

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services and Native American Training Institute

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Contacts: LuWanna Lawrence, Assistant Public Information Officer, N.D. Dept. of Human Services, 701-328-1892 or Sandra Bercier, Training Director, Native American Training Institute, 701-255-6374

Indian Child Welfare and Wellness Conference to be held in Bismarck

Gov. Dalrymple has proclaimed Jan. 29 - Feb. 4, 2012 Indian Child Welfare Act and Wellness Week

BISMARCK, N.D. – “*Celebrating Life, Relationships, and Culture*” is this year’s theme of the 11th annual **Indian Child Welfare and Wellness Conference, Feb. 1-3, 2012**, at the Seven Seas Hotel in Mandan. The conference will feature experts on child welfare issues, juvenile justice, cultural and tribal relations, child behavioral health, and the Indian Child Welfare Act. It is hosted by the Native American Training Institute with funding from the N.D. Supreme Court and N.D. Department of Human Services’ Children and Family Services Division.

“This conference is about enhancing cultural knowledge, brainstorming new ideas to build relationships, and to support families to meet the unique needs of Native American children,” said Sandra Bercier, training director for the Native American Training Institute in Bismarck, N.D.

Conference sessions will include discussion on the Indian Child Welfare Act, recruitment and retention of native foster parents, family engagement for Native American youth, cultural planning, brain development and trauma in relationships, pregnancy wellness, an introduction to the Youth Cultural Achievement Program, and more.

There will also be a panel discussion involving former foster care youth, and keynote presentations on practices to heal the mind, body, and spirit, as well as reducing stress, and preventing and recovering from illness, addictions, and trauma.

A premiere screening of the feature documentary “*First Circle*,” which showcases foster care, families, and healing in the West, will be held at the Seven Seas Hotel Pier 7 room on Thursday, Feb. 2, 2012, at 7 p.m. The film is free and open to the public.

“It’s important to work toward building strong families and communities, which improve the lives of Native American children,” said Tara Muhlhauser, director of the N.D. Department of Human Services’ Children and Family Services Division. “It takes a positive, collaborative effort between tribal governments and the state systems to make this happen.”

Nearly 150 people are registered for the conference. Registrants include social service providers, child protection workers, judges, juvenile justice and tribal court personnel, foster parents, educators, mental health and substance abuse professionals, and others interested in child welfare.

Continuing education credits are available for licensed social workers. Registration will be accepted at the door. For more details or a schedule of events, go online to www.nativeinstitute.org.

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