



Farewell...

It is with a full heart that I take my leave of you all, my 7th Generation Collaborative Partnership family. It has been my pleasure and honor to work with you all. I started at Tribal STAR on February 23, 2004. I was asked to join in staffing a new program that was funded by the Children's Bureau in the form of a five-year grant. Our task was to develop curricula and deliver training to those who work with Tribal Youth who are emancipating out of foster care. That program came to be known as Tribal STAR.

When we started Tribal STAR we had four partners, the original partners that agreed to support this new programs when the proposal was submitted to the Children's Bureau for funding. In the years since 2004 our partnership has grown to include Tribes, Counties, Statewide and National agencies.

My work among you for the last eleven years has been a pleasure for me. I think back to the early days when we were getting to know one another and our meetings were sometimes tense and we struggled to understand one another. With dedication and the willingness to have those "courageous conversations" and to not give up for the sake of the children and families we all serve, we have continued and we have, together, done some outstanding work.

I feel privileged to have known you and to have worked with you. There are still so many things that need to be done and I know you will continue to work together to make good things happen for our children and families. I look forward to hearing that the San Diego County/Tribal Protocol is completed and all signatures affixed and that ICWA cases have a standardized manner for being handled throughout the county. I commend you all for sticking with the process and for putting aside differences and entering into the process in a spirit of willingness to make it work.

I am deeply grateful to all of you for joining Tribal STAR on this journey to make things better for our Tribal children and families in the region we serve: Imperial, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego Counties.

I want to acknowledge and thank the Academy for Professional Excellence that is the umbrella program of which Tribal STAR is a project for the support that have extended to our Partnership. Their continued support has insured that Tribal STAR could reach into the Statewide and National venues.

Last but definitely not least, I want to thank the Tribal STAR staff. We are small in size but mighty in heart and dedication to our community. Thank you Tom Lidot for being there from the beginning and for being such an excellent developer of curriculum, such an excellent trainer and for taking on the role of community liaison for the program. Tribal STAR would not be what it is today without your work and dedication. Thank you for the kindness you have always shown me and for being such an integral part of the team.

I also want to remember and thank Dana Allen who was the original Program Manager for Tribal STAR. Dana was a forward thinking young woman who allowed those of us who are Tribal to lead in the direction in which the program needed to go. Without her willingness and her support of the process which was often-times difficult to negotiate, Tribal STAR could not have developed into a program that was respected by both the Tribal and non-Tribal community and therefore could serve as a bridge to both communities.

I want to remember and thank Norma Elizalde who was our Program Assistant and took on the task of organizing our somewhat chaotic training schedule and all the logistics that went into making sure we had all the materials we needed for each training, that we had rosters of the participants, that we had hotels to stay at and who drove us back and forth to all of our training sites. Norma was the ultimate Ambassador, always smoothing the way and getting us the best prices for everything. On top of that Norma always had a smile and a kind word for everybody. We missed her when she left our program but she left behind an organization that someone else could pick up and continue with. I should add that Norma was also handling the logistics for the Master Program and for LIA and SACHS.

When Norma left us Tina Kerrigan came to work for us. Tina picked up where Norma left off and has further organized us, taking on the task of helping to fill our training calendar and the scheduling of the other large events that Tribal STAR conducts each year. Tina takes care of all the logistics for the program, making sure we have the materials, the training site is ready for us, we have the participant rosters, the equipment and back-up equipment, hotel accommodations, food, and she drives us there and back. Tina has added many skills to Tribal STAR, some of which she shares with the Academy at large, such as her expertise in designing and printing large posters for various events and purposes.

I also want to remember and thank our student interns who worked with us in the beginning, in particular, Jennifer Brolier, Penelope Garcia, Trish Hilliard who trained with us, and Angie Craven who continues to produce our newsletter.

It was my honor and pleasure to work with you all for these many years. As I leave I extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you and I want you to know I will always remember you all with gratitude.

So, I shall not say goodbye but only farewell and hope that our paths cross again soon.

All My Relations,

Margaret Orrantia, Tribal STAR Elder