



# RURAL EXPRESS

Child Welfare Partnership

Spring 2006



## In Celebration of Rural Practice

### A Summer Training Institute for Rural Child Welfare Staff

**What is the Rural Training Institute?** The Institute is a three day training experience that recognizes and honors the uniqueness of rural social work and provides opportunities to interact with others who share your commitment. Training topics include; Rural, Tribal and Professional Culture as a Lens that Impacts Individual and Agency Practice, Developing Resources, Dual Relationships and Boundaries, and more.

**Who Should Come?** Four Child Welfare staff in Service Delivery Areas 7, 10, 11, 13 and 14, with at least one year of experience are eligible to attend. The Institute will be of value to CET's, direct service staff and supervisors, ICWA liaisons. Ten slots are reserved for Tribal Child Welfare staff for any of the nine recognized Oregon tribes.

**Where Will It Be?** The Phoenix Inn in Downtown Bend, Oregon.

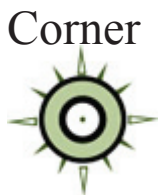
**When Will It Be?** July 25-27th 8:30 to 5:00

**What Does It Cost?** There is no registration fee. Breakfast, lunch and lodging, at the training site, provided. Your office is asked to cover your mileage and other expenses. You can request assistance from the Project Manager, Judy Miller.

**Registration** DHS staff - coordinate requests through your Child Welfare Manager. Tribal staff - coordinate requests through your manager or supervisor. Contact Judy Miller with questions: 1-503-589-7874 or [jmille99@chemeketa.edu](mailto:jmille99@chemeketa.edu)

In the fall of 2006 there will be an Institute in Bethel, Alaska for Alaska participants.

#### Katharine's Corner



**What's "different" about rural or tribal child welfare?** After several years of working on this project, we can say that the answer to this question is 'nothing' and 'everything'. Certainly our goal for children in rural areas is a goal of safety, permanence, and wellbeing just as it is for children everywhere. The core practices of identifying risk and assuring safety, engaging parents and kin in building safe families, and moving in a timely way towards permanence are the same for children everywhere. So, the first answer is "nothing is different".

There is an important difference in the context of practice in small tight-knit rural, tribal, or village settings. Relationship skills take center stage. A rural or tribal child welfare worker won't last long unless she can work as a team player and understand and build on cultural and community resources. She (or he) must know how to negotiate the boundaries of being both neighbor and CPS worker. Sometimes it's stressful to be the one to take a stand in the face of community pressure. At other times it's wonderful to tap the resources of a generous community, ready to go the extra mile for families who need help. Here, the social worker and supervisor don't specialize, but must understand practice across the full continuum of child welfare.

Relationship, culture, taking a stand, community resource development, being a generalist practitioner ... isn't this just good old-fashioned child welfare social work? Yes, it is, and rural practice is one place where "good old fashioned social work" is still in practice. That's why this project is called In Celebration of Rural Practice.

# Promising Practices in Tribal-State Relations

By Kirstin O'Dell



Providing child welfare services for American Indian/Alaska Native children routinely involves multiple governments, agencies, and jurisdictions. When States and Tribes work together better outcomes for children and families can be achieved. The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect published a research brief in October 2005 to help States and Tribes find ways to work together more effectively to meet the goals of ICWA. The brief identified the following four promising practices in successful Tribal-State Relations.

## 1. Advisory Committees And Forums.

Tribes and States that communicate early and frequently are better able to develop mutual understanding and respect. Advisory committees and forums provide opportunities for mutual education and a place to communicate about the impact of specific programs, services, and legislation within the communities. At the local level, advisory committees may also serve as a forum to discuss case-level issues.

## 2. Development Of Tribal-State Intergovernmental Agreements And Contracts.

Cooperative agreements are used in many states in regard to custody proceedings involving Tribal children. They are useful to clarify up front who has jurisdictional authority, how it will be exercised, and how services will be provided to protect American Indian/Alaska Native children.



“Let us put our minds together to see what life we can make for our children.”

--Sitting Bull

## 3. Training And Information Sharing.

Improving training opportunities for Tribal and State child welfare workers helps improve understanding of the cultural context in which American Indian/Alaska Native children and their families live. This information is at the core of how these families should be approached and worked with in child protection and permanency situations. Cross training opportunities can also aid in the mutual understanding of organizational and community environments.

## 4. Development Of Culturally Competent Permanency Alternatives.

Providing more culturally appropriate options in safety and permanency creates greater ownership and buy-in from the child's Tribe and reduces potential conflicts in case planning. Families are also more engaged when there is an individualized approach. Two examples of promising and culturally appropriate permanency practices are subsidized guardianships and customary adoptions.

The information in this article is from a research brief published by The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect on promising practices for tribal-state relations (October 2005). The entire brief is available on-line at <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>.

# Tips for Workers in Rural Areas



Carry an emergency kit that includes the following items: a thermal blanket, snack bars, a working flashlight and water.



Since cell phones may not work in many rural areas, have some way to keep in touch with your office.



Make sure your office has your daily itinerary with addresses and phone numbers (if your clients have them).



Have a system to check in at the end of the day to make sure that everyone has returned from the field.



Maintain a good working relationship with your county sheriff's office. Make sure they know if and when you are going to take a high-risk action with a family.



Have a way to check in with other service providers who may be working with the same families. With the proper releases in place you can coordinate a treatment plan.



Make sure your notes contain clear information that someone else might need to know who may be covering or following up with your cases. Example: "Road is washed out. Down to one narrow lane."



If you run into a client (or ex-client) somewhere outside the office, give a nod, but let that client acknowledge you first. A client may feel self-conscious about the nature of your relationship.



Consider putting your office address on your checks if you are concerned about people easily finding out where you live.



When you get a new case and it is someone with whom you already have some kind of relationship, consult with your supervisor.

Adapted from "10 Tips for Social Work Practice in Rural Areas...Direct from the Trenches" printed in Reaching Out: Current Issues for Child Welfare Practice in Rural Communities Summer 2005 published by the Northern California Training Academy.

## Send Us Your Tips!

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# Distance Delivery - Reaching Out to You



## Training Calendar Up and Running!

Curry County Child Welfare office, located in Gold Beach, is the first county to start using the RTG website as a place for community partners involved in social services to have a central calendar of training opportunities.

Community partners submit any appropriate upcoming trainings and Child Welfare posts these on the website. The calendar gives the training title, presenters, dates, place, and contact information. It is hoped that this will help the community know about and access training.



## NetLink Trainings

Upcoming NetLink trainings offered by the Child Welfare Partnership are Confidentiality, Relatives as Caregivers, Promoting Permanency: The Importance of 30 Day Contact, and more. We are currently developing a NetLink training called What Color is Math? which is about working with Fetal Alcohol Affected Children. Watch for that in the Fall. These NetLink courses are great opportunities for training to reach out to the rural areas. Information, materials and directions for CWP NetLinks are available at... [www.cwpsalem.pdx.edu/netlink](http://www.cwpsalem.pdx.edu/netlink)



## State ICWA Pre Conference and Conference: September 26th - 28th

This year's state conference "**Reaching a Common Voice: Working from an Indigenous Perspective**", will be co-hosted by Oregon's Department of Human Services and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde with sessions and activities scheduled both at the Tribal Center and at Spirit Mountain Casino and Resort Hotel.

There is a **pre-conference training institute, "Tillixum - All My Relations" on Tuesday, September 26th** that starts at 11:00. The conference begins Wednesday at 8:30 AM and goes through Thursday.

A variety of presentations and activities are planned and include workshops and activities that will enhance your understanding and appreciation of tribal culture and a Wednesday night dinner and entertainment hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

**Agenda topics include:** ICWA compliance, Active Efforts, Cultural Competency, Communication, Relationships in Joint Case Management, and more.

