

## Apology from Child Welfare League of America

NICWA Conference. 8:30 a.m. Keynote  
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Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you, Terry, for that gracious introduction. I am honored to have been invited, and honored to address this gathering. I look forward to being with you over the rest of the day and evening, to listening to and with you, and learning from you.

It was a long trip to be here today, for me individually, and for the Child Welfare League of America as an organization - so I am delighted to be able to share some of my thoughts, and reflect on that journey.

Before we get down to business, though, I want to acknowledge your recent loss of a great leader, Eloise King. I did not know her, but my staff who knew her and worked with her have told me what a remarkable and energetic person she was and what an influence she will continue to have. She will live on through all of you.

### I. Truth and Reconciliation

I want to begin with a story that was a favorite of Dr. Carlos Montezuma, also known as Wassaja. He was an Indian activist, a Yavapai who was born in 1875 at Fort MacDowell, Arizona, and a physician, back in the days when doctors made house calls. As he told the story, a certain doctor used to walk once a week or so down a particular street to visit a patient. On his way, he passed by the home where a friend of the patient lived. Each time he passed her door on the way back from his house call, she would be sitting outside, and she would ask how her friend was doing. "She's improving," the doctor always reported.

After this had gone on for many weeks, there came a day when he had a different answer: "I'm sorry, she's dead." The woman went inside and conveyed this news to her husband. "What did she die of," he asked? "I don't know," said the woman. "I guess she died of improvement."

When Carlos Montezuma told this story, sometimes in testifying before Congress about the condition of his people, he used it to warn his audience that American Indians and their irreplaceable cultures were in danger of dying from "improvement" if the U.S. government persisted in the policies it was following.

Now the Child Welfare League of America, the organization I represent, has never been a part of the U.S. government. But most of its members, public and private child welfare organizations, represent a profession that has always been dedicated to improvement, in its positive and sometimes negative sense. For that reason, I think that you and all the people you represent deserve an accounting of one phase of our history.

I have not met many of you before today, and we don't yet have an established relationship. Even so, I want to talk with you on a very personal basis about a matter of great importance to all of us.

The spirit in which I stand before you today, as a representative of CWLA and as an individual, is the spirit of truth and reconciliation. In recent years, many countries have dealt with the aftermath of a period of great injustice by creating national truth commissions. This approach was based in the belief that while the past could not be undone, it could be faced squarely, and in a highly public forum----and that a full accounting of the truth was the best possible basis for moving forward to build the future. When the truth had been told as fully as possible, those who had been offended could have at least the knowledge that denial was at an end, and that the world knew what they had suffered. The perpetrators shared that knowledge. Reparations and reconciliation could proceed, on the foundation of truth.

It is with this attitude that I approach you today, and begin a discussion that I realize will need to continue - and to grow over time.

Some of you are already familiar with CWLA, but for those who are not, I'll offer a brief history. In 1909, the first White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children recommended the formation of both a Children's Bureau within the federal government and a non-governmental body that would unite the various public and private groups working across the U.S. for the sake of children and families. Around the same time, leaders of many child-serving organizations in the Eastern and Midwestern states were realizing for themselves that they would be stronger together than alone. They were particularly interested in developing standards to guide child welfare practice, in hopes that high quality services would become the national norm. CWLA opened its doors in New York City in 1920 with 63 member agencies.

This all happened just about the time that child welfare was beginning to take itself seriously as a profession. Individuals viewing the work from something of a business perspective were stepping up to take control away from the "church ladies" and society wives who had originally established many of our agencies, and a few colleges were beginning to offer professional degrees in social work.

Since 1920, CWLA and the child welfare profession have grown up side by side, and although we like to believe that today's practice is the state of the art, we know that both still have a lot of growing to do. In no area of practice is this truer than in Indian Child Welfare.

Our profession is other-centered. It's dedicated to improving conditions of life for people, like children, whose capacity to help themselves is limited by age or other circumstances. By its very nature, this exposes us to a strong temptation to think we know what's best for other people, so we constantly have to rediscover humility and respect.

Although we strive to provide leadership for our member agencies, as a membership organization we haven't usually been very far ahead of our members, who haven't been very far ahead of the mainstream culture. For a long time in the early history of child welfare, many educated middle-class Americans sincerely believed that the world would run smoothly and sweetly if everybody would just make the effort to think and behave like they did. In the name of improvement, Irish and Italian children were scooped up from city tenements that looked crowded and dirty, away from "unfit" single parents and the smells of unfamiliar cooking, taken to the countryside in orphan trains, and parceled out to rural families. Most of them never saw their parents or siblings again.

These were terrible acts, no matter how noble or "professional" the intentions of their perpetrators. Next to the death penalty, the most absolute thing a government can do to an individual is to take a child away. But these were acts against individual immigrant families, and no European national group was singled out for these removals to the point of being imperiled.

One ethnic group, however - American Indians and Alaskan Natives - a people of many cultures and governments, and the original citizens of this land Ñ was singled out for treatment that ranged over the decades from outright massacre to arrogant and paternalistic "improvement." CWLA played a role in that attempt. We must face this truth.

No matter how well intentioned and how squarely in the mainstream this was at the time, it was wrong; it was hurtful; and it reflected a kind of bias that surfaces feelings of shame, as we look back with the 20/20 vision of hindsight.

I am not here today to deny or minimize that role, but to put it on the table and to acknowledge it as truth. And then, in time, and to the extent that each of us is able, to move forward in a new relationship in which your governments are honored and respected, our actions are based upon your needs and values, and we show proper deference to you in everything that concerns Native children and families.

These are the facts. Between 1958 and 1967, CWLA cooperated with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, under a federal contract, to facilitate an experiment in which 395 Indian children were removed from their tribes and cultures for adoption by non-Indian families. This experiment began primarily in the New England states. CWLA channeled federal funds to its oldest and most established private agencies first, to arrange the adoptions, though public child welfare agencies were also involved toward the end of this period. Exactly 395 adoptions of Indian children were done and studied during this 10-year period, with the numbers peaking in 1967.

ARENA, the Adoption Resource Exchange of North America, began in early 1968 as the successor to the BIA/CWLA Indian Adoption Project. Counting the period before 1958 and some years after it, CWLA was partly responsible for approximately 650 children being taken from their tribes and placed in non-Indian homes. For some of you, this story is a part of your personal history.

Through this project, BIA and CWLA actively encouraged states to continue and to expand the practice of "rescuing" Native children from their own culture, from their very families. Because of this legitimizing effect, the indirect results of this initiative cannot be measured by the numbers I have cited. Paternalism under the guise of child welfare is still alive in many locations today, as you well know.

Far From the Reservation, David Fanshel's 1972 CWLA study of these adoptions (which only covered five years in the children's lives), concluded that while the children were doing well and the adoptive parents were delighted in almost every case, only Indians themselves could ultimately decide whether this adoption program should continue. "It is my belief," Fanshel wrote, "that only the Indian people have the right to determine whether their children can be placed in white homes."

Indian people knew from the beginning that this policy was very wrong. In Fanshel's own words, they saw this "as the ultimate indignity that has been inflicted upon them."

Fanshel came to this realization, as he concluded his research, because of the vigorous Indian activism that was underway in the early 1970s. Your legislative answer, after another 5 or 6 years of education and advocacy, was the Indian Child Welfare Act, passed into law in 1978. In the words of ICWA, Congress endorsed the unassailable fact that "no resource is more vital to the continued existence and integrity of Indian tribes than their children." As you have clearly articulated, children are the future.

While adoption was not as wholesale as the infamous Indian schools, in terms of lost heritage, it was even more absolute. I deeply regret the fact that CWLA's active participation gave credibility to such a hurtful, biased, and disgraceful course of action. I also acknowledge that a CWLA representative testified against ICWA at least once, although fortunately, that testimony did not achieve its end.

As we look at these events with today's perspective, we see them as both catastrophic and unforgivable. Speaking for CWLA and its staff, I offer our sincere and deep regret for what preceded us.

The people who make up CWLA today did not commit these wrongs, but we acknowledge that our organization did. They are a matter of record. We acknowledge this inheritance, this legacy of racism and arrogance. And we acknowledge that this legacy makes your work more difficult, every day. As we accept this legacy, we also accept the moral responsibility to move forward in an aggressive, proactive, and positive manner, as we pledge ourselves to see that nothing like what has happened ever happens again. And we can ask --- I do ask and hope --- for a chance to earn your respect and to work with you as partners, on the basis of truth, on the ground of our common commitment to the well-being of children and young people and the integrity of families and cultures.

We will begin by demonstrating our respect for you and your work, recognizing the authority of your governments, and taking seriously our position of influence with public and private child welfare agencies and the governments supporting them, to fully comply with the spirit and the letter of the Act.

In recent decades our relationship has been characterized by a fluctuating level of effort and many sins of omission. There has been silence from the League on many occasions when we should have spoken out, on ICWA in particular. And we haven't yet demonstrated sufficient leadership for our members, or the field, in this area.

But more encouraging things have been happening recently, and the trend is definitely looking up. The credit for that goes largely to Terry Cross, of NICWA and the Seneca Nation, and to Faith Smith, founder and president of Native American Educational Services College, who has served on our board since 1992. Faith Smith is an Ojibwe from the Lac Courte Oreilles in Wisconsin. Both of them have been insistent and persistent ---in the friendliest possible way. A newer CWLA Board member, Faith Roessel, who is a Navajo from Round Rock, Arizona, has also guided our new course. And a number of our staff members have urged and guided us in this direction, beginning with Burt Annin in the 1980s and including Deputy Director Shirley Marcus Allen, and staff members Linda Spears, Lynda Arnold, John George, Tom Hay, and

others. We established an internal Task Force on Indian Child Welfare in early 1999, and some of the recommendations it has developed are already being implemented.

## **II. Where CWLA Is Today in This Area**

I want to begin by mentioning some of the areas that our Task Force on Indian Child Welfare has identified as necessary and appropriate for collaboration between CWLA and national and tribal organizations that represent the interests of Indian children. The list begins with some groundwork tasks to bring us into readiness for collaboration. Collaboration is probably the most important thing for us to do when it comes to Indian child welfare. We should and will work closely with tribes and Indian organizations, most significantly NICWA. In this way we can strengthen accountability while we work toward better quality services and outcomes.

1. The first (and ongoing) step in our efforts is listening and learning. We are committed to that mode as we move forward, but we may slip back into the old social worker bossiness now and again, so please be prepared to remind us when we need to hush and listen.

Some of you have been the gracious hosts who invited CWLA staff members to visit the reservations and meet with tribal elders and others from whom they can take direction and understanding. Shirley Marcus Allen spent two unforgettable days on the Navajo Nation in December. Chris Gerhard participated in a listening forum in Window Rock, Arizona in January of this year. Most of the 28 people with whom she met were from the Navajo tribe, but there was one representative each from the Hopi, the Blackfeet tribe in Montana, and the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma. We had another listening forum during our national conference in February, and I'm looking forward to sitting down with some of you this evening. I know we have some catching up to do, when it comes to listening, but we're making a start.

2. The second step will be educating our board, our staff, and our membership about issues pertinent to the welfare of Indian children. The members of the Task Force who are conducting this formal and informal training all have considerable experience in working collaboratively with tribal child welfare systems. Terry Cross, without realizing it, we are sure, has been considered by our staff as an important informal adviser to this group. One Task Force member, Linda Spears, is a member of the Narragansett Tribe. Linda conducted an all-staff training on Indian child welfare several years ago, and will be repeating it at intervals. Our in-house publications will also play an educational role.

Moving toward the goal of educating our membership, we had three workshops on Indian child welfare at the 2001 national conference in February. Some of you may have facilitated those sessions, served on panels, or otherwise participated. Thirty people saw the film *Return of the Navajo Boy* in a special screening at the national conference. We are planning listening forums and educational sessions for our upcoming regional conferences, including additional showings of the film.

Engaging our membership is an important part of our work in any area, but particularly in relation to Indian child welfare. We understand that we must bring "value added" to this work. For example: helping our members learn how to work more effectively with Indian children and families - enhancing their cultural competence; helping to reinforce the sovereignty of tribes across the country, creating a stronger voice in support of Indian children and families,

and simply adding support in areas where we all agree that we have something unique to offer.

3. Beyond our own staff, board, and members, we have a number of collaborative efforts underway. We're working with the Native American Foster Parent Association in Chicago to promote their accreditation, and planning some joint training for foster parents.

We are participating in a series of forums on improving permanency for Indian children and families, with NICWA, the National Resource Center on Foster Care and Permanency Planning, Casey, and the National Indian Children's Alliance. Forums have been held involving the tribes of South Dakota, Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana, with Arizona coming up next week. Tribal teams submit proposals to participate in these forums, and state representatives also attend so they can improve their practice and support of tribal plans.

We've been including experts from NICWA and other organizations in reviewing and revising our standards for Services to Abused or Neglected Children and Their Families, Adoption, and Kinship Care. And their input is beginning to make its way into the final publications of these standards.

Task Force members are already working with the CWLA membership committee to find better ways to support tribal and urban Indian organizations, in some areas where our working together would be mutually beneficial.

Tom Hay, of our staff, is with us today. Tom is the project manager, working under director Lynda Arnold, of the National Resource Center for Information Technology in Child Welfare. For nearly two years, CWLA and the National Indian Child Welfare Association have been working together around the National Resource Center, which is housed at CWLA and funded by the Children's Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services. Our partnership began with developing the successful application together. The mandate of the Resource Center includes helping tribes to incorporate information technology and data use into your child welfare services, and helping states to incorporate tribal child welfare issues into their information systems and data use. As part of this work, there is a survey in your conference packages that we will use to better understand tribal information technology needs and challenges. Some preliminary results of this survey are being presented at this conference by Tom and Mary McNevins from NICWA. Please fill out the survey and turn it in, so that together we can find the best ways to use data and technology to help all of our kids and families.

State agency people here in Alaska know how useful this kind of data can be. Before CWLA established the National Data Analysis System, which is an interactive, online collection of child welfare data by state, we published an annual volume of state-by-state statistics called the CWLA Stat Book. The first year the Stat Book came out, its charts and graphs---all based on information provided by the states---showed Alaska with unusually high numbers of child abuse reports. The information made front-page news, and Governor Tony Knowles, who knew how to make lemonade when he saw lemons, took it straight to the state legislature. The next year he came to our national conference in person to thank us. The statistics, and the headlines, helped him secure appropriations to tackle some long-standing problems.

On the public policy front, CWLA has several initiatives in hand that relate to Indian child welfare. First, I want to make an announcement regarding the Tribal Title IV-E bill that NICWA

has worked so hard on, which has been introduced by Senator Daschle and others as S. 550. CWLA unequivocally supports this legislation that will allow tribes direct access to IV-E funds, the largest source of federal funding for child welfare services. The bill allows tribes to choose to either receive direct funding or work within the context of cooperative agreements with states, and ensures Indian children the same access to services that other children and families enjoy nationwide. We will be working with NICWA and other advocates to achieve its passage into law. Yesterday we sent a letter to Senator Daschle, the prime sponsor, with our strong endorsement. We also went on record a couple of years ago as supporting New Mexico's waiver for this purpose.

Another one of our main legislative objectives this year is S. 484, the Child Protection/Alcohol and Drug Partnership Act. Our research indicates that addiction is an issue for two-thirds of all the families who come to the attention of the child welfare system, nationwide, but that treatment is only available for about one-third of those who could benefit from it. We know that treatment is effective when it is available and combined with long-term supports. The shortfall comes down to resources, here as in so many areas.

The legislation that we worked with other advocates to draft, and that we are now promoting, includes a 3 to 5% set-aside for Indian Tribes, out of a total of 1.9 billion over 5 years.

In sum, today, we oppose legislation that would undercut ICWA, and we will be supporting legislation to strengthen it.

These are all just beginning steps, but they are ways for us to learn, and to build mutual trust. We look forward to many close personal and organizational relationships in the years ahead. Please be patient with us---but not too patient--and continue to give us feedback on how we're doing. And join with us as we work to improve the practice of our member agencies.

### **III. CWLA Overall**

Next let me tell you a little about what we're doing at CWLA today in overall terms. We've recently developed a 10-year Strategic Plan called "Making Children a National Priority."

Do we think we're going to accomplish that in 10 years? Not really. We know that we, and our field, still have a lot to learn. We also know, after all those years, that success doesn't come easily. But to make our children a national priority, we have to periodically re-examine and redefine our goals; we have to build on what we have learned; and we have to keep broadening our base. We have to build critical mass on children's issues, and we'll do that by building relationships.

The Strategic Plan we are now implementing has three key elements related to those three tasks: a National Framework, a Research to Practice Initiative, and Strategic Partnerships. If you would like a copy of this plan, let Terry or our CWLA staff know, and we will get it to you.

The first, the National Framework, is a template for redefining our national priorities. It will shape CWLA's efforts on the national, state, and community levels, and in the many environments within each community where children, young people, and families live and thrive --- or fail to thrive. It delineates the full array of supports and services that families

need. Though we've seen it differently in different eras, and we've put it in fresh words for today, the goal of our National Framework is the goal that has united CWLA since 1920: to reduce the victimization and enhance the well-being of all of America's children and youth. We mean it this time, and you can hold us accountable to it by working together with us toward that end.

Most important, it will be a fundamental statement of values, expectations, and objectives for the entire country on behalf of its children and youth, with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable. Both the process of developing it and the dissemination process we go through afterwards will build a consensus on what America owes to its children and families. It's the WHAT of our strategic plan.

In the process of developing this plan, we're inviting input from all the individuals and groups who share the commitment--at least all of those we can reach. CWLA's web site, at [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org), has a link on the left side headed National Framework Survey. If you're on line, you can use that to give us your input. We also have a good stack of copies here in the hall.

It's a thin orange booklet called Building Consensus. Our publications department made it into something very beautiful and finished-looking for our national conference, but it really is still work in progress. We welcome your comments and suggestions. If you don't have a chance to talk to me today, you can talk to John George, from our National Center for Consultation and Professional Development, or Tom Hay, from the National Resource Center for Child Welfare Information Technology, who are both here today and for the rest of the conference. You can also call Linda Spears, who drafted the document, and whose phone number is inside the back cover.

The second element of CWLA's Strategic Plan is Taking Research to Practice. The challenges our children and our communities face are many and complex, but by and large, they are not new. And they can be solved. For any challenge we can name, there is a tribe or community somewhere in this vast, resourceful country that is implementing a solution.

Now some of these solutions are proven, through solid research; some are promising, though not yet adequately documented or tested; and some are just bright ideas that deserve to be tested. Our tasks are, first, to decide which is which; then to apply research to increase the inventory of proven programs; and finally, to leverage the resources to bring those proven approaches to large-scale implementation. It's the HOW of our plan, and it's an ambitious agenda requiring many hearts, minds and hands. That's why we need to bring many more people and institutions on board.

Relationships are the key to resources. And resources are the answer to the next question: WITH WHAT? How do we pay for it? Since the resource challenge is possibly the most frustrating of all the challenges we face, we come to the third element of our plan, Building Strategic Relationships. Once we have identified the laws, resources, and infrastructure supports that it will take to bring our combined best efforts to every child who needs them at the community level, we still have a huge gap to close. We have to see that every child, every young person, and every family gets the right supports and services, in the right mix, at the right time, in sufficient duration and

sufficient intensity to meet their needs. To do that will take all of us working together -  
---- and all the friends we can get.

And it will, of course, take work that honors tribes and finds ways to build the capacity of tribes and Indian organizations to provide services.

#### **IV. Collaborative Models**

That brings us back to one of the main themes of this conference: Collaboration! At CWLA, we're constantly forging new alliances and strengthening old ones. Partnerships across the lines between child welfare and juvenile justice, between education and mental health, between juvenile justice and behavioral health, between parents' advocacy organizations and national professional organizations, are building critical mass and strengthening our common advocacy position. They're also straining our staff, but we have to keep building! We need to tighten the weave and thicken the web of interconnections even further, bringing in elected officials and the media and still other partners we probably haven't even thought of yet, before we can get where we need to go.

I know that your program includes sessions on state and tribal collaboration, government to government collaboration—with Alaska as one example-- and on cross-systems collaboration, of the kind I just referred to. Every one of these is tremendously important for all of us. Before I conclude this portion of my presentation, I want to throw out just a few examples of collaboration models that have made a particular impression on me.

Perhaps since my own experience has brought me from juvenile justice to child welfare, I'm especially aware of models of collaboration across systems. Whether these originate in child welfare, juvenile justice, law enforcement, health, mental health, or education, they succeed by involving several or all of the other systems. Children live their lives in many domains - family, peer group, community and school -- and the best programs reflect that reality. They recognize and touch those many domains.

The juvenile justice system has originated a number of collaborative projects at the national level. My old agency, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, has a new project on Indian youth gangs and a somewhat more established Tribal Youth Project, which has launched partnerships in Michigan, Arizona, California, and Wisconsin. Partners include five Michigan tribes, the Michigan Public Health Institute, the Native American Institute, Michigan State University at East Lansing, New Mexico State University, the Navajo Nation, and the College of Menominee Nation in Keshena, Wisconsin. Watch the Federal Register for Department of Justice grant announcements. You may see some excellent opportunities.

Some of the best cross-systems partnerships have started out in the mental health system. Alaska was home to one of the pioneering models: the Alaska Youth Initiative. The principles and concepts behind this model were actually borrowed from traditional practices in Indian country.

As I understand it, the Alaska Youth Initiative began in 1985 because of a budget crunch. The state could no longer afford to meet young people's severe social services, mental health, or educational needs by keeping them in out-of-state placements, so administrators began looking around for a way to bring them home. They learned about a new model called

"wraparound" (you would know about this), which began by moving children from large residential settings to small ones, but quickly evolved to a model of coordinated, intensive services that allowed them to remain home. With funding from the National Institute of Mental Health and a team approach that brought all the systems together, the state developed individualized plans. In time, almost all of the young people---most of them with very complex needs---were able to return home and remain home. Vermont, Washington State, Idaho, and other states have been inspired to develop their own variations.

The wraparound model, in all of its variations, recognizes parents as the primary authorities on their own children, and puts family members at the center of the team that assesses needs and strengths, then plans and carries out services. In the Hawaii Ohana Project, an offshoot that serves Native Hawaiians on Oahu, family, friends, relatives, neighbors, and other non-professionals must make up at least 51% of every team.

The consumers of our services have a valuable perspective to offer, and they're important partners in our work. Unfortunately, their voices are not always heard---at least not in our mainstream, improvement-oriented style of doing social work. That's why it's exciting to see a few practice models gaining ground in the child welfare system that go about things differently.

Family group decision making is one such model. I said earlier that whatever the challenge is, someone here in the U.S. is working on a solution. Sometimes, though, we need to look beyond the U.S. There's a big world out there. The family group decision making approach was born in New Zealand, where it was a revolt by the indigenous Maori people against imposed European, expert-driven models. In 1989, it was legislated there as the mandated way to proceed for both child welfare and juvenile justice cases.

Although the child welfare field went to New Zealand to discover family group conferences, I'm sure they're pretty much the way that tribal groups have handled family problems in North America for many generations. It's all about getting everybody at the table and sitting down together to arrive at a solution.

As of 1998, the model was being used in an estimated 50 communities in Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New York, North Carolina, Vermont, and Wisconsin. Not all of these are pure models. There's a continuum that runs from paternalism to partnership, and different systems, in adapting the model, have made it to different points along that line. If the family isn't in charge; if its decision can be vetoed, then it's just a case conference: it's not family group decision making.

When it's done right, it's not about rescuing children from their families: it's about inviting families to claim their own power---and backing them up while they do it. The conference always involves professionals from more than one system, and it always involves more family members than professionals. Not surprisingly, some professionals are threatened by the shift in power, just as they sometimes are by the active involvement of tribes. But we need to help them get past these feelings---because the potential impact of this approach can be so powerful.

Like everything worth doing, this model requires the commitment of resources. A coordinator or facilitator plays a key role. In Canada, they estimate that the facilitator --- a neutral party,

who doesn't belong to the family or the system --- invests about 36 days in preparation alone. All the right people have to be there, and they all have to be prepared. Follow-up is also critical. Families and systems have to deliver what they promise.

The great thing about this model---beyond the fact that it keeps troubled families together and keeps all the family members safe--- is that it illustrates the child welfare system's ability to learn from traditional cultures. Yes, we are making some progress in how we work with families - often simply by respecting, listening, and learning.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

I will leave you with a promise. In a 1999 Families in Society article, Terry Cross asked the mainstream child protection field to "honor, endorse, and legitimize tribal efforts in the eyes of funders and policymakers." I enthusiastically accept that challenge, and give you the commitment that CWLA will do our part to make this a reality everywhere in this country. As long as you'll bear in mind that CWLA struggles for the attention of those funders and policymakers too, we will commit to work together, and to approach them as partners at every opportunity.

We want to walk with you, to honor your efforts, to be active in making things right, and to rejoice in your success. And we know that unless you are strong in your efforts to protect and nurture your children, we as a country will never be fully successful.

I know that we still have to prove ourselves as individuals and as an organization, and to demonstrate our commitment through our behavior. We know that reconciliation doesn't happen overnight-----it takes time, a lot of discussion, successful experiences, and trust to build into a relationship. But CWLA does have resources to share, in our size, and our influence, and our visibility. And we know that we don't know it all. Let this be the beginning of wisdom.

We know that we need to learn from you what is important and to look to you for leadership as we apply our resources in support of your efforts. Let this be the beginning of a new era for us all.