

# CALIFORNIA TRIBAL FAMILIES COALITION

In 1978, nearly 40 years ago, the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act, 25 U.S.C. §§1901 et seq. (ICWA), was considered landmark civil rights legislation. When California later enacted legislation to adopt many of those federal protections into state law – Cal-ICWA – it was another milestone for tribes. Unfortunately, the protections promised in both the federal ICWA and the Cal-ICWA have not been realized.

In 2015, the California ICWA Compliance Task Force (Task Force), co-chaired by Tribal Council members from six tribes across the state and one Tribal Court judge, convened at the invitation of the California Attorney General. The Task Force gathered narratives and data regarding compliance with the ICWA and Cal-ICWA. Their goal was to use the narratives and data in a concerted effort to target reform at non-compliant entities within the state dependency system. Their lengthy and detailed report documented compliance issues and offered 20 targeted recommendations to remedy civil rights violations and non-compliance. The 2017 ICWA Compliance Task Force Report (Report) was presented to Attorney General Xavier Becerra in March 2017 at a meeting with the Task Force co-chairs.

The Report was an essential first step in examining the issues and framing solutions to achieve compliance. The California Tribal Families Coalition (CTFC) was formally organized in May 2017 to continue to press for the implementation of the Task Force Report recommendations. The CTFC Board of Directors is comprised of nine Tribal Council leaders from across the state, including five of the seven Task Force co-chairs.

CTFC is organized as a 501(c)(4) nonprofit membership corporation formed to promote social welfare, and to promote and protect the health and welfare of tribal children and families through litigation, legislation, regulations, and policy initiatives. As a force for change, CTFC and its member tribes can impact how state and national policies and judicial decisions address the implementation of ICWA to achieve the promises first made to tribes and their families in 1978.

The initial roadmap for the organization lies in the recommendations contained in the Report. The CTFC Board of Directors has established a multi-pronged approach to advance its mission which includes: regional meetings of tribal social workers and ICWA advocates; convening an attorney advisory panel of tribal attorneys in the state; and the establishment of the Children’s Commission, a high-level executive body of tribal leaders, judges, and subject matter experts to provide the Board of Directors with a broad perspective and recommendations to better protect the health, safety and welfare of tribal children and families.

## OUR MISSION

To protect the health, safety and welfare of tribal children and families, which are inherent tribal governmental functions and are at the core of tribal sovereignty and tribal governance.

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