



CENTRAL COUNCIL
Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tribal Court Selected to Participate in Project to Improve Outcomes for Abused and Neglected Children



Juneau, AK (February 24, 2017) – The Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Central Council) has been selected as one of six new courts to be a part of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges’ (NCJFCJ) Implementation Sites Project to improve outcomes for abused and neglected children and their families.

The project is funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to provide child abuse and neglect courts with training, technical assistance, and support to guide program improvement, sustainability, and performance. Under the project, Central Council’s Tribal Court will implement meaningful change, evaluate progress, and share challenges and successes with other courts across the country.

“Being a part of the NCJFCJ’s Implementation Sites Project will not only help grow and expand our Tribal court in the child welfare area of services, but would greatly benefit our court’s needs for technical assistance, practical tools, and collaborative assessment,” said Presiding Judge Debra O’Gara.

Central Council’s Tribal Court has greatly expanded its judicial services since it was established ten years ago. Currently, the Tribal Court has subject matter jurisdiction over a large range of civil and criminal issues including adoptions, child custody, child support, child welfare, divorce, domestic violence protection orders, guardianship, marriage, and paternity.

“Building the infrastructure and capacity of our Tribal Court and ICWA team to keep our children safe, out of the State’s custody, and placed with Native families has been one of my top priorities,” said President Richard Peterson. “This project will help the Tribe move in the right direction of transferring more child welfare cases from the Alaska Court System to our Tribal Court.”

Through ongoing work between the Tribal Court, Tribal Family and Youth Services department, and State of Alaska's Office of Children's Services (OCS), they have developed an extensive partnership that has laid much of the framework already for the Tribe to increase its role in cases of child abuse and neglect within the service area of Juneau.

"Our Child Welfare team has worked really hard to develop the capacity to be tribal advocates at the prevention, investigation, and intervention level when reports of child abuse and neglect are received," said Tribal Family & Youth Services Director Francine Eddy Jones. "This project continues to strengthen our tribal child welfare system and will build upon the great partnership already established between the Tribal Court, Tribal Family & Youth Services, and State of Alaska's Office of Children's Services."

A team from the NCJFCJ will travel to Juneau, Alaska March 13-15, 2017 for an initial site visit with Central Council's Tribal Court to complete a variety of assessment activities including court observation, convening focus groups, and collecting data for evaluation purposes.

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