

Dear USET Board of Directors, DC Tribal Reps, and USET Social Services Committee:

Please see an important alert from the National Indian Child Welfare Association below. As you may know, in response to strong advocacy from Tribes, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) recently issued [proposed regulations](#) [linked] aimed at improving the implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) at the state level. The regulations are intended to support the revised [Guidelines for State Courts and Agencies in Indian Child Custody Proceedings](#) that the BIA released in February. Both the guidelines and the regulations seek to address a number of issues experienced by states, as well as public and private agencies, since the passage of ICWA in 1978. However, since guidelines do not have the strength of regulations, it is crucial that BIA once again hears Tribes, staff, and families speak with one voice in support of making these reforms stronger.

Unfortunately, number of anti-ICWA groups have already come out in opposition to the ICWA regulations, so the BIA needs to hear from those that support the regulations. USET is encouraging each of our member Tribes to send a letter of support to the BIA by May 19th. For your use, a template letter appears in the NICWA alert below. In addition, please consider encouraging Tribal staff who work with ICWA and families who have been helped by ICWA to send in letters of support, as well. A strong response from Indian Country will show the BIA that it is necessary to move forward with these long-overdue regulations.

USET will be submitting its own comments by the May 19th deadline in support of the regulations, and will continue to monitor their progress. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Thank you,

**Liz Malerba** ~ Mohegan Tribe  
*Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs*  
**United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.**  
400 North Capitol Street, Suite 585  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Office: 202-624-3550  
Cell: 615-838-5906  
Fax: 202-393-5218

[lmalerba@usetinc.org](mailto:lmalerba@usetinc.org)  
[www.usetinc.org](http://www.usetinc.org)

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**From:** National Indian Child Welfare Association [nicole@nicwa.org]

**Sent:** Friday, April 17, 2015 7:45 PM

**To:** Liz Malerba

**Subject:** Deadline to be a part of ICWA history

URGENT  
BULLETIN



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April 17, 2015

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## May 19, 2015.

That's your deadline to become a part of ICWA history.

The BIA has proposed [the first-ever set of substantive ICWA regulations](#) aimed at creating more protection for Native children and families.

NICWA is asking you to **make your voice heard during the 60-day comment period that ends May 19, 2015.** Now is your chance to weigh in on the issues related to ICWA that matter most to you and your family.

There are two ways you can participate.

### #1

BIA officials are hosting a series of public hearings and tribal consultations between April 20 - May 14, 2015, in communities all across the country. It is *imperative* for tribal leaders, tribal social service directors, urban Indian organizations, Native families, and adult adoptees to **attend the tribal consultations and public hearings.** NICWA has created some [sample talking points](#) that can be used at these events.



These vital meetings start next week, so mark your calendars now. **Forward this message to your tribal council. They need to be at these hearings.**

## *Public Hearings*

Date & Time	City	Venue
April 22 9 a.m. - Noon	Portland, OR	<u>BIA NW Regional Office</u>
April 23 1 - 4 p.m.	Rapid City, SD	<u>Best Western Ramkota Hotel</u>
May 5 1 - 4 p.m.	Albuquerque, NM	<u>National Indian Programs Training Center</u>
May 7 1 - 4 p.m.	Prior Lake, MN	<u>Mystic Lake Casino Hotel</u>
May 12 1- 4 p.m. EDT	Teleconference	(888) 730-9139 Code: INTERIOR
May 14 1 - 4 p.m.	Tulsa, OK	<u>Tulsa Marriot Southern Hills</u>

## *Tribal Consultations*

Date & Time	City	Venue
April 20 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.	Portland, OR	<u>Portland Hilton &amp; Executive Towers</u>
April 23 9 a.m. - Noon	Rapid City, SD	<u>Best Western Ramkota Hotel</u>
May 5 9 a.m. - Noon	Albuquerque, NM	<u>National Indian Programs Training Center</u>
May 7 9 a.m. - Noon	Prior Lake, MN	<u>Mystic Lake Casino Hotel</u>
May 11 1 - 4 p.m. EDT	Teleconference	(888) 730-9139 Code: INTERIOR
May 14 9 a.m. - Noon	Tulsa, OK	<u>Tulsa Marriot Southern Hills</u>

## #2



**Submit written comments to the BIA.** They are due May 19th and can be submitted [here](#) or emailed to [comments@bia.gov](mailto:comments@bia.gov) (subject line: "ICWA"). We have put together a [sample comment letter](#) that you may wish to use. Comments don't

have to be formal or technical. We encourage you to share your own thoughts about the ICWA regulations and the overall importance of ICWA with the BIA.

## ***Will you stand up for our children?***



So many of our families have an ICWA story to tell. *Now* is your opportunity to explain to policymakers directly how important ICWA is, how regulations are necessary, and why 35 years of non-compliance needs to come to an end...for the sake of our children.

### **Will you share *their* stories with the BIA?**

On May 19, 2015, your chance to weigh in on these matters will end.

***May 19, 2015.***

It will be here before you know it. Will your voice be heard?

