



Native American Child Welfare: Challenges in Protecting Vulnerable AI/AN Children

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Issues in AI/AN Communities

- Family and Tribal Connections
 - Large extended families and clans
 - Often, important decision-making takes place in the setting of the entire family
 - Many tribes live in small, isolated communities where “everyone knows everyone”
 - Confidentiality may be non-existent, complicating not only reporting but investigation

Unique Issues in AI/AN Communities

- **Historical Experience: The Policies of Colonization**
 - For the past 400 years, AI/AN families have been under massive stress
 - Forced migrations and relocations
 - Mass deaths due to war, disease, relocation, hardship
 - Drastic changes in traditional ways of life
 - **Boarding school experience**
 - Thousands of children forced into boarding schools
 - Loss of connections with families and tribes
 - Punished for speaking their language and participating in their culture
 - Resulted in break of transfer of knowledge and traditions



Still being separated from their families, Native Americans are stripped of their culture & religion by schools.

Unique Issues in AI/AN Communities

- Cultural Issues
 - Stigma attached to being a victim may impede reporting and investigation
 - Weakening of traditional social support network
 - Severe shortage of AI/AN foster parents

Summary

Taken together, these issues present a daunting challenge to overcome in preventing AI/AN child maltreatment

- Substance Abuse
- Mental Illness
- Family Violence
- Poverty
- Overcrowding
- Lack of access to care and services
- Tight-knit, isolated communities
- Loss of traditional knowledge
- Cultural Issues
- Poor data
- Complex CPS systems
- Complex legal systems