

# AAIA to Publish Newsletter

*- focus on family defense*

The Association on American Indian Affairs announced recently that it will publish a quarterly newsletter focusing on the problems of Indian family defense and child welfare. The first issue will be available in January

1974.

"One of the most tragic aspects of American Indian life today," says AAIA Executive Director William Byler, "is the wholesale abduction of children from their families." A survey of AAIA states with large Indian populations by the association reveals that about one out of every four Indian children will be faced with removal from their families to be put in foster homes, adoptive homes, or institutions—and recently the problem is getting worse.

In North and South Dakota, approximately 17 times as many

Indian children as white children, on a per capita basis, are living in foster homes. In Minnesota, the rate of foster home placement of Indian children is 24 times the national average.

In one case, Benita Rowland, three-years-old, was abducted from her family on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation. The two women who took the child were prepared to purchase Benita rather than return her to her natural mother.

Another case involved Blossom Lavone, a three-year-old Rosebud Sioux who was taken

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from her family by California social workers. The social workers although they had no evidence that the mother was unfit argued that an Indian reservation was an unsuitable environment for a child.

In both cases, legal intervention by the AAIA was successful in reuniting the families.

The decision to take Indian children from their natural

homes is usually carried out without due process of law and with little regard for its impact on the children, their families, and the community. The child welfare crisis reaches from the root of Indian life in the family to the bureaucracies of federal and state government.

The association hopes that a newsletter which demonstrates the national scope and urgency of the Indian child welfare crisis will also become an instrument of change. It would like to learn of any families involved in legal cases regarding child welfare; about any child welfare projects that are planned or now being undertaken by your tribe; and from individuals with knowledge of family defense problems.

Subscriptions to the newsletter are free and can be obtained by writing to:

Child-Welfare

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