



Children's Administration 2008 Indian Child Welfare Summit...a success!



The Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration Indian Child Welfare Summit was held at the Little Creek Resort March 24-26, 2008. Shannon Jackson, conference planner for the Children's Administration, Office of Training and Development and Nancy Dufraine, Children's Administration Indian Child Welfare Program Manager, and their hard working committee made this event a huge success with over 300 people in attendance.

A diverse group including Attorneys, CASA/GALs, Children's Administration Staff, Court Personnel, Kinship/Relative Caregivers, Licensed Foster Parents, LICWAC Members, MDT/CPT Members, State and Tribal Social Workers, Tribal Government and Tribal Staff attended.

The goals of the conference were:

- To build upon and promote new relationships between Washington tribes and the Children's Administration;
- To understand why inter-generational trauma affects Native American families involved in the state or tribal child welfare systems;
- To educate state and tribal policy makers, administrators, and DSHS liaisons on the Indian Child Welfare Act;
- To honor the knowledge of the tribal elders in their cultural teachings in hopes of not repeating history's mistakes.

Monday evening's social activity consisted of beading, weaving, cultural sharing and networking.

Tuesday morning led off with a general session presentation from Gary Peterson from the National Indian Child Welfare Association speaking on Reconciliation. This was followed by 23 individual breakout sessions.

Tuesday evening's honoring dinner celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). A videotaped speech from Governor Christine Gregoire opened the honoring dinner followed by a DVD from Ron Allen of the Jamestown S'Skallam Tribe thanking the audience for their dedicated and hard work in preserving the cultural of our Native American children. Mel Tonasket, from the Colville Tribe and co-author of the initial language for the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act shared the history of the passage of ICWA.

"Speakers were great and the topics were relevant to my everyday work. I can hardly wait for next year!"

"This has been one of the best conferences I have been to in a very long time. The workshops I attended were pertinent and worth attending. It was very well organized."

"This conference has really helped me to refocus and remember why I do this work."

"I am very grateful for those you honored at the banquet dinner."

"The evening presentation was inspirational."

The families of deceased honorees, tribal leaders, Robin Arnold-Williams, DSHS – Secretary, Blake Chard, DSHS – Deputy Secretary and Cheryl Stephani, Children’s Administration – Assistant Secretary were all presented with a Pendleton blanket with the 30th Anniversary seal embroidered on them.

Workshops topics consisted of:

- Collaborating for Change: Assessing Indian Child Welfare Practice and Improving Outcomes for Native American Children;
- Continuing the Conversation: Native American Pregnant Women and Infants—Health Disparities and Birth Outcomes;
- Foster Care Licensing: Process and Benefits; ICW from a Public Health Perspective;
- ICW Legal Issues;
- Kinship Care: Navigators and Payments;
- Local Agreements; Quinault Foster Care Recruitment;
- Reflections on the Indian Adoption Project;
- Split Feathers ask: "Who Am I?";
- The Impact of Historical Trauma on Essential Connections;
- Tribal & State Collaboration;
- Tribal Access to IV-E Federal Funding;
- Tribal Foster Care Program – Keeping our Children Home;
- Tulalip Canoe Family: A Cultural Presentation;
- Understanding Before Serving;
- Working with Families in a Small Tribal Community.

"Speakers were knowledgeable and presented information well with a variety of teaching modalities."

"Great conference and workshops – lots of really good information which increased my knowledge on a variety of issues and will help me in my daily work life."

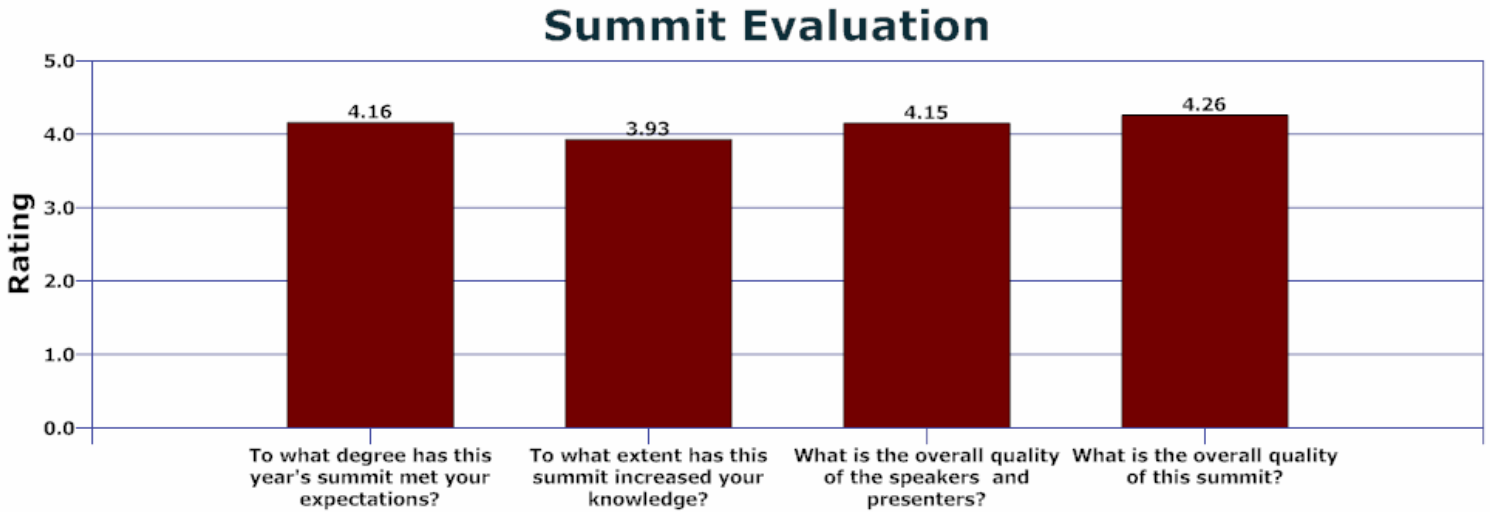
"Incredibly valuable information! I found the presentations to be relevant and the presenters knowledgeable as well as a wide array of subject matter."

"Very impressed with the legal piece and the adoption presentations – very well done."

"Elaine Whitefeather’s presentation was exceptional."

In addition to DSHS’ Children’s Administration, other primary sponsors were Casey Family Programs, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, Little Creek Resort, Nisqually Tribe, Puyallup Tribe, Quinault Tribe, Rachel Peters, Skokomish Tribe, Small Tribes of Western Washington, Squaxin Island Tribe and the Tulalip Tribe.

The summit ended on a positive note with a lunch presentation 'Healing the Healer' by nationally known speaker Elaine Whitefeather, followed by the summit conclusion with a Questions and Answers forum with Cheryl Stephani, Children's Administration Assistant Secretary.



Future Suggestions

- Provide proven methods and new ideas about how to work with our Native American clients.
- Hold some sessions for longer periods of time for more Q&A.
- Provide more structured interaction between participants. More sharing of culture.
- Consider having separate 'tracks' for ICW SW, foster parents, tribal workers and LICWAC volunteers. To leave out any part of this group fails to support the whole system. Of course the general sessions would be relevant to all persons working with Native children in the child welfare system - state or tribal.

Special thanks

To the hard work and dedication of the conference planning committee and volunteers in making this event the success that it was; Janice Banning, Tarachel Benjamin, Kateri Bishop, Colleen Cawston, Garnet Charles, Robbie Downs, Nancy Dufraine, Helen Fenrich, Roxanne Finney, Shannon Jackson, Julie Jefferson, Nettie Longee, Peggy Lopez, Trudy Marcellay, Cheryl Miller, Don Milligan, Doug North, Dana Phelps, Nikki Plaid, Cheryl Rich, Cindy Trokey, Betsy Tulee, Diane Waddington, Jason Werle and Helen Zack.

"The outcome reflected a lot of hard work by the whole committee".

