

# NICWA NEWS

Quarterly Newsletter • Winter 2022



40<sup>th</sup> Annual Protecting Our Children Conference Art, "Homecoming"



**National Indian Child Welfare Association**  
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The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) is a 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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**Executive Director**

Sarah Kastelic (*Alutiiq*)



Close up of conference art, "Homecoming"

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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. For reprint requests, additional copies, or other information, contact us at [info@nicwa.org](mailto:info@nicwa.org)

# Message from the Executive Director

Dear NICWA Members, Sponsors, Donors, and Friends,

Welcome to the Winter issue of *NICWA News*. This issue embraces the theme “Being of Service to Community.” Interdependence and community-mindedness are values common to Indigenous cultures throughout the world. In the [Kodiak Alutiiq worldview](#) from my father’s home region of Alaska, the “inter-related and valued elements that sustain our well-being” include suupet, “our people.” In the [social sphere](#) of our well-being described by our Kodiak Alutiiq Elders, this value is clarified as “We are responsible for each other and ourselves.”

As Dr. Alisha Draybeck (2012, p.158) [explains](#), “This value is closely linked to the value, ‘Respect for self, others and our environment is inherent in all of these values.’ Caring for our people and ourselves goes much further than just being polite. It is about interdependence with each other and the need for each person to fulfill their role or responsibilities to others in their family and community.”

My parents and extended family raised me with this value of being responsible for one another, and I believe it’s what led me to a career in social work. As I’ve shared with many of you before, as a child my father told me, “When you need help, help other people, and in the act of doing so, you will always find the help you need.” That teaching has served me well.

Growing up in the Washington, DC metro area, I didn’t know any social workers. I didn’t know it was a job. In college, as a sociology major, I took an elective social work course. As a person who struggled with some of the structures and paradigms of western higher education, I was surprised to find a discipline that aligned with my values and beliefs. Of course, there was some really discordant content in mainstream social work, but I was attracted to the heart of the work. I appreciated social work’s inherent interdisciplinary approach (more holistic than many other fields), and I was drawn to the action orientation of the profession: not just learning about something but learning to put it into action—in service to people and community.

I applied to a graduate social work program with a specialization in American Indian/Alaska Native social work practice (and a great scholarship program). At the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis, I studied with [Dr. Eddie Brown](#), Pascua Yaqui and Tohono O’odham, and former Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I learned about public policy for the first time, and that passion set the trajectory for my career.

Today, tribal communities have more Native professionals in a wide variety of disciplines and jobs. Yet, especially in the field of social work, our communities desperately need more people who are attuned to the communities’ needs and are trained, in both Indigenous and western methods. This field of study includes advocacy; policy development; individual, family, and group practice; research and evaluation; and management, planning, and program development. A real benefit of social work training is the diversity of careers it prepares one for. At a recent NICWA board meeting, our board members spoke about how social work is a broad and open field. Social work education provides core knowledge and skills that, shaped with Indigenous knowledge, relationships, and values, can be directed in service to community.

This issue of *NICWA News* highlights several concrete examples of social work in service to Native people and communities. Native social workers share with you their path to social work and being in service to community.

As you engage with this issue, we’d love to hear your thoughts and reflections about how tribal communities and Native people center being of service to their communities in both their professional and personal lives. Please post on social media and tag us [@NativeChildren](#) or email me directly at [skastelic@nicwa.org](mailto:skastelic@nicwa.org) about your ideas and response to our theme.

With gratitude for your service to the well-being of Native children and families,

*Sarah J. Kastelic*

Sarah Kastelic,  
PhD, MSW  
(Alutiiq)



## Supreme Court to Review *Brackeen v. Haaland*

Following a decision in [Brackeen v. Haaland](#), an Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) case from the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals en banc, four of the parties in the case filed petitions asking the United States Supreme Court (Court) to review the decision. On September 3, 2021, the federal government, four intervenor tribes, State of Texas, and private parties (adoptive and foster care parents) in the case all filed [petitions](#) asking for review. On February 28, 2022, the Court announced they would accept the case for review and consolidate the four cert petitions. The case will not be heard until the Fall session beginning October 2022.

NICWA and the Protect ICWA Campaign partners (National Congress of American Indians, American Association on American Indian Affairs, and Native American Rights Fund) will be developing an amicus brief strategy for the case and will be reaching out to tribes, Native organizations, and others in the coming months. [Read the Protect ICWA Campaign press statement](#). Additionally, here is [recommended social media content](#) for taking the conversation to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

## Senate Poised to Consider Legislation to Fund Prevention and Treatment Services

On March 16, 2021, the House of Representatives passed the Stronger Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act ([H.R.485](#)). The legislation reauthorizes the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA—P.L. 93-247) and addresses challenges that tribes have in accessing the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grant program under this law. This legislation will increase funding for tribes for child abuse prevention services and will support a study of culturally based child abuse and neglect strategies from tribal communities.

Senators Warren and Murkowski introduced a Senate bill not long after the House passed their CAPTA bill that specifically addresses issues for tribes under CAPTA ([S.1868](#)). This bill was later included in the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee approved CAPTA reauthorization bill ([S.1927](#)). The next step is a vote on S.1927 before the full Senate. If the full Senate approves the legislation, it will go to conference with the House where they will work out the differences and send a revised bill to both House and Senate for final approval.

The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs approved a bill, the Native American Child Protection Act ([S.2326](#)), that reauthorizes tribal funding for child abuse prevention and treatment of victims. The legislation increases the amount of authority Congress has to appropriate funding for the tribal grants authorized in the legislation. This legislation is similar to an earlier bill, H.R.1688, that was approved by the House of Representatives. With passage by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, the legislation is ready for consideration by the full Senate. Because the Senate bill is identical to the House passed bill, if passed by the Senate, it will go to the President's desk to be signed into law.

NICWA is working with tribes and Indian organizations to seek support from senators on S.1927 and S.2326.

We encourage you to [contact your senators](#) and ask them to support the legislation as it moves through the Senate. These are some of NICWA's top policy priorities in 2022, and we need your help to get this through Congress this year.

## Department of Interior and Congress Address Boarding School Experience

In June of 2021, Secretary Deb Haaland announced the Department of Interior's (DOI) initiative to collect and review DOI information and records related to Indian boarding schools. The initiative comes after large numbers of unmarked graves of First Nations children at several residential school sites in Canada were discovered. Secretary Haaland recognized the need to "shed light on the unspoken traumas of the past." The initiative will identify boarding school facilities and sites; the location of known and possible student burial sites located at or near school facilities; and the identities and tribal affiliations of children interred at such locations. The initial investigation is expected to be completed with a published report by April 2022.

On September 30, 2021, Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Sharice Davids introduced companion bills (identical bills) entitled "Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act." The Senate bill is [S.2907](#), and the House of Representatives bill is [H.R.5444](#). The legislation establishes a commission to formally document and investigate Indian boarding school policies and practices in the United States.

We encourage tribes and advocates for Native children and families to [contact your congressional representatives](#) and urge them to sign on as co-sponsors to the legislation.

Visit [www.nicwa.org/policy-update](http://www.nicwa.org/policy-update) for the latest on child and family policy related news.

## Meet NICWA's New Staff Members



**Lynn Lindell** (*Suquamish*)

### **Project Coordinator**

Lynn Lindell joined NICWA in August of 2021 as a project coordinator. She is a member of the Suquamish Tribe in Washington. Before joining NICWA, Lynn graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from Portland State University while working full time in the HOA industry. It was during this time Lynn attended courses focused on child development, trauma, and Native American psychology which fueled her passion for helping children and families. In her free time, Lynn enjoys caring for her many plants, playing with her cat and rabbit, and cooking complicated recipes. She is grateful for her new role at NICWA and excited to learn, grow, and work in service to NICWA's mission and Native communities.



**Mariah Meyerholz**

### **Government Affairs and Community Development Fellow**

Mariah joined the NICWA team as a government affairs and community development fellow in January 2022. Mariah was born and raised in Eastern Oregon and is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan School of Social Work where she obtained her MSW. She has educational and work experience in community health programming, case management in an outpatient clinic setting, health related resource development projects, and research projects on social injustices and health care access. Her passions lie in advocacy, grassroots organizing, trauma-informed care, and community wellness. In her spare time, Mariah enjoys adventures in the wilderness, crafting, and spending quality time with family. She is currently in the search for a dachshund and learning how to play guitar.

Mariah aspires to work alongside tribal members and community partners to improve public policy and community programs to protect Native children and preserve extended family units, culture, and tribal sovereignty.

# Being of Service to Community

NICWA's vision for Native children to have access to community-based, culturally appropriate services. Who provides those services? Oftentimes it's those who work in the field of social work. Our primary constituency has always been tribal and urban Indian social service programs that serve Native children and families, and—in particular—the staff who work with Native children and families. In light of this issue of *NICWA News* and the theme “Being of Service to Community,” we asked experienced social workers from our board of directors to share the best advice they received regarding social work, to talk about their mentors, and describe what being of service to community means to them and their work. Here's what they had to share:



**Tessa K. Baldwin (*Inupiaq*), LMSW, CDC-I, Director of Public Safety for the Northwest Arctic Borough, NICWA Board Member**

“Social work is a profession you are able to do so much in! I started out working as a therapist in my own community in rural Alaska which then led me to continue to serve my community in a politically appointed position. Social work really equipped me to move forward in both professions by giving me the skills necessary to move my community forward. I would encourage anyone who is passionate about moving their communities forward to consider social work!

I grew up in rural Alaska. This is where my family has come from for 10,000 years. After graduating with my MSW, I decided to move back to my community because I not only had the responsibility to my tribal community but I am passionate about the social issues Alaska Natives/ American Indians face. I wanted to ensure that my future children do not have to live with the symptoms of historical trauma—like, domestic violence, sexual assault, and high rates of suicide. Social work equips you to see these issues from macro and micro lenses and come up with solutions.

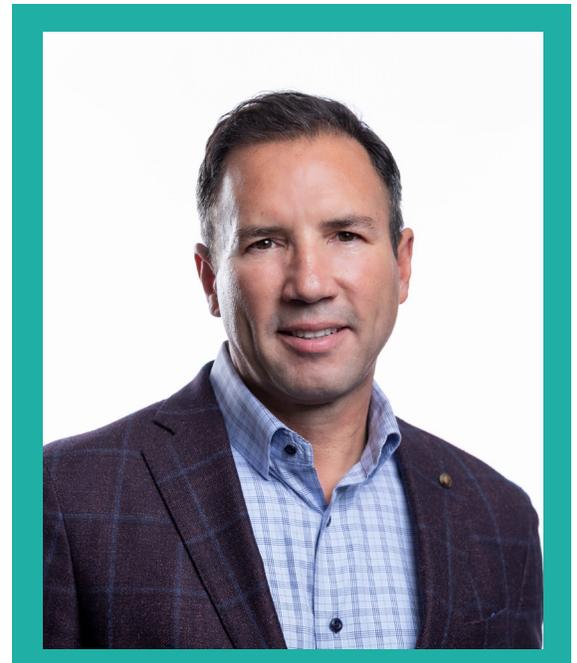
I had many, many mentors in my career. From elders in my own community to people who ensured I got up and moved forward every day in graduate school. It truly takes a village to raise a child, and my story is no different!

”

“When something is presented to us, whatever the case, it's necessary to listen to the arguments presented, research the evidence, understand the issue, and be diligent in our own research. Many times, our actions and/ or the decisions we make impact more than one person, and to the best of our abilities, we should always be aware of the intended and unintended consequences of those decisions. So question everything. Always ask “why?,” and listen to your gut.

I don't necessarily have one mentor. My entire life, people have provided me with kindness, insight, guidance, and opportunities. However, if I had to choose, I would have to say my parents, who taught me to treat people with kindness, be supportive of others, and treat others with respect.

I believe there is goodness in everyone, and it may be up to us to help others to be aware of this goodness. I don't mind my work being considered “service to community,” but I believe community starts with one “you,” and in order for community to grow “you” must be able to accept others and their faults. When you are able to understand each other and respect each other, “your community” will grow. I am involved in many communities based on various variables and factors. I consider them all part of my community.

”

**Robert McGhee (*Poarch Band of Creek Indians*), MSW, MBA, Chief Governmental and Public Affairs Officer/Vice Chairman, NICWA Board Member**



**Stephanie Weldon (Yurok Tribe),  
MSW, Office of Tribal Affairs Director,  
California Department of Social  
Services, NICWA Board Member**

“People have the power to change, and being a social worker requires helping people believe in themselves, creating opportunities for connection, advocating, and ensuring cultural and tribal connections to identity and community. It is important to be upfront, direct, patient, creative, and, most importantly, be consistent and follow through. Often you will have to advocate and inform non-Native people of the strengths, cultural worldview, and experiences of tribal and Native American people.

My mentors were many of the women in my family, most importantly my grandmother and mother. They taught me the importance of hard work, responsibility to community and the future generations, and perseverance. They both worked hard to serve and advocate for Indian communities and tribes in different ways. My grandmother worked to ensure our ceremonies and language continued and were instilled in all of her children and grandchildren's lives. She taught me the importance of forgiveness and the responsibility to help and love one another.

As Indian people it is our responsibility to take care of each other and our community. Being of service means helping those that may be in need as individuals or advocating and creating change so our families/communities can heal from trauma. Being of service also means working to ensure that our existence and traditional ways of being continues for many generations. I utilize my skills to advocate for change within systems to serve Indians and tribes equitably, fairly, and culturally responsively. I was taught it is my responsibility to contribute to the well-being of our community in the present and for future generations.”

## **What Does *Being of Service to Community* Mean to You? Essay Contest**

NICWA is launching an international essay contest for social workers. With the prompt, “What does being of service to community mean to you?”, we encourage those working in the field of social work to write to inspire and encourage people to consider joining our profession. Share about your path to social work, the mentors in your life, and/or the best advice you've received about working in the field of social work. Remind others of the important work social workers do for children, families, and communities every day.

Three winners will each be awarded a \$100 Visa gift card, and excerpts of their essays will be featured in the 2022 Summer NICWA News issue. The essay contest is open to all current students of social work and experienced social workers. **Entries must be submitted by June 1, 2022 at <https://bit.ly/BeingofServicetoCommunity>.** Questions? Contact [communications@nicwa.org](mailto:communications@nicwa.org).



# The Cultural Significance of Service

By Terry Cross



Over the last 20 years, NICWA has been engaged in community-based participatory research. In several projects tribes or Native organizations have asked us to develop instruments to help them evaluate a program or activity. We always start with questions about desired outcomes. Four different projects started with the following questions: “What is a healthy Native youth?” “What is a healthy relationship?” “What is a healthy family?” and “What does it mean to be mentally healthy and well?” In our culturally based approach to research and evaluation, we always sort the answers around the [relational worldview](#) and look for the most important things to measure. Consistently across many projects, the desired outcomes for health and wellness included service to community. A healthy Native youth is of service to their community, a healthy couple is of service together, a healthy family works together in service to others, and to be mentally healthy, one is connected, and of service, to others. In reviewing the literature about other Indigenous research, we have found that connectedness to family, community, culture, and the land are associated with positive health and behavioral health outcomes. We have come to understand that service is one way that connectedness is manifested.

In the No-face legend of the Seneca, a hero’s journey in which a small doll attempts to win back the faces of all of her kind after they are taken away as punishment for the vanity of one doll, the main character takes time out of her journey to save a village from starvation, to save the spirit of the corn from a withering drought, to defeat a stone giant who threatens the people, and to battle an evil sorceress to save the old man who made her. In the end she feels no closer

to finding her face than when she begins, but at her lowest point everyone that she has helped gathers around her and in gratitude for her service paint her a face. In the legend, I believe, identity is represented by the metaphor of the face. The No-face doll finds her identity in selfless service to others. However, it takes the relationship with those she has helped to show her real identity.

I chose a life career in social work, not really knowing why. I have always said that with my White father who was a public servant with a strong work ethic and my compassionate Seneca mother who seldom said no to others in need, we were bound to have social worker in the family. In social work, and child welfare, I found my calling. I had no idea it was so intertwined with my cultural identity as an Indigenous man, a Seneca of the Bear Clan. For me, Indigenous social work became a life of service that has given me far more than it has taken. I am writing this article in hopes to persuade others to explore this path. Who knows what stone giants you might defeat?

## Grandfamilies Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center

NICWA has partnered with Generations United (GU) over the past several years to improve culturally appropriate services to kinship families and grandfamilies. Kinship and grandfamilies are incredibly important supports to healthy Native communities, and we are happy to once again partner with GU on a new national technical assistance center: Grandfamilies and Kinship Support Network. The goal of our work together is to increase capacity and effectiveness of tribes, states, and community organizations to serve and support kinship and grandfamilies, keeping more children safely at home with their extended family and connected to their community and culture.

As part of this work, NICWA will convene a half-day virtual event on June 7, 2022, providing an opportunity to build relationships across agencies and service providers, raise awareness of opportunities for coordination and cooperation, engage in peer learning around culturally appropriate practices, and create the networks needed for high impact work. All tribes and tribal organizations are invited to join us for this free event. Stay tuned for more information. Subscribe to NICWA emails and follow us on our social media channels. For more information, contact Alexis Contreras at [alexis@nicwa.org](mailto:alexis@nicwa.org).



## Healing from Indian Boarding Schools

In the last issue, we covered the news from 2021 surrounding the discovery of unmarked graves at five boarding (also known as residential) school campuses in Canada and the reconciliation efforts between Canadians and Indigenous peoples. We also shared the action beginning in the U.S. with the [Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative](#). This initiative includes collecting records and information related to the Department of Interior's own oversight and implementation of the Indian boarding school program, consultations with tribal nations regarding protecting identified burial sites, and a report on the investigation to Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland. It is long overdue that the U.S. acknowledge the impact of the country's boarding school policies.

Given this recent news, you may be reading and researching more about boarding schools. Are you having conversations with your family or your community about Indian boarding schools? Is it bringing to life conversations about the impact on your family or community? The ongoing news about discoveries of human remains using ground-penetrating radar and discussion of your own family's and community's experience with boarding schools can bring on a new wave of collective historical trauma. We collected a list of resources for you, your family, and your community as these discussions may come up.

### Background information:

Watch: [How the US stole thousands of Native American children](#)

Read: [Healing Voices Volume 1: A Primer on American Indian and Alaska Native Boarding Schools in the U.S.](#)



**40<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**  
**PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN CONFERENCE**

Attend: Join us at the [virtual 40th Annual Protecting Our Children Conference](#) on Wednesday, April 6th at 8:30 a.m. Pacific Time to participate in the plenary session, **Indian Boarding Schools: Working Together for Meaningful Change**. There, panelists will discuss the history and context of colonization in the U.S. and the shared history with nations across the globe such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand. The panel will include sharing the work of several organizations, dozens of communities, and federal government bodies creating opportunities for truth-telling and individual, family, and community healing from the century of Indian boarding school policies implemented in the U.S.

### Healing resources:

[National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition Resource List for Trauma Responses](#)

[First Alaskans Institute \(2019\). How We Heal Toolkit](#)

What other resources might you, your family, or your community need regarding healing from Indian boarding schools? Please reach out to us and let us know by emailing [info@nicwa.org](mailto:info@nicwa.org).

## Child Welfare Redesign Listening Sessions

Last year, NICWA held nine virtual listening sessions with tribal nation representatives and tribal citizens to learn more about the experiences and perspectives of American Indian and Alaska Native people involved in the child welfare system. The participants were asked questions regarding their experiences and thoughts for addressing concerns related to the current child welfare system in the United States and how to support participants in advocating for change. While there were many distinct differences in the findings among the different regions, the similarities between the listening sessions provide helpful information in understanding the needs of Indian Country in child welfare redesign efforts.

A number of shared values were evident in the listening sessions. Extended family was seen as an important support to Native families who are navigating the child welfare system, indicating that extended family- both Native and non-Native- should be engaged early and often when working with child welfare families. Culture and connection to community were

also highly valued and should be incorporated into child welfare practice, recognizing that not only do social workers play a role in keeping children safe and ensuring cultural connections, but all community members have an important role to play. Strengths in the community can be utilized beyond just out-of-home placements. Having a connection to that community gives families access to strengths and supports that they do not hold on their own and helps them to build them. [Read the full summary of findings here.](#)



# Trainings and Events



## 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN CONFERENCE

Each year, NICWA hosts the largest national gathering on American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) child advocacy issues. With a special milestone this year, we are reflecting on the theme of “Homecoming” and 40 years of connecting for our children. While we hoped to meet in person in Orlando, Florida with our sponsor Seminole Tribe of Florida, we will stay safe and conduct another virtual conference, with the spirit of tropical Florida still reflected in our branding by Seminole artist Erica Deitz.

No matter where we work, travel, or live, home remains the place where we feel connected. Homecoming, or coming back to our place of origin, also implies connecting to our past in appreciation of where we’ve come from, the people whose hard work and perseverance made this community life possible, and gratitude to the Creator for our existence and daily experience.

For 40 years, the Protecting Our Children Conference has been a home for those who serve our children and families to gather. Join us to hear keynotes on these topics among 70+ other inspiring workshops and earn continuing education units. Thank you to our host sponsor, Seminole Tribe of Florida, for making this work possible.

Learn more about the agenda and registration at [www.nicwa.org/conference](http://www.nicwa.org/conference).

## April Virtual Training Institute Featuring Positive Indian Parenting

Join us April 18-21, 2022, for one of our most popular training courses.

Positive Indian Parenting prepares tribal and non-tribal child welfare personnel to train American Indian and Alaska Native parents using a culturally specific approach. Register at [www.nicwa.org/training-institutes/](http://www.nicwa.org/training-institutes/).

Stay tuned for details on our training institutes for June in Palm Springs and September in Niagara Falls.

## New and Improved Resources

As part of our ongoing commitment to providing consistent and timely responses to requests for information through the ICWA Crisis Response and Family Advocacy Program, we have updated and expanded resources on our website. In our last issue of *NICWA News*, we shared updates to one of our core resources created to help caseworkers address ICWA compliance, the *Guide to ICWA Compliance*.

We are excited to share two new Indian Child Welfare Act resources that have been updated on our website:

**ICWA Doesn't Apply to My Child Welfare Case – What Other Help Can I Receive?**

**Indian Child Welfare Act: A Families Guide**

You can find, download, and share these resources at [www.nicwa.org/service-providers/](http://www.nicwa.org/service-providers/).

### ICWA Doesn't Apply to My Child Welfare Case. What Other Help Can I Receive?

A Publication of the National Indian Child Welfare Association

This brochure is not a substitute for legal counsel. You should always consult a lawyer for advice on any legal matter relating to ICWA or child custody issues.

Note: The terms "Indian" and "American Indian/Alaska Native" are used interchangeably throughout this document. Additionally, the term "tribe" includes all federally recognized Alaska Native village and those located in the United States.

**ICWA THE "GOLD STANDARD" OF CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE**

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was established due to the extremely high rates of Indian children being removed from their homes under the Indian Child Welfare Program, "ICWAP." You, our AI/AN allies, are not immune to best child welfare practice. Many members of Indian child welfare professionals have been trained in ICWA and its requirements. ICWA also requires that Indian children and tribes be addressed as in state child welfare systems and that Indian children be connected to their families and tribal culture.

ICWA has been called the "gold standard" of child welfare for many reasons, one of the most reasons is that ICWA is the only federal law that requires state child welfare and tribal courts to consult with and notify Indian child welfare and tribal courts before removing an Indian child from their family and care. ICWA also requires that ICWA be the "gold standard" of child welfare practice.

Each year NICWA receives over 1,000 calls from both parents and extended family asking for information and child welfare services. Unfortunately, many families that may qualify as American Indian or Alaska Native are not eligible for ICWA's protection.

### The Indian Child Welfare Act: A Family's Guide Answers to Your Questions About ICWA

A Publication of the National Indian Child Welfare Association

This brochure is not a substitute for legal counsel. You should always consult a lawyer for advice on any legal matter relating to ICWA or child custody issues.

Note: The terms "Indian" and "American Indian/Alaska Native" are used interchangeably throughout this document. Additionally, the term "tribe" includes all federally recognized Alaska Native village and those located in the United States.

**WHAT IS ICWA AND WHY WAS IT PASSED?**

The intent of Congress under ICWA was to control the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families. ICWA also requires that Indian children and tribes be addressed as in state child welfare systems and that Indian children be connected to their families and tribal culture.

**WHAT PROTECTIONS DOES ICWA PROVIDE?**

ICWA requires a number of protections for family members who believe that ICWA and state child welfare laws, but it does not mean that Indian children are not eligible for ICWA's protection. ICWA also requires that Indian children and tribes be addressed as in state child welfare systems and that Indian children be connected to their families and tribal culture.

**HOW DOES ICWA PROTECT AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES?**

ICWA applies to the Indian child care system. ICWA also requires that Indian children and tribes be addressed as in state child welfare systems and that Indian children be connected to their families and tribal culture.

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# Membership

## NICWA Membership – A Year in Review:



NICWA's membership program virtually brought people together throughout 2021. During the calendar year, we held 15 webinars which attracted over 600 attendees. We also had the great privilege of partnering with six different organizations to showcase and highlight their incredible work. The most watched NICWA member webinar in 2021 was Healing from the Trauma of Indian

Boarding Schools, which was presented by [The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition](#) and had over 110 attendees. The session included important information about history, experience, and healing. At NICWA, we prioritize feedback from our constituents, and we were thrilled when 188 people completed our recent Listening Survey! Of the 188 participants, 91 were members, and 80% of survey participants marked ICWA and child welfare as critical topics. Turning this data into deliverables for membership is part of what keeps our work strong, and we wouldn't be here without our supporters.

With the rest of the year ahead of us, we are working to connect members to resources surrounding the ongoing Brackeen vs. Haaland lawsuit by partnering with [Native American Rights Fund](#) on a member webinar, and we have a few special presentations in the works, so stay tuned!



## NICWA Members at Protecting Our Children Conference

The virtual 40th Annual Protecting Our Children Conference presents the opportunity for NICWA to learn more about our members. Whether it's the feedback shared in sessions or the answers to our annual [member profile survey](#), the more we get to know you, the better we can support you as members. By filling out the [member profile survey](#), you provide us with valuable information which informs everything from the webinars we provide to the content of our e-bulletin. If you needed another reason to fill out the survey, members who are attending conference and complete the survey by midnight on April 15, 2022, will be entered into the drawing to win a beautiful Pendleton blanket.

Survey link: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/85PPXNF](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/85PPXNF)

During conference, we will also celebrate long-time NICWA members, who have championed NICWA's work for decades, as well as the Member of the Year. The annual membership meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. on Monday, April 4th. [Register](#) for and attend the conference to join us!

[Access Member Portal](#)



## NICWA News

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## HOMECOMING: 40 YEARS OF CONNECTING FOR OUR CHILDREN

Our ancestors, in their villages and camps, often traveled to neighboring places to visit relatives, replenish supplies, celebrate seasons and hunts, and visit to enjoy each other's company and share news. This physical movement was part of the cycle of their calendars, something to anticipate and look forward to. Through these relationships and interdependence, our peoples were sustained over generations. Similarly, today, no matter where we work, travel, or live, home remains the place where we feel connected. For 40 years, the Protecting Our Children Conference has been a home for those who serve our children and families to gather.

Homecoming, or coming back to our place of origin, also implies connecting to our past in appreciation of where we've come from, the people whose hard work and perseverance made this community life possible, and gratitude to the Creator for our existence and daily experience. This conference is an opportunity for reflection and stock-taking. We can observe where we are now, the characteristics of this place—both literally and figuratively, and the status of our people. This is a chance to affirm what we do and to adjust practices so that we may serve families better.

This homecoming will provide participants an opportunity to chart our self-determined future, to plan for the physical and social movement to create the change needed to sustain our people. Our advocacy is a call for justice and equity, the principles that guide our future. Our communities call for the structural change that will enable us to transform our helping systems and services to better support and heal children and families. Our self-determined futures and the well-being of our citizens are at stake.



# REGISTER TODAY

