



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

NICWA's 45th Annual Conference **Rooted in Ancestral Wisdom, Weaving Sacred Connections** **April 4-7, 2027**

This year's conference theme, "Rooted in Ancestral Wisdom, Weaving Sacred Connections," reminds us that around the world, since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have developed and passed down weaving practices that are central to their cultures. Specific local practices rely on the abundant gifts of the Creator and are woven together with our teachings to create baskets, blankets, and clothing to protect and sustain our people. Like the weaving of our communities, advocates for Native children bring together many strands—family, Tribal community, culture, language, and ancestral wisdom—to create nurturing networks and trusted systems that hold children and families with care and love.

The 45th Annual Protecting Our Children Conference theme, ***Rooted in Ancestral Wisdom, Weaving Sacred Connections***, calls us to remember why we do this work: to continue weaving our children into our cultures. It reminds us that protecting Native children is a sacred responsibility entrusted to us by our ancestors and guided by our values. When we are rooted in who we are, we strengthen the elements and relationships that help children thrive.

This theme invites us to weave stronger connections across families, Tribal Nations, service systems, and communities so Native children are surrounded by the care, belonging, and cultural knowledge they need to grow strong.

Children are the heart of our communities and all that we do should be with them in mind. In that spirit, we gather to learn from one another to interlace our best practices and innovative approaches together to renew our collective commitment to children, families, and communities—today and for the generations yet to come.

Together, we weave sacred connections that help ensure no child, family, or community is left without support. Rooted in ancestral wisdom and joined in shared purpose, we continue this work with humility, strength, and hope.



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

Call for Presentations

NICWA is now accepting proposals for our 2027 conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. **Proposals must be submitted by October 30, 2026.** NICWA will host a webinar for those wanting to learn more about presenting at our event on September 17, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., Pacific Time. The webinar will be recorded and made available after the event.

This year, NICWA will host over 85 workshops selected to lead vigorous dialogue and share innovative ideas. Presenters are the heart and soul of our conference, and we are excited to review this year's exciting submissions.

Workshop Formats:

Our 90-minute workshops offer an opportunity for robust dialogue about current research, advocacy efforts, policy implications, and other important lessons learned. NICWA prioritizes creative, innovative workshop topics and values Tribal involvement. Workshops should focus on child welfare, foster care or adoption services, children's mental health, judicial or legal affairs, and/or youth and family involvement or support this year's theme of "Rooted in Ancestral Wisdom, Weaving Sacred Connections."

New this year: This year we are excited to offer a new 45-minute workshop format. These community highlight mini workshops are a great opportunity to share an innovative and promising practice that you would like to highlight and share about. These mini workshops can highlight current research results that have led to systems change within your community, advocacy efforts showing promising results for families, and culturally centered strategies being utilized for prevention or reunification. The community highlights will take place on Monday, April 5th, from 11:15 a.m. –12 p.m., and presenters must be available to present at that time.

In 2027, we are thrilled to welcome an anticipated 1500 attendees to Albuquerque, New Mexico, from April 4–7. We look forward to presentations that highlight best practices, share the latest test research, explore advocacy efforts, examine policy implications and spark meaningful conversations that make a difference for Native children and families.



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

Selection Criteria

NICWA values creative, innovative workshop topics that offer audience engagement and interactivity, as well as new and exciting topics. We prioritize workshops that feature Tribal involvement. Workshops that focus on selling a product are not likely to be selected. We anticipate a highly competitive workshop selection process.

Requirements

Each workshop should comprise up to three presenters. Presenters are required to register for the conference. Discounted registration is available for up to three presenters per workshop. We highly recommend that selected presenters submit their presentation materials in advance of the conference so it can be included in our mobile app and conference agenda.

Screens and projectors will be made available in each workshop room and presenters will be responsible for providing their own laptops and necessary cables to connect to the workshop room projectors. Rooms will be set in theater-style with seats only, no tables. Microphones will be available in each room. Workshops rooms will hold between 80–150 attendees.

Topics

We are seeking proposals regarding the following topic areas that are among the most pertinent to NICWA's conference attendees and that reflect this year's theme in some way. Please select one topical area from below that most adequately reflects the content of your proposed presentation:

Child welfare, foster care, and adoption services Presenters may include child welfare workers, directors, researchers, and staff from Tribal, state, federal, and private programs. Topics could include but are not limited to:

- Culturally responsive assessment tools
- Innovative Tribal Child Welfare best practices in serving families
- Collaboration strategies



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

- Relative caregiving and foster care licensing strategies in meeting Native families
- Methods or strategies in recruiting and supporting the child welfare workforce, including skill building for front line staff and supervisors/leadership development and addressing compassion fatigue and burnout
- Prevention strategies and programs

Children's mental health Presenters may include mental health, psychiatric, behavioral health, youth advocacy, and general health professionals. Topics could include but are not limited to:

- Culturally responsive services in relation to children's and family's mental health and stability
- Culturally responsive substance use treatment approaches
- Best practice programs that serve youth
- Youth programs and prevention
- Strategies for supporting children, youth, and families impacted by mental health or substance misuse

Judicial and legal affairs Presenters may include attorneys, judges, and other legal professionals and advocates; law enforcement professionals; court and legal professionals; Court of Indian Offenses judges and attorneys; CASA workers, guardians ad litem (GALs); and grassroots community organizers. Topics could include but are not limited to:

- Efforts to improve representation of families involved in the child welfare system
- Healing to Wellness court models
- Indian Child Welfare Act implementation strategies from the legal and judicial workforce



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

Youth and family involvement Presenters may include Tribal and public-school administrators, teachers, educators, counselors, and staff; TANF workers; domestic violence workers; substance abuse workers; parents; guardians; elders; and extended family members. Topics could include but are not limited to:

- Promising or best practice strategies that strengthen Indigenous children, youth and families
- Family group decision making
- Effective strategies involving lived experiences to improve child welfare practice

Form Questions

Please list your workshop Title (100 characters or fewer).

Are you submitting a 90-minute or a 45-minute presentation?

Please choose one of the following topics:

Child welfare, foster care, and adoption services

Children's mental health

Judicial and legal affairs

Youth and family involvement

Please submit a short description (500 characters or fewer).

Please be prepared to share 3–5 short objectives. Each objective will be formatted to answer the prompt “As a result of attending this workshop, participants will...”

Please submit a detailed workshop description of 500–1000 words which should include a description of the interactive and/or participatory aspects of your workshop.



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

Does your proposed research workshop include data about a Tribal community (whether the community is identified by name or not)?

If so, how have you secured Tribal approval to present the data in advance of submitting a workshop proposal?

Is your organization a for-profit company?

If so, how will you encourage Tribal involvement.

Does your presentation topic include the discussion of issues related to generational and/or historical traumas?

If so, submit an action plan outlining how they plan to respond to the emotional and/or spiritual needs of participants when issues arise.

Topics covered (please select up to five topics that apply to your presentation)

- For Tribal leaders
- LGBTQIA2S+
- Research
- Education
- ICWA
- Traditional healing
- Legal
- Adult adoptees
- Good for beginners
- Technology
- Case studies
- Best practice
- Family engagement
- Hands-on
- Urban social services
- Tribal social services
- Good for youth audience



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

For each speaker (up to three may be listed):

- First name
- Last name
- Credentials
- Email address
- Company
- Title
- Tribal affiliation (if applicable)
- Work address
- Work phone number
- A profile image (can be added later)
- A biography (1,200 characters or fewer)

Please email Training@nicwa.org with any questions. A webinar for those interested in submitting a proposal will be held on September 17, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. PT.

FAQ

When is the submission deadline?

October 30, 2026

How many presenters can we have per workshop?

A maximum of three presenters will be listed alongside your workshop. Each workshop may receive the discounted presenter registration rate for up to three presenters.

How much is the presenter registration?

Presenter registration is \$399. Save \$99 by paying for your registration before January 1, 2027.

When will I know if my presentation has been accepted?

We will notify lead presenters by December 11, 2026.



Albuquerque, New Mexico | April 4-7, 2027



NICWA

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