

Jennifer Frick
Portland
LD 1970

May 30, 2023

With so much research supporting the benefits of ICWA to Wabanaki children as well as reports certifying the overrepresentation of Wabanaki children taken from their homes compared to non-Native children who are put in foster care, it is crucial that ICWA be codified at the state level. ICWA serves the best interests of Wabanaki and other Native American children by keeping them connected to their culture, extended family and community, which are proven protective factors. Source: "The Indian Child Welfare Act Fact Sheet" prepared by the National Indian Child Welfare Association).

I grew up in a white family of European descent, in a city divided into "sections" of Europe, as well as an African-American section. As school children whenever we met a child new to us we would ask "what are you?" meaning, are you German, Polish, French, Irish, etc? Even though most of us were a mixture, we were "proud" of whatever heritages they were. "Belonging"- even though for us it was more just the idea of belonging to an ethnic group- was a crucial part of our identities.

To be taken from one's established culture, language, and ethnic identity and be placed in a culture so radically different from one's own would have been devastating. Belonging is a vital part of being a healthy, functional human being. ICWA was designed to protect Indian children from the effects of being completely separated from their community of origin. Please codify ICWA for the state of Maine to protect the rights of Wabanaki children.

Thank you for your deep consideration of this matter.

Jennifer Frick
Portland, Maine