

Communities of Color Report Finds Native Americans Are Still Losing Ground

Part 1: Deep disparities hurt families and the community

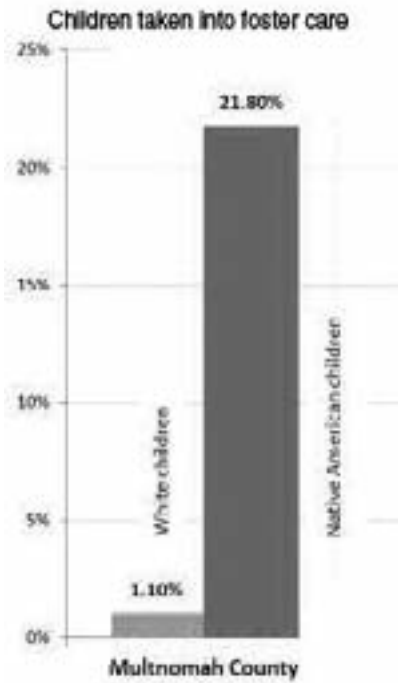
By Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

The Coalition of Communities of Color has released a report on Portland's Native American community that shows deep disparities in employment, income, graduation rates, children taken into foster care and more...

For anyone who doesn't already know the history of Oregon's Native Americans, the 100-page plus, must-read report is shocking in its descriptions of "genocidal policies" that began before the state was officially founded and continued through the 20th century. Examples include: broken treaties, forced relocation, theft of native lands, forced sterilization, children taken from families and outright killings of Native people.

"Our faith traditions were outlawed until 1993, and our children were forcibly removed from our care and placed in residential schools, stripping our youth of culture and community," the report says.

"...we have been forcibly moved from productive lands several times through history, with the most recent being in 1956 when we were forced from reservations and



is the second in a series of seven reports, that will look at Portland's Communities of Color in detail. The first, powerful report took an overview, and each of the others will profile a single community in greater detail.

Familiar to African Americans will be this report's key points: First, this long history of brutality and repression remains a central experience for Native American communities.

Healing is a long-term journey. Second, it's not just about history. Institutional racism endures and hurts to this day.

The results can be seen in a host of statistics many extracted from the 2009 American Communities Survey, that show deep and worsening levels of disparity and

inequity. Compared to Seattle's King County, the disparities are on average 36 percent worse. Portland now is home to 28 Native American organizations working to heal these ills. But as the report details they have a long climb ahead.

One of the saddest statistics in the report is that more than one in five Native American children in Multnomah County are in foster care, a rate 20 times higher than for Whites.

For African Americans the rates are twice as high as for Whites. Yet studies show that Native Americans (and African Americans) are NOT any more likely to abuse their children. As experts at Tuesday's (Nov 1) Shoulder to Shoulder conference on children in foster care explained, most children are taken into care for neglect. And neglect



Matt O'Brien

is connected with poverty because it often amounts to families being too poor to feed, clothe, house and care for their children.

Just look at Native American poverty levels, for example:

One in three Native Americans live in poverty in Multnomah County compared to one in eight Whites. That's more than 11 percent higher than the national poverty



High school students Eddy Ratcliff and Kayla James attended the 2011 Portland College Fair Nov. 7 through the Native American Youth and Family program.

level for Native Americans. And the economic downturn has hit Native Americans far harder. Between 2000 and 2009 poverty levels for Native American children under 5 more than doubled, rising from 24 percent to 53 percent. For White children under five it stayed steady at 12 percent. Look at the other end of the age range and 21 percent of Native elders live in poverty.

Unemployment is 9 percent for Native Americans compared to 5.3 percent for Whites. But as the report shows this doesn't tell the full story. Taking account of those who are recently laid off, those who are not working and not receiving retirement or disability income, the real unemployment rate rises to 31 percent.

"The economy is failing to provide the vast majority of Native Americans with decent jobs at decent incomes," the report says.

Similarly troubling are the disparities that exist in housing, healthcare, hunger, incarceration rates and education. Some key figures include:

Fewer than half of Native children gradu-

See REPORT on page 10

One in five Native American children in Multnomah County are in foster care, a rate 20 times higher than for Whites

into poor urban areas – with little more than a one-way bus ticket. It is this recent history which is a key factor in how Portland has emerged as the 9th largest Native American population in the USA."

The Native American Community in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile,

MY FATHER'S HOUSE MINISTRIES Come and Experience Faith and Miracles!

Join us for our **Thanksgiving Service** With Special Musical Guest **Dawn Robinson**

Friday, November 18th at 7pm
New Song Community Center
2511 NE MLK Blvd • Portland, OR 97212
Corner of NE MLK Blvd and Russell Street
Doors open at 6pm for every service.

For directions or more information, call 503-488-5481 or log on to www.mfhimportland.com

NEW SEASONS MARKET

BUY HOME GROWN

Time to Order your **DIESTEL TURKEY!**

EASY & FUN TO SHOP • SENSIBLY PRICED • LOCALLY OWNED & OPERATED

ARBOR LODGE: N Interstate Ave & Portland Blvd 503.467.4777
CONCORDIA: NE 33rd & Killingsworth 503.288.3838

www.newseasonsmarket.com