



## IMPORTANCE of SERVE

The issue of social welfare is central to tribal communities. Indigenous Peoples in the U.S (Native American, Native Alaskan and Native Hawaiian) have been the target of federal and state policies and services, including the forced removal of children from their families to boarding schools where they were forced to give up their culture, and many suffered mental, physical and sexual abuse. The continuing impact of Federal policies has effectively decimated healthy tribal communities and families, leaving behind high rates of chronic disease, alcoholism and family violence.

In addition, although the Indian Child Welfare Act was enacted in 1978, Native American children continue to be removed from their family homes at a higher rate than other groups. For example, “Nearly 10,000 Native American/Native Alaskan children are in the nation’s foster care system today, at a rate that is disproportionately higher than that for non-Indian children.”<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, schools of social work have generally failed to provide nontribal social workers with the knowledge and skills needed to respond and work respectfully with Tribal families and communities. And there is a need for Native American social workers who can bring to their practice an understanding to historic trauma, tribal systems, and the challenges Native American families and communities face in their efforts to maintain and improve their physical and mental health.

The need in social work is two-fold<sup>2</sup>:

- 1) There is a need for all social work students, regardless of racial or ethnic identification, to have the knowledge and skills to work competently with Native Americans;
- 2) There is a need to improve the pipeline for Native American students and faculty into social work.

There are 111 federally recognized tribes in the State of California not including state recognized or unrecognized tribes. In Southern California, two of the nation’s largest populations of Native Americans reside in Los Angeles and San Diego. However, Indigenous students have been disenfranchised and neglected by the state’s education system. There are disparities in educational attainment at all levels (high school, undergraduate and graduate), which then leads to a lack of Native Americans serving in faculty and educator roles. In California, only 40% of Native American high school graduates fulfill UC/CSU entrance requirements which are 13% lower than the state average<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> (Cross, et al., 2009)

<sup>2</sup> (Cross, et al., 2009)

<sup>3</sup> (Proudfit & San Juan, 2012)