

NICWA asks for help to protect Native children, keep them with family

By Terry Cross, Executive Director,
National Indian Child Welfare Association

Who should raise American Indian and Alaska Native children? What rights do Native children have to their culture?

These questions are at the heart of a case that was ruled on July 25 by the South Carolina Supreme Court. This decision has become a lightning rod for opposition to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

With this ruling as a rallying cry, a new push is being made by anti-Tribal groups to dismantle the ability of ICWA to protect Native children. ICWA is the only law that stands to keep Native children with Native families and protects Native children's right to their Tribal heritage and to participate in their culture.

Since early January, the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) has been tracking the ICWA case in South Carolina involving a Cherokee child called "Baby Veronica."

This case affects the now 2-year-old child, her enrolled Cherokee Iraq war veteran father and the Cherokee Nation. It also has real ramifications for U.S. congressional action, law in other states,

Tribal governments across the country and thousands of Native children and families.

Unlike any ICWA case we have ever worked on in our 30-year history, the court records in this case were sealed. The void left by the lack of a public official court record has been filled with many inaccuracies perpetuated by the media.

The South Carolina Supreme Court heard the case on April 17, 2012, and because of egregious violations of state and federal law, the court upheld Baby Veronica's father's custody.

However, this victory is the beginning of another challenge.

Supporters of the prospective adoptive couple are planning to move forward with challenging ICWA. They are vigorously lobbying for major amendments to ICWA. With resources such as a full-service public relations firm, supporters have created a new coalition to achieve this goal.

But Baby Veronica and her father do not stand alone. With your support, NICWA can make sure lawmakers uphold the law. Your gift can help us stand for Native children and their right to be with their families.

Should the prospective adoptive family choose to appeal, as they have sworn to, this case will land in a federal circuit court that sees few Indian law cases and is considered very conservative. Further, we have seen already how effectively the family uses the media to mobilize a wide community of supporters who fervently believe ICWA should be repealed.

We are in for a long fight. This newly formed anti-ICWA coalition has recently hosted a briefing on Capitol Hill. We need your help to successfully counter these attacks.

In 1996, when NICWA worked on an anti-ICWA case in which policymakers took an interest, we dedicated several staff positions and spent two years defending ICWA from ill-conceived amendments. We are starting to raise funds now to counter these anti-Tribal attacks. Donor support was critical to NICWA'S success in 1996. We are counting on supporters once more.

We call on you to defend ICWA – to make a contribution to NICWA to support our advocacy in this case. Our children and communities cannot afford for us to be unprepared to defend the law that keeps Native children in Native families and communities.

ICWA is needed now more than ever.

A National Public Radio story in the fall of 2011, *Lost Children, Shattered Families*, stressed the continued need for legal protections for Native children, their families and Tribal communities. There are still many cases where Native children continue to be unjustly removed from their Native families. This law is the only recourse Tribal communities and Native families have to bring their children home.

NICWA is fighting to protect ICWA and protect Native children – and stands between those who would speak to part them from their families and culture.

NICWA has taken the lead to organize our own coalition by completing a webinar on the case and media coverage of it to a network of more than 200 Tribal communications professionals, organizing and training a group of messengers from all aspects of Indian child welfare work to help inform the media and coordinating a response to anti-Tribal efforts on the Hill.

We cannot defend the only law that protects Native families from the unwarranted removal of their children without your support. Join our coalition by making a generous gift of \$25, \$50 or \$100 today and take a stand for Native children and the future of our Tribal nations.

We know you care about our Native children. Please join us in protecting them today.

For more information, contact NICWA at 503-222-4044 or 5100 SW Macadam Ave., Suite 300, Portland, OR 97239; or visit nicwa.org.



Over a hundred years ago Black Elk had a vision of the time when Indian People would heal from the devastating effects of European migration. In his vision the Sacred Hoop which had been broken, would be mended in seven generations.

The children born into this decade will be the seventh generation.

Photo used with permission of Sacred Ground Outreach



**"When the Children Grow Old...
We Want Them to Know We Fought for Them"**

There are many ways to fight to protect our children – one of those ways is by being a foster parent. The Siletz Tribal Indian Child Welfare Department is accepting and recruiting foster homes on behalf of our Tribal children. For more information, call Christy Hurt, foster care certifier, at 800-922-1399, ext. 1338, or 541-444-8338.

HUNTING & FISHING INFORMATION

NOW ISSUING

GENERAL DEER RIFLE TAGS

Season 9/29 – 11/2/2012



EARLY DEER ARCHERY TAGS

Season 8/25 – 9/23/2012



SALMON TAGS

Season dates will be posted at a later date.

Tags can be obtained at the Natural Resources office in Siletz or by phoning Rosie Williams at 541-444-8227 or Mike Kennedy at 541-444-8232 and providing name, roll number, phone number, address and which tag(s) are being requested.

INCENTIVES

Remember to report the harvest of all tags within 3 business days. All persons reporting will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win Cabelas gift cards.

HUNTING & FISHING INFORMATION

ELK TAG DRAWING



ELK TAG LOTTERY DRAWING

Applications are due by 4:30 p.m. on Sept. 28, 2012. Drawing will be held Oct. 8, 2012, at 5 p.m. at the Siletz administration building.

Each person must fill out, sign and turn in his or her own application. We have 25 tags each for the first and second season bull hunts and a total of 27 tags for the various cow hunts.

Applications are available beginning Sept. 3 at the Natural Resources office; on the Tribal website under Tribal Services, Other Departments, Natural Resources; or by calling one of the numbers listed below.

If you have questions, please call Rosie Williams at 541-444-8227 or Mike Kennedy at 541-444-8232.