small pool of applicants and been significantly underutilized, so NICWA merged them. We're combining the benefits and value of the Wisdom Circle Scholarship along with the prestige and recognition of the Member of the Year Award. Whether you're applying for Member of the Year or nominating a peer, please take note of the changes to the benefits the awardee receives, nomination criteria, and submission requirements. Honoring those dedicated to the well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native children and families remains the goal of NICWA's Member of the Year, so please help us recognize and celebrate your work.

Applications are due by February 1, 2021.

## Dear NICWA Members,

NICWA members come from all walks of life, and I love speaking with and learning from our amazing community. During this time of necessary distancing, I've valued my interactions with NICWA members, and it's been an honor to highlight these fantastic individuals in the monthly e-bulletin. The responses we publish were collected via the survey sent out during March's 38th Annual Protecting Our Children Conference, and I selected some of my favorite survey answers to share with you here in NICWA News.

**Your Member Relations Manager,**  
Jeremy Chase-Israel

**Who inspires you?** "My caseload of children. Most are teens who have been in the system for years and are finally becoming a little more stable." – Shawna Hill (*Skokomish Tribe*)

**Why did you become a NICWA member?** "I believe there is strength in numbers. The only way to change something in society is to have many voices speaking as one."  
– Shawn Shirley

**Share a short story about how ICWA or NICWA has helped you, your family, or your community:** "NICWA shaped a fundamental reason as to why I went into the social work field. I was young when NICWA showed up to NCAI's youth commission and talked about the importance of ICWA. I saw many needs in my community when it came to social welfare from substance use issues, to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, to children being placed into foster care at alarming rates. NICWA gave me the knowledge and role models to become a change in my community!"  
– Teresa Baldwin (*Inupiaq*)

**What is the most important thing for decision-makers to know about Native children and families?** "The way Natives may do things will not always match to how you do things. Our understanding and traditions help lead and guide us. We want to be seen as people but not to have our culture continuously stripped away when we step into politics. We are all equals, and we all bring different insight to society. You do not have to understand our culture but respect it and be open-minded."  
– Shauna Jackson (*Diné Nation*)



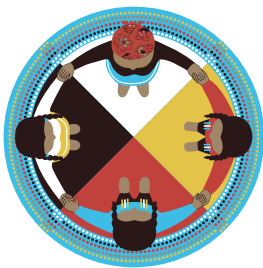
## NICWA News

National Indian Child Welfare Association

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### PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

Connectedness, Resilience,  
and Persistence



NICWA  
National Indian Child Welfare Association  
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

**Call for Presentations Now Open**  
Present virtually or in Seattle, Washington  
on April 11-14, 2021  
Apply by October 30, 2020

Visit [www.nicwa.org/call-for-presentations](http://www.nicwa.org/call-for-presentations)