



Addressing the Needs of Tribal Foster Youth

Bringing Them Back: A Tribal Perspective On Returning Youth

Imagine that two of your three children have been taken away. Now imagine these children return after 10 years and have forgotten their language and how to conduct themselves. Essentially, they have lost their culture. This was a real experience for many Tribal people, where today, one of three has been affected by the Boarding School experience. How do you ease your children back to a home and a culture that is vastly different than what they have been experiencing for 10 years? This is a question posed to training participants, and was the focus of a workshop that was presented at the annual *NICWA (National Indian Child Welfare Association)* conference held in San Diego.

These responses came from a majority of Tribal participants who shared how they would approach re-integrating their youth back to a home and a community.

- ★ Host a traditional welcoming and cleansing ceremony.
- ★ Make sure there is open communication, and listen to everything they have to say.
- ★ Teach them cultural awareness.
- ★ Be non-judgmental.
- ★ Host a gathering, bring all the family together, help them find all their relatives and teach them their family history and their culture.
- ★ Address their fears about coming back to their culture.
- ★ Understand that they live in both cultures, help them find a balance of living in two worlds.
- ★ Have patience.

(National Indian Child Welfare Association Conference, April 2-5, 2006)