

# Indian Child Welfare Timeline

1820

White settlers proclaim “manifest destiny” as their God-given right to take possession of the North American continent for colonial expansion.

1830-1950

**Indian Removal Act:** United States (U.S.) government forcibly removes southern American Indian tribes to west of the Mississippi River, formerly known as Indian Territory (now the state of Oklahoma), to open Indigenous homelands for colonial settlement, leading to ongoing displacement and relocation of tribal peoples.

1887-1934

**General Allotment Act:** U.S. government establishes land allotment to dismantle tribal governments, abolish reservations, and weaken traditional communal living.

1879-1934

**Primary boarding school era:** U.S. government policy established to take American Indian/Alaska Native children away from their families and homelands as a way to erase Indigenous tribal culture.

1928

**Meriam Report (The Problem of Indian Administration):** Report released outlining the poor living conditions of American Indians/Alaska Natives, particularly in boarding schools and on reservations.

1934-1968

**Secondary boarding school era:** U.S. government policy ends but boarding schools continue to be seen as a threat to American Indian/Alaska Native children and families.

1960-1970

American Indian/Alaska Native children placed in non-Indian homes by state child welfare workers and other officials with little to no acknowledgment of cultural needs.

1978

**Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA, P.L. 95-608):** Federal law passed by Congress to protect American Indian/Alaska Native children and their families from biased child welfare practices and cultural disregard.

1978-present

**National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) data:**



American Indian/Alaska Native children continue to be four times more likely to be removed<sup>1,2</sup> by state child welfare systems than non-Native children even when their families have similar presenting problems.

14x

American Indian/Alaska Native children are placed in state foster care at a rate 14 times higher than their rate in the general population.



13 states continue to have significant overrepresentation of American Indian/Alaska Native children in their foster care systems.

56% of adopted American Indian/Alaska Native children continue to be adopted outside of their families and communities.



National Child Welfare Workforce Institute  
LEARNING, LEADING, CHANGING



## References

American Indian Policy Institute. (n.d.). American Indian policy. <https://aiapi.asu.edu/>  
Lubragge, M. T. (n.d.). Manifest destiny: The philosophy that created a nation. American History From Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond, University of Groningen. <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/essays/1801-1900/manifest-destiny/manifest-destiny---th-e-philosophy-that-created-a-nation.php>  
National Indian Child Welfare Association. (2022). About ICWA. <https://www.nicwa.org/about-icwa/#:~:text=In%20fact%2C%20research%20found%20that,children%2C%20families%2C%20and%20tribes>  
<sup>1</sup>National Indian Child Welfare Association. (2018). Setting the record straight: The Indian Child Welfare Act: Fact sheet.  
<sup>2</sup>National Indian Child Welfare Association. (2021). Disproportionality in child welfare: Fact sheet. [https://www.nicwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/NICWA\\_11\\_2021-Disproportionality-Fact-Sheet.pdf](https://www.nicwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/NICWA_11_2021-Disproportionality-Fact-Sheet.pdf)