



# RURAL EXPRESS

Child Welfare Partnership

Fall 2005

## In Celebration of Rural Practice

Twenty two participants from Oregon and Alaska attended the first summer institute “In Celebration of Rural Practice” held at the Inn at the Seventh Mountain, Bend, Oregon August 1st through 4th 2005. Each day had a specific rural focus: 1) Cultural competence in the rural community, 2) Assessing safety and risk in rural environments, 3) Achieving permanency in rural settings, and 4) Celebrating the art of rural practice and Taking it home. This was the pilot training for curriculum developed specifically for the Rural Grant.

Participants came from Anchorage, Fairbanks, Bethel and St Mary’s, Alaska and from our Oregon pilot sites in Gold Beach, Madras, Burns, Lakeview, John Day, and Enterprise. We enjoyed spending four days together and sharing the challenges and opportunities unique to child welfare work in rural and remote communities. Comments from participants included “Hot! Hot! Hot!” (referring to the temperature from an Alaskan perspective) and “I really enjoyed getting to know others who work in a similar environment”.

Based on the comments from our participants and our steering committee, we are making minor adjustments in the curriculum and format and plan to offer the second Summer Institute near the end of July 2006. This will be a three-day session in Central Oregon, with the exact location yet to be determined. The Institute will be open to Oregon child welfare staff in Service Delivery Areas (SDA’s) 7, 10, 11, 13 and 14 and to any Tribal child welfare staff serving rural areas in Oregon. We are also beginning plans to support Bethel, Alaska in offering the Institute for the staff and tribal partners serving the area.

“Being new to rural social work, I would say that all aspects and topics of the training were useful. Appreciated specific child welfare practice issues tied to rural situations. Particularly about boundary issues, maintaining professionalism, but having the close relationships needed to assure collaborative casework.”

Check with your child welfare manager if you have an interest in attending the next Summer Institute.

**Katharine’s Recruitment & Retention :** At our Annual Grantee Meeting in D.C. , Judy and I had an opportunity to present some of the things we had learned from our pilot sites about how you recruit and select staff. “Grow your own” and “hire for authenticity, relationship, cultural capacities, and integrity” were just some of the tips you shared with us. Challenges you have mentioned include the fact that staff are on duty 24/7, often travel great distances on bad roads and in bad weather, must navigate dual relationships with clients and community partners when confidentiality is a challenge, and must know and perform all aspects of child welfare practice.

### Corner



When asked how to retain workers you suggested “provide mentors”, “make sure supportive supervision is available by phone or in person”, and “find ways to embrace the staff member and their family and assist them in joining the community”. You stressed the rewards of rural social work – particularly the opportunity to learn about your community and its culture and to use your social work skills to make a real difference for children and families. You felt that in rural areas it is possible to practice “real social work”.

# Results from the Summer Institute

Kirstin O'Dell

Evaluation activities in the last six months centered on preparing for and then conducting an evaluation of the Summer Training Institute in Bend, Oregon.

Since this was the first time a training of this kind has been offered, it was important to learn as much as possible about what worked and what could have been improved from the participant and trainer perspectives. Many opportunities were provided for feedback and reflection during and after the training.

A total of 22 child welfare professionals who work in rural settings attended the Institute, 15 from Oregon and 7 from Alaska. The Warm Springs, Coquille, and Bethel-area tribes were also represented. The majority of participants were experienced child welfare workers or administrators.

Overall evaluation results were very positive. Participants reported that the training objectives were achieved and that they left feeling energized. One participant stated, “This group got the masks off and were real and present and that’s different. You don’t need to put a mask on when you’re working with families...especially in rural areas.”

Another acknowledged, “I feel like I’ve been ‘born again’ into rural practice, I’m looking forward to spreading my renewed enthusiasm for rural practice.”

This training provided a unique opportunity for rural child welfare practitioners from Oregon and Alaska to connect, both within and outside of their home state. There was a strong sentiment from respondents that this connectedness was a key factor in open and honest discussions about rural practice issues. One participant stated, “I’ve never been to a training where I felt this connected and got this much out of it, it was positive and uplifting.”

“I really appreciate this training and to be part of the Rural Training Grant and how unique it is, this is the best training I’ve ever been to...the thoughtfulness of the planners, great trainers, and level of honesty people brought here was terrific and added meaning to it.”—Summer Institute participant

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## What is Permanency?

“Permanency – A soft place to fall on without having to feel fear.”



“Permanency – Stability, structure, culture, comfort, and connectiveness to family and community”.

“Permanency – Having a stable, safe environment to call home, without the worries of leaving at any time.”



“Permanency – Finding a forever home in the environment that the child lives – keep in the neighborhood.”

“Permanency means a child knows to whom they belong and with whom they will be able to live, be loved by, protected by, and share life with.”



Check out the Rural Training Grant Website:

[www.rtg.pdx.edu](http://www.rtg.pdx.edu)

# Tribal Partner News

## ICWA Training Institute and Fall Conference

Seven Feathers Hotel Resort and Casino in Canyonville was the gathering site for the 2005 Oregon ICWA Training Institute and the Fall ICWA Conference. The Training Institute “Government to Government: Collaborating for Native Children and Families” was attended by 95 tribal and state child welfare staff and included a tribal community simulation designed to help participants better understand how one’s values, resources and experiences impact the building of a community. It highlighted the challenges tribes have faced in child welfare and the need for collaborative working relationships. Participants became very involved in the tribal simulation, which opened new avenues of communication. The activity culminated in a Healing Community Ceremony. Participant comments were very positive. “The cultural experience we participated in made the conference different and better than others.” “I received a lot of information I can take back home and apply to my caseload.”



The following two day conference, “Building for the Future of Indian Children and Families: Cultural Competency and Collaboration”, was attended by 140 who were engaged by James Mason, PHD in the two opening plenary sessions. Dr. Mason serves as the Oregon Health Division Director for

the Office of Multi-Cultural Health and focused his day one remarks on demystifying cultural competence. Participant comments included the following: “Very much appreciated this session. The presentation was respectful of all diverse groups – nice approach.” Excellent presenters offered break out sessions on the following topics: creating partnerships, family unity meetings, supervision, boundaries/confidentiality, and recruitment and retention of native families. On day two, Dr. Mason addressed indigenous views of health and wellness. This was followed by more breakout sessions with additional sessions available in the afternoon on topics such as family/worker support, tribal communities and child abuse centers working together and on various types of guardianships.

The conference had many opportunities for sharing culture including Tony Johnson’s narrated slide show of his Canoe journey, storytelling by Ed Edmo, and several ceremonial offerings from Quartz Creek Drum, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation. “The drumming, storytelling and other cultural experiences were great.” The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians assisted by staff from SDA 6 hosted the conference. “This tribe’s hospitality and generosity is felt in the heart because it is genuine.”

The Rural Training Grant was one of the sponsors for this event. We look forward to participating in the planning for next years Training Institute and Fall Conference, which is tentatively scheduled for late September 2006 at Spirit Mountain Casino and Resort Hotel in Grand Ronde. Check with your supervisor to indicate your interest as it promises to be another excellent training and conference event.

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### *NICWA On Line Training*

Free – Sign Up Now! Thirty-five state and tribal child welfare staff have signed up for the NICWA on line training offered through the Rural Training Grant. Registering is easy, there is no cost to you, and you will receive a one-year membership in NICWA, which includes the NICWA newsletter and training announcements. We strongly encourage state and tribal child welfare staff to access this class as it can assist in creating a common understanding and common language for collaboration. If you have not signed up, we encourage you to contact us. Call Judy Miller at 1-503-589-7874 or email her at [jmille99@chemeketa.edu](mailto:jmille99@chemeketa.edu).



# Distance Delivery - Reaching Out to You

## Online Course

As part of the Rural Child Welfare Training Grant, we are offering a series of Web CT classes specifically for social services staff in rural and remote communities. The target areas are DHS Child Welfare Staff in SDAs 7, 10, 11, 13 and 14; Oregon Tribal Child Welfare Staff; and Child Welfare Staff and Tribal partners in Bethel, Alaska. You may take the class free of charge and receive, on loan, a copy of the textbook “Rural Social Work: Building and Sustaining Community Assets”. The class may be taken for one undergraduate credit, for a grade or as a pass/no pass; or be audited.

The class is a four-week online course starting the week of January 9th, 2006. Each week involves about 2-3 hours of work. A highly experienced child welfare practitioner who has served in rural Oregon teaches sessions. In April, we will be offering “Rural Social Services: Policy Issues” and hope to repeat “Rural Social Services: Dual Relationships” summer or fall term. Classes may be taken in any order.

## Online Resource Development

We are currently developing an online resource where rural child welfare workers involved with our grant can share ideas and resources. This will have a discussion board, some mini training modules (as they are developed) and links to useful resources. RTG Central will be online after the first of the year.

## NetLink Trainings

The Child Welfare Partnership has been offering synchronous online training in topics such as: Promoting Permanency, Working with Teens, and Transitioning Children with Sensitivity. New sessions are being developed including Working with Sexually Reactive Children. These NetLink courses are great opportunities for training to reach out to the rural areas. Information about these NetLinks is available at [www.cwpsalem.pdx.edu/netlink](http://www.cwpsalem.pdx.edu/netlink)

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