

# EARLY BIRD WEEKLY



NewbergRotaryEarlybirds.org

May 5, 2022

Last week was NICWA as presented by Alexis, Research Assistant, and Betty, Project Coordinator.

Alexis Contreras is a member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. After earning her BS Sociology from PSU she joined NICWA working government affairs, advocacy and research.



Betty (Nelson) Bryant is one of our own, a former Exchange Student to France in 2012-13. Her degree is in cultural anthropology, also from PSU, with a focus on the indigenous peoples of the Americas. A natural fit, with her mom, Blanca Nelson, being Costa Rican. Betty's passions are the well-being of youth, human rights and preservation of culture.



National Indian Child Welfare Association is a fairly small organization with about fifteen staff. Its roots go back to 1983 known then as the Northwest Indian Child Welfare Institute.

NICWA is a membership organization of tribal governments, urban and reservation-based social service programs, and front-line staff who work with Native children and families. As a 501(c)(3) NICWA receives funding from memberships (individual and tribal), and corporate donations; fundraising events; program contracts; curriculum sales; and foundation and government grants.

Its goal is to support the safety, health and spiritual strength of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children for the continuum of their lives. This means this support will benefit them, their families and communities.

NICWA is widely regarded as the most comprehensive single source of information for AI/AN tribal affairs. Their work has extended to Canada and as far away as Australia.

What led us to the Indian Child Welfare Act, ICWA, was the many policies the U.S. put in place over hundreds of years to assimilate youth and break up Native families.

Starting with the 1918 Civilization Act with the intent to civilize (Christianize) native people with funding to missionary schools for "moral education."

1861-1970 saw Indian boarding schools where Native kids were taken from their homes and placed in harsh, military style boarding schools.

The result was generations of Native youth with no exposure to parenting skills or their own culture.

The Indian Adoption Project of the early '60s placed Native youth in white homes to save them from life on reservations.

During the Termination and Relocation era of 1940-80 the federal government actively encouraged Indian people to leave tribal communities and relocate to urban areas totaling over 25% of Native children being removed from their homes with most of them being placed outside their families and communities, even when fit and willing relatives were available.

ICWA was formed in 1978 in response to the crisis of culture affected by so many years of dilution caused, intentionally or not, by government policy.

The Self-Determination era of 1962-80, the Kennedy and Nixon years, aimed to give more weight to the Tribes' own interest in the well being of their communities and families.

We are currently facing forces aiming to dismantle ICWA. If that is allowed to happen, the trickle down will directly impact the Tribes' ability to act as sovereign nations and the protection they offer their families and culture.

Right now, that's a big part of NICWA's effort. Especially with communications, litigation, advocacy and public education.

ICWA maintains minimum federal requirements including placement preference provisions with active effort. In child welfare there is a minimum standard

of "reasonable effort." Where that differs from active effort is that reasonable could be as simple as presenting the most relevant form or application. Active effort, however, would be sitting and explaining the meaning of the form, making sure it's complete and gets to the right people.

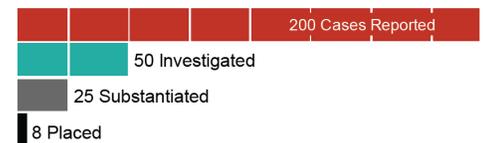
Placement preferences start with immediate family when in the child's best interest. Then with a Tribal member or other Native person or family.

It also recognizes the Tribes' inherent jurisdiction over child custody proceedings and will notify the Tribe if they know to have one of their children in front of them. This allows the Tribe to take over, monitor, or offer services toward the child's benefit.

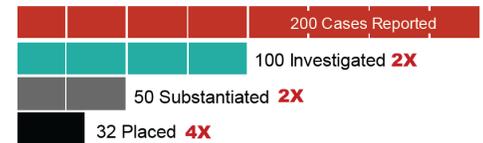
ICWA is considered the gold standard because of these placement preference efforts.

To illustrate the disproportionality afflicting Native kids in the child welfare system is

## White/Caucasian Children



## American Indian/Alaska Native Children



this [simple chart from NICWA's web site](#) showing how more often NA/AI cases are investigated, substantiated and placed than Caucasian children. While the study was charted in 2007, the statistics have changed very little. These cases are often neglect, substance abuse and sexual exploitation.

Because of this disparity NICWA's objective is to place those children into homes that are culturally appropriate. That doesn't mean just placing an Indian child with an Indian family but with a family this is or very nearly like their native culture. Native cultures vary so much across the nation that it could be like placing a Ukrainian child with a Danish family because they're both Caucasian.

Because NICWA's founder is so open to various projects people sometimes get confused on what they do because they try and do as much for as many as they can.

Talking about the nine tribes in Oregon are Alexis' tribe, Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Suislaw Nations, The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, Umatilla, and Warm Springs. The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians, Coquille Indian Tribe, the Klamath Tribe and the Burns Paiute Tribe.

There are 574 federally recognized tribes in the U.S. dominantly concentrated west of the Mississippi with the majority in California and Alaska.

There are many tribes recognized by states but still trying to gain federal recognition. Not just for benefits but for sovereignty.

As mentioned, NICWA does a lot of advocacy, education and research work.

When they perform data collection they make every effort to work respectfully with Tribal leaders and their protocols and NICWA considers data collected from the Tribe to be the property of that Tribe.

NICWA's website is constantly updated with resources to benefit families and their Tribes.

There's a cohort NICWA has worked with for several years, African American Grandfamilies. African American and Native American families have the highest disproportionality rate in the child welfare system. So both benefit from [Grandfamilies](#) also advocate for more culturally relevant child welfare resources.

NICWA gets about a thousand requests for information and guidance each year from parents, social workers, grandparents, and others trying to navigate the child welfare system.

Technical requests are also a thing including child welfare re-design. Moving a little away from the protection stance (removing the child from the family home) to a system more focused on safety and healing so families can stay together.

Events and training are another front. An example being Positive Indian Parenting while maintaining Native culture. Understanding ICWA is more a technical course.

Lastly is their [annual conference](#) covering things that have worked, things that are coming, peer networking, AI/AN research activities, and strategies for developing effective services.

Next up, as if that weren't enough, is the Northwest Natural Street of Dreams. This year, for the first time ever, being hosted in Newberg and McMinnville.

Dennis Lewis introduced Rachel Trice, Chief Marketing Office for Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland, who gave us the dime tour of this year's Street of Dreams being held here July 23 - August 14.



With her were Sheri Richards, Event Coordinator, and Sarah Halstead, Sponsor & Member Relations Manager.

From their [website](#), The Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland has promoted, protected and advanced the building industry continuously since 1941. We provide benefits, networking opportunities, education and government representation to builders, developers, remodelers, sub-contractors, suppliers and other industry service professionals in Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Columbia and Yamhill counties.

What most people don't know is what HBA does with their 501(C)(3) arm, the Home Builders Foundation, working with transitional housing and homeless shelters.

One thing Rotarians can do, besides patronizing this luxury home event, is supporting housing at the ground level and affordable housing of all types and sizes.

While these \$3.5 million "looky loo" homes are fun, we are also talking about getting homeless and transitional families housed.

HBA is also in to advocacy around topics like land use, permitting that developers and contractors face when trying to build affordable housing.

Street of Dreams is one of only a few single site luxury home tours in the U.S. There are others, but it began here and we own the trademark.

Once a site is selected builders buy lots and build houses, whether pre-sold or spec home for sale.

Then consumers buy tickets to what is best described as an experiential event, much like a concert or event.

Volunteer opportunities are sometimes challenging and that's one way we, as a community, can help is by welcoming people.

Crew Kids, high school and college, are being hired right now with applications on their site: [streetofdreamspdx.com/p/contact/jobs--internships1](https://streetofdreamspdx.com/p/contact/jobs--internships1)

Some kids work one season, others have returned since they were fourteen. If you're sending this to a kid in mind, especially if they like carrying tables and chairs in the hot sun, have them mention Rotary in the application so Sheri knows where leads are working.

Rachel expects 2022 Newberg to be their most spectacular event to date.

If you'd like to follow progress, follow [Street of Dreams on Facebook](#) where you'll find [videos like this one](#), created by Lewis Audio Video.

This year will also feature a pair of homes in McMinnville off of Baker Creek Rd.

Also on the site, look for container homes and tiny homes. There will be info displays for transitional housing as well.

There will be wine, food, an entertainment stage, a few VIP events, and special events like Celebrate Veterans.

When Street of Dreams comes to a community, they convey the community's story to its guests. They will have brochures and window clings for businesses, discount/promo codes, to make this a super successful and positive experience.

