

The
Super-Sized
Edition

Special points of interest:

- **Repatriation Institute**
- **National Policy Update**
- **Q & A: Jan Lindstrom**
- **Awards!!! (Yes, it's true!!)**

Volume 1, Issue 4

**Spring/Summer
2009**

Like Sands Through The Hourglass...

There are so many different ways I wanted to use space, as this is my last newsletter. Do I make it really dramatic and thought-filled? Do I make it full of lessons and policy provisions to be considered? Do I draw out my perspective on what Indian Child Welfare elements could be included in Minnesota's Program Improvement Plan for the second round of Child and Family Service Reviews? I could go on, but needless to say, I examined many angles.

What I came up with was that I wish to thank you...all of you. I have worked with a lot of you in some capacity, big or small, over the last three years and it has been my pleasure. We haven't always agreed on things, but we have done so respectfully. I have been appreciative of the thoughtful and thought-filled discussions.

Additionally, I will miss all the chit-chat and banter outside the courtroom. There were many

laughs shared, relationships cultivated, and memories made for me.

This is a very difficult field in which we work, with very specialized requirements. It takes a dedicated person to commit to those requirements that so readily impact the children and families of our very strong and very present American Indian community of Minneapolis. We have a lot to be proud of here on many levels: a county system that is geared toward providing specialized services, high compliance rates with state and federal law for Indian children in the child protection system, an incredibly active community that is steeped in a rich history, and an insatiable spirit that continues to keep the community going in a new direction.

Minneapolis and Hennepin County are leaders across the nation for these aforementioned

attributes, led by all of you with whom I have worked with over these last three years. It is my sincerest hope that the two groups can continue to work well together to set a precedent for the country and to continue improving the lives of our Indian children and families of this historic community. I thank you for what you've done and for what you will do tomorrow...

**HIGHLIGHTS: JANUARY—
JUNE 2009**

- 158 Hearings were monitored over two quarters.
- 9 families were reunified; 17 children were returned under protective supervision.
- 5 cases went non-ICWA.
- 48 children were in the home under protective supervision.
- 7 cases transferred to tribal court.
- The court terminated jurisdiction on 10 cases.

**PARTIES AND INTERESTED
OBSERVERS PRESENT:**

- Mothers were present at 142 hearings.
- Fathers were present for 75 hearings.
- Guardians ad Litem were present at 152 hearings
- Community organization advocates present at 54 hearings.

Inside this issue:

Repatriation Institute	3
National Policy Update	4
Q & A: Jan Lindstrom	7
Awards	9
ICWA Collaborative	10

MINNEAPOLIS AMERICAN INDIAN CENTER

THE ICWA COURT AVENUE

First Nations Repatriation Institute: Restoring First Nations People to Their Homeland

Submitted by Rachel Kupcho

Repatriation is becoming a new buzz word around Indian child welfare, but how many of us know what the word means in all of its intentions? In general, to repatriate is to restore one's citizenship, especially after a time of war. To use that in the context of Indian child welfare means for an adoptee or a fostered individual to return to his or her homeland and build those connections, both familial and national. And as shared by an elder, adoptees and fostered individuals are considered by tribes to be the last remnants of the wars. Many adoptees and fostered individuals have been unable to access birth records and are, therefore, unable to enroll due to a lack of identifying information. As a direct result, this group of people are withheld from their relatives and their tribes. Repatriation is based in sovereignty. Tribes should be able to access records on behalf of adoptees/fostered individuals to claim relatives.

I was adopted when I was two months old. Over the years, my personal life and my professional life have become inextricably linked. As an American Indian adult adoptee, I have embarked on an extremely personal journey through my work in Indian child welfare. I feel that my life has been touched by the bigger world of public policy and I have seen the direct implications policy has on social service delivery, namely the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978. Knowing that I was born a year before a federal law was passed that would have prohibited my parents as an adoptive resource makes my work take on a very different meaning.

Even having had a very loving upbringing in a non-Indian home, I still strongly believe in the spirit of ICWA and keeping Indian families together. From the time that I started working in Indian child welfare in 2000, there was a feeling that I couldn't articulate and it was something that I couldn't truly recognize until I went to my reservation for the first time in the fall of 2007. I stood in the ceremonial circle with relatives and it was then that I knew I was spiritually home. My adoptive parents have provided everything for me, but soothing that indescribable feeling was something they could never do. What they have done is wholeheartedly support me in my journey, which has been such a blessing. That feeling of spiritual home is of deep comfort to me and is something, I believe, that our children need. This is just one of the many reasons for dedicating my life to serving American Indian children and families. It's time for American Indian adoptees and fostered individuals to know from where it is they came. Only then will we be able to heal the wounds of generations of our people.

First Nations Repatriation Institute
College of St. Catherine/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work
SCB 201, 2115 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105
Sandra White Hawk: 651-442-4872 or sadoptee@yahoo.com
Sheila Brummell: 651-962-5813 or smbrommel@stthomas.edu

Purpose: Repatriation (from Late Latin *repatriare* – to go home again: to restore or return to the country of origin, allegiance or citizenship). This proposal is to establish The First Nations Repatriation Institute as a grassroots collaborative between First Nations Orphan Association and the College of St. Catherine/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work. The purpose is to create a resource for First Nations people impacted by foster care or adoption to return home, reconnect, and reclaim their identity. The Institute also serves as a resource to enhance the knowledge and skills of practitioners who serve First Nations people.

Rationale: The First Nations Repatriation Institute would fill a significant gap in resources available for First Nations people. There is currently no organized effort at a local, state, national or international level to address the needs of people separated from their culture by foster care or adoption. Sandra White Hawk and Sheila Brommel have collaborated on community forums and national presentations since 2004 and now propose to formalize and expand this collaboration at The University of St. Thomas. The First Nations Repatriation Institute fits with the institutional mission of The University of St. Thomas and its commitment to the pursuit of truth, diversity and dignity. In addition, The First Nations Repatriation Institute demonstrates the School of Social Work's commitment to social justice.

Mission: The First Nations Repatriation Institute is a grassroots collaborative that provides technical assistance, education, research and advocacy on the process of Truth, Healing and Reconciliation for the healing and return home of First Nations people impacted by foster care and adoption.

(continued from page 3)

Values: The Institute promotes Truth, Healing and Reconciliation as a way to address historical trauma and disenfranchised grief caused by force removal of indigenous children to foster care and adoption. We support family/cultural reunification and community healing.

Goals: The goals of the First Nations Repatriation Institute include the follow areas of education, scholarship and advocacy:

1. Education

- a. Provide education for social workers and others in the community regarding First Nations people, needs and risks.
- b. Incorporate and strengthen undergraduate and graduate content relevant to First Nations people in the social work curriculum including history, trauma, disenfranchised grief, identity, healing and reconciliation.
- c. Participate in and host regional and national reconciliation conferences
- d. Host the first ever National Repatriation Forum at CSC/UST – bringing together legal professionals, social work professionals, educators, researchers to share ideas and identify research needs for First Nations repatriation
- e. Develop a certificate program for practitioners providing post adoption services for indigenous people.

2. Scholarship

- a. Present our work at local, state, national and international conferences
- b. Publish our work in peer reviewed journals
- c. Develop a research agenda and funding for graduate student research

3. Advocacy

- a. Create a clearinghouse and repository of local and national psychosocial, spiritual and legal resources for First Nations individuals, family, community and the practitioners who serve them.
- b. Collaborate with other organizations to promote Truth, Healing and Reconciliation
- c. Formal making amends including documentation and evaluation of the proceedings
- d. Influence public policy related to First Nations child welfare issues
- e. Support and legal aid for search services in conjunction with the UST Inter Professional Center
- f. Advocate for “Repatriation Act” – granting full access to all adoption records to 1). ensure tribal enrollment, 2) offer support and healing in reunification process, 3) build trust between social services and Indian communities and 4) ultimately bring relatives home
- g. Create a documentary film on the history of child removal, the impact on extended families and Indian Nations and the process of Truth, Healing and Reconciliation.

Participants: The First Nations Repatriation Institute is a grassroots collaboration of the indigenous community, service providers, advocates, educators, researchers and policymakers.

Institute Development Team:

Sandy White Hawk, First Nations Orphan Association

Sheila Brommel, PhD, LISW, Assistant Professor, CSC/UST School of Social Work

Rachel Kupcho, BSW, Program Assistant

Carolyn Morrison, MSW, LCSW, Senior Consultant, National Indian Child Welfare Association

Partners/Supporters:

Terry Cross - National Indian Child Welfare Association

Sarah Hicks - National Congress of American Indians

Shay Bilchik - Georgetown University

John George, Child Welfare League of America

Lynn Lewis - Hennepin County Social Services – Manager Child Protections Services

Jeri Jasken – White Earth ICWA Director

Judge William Thorne – Utah Supreme Court Judge

Anita Fineday – Judge White Earth Tribal Judge

Mark Tilden – Native American Rights Fund

NATIONAL POLICY UPDATE

Submitted by David Simmons

Tribal Leaders Provide Testimony on Children's Programs

On April 29-30 the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) provided tribal leaders from around the country an opportunity to provide testimony and consult with DHHS officials on federal programs under DHHS. The list of programs was very broad and included everything from health care to child welfare. This consultation session was the 11th annual session and the National Indian Child Welfare Association has been invited to attend and submit testimony each year. The information discussed would be used to help inform the policy agenda and development of next year's federal budget.

This year two distinguished tribal leaders provided NICWA's testimony - Lieutenant Governor Jefferson Keel from the Chickasaw Nation and Chairman Henry Cagey from the Lummi Nation. Lieutenant Governor Keel provided testimony on five different federal child welfare programs. His testimony described the great need for these resources, all of which are fully available to states, but in some cases are not available to tribal governments.

Chairman Henry Cagey provided NICWA's testimony on children's mental health programs to those in attendance. His testimony focused on four different federal children's mental health programs that provide funding and support for direct services to tribal children. As is the case with federal child welfare programs, a number of federal programs that support mental health services are not yet fully available to tribal governments. The largest provider and funder of mental health service for Indian people, the Indian Health Services, is severely underfunded and does not have a specific children's mental health program or funding.

Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Update

Consultations. In May the Children's Bureau completed all of the regional tribal consultations regarding proposed regulations pertaining to the new IV-E law for tribes. The Children's Bureau has indicated that the interim final rule will be published sometime in March of 2010. The Children's Bureau was focused on four questions during the consultations. They were as follows:

- § Considering that the Secretary is to apply title IV-E of the Act to Tribes in the same manner as to States except where directed by law, what, if any, provisions and clarifications related to the title IV-E program for directly-funded Tribes should be in regulations?
- § Are guidelines above and beyond those provided pursuant to the ICWA needed to execute the transfer of placement and care responsibility of a title IV-E Indian child to a Tribe operating a title IV-E plan? If, so please provide suggestions.
- § What specific information pertaining to title IV-E and title XIX Medicaid should a State make available to a Tribe that seeks to gain placement and care responsibility over an Indian child?
- § Should the third-party sources and in-kind limits on Tribal administrative and training costs remain consistent with section 479B(c)(1)(D) of the Act? Please provide a rationale for this response.

Several themes were present in the comments from tribes including the following:

- Need for more information and assistance in understanding the Title IV-E program and requirements.
- Need for further technical assistance to tribes to identify program needs and improve capacity as tribes start the process of determining whether the IV-E program is a good fit for their community.
- A desire for federal guidance and regulations that support cultural practices of tribes and the implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act.
- Recognition of tribal economic realities and the very limited availability of funding to apply towards non-federal match requirements. The need for the most flexible match requirements possible under the law.
- Support sharing of information between tribes and states to improve access to services under Title IV-E.
- Assist tribes as they search for feasible methods for developing tribal data systems to collect IV-E data.

IV-E Development Grants. The other significant announcement was the notice of funding availability for the tribal Title

IV-E Development Grants. The other significant announcement was the notice of funding availability for the tribal Title IV-E Development Grants for tribes that are intending upon applying to operate the Title IV-E program. The grants are for up to two years and \$300,000 per approved applicant. The purpose of the grants is to support tribal capacity building efforts to be able to operate the Title IV-E program. The announcement was published on April 20, 2009 with a deadline for submission of grant proposals on June 19. You can find the funding announcement at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/HHS-2009-ACF-ACYF-CS-0079.html>

National Resource Center for Tribes. Another funding announcement released from the Children's Bureau was in regards to the establishment of the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Tribes. This announcement was released in March with applications due by May 11th. The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Tribes will provide technical assistance to tribes who are interested in or currently operating federal child welfare programs under the Administration for Children and Families. While there have been several funded child welfare resource centers in operation for many years this will be the first tribally focused one. The National Indian Child Welfare Association is among at least two organizations that have submitted an application to operate this resource center.

IV-E Data Meeting. NICWA is also participating in a partnership between Casey Family Programs and NCAI to explore tribal needs in the area of child welfare data systems, particularly IV-E related data. NCAI and Casey held a meeting on July 13-14 at NCAI with NICWA, tribal representatives, IV-E program consultants, data system consultants and federal agency representatives from the BIA and Children's Bureau. The meeting explored what the current resources and needs of tribes in this area and came up with some recommendations and resources that need to be developed. Priscilla Day, PhD. of University Minnesota-Duluth is contracting with NCAI to develop a white paper on IV-E data issues for dissemination to tribes and policymakers. The paper will also make recommendations for improving tribal data capacity in this area. One significant discovery is that tribes and states are not allowed to submit IV-E data via a proprietary data system based upon federal rules. This is a data system that has been purchased or is being leased where the rights to the system are not owned by the state or tribe. Tribes that are working with consultants or data system vendors should be asking about this issue before they commit their resources.

The Children's Bureau also published an Information Memorandum (ACYF-CB-IM-09-02) regarding an automated child welfare information system (not available on line as of July 27). The IM provides information on the different types of child welfare data that the Children's Bureau requires and some suggestions on what to consider when developing a system. If you want to get a copy of this information memorandum please contact your regional Administration for Children and Families office. The Children's Bureau has indicated that they will be issuing some protocols for tribes on data system requirements under Title IV-E sometime before October of this year.

Eligibility Decision. Back in early 2009 the Children's Bureau issued a new policy under their Child Welfare Policy Manual (Section 9.1, Question #4) that clarifies that a tribe must be operating a Title IV-B, Subpart One program in order to be eligible to operate a Title IV-E program. This decision was based upon a reading of the IV-E statute under Section 471(a)(2) of the Social Security Act (Title IV-E) that requires that the state agency that operates Title IV-E must also be the same agency that operates Title IV-B. NICWA and the Association on American Indian Affairs challenged that interpretation in writing in March and received a response in June that after review with DHHS counsel the new policy would stand. NICWA and AAIA have recommended there be a discussion of how the IV-B and IV-E application and reporting requirements can be streamlined to save tribes administrative time and resources.

Federal guidance & instructions issued thus far regarding tribal specific issues:

- ACYF-CB-IM-08-03 - Overview of tribal provisions in the law http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/im/2008/im0803.pdf
- ACYF-CB-PI-08-06 – Tribal Letters of Intent to apply for IV-E http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/2008/pi0806.pdf
- Child Welfare Policy Manual Update – Tribal IV-E eligibility and Title IV-B (Section 8.3C, Question and Answer #9) http://www.acf.hhs.gov/j2ee/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/policy_dsp.jsp?citID=90#1881
- Request for Public Comment (regulations) and Tribal Consultation Schedule <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-5505.pdf>
 - Tribal IV-E TA document http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/tribal_considerations.pdf

- Notice of Funding Opportunity: National Resource Center For Tribes <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/HHS-2009-ACF-ACYF-CZ-0058.html>
- Notice of Funding Opportunity: Tribal IV-E Start up Grants <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/HHS-2009-ACF-ACYF-CS-0079.html>
- ACYF-CB-IM-09-02: Information Memorandum regarding automated child welfare system requirements under Title IV-E (not available on line as of July 27, 2009).

Federal guidance & instructions issued thus far for both tribes and states:

- ACYF-CB-PI-08-05 - Overview of law http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/2008/pi0805.pdf
- ACYF-CB-PI-08-007 IV-E State Plan Amendment - Assisted Kin Guardianship http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/2008/pi0807.pdf

Availability of BIA Funds as IV-E Match. After careful review of tribal concerns that some regional BIA officials were indicating that BIA 638 funds would not be available to meet the non-federal match requirements of IV-E NICWA began a review of relevant statutory and regulatory policies. Our findings indicate that even though the at least two different statutes allow for the use of these funds to meet non-federal match requirements, BIA Social Service regulations contain language that are an obstacle to this purpose. The barriers are centered around regulatory language that only allows tribes to use BIA Social Service funds as a “resource of last resort” and not when any other federal or state programs are available. Secondly, there are differences between what BIA Social Service funds are permitted to pay for and what Title IV-E is, specifically the more narrow range of services that BIA funds can be used to support. NICWA, NCAI and AAIA have been working with the BIA Social Services Chief, Sue Settles, and now that the BIA has a newly confirmed Assistant Secretary they will be scheduling a meeting with Mr. Larry Echohawk to discuss a process for addressing this policy conflict.

NICWA Submits Comments on Medicaid Regulations and Home Visitation Legislation

Medicaid Regulations. The Obama Administration solicited public comments on ending a moratorium established in the previous Administration that made health services case management funding unavailable to foster children. The program, referred to as Targeted Case Management, has provided states and tribes that have agreements with states, funding to support the coordination and management of health services for a variety of low income children. The previous Administration sought to narrow which children could receive these TCM funds and put a moratorium on providing such resources to children in foster care. NICWA submitted comments that described the importance of these funds to tribal children and the tribal governments that serve them, as well as the need to increase, not decrease, access to health services for vulnerable children in care. NICWA cited at least two states where tribes and states had been sharing these funds until the moratorium was established, which put an end to these services and collaboration opportunities.

Home Visitation Legislation. Congressman Jim McDermott, Chairman of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, introduced legislation (H.R. 2667) on June 2 that would establish a new federal child welfare program that would fund home visitation program provided by states and tribes. Home visitation programs provide instruction and services to families with children or expecting a child. The research suggests that these types of programs are very useful in preventing child abuse and neglect, which is a key factor in why Congressman McDermott and President Obama are supportive of these programs. The legislation contains a 3% set-aside for tribes to fund programs in their communities and also allows the Secretary of DHHS to waive certain requirements if they prove unduly burdensome. NICWA’s testimony is supportive of the legislation. No committee vote on the bill is scheduled at this time. You can get a copy of the legislation at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:H.R.2667>:

The Senate Finance Committee is also working on a bill that will provide funding for home visitation services and will contain a tribal funding provision. However, the bill will not be part of a child welfare program and will instead be part of the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant. The Senate has a bill (S. 1267) introduced by Senator Menendez, but the Senate Finance Committee is in the process of making several changes and additions to his bill before a committee mark up.

Senate Finance Committee is in the process of making several changes and additions to his bill before a committee mark up.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act Reauthorization

This landmark law established many of the child protection standards commonly used by states today. It also authorized funding for state, and some very limited tribal, child abuse prevention programming. The law is up for reauthorization this year and while there are no bills currently introduced, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee has been working to develop a bi-partisan bill for committee action this year. The reauthorization bill will likely only contain small changes in program requirements and little change in funding levels. Currently, the child abuse prevention grant programs for states is only funded at \$27 million a year and the tribal portion only provides enough for one to two tribal grants per grant cycle. NICWA has met with Senate staff and presented a list of suggested amendments that will increase tribal participation on advisory boards and in research, demonstration and other grant programs. NICWA has also proposed an amendment that would raise the level of tribal set-aside funding under the child abuse prevention grant program and establish an advisory board to examine child abuse and neglect issues for Indian children and make recommendations to Congress on how to best address these issues.

Child Welfare Work Force Legislation

Senator Lincoln and others have been working on a bill to be introduced that would address workforce improvement issues in child welfare. The intent is to introduce a bill this summer that would provide the following:

- Data collection and research to increase accountability for outcomes for children (linking workforce improvement activities to outcomes for children)
- Removal of barriers to providing training for child welfare staff and related professionals under parts B and E of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (including the elimination of the requirement that only training activities that are directly linked to children who are IV-E eligible are reimbursable)
- Comprehensive child welfare workforce improvement demonstration program

NICWA and AAIA have been able to review a draft bill and submit suggestions for additional changes to the draft bill. NICWA's comments focused on improving tribal participation in the development of the research and findings and allowing for the consideration of cultural considerations (waiver) regarding program requirements. The draft contained a provision that allows tribes to be eligible to apply for the demonstration program authorized under the legislation.

For more information, please contact David Simmons, Government Affairs Director for the National Indian Child Welfare Association at 503-222-4044, ext. 119 or desimmons@nicwa.org

Court Monitoring: Where It All Began with Jan Lindstrom

Q: From where did the idea for the court monitor program come? What went into establishing it?

The Indian Child Welfare Program at the Minneapolis American Indian Center was established through the hard work of many: Jake Mendoza, Mike Wiebe and others who contributed ideas and thoughts into creating a program that would identify the barriers for services to our Indian people. I was hired by Fran Fairbanks, Executive Director in 1986 to implement the many goals and objectives of the Court Monitor position. It was exciting to work with many in the community to establish a plan to monitor the compliance of the Federal and State law in regards to our Indian children and families. 1985-1986 was an exciting time, to assist the many committed Indian people in the community in writing the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act, The Tribal-State Agreement and so many other initiatives to protect our Indian

children and families.

I immediately began working to create and organize files, develop brochures and forms, while traveling all over the state to monitor hearings. I was able to foster positive working relationships with judges, which helped us in those early years. Additionally, we were fortunate to receive some real support from the County and from the State on this initiative.

Q: What were some of the initial challenges and barriers with which you were met? How did you overcome them?

Well, the biggest challenge, starting out, was that I didn't know how to monitor! Everything was so new and this was the first position of its kind, so there was really no precedent or model off of which to go. So much of it at the beginning was learning on the spot by doing it I was responsible for learning more about ICWA and how to use it; MIFPA backed it up, which helped. Minnesota was really ahead of everybody at that time in implementing cutting-edge services and practices.

How I ended up overcoming some of the initial challenges was by being as straightforward as possible and keeping communication open. I also made it a practice to have collaborative meetings with the social workers, attorneys, and families to identify what the needs were and what services were appropriate and available. This aided in streamlining services.

Q: What are your thoughts or feelings on how the program has transpired over the years and where it currently stands?

The program has grown and changed

so much over the years, but in a good way. The work of the ICWA program and of the court monitor is something of which I'm very proud. I've been fortunate to be a part of so many of the early initiatives. I served as the first Ombuds-person for American Indian Families, as well as an Indian Child Welfare Consultant at the Department of Human



Services for 11 years. Currently, I serve as the Executive Director of Juel Fairbanks, a full service Chemical Dependency Center for American Indian people. It's been a wonderful career so far!

Q: Where would you identify service gaps in the community and how would you address some of those?

In a lot of ways, it feels as though the same problems still exist and that a lot of the same conversations are still being had. Don't get me wrong, I recognize that there has been progress made, but it feels as though there should be more. ICWA was passed over 30 years ago and we still have problems with people

identifying their responsibilities and complying with the law!

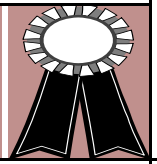
Additionally, I believe that American Indian people have disappeared. I attend so many meetings where there are statistics after statistics presented on minority groups, but we always seem to be missing from those. I believe that it is because we are not vocal enough. Other groups of people seem to have their voices heard and, therefore, their needs met. If we became more vocal and more demanding, perhaps we would be provided with the monies and services that are so incredibly needed. A new community center, for example, is something that would be extremely beneficial for us, but it feels as though we have nowhere to go for the money. It feels like time for us to speak up to better serve the children and families of our community!

I would like to thank Jan for participating in my final interview and for sharing her many experiences and the rich history of the Indian Center and of the Minneapolis Community!

Also, I would like to note the dog in the photo. According to Jan, Martha, her beloved labradoodle, is the Juel Fairbanks Mascot and therapy dog. She has been going to work since she was eight weeks old and she is now three. Everyone knows and loves Martha!



* * * Awards * * *



minneapolis american indian center

1530 e. franklin avenue
minneapolis, mn 55404
phone: 612.879.1737
fax: 612.879.1795
email: rkupcho@maicnet.org

The Minneapolis American Indian Center is a community center in the heart of the Indian community of Minneapolis. It is one of the oldest Indian centers in the country, founded in 1975. The MAIC provides educational and social services to more than 10,000 members of the community annually. It preserves and supports American Indian cultural traditions through the arts, youth and intergenerational programs.

Heart of Urban Indian Country

In Minneapolis, the Phillips neighborhood and in particular Franklin Avenue have long been known as “Indian Country.” It would be no stretch of the imagination to say that the Minneapolis American Indian Center is probably the heart of our urban Indian country. This goes deeper than geography-in many ways. The Indian Center symbolizes the dreams of people of hundreds of Indian Nations who, for reasons as varied as themselves, left their reservations to come here and pursue a new life. The Indian Center is a symbol of these dreams, but even more so of the deep ties that our people have to their culture and traditions. It is a tiny refuge in a big sea of people who don’t share our memories and values, a place where we can always come to feel comfortable, a home away from home.



The ICWA Collaborative: How Families’ Needs Do Not Go Unnoticed

Entering the child protection system is very scary for families and to be thrust into the court system is often confusing and overwhelming. At the first court hearing, Melanie Witthoft the ICWA Collaborative Case Manager, will greet and begin to support families. So many people bombard families at this time and often Melanie will simply sit next to them as much as possible just getting to know them and their needs. Families are reassured that Melanie’s program is completely voluntary, so it is not uncommon for clients to come to Melanie after the hearing to ask what is the next step.

Melanie works with families affiliated with tribes outside the state of Minnesota and are involved in child protection system. She promotes and supports reunification among Native

American families by providing intensive case management and coordination of resource services. Melanie assists families to understand the court proceedings and attends court hearings



with the families. She coordinates and collaborates with child protection departments in the seven county metro-

area to make recommendations for a realistic culturally specific case plan. Melanie offers help and support to families to engage in their case plan, but also works on life goals beyond child protection case plans to work towards family stability. Melanie’s services do not end at court dismissal or child protection closing of the case – she continues to work with the families providing one-year post-reunification services to continue the support and achieve the life goals families have set in motion.

For more information on the program, contact Melanie by phone at 612.879.1741 or by email mwitthoft@maicnet.org.