



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SAC-06-015

### **TITLE: Court-Appointed Child Advocates for American Indian/Alaskan Native Children**

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**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, 10,323 American Indian/Alaskan Native children are in out of home placements today because they are alleged victims of abuse, neglect or abandonment; and

**WHEREAS**, American Indian/Alaskan Native children are over-represented in the foster care system by a ratio of two to one; and

**WHEREAS**, a child's safety, well-being and permanence should be the goal for all children in out of home placements; and

**WHEREAS**, children in out of home placements need independent, quality, culturally competent advocacy to assure that their best interests are made known and addressed by the court and child welfare systems; and

**WHEREAS**, the National CASA Association supports and promotes court-appointed advocacy for abused and neglected children so that they can thrive in safe, permanent homes; and

**WHEREAS**, the National CASA Association provides training, technical assistance and resources to tribal communities to support independent, quality advocacy for children in the tribal court system because of abuse and neglect; and

**WHEREAS**, Tribal CASA programs for abused and neglected children exist in only 14 tribal courts in the country, providing direct service advocacy to native children; and

**WHEREAS**, Tribal CASA programs have advocated for 965 children between 2002 – 2006; and

**WHEREAS**, Tribal CASA programs struggle to sustain their services to Native children because of severely limited resources and the challenges of working on tribal lands; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a lack of other national coordination to assure that American Indian/Alaskan Native children receive quality advocacy for their best interests.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NCAI does hereby urge the U.S. Congress to authorize a grants program, through the Office of Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice, for the purpose administering \$5 million in grants to tribal governments, courts, and non-profit agencies to provide quality, independent, culturally competent advocacy for children in the tribal court system because of allegations of abuse, neglect or abandonment. The Administrator of the Office of Victims of Crime will assure standards of practice and minimum training requirements for court-appointed child advocates appropriate to their role.

Such training will include child development, the Indian Child Welfare Act, and working within Native American/Alaskan Native communities and tribal courts. The trained, court-appointed child advocate may be a volunteer, attorney or lay Guardian ad Litem; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

### CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2006 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Sacramento Convention Center in Sacramento, California on October 1-6, 2006, with a quorum present.

  
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President

**ATTEST:**

  
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Recording Secretary