

Indian Families Said to Face Removal Crisis

The removal of Indian children from their families is the subject of a new quarterly bulletin just published by the Association on American Indian Affairs. The eight-page bulletin, "Indian Family Defense," is devoted to what the AAIA calls "the child-welfare crisis" facing American Indian families.

According to a survey of states with large Indian populations by the AAIA, "25-35 per cent of all Indian children are removed from their families and placed in foster homes, adoptive homes, or institutions — and over recent years the problem has been getting worse."

An analysis of adoption and foster care statistics, according to "Indian Family Defense," indicates "at current adoptive rates, within 10 years one in every four Indian children under age 18 in Minnesota will be in an adoptive home, usually non-Indian."

"Indian Family Defense" states: "The child-welfare crisis reaches from the root of Indian life in the family to the bureaucracies of federal and state governments." It is, the bulletin continues, "perhaps the most tragic aspect of American Indian life today."

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Removal . . .

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The bulletin documents its assertions with case histories where legal intervention was successful in reuniting families that had been separated by welfare officials. It contains draft legislative recommendations that are based on discussions with Indian communities over a considerable period of time.

A report describes the formation of what is probably the first all-Indian statewide child-placement agency in the United States by a group of concerned Wisconsin Indians. Resolutions adopted by tribes who have moved to prevent the removal of children from their reservations are reprinted.

The AAIA hopes that its bulletin "will demonstrate the national scope of the child-welfare crisis — and become an instrument for change."

The editors of "Indian Family Defense" write: "We would like to learn of any families involved in legal cases regarding child welfare; about any child-welfare projects that are planned or being undertaken by a tribe; and from individuals with knowledge of family-defense problems. We feel it is urgent to learn and communicates the experiences of different tribes in coping with this problem."

A free subscription to the bulletin can be obtained by writing to:

Indian Family Defense
Association on American Indian Affairs, Inc.

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New York, N.Y. 10016

The Association on American Indian Affairs is a national, non-profit, citizens' organization with a membership of 70,000.