



UNITED SOUTH AND EASTERN TRIBES, INC.

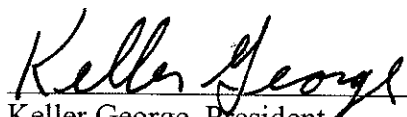
Resolution No. USET 97:50

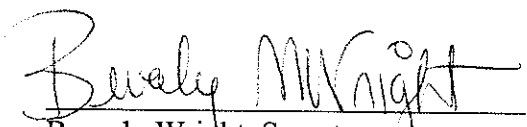
TRIBAL SUPPORT FOR RECOMMENDATIONS ON ADOPTION 2002 INCREASING PERMANENCY FOR AMERICAN INDIAN CHILDREN

- WHEREAS**, the United South and Eastern Tribes Incorporated (USET) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-three (23) federally recognized tribes; and,
- WHEREAS**, the actions taken by the USET Board of Directors officially represent the intentions of each member tribe, as the Board of Directors is comprised of delegates from the member tribes leadership; and,
- WHEREAS**, the USET Board of Directors are dedicated and committed to the needs of its tribes and members to the goal of preserving the sovereignty, inherent rights, integrity, and stability of our Indian children and families; and
- WHEREAS**, the 105th Congress and the White House are preparing proposals to reform federal foster care and adoption policy; and
- WHEREAS**, historically federal adoption and foster care policy, with the exception of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, has not met the needs of American Indian children and families, and in some cases, has even been destructive, i.e., boarding schools, 1950-60's Indian Adoption Project; and
- WHEREAS**, there has been little or any consideration given to the unique political status and culture of American Indian people in the development of these proposals; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED**, the USET Board of Directors hereby informs the United States Congress and the Clinton Administration that any federal adoption or foster care policy reforms must include consultation with and input from Tribal governments; and be it further
- RESOLVED**, the attached document - *AMERICAN INDIAN RECOMMENDATIONS ON ADOPTION 2002 INCREASING PERMANENCY FOR AMERICAN INDIAN CHILDREN* - outlines methods to ensure the increase of safe, permanent homes for our American Indian children.

CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly approved at the USET Washington Impact Week meeting, at which a quorum was present, in Washington, DC on Wednesday, February 5, 1997.


Keller George, President
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.


Beverly Wright, Secretary
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

“Because there is strength in Unity”

**AMERICAN INDIAN RECOMMENDATIONS ON
ADOPTION 2002 INCREASING PERMANENCY
FOR AMERICAN INDIAN CHILDREN**

- 1] Title should be Permanency 2002 not Adoptions 2002. There are many alternatives that should be discussed.

- 2] We must reduce the flow of children into the child welfare system and not just try to fix it on the other end.
 - All tribes must be eligible to receive Title IV-B Family Preservation and Support Services funding.
 - “Active efforts” provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 [ICWA] must be enforced at state level.
 - Provide services to kin to empower their ability to provide care.
 - Provide training to child protection services workers in cultural competence and sensitivity to Indian culture.

- 3] We must shorten out-of-home placements and return Indian children to parents or kin whenever possible.
 - Recruitment and training of Native American foster care and adoptive homes is essential to maintaining compliance with the ICWA and securing permanency for Indian children.
 - Enforce “active efforts” of ICWA.
 - Require placement in geographic location.
 - Require “active efforts” for visitation (with kin if not with parents).
 - Enforce placement provisions of ICWA, such as extended family.
 - Priority on family reunification.
 - Substance abuse treatment funding linked to child welfare services.
 - Offer parent support services to kinship placements (child care, mental health, etc.).

- 4] When children cannot be raised by their biological parent(s).
 - Need to focus more on helping special needs children find permanency (older children and children with disabilities).
 - Establish a status that is stronger than guardianship and not adoption, avoid termination of parental rights, but ensure permanence.
 - Create the capacity for tribes and states to offer subsidized guardianships.
 - Fund tribal governments directly for foster care and adoption services (Title IV-E), with the administrative and training funds needed to make it work.
 - Develop models to teach parents how to be non-custodial parents and support their child in their new family.
 - Recognize traditional forms of adoptions under tribal customary law that do not require termination of parental rights.
 - Fund state to comply with the ICWA on a per case reimbursement basis.
 - Fund tribes to respond to ICWA notices, do home finding, relative searches and joint case staffing.
 - Fund absent parent finding, establish paternity, support development of child support infrastructure.

Adequate funding must be made available to Tribes to develop, implement and administer an effective permanency plan for American Indian children.