

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Board of Directors
Resolution
2015

TITLE: Our Pledge to Defend ICWA

WHEREAS, the National Indian Child Welfare Association , formerly known as the Northwest Indian Child Welfare Association, was established in 1987 and is the oldest national Indian organization dedicated to the well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children; and

WHEREAS, we, the members of the NICWA Board of Directors, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, Congress, working with tribal nations, tribal leadership, and advocates for AI/AN children, passed the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in 1978 to stop the wholesale removal of Indian children by public and private agencies, taking 25–35% of all Indian children from their homes, families, and communities; and

WHEREAS, a coalition of leading national child welfare organizations have declared ICWA to be a “gold standard” for child welfare because as ICWA mandates, it is in every child’s best interest to be protected from harm and to prevent the unnecessary trauma that occurs when children are removed from their family, culture, and community; and

WHEREAS, national Indian and non-Indian organizations, state governments, members of Congress, tribes and tribal communities, and thousands of AI/AN individuals have supported ICWA as an essential and effective policy that protects the best interest of AI/AN children; and

WHEREAS, early application and consistent compliance with ICWA prevents unlawful removals of AI/AN children from family and promotes stable placements for AI/AN children in loving, permanent homes, connected to family and culture; and

WHEREAS, current research shows that family, culture, and community promote resiliency and healthy development in AI/AN youth; and

WHEREAS, AI/AN children continue to be taken from their homes at alarming rates (rates three times higher than other children) due largely to misapplication, ignorance, or willful non-compliance with the mandates of ICWA and often without notice to or engagement with the child’s tribe; and

WHEREAS, in response to these troubling numbers, calls for action from Indian Country and allies, and consistent and shocking reports of widespread ICWA non-compliance, federal agencies have recently acted to improve ICWA implementation and protect Indian children and families; and

WHEREAS, recent opposition to ICWA has risen in the form of frivolous litigation, misinformation campaigns with Congress, and attempts to garner media attention by exploiting tragic events and promoting racist, inaccurate stereotypes of AI/AN tribes; and

WHEREAS, those in opposition to ICWA claim to advocate on behalf of Indian children and for the best interest of Indian children, but have not consulted in any meaningful way with, or worked with, Indian Country experts, national Native organizations, or any individual tribe.

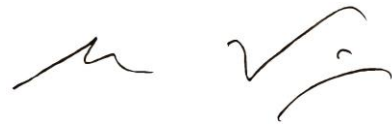
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NICWA recognizes and firmly supports the continued need for ICWA and federal efforts to improve ICWA compliance and implementation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NICWA pledges to work hand-in-hand with tribal nations, Indian Country allies, AI/AN families, and non-Indian supporters, to vigorously promote ICWA in the courtroom, state house, and Congress to protect AI/AN children and their families from the harmful effects of being denied the federal protections provided under ICWA; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that this resolution shall be the policy of NICWA until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION. The members of the Board of Directors of the National Indian Child Welfare Association hereby adopt the foregoing resolution by unanimous consent and direct that this resolution be entered in the record of board work.

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the NICWA Board of Directors through electronic roll call vote on this day 18 of August, 2015.



Gil Vigil, President

Attest:



W. Alex Wesaw, Secretary