

NICWA NEWS

Quarterly Newsletter • Summer 2022

The **LATEST**
INSIDE

*Coming Together
in a Good Way*





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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(Participants at NICWA's first in-person training since 2020)

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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

Message from the Executive Director

Dear NICWA Members, Sponsors, Donors, and Friends,

Welcome to the summer issue of *NICWA News*. This issue is entitled “Coming Together in a Good Way,” and this theme has been on my mind as kids take a break from school; families and communities undertake seasonal summer activities like berry picking, fish camp, and culture camp; and US Department of the Interior (DOI) Secretary Deb Haaland launches her year-long [Road to Healing tour](#). Secretary Haaland’s tour is an outgrowth of DOI’s Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative and the [Volume 1](#) report released in May 2022. This year-long tour across the country will provide an opportunity for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian survivors of the federal Indian boarding school system to share their stories, help connect communities with trauma-informed support, and facilitate collection of a permanent oral history.

“Coming together” as a family, a specific place-based community, or as a community of advocates regionally or nationally is how we show up for one another, how we stand together, and how we support each other. Coming together is how we join our individual gifts and talents to become more than just the sum of our strengths. Coming together, we can do things that are greater than what any of us can do alone. Coming together is how we lessen our burdens and multiply our resources.

To me, doing something “in a good way” means approaching something with a good mind, a right way of being, honoring protocol, and even doing it in a humble and prayerful way.

This summer as we come together at conferences, trainings, community gatherings, pow wows, and family get-togethers and vacations for the purposes of enjoying one another’s company, supporting one another, learning together, practicing our cultural teachings and ceremonies, healing, nurturing our children, feeding our bodies, and more, let us come together in a good way for the benefit of all of our people. We can all look for opportunities to come together in a good way, to nourish one another, and in so doing, to nourish ourselves.

With gratitude for our opportunities to come together in a good way in service to our children and families,

Sarah J. Kastelic

Sarah Kastelic, PhD, MSW
(Alutiiq)



Legislation to Establish a Commission to Examine the Boarding School System Gathers Support

The background:

On September 30, 2021, Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Sharice Davids introduced companion bills entitled the 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 House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples of the United States held a [hearing](#) to receive testimony on the legislation on May 12, 2022, and approved the bill in the full Natural Resources Committee on June 15, 2022. The bill is now ready for consideration by the full House of Representatives. The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held a [hearing](#) on their bill on June 22, 2022. [NICWA submitted written testimony](#) for both hearings that focused on the intersection of the Indian boarding schools and experience of Native children and families in state and private child welfare systems.

What the legislation does:

The legislation establishes a commission to document and investigate Indian boarding school policies and practices in the United States. The commission members are appointed by Senate and House of Representatives leadership and the president. The legislation also establishes an advisory committee to provide advice and recommendations to the commission comprised of representatives that include, but are not limited to:

- National Indian organizations, federal agencies, and members of federally recognized tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations
- Mental health, healthcare, or Native healing practitioners that have experience working with descendants of boarding school students
- Family members of students that attended boarding schools, current teachers, and students who have attended a boarding school in the past or currently are attending one

What the commission will do:

The commission will hold public hearings to gather evidence and will make recommendations on how to address and heal the historical and intergenerational trauma caused by the Indian boarding school policies and practices.

What tribes and advocates for Native children can do:

Contact your congressional representatives and urge them to sign on as co-sponsors to the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. To find a list of co-sponsors, visit boardingschoolhealing.org/truthcommission/. Find your congressperson and two state senators at congress.gov/members/find-your-member.

Sample Email Template

Hello,

My name is **[YOUR NAME]**. I'm a constituent living in **[CITY, STATE]**. I'm emailing to ask **[YOUR CONGRESSPERSON/SENATOR'S NAME]** to sign on as a co-sponsor for the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

This legislation is critical to documenting and revealing the truth about the Indian boarding school policies and the lasting impact of individual and collective trauma that was imposed upon Native communities. This legislation is vital in furthering the process of healing for all Native people.

Thank you!
[YOUR NAME]

Briefing Finishes in *Haaland v. Brackeen*

Oral Arguments Scheduled for November 9

Briefing with the legal parties in the *Haaland v. Brackeen* case concluded in August with the legal parties defending the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) (federal government and tribal intervenors) filing their briefs on August 12, 2022. Supporting amicus briefs were filed on August 19, 2022.

The Supreme Court received 21 amicus briefs in favor of upholding ICWA from tribes and Indian organizations, members of Congress, state attorneys general, constitutional and Indian law scholars, Native women, and leading child and family advocacy groups.

The Supreme Court announced the hearing date for oral arguments, where the legal parties will argue their positions, scheduled for November 9, 2022. More detailed information on the case can be found at www.nicwa.org/policy-update. You can also find out how to follow the Protect ICWA Campaign at the Linktree in the Protect ICWA Campaign Instagram (@ProtectICWA): linktr.ee/protecticwa.

SIGN THE PROTECT ICWA PETITION

Sign the Petition to Protect Native Kids

With the Supreme Court hearing arguments for *Haaland v. Brackeen* on November 9, it's more important than ever to bring visibility to ICWA and to show support for the law before the Supreme Court issues its decision.

ICWA is the gold standard in child welfare policy and practice that keeps kids with their families and communities whenever possible. When Native kids are removed from Native communities, they are being robbed of their ancestry, rights as tribal members, familial networks, and cultures. Our connection to community and culture gives us a sense of identity, belonging, and a connection to something much larger than ourselves.

Unfortunately, ICWA is not a mainstream issue. Outside of Native peoples, child welfare experts, and some policymakers, ICWA is frequently unknown or misunderstood.

By signing this petition, we're asking people to do three things:

1. **Pledge** support for ICWA and Native children and families in the impending Supreme Court hearing
2. **Talk** to your friends, family, and colleagues about ICWA to make this case more visible
3. **Educate** yourself on the history of harm Native families have experienced in the U.S. and share your knowledge with others

For more information and resources from the Protect ICWA campaign, visit <https://linktr.ee/protecticwa>.

Meet NICWA's Newest Staff



Mariah Garcia (Piute)

Project Coordinator

Mariah was born and raised in central California and is a descendant of the Numu Kutzadika (Piute) people of Mono Lake as well as Tachi-Yokut. She is a graduate of Humboldt State University, where she received a bachelor's degree in socio-cultural anthropology. Mariah spent those four years intensively studying issues on gender, culture, race, colonialism, language, and power. She also supplemented her coursework with an independent ethnographic research project, an internship, volunteer work, and other extracurriculars. During her time there, Mariah discovered her passion for social justice work, public health, and community building. She is excited to apply her skills, experiences, and passion to her work with NICWA.



Loni Greninger

*Tribal Council Vice Chair
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe*

Each month, NICWA features a member to spotlight. In August, [Loni Greninger](#), tribal council vice chair of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, shared about her family, the sacredness of children in our cultures, and an example of coming together in a good way.

Why did you become a NICWA member?

The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe is a proud supporter of national Indigenous organizations that move priorities forward in Indian Country. As we grew to know NICWA and their mission, we found that it lined up with our mission and vision. When we find those like-minded partners, we do not hesitate to find opportunities together. Jamestown is also proud to call NICWA our technical

advisor in our federal work through Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee and HHS Administration for Children and Families Tribal Advisory Committee. NICWA Director of Government Affairs and Advocacy David Simmons has been providing us excellent service, continuing to allow us to be forefront leaders in our relationships and work with federal and state partners.

What is the most important thing people should know about Native children and families?

It is difficult to communicate the depth of sacredness our children possess. There's a phrase in our S'Klallam language — ʔaʔ nəsxwi ("ah n-swee")—that means "you are my very life." There was one time I happened to be paying attention to how my grandmother was interacting with one of her 12 great-grandchildren. Human language cannot describe the depth of joy and love emitting from her body toward this child. The child was young and couldn't speak yet; she just stared at my grandmother in wonder. The child's very existence brought my grandmother joy! I struggle to describe that joy to you now.

But I think of that phrase; this child brings her life and abundant joy—all 12 of them do, plus her nine grandchildren, and her three children. I think all cultures have a word or phrase that tries to describe this.

In our Native cultures, all children embody a piece of every one of their ancestors; and when they grow up, they walk the earth doing good work for their ancestors, their community, and their descendants. This is why we give them traditional names. In the S'Klallam ways, we receive names of ancestors that we are similar to in strengths, weaknesses, characteristics, and personality. We learn value systems and philosophies passed down from generations; we accept those values wholeheartedly and they compel us to be the family member, community member, or leader that we strive to be while we are here on earth. Our children grow up to work with purpose; every decision they make today must positively affect our children seven generations from now.

I am a physical manifestation of my ancestors from seven generations ago—and so are you!

I love to tell my personal story about my grandfather of seven generations ago. His name was Chief čičməhán ("Cheech-muh-han"). He strived to think about his descendants. I give credit to čičməhán for my very life.

He [stopped a war](#) between my tribe and the local non-Native settlers in the late 1800s. We were outnumbered and he knew it. He instead told our tribe and the settlers that we must learn to co-exist respectfully and responsibly. If the S'Klallams had gone to war, we would have become extinct, and I would not be here today. His leadership decisions saved our tribe, and it set in motion a generational cycle of leaders. A member of my family from every generation after him has stepped into a role of tribal leadership. Here I am today, a child all grown up, putting forward these values.

Will you share with us about Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe's relationship with the State of Washington?

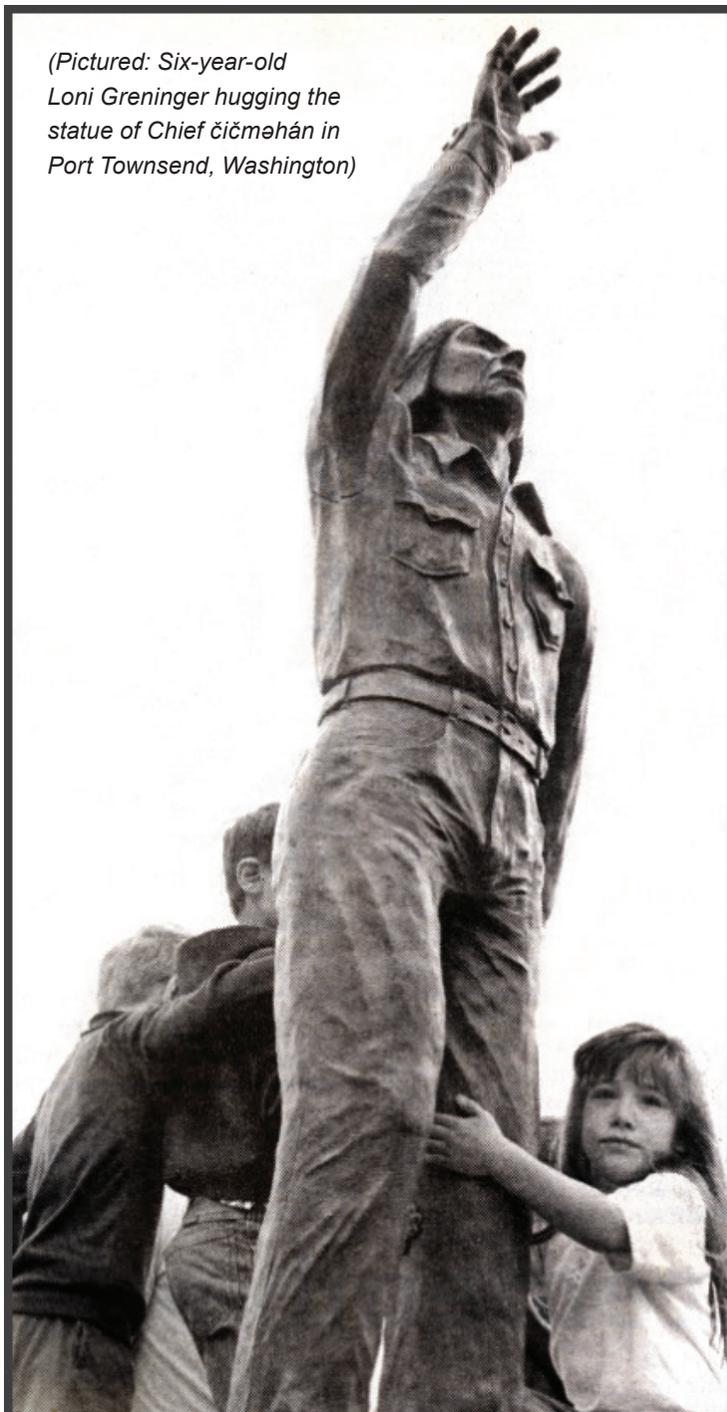
The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe has chosen to partner with the State of Washington in almost all (if not all) realms: gaming, social services, healthcare, behavioral health, corrections, commerce, education, natural resources, agriculture, and public safety and justice. When it comes to child welfare, specifically, we are involved on many levels.

I am grateful to say that Washington State is a forefront leader in working with its tribal governments. While not all relationships are perfect, a lot of work has been done to form trust and momentum.

I currently sit as the tribal co-chair to the Governor's Tribal Leaders Social Services Council; chair of the Washington Department of Social & Health Services Indian Policy Advisory Committee; chair of the Washington Department of Corrections Indian Policy Advisory Committee; co-chair of the Washington Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) Tribal Policy Advisory Committee; and I also sit on the DCYF Governor's Oversight Board as the western Washington tribal representative. Within these governor and agency committees, we discuss successes and barriers to accessing state services on a monthly basis. The committees take on important projects, such as updating the DCYF Indian Child Welfare Manual, so that our state social workers are most successful in complying with ICWA and working with our Native families. At these committees we advocate and create language for laws, legislation, funding, policies, and procedures that are favorable toward our tribal governments and their families.

We provide ongoing education for state agency staff and help develop trainings so that institutional knowledge and history are never forgotten. As recent success was partnering with DCYF to gather more funding from the legislature to strengthen Indian child welfare services. Through this partnership, the legislature provided the full ask of \$20 million dollars. These funds will go toward an increased number of DCYF staff that will focus more solely on ICWA cases, rather than being torn between ICWA and non-ICWA cases.

(Pictured: Six-year-old Loni Greninger hugging the statue of Chief čičməhán in Port Townsend, Washington)



Programs

Coming Together in a Good Way

We are always stronger when we come together. We see this in the 21 amicus briefs recently filed with the Supreme Court in support of ICWA. We see the strength in tribal-state relations (as you'll read Loni Greninger illustrate in the story on page 67).

NICWA has long been committed to maximizing our effectiveness with strategic alliances and strong partnerships while advocating for the well-being of Native children and families. For nearly 40 years, collaboration has been a strategy that has enhanced our strength and expanded our sphere of influence as a national, credible technical expert. Inherent in our mission is partnership with Indian Country—with tribes and tribal organizations. We often approach work naturally with a good mind, a right way of being, honoring protocol, and even doing the work in a humble and prayerful way.

We also partner with many organizations and funders whose mission overlaps with our own but who are not currently focused on serving Native children and families. In these relationships, oftentimes, NICWA is the only Native organization at the table working to ensure that the needs of Native children and families are effectively met. We often face tough questions and work across differences in worldview

and values, coming together to prioritize the needs of Native children and families. Partnership and collaboration only make sense when organizations are aligned enough to work together toward a common purpose. To ensure we do our work in a good way and are transparent about who we are and what we stand for, NICWA shares our collaboration principles with new potential partners at the outset of our relationship. By being explicit, we can decide together whether collaboration makes sense and whether we can work together in a good way for the benefit of Native children and families.

Here are three top principles that NICWA adheres to in collaboration with others:

1. Uphold tribal sovereignty. Respect the self-determination of tribal governments and individuals in all partnerships. At NICWA, we see this show up in community-based services designed and delivered by and for local people.
2. Ensure cultural considerations in all policies. At NICWA, we actively advocate against any child welfare-related policy that would oppose tribal cultural practices for Native children and families.
3. Adhere to a “win-win” or “no deal” philosophy. The collaboration should be beneficial to both parties, and we want to be a full partner in any collaborative venture.



— Alaska Native —
JUSTICE CENTER
Voices for Justice

Tribal Child Welfare Worker Assessment

NICWA has a new partnership with the Alaska Native Justice Center (ANJC). ANJC received a Bureau of Indian Affairs urban Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) grant to host a statewide ICWA conference in September 2023. In preparation, NICWA is developing a self-assessment for tribal child welfare workers to collect data for ANJC about the training needs of tribal workers. This fall NICWA will develop the online survey and distribute it broadly to tribal child welfare workers across the state. Afterwards, NICWA will analyze the data and write a report to ANJC with recommended topics for the conference ANJC will plan with partner Agnew::Beck Consulting. The project staff met in July to kick off the project, which is being led by Casey Groat, tribal justice facilitator at ANJC.

NICWA has experience with this kind of work. When we partner with a tribal community to conduct a child welfare program assessment, one component of assessing the

strengths and gaps of the program is to look at the capacity of the workforce. We review the tribe's programs and services and the job descriptions of the staff. We look at staff qualifications and talk with them about their capacity to meet the needs of their clients. As tribes take on new programs and services or shift their approach to be more focused on family engagement, staff often have professional development needs, and NICWA uses a variety of tools to help departmental and program leadership identify staff needs and develop a training plan to meet them.

By supporting tribal child welfare workers in gaining knowledge and skills to better serve families, workers' job satisfaction and tenure in their positions increase and families are better supported by workers more equipped to meet their needs. Ongoing support and opportunities for growth for the tribal child welfare workforce is critical to effectively serving families and helping more children to stay safely home with their families.

Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care

Having a basic knowledge and understanding of cultural competence is vital in coming together in a good way and serving families. A collaborative relationship between agencies and families fosters creative approaches to complex issues and leads to shared planning where the needs of the families we serve remain at the heart of the work. Agencies that work with families are diverse, and no two are the same.

The term “cultural competence” has evolved over the last 40 year. Many authors have used such terms as *cultural responsiveness*, *diverse integrative programming*, or *multi-cultural response*, just to name a few, to further explore or bring focus to certain aspects of the original concepts. Although specific terms may vary, the original tenants of cultural competence remain as guideposts for effective services. NICWA Founder and Senior Advisor Terry Cross co-authored a seminal work about cultural competence in a publication entitled *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care* (1989). He writes:

“Attitudes, policies, and practices are three major arenas wherein development can and must occur if agencies are to move toward cultural competence. Attitudes change to become less ethnocentric and biased. Policies change to become more flexible and culturally impartial. Practices become more congruent with the culture of the client from initial contact through termination.

Positive movement along the continuum results from an aggregate of factors at various levels of an agency's structure. Every level of an agency (board members, policymakers, administrators, practitioners, and consumers) can and must participate in the process. At each level the principles of valuing difference, self-assessment, understanding dynamics, building cultural knowledge, and practice adaptations can be applied. When, at each level, progress is made in implementing the principles, and as attitudes, policies, and practices change in the desired direction, an agency becomes more culturally competent.”

You can read Terry's article here at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED330171.pdf>.

For additional reading on the evolution of the concept by Terry Cross, see the entry for *Cultural Competence* in the Encyclopedia of Social Work at the National Association of Social Workers Press and Oxford University Press: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.013.95>.

Highlight of Summer Activities for Native Families

The summer season is an important time for cultural activities in Native communities. Summer is an opportunity to share our tribal lifeways and a time where youth out of school can experience connections to culture. It's a time of the celebration of summer solstice, ceremony, pow wows, harvest of crops, and the energy we gain from the long hours of sun and daylight before returning to fall.

Below are some tribes and partner organizations that have provided culturally based summer camps and activities for Native children and families. One example is Comanche Nation hosting a showing of the movie *Prey* in the Comanche language. Below are links to several other examples close to NICWA's homebase in the Pacific Northwest and nationwide. These may spark ideas for your own community programming and what the coming seasons or next summer may bring.

Activities In Oregon and Washington:

- Puyallup Tribe [Mini Canoe Journey](#)
- Suquamish Tribe [Chief Seattle Days](#)
- Cowlitz Indian Tribe Annual [Elder Fishing Trip](#)
- Cowlitz Indian Tribe [Language Weekends](#)
- Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community [Contest Pow Wow](#)
- Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians [Social Pow Wow](#)

Summer camps and opportunities:

- Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission [Salmon Camp at Camp Namanu, Oregon](#)
- Alutiiq Culture Camp, [Dig Afognak, in Afognak, Alaska](#)
- [American Indian Youth Enrichment](#) in St. Paul, Minnesota
- [USDA Native Youth Resource Guide](#) offers information on USDA scholarship opportunities, internship programs, cultural summer camps for Native youth.

Trainings



Back Together: Our First In-Person Training since 2020

In June, NICWA successfully hosted our first in-person training event since February 2020. Over 30 participants gathered for a training institute on Positive Indian Parenting (PIP), and over 20 participants were trained on Understanding the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in sunny Palm Springs, California. The sense of community in being together again was seen and felt by all. Participants including First Nations in Canada and our Alaska Native relatives networked, learned the latest updates about the *Haaland v. Brackeen* case, and enjoyed each other's company after training hours on the resort's beautiful property and beyond. Based on our feedback survey results, participants reported confidence in their new knowledge and abilities, commented on how helpful and beneficial to learning styles the roleplaying activity was, and shared plans for bringing this valuable information back to their communities. One PIP participant said that "the most important part of training was the sharing of the group, stories, and personal experiences." An Understanding ICWA participant shared that this training was a "refresher to what I already knew but very much needed to hear again."

Whether you are learning this important information for the first time, or back for a refresher training to reignite your passion for child welfare, we are grateful for your advocacy on behalf of Native children and families. We look forward to our next in-person training in Niagara Falls, New York, where participants will have the opportunity to train in PIP or ICWA at the beautiful, tribally owned Seneca Niagara Resort and Casino.

See you in Niagara Falls and Portland, Oregon

With the pandemic, NICWA shifted our fully in-person programming to offer virtual trainings to fit the professional development needs of NICWA members. Together, we learned new software, shared our skills, taught one another how to bead and weave over Zoom, and collectively remembered to take ourselves off mute and let our voices be heard for Native children and families.

At NICWA, we know the importance of coming together in a good way, both virtually and in person. After many successful virtual trainings and analyzing our post-training participant evaluation data, the events and training team is excited to welcome you back to in-person training.

Find out more information by visiting www.nicwa.org/training-institutes. We are looking forward to coming together in a good way, cultural activities, laughter, and knowledge as a learning community.

September 20–22, 2022

Training Institute in Niagara Falls, New York

Participants can choose between two trainings:

Understanding the Indian Child Welfare Act or our popular train-the-trainer course, Positive Indian Parenting. All attendees will hear the latest updates on the *Haaland v. Brackeen* case and will be well-equipped to take this information back to share with their communities.

January 31–February 2, 2023

Training Institute in Portland, Oregon

Participants can choose between two trainings:

Qualified Expert Witness or Cross-Cultural Skills in Indian Child Welfare. The Portland Training Institute is a great way to engage with staff in NICWA's hometown.

About ICWA Resource

Need a resource to talk about *Haaland v. Brackeen* and the importance of ICWA? Download this flyer about the case and why it will be a defining issue in 2022 and print or share it digitally. Visit www.nicwa.org/latest-news/ to read *NICWA News* digitally and download the flyer by clicking on the next page.

THE FIGHT TO PROTECT THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT (ICWA)



ICWA protects American Indian and Alaska Native kids in child welfare proceedings by keeping them in the care of extended family or tribes whenever possible. In **Brackeen v. Haaland**, a small group of opponents will argue in front of the Supreme Court that those protections should be taken away—and the challenge will have far-reaching impacts.

Here's what you need to know about this case, which will be a defining issue of 2022:

ICWA IS NECESSARY.

1 ICWA puts best practice into law.

Experts agree that placing kids with extended families or communities when possible is preferred. These placements give kids a connection to the people and places they come from. ICWA protects identity, familial network, and sense of belonging—things that all children need.

2 Family separation is a modern-day threat.

Systemic, intergenerational trauma and neglect coupled with bias has meant that Native children still enter the child welfare system in disproportionate numbers. 15% of Native children can expect to enter foster care at some point before their 18th birthday compared to about 5% of white children and they are often not placed with relatives or other Native families, even when such placements are available and appropriate.

3 ICWA exists to curb and heal generations of harm.

When ICWA was passed in the 1970s, research found that 25%-35% of all Native children were being separated from their parents, extended families, and communities by state child welfare and private adoption agencies; of these, 85% were placed outside of their families and communities even when fit and willing relatives were available. The family separation crisis compounded nearly 200 years of active cultural genocide in the boarding school system, starting in the early 1800s. ICWA has acted as a much-needed reform on the practices that have separated Native children from their families for centuries.

WHAT DO ICWA CHALLENGERS WANT?

Not the well-being of Native children.

ICWA opponents have two things in common: deep pockets and minimal contact with Native tribes, organizations, leaders, or peoples. ICWA opponents include a conservative think tank, a law firm that represents Big Oil, and the State of Texas. ICWA supporters include 486 tribal nations, 59 Native-led organizations, 11 child welfare organizations, and 26 states. One side is best suited to represent the interests of Native kids; the other is best suited to undermine them.

Not respect for tribal sovereignty.

In a blatant and intentional misunderstanding of sovereignty, ICWA's opponents argue that the law is unconstitutional because it creates a different set of rules for Native kids—that is, they say it is racist. Not so. Tribal Nations are sovereign nations like France or Japan or Mexico; we are federally recognized entities with inherent power to self-govern and thousands of years' experience doing so. Tribal citizenship confers a political classification that allows for self-determination in our affairs.

A coordinated attack on tribal rights.

These malicious attacks are familiar; this time, our enemies are attacking ICWA so they can use Native kids and cultures as a backdoor to ultimately undermine the rights of tribes. If the Supreme Court undermines Tribal Nations' sovereign rights, our opponents could set legal precedent that has serious consequences for other issues like tribal gaming and land rights. A challenge to ICWA is a threat to tribal rights.

Want to stay in touch with the Protect ICWA Campaign? [Click here.](#)



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NICWA's 41st Annual Protecting Our Children Conference

April 2–5, 2023
Present in Reno, Nevada

Call for Presentations opens on **Friday, October 7, 2022**

Apply by **Friday, December 2, 2022**

Visit www.nicwa.org/call-for-presentations