



*Spokane Tribe Labor Day Pow Wow, 2019*

### **Positive Results**

- Increased parent attendance and participation.
- Increased Tribe participation.
- Increase in return home rates.
- Increase in relative placements.
- Increase in timely permanency data.
- Increase in parent-child visitation.
- Decrease in continuance requests for lack of availability.
- Decrease in continuance requests for lack of compliance with ICWA.
- Court orders that reflect that accurate legal standard and burden of proof.

# SPOKANE'S ICWA DEPENDENCY TEAM



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Spokane's ICWA Dependency Team, 2019

## Spokane's ICWA Dependency Team

### About Us

The team approach created an ICWA team. The agency already had a social worker unit assigned only to ICWA cases and it made sense to assign one of the court teams to that social worker unit.

In collaboration with the court, the agency created a definition of Indian child that is broader than our state and federal law. While different laws notice, and burdens of proof do not apply to all of the children on this caseload, all of the children have Native American ancestry and cultural competence is expected and promoted.

### Advice to Others

- A best practice – build expertise among the stakeholders on ICWA.

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*“...enhance the quality of life, to promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives.”*

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*Indian Child Welfare Act Judicial Benchbook, 2017*

### Implementation Challenges

- Building relationships with Tribes, so they will trust our State court to follow the law and placement preferences
- Still difficult getting CASAs to take Native American cases – working on misperceptions.



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### How did the ICWA Team get started?

In 2007, Spokane County Superior Court began its Team System for dependency cases. The old system had parents and stakeholders all arriving at the same time every day and waiting, potentially all day, for their hearings. The families did not have a consistent attorney or court assigned to them. There was much chaos and our data was poor for returning kids home and permanency.

The system came together lead by one of our Court Commissioners. The dependency dockets were given the highest priority on the Court Commissioners rotation and all other dockets (child support, domestic violence, family law, guardianship, civil commitment, truancy, ex parte) were built around them.

