

NCWWI Student and Alumni Learning Exchanges: Spring 2023 Current Issues Series



What Is ICWA and How Can We Protect It? Possible Implications of the U.S. Supreme Court's Decision

This document summarizes key takeaways of two small group discussions, one with NCWWI students and alumni and the other with school of social work faculty, following a panel discussion with Indian child welfare scholars about:

- ICWA,
- The pending U. S. Supreme Court decision, and
- Related implications for social workers working in child welfare.

Advance the Work to Preserve ICWA and Indigenous Families and Promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Learn more about ICWA and monitor the status of the [Haaland v. Brackeen](#) U.S. Supreme Court Case.
- Learn about tribal/state partnership agreements. They can be administrative policies or a contract between the state and tribal nation.
- Ask questions like:
 - Are there any administrative policies that need to be revisited over a certain period of time?
 - How has tribal consultation been involved in tribal/state agreements?
 - Are tribes being consulted when new state policy is being considered?
 - At what point are tribes being invited to the table?
- If your state does not have its own legislation in place to protect Indian families, children, and culture, write legislators to get these important protections into state law.

SESSION 1 OF 3

Event Date:

01/23/2023

Recording:

<https://vimeo.com/792400888>

Discussion Questions and Related Resources:

<https://ncwwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/ICWA-Resource-List.pdf>



- If you are in a state where ICWA is not written into state law, are there components of ICWA that could be written into the tribal/state agreement? Develop a plan to write and propose amendments or additions to your state statutes that support and preserve Indigenous families and communities.
- Contact your federal elected officials and ask them to co-sponsor the [Strengthening Tribal Families Act](#).
- Educate school systems about tribal law and the needs of tribal students. Establish partnerships between community and tribal partners: Alaska has such a partnership.
- It's important to raise awareness and improve education to help people understand why ICWA is important. Some strategies include:
 - Remind people that this is about people and preservation of their culture.
 - Instill passion about ICWA.
 - Advocate and educate the community and state officials as much as possible.
 - Provide ongoing education to agency partners and the community about ICWA. This could include monthly or other regularly scheduled trainings.

Empower American Indian and Alaska Native Populations

- Provide comprehensive training to child welfare professionals around the history, culture, and importance of ICWA.
- Give voice to the population you are serving and bring those voices to decision-making tables.
- Use a strengths-based and resiliency perspective when working within and outside of American Indian/Alaska Native communities.
- Use your power and connections to support ICWA.
- Advocate for relative and community resources whenever possible. There's a movement nationwide to increase resources for relative placements. Learn about it so you can support it.
- Many people do not know that ICWA exists or the protections they have under ICWA. Educate the population on the rights they have. Connect them to resources that they need to exercise their rights under ICWA.
- Understand [active efforts](#), a major component of ICWA. Advocate for active efforts to be expanded for all children within the child welfare system. This is the gold standard of child welfare practice.

Increase Awareness of ICWA and Related Issues

- Promote understanding so that the outcome of this discussion reaches far beyond just child welfare to include other social, economic, and ecological justice issues.
- Challenge colleagues to better understand these issues and move beyond the white dominant narrative. Whitewashing history and these issues continues to be common.
- Support the profession, colleagues, and students to engage in active advocacy around these issues.



- Become familiar with the Council on Social Work Education's [reparation statement](#) and [associated teaching and curriculum guides](#). Integrate these into your teaching.
- Support developing and using case studies and other current and relevant educational materials for social workers and other child welfare professionals.
- Make teaching tools visible and accessible to faculty on resource websites.

