

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

May 13, 2015

Ms. Elizabeth Appel
Office of Regulatory Affairs and Collaborative Action
Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW, MS 3642
Washington, D.C.

Dear Ms. Appel,

All of my life I have known, or heard the stories, of people adopted out of their tribes into non-Native families. Because I am 60, there are many tribal people my age who were adopted before the implementation of ICWA. In every case, no matter how wonderful the non-Native family was, the person lives in a state of longing. There is always a lasting confusion. I have seen my friends search for biological family members within their tribes, and witnessed the endless lengths people go to discover their clan, to learn traditions, to become whole again.

I am writing to support federal regulations that increase the understanding of courts and social agencies as to how the ICWA rules should be applied. Many of the friends I have known may not present as "Native" and it is therefore important that courts and agencies actually ask and ascertain the backgrounds of children who need services.

The other proposed rules and actions will help clarify the parameters of ICWA. It is wrong for half of Native children, now, to be placed in non-Native homes. Among all other struggles that Native people face, tribal entities have sought vigorously to find qualified families and to ensure that children are raised with knowledge of their precious identity, and the comfort it truly gives.

Thank you so much for your work, and for your consideration.

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