



The Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies: Systems Change Through a Relational Anishinaabe Worldview

Haight, W., Waubanasum, C., Glesener, D., Day, P., Bussey, B., & Nichols, K. (2020). The Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies: Systems change through a relational Anishinaabe worldview. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 119, 105601. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105601>

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

As the third paper in a [series of three](#) on the Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies at University of Minnesota, Duluth, this article presents a study on the Anishinaabe worldview perspectives of Center staff and allies related to systems change in child welfare. The authors conducted interviews to analyze processes of systems change and provide examples and guidance at the tribal, county, and state levels.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

The Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies (the Center) creates child welfare systems change grounded in an Anishinaabe worldview, focusing on developing and sustaining relationships and building capacity.

During in-depth interviews, Center staff and allies stressed that lasting systems change happens through long-term relationship building. Due to historical and ongoing oppression and trauma forced upon Indigenous people, building trust and collaboration requires:

- Anti-oppressive practices
- Respectful engagement with tribes and elders
- Sustained efforts to create bridges across tribal communities and county and state child welfare systems
- Building capacity rooted in culture that draws on the strengths of people and emergent leadership to work toward change

Interviewees identified three case exemplars of successful child welfare systems change led by the Center, tribes, and their collaborators:



Although interviewees did not emphasize barriers to systems change, they did discuss how structural racism hinders change and prevents people from deeply connecting with communities and understanding their needs.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

Developing and sustaining relationships and building capacity at the tribal, state, and county levels is critical to creating systems change. Child welfare professionals must be open to learning, listening to understand, and finding shared humanity and common goals. Using the Center's model to foster collaboration between tribal nations and county and state child welfare professionals can positively impact practice with Indigenous children, families, and communities. To learn about the [first](#) and [second](#) articles in this series, please visit <https://ncwwi.org/1-page-summaries-and-infographics/>.