~KEEPING THE PROMISE~

Teaching ICWA Online: Undergraduate Child Welfare Student Learning

Paul Force-Emery Mackie, Ph.D., MSW & MacKenzie Collin, BSSW Student

Department of Social Work
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Dr. Paul F.E. Mackie is an Assistant Professor of social work at Minnesota State Mankato & co-facilitator of the Title IV-E Child Welfare grant.

MacKenzie Collin is a Title IV-E Child Welfare Scholar and senior graduating with her BSSW this spring.

The Title IV-E Child Welfare Grant is based on federal monies that support undergraduate students interested in working with children and families after graduation.

The “ICWA Online” class was developed to provide a critical learning experience to Title IV-E students who will likely work with Native American children and families sometime in their careers and social workers.

This presentation is designed to outline and show how we are attempting to do this using current educational technology and platforms – to keep the promise” established by ICWA 30 years ago... Today.
This year’s conference goals match well with the online class we developed –

- The responsibility of stakeholders (including higher education) in assuring quality child welfare services,
- Revealing an innovative approach to educating future social workers about ICWA,
- Investigating the role of research and data in advocacy & collaboration through education.
Upon completion of this workshop, attendees will:

- have an understanding of how ICWA-related content can be integrated into undergraduate child welfare curriculum using online educational technology,
- Be able to develop an online, hybrid, or classroom curriculum focused on ICWA issues,
- Be able to critically evaluate an online course focused on student learning, growth, and development pertinent to becoming culturally sensitive & professionally effective.
The course was designed in response to a gap in knowledge among Title IV-E students – they did not know ICWA.

This course was designed using “Desire to Learn” (D2L) educational technology.

Recognizing the “problem” was only the beginning – conceptualizing, developing, and implementing the project proved to be... interesting.

The challenge: To provide a meaningful education to students outside of a traditional classroom environment.
The first step was to conceptualize the problem; what is it students need to know to be effective child welfare social workers addressing ICWA-related concerns? What “don’t” they know?

According to students interviewed, they didn’t know much at all about ICWA – The importance of the law, implications it has on practice, or importance of adhering to the law. I started here...
Starting from the “beginning” proved difficult – I needed to figure out where the “beginning” was located! Broken up into seven learning units:

- **Unit 1**: Book reading “Pigs in Heaven”
- **Unit 2**: ICWA-related websites
- **Unit 3**: Child Welfare, ICWA, & Culture
- **Unit 4**: Child Welfare, ICWA, and Policy
- **Unit 5**: Child Welfare, ICWA, and Practice
- **Unit 6**: Child Welfare, ICWA, Training, & Research
- **Unit 7**: Recommended Articles & web pages
Barbara Kingsolver’s (1993) book *Pigs in Heaven* is an assigned reading. Students are asked to critically think about the story, and discuss in groups (online) their interpretations of the story.

*Special note: Currently this is not being used in the class. According to students feedback, inclusion of *Pigs in Heaven* along with all of the other readings creates an especially heavy amount of reading.*
UNIT 2: ICWA-RELATED WEBSITES

Unit #2 begins with an overview from web-based sources I considered informative and valuable:

- NICWA website
- Tribal Law and Policy Institute,
- MN Department of Human Services,
- American Indian Child Resource Center (San Francisco)

Assessing student learning:
Two “scavenger hunts” were developed. By returning with specific information, I could evaluate student learning, and a scavenger hunt makes it fun and interesting (active learning).
Each of the unit #3 readings are grounded in scholarly works (journal articles).

Readings address critical elements pertaining to culture loss as a result of removal of children, increasing cultural responsiveness, and Ojibwe perspectives on the welfare of children.

The purpose of these readings are to develop students’ critical thinking skills about the relationship between culture, loss of culture, and the relevance of the ICWA.
Unit #4: Where the 1978 ICWA law is introduced.

While logic may dictate that this should have been introduced earlier, my concern is that it could be overwhelming to students – they need to know why the ICWA was needed, then read the law and further dissemination of the effects of the original law.

Scholarly readings are presented to strengthen learning, including:

- The politics of the ICWA
- A general overview of ICWA adoption law
- The impact of ICWA law on families
- The effectiveness of the ICWA for children & families
Unit #5 discusses practice issues. Special attention has been given to what students as social workers may experience, which includes:

- Kinship care and permanence,
- Working with grandparents raising grandchildren,
- Adoption issues,
- Evidence-based treatments with children.
Unit #6 exposes problems associated with service delivery, and offers suggestions in providing better service by human service workers, which includes:

- Training child welfare workers to better understand ICWA requirements,
- Using Tribal and State Title IV-E agreements to best serve Native American children & families,
- Being culturally sensitive in conducting research within Native American communities and culture.
Unit #7 is a “catch-all” location where related information can be placed and distributed. Information currently placed here includes:

- Maps & locations of Native American communities,
- Centers & institutes that focus on Native American policies and ICWA-related issues,
- Minnesota-specific Native American information.
This course is designed to provide undergraduate Title IV-E grant-supported students with the education and tools necessary to better respond to the needs of Native American children and families.

However, this type of material presentation lends itself to being offered through distance education, as CEU/CEH – which would immediately include even the most rural & geographically distant child welfare workers.

Using D2L or similar educational platform, information can be quickly changed/updated, new learning assessments developed, and curriculum can be managed efficiently.

This is also a way to direct Title IV-E resources to address Native American community needs.

We see this as an effective way to inject Title IV-E funding to an area where it is needed the most – and keep the promise made to children under the ICWA.
NOW TO THE D2L SITE – VIEWING THE CONTENT

- Let’s go to the actual course as it is viewed online and review

  - www.mnsu.edu/Desire2Learn/Login/SOWK492
  - Course home
  - Content
  - Discussions
  - Other tools
But…

Are Students Learning?

Assessment, outcomes, data, and interpretations from Ms. MacKenzie Collin, BSSW program senior and Title IV-E Child Welfare program participant.
Evaluation of program graduates: Former Title IV-E students from Minnesota State Mankato.

- Sample: 12 graduates
- Findings:
Evaluation of current students:

- Sample: 28 students (all seniors)
- Findings:
CONCLUSION

+ Implications for social work education
+ Implications for children and families
+ Implications for generalist social workers
  ❖ Licensure
  ❖ Practice
  ❖ Mentoring