



The Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies: Reducing Disparities Through Indigenous Social Work Education

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WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

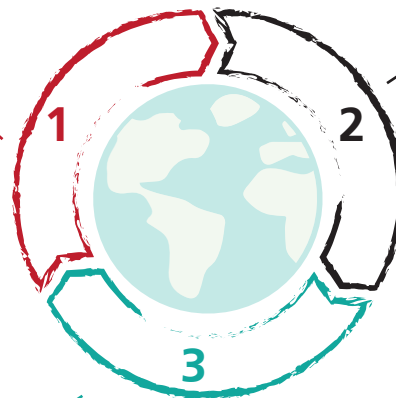
This article, which is the first in a [series of three](#) on the Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies at University of Minnesota, Duluth, highlights effective and inclusive education designed to address the dramatic overrepresentation of Indigenous families in North American public child welfare systems. The program provides a pathway to “decolonizing” social work education by honoring and integrating Indigenous knowledge into social work education to support culturally responsive child welfare.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

The Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies created a model of effective and inclusive education as an essential element of a comprehensive effort to reduce the ongoing disparities facing Indigenous families within public child welfare. The model, which illuminates gaps in Western-centered social work education, has a three-pronged approach to “decolonizing” social work education:

CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Integrating Western and strengths-based Indigenous worldviews and practices to achieve culturally responsive social work practice and policy.



PARTNERSHIP

Operating from a strengths-based Indigenous social work perspective that requires a deeper understanding of culture. The Center designs and conducts its educational programs in partnership with local Anishinaabe communities.

FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS

To implement the Center’s educational worldview, a developmental and cultural approach to learning opportunities and interactions among Center participants should be used along with experiential learning that engages the heart and head. This educational worldview teaches participants to embrace one another as “relatives” who are imperfect human beings with good intentions. Participants intentionally engage in relationships that invite reflection; respond to questions and comments with strength and clarity; and show patience, compassion, and respect for each other.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

Effective, inclusive education is one necessary component of efforts to reduce disparate outcomes for families overrepresented in the child welfare system because of race, ethnicity, and tribal affiliation.

Child welfare workers are better prepared to minimize disparate outcomes when they are educated by training systems that intentionally work with leaders of non-dominant cultural groups to create holistic, culturally-centered, experiential learning opportunities that fully integrate non-Western worldviews and practices. To learn more about the [second](#) and [third](#) papers in this series, please visit <https://ncwwi.org/1-page-summaries-and-infographics/>.