

Welcome to Families Like Mine

- Facilitator Intros
- Housekeeping
- Content Acknowledgement

Learning Objectives

- At the end of this session participants will:
 - Understand the influences of historical trauma and intergenerational grief and loss on American Indian families today
 - Understand the impact the loss of children to the boarding schools and child welfare has had on American Indian family systems
 - Learn about parenting programs intended to revitalize cultural approaches to parenting that build on resilience and promote healing.

Sensory Learning

- "We Shall Remain" – YouTube
- Losses Exercise
- Tiers of Trauma Image



Tiers of Trauma

- **Tier Three: Boarding Schools**
 - American Indian children suffering various forms of abuse
 - Substance abuse in parents as a result of their loss and trauma
 - Repeated acts of genocide by U.S. Government by removing American Indian children from their families



The philosophy of the Boarding School Movement as stated by the 1886 Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

“If you want to solve the Indian problem you can do it in one generation. You can take all of the children of school age and move them bodily out of Indian country and transport them to some other part of the United States where there are civilized people. If you take these kids away and educate them to make their own lives, they wouldn’t come back here.”

(Adams, 1995)

Boarding School Movement

Children as young as 6 subjected to:

- Denial of contact with their families
- Forced to cut their hair
- Forced to adopt Christianity as their religion
- Forbidden to speak their native language
- Forced to adopt a new European name





Trauma, Separation, and Loss Experiences

- Separation from families; cut off from families – couldn't go home for first few years
- Train ride to Carlisle – not knowing what to expect
- Little to eat; different food to eat
- Given new names; loss of identity
- Given new clothes – old ones taken away
- Forbidden to use spiritual practices and native language



Indian Adoption Project

Collaborative project between BIA & Child Welfare League of America

- 395 Indian children placed for adoption with non-Indian families
- Poverty cited as a reason to break up Indian families

Leading up to the ICWA

- By the 1960s, there was recognition that Indian families were being broken apart at an alarming rate due to state social service departments removing children and placing them in non-Indian homes.
- Even after the Indian Adoption Project officially ended, premise continued that Indian children are better off growing up non-Indian
 - Child welfare workers often misinterpreted material poverty as sufficient grounds for removal



Leading up to the ICWA

1969 & 1974 Association on American Indian Affairs Studies

- 25-35% of all Indian children were separated from their families, placed in foster homes, adoptive homes or institutions.
- The national rate of removal for Indian children was 25 times higher than non-Indian children
- In Wisconsin, the risk of an Indian child being separated from his or her family was **1600** times higher than for non-Indian child.
- More than 17% of school aged Indian children from reservations were living in institutional facilities.
- 85% of all Indian children in foster homes were in non-Indian homes.

Association on American Indian Affairs

Conclusion of 1969 & 1974 Studies

Only 1% were removed because of abuse. 99% were based on “neglect” or “social deprivation.”

- Examples of “neglect” or “social deprivation” –
 - *An Indian reservation was deemed an unsuitable place to rear a child*
 - *Adoptive parents were seen as being able to provide a better home*
 - *Family sending children to tribal school rather than public school*
 - *Mother was being “indiscreet”*
 - *Poverty, poor housing, lack of modern plumbing, overcrowding*
 - *Alcohol abuse, applied against Indian parents where it was not applied against non-Indian parents*



Other Findings of AAIA Studies

- Responsible tribal authorities and Indian community agencies not being consulted or informed when children were being removed
- Public officials involved were unfamiliar with, and often disdainful of, Indian culture and society.
- Children with Indian custodians rather than parents had even fewer protections.



Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978

- To protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families
- Prevent the unwarranted breakup of American Indian families
- Recognize tribal jurisdiction to make custody decisions involving the removal of Indian children
- Establish minimum federal standards that county and/or state courts must follow when Indian children are removed from their homes for foster care, TPR, pre-adoption, or adoption

Sensory Learning

- [How the US stole thousands of Native American children – YouTube](#)
- Tiers of Trauma Image

What do we do from here?

- Tribal communities & resources
- Tribal parenting programs

Conversation

- Questions?
- Thoughts & Comments

Yaw^ko / Miigwetch

- Sage & Sweetgrass
- Books & resources
- Thank you!
- Safe travels home 😊