

## Welcome Our New CASA Volunteers



**“GATHERING TRADITIONAL FOODS IS MEDICINE TO THE PEOPLE. THEY ARE YAKAMA PEOPLE’S BROTHERS AND SISTERS.”**



## Volunteer Today!!

How:

- ◆ Submit Application
- ◆ Background Check
- ◆ Attend CASA Training
- ◆ 3 court observations
- ◆ Oath & Affirmation
- ◆ Appointment

**“MISITWI”**

**“ATWI” RUTH E. HOWARD**

**Spring is here!** Native American people are very busy at this time of the year gathering traditional food for 'uyt (first foods feast). This leads to the thought of what do people believe culture means? After some research I could identify with one meaning. A culture is a way of life of a group of people –the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next (Karowski, 2001). Although, we will all define culture in a different way.

Native Americans have battled for cultural survival for decades. The Indian Adoption Act was created to assimilate native children. We as a community must act by giving our children a voice. A author stated “if a given population wishes its culture to survive, then it is its own

responsibility to do what is necessary to maintain and cultivate it, reordering priorities in accordance with the will of the group” (Maybury-lewis,2001). Action means advocating that each child is learning a part of their culture.

Why is culture important in the child welfare system? Research reveals that foster youth have difficulty transitioning to life after emancipation. Many live on the streets, lack funds for basic living expense, lack regular employment and are often involved with the criminal justice system, (Reilly, 2003). Some experts suggest that youth suffer because they have no cultural knowledge. Each Indian child is taught unwritten laws/ cultural knowledge by parents, grandparents and community through demonstration and oral history.

Cultural knowledge can heal the trauma of the abuse and give the child a spiritual connection that can offer a source of strength to them as they make their way to adulthood, by creating a cultural protective factor, (Laplant, 2018). During the training as a CASA we have an effort after you build rapport with the child to reinforce the characteristic of resilience. The seven C’s of resilience are the following: competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control.

What role does culture play in CASA work? All CASA Volunteers are making an extra effort to understand the child and have cultural competence. Cultural competence is the ability to interact effectively with people of different backgrounds and be respectful and responsive to the health beliefs and practice and linguistic need of diverse populations (SAMHSA). We

emphasize an action plan in the first day of class to learn more about culture. Our curriculum for National CASA suggests the following places:

- Local Library
- Museums
- University
- Internet
- Community Agencies
- Communities of Faith
- Community groups focusing on cultural traditions and norms.
- Community groups providing health services to particular cultural groups.

This is difficult for non-native CASA Volunteers because a lot of Native traditions are unwritten.

If CASA Volunteers cannot find resources to learn then how are non-native foster parents provided information to teach the children that are currently in their care. Some have learned a lot from the Yakama Nation Cultural Center, Peace Keeper Society events, culture night at Yakama Nation Tribal School and Yakama Nation language program activities. Many foster parents and children have reported learning a lot from the community events. Children that grow up in non-native homes in the foster care system still have limited to no connection to traditional knowledge.

Some foster parents have reported feeling unwelcomed going to the communities of faith (longhouse/ shaker church, etc.). We as a community can help by welcoming these individuals to our homes. They are taking care of an important natural resource... "Our children". Allowing a visitor to bring a child they care for to our homes can provide the child strength, healing and hope.

Our children in the foster care system are already suffering by not attending the first foods ceremony or not receiving an Indian name along with many other ceremonies. We do have ICWA to protect our children. Although, Native American foster homes are limited. Culture could save many of our children from the trauma and abuse they have experienced.

### ICWA Provides:

- Active efforts to reunify families.
- Cultural competent case management
- Proper and timely court filings
- State gives tribes legal authority to intervene

## QUESTIONS

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### WORK CITED

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