

Understanding, engaging, and supporting Native families

Thursday, June 9, 2022

Heather La Forme-Maldonado, MPA
Onondaga, Beaver

AdoptUSKids consultant

Kendra Lowden, MS
Potawatomi and Osage

AdoptUSKids consultant

Before we begin



This webinar will be recorded and shared with you.



Submit your questions via Q&A. Type in chat to get technical help and engage with panelists and each other.



Please complete our survey, arriving via email after the webinar.

Agenda

- 1 Introduction to tribes, citizenship, and connection
- 2 Building knowledge in history, culture, and self-awareness
- 3 Strategies to support and engage families
- 4 Resources
- 5 Questions

Our mission



Raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families for children in the public child welfare system



Assist US states, territories, and tribes to recruit, engage, develop and support foster and adoptive families

Introduction to tribes and tribal citizenship

Tribes and tribal sovereignty

“The U.S. Constitution recognizes Indian tribes as distinct governments and they have, with a few exceptions, the same powers as federal and state governments to regulate their internal affairs.”

“Tribal sovereignty refers to the right of American Indians and Alaska Natives to govern themselves.”

–*An Issue of Sovereignty*, National Conference of State Legislatures

Significant historical events



Residential Boarding
Schools Era: 1880-1956

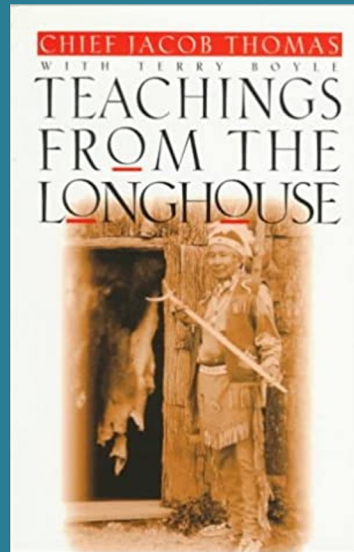


Government order forcing
hair cutting: 1902



Indian Removal Act
of 1830

Significant historical events

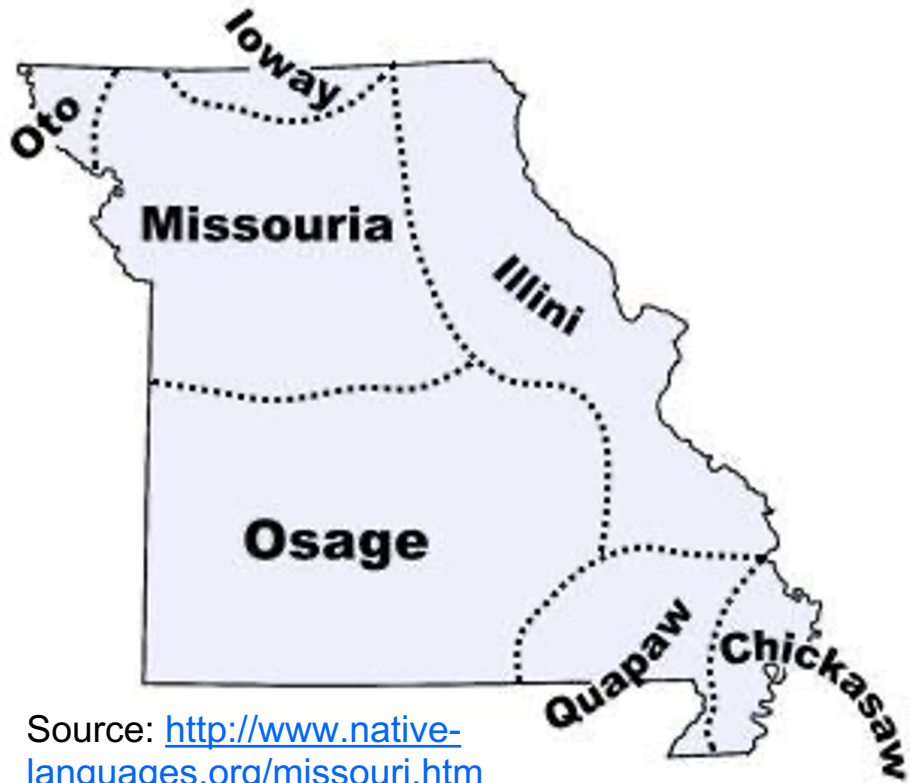


Prohibition of
ceremonies: 1884



Prohibition of sale of
beads and body paint:
1879

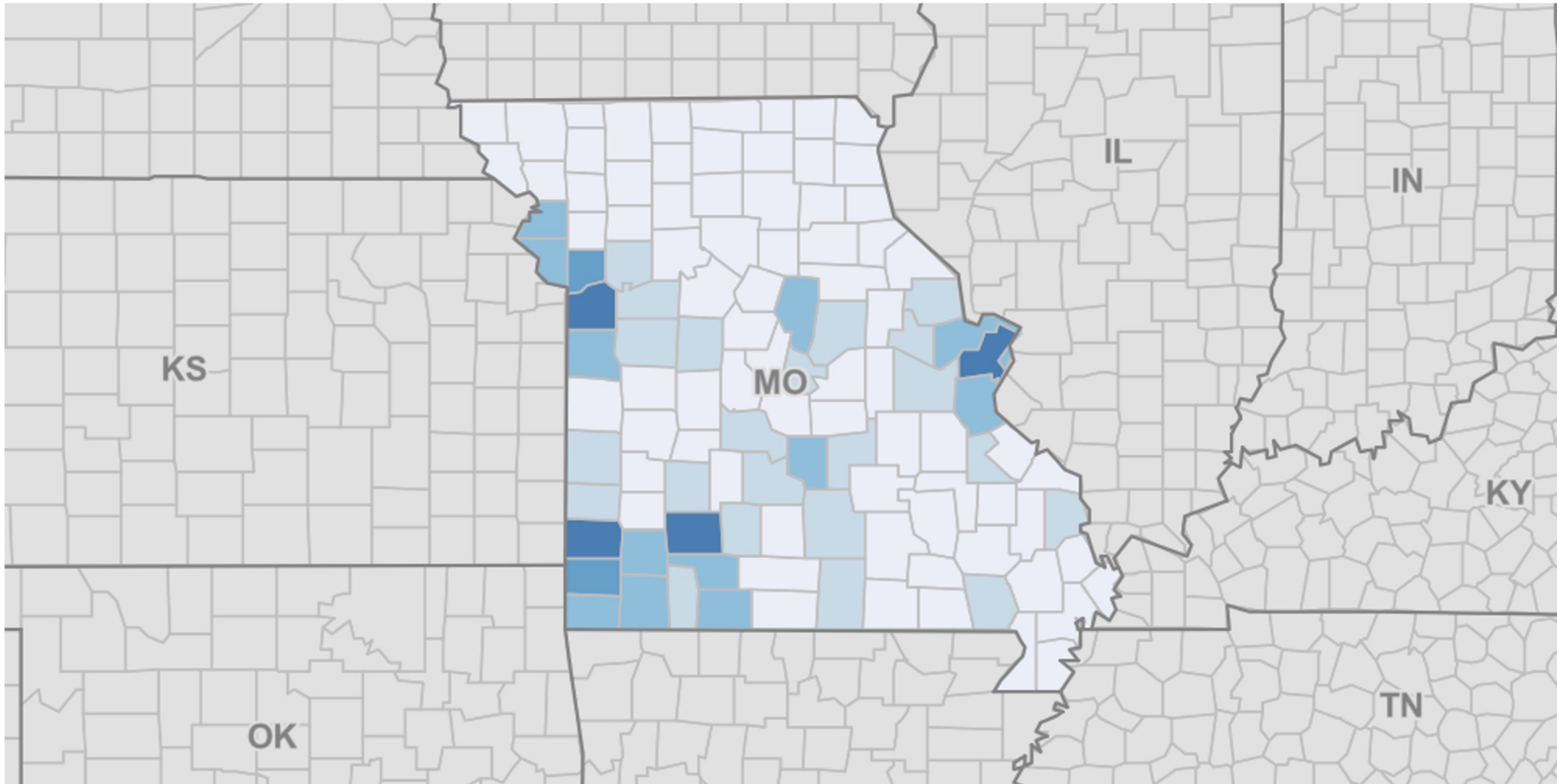
Pre-colonization map



- Oto
- Ioway
- Missouri
- Illini
- Osage
- Quapaw
- Chickasaw

2020 US Census

American Indian population



Tribal citizenship

The definition of tribal citizenship varies by tribe. It may include the use of family lineage or “blood quantum” as requirements for enrollment.

Government actions, such as the Dawes Commission, forced Native people to add their name to lists in order to be considered a member of their tribe.

–*An Issue of Sovereignty*, National Conference of State Legislatures

Tribal citizenship and identity

- Blood quantum does not determine a person's Indigeneity.
- Non-enrolled Natives may have strong cultural connections.
- Native people identify in various ways, including Native American, American Indian, Indian, Indigenous, and by their specific tribe(s).

Native family lore

- Many people claim to be Native based on family stories.
- DNA testing websites will never determine tribal citizenship.
- Blood tests will never determine tribal citizenship.

Have you ever said or heard something like this?



“My great grandmother was a full-blooded Cherokee, but too proud to enroll.”

“It was not popular to be Indian back in the day, so my family did not sign the rolls.”

“I took a DNA test and it showed that I’m 2% Native American.”

Do these statements help build trust?

If not, what purpose do they serve to your clients?



Indian Child Welfare Act

State and private agencies removed as many as 25-35% of Indian children from their families and placed many of these children in non-Indian foster and adoptive homes.

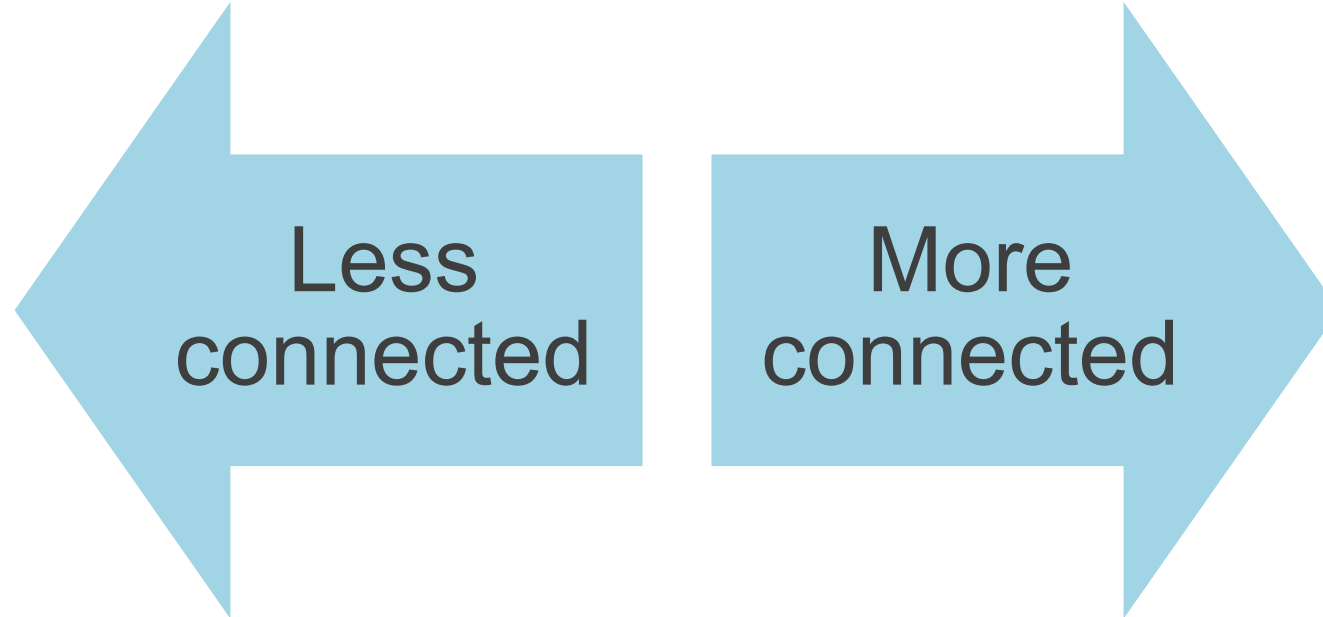
Although progress has been made, out-of-home placement still occurs more frequently for Native children than the general population. Native families are four times more likely to have their children removed and placed in foster care than their White counterparts.

–Bureau of Indian Affairs

What to know about ICWA

- Families may mistrust child protection agencies based on history and personal experiences.
- ICWA is based on the political status of tribes.
- It is *not* based on race.

Continuum of cultural connection



Lack of strong cultural connectivity

- Family separation from child welfare involvement, divorce, or relationship breakup
- Was not emphasized in the home
- Lived away from the tribal community

Assessment process

There are some things to know about verifying tribal heritage during the application and assessment process.

Working with Native applicants

- Ask about tribal heritage during the assessment process.
- Obtain a copy of the Certificate Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) card or tribal citizen card.
- Verify citizenship with the tribal nation's child welfare agency or tribal enrollment department.

Building knowledge: history, culture, and self-awareness

Gaining an understanding

- Historical distrust Native families have for government and private agencies
- Native people walk in two worlds
- Differences in child-rearing practices



Source:

<https://historicmissourians.shsmo.org/sacred-sun>

MO-HON-GO,
AN OSAGE WOMAN.

Understanding yourself



Be aware of your own biases.



Have an open mind.



Ask for help.

The Clute family



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01KRJPhpOoA>

Invest your time



Know your community.



Help the family connect.



Utilize cultural guides.

Tribal culture is not a monolith



- Each Native person has their own unique cultural connection and worldview
- Onondaga meaning of thunder to Heather
- Potawatomi meaning of thunder to Kendra

Strategies to support and engage families

Preparing families for the process

First steps

- Provide a clear overview of what the application process entails.
- Explain why certain information is needed, especially if they are hesitant to provide it.
- Take your meeting location into account.
- Focus less on formality and more on connection.

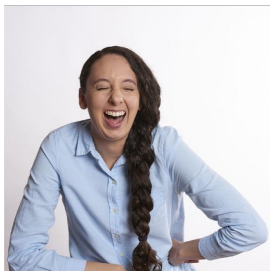
Cater your approach and communication style



Nonverbal communication may be utilized.



Lack of eye contact is not disrespectful.



Humor may be used to discuss hard things. This does *not* indicate disrespect of the subject.

Consult with a trusted expert

- Reach out for help when needed.
- Only use someone trusted by the community.
- Take into account the family's needs.
- Connect to existing Native resource families.
- Contact the Missouri Tribal Liaison for guidance.



Kansas City Indian Center



Supporting ceremonial practices

- Ask the family if and where they participate in ceremonies and at what frequency.
- Be respectful of what the ceremonies entail, such as smoking tobacco, burning sage, and understanding the different medicines—so no confusion occurs during the child's experience.

Celebrate Native heritage

- Find ways to acknowledge the family's culture.
- Consider ways to highlight families during Native American Heritage Month (e.g., newsletter, website, social media).
- Provide sessions on Native culture in foster parent trainings or support groups.
- Take the family's cues when making these steps.

Resources

Bureau of Indian Affairs

- [Indian Child Welfare Act resources](#)

NICWA

- [Tribal Best Practices](#)
- [Tracing Native Ancestry: A Guide to Responding to Inquiries](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

- [Culture Card: A Guide to Build Awareness: American Indian and Alaska Native \(samhsa.gov\)](#)

Resources

Wellness Courts

- [*American Indian Belief Systems and Traditional Practices*](#)

Child Welfare Information Gateway

- [*Engaging American Indian Children and Families*](#)

Administration for Children & Families

- [*Resources Specific to American Indian/Alaskan Native \(AI/AN\) Communities*](#)



Contact information

Ligia Cushman, national child welfare consultant, AdoptUSKids
ligia.cushman@raisethefuture.org

Britt Cloudsdale, family support program manager, AdoptUSKids
brittcloudsdale@nacac.org

Heather La Forme-Maldonado, MPA
heather.laforme@gmail.com

Kendra Lowden, MS
kendralowden@gmail.com



Questions?



AdoptUSKids

888-200-4005 • [ADOPTUSKIDS.ORG](https://adoptuskids.org)

AdoptUSKids is operated by the Adoption Exchange Association and is made possible by grant number 90CO1133 from the Children's Bureau. The contents of this presentation are solely the responsibility of the Adoption Exchange Association and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children's Bureau, ACYF, ACF, or HHS.

