HUMBOLDT COUNTY FOSTER CARE PROGRAM: ADDRESSING THE
CHALLENGES OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION FOR RURAL AND
INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

By

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ABSTRACT

HUMBOLDT COUNTY FOSTER CARE PROGRAM: ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

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In a brief from the Department of Health and Human Services (Recent demographics, 2013), data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) estimated that although national trends have shown dramatic declines in most ethnic groups entering foster care over the past 10 years, Native American/Alaskan Natives (NA/IA) have only seen a slight drop in numbers. Since 2009, NA/IA children have entered the foster care system at higher rates than any other ethnic group (Recent demographics, 2013). Between 2008 and 2010, California Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) created the Continuum of Readiness to address these disproportionate rates in order to comply with Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in collaboration with tribes and Indigenous communities (Lidot, Orrantia, & Choca, 2012). Through the collaboration, Humboldt County has been designated for a test pilot program due to the high proportions of Indigenous children in the child welfare system. In addition, due to the small population and large service area, Humboldt County has previously participated in a test model to address the need to integrate rural human services (Gutierrez, et al, 2012). Part of the child welfare system is foster care. This project looked at and compared the Grand Ronde Tribe foster program with that of
Humboldt Counties in an attempt to find what has worked in a successful program in an effort to make improvements to Humboldt County’s foster care program. Emphasis for this project was placed on the recruitment and retention of Indigenous foster families as well as addressing the challenges for potential foster families in rural areas.

Keywords: Native American, Indigenous, foster care, Humboldt County, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, historical trauma, genocide, assimilation.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Definition of Genocide and the U.S. Boarding Schools</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Policies, Laws, and Acts: Past to Present</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in Working With Indigenous Communities</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in Working With Rural Communities</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPARISON OF TWO FOSTER CARE PROGRAMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Foster Care Program</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humboldt County’s Foster Care Program</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODS</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The Indigenous people have long been fighting to exercise their rights to remain sovereign nations separate from the United States (U.S.) (*The state of the native*, 2008). As part of that struggle with sovereignty, Indigenous people have fought for more than a century to protect their children, to keep them in their tribes and with their families (*The state of the native*, 2008). As part of the *vanishing policies* of the 20th century, mixed blood quantum was used to shrink tribal membership and weaken communal relationships (Holm, 2005). Yet because of the shortages of Indigenous foster care families and current policies in state and county agencies, their children more often than not fall into the homes of non-Indigenous, white foster parents (Atwood, 2008). In the 1990’s, Indigenous children represented only 0.09% of the entire population in the U.S., yet they made up 3.1% of the state run foster care facilities (Scannapieco & Iannone, 2012). Indigenous children were 3 times more likely to be taken out of their homes and placed in foster care institutions than non-Indigenous children. A report looking at recent demographics in foster care show the national trend in foster care continues to rank NA/AI in the higher rates within the foster care system. (Recent demographic, 2013)

Today the statistics show a slight improvement according to Lawler, Laplante, Giger, and Norris (2012) who cited a study from the Casey Family Program in 2010; they estimated that although Indigenous children still only make up approximately 1% of the entire U.S. population, Indigenous children are still twice as likely to be placed in foster care as non-Indigenous White children. Overrepresentation of minority groups is a long-
standing issue in foster care. The national average of children removed from their family is 2%; however, percentages of Native American children differ from state to state and can reach as high as 13.14% according to one study from the University of California’s Center for Social Services (Lawler, et al, 2012) and as low as 0.05% (Group disproportionality & disparity, n.d.).

Minority groups affected the most by disparities in foster care are African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans (Lawler, et al, 2012). However, for Native American children the issue is complicated by over one hundred years of racist policies, congressional acts, and state and federal laws which have affected their people as a whole for decades and have contributed to a long history (Lidot, et al., 2012) of over-representation in the foster care system (Lawler, et al, 2012).

In 2014, the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services published the Community Health Assessment for 2013. This demographic overview report showed that 5.7% of the Humboldt County population was Indigenous, while the overall population for the whole of California was only 1.0%. (Community health, 2014). Demographically, Humboldt County is primarily white (Community health, 2014) and although there are no disproportionate rates for white children in the foster care system there is a need for foster care families of all ethnicities. In an article from The Times-Standard, McGlaughlin (2013) interviewed Jeri Scardina, deputy director of Children and Family Services for the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services who stated that there were approximately 50 foster families in the whole county of Humboldt with no mention of Indigenous homes.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Definition of Genocide and the U.S. Boarding Schools

There is a little known fact in history about a man who devoted much of his life to seeking justice for the atrocities which occurred during his life time. As a child, Raphael Lemkin learned of the massacre in which Armenians were killed in the hundreds of thousands in Turkey. Later in 1941, Lemkin fled to America as his homeland of Poland was overrun and occupied by the Nazis’. (History.com Staff, 2009). It was because of the Nazi occupation and the horrific crimes they committed against the Jewish people that spurred Lemkin to coin the phrase *genocide* (History.com Staff, 2009). Today, many of us use the term to describe mass murders on large groups of people; however the word has a much deeper meaning to it. To create the word, Lemkin chose the Greek word *genos* which mean ‘race’ or ‘tribe’ and combined it with the Latin *cide*, which means ‘to kill’(History.com Staff, 2009). The combination of the two words means literally to kill a tribe or race, Lemkin wanted to ensure that the term was not mistaken to merely kill or murder.

The word *genocide* is distinct and is not to be confused with the word *murder* or the term *mass murder* to be exact. The meaning of the word *genocide* encompasses so much more than the death of people; it is the intention to completely eradicate an entire targeted group (Churchill, 2004). Churchill quoted Lemkins’ description as such.
Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate
destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killing… it is
intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at
the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national groups,
with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of
such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institution,
of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic
existence of national groups, and the destruction of personal security,
liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to
such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity,
and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their
individual capacity, but as members of the national group (Churchill,
2004, p. 3).

Lemkin believed that the extinction of a targeted group was not merely by lethal means,
but included any policy by a governing party to completely liquidate any evidence of that
targeted group (Churchill, 2004).

In 1947, When the United Nations was newly formed, Lemkin was asked to lead
the committee and draft the U.N’s law on the prevention and punishment of *genocide*
Lemkin was able to detail his original premise on *genocide*. Lemkin defined Genocide as
a two part course which would accomplish the eradication of a group. First, the targeted
group is destroyed and second, the targeted group is prevented from preserving or
developing its culture in any way. Lemkin paid considerable attention to this and
expanded the original premise into three modes of attaining results. First, *Physical Genocide*, “both direct/immediate extermination” (Churchill, 2004, p. 5) and a slower less direct way of death, such as

subjection to conditions of life which, owing to lack of proper housing, clothing, food, hygiene and medical care or excessive work or physical exertion are likely to result in the debilitation [and] death of individuals; mutilations and biological experiments imposed for other than curative purposes: deprivation of [the] means of livelihood by confiscation, looting, curtailment of work, and the denial housing and of supplies otherwise available to the other inhabitants of the territory concerned (Churchill, 2004, pp. 5-6).

Second, *Biological Genocide* which includes “sterilization, compulsory abortion, segregation of the sexes and obstacles to marriage (Churchill, 2004, p. 6)” as well as any other means to prevent procreation of the targeted group. Third, *Cultural Genocide* in which Lemkin described as the “central feature (Churchill, 2004, p. 6)” and includes, “all policies aimed at destroying the specific characteristics by which a target group is defined…forcing them to become something else (Churchill, 2004, p. 6).” Among the list of acts to be defined as Cultural Genocide was the forced removal of children, destruction or diversion of religious monuments, prohibition of the use of language, and destruction or dispersion of religious objects (Churchill, 2004).

Despite Lemkin’s attempts, the American representative appointed to the review committee for the draft was able to successfully remove the entire cultural genocide
portion of the piece. However, by 1948 a similar yet less impactful was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly. According to The Genocide Education Project (Churchill, 2004) the Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide still cited policies with the intent to eradicate an entire population would include the following:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to member of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The United States refused to acknowledge the U.N. Article until 1986, however the U.S. did so with reservation and referred to their ratification as the “Sovereignty Package (Churchill, 2004, p. 9). The sanction supposed that the U.S. constitution was above international law and therefore the Nation was exempt from the international law concerning article 2 of the U.N. General Assembly as was the intentions by two of its main authors, Senator Jesse Helms and Orrin Hatch (LeBlanc, 1991).

To suggest that the U.S. is anything other than fair and righteous in their dealings with all nations, domestic and foreign would be considered a falsity. However, the history of U.S. policies is little known to the general public and even less is known of the U.S. policies dealing with the Indigenous Peoples of North America. By 1890, the Indigenous nations had been reduced to roughly 5% of their original population when the Indian wars were finally declared to be over (Churchill, 2004). At that time policies
moved from offering bounties for the scalps of the nation’s first inhabitants to that of assimilating them. As early as 1885 the U.S. began by assuming jurisdiction over *Indian country* which eventually lead to policies: prohibiting the ownership of land; blood quantum criteria; denial of traditional religious and/or spiritual practices; denial of self-governance; the termination of whole tribes or bands; expulsion of lands; self-determination; and the removal of children into institutions designed to assimilate the Indigenous children into the mainstream population (Churchill, 2004). It was during this boarding school era that Captain Richard Henry Pratt was selected to create and supervise the school system. His objective was publicized and well known; as cited in Churchill, Pratt coined the phrase *kill the Indian, save the man* (Churchill, 2004, p. 14).

Assimilation has led to the near destruction of the Indigenous culture for many families. The boarding school era officially began in 1879 with the opening of the first off reservation boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, although Indigenous boarding schools had been established as far back as the seventeenth century by missionaries (*Away from home*, 2000). The Carlisle school was founded by Pratt who had experienced some success with a group of Indigenous students at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, initially a school for African American students. Pratt lobbied the federal government with goals of assimilation and acculturation of Indigenous children by submersing them into the white man’s world (*Away from home*, 2000). These institutions were designed to cut the ties with families and tribal affiliations. Once children arrived at the school, they were no longer allowed to be *Indian* “culturally, artistically, spiritually, or linguistically” (*Away from home*, 2000, p. 19). Clans were pulled apart as Children
were taken from their homes and placed in boarding schools were cultural genocide took the form of education (Away from home, 2000). The boarding school era impacted the Trial Nations until the 1960’s as activism, reiterations of tribal sovereignty, and policies supporting self-determination worked their way into the spotlight of the federal policy makers (Away from home, 2002).

Children who attended during the boarding school era are still alive today. Although there are many who had good experiences during their time in boarding schools, there were still many children forced into schools were the experiences were less than positive (Away from home, 2002). According to Away from home: American Inidan boarding school experiences, 1879-2000, “Boarding schools could be violent places, and abuse and neglect also devastated students’ physical and emotional health (Away from home, 2002, p. 42).” Churchill (2004) reported the use of lye to wash out the mouth of a child who spoke their own native language.

Court documents filed in South Dakota over the last several years document allegations of children being “beaten, whipped, shaken, burned, thrown down stairs, placed in stress positions, and deprived of food” (Woodard, 2011, paragraph 3) as recently as the 1970’s. According to Woodard, other allegations included children having their heads smashed against walls and reports of children having to stand before their classmates without clothing. Further reports filed included the fear of sexual abuse from the staff running the school (Woodard, 2011). Many of the boarding schools were turned over to religious groups such as the Catholics and the Jesuits. In South Dakota, approximately 100 former students filed suits against the Catholic Dioceses of Sioux
Falls and Rapid City. The suit charged that “priests, brothers, nuns and lay employees at these institutions raped, sodomized and molested” the children in attendance. The suit also claimed that these acts included “bizarre, violent and humiliating sexual abuse, along with horrific physical abuse” (Woodard, 2011, paragraph, 6).

In the work by Woodard (2011), Howard Wanna described his life at the boarding school Tekakwitha Orphanage in Sisseton, South Dakota which was run by the Catholic Church. He and his siblings were enrolled with approximately 150 other children ages from newborn to teenagers. Wanna described his life there as terrifying thanks to the priest in charge of the school who took him and other boys by the hand to lead them behind the alter in the church or to his private quarters. In addition, Wanna stated that he was raped often by the priest and then as well as molested by one of the nuns at the school. Wanna described his adult life as “one hell of a struggle” (Woodard, 2011, section, former students recall their experiences) and blamed the church for his abuse of alcohol and the other difficulties many other students experienced in their adult life. He stated that his tribe deals with the aftermath of the boarding school and has had to put into place programs to deal with chemical-dependency, anger management and suicide prevention. Wanna blames the boarding school and the mistreatment he and other tribal members received there which effected the elders as parents and grandparents, stating that the effect continues with each generation (Woodard, 2011).
American Policies, Laws, and Acts: Past to Present

As far back as 1790, George Washington and Secretary of War Henry Knox urged Congress to establish the federal government to become the only entity in the newly formed United States to purchase Indigenous lands and promote the assimilation of Indigenous people by civilizing them (Holm, 2005). This set the precedent for government-to-government relations between federal policies and the Nations tribes eventually leading to the ‘Peace Policy’ by President Grant who sought to solve the Indian problem in 1871 (The state, 2008). The Peace Policy allowed for federal monies to fund religious organizations such as the Catholics and Methodist and place them as the primary educators and colonizers of the Native Peoples.

By the late 1870’s a new movement gave way to the federalization of the education, opening the way to the boarding school era (The state, 2008). Until the 1930’s forced acculturation had prevailed in American policy making. By 1934, federal policies changed direction, allotment was ended, governments were constitutionalized and education saw a movement back to the reservations, however, it was not the end of the boarding schools. Generations of Indigenous children continued to be separated from the families and their culture (The state, 2008).

The 1920’s progressive movement began reform criticisms on the government’s policies towards American Indigenous policies. The Secretary of the Interior, Hubert Work commissioned an investigation of the nation’s boarding schools under the regime of Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge (Szasz, 1999). The report was an instrument
used to indicate what still needed “to be done to adjust the Indians to the prevailing civilization so that they may maintain themselves in the presence of that civilization according at least to a minimum standard of health and decency” (Meriam, et al, 1928, p. viii). The report titled *The Problem of Indian Administration*, Meriam summed up the findings as having uncovered the best and worst practices amongst the 95 jurisdictions included in the report (Meriam, et al, 1928). The report lead to the eventual reform of many of the boarding schools and the closure of many more (Szasz, 1999).

The U.S. continued to see the Indigenous Peoples as the *Indian problem* and from the 1950’s through the 1970’s. Assimilation into the main stream population and American ideals was still the main goal of U.S. policies (Halverson, Puig, & Byers, 2002). In 1958 the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Child Welfare League of American (CWLA) created the Indian Adoption Project (IAP). The project targeted Indigenous families who were considered incapable of providing a stable home life for their children (Mannes, 1995). In only 10 years, nearly 400 Indigenous children were removed and placed into adoption with non-Indigenous white families. In the early 1970’s the project stirred six tribes, including the Oglala Sioux of Pine Ridge, to pass resolutions that demanded the policies to remove children be ended; their demands lead to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 (Mannes, 1995).

Children have been the target The Indian Adoption Project (IAP) allowed for Indigenous children were adopted out to white families through Social workers cited children living with extended family members were often the victims of neglect prior to the ICWA (Atwood, 2008). Prior to the IAP, children were removed from their homes
and relocated to residential schools were the children were forced to cut their hair, wear western clothing, and forbade speaking their own tribal language. In an effort to protect, the children of the Nation’s First Peoples, the colonizing government managed to permanently separate children from their families. After over half-a-century of campaigning in the war to save the Indian, the American government and social welfare were well on their way to success in eradicating the Indigenous family (Atwood, 2008)

**Challenges in Working With Indigenous Communities**

Churchill (2004) voiced stories of coercion, bribery, threats of lost rations, near open rebellion, and armed forces being called in as parents on reservations fought to keep their children with them rather than letting them be taken far away to boarding schools. According to Adams (1995) and Hoxie (1989) this came after U.S. policy attempted to eradicate the Indigenous peoples from the continent through war, famine, and disease. Thousands of children were severed from their families and tribal ties in attempts to educate them and force them into dominate white culture (Lucero, & Bussey, 2012).

The twentieth century was replete with cultural genocide policies as defined by Ralph Lemkin (Churchill, 2004) and used as the basis in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948 (Mako, 2012). Limkin defined cultural genocide as all policies created and aimed to destroy specific groups of people by forcing them to change every part of their life that defines them and their culture. Destruction of a culture, according to Lemkin would include banning of: language; artistic expression; religious values; worship and objects; allowance of the
desecration of sacred monuments and lands; exile or imprisonment of strong proponents of the culture and the abduction of their children (Churchill, 2004).

This extensive past of forced assimilation by U.S. policies has had dramatic effects on an entire culture and people. Understanding the lengths of extremes to which our dominating white culture has gone in order to assimilate a resistant people is important for social workers, therapists, medical personal, and political parties to understand (Lucero, & Bussey, 2012). The IAP adopted out Indigenous babies to white families before they could form attachments to their birth family and tribe, while older children still continued to be sent to boarding schools. These children were separated from their families and prevented from developing nurturing ties and normal attachments to their families (Goodluck, 1980). The historical traumatic past is essential in understanding Native American families and the continuing impact it has on the families today and should be considered as the first step in working with Indigenous families (Weaver, 1998)

Assimilation has forced many Indigenous people to migrate to urban areas. Thornton, as cited by Halverson, et al., (2002), stated that the urbanization of Indigenous peoples has led to new problems which include: intermarriage with non-Indigenous people; decrease in tribal identity; fewer members speaking their native language; little to no participation in cultural activities; and an increase in those who do not report having an affiliation to tribal ties. Halverson et al. (2002) suggests these trends have affected tribal distinctiveness and contributed to unstable family functioning for many urban Indigenous people. Off the reservations, today’s Indigenous people continue to
experience high levels of trauma affecting their physical and mental health. Evans-Campbell, Lindhorst, Huang, and Walters (2006) sited a report from the Department of justice which reported that Native American and Alaska Native women suffer the highest rates of rape, physical assault, and stalking of all ethnic groups. Victimization has led to high rates of mental illnesses such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, and anxiety. Estimations of Indigenous peoples living off their reservation in urban areas accounts for more than 60% of tribal populations (Evans-Campbell, et al, 2006).

Moreover, childrearing takes place in two interrelated systems: the birth family and the extended family (Blanchard & Barsh, 1980). Child Welfare Services have strict guidelines which go against traditional family upbringing in most Indigenous communities. Furthermore, many Indigenous peoples do not see adoption of their children as an option (Johnson-Shelton, et al., 2009). Cultural values vary amongst groups, however, Indigenous peoples share a traumatic past that fosters common perceptions of social services.

Halverson et al. (2002) found that there are four common themes amongst Native Americans in regards to feelings towards social services. First, Indigenous peoples felt discouraged from working with the present foster care system. Participants agreed that there were problems with discrimination and negative perceptions of Native Americans. The second theme was the role of cultural caregiving. Participants found there was little to no acknowledgement or programs to help sustain Native American values and socialization. Third, a different definition of family and relationships. The western concept of the nuclear family is not a traditional concept to most Native American
people. Altogether, the participants believed that all Indigenous people are related and therefore all children are familial. Finally, historical trauma and pain due to past family disruptions. The participants stressed the importance for addressing past wrongs in order to heal, which they believed would be a significant motivator to Native American participating as foster care parents.

**Challenges in Working with Rural Communities**

Keeping in mind the large ties to the Tribal community which go beyond those who are enrolled, it is important to consider when contemplating the rural nature of Humboldt County. Many of those who are and will be involved with Child Welfare Services may come from generations which have been unknowingly affected by the assimilation process of U.S. policies for the Indigenous population. In addition, rural communities have challenges of their own which must be addressed. Rural communities face economic strife which results in inadequate: medical care; child care; transportation; and mental health services. These issues affect foster care and welfare services, as well as geographical isolation and special needs of the foster children (Johnson-Shelton, et al., 2009)

Green (2003) presents rural social work as a special challenge with the need to use a generalist approach in delivering services. Green also emphasizes mutual, reciprocal, and interrelatedness of the rural community in which only a generalist approach will work because of the geographical challenges and lack of personal to specialize in any one area. A report released in 2010 by the Rural Policy Research
Institute (RUPR) was commenced in response to changes in economic instability in the U.S. economy. Rural areas were hard pressed to meet the challenges of stead unemployment increases in food instability, increasing needs for food assistance, and decreasing state and federal funding for social services. Additionally, aside from geographical isolation, many rural residence are unaware of service they qualify for nor are they able to access social service workers who have specialized knowledge to bring clients into line with the services they need. (Gutierrez, et al., 2010).

Following the initial RUPRI report, an assessment was conducted in Humboldt County who was already dealing with many of these issues. The 2014 assessment found that Humboldt County was well on its way in dealing with the issues of dwindling money sources and rural needs. According to the 2014 RUPRI report Marianne Pennekamp completed a study in 1993 which initiated the redesign of Humboldt County’s fragmented social services. Rendering these services called for a change in the delivery system including: a shift in focusing on people and their environment rather than the programs and services from funding sources; shifting from providing services to the most serious problems to intervention services; and ownership of services from the non-profit and public agencies to shared community ownership (Gutierrez, Belanger, Redfern, Goolsby, & Richgels, 2012).

Furthermore, there was also a need for services and funding to be integrated rather than dispersed to programs that did not meet the needs of the community. Humboldt County integrated six of its departments including social services and mental health. The integrated services allowed for funds to be allocated to meet the needs of the new
priorities in person and family service strategies rather than programs. Humboldt has been attempting to meet the needs of the rural community for fifteen years, however there is still a great deal to be done (Gutierrez, et al., 2012).
CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF GRAND RONDE FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

Twelve years ago, Oregon became the “first state in the nation to pass a state-tribal government-to-government relations law” (Quigley, 2013). Forty Years prior, the state of Oregon recognized the need to have a contact point for tribal relations with their 9 federally recognized tribes throughout the state. In response to this need, a forum for communications with the Legislative Commission on Indian Services (LCIS) was created. The LCIS provided a place for discussions to take place in which tribal sovereignty was recognized, and for the Oregon government and the tribes to learn from one and other in order to make informed decisions regarding infrastructure improvements, education and social services (Quigley, 2013).

Through the spirit of cooperation, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR) have developed a successful foster care program in cooperation with the counties surrounding them. From 2009 and 2014, the number of foster children in the Grand Ronde Tribe dropped by 50%, going from 100 to 47 children in care (Karten, 2014). Funds for foster care services at GRCFS derive from a contract with the Oregon Department of Human Services for Title IV-E as well as System of Care for “safety, permanency, well-being and attachment” (Goldberg, et al, 2007, p. 6). According to an article by Karten (2014), success of the tribes’ foster care comes from a proactive stance. Tribal social services concentrate a great deal on prevention programs rather than crisis
management, connecting with families and providing them with the support before losing their children (2014). However, not all families are successful in the prevention program and children are sometimes removed.

For those children who do find their way into foster care, the GRFS webpage (http://www.grandronde.org) offers a variety of training, resources and support for their foster families. Potential foster families can go to the website, which is interactive and informative. The website outlines services offered: reimbursements for childcare, respite and mileage reimbursements, foster care and cultural training, support groups, resources and lending library, events calendar, and parent appreciation. The website also includes information about the kind of children needing homes; requirements for becoming foster parents; and an explanation of the three different categories of foster care: emergency and respite care, long term care, and therapeutic care. In addition, the website allows potential foster families’ access to all of the required applications which need to be filled out as well as a link to an outline of the steps necessary for certification. Grand Ronde also takes advantage of social media and makes use of a public GRCFS Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com) listing upcoming events, trainings, information for parents, and pictures of events.

In addition to GRCFS s’ active recruitment efforts, the GRCFS department uses a variety of retention methods to keep foster families healthy and feeling up to the task of providing foster children in their homes. Grand Ronde Family and Children Services provide: continued training; a bimonthly newsletter; partnership trainings in classrooms and online; a private Facebook parent support page; family counseling; referrals for other
services; safety supplies; a binder with all pertinent paperwork; continued cultural training; annual foster care holiday parties and parent appreciation events; incentives for participation; a referral program; school year clothing voucher; and an annual two day training retreat that leads into an annual Powwow (http://www.grandronde.org). In addition, the website indicates staff is provided to support the families and includes a social worker and a certifier. The certifier is used to provide support for the foster family as well as act as a liaison with other agencies and community partners involved with the foster child’s case (Oregon Youth Authority, n.d.). Grand Ronde has been able to redistribute funds and successfully reduce the number of children needing foster care services using a prevention model (Karten, 2014) but the tribal social services provides many resources and support for the families who open their homes to the children in need of foster care.

**Humboldt County Foster Care program**

The Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services provides information for Children and Family Services (CFS) on their website (http://co.humboldt.ca.us). The webpage for CFS is simple, with basic information and requirements for becoming foster parents. The website also has links to P.R.I.D.E. training (Parent Resource for Information Development and Education) through College of the Redwoods Foster and Kinship Care Education (CRFKCE) program as well as the New Directions of Humboldt Foster Family Association (NDHFFA). The support group, NDHFFA offers continued training and support to its members, and resources for foster families. Additionally, the
CFS website outlines the team of professionals the foster family will be working with once they begin to take foster children into their home. The team includes: “the youth’s parent(s) or relatives; a Child Welfare Services Social Worker; an Adoptions Social Worker; a counselor; a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA); teachers; and other community representatives” (Children and Family Services, n.d.)

The majority of information for foster parents is located on the CRFKCE website (http://www.redwoods.edu/ Eureka/foster/). From the website, potential foster families can find outside resources through web links for health and development, child advocacy organizations, and California’s Child & Family Services Division (http://www.dss.cahw.net.gov). Classes for P.R.I.DE., kinship care training, youth group, CPR, and First Aid take place at Redwood College, although there are some ongoing trainings provided at the Foster Parent Support group which meets once a month in the city of Eureka.

Another important factor in Humboldt’s drive to provide better services for their Indigenous children has been through the collaboration between county social services and the surrounding tribes. As part of a five year federally funded program, Humboldt was chosen to take part in the California Partners for Permanency initiative (California partners for permanency, 2011). Through this initiative, the county and the tribes were able to forge a document enabling county social workers to share pertinent information with tribal social workers concerning tribal children who have become involved with Child Welfare Services (CWS) (Standing Order Meeting, 2013). Other positive changes from the CAPP meetings include a new screening process that provides a format that includes asking more specific questions about tribal affiliations, and culturally specific
training for social workers utilizing tribal members in the community as cultural coaches (Harbour, 2014, personal meeting notes).

In addition, Humboldt’s foster care services have attempted to address the lack of foster parents participating in their program by holding emergency meetings. Although the meetings did not continue, they did facilitate plenty of ideas for recruitment and retention, including ways that would reach out to the Indigenous and rural communities. Unfortunately those meetings ended and the ideas have yet to be utilized. A major impediment to recruitment is the lack of trust between the community and CWS. According to a Grand Jury Report (2000-2001, n.d.), the Yurok Tribal Council asked the Humboldt County Grand Jury to investigate the removal of children removed from relative foster placement by CWS. The investigation found that CWS removed the children without notification to the tribe and placed the children with non-relative foster parents in a distant location where family could not easily visit the children. It is situations such as this which has created distrust in the Indigenous community in regards to working with CWS (2000-2001, n.d.), making recruitment of appropriate Native American homes difficult.
METHOD

This project examined and compared information for two separate foster care programs, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and that of Humboldt County. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde was chosen because of its successes in recruiting and retaining foster families, especially in consideration of their ability to work in conjunction with county social services. Historically, tribal members have shied away from working with government agencies due to the previous eras of historical trauma, which include genocide and boarding schools (Halverson, et al., 2002). Humboldt County’s foster care program faces difficulties similar to what Grand Ronde did before revamping their recruitment and retention program which, at the time, was in need of foster families (Harbour, 2013).

In order to assess the effectiveness and ease of becoming a foster parent in either of these programs, this project focused on finding information with publicly available resources through each program’s website. The investigation was modeled after a single individual seeking to become a foster parent living near the Hoopa Valley Tribe Reservation in an unincorporated part of Humboldt County or near the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation in Polk County, Oregon. This project focused on portions of each program that fit the special needs of a sparse population and the large and diverse topography of Humboldt County. Additionally, special attention is placed on availability to cultural aspects of the programs due to disproportionate rates of Indigenous youth in the Child Welfare System in Humboldt County.
RESULTS

Humboldt County is a large rural geographic area with multiple ecological environments. The varied regions have inspired people to dwell within its boundaries for thousands of generations. In the last 200 years, the original inhabitants have been inundated by Europeans wishing to take advantage of Humboldt’s riches and its beauty. In recent history, part of the draw for many of the inhabitants is the rural nature of the county and over the years small communities have spread throughout the region and the once vast regions of mountains filled with the promise of gold and redwoods has vanished leaving the community impoverished with household incomes below the median income and higher rates of public assistance. The small population and rural aspects of the county make it difficult to provide social services to the families living outside of the main city. For many of the people in need of basic services, dwindling resources and the large service area make it difficult to provide adequate support from public and non-profit programs (Gutierrez, et al., 2012). Recruitment and retention of foster families face these same issues.

The Rural Policy Research Institute outlined the current economy and the necessity to make changes in order to provide services to the public in rural and unincorporated parts of the county programs (Gutierrez, et al., 2012). Similarly, a report was published outlining the needs in addressing foster care recruiting amongst the rural areas and the Indigenous peoples here in Humboldt (Johnson-Shelton, et al., 2009).
Grand Ronde Children and Family Services has created a program that addresses many of the concerns of their tribal members by incorporating cultural training and state licensing through their social services. By providing the licensure to its members, GRCFS negates the themes found in Halverson et al. (2002) study. In addition, Grand Ronde has aided in getting foster care to participants, even if they are out of area by providing many of the resources online and providing support groups in areas where they are needed.

Humboldt County Foster Care provides similar services compared to GRCFS, however on a smaller scale. They have yet to utilize social media as GRCFS has which puts them at a disadvantage in a world that is continually becoming more connected via social media. Grand Ronde has also successfully overcome issues that still hinder cooperation with the surrounding tribes here in Humboldt County. A thick layer of distrust from the community has hindered the recruitment of potentially positive and culturally appropriate foster homes for the high number of Indigenous children under CWS’s care. One advantage is that Humboldt is part of an integrated system that should allow for access to needed funds due to the flexibility of the integrated budgeting system and could afford Humboldt foster care the needed programs and staffing to overcome the issues of mistrust in the community.
DISCUSSION

Early in the spring of 2013, the Humboldt County department for Foster Care Recruitment began to hold meetings to discuss the vital need to recruit and retain foster families. An email was sent out highlighting key points to reach out to the community and recruit foster families. Meeting members who attended these meetings brainstormed several lists of ideas including taking advantage of community events for tabling, creating new brochures for handing out to the public, more opportunities for foster care training, and providing gifts as incentives for foster families. Special attention was paid to recruiting tribal members from the eight surrounding Reservations and Rancheria’s in Humboldt County (Harbour, 2013).

P.R.I.D.E training takes place at College of the Redwoods, located just 10 minutes south of the county hub in Eureka where the offices of Social Services are located. This presents a problem for many of the residents in Humboldt who live throughout the county, especially the Indigenous populations living in Hoopa, Weitchpec and Klamath. Potential foster families from these areas will have to expect driving over an hour to the orientation, P.R.I.D.E. trainings and the support group.

One suggestion for Humboldt County Foster Care is to make their applications available online so potential foster parents know upfront what they will need to fill out. Providing forms ahead of time will allow potential recruits to prepare them for the invasive paper work they are asked to fill out and allow them to complete the paperwork before coming to the orientation. Doing so would alleviate an extra drive for applying.
foster families and allow for them to ask questions at the orientation about the paperwork. Additionally, providing the paperwork on the website may help with the preexisting mistrust of Child Welfare and social workers by making the process open and transparent.

The need for foster parents is great and there is an enormous amount of work to be done in recruitment and retention. However, other issues for the Department of Health and Human Services to consider would be addressing the special needs of the Indigenous people in the more populated urban areas such as Eureka, Arcata, Ferndale, and McKinleyville; especially taking into consideration that there are few places to seek services specific to urban Indigenous people other than United Indian Health Services. Perhaps by addressing the mental and physical needs of a people who have historical and continuing trauma, there would be less need for the recruitment of foster parents. However, the policies which forced assimilation of the surrounding tribal members into the larger white population over the past century should also be taken into consideration since numbers are unknown as to how many families have been far removed from their tribal communities.

Humboldt County has eight federally recognized tribes in their jurisdiction, two of the largest being Hoopa and Yurok, over the decades, forced assimilation, blood quantum, and interracial marriage have contributed to the dwindling enrollments. Many of the descendants live in the urban and rural areas throughout the county, meaning that much of the non-Indigenous population working with Child Welfare Services are there because of unknown past historical traumas. In addition, 32% of the foster children in
CWS’s care are Indigenous and in need of foster homes within their community (Number of children, 2014). With this in mind, it might benefit Child Welfare Services and County Foster Care Services to work with their clients presuming that all of them have historical trauma of some kind and incorporate options for more traditional healing services to all clients.

With the long and turbulent past between Humboldt County and the eight tribes within its area, Humboldt may need to take extra steps to gain the trust of the Indigenous community. Judge Abinanti, commissioner of the Superior Court of California and Chief Judge for the Yurok court, addressed Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) on advocating for the best interest of Native Children. The Honorable Abinanti emphasized the need for CASA volunteers to act as liaisons between tribal courts and services and the county. Abinanti relays in her address the “long-standing bias against social services” (Abinanti, n.d., p. 4) amongst the Indigenous community.

Much of the difficulties in finding appropriate licensed foster care homes comes from misunderstandings or lack of knowledge concerning the history and current conditions of the Indigenous peoples by social workers. There are a multitude of appropriate foster homes to be found, however, difficulties in licensing arise when western standards are applied. Issues with standards of living, housing conditions, less than perfect background checks, and a lack of understanding cultural norms often prevent families from becoming licensed (Weaver & White, 1999). Understandably, there are laws that must be adhered to by social workers to guarantee safe environments for the
children, however, there must be adjustments made to allow for cultural norms that may not fit into the western ideals of childcare.

This project has only begun to look at ways to address the difficulties of recruitment and retention for foster families here in Humboldt County. A closer look into the issues surrounding the recruitment issues for tribal members is needed. Each region and community has their own unique and personal experiences with the U.S. assimilation policies as well as experiences with settlers and the surrounding white communities. Humboldt has its own unique past concerning the tribes, many of them differ depending on the resources available to the tribes. It would be interesting and poignant to see if themes would emerge as similar to those found by Halverson, et al, (2002).

One last suggestion for the continuation of this work would be to inquire amongst the rural and tribal communities of their assessment of the foster care recruitment and retention services offered. Special attention could be given to families who have already gone through the process asking them what services keep them in the Humboldt County foster care program. In addition, a closer look at the policies in reunification and adoptions such as kinship care, relative placement and Tribal Customary Adoption should be addressed and emphasized to every social worker working with families at CWS.
REFERENCES


Group disproportionality & disparity (vs. white) by state: entering and in care, 2004.


