



Native American Youth and Family Center
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“Making the Invisible Visible: Native American Children and Youth”

History of Native Americans in Portland

Introducing the Native American Community of Multnomah County

Multnomah County rests on traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other Tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River. The late 18th and early 19th centuries brought disease, genocide, military conflicts, dislocation and rapid change to the indigenous populations of Oregon. Everywhere, Native communities suffered. In 1805, the population of Chinooks in Oregon was approximately 15,000, but by 1855, there were only 350 Chinook surviving. Similarly, in 1841, 8,800 Kalapuyas lived in Oregon--by 1905, only 130 remained. Some tribes were entirely wiped out during this period, while others lost half or more of their people.

Historic Events:

- Reservations
- General Allotment Act (Dawes Act) (1887)
- Boarding School Policies - mid 1800's to 1960's)
- Movement to Cities
 - World War I
 - World War II
 - Termination (Revocation of Tribal Sovereignty)
 - House Concurrent Resolution No. 108
- Federal Relocation Policy - 1950's
 - Operation Relocation - 1952
- Native-specific community organizations 1960's

ICWA

The ICWA is a federal law that seeks to keep American Indian children with American Indian families. Congress passed ICWA in 1978 in response to the alarmingly high number of Indian children being removed from their homes by both public and private agencies. The intent of Congress under ICWA was to "protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families" (25 U.S.C. § 1902). ICWA sets federal requirements that apply to state child custody proceedings involving an Indian child who is a member of or eligible for membership in a federally recognized tribe.

Historically, an alarmingly high percentage of Indian families in comparison to the general population have been broken up by the often unwarranted removal of their children by non-tribal public and private agencies. A disturbingly high percentage of such children have been placed in non-Indian foster and adoptive homes and institutions. Indian children have a unique political status as members of sovereign tribal governments. Congress, through the Constitution, statutes, treaties, and the general course of dealing with Indian tribes, is charged with the responsibility for the protection and preservation of Indian tribes and their resources, including Indian children. The special political status of Indian tribes, as well as the history of biased treatment of Indian children and families under public and non-Indian private child welfare systems, is the basis for the enactment of ICWA (25 U.S.C. § 1901). (NICWA, 2010)

<http://www.nicwa.org/Indian Child Welfare Act/>

Tribal codes
DHS compliance

Issues facing Native American Youth in Foster Care

- Disproportionality
- Removed from their culture
- Urban Indian Youth with no local tribal ties
- Difficulties with interstate placements or tribal responsibilities
- Multi ethnic – community acceptance and internalized racism
- Limited culturally appropriate placement options
- Lack of specific/reliable data to understand resources and needs of urban and reservation based Native people.
- Reunification
- Aging out of services

Resources

Title VII, ILP programs, CHIF programs (NAYA and NARA), Johnson O’Malley Program through Siletz, NARA A&D Youth program, Bow & Arrow Club, Cedar Bough, NAYA Youth Empowerment Program, Early College Academy, Homeless Youth Outreach

Actions

In Jan 2009 Gov Kitzhaber made an Executive Order to Create a Task Force on Disprportionality in child Welfare in the State of Oregon. The Coalition of Communities of Color has developed a list of recommendations that have been presented to Oregon’s Department of Human services. These are currently under review.

We at NAYA Family Center are working with the Portland Native community to recruit Native Foster Parents and helping them through the DHS certification process and supporting them in their role as foster parents. Foster parents have the opportunity to provide a safe, secure & loving home to a child in need. Native American people traditionally cared for their children through extended families. It was common for relatives, for “Aunties & Uncles” to care for one another’s children in difficult times. Being a foster parent is another way to carry on this tradition and share these values for our future generations, while supporting our children to maintain their Native culture. In the Portland area there are significantly more Native foster children than there are Native foster parents. Many of these children and youth are far away from their tribes and communities and may have lost their connection to their culture. We are working to strengthen community connections.

“Active Efforts” as applied by the ICWA:

States are required to provide active efforts to families, and the court will be asked to determine whether active efforts have been made. The definition of "active efforts" is left open in the Indian Child Welfare Act to accommodate individual case decisions. However, federal guidelines do exist (Federal Register, Vol. 44, No. 228, November 26, 1979).

ICWA mandates the state to make active efforts in every ICWA case in two areas:

1. Provide services to the family to prevent removal of an Indian child from his or her parent or Indian custodian
2. Reunify an Indian child with his or her parent or Indian custodian after removal

A cornerstone in the application of active efforts is active and early participation and consultation with the child’s tribe in all case planning decisions. Additionally, "active efforts" is more intensive than "reasonable efforts." For example, reasonable efforts might be only a referral for services, but active efforts would be to arrange for the best-fitting services and help families engage in those services. The federal guidelines referenced above apply whether or not the child’s tribe is involved in the custody proceedings. (NICWA 2010)

http://www.nicwa.org/Indian_Child_Welfare_Act/faq/