

# National Resource Center for Tribes

The **National Resource Center for Tribes** (NRC4Tribes) is one of the new resource centers within the Children's Bureau Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) National Network.



The NRC4Tribes joins the Children's Bureau's Child Welfare Training and Technical Assistance Network (T/TA Network) which is designed to improve child welfare systems and to support States and Tribes in achieving sustainable, systemic change that results in greater safety, permanency, and well-being for children, youth, and families.

The Children's Bureau ([www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb)) is located within the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Tribes continue to be able to access training and technical assistance (T/TA) through various national resources centers within the Children's Bureau national T/TA Network. The NRC for Tribes is the focal point for coordinated and culturally competent child welfare T/TA for

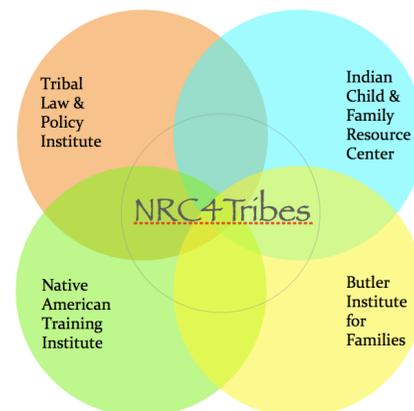
Tribes within the T/TA Network. The NRC4Tribes works collaboratively with Tribes and the T/TA Network to assist Tribes in the enhancement of child welfare services and the promotion of safety, permanency and well-being for American Indian/Alaska Native children and families – including:

- *Enhancing Tribal access to and utilization of the Children's Bureau T/TA Network;*
- *Brokering Tribal T/TA through the T/TA Network;*
- *Assisting in the provision of T/TA;*
- *Facilitating peer-to-peer consultation between Tribes on child welfare issues;*
- *Increasing cultural competence and sensitivity to Tribal voices in the T/TA Network and in State child welfare systems*
- *Generating toolkits, resource manuals, and other products for dissemination*
- *Participating in NRC4Tribes-specific and national cross-site evaluation process*

A key objective of the NRC for Tribes in its first year was to conduct a [national assessment of tribal child welfare systems](#), to better understand and appropriately serve tribal communities in subsequent years. The National Resource Center for Tribes is authorized to provide T/TA services to federally-recognized Tribes who receive federal Title IV-B funding.

## Who We Are

*National Resource Center for Tribes Partnership*



The **Tribal Law and Policy Institute** (TLPI) ([www.tlpi.org](http://www.tlpi.org)), based in Los Angeles, CA – with additional offices in Minneapolis, MN and Helena, MT - was awarded a 5-year cooperative

agreement with the Children's Bureau in October 2009 to establish the National Resource Center for Tribes. TLPI is joined by the Indian Child and Family Resource Center; the Native American Training Institute and the Butler Institute for Families at the University of Denver to implement the work of the NRC4Tribes.

Lead agency, the ***Tribal Law and Policy Institute (TLPI)*** is a 100% Indian owned and operated non-profit corporation established in 1996 to design and develop education, research, training, and technical assistance programs which promote the enhancement of justice in Indian country and the health, well-being, and culture of Native peoples. TLPI's organizational vision is to empower Native communities to create and control their own institutions for the benefit/welfare of all community members now and for future generations. TLPI's mission is to enhance and strengthen tribal sovereignty and justice while honoring community values, protecting rights, and promoting well-being. This vision now expands to the work of the NRC4Tribes.

The ***Indian Child and Family Resource Center (ICFRC)***, Helena, MT, is a Native American non-profit agency guided by a board of directors who, like the partner agencies, have "been there" for many years doing the work of Indian child welfare: tribal social workers, ICWA advocates and tribal leader. Established in 2004 to provide training and technical assistance resources for tribal child welfare programs, ICFRC has worked closely for several years with the National T/TA Network of the Children's Bureau to offer tribes throughout the country quality, no-cost technical assistance and training opportunities.

The ***Native American Training Institute (NATI)***, an inter-tribally controlled, tribally chartered, non-profit entity located in Bismarck, ND, was originally established in 1995 to address the great need for local, culturally appropriate training and professional development opportunities for ND tribal child welfare agencies, staff, and foster partners. Since that time, the NATI has expanded its services to include training, technical assistance curricula and other products to strengthen the capacity of community members, practitioners and agencies to improve positive outcomes for Native American children, youth and families in urban, tribal and first nation communities in the United States and Canada.

Evaluation partner, the ***Butler Institute for Families (BIF)*** at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work, has a strong history of evaluation of federally funded initiatives. Butler's evaluation team is comprised of experienced researchers with expertise in sampling, design, instrumentation, data management and verification, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, contextualization and interpretation of results, and reporting. Since its founding in 1994, Butler's mission has been to enhance the well being of children, youth and families through research, education, and consultation. The Institute has grown to become a resource for building professionalism through training and technical assistance and discovering effective practices and policies for child and family programs through evaluation and research.

#### **NRC4Tribes Implementation**

The National Resource Center for Tribes is guided in its daily work by a Leadership Team, comprised of TLPI and its partner agencies. In addition, a ***National Advisory Council***, comprised of tribal child welfare professionals, tribal leaders, and community stakeholders will review plans and activities of the NRC4Tribes and the larger T/TA Network, provide recommendations regarding the Network's approach to serving Title IV-B funded tribal child welfare systems.

Implementation of the NRC work will, through a Systems of Care framework, include engaging, assessing, informing and supporting culturally appropriate Tribal child welfare services nationwide to implement strategies for improving the quality and effectiveness of services for American Indian and Alaska Native children, youth, and families leading to increased safety, permanency, and well being for children.

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## In a Good Way, We Honor the Children

During January 2010, the leadership team of the National Resource Center for Tribes (NRC4Tribes), comprised of the Tribal Law & Policy Institute; the Indian Child & Family Resource Center; the Native American Training Institute; and the Butler Institute for Families, University of Denver, convened a strategic planning meeting to lay the groundwork for how we would conduct our work and fulfill our responsibilities as part of the new NRC4Tribes, a service of the Children's Bureau Training & Technical Assistance Network. To ensure that we would start off our work "in a good way," with an offering of tobacco, we asked for spiritual guidance through Rick Two Dogs, Wakan Iyeska (Interpreter of the Sacred), Oglala Lakota. From this foundation, Rick Two Dogs and Ethleen Iron Cloud-Two Dogs, Oglala Lakota, facilitated the strategic planning meeting.

It should be noted that Rick is a recognized spiritual leader for the Lakota people and we felt it was important that we be mindful of the sacredness of the work we would be doing, as many tribal nations hold the belief that children are sacred and therefore, the work we would be doing is part of a sacred trust and responsibility.

After starting our planning session with an opening prayer, the facilitators began with a guided imagery exercise as part of the initial process to develop our vision, mission, and guiding principles to complement the system of care (SOC) framework we will adhere to throughout our journey. Ethleen asked us to close our eyes, listen to her voice and

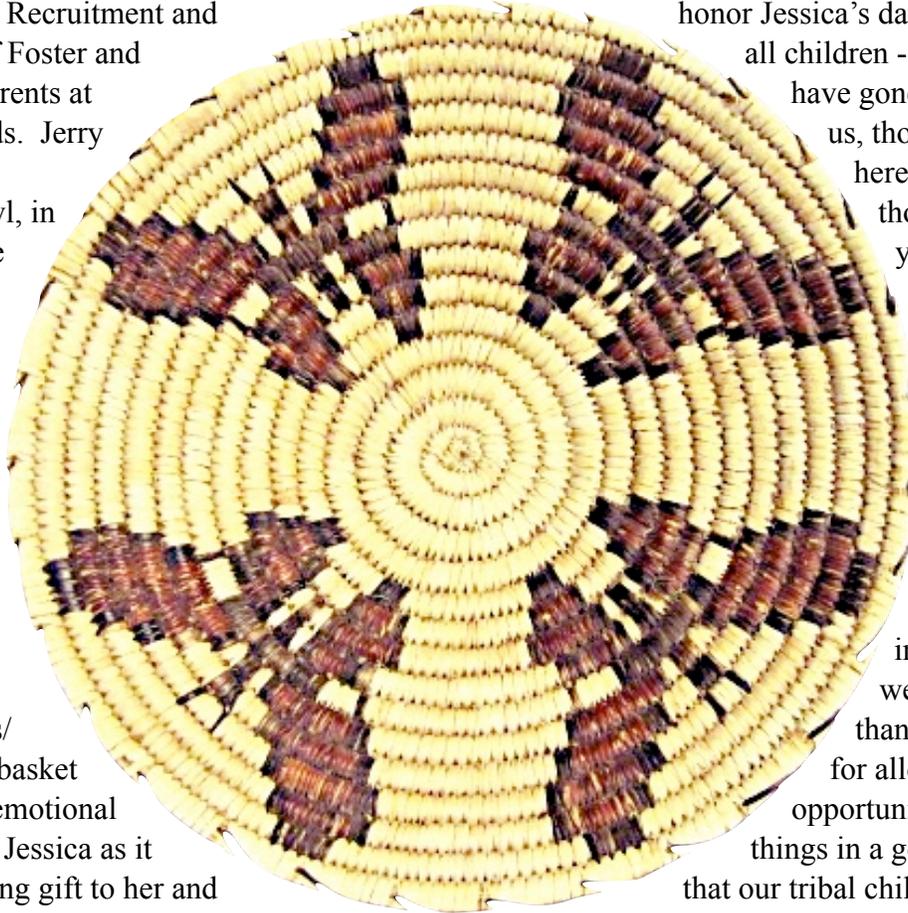
instructions, while her husband Rick sang a ceremonial song and we were asked to imagine ourselves sitting in a place where we were safe and happy, and then to imagine a child off in the far distance coming nearer and nearer to us, until they were right next to us. From this point, we were asked to talk to the child who came to us, and to listen for any messages they would bring to us. The messages that were given were that the children wanted to be loved, they wanted to be safe, they wanted to be with their families, they wanted to belong and they wanted to have a home. It was a very profound and moving experience for us and it set the tone for the rest of the meeting. After we discussed the messages and their significance, Ethleen suggested as we left for lunch that day, that we remember the children and consider making an offering to the children who came to us and to thank them for their guidance. In our Native American belief ways, we believe that we are all spiritual beings before we come to this earthly world and thereafter -- even after we have left our



human bodies and have passed on to the other side we continue our spiritual journey and our spirits continue to live on. And in light of this, many tribal people will

acknowledge the spiritual world by making offerings of tobacco, food, material goods, smoke from various natural herbs such as sage, cedar, sweetgrass, etc. This is a practice that many Indian people continue to do today and so as to remember our commitment to the children, we decided that we would always have an offering bowl as a symbolic way to honor and remind us of that sacred trust.

We left it to Jerry Gardner, NRC4Tribes Director and his staff to find a suitable container or bowl that we could use and we agreed that every time we gathered, we would have the offering bowl with us and set before us in a very visible way. After that January meeting, we finally gathered again during our first consultant training that was held in Detroit, MI at the end of March in conjunction with NRC for Adoption and the NRC for the Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Parents at AdoptUsKids. Jerry brought the offering bowl, in this case, the offering basket, that was so graciously loaned to us by Jessica Allen, the Administrative Manager for NRC4Tribes/TLPI. This basket holds great emotional meaning for Jessica as it was a wedding gift to her and her husband and was passed down by her family so it is greatly valued and treasured by her, but because Jessica believes so strongly in the work we are doing, she allows us to use this cherished gift. Jessica was very instrumental in the material preparation of the NRC4Tribes application and worked tirelessly along with Kathy Deserly and Jerry to ensure the application met the deadline. During this time, Jessica



was expecting her first child, and two weeks after we had the strategic planning meeting in January, Jessica's daughter was born. We believe it was no co-incidence that we had this little child's spirit with us throughout the process and now she is here with us. This little spirit is a blessing to her family and we believe she brings blessings to the NRC4Tribes. Today, we continue to share the meaning of the NRC4Tribes basket to honor Jessica's daughter and all children -- those who have gone on before us, those that are here with us, and those who are yet to be born. We are thankful to Jessica, her family and the children who will guide us in our work. Most importantly, we humbly thank the Creator for allowing us the opportunity to do things in a good way, so that our tribal children will reach their highest potential, live in a safe and stable home, with a loving family, will have their needs met, and know who they are so they too, will become respected and wise elders in their community.

Spa-na-na-ta-ka  
April 8, 2010

## **VISION**

*The vision of the National Resource Center for Tribes (NRC4Tribes) is to facilitate the empowerment of Native Nations to nurture the safety, permanence and well-being of American Indian/Alaska Native children, families and communities by offering culturally relevant information, resources and technical assistance so that the dreams and sacrifices of their ancestors are fulfilled and honored.*

## **MISSION**

Our mission is to collaborate with Native Nations and our training and technical assistance partners to identify and effectively implement community, culturally based strategies and resources that strengthen tribal child and family services.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Children are sacred and entitled to be cherished in a safe and nurturing environment with strong family, community and cultural connections. Their happiness and well-being includes nourishment of mind, body and spirit in order to fulfill their dreams throughout their journey toward becoming a healthy Elder. To honor the sacredness, the NRC4Tribes believes:

(1) in the inherent sovereign right and ability of American Indian/Alaska Native Nations to create, control and improve their own local child and family service systems for the healthy functioning of tribal communities.

(2) empowerment and solutions come from within tribal communities as they build upon their inherent strengths as sovereign nations since they are the source of cultural knowledge through elders, leaders and culture-bearers.

(3) the environment of disparity and despair in Indian Country and Alaska Native communities is the result of ongoing impact of colonization and historical trauma.

(4) the responses to child and family needs must include culturally based solutions that honor and respect the voice and choice of families.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The NRC4Tribes Team agreed to develop principles that would guide our work with the Tribal Nations as well as with our technical assistance partners. Our principles are:

- Compassion
- Humility
- Responsiveness
- Respect
- Integrity
- Inclusion
- Seamless and Effective Service Delivery

## **SYSTEM OF CARE VALUES**

In addition to principles guiding the work, the NRC4Tribes Team agreed that the following System of Care values are instrumental in the development and implementation of the work of the NRC4Tribes:

- Least Restrictive
- Culturally Competent
- Community-based Services
- Accountable
- Family and Youth Driven
- Interagency Collaboration
- Individualized and Strength-based



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