



NCWWI Tribal Traineeship Programs: Legacies & Lessons Learned

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I. Introduction

In 2008, the Children’s Bureau funded the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) to build the capacity of the nation’s child welfare workforce and improve outcomes for children, youth and families through activities that support the development of skilled child welfare leaders in public and tribal child welfare systems, and in private agencies that are contracted by the state to provide case management services that are traditionally provided by the public child welfare system. To achieve this, NCWWI launched three major training initiatives: one for mid-managers, one for supervisors and one for students – the Traineeship program.

The purpose of the NCWWI Traineeship program was to support professional education for current or prospective child welfare practitioners in accredited BSW or MSW programs. A major goal for the Traineeship program was to develop educational experiences that would teach and reinforce core competencies in areas of child welfare practice and leadership. Trainees were expected to participate in a field placement at a child welfare agency, enroll in relevant courses to prepare for professional service and leadership in child welfare, and to work in a child welfare agency upon graduation. Traineeship schools were expected to innovate and improve their child welfare curricular offerings and were encouraged to provide additional supports for trainees to support completion of degrees and retention in the field. The traineeship programs needed to be particularly attentive to addressing diversity within the workforce, local agency workforce needs, preparing future leaders, and understanding systems of care principles.

Twelve Traineeship programs were funded: 5 BSW, 3 joint BSW/MSW and 4 MSW programs.

Briar Cliff University, Portland State University, University of Montana, Northeastern State University, and the University of South Dakota are the five social work programs that are part of the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) traineeship network selected to provide social work child welfare education for tribal and non-tribal social work students who share an interest and concern for the American Indian population.

These five **NCWWI Tribal traineeship programs** were charged with:

- Creating a legacy document that captures innovative and successful strategies used by the Tribal traineeship programs at multiple levels, especially “lessons learned” that may help others develop future child welfare workforce projects.
- Applying “lessons learned” data to multiple system linkages and levels, including students, schools of social work, child welfare agencies, and regional/national areas.

The main themes of the NCWWI Tribal traineeship programs’ collective legacies and lessons learned are incorporated in the system level analyses that follow.

II. Tribal Traineeship Programs: Legacies & Lessons Learned

Individual Level: Students

I. Recruitment & Selection: Building Relationships & Infusing Cultural Ways

The five Tribal traineeship programs recommend that traineeship projects include an emphasis on the historical context that impacts the lives of the American Indian people, the physical environments of the regions where they live, the urban locations of the universities, and the differences in tribal cultures when providing child welfare services. These aspects are important to consider in the recruitment and retention of tribal and non-tribal students to become effective, knowledgeable, and culturally cognizant child welfare social workers.

Recruitment is ongoing and a function of relationships. When faculty members attend events in the community they talk to potential students or people who are mentoring young people. Social work faculty can also join with other departments on campus, to bring a social work presence to the recruitment of American Indian students for the universities. This can be accomplished in part by sharing prepared materials that reflect the schools' support for American Indian students. Once the materials are published they can be shared with prospective students, current students, faculty members, and admissions departments to assist in "getting the word out".

A best practice for recruitment of American Indian students is the infusion of cultural ways, which is time consuming, but provides beneficial results. Outreach and involvement is important to the tribal communities. There is added value when faculty/ staff at the traineeship programs offer training, expertise, collaborative grant writing, and technical assistance to the American Indian communities in a respectful and useful way. Outreach also includes participation in cultural activities located within tribal communities. All of these approaches require time and patience to effectively build and sustain long term relationships with tribal communities.

An approach for recruitment and retention of American Indian students includes visits to the universities' campuses for informational interviews held with the prospective students. Their support system, which may include family members, spiritual leaders, church and tribal representatives, are also invited to participate to learn the program requirements and expectations. The prospective students are then able to make an informed decision in conjunction with their personal support system and the faculty and advisors who participate as part of the support network. This approach is beneficial for the prospective students for they have a better understanding of the expectations from academe, families and their tribal or *home* communities. Universities' representatives may also want to visit prospective students in their tribal communities, urban centers, tribal colleges, or at cultural events. All are opportunities to inform prospective students of the social work

programs, the profession, and how they are welcome and will be supported if they decide to attend the mainstream universities.

Non-tribal social work students have been included in some of the universities' American Indian traineeship programs. These students are committed to developing professional cultural competence with tribal nations, agencies, and the state departments. This is evidenced by their interest and commitment in serving the American Indian population, their requests for American Indian field placements with Indian Child Welfare (ICW) agencies, and the completion of social work courses on American Indian children, families and child welfare. They also may write papers on issues relevant to the American Indian population, the development of field objectives to visit ICW agencies, and their participation in ICW conferences. Non-tribal students' participation in the Tribal traineeship programs has demonstrated the importance of having tribal and non-tribal students in the same program to promote cross cultural learning and to increase "allies" to provide competent services for American Indian families.

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU's) are potential sources for student recruitment opportunities. American Indian and non-tribal students who attend TCU's are likely to have a particular commitment to Indian child welfare issues. Three of the five universities are working in partnership with tribal colleges to develop a two plus two program, or have students in a combined BSW degree program with classes held at a tribal college. For example, in South Dakota, American Indian students have the opportunity to choose a tribal college setting for the completion of their undergraduate education in social work because the Oglala Lakota College BSW Program is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). In addition to TCU's, it is recommended that efforts be made to recruit American Indian high school students.

2. Avenues for Student Support: Mentoring & Peer Support

Clearly, students need support which can be offered in many ways. One traineeship program hired American Indian graduates to provide tutoring and professional mentoring to current American Indian child welfare trainees, especially those who were struggling academically. Another university had a Multi-Cultural Program (MCP), which included tribal students who provided input to the selection of speakers for two events. A few of the universities have American Indian student organizations on their campuses; but they are not exclusively designed to support social work students. These organizations provide students with an opportunity for acceptance of their cultures and to increase their learning of the diversity within the American Indian population. The American Indian students that participated in these programs were able to be in leadership roles and found support to address homesickness, isolation, and discrimination. Unfortunately, not all students participated in the Indian student organizations because they intended to return to their home communities to continue to be engaged in their specific tribal cultures. Another university with a high percentage of American Indian students indicated they have university-wide cultural celebrations monthly that also provide support to students.

The universities' social work programs are involved in many activities that keep alumni engaged and active in the lives of American Indians. For example, Briar Cliff University's

social work program is involved in the planning of the annual Memorial March to Honor Lost Children, a remembrance of the Indian children lost to the system which allows current students, Native and non-Native, to work collaboratively with local tribes, DHS staff and community child welfare volunteers.

Finally, financial support must be considered in the recruitment and retention of American Indian students for it may be the only way the students can attend college. Many college students have financial issues and the American Indian students are no exception.

3. Using Cultural Consultants & Agency Training to Enhance Field Experiences

Contracting with cultural consultants who are American Indian, including Elders who are in the roles of consultants and field supervisors with MSW degrees, can help facilitate positive field experiences for trainees. The inclusion of these experts assists in bridging the cultural gap that may exist and provides supervision by a professional with an MSW for a viable placement.

It is imperative for field agencies to include the social work students in the training that is provided for all staff. An example is the ICW training which was provided by members from the federally recognized tribes who delivered content about their tribal nations in an effort to dispel the myth that all tribal nations/American Indians are alike. The students in placement may also increase their understanding of cultural differences and nuances that exist within tribal nations and tribal services available. All five traineeship programs had field placements located on reservations which resulted from working over time with tribal nations to develop meaningful, collaborative, and long term relationships. For example, South Dakota currently works with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and has a practicum placement agreement with Sicangu Children & Families, which is the tribe's foster family agency that provides foster placements and counseling services for native children and families involved with both tribal and state child protection agencies. Other tribes in the area that have working agreements for practicum placements include Flandreau, Yankton and Pine Ridge.

One structural challenge is that tribal agencies often operate in small units which may have only one supervisor who does not have the time to support a student field placement. A second challenge is that social work students may be the first in the agency with social work degrees so there is no one on site to provide field supervision and faculty members are then required to be in the role of a liaison supervisor. Another challenge is that tribal communities are often small and the familial ties that occur with supervisors/workers/clients/tribal governments present unexpected complexities for the social work students. Lastly, those universities with MSW programs have few placements with tribal agencies because the tribal communities are in rural areas and the universities are in urban areas. This distance creates difficulties for students who want to work with tribal agencies. Urban agencies are noted, but they are limited in number. Also, some students want to work on reservations or for their own tribal nations, which may be hours away in drive time. Supporting these field placements may require the delivery of online and distance learning programs.

4. Transition to the Workforce: Graduation Ceremonies & Career Pathways

A graduation ceremony may be as important to the success of a Tribal traineeship program as is the recruitment process. A graduation that includes a traditional honor ceremony hosted by the university will bring together extended families, tribal connections, and faculty to acknowledge the successful completion of the degree program. This is a reaffirming experience to welcome the individual into the community as a professional and as someone deserving of respect for his or her accomplishments. Social work graduates are most likely to work for child welfare agencies either with American Indian agencies, or agencies who serve the American Indian population; therefore, he or she is likely to become a mentor for the youth and a recruiter for the social work program simply by his or her presence in the community.

Many of the Tribal traineeship graduates are hired by their field practicum agency because the agencies have trained them and know they have acquired child welfare knowledge and skills. Additionally, these trainees have participated in relevant conferences which increase their knowledge and networking with professionals.

The American Indian traineeship programs also have paid field placements which have increased their understanding of ICW as a result of the students receiving the Systems of Care Training together with both the state workers and students. The students have learned state policies, collaborated with child welfare professionals, and were prepared by being culturally aware and knowledgeable of ICWA.

As trainees transition to the work force they are serving on both the social work department and child welfare traineeship advisory boards, and some have become Department of Human Services (DHS) and agency administrators. Faculty and students also serve on community and DHS committees and teams, which are often staffed with alumni. This collaborative model is an excellent approach to building and sustaining a child welfare social work force network with the knowledge to meet the needs of American Indian families and tribal systems.

Organizational Level: Schools of Social Work

I. Support for Traineeship Faculty

Faculty and adjuncts in Tribal traineeship programs benefit from attending conferences, special trainings, and participating in webinars to learn more about Indian child welfare. Secondly, faculty who are involved in working with the American Indian communities must receive recognition and credit toward tenure and promotion for their involvement with tribal nations. It must equate to faculty who are working with populations in other countries that require additional time and effort. Third, faculty need to become aware of the American Indian culture differences and understand why students may not be in class due to tribal community responsibilities and/or religious/spiritual ceremonies. They may not want to share their tribal nations' religious and ceremonial practices due to the historical punitive and discriminative responses and actions tribal members have experienced. It is important for faculty to be mindful of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, and the impact this may have on students and their families today.

Fourth, it is essential for faculty to develop awareness that not all students are competent in their own tribal cultures due to loss of cultural knowledge and identity, which may result from relocation, adoption, foster care, assimilation, and historical consequences of the Indian boarding schools. Faculty also must be aware that American Indian students may have different styles of learning, processing, and arriving at a resolve. For example, an American Indian student may not raise her hand in response to a professor's question. The non-volunteering is in response to a goal of surviving in the environment with the least amount of disruption. However, if called on directly by name, she is likely to respond positively.

2. Curriculum Innovation & Development: American Indian Experts, Competency Enhancement, Macro Projects and Learning-in-place

All social work students, including American Indian students, who are interested in the field of child welfare, need to acquire knowledge of the origins of the strong mistrust American Indians may have of non-Native public and private child welfare agencies. Tribal traineeship curriculum but help students to recognize that this distrust largely results from a lack of cultural competence present in the agencies and the number of children removed from their Native homes both historically and in the present. American Indian students may have some knowledge of this mistrust, but may not be aware of the histories of all tribal nations. In addition, there are those who may not be aware of their own tribal nation's history, especially if they were placed in foster care or adopted to non-tribal families. American Indian students who are knowledgeable of their own tribal nations, histories, strengths, and challenges need to learn about other tribal nations' histories, policies, critical issues, service needs and challenges.

American Indians are more often able to attend college later in life. As a result, they have an in depth knowledge of policy and practice, but are required to take basic social work courses. A limited number of social work programs have become more inclusive in the curriculum by allowing academic credit for attendance at tribal symposia, statewide and national conferences, or for independent study on a project that meets students' interests. The goal is for students to benefit if prior learning was taking into consideration.

Macro change projects are another area of the curriculum in which senior BSW students can enhance their understanding of ICW. It is important to encourage student child welfare trainees to design their macro change processes in collaboration with child welfare professionals. Examples include the student development of a cultural assessment form used by all DHS staff when children enter foster care, as well as the Native American Foster Home Initiative which was developed by a student and continues to be used after the student's graduation. Also, the inclusion or specific courses offered on the topic of Indian child welfare, with assignments that demand critical thinking such as writing reflection papers on the *"Best Practices in Indian Child Welfare"*.

Another area of curriculum enhancement is the "in place" learning experiences which can include a visit to a reservation, historical sites, meeting with a judge, and attendance in cultural classes. "In-place" learning also occurred when tribal college students attended "The Red Road Gathering" hosted and supported by several departments of the University

of South Dakota. The term, “The Red Road” has more than one definition for the American Indian population. For this experience, [“The Red Road Gathering](#) is a holistic healing journey based on Lakota/Nakota/Dakota world views to which people come from all points of the world. The diverse population travels to the *Wase Wakpa* community gathering to resource, network, and participate in recovery experiences for holistic healing opportunities. The Red Road Gathering is a time for healing, renewal and an opportunity to gain the energy and insight to stay physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually healthy. This spiritual gathering is a voluntary event which utilizes the talents, expertise, and resources of the participants. This gathering is a self-initiated individual healing experience enhanced through powerful group interactions.

Students who participated in these two “in-place” learning experiences shared a class connection via video classroom technology throughout a semester. The joining of tribal and state university students through technology and “in-place” learning experiences was a powerful teaching format. The students will continue their shared learning for another semester as they produce a video and training material reflective of their cultural learning experiences, and how this cultivated and/or enhanced their level of cultural competency for their future work in the field of Indian child welfare. The training packet will be presented to the State and Tribal CPS professionals to be used as an on-going training for students in future child welfare courses.

Child welfare courses may utilize the assistance of American Indian child welfare professionals in multiple ways: judges and attorneys for mock trials, therapists interviews by students, as well as through participation in a number of varied volunteer opportunities offered by child welfare agencies. Also, it is important to complement existing faculty strengths by incorporating additional American Indian practitioners as guest speakers, program consultants, field supervisors, and adjunct faculty. The five universities support the involvement of tribal elders in the development of curriculum competencies and teaching approaches.

The child welfare competencies need to include knowledge of the historical oppression of the American Indian population and the diversity within it; the social issues colonization has created; and practice models effective for the population. Cultural ways of learning and healing need to be incorporated into the curriculum, for there is more than the linear model. Additionally, the strengths of the population as a whole, and tribal nations individually, need to be studied and incorporated into the knowledge base. Curriculum needs include addressing the barriers caused by distance (e.g. rural and hazardous mountainous terrain American Indian students travel through to attend a BSW or MSW program). Therefore, a need for curriculum development that incorporates distance education approaches, such as online learning would be most beneficial. The tribal students would then have an opportunity to receive their education “in place” and work “in place” on the reservations where their education and training may be most needed.

3. Field Department Supports: Cross-training

Department of Human Services field placements are critically important to ensuring that DHS administrators, supervisors, and other staff are able to know our students. There is a need for coordination of field placements that build cross-training opportunities between

professionals and students to sustain the efforts made by traineeship programs. This can include child welfare professionals training social work students in the classroom and then also providing supervision once they are in the field. For example, the traineeship project in South Dakota teamed up with the State Division of Child Protection Services to host four training sessions on Systems of Care while professionals in the field worked with students through classroom instruction. These activities led to a stronger presence of students and professional partnerships during field placement and first time employment experiences.

4. Support from University Administration

The universities' administrators need to be aware of the time necessary to build successful relationships with tribal nations; it is not just a one-time experience. The investment of time is necessary to build the bridges to demonstrate genuine commitment. If the social work programs do not have this support, the efforts in the development of an ethical and respectful relationship will be an enormous challenge. Without the time investment, the tribal nations may see an empty promise which is a repeat of the past.

This time commitment is not only dedicated to American Indian students, or tribal representatives coming to the universities, but for faculty members to visit the communities and participate in meetings, ceremonies, conferences, and cultural activities held in Indian Country. For example, there is a collaborative relationship with the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma ICW agency and the Oklahoma Indian Child Welfare Association.

Organizational Level – Child Welfare Agency/Tribal Agency

1. Recruitment & Selection of Field Instructors

Universities recruit field instructors who are willing to assist students in achieving competency standards and have an interest in working with American Indian communities. The agencies make recommendations for supervisors who have this skill set. Also alumni often become field supervisors for they understand the social work program, are employed by child welfare agencies, and are often tribal members who want to work with their own tribe or other tribal nations. In addition, the nontribal students who are trained to work with the American Indian population are an asset to the programs and serve in the role of “allies”.

2. Support for a Variety of Placement Types

The child welfare field placements are in urban, tribal, and nontribal agencies with DHS placements being an important collaborator in the education of the social work students. The Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Welfare agencies are the most frequently active non-Indian placement agencies that provide students with experiences in working with the American Indian population. Several students from the American Indian traineeships are currently placed in the various states' DHS agencies.

Barriers to rural placements are due to distance and the terrain students have to travel to the reservation communities. In addition, the small staffing of the agencies and limited number of field supervisors with MSW degrees may impede this type of field placement. At times, specific arrangements are put into place with faculty or community members who have an MSW degree.

3. Agency Supports: Diversity, Specialized Training & Mentoring

Frequently, tribal nations have a human resource hiring practice or preference for selecting tribal members and/or American Indians to work in positions within their tribal nations. Even though this policy exists, the workers still have to meet all the requirements for the position. It does, however, allow for more American Indians to be hired to work with tribal families. Also, a benefit offered by the agencies is the NICWA online course fee of \$50.00, which is sometimes waived for students in the child welfare field placements. In addition to special training opportunities, the students also received ongoing encouragement and mentoring from agency staff members. The universities view the partnerships with agencies as the foundation for bridging a pathway for administration, students, faculty, urban areas, and tribal nations to meet the students' needs in "walking Native ways."

4. Field Agency Innovations: Relationship-building & Block Field Placements

Field agencies and tribal nations are active in the building and retaining of ongoing relationships to support state regulations, participation in ICWA meetings and statewide tribal conferences, and Indian Health Services collaborations with communities. Also, the universities are active in state education associations, NICWA, education fairs, and tribal events. *Barriers* to the development of relationships include time constraints and bureaucratic roadblocks. For example, Indian Health Services background checks at the federal department are extensive and demand additional time for clearance and patience on the part of the student, agency and university.

Block field placements are good for the student's learning experience because the student can be 100% immersed and may be able to travel for field; however, not all schools allow for this option. Also, it is difficult to have *real* protected or reduced time for the field placement days for current employees attending school. This is particularly challenging for supervisors where a 'reduced caseload' is simply not a reality. A reduced caseload does not guarantee that the students' cases will not blow up in particularly time-consuming and demanding ways. If a student is completely away from the office for 2-3 months, it is easier for the agency to back-fill, and provides someone to handle the uncovered work.

5. Strong Partnerships Between Schools & Agencies

As indicated previously, open lines of communication among three entities is required for competent social work in the field of Indian child welfare. In the establishment of partnerships between the universities and the agencies, a third entity must be added – the tribal nations. Without the engagement of the tribes and the urban American Indian population there would be minimal success for meeting the child welfare needs of the population. The three entities must have ongoing communication that is sustainable over time, and include grassroots efforts to be able to continually benefit from the partnerships.

Regional & National Level

I. Collaboration across the Traineeship Network

Collaborating with Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU) is one key to a successful Tribal traineeship program. For example, a powerful addition to the University of South Dakota traineeship program included bringing the established and accredited Oglala Lakota College BSW program into the loop. This program is currently offering a BSW program for tribal students in collaboration with the students from the University of South Dakota. Two other traineeships have also worked with TCUs to move the students from a two year to a four year program.

Tribal traineeship program staff have also collaborated on written works and presentations (e.g. four of the five PI's for the traineeships have written a book chapter together and all five have shared their models and experiences during formal presentations at conferences). In addition, the programs have shared their experiences informally at meetings and on conference calls. This collaboration also benefits the students (e.g. programs brought together students from the traineeships to experience *in place* learning as well as educational and professional networking sessions).

2. NCWWI Support for the Traineeship Programs

Funding support for the individual students has provided them with the opportunity to enroll in the social work programs, attend ICW and NICWA conferences, and collaborative meetings with other universities and tribal colleges. Also, funding support assisted faculty/staff to focus a percentage of their time on the traineeship project which included strengthening collaboration efforts with agencies, state and federal departments, tribal nations, and urban Indian centers. The funds also supported PI's and/or team members, in part, to attend conferences, trainings, and meetings with students. Additionally, the webinars and print resources have been most helpful.

Having a dedicated NCWWI Tribal traineeship consultant has been most helpful in coordinating the NICWA workshop sessions (2012 & 2013), the student luncheon, the development of this document, and site visits to the institutions which included presentations with American Indian content.

III. Reflections from Tribal Traineeship Pls

“If I were to identify the one way in which participation as part of NCWWI was critical for our Traineeship program, I would say...”

The seminar on leadership for culturally responsive students, which emphasized leadership competencies, and provided mentors for students of color in negotiating intersecting cultural and professional identities, was a powerful core of our program. **Katharine Cahn, Portland State University**

The one program innovation that has been very important to our university and the field of child welfare has been the institution of the child welfare specialty for our BSW program. This is the first time that our university has implemented a specialty in generalist practice and currently is one of the few such specialties in the nation. Not exclusive to the trainee students, but available to all BSW students as well, social work majors can elect to take 11 hours of coursework that address working with children and families. As our curriculum already has a structured minor that can encompass upper division courses in psychology, social sciences, and Native American studies, the students may substitute this minor for child welfare. In the specialty, students can select rotating course offerings in child welfare, family/children services, leadership and supervision, Indian child welfare, and youth offenders. Independent study credits are also available for topics not currently offered in regularly scheduled courses, and students may receive approval from the curriculum coordinator to take a related course of special interest that will count towards the specialty. In particular to our significant Native American population, students often elect to take courses that fit with the domain of services to Native children and families, such as social work with Native Americans and indigenous leadership. This specialty was a part of the original proposal’s funding for the grant, and to date, five students outside of the traineeship are specializing in child welfare. In our state, as with many others, child welfare candidates are often hired who lack a social work academic background. Because of the traineeship, not only will current trainees hold a BSW, but they are also better equipped to develop as leaders in child welfare as they enter the field equipped with additional knowledge and skills in this area. It is our plan to continue with the specialization when the traineeship funding has ended, as a means to assist in professionalizing child welfare in our tribal and state child welfare systems. **Virginia Drywater Whitekiller, Northeastern State University**

The collaboration that was required to begin the Briar Cliff University Siouxland Indian Child Welfare Traineeship Project (SICWTP), was also the collaboration that was required to strengthen and sustain the program. Several innovations emerged from the community collaboration. For example, the social work program developed a new Child Welfare and the Law course. Members of the Native community contributed to the development of an ICWA case used throughout the semester. Professional attorneys and a family judge volunteered to serve as attorneys, guardian ad litem and judge for the capstone mock trial held at the end of the course. Members of the SICWTP advisory board provided feedback on the content and process in order to improve the course for future child welfare students. This community collaboration not only strengthened the program’s two child welfare courses, it strengthened the relationships essential to community improvements in Indian child welfare services, as

well as successful internships for students interested in child welfare. **Heather Craig-Olsen, Briar Cliff University**

Cultural Consultants: If I were to identify the one innovation in our program that was most important for students I would say it was employing “cultural consultants” who were native women (elders) who also had MSWs, one from our program. I would also say that this was equally important to our faculty and school. In fact, we are broadening this support approach to encompass our whole school, not just trainees. Support and Learning Teams: All of our trainees are supported by “support and learning teams”. This is a team lead by our project manager and can include other faculty or any person the trainee believes will support them in their work. Presently, we are experimenting with distance technology to enhance this approach. Course Development: “Social Work in Indian Country” was developed by one of our graduates and adjunct faculty member. This course has been influential in our traineeship and school. Currently we are considering making it a required course rather than an elective. **James Caringi, University of Montana**

The financial support of the NCWWI allowed our program to achieve the partnerships we needed to begin to improve child welfare in our state. The financial support of the NCWWI for program planning, travel and supplies allowed our program to achieve the partnerships we needed to begin to improve child welfare in our state. **Debra Norris, University of South Dakota**

The NING website resource helped students develop a strong sense of identity and common professional cause with peers across the nation. If we could identify more than one thing, I would also name the wider latitude in student selection and service-payback guidelines provided by these IV-B traineeships over our pre-existing IV-E program. **Katharine Cahn, Portland State University**

NCWWI funding offered the opportunity to further develop our students and social work program in child welfare services. Although our program already had some course offerings in child welfare, NCWWI allowed our program to evaluate and assess what was in place, as well as to contemplate how our program could become more professionalized in this area. In particular, the support that NCWWI provided, not only financially, but also by making professional connections throughout the nation was extremely helpful. In four years, our program has developed a sense of nation-wide camaraderie via knowledge sharing, skills building, and project development. Without NCWWI, this would have not happened. Finally, our traineeship students have also been included in this national level collaboration by webinars, chat rooms, and the attendance at national child welfare conferences. **Virginia Drywater Whitekiller, Northeastern State University**

Our involvement with NCWWI has been extremely important in many ways. The support network of faculty / PIs working on the Tribal work has been particularly helpful. Suzanne Cross’s leadership has been the driving force in keeping our work going. Annual meetings in Chicago also help with cross-pollination of ideas. The webpage is also a useful tool. In general, the leadership provided by the institute was excellent. **James Caringi, University of Montana**

NCWWI provided the impetus to create the Briar Cliff University Siouxland Indian Child Welfare Traineeship Project, the first community collaboration focused solely on developing a skilled child welfare workforce deeply involved with the Native American community. The five years of the traineeship program have produced several Native American child welfare professionals who are deeply involved in improving child welfare services in Siouxland and committed to work in a partnership of university, human services, private agencies, and Native American organizations. Participation with NCWWI has provided opportunities to highlight the work of our students at national gatherings, as well as opportunities to hear ideas and feedback from other schools involved in similar pursuits. The consulting services provided by Dr. Suzanne Cross through NCWWI significantly strengthened the university's work. **Heather Craig-Oldsen, Briar Cliff University**

The most important innovation our traineeship project developed would be the joint trainings between state professionals and tribal college students. The opportunity for the USD students to train with professionals in the field and with the Oglala Lakota College students would not have happened without the project's support. **Debra Norris, University of South Dakota and Josie Chase, Oglala Lakota College**

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