

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

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**January 29, 2019**

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### **Indian Child Welfare and Wellness Conference to be held in New Town Feb. 12-14**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The Native American Training Institute will host the 18<sup>th</sup> annual North Dakota Indian Child Welfare and Wellness Conference, Feb. 12-14, at the 4 Bears Casino and Lodge in New Town, N.D. This year's theme is "Family First: Keeping the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Vision Alive" and will focus on child welfare issues, juvenile justice, cultural and tribal relations, and health and wellness topics.

"With this conference we bring together a broad range of professionals who work in child protection services and especially with ICWA," said Stephanie DeCoteau, director of the Native American Training Institute. "We want to make sure everyone has the most up-to-date information and is able to form relationships and partnerships that support the work they do. Communication and partnerships are key to making sure ICWA is implemented to its fullest potential in North Dakota, and we strive to nurture both."

On the opening day, Feb. 12, participants will learn about the federal Families First Preservation Services Act (PL 115-123) and its effect on child welfare services in the state. At 3 p.m., there will be a panel discussion on family preservation services and how tribal families are benefitting from the Mandan Hidatsa and Arikara Nation Family Preservation Program, the Turtle Mountain Sacred Child Project and the Near@Home program.

The conference continues on Feb. 13 with a presentation at 9 a.m. on ways to build and maintain strong family relationships by using positive parenting strategies. The rest of the day will include 12 separate breakout sessions on topics like medication assisted therapy, healing from trauma, North Dakota juvenile court processes and court orders; the Dual Status Youth Initiative and tribes and states partnering for better family outcomes.

On Feb. 13, at 6 p.m., the public is invited to participate in a free showing and discussion of the documentary "Blood Memory" about Indian child welfare and healing historic trauma.

The conference wraps up on Feb. 14 with morning sessions that include music and stories from a Native American storyteller, flutemaker and musician Keith Bear, and an interactive networking opportunity to strategize on Indian child welfare topics to better serve children and families.

There are also preconference workshops on Feb. 11 on ICWA and child welfare ethics.

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Additional sessions are also scheduled throughout the conference. More information can be found on the Native American Training Institute's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/nativeinstituteND/>.

DeCoteau said the conference is open to social service professionals, counselors, child protection workers, judges, attorneys, juvenile justice and Tribal court personnel, foster parents, educators, behavioral health professionals and others interested in the child welfare system.

Continuing education units are available for licensed social workers. Educational hours are also available for Wraparound Recertification from the North Dakota Department of Human Services.

Preregistration is encouraged, but people can also register at the door. Registration ranges from \$80 per day to \$225 for the full three-day conference. A student and foster parent rate of \$20 per day or \$60 for the entire conference is also available. To preregister or for more information on the conference, call the Native American Training Institute at 701-255-6374.

The conference is hosted by the Native American Training Institute in partnership with the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Children and Family Services Division.

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