

## PRESS RELEASE

Native Nations Institute, University of  
Arizona  
National Indian Child Welfare  
Association



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
**NATIVE NATIONS  
INSTITUTE**  
Founded by the Udall Foundation  
& the University of Arizona



*Strengthening Indigenous Governance*

**NICWA**  
National Indian Child Welfare Association  
*Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture*

September 17, 2015

### **New Findings in Tribal Child Welfare Study**

The Native Nations Institute at the University of Arizona and the National Indian Child Welfare Association announce the release of the graphical summary, “Protecting Our Children Through Tribal Law: A Review of 100+ Tribal Child Welfare Codes (Part II).” The second set of qualitative and quantitative analyses from an ongoing project on tribal child welfare policy, Part II answers the question “How are tribes asserting their sovereignty to protect their children?” in the areas of child welfare jurisdiction, child abuse reporting, paternity, and tribal-state child welfare relations.

#### Highlights:

- To help protect children from abuse and neglect, 70% of the tribal codes make specific requirements for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.
- To ensure paternal rights and responsibilities, 60% of tribal codes create processes for establishing or acknowledging paternity.
- Whereas the Indian Child Welfare Act acknowledges that tribes *may* take jurisdiction over their children, 61% of tribal codes assert *explicit* jurisdiction over tribal citizen children on and off the reservation.

Researchers reviewed 107 publically available, tribal child welfare codes for U.S.-based tribes with populations ranging from 50 to 18,000 citizens. Researchers sought out the most up-to-date tribal child welfare codes available for each tribe, reporting that approximately 45% of the 107 codes were amended after 2000. The research team analyzed over 100 variables on the topics of culture, jurisdiction, tribal-state relationships, child abuse reporting, paternity, foster care, termination of parental rights, and adoption. A more detailed report on this study will be released later this fall. For more information about this project and its findings please contact the Native Nations Institute: Mary Beth Jäger (Citizen Potawatomi) [jager@email.arizona.edu](mailto:jager@email.arizona.edu).

For more findings, access Part II [[here](#)] and Part I [[here](#)].

#### Authors:

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## **Author Bios:**

### **Smith:**

Adrian (Addie) Smith is trained in both law and social work. She has worked in numerous capacities on the front lines with children and families in the mental health, child welfare, and juvenile justice systems. As a government affairs associate at the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), Addie works closely with tribes, tribal organizations, and mainstream child advocacy organizations to develop and promote policy that supports the well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native children and families and strengthens tribal child welfare and children's mental health systems. In this role she also works closely with tribes, states, and the federal government to promote improved Indian Child Welfare Act compliance and implementation. She monitors court decisions that affect American Indian and Alaska Native children and families, provides consultation to attorneys, and, when appropriate, works with partner organizations on litigation strategy and amicus briefs.

### **Jäger:**

Mary Beth Jäger (Citizen Potawatomi) is a research analyst for the Native Nations Institute (NNI) at the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy at the University of Arizona. Mary Beth has worked on research projects on multiple topics including a case study of Four Bands Community Fund. The case study analyzes the role of community development financial institute (CDFIs) and citizen entrepreneurship in reservation economic development. The ultimate goal of her research is to strengthen Native people and create sustainability.

Jäger earned a B.A. at Carroll College and a master's of social work (MSW) from the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis, with an emphasis on social and economic development in American Indian communities.

### **Starks:**

Starks has managed and participated in research on tribal economic changes using the U.S. Census, evaluating asset-building initiatives in Native communities, tribal justice systems, Native control of health care, Indigenous rural economic development in Alberta, and management of Canadian Aboriginal lands.

She has most recently published, with McCormack and Cornell– *Native Nations and U.S. Borders: Responding to Challenges to Indigenous Culture, Citizenship, and Security*, and with Quijada-Mascareñas in *Conservation of Shared Environments: Learning from the United States and Mexico*, eds. Lopez-Hoffman, McGovern, Varady, and Flessa.

Starks has a Master of Arts degree in Sociology from the University of Arizona (2002), and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Wheaton College (2000).

## Organizations

### **Native Nations Institute**

The Native Nations Institute (NNI) at the University of Arizona partners with Native nations and organizations to support Indigenous self-determination, strengthen Indigenous governance capacities, and achieve Indigenous community and economic development objectives. It does this through hands-on collaboration, practical research, and educational programs designed to assist Indigenous peoples in rebuilding their nations according to their own designs.

The Native Nations Institute was founded in 2001 by The [University of Arizona](#) and the [Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation](#) as a self-determination, self-governance, and development resource for Native nations. It is housed at the university's [Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy](#).

[www.nni.arizona.edu](http://www.nni.arizona.edu)

### **National Indian Child Welfare Association**

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) is a national voice for [American Indian children and families](#). NICWA is the most comprehensive source of information on American Indian child welfare and the only national American Indian organization focused specifically on the tribal capacity to prevent child abuse and neglect.

NICWA is a private, nonprofit, [membership organization](#) based in Portland, Oregon. Members include tribes, individuals—both Indian and non-Indian—and private organizations from around the United States concerned with American Indian child and family issues. Together, [partners](#), [board](#), and [staff](#) work to protect the most vital resource of American Indian people—our children.

[www.nicwa.org](http://www.nicwa.org)