



# ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING NATIVE GRANDFAMILIES

Traditionally, tribal elders have been held in high esteem; respected for the wisdom they have gained from lived experience. They are sources of comfort, strength, and guidance for members of younger generations.

Grandparents serve a critical role in the tribal family structure. They are often the glue that holds the family together, providing the place to gather. They are keepers of family stories, cultural knowledge and are calm voices of reason.

Engaging and supporting grandparents and other extended family members can help native children and families achieve the best outcomes.

## [American Indian & Alaska Native Grandfamilies: Helping Children Thrive Through Connection to Family and Cultural Identity](#)

This toolkit, developed by the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) and Generations United, offers tips, practice, and policy recommendations for child welfare agencies and advocates to support all Native grandfamilies. Historical trauma, the impact of family separation on family and culture, and culturally appropriate services and the strengths of preserving and restoring cultural identity are discussed. A detailed list of services grandfamilies may find helpful are also provided.

See also: [Coping with Crisis, Confronting COVID19: Native American Grandfamilies Hit the Hardest](#), which introduces this toolkit while offering a discussion of the disproportionate impacts COVID-19 has had on these families. Actions to better serve Native children and their grandparents that care for them are offered.

“Grandfamilies are united not only by their love for and desire to protect their grandchildren but also by their perseverance, resilience, and determination. They deserve our respect and support now more than ever.” – Sarah Kastelic (NICWA) and Donna Butts (Generations United)

See also: [American Indian and Alaska Native Grandfamilies: Helping Children Thrive Through Connection to Family](#) (webinar recording and handouts)

## [Unci Na Gaka: Lakota Grandparents’ Perspectives on Raising Grandchildren](#)

Written by Ethleen Iron Cloud-Two Dogs, this paper examines the experiences of contemporary Lakota grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

### [Understanding ICWA Placements Using Kinship Care Research: Family that Children Have Never Known](#)

This article explores the available kinship care research and highlights key benefits to following ICWA placement preferences for all children in care. Research that focused on the relationships between grandparents and their kin demonstrated strong attachments and healthy bonding development.

### [American Indian & Alaska Native Grandfamilies: The Impact on Child Development](#)

Various forms of historical trauma continue to be significant factors in the lives of both the grandparents and grandchildren, especially in how decisions are made to access services. This article discusses the challenges, opportunities, and strengths of Native grandparents raising their grandchildren and includes recommendations for educational and social services institutions.

### [American Indian Grand Families: A Qualitative Study Conducted with Grandmothers and Grandfathers Who Provide Sole Care for Their Grandchildren](#)

This study features Native grandparents in Michigan who are raising their grandchildren and looks at the reasons behind their caregiver role, the impact historical trauma has had, and policy implications.

### [“We Raise Our Grandchildren as our Own” Alaska Native Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Southwest Alaska](#)

A study of grandparents in a Yup'ik community in Alaska explores the roles they play in their grandchildren's lives and preserving cultural traditions reflective of practices and values passed down from their own Elders.



### [Grandparents' Resource Guide - North American Indian Center of Boston](#)

This online manual is dedicated to support Native grandparents in the Boston area by linking them to existing resources related to child care, education, elder services, employment/benefit programs, family services, healthcare, substance abuse treatment, nutrition and food, housing, legal aid, transportation, and various cultural resources and can serve as an example to other communities.

