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Statement by Peter Crovo collected by Marcie Lister on October 14, 2014

Peter Crovo

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General Information

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Statement Provider: Peter Crovo

Date: October 14, 2014

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Previous Statement? N/A

Statement Gatherer: Marcie Lister

Support Person: N/A

Additional Individuals Present: Matt Dunlap, gkisedtanamoogk

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Length of Recording: 45:39

Recording

ML: Um, could please tell me about your experiences as someone who provides services to children and families in Maine?

MD: Should, should we recite the case number and everything first?

ML: OH, I'm sorry. You know, you reminded me about this last time. Yes. Thank you. Um, ah, yes, I am Marcie Lister, gathering the statement from Peter Crovo, and with me are two of the commissioners

MD: Matt Dunlap.

g: I'm gkisedtanamoogk.

ML: And this is file number ME-201410-00096-001. So, again, if you could please tell us about your experiences as someone who provides services to chil-- or provided -- services to children and families in Maine, um.

PC: Ok, um. Do you want the history of my work or do you want me to start just where I am right now? I'm sorry.

ML: Uh, no nothing to be sorry about, that was rather vague. Let's start with how many years did you work in this field and what was your position?

PC: I am, I work for Community Health and Counseling Services. My, uh, my job title is Program Coordinator, I mostly work with kids in treatment foster care, which is a contracted service with the State of Maine and Department of Human Services to provide a mental health kind of foster care for children that are, that need that service. We presently, in the area that I supervise, um, we have about 35 to 40 children in our treatment foster care program at any one time, so my responsibilities, I do a variety of responsibilities within that. Some of it, I work directly with the kids, supervising visits between children and families. I also work with, as a case manager, for some of those kids. And I also just work as a support person for our foster families and I also have supervisory responsibility to all the kids in the program. Also, I, um, work as a case manager in the community for children in need of mental health services and helping arranging services, that's what I presently do. I started working with, in the child welfare system in 1986 as a licensing worker for the Department of Health and Human Services, and, and then after about eight and half years I went to Community Health and Counseling Services in 1995 and have been with Community Health and Counseling Services since that time. Always working mainly in, well, Aroostook County -- including the Danforth area, which is not Aroostook County and mostly, most of my work has been southern Aroostook. I don't know if that, that helps.

ML: Absolutely. Did you say how many, how long you've been doing this?

PC: Since 1986.

ML: Yes, ok. And that's, that encompasses all of what you've just...

PC: Yeah, ah, yeah, it's about, I guess 28 years.

ML: Do you know about Maine's Indian Child Welfare Policies and the Indian Child Welfare Act?

PC: Yeah, in 1986 I started working for, for, as a licensing worker and that was one of the things I needed to learn at the time -- was licensing foster homes. I started working with the Maliseet-- Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians at the time and there was some trainings. I remember the first training, gosh, I don't know if it wa-- it was in the late 80's and we actually did it out on the reservation, and, um, in one of their buildings. And I remember going to the training and it was for DHS staff and, and, to--to, to have a better relationship with the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians. And I helped set that training up and -- because I was working with Pam Fillion was the ICWA director at the time for the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians. I remember the tension in the air. You could feel it, at the time. And you could see some of the, ah, the, it was like-- it was supposed to be like, I don't know if it was like a joint training -- I kept trying to remember it. But I, I just remember being there, thinking this isn't as good as I was hoping it would be. And you could feel it, like there was some like, "Well, you're removing our kids" you know, and there were statements from, "You're removing our kids,



you know, because their house isn't clean" and DHS would be like "No, that's not why" and they would be defensive back. And it just wasn't, didn't have a good feeling, that first training.

It was very unsettling, I thought, for me -- so I imagine it was for everyone else as well, because I always try to put myself in other people's shoes and thinking "Oh, that wasn't so good." And then I remember, we did other trainings in the early 1990's, more so, I think, for foster parents to understand you know, working with Native American children. And-- or, maybe, it was, I think one more in the early 90's. And that one was a little better. And that was more directed by the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians. And, and then I remember [00:06:14.29] other trainings that, once I came over to Community Health and Counseling Services, we did some trainings that were really well done with both the Maliseets and the Micmacs. Some out at, at, with the Maliseets place and some up at, well, the University Maine Presque-Isle, that the Micmacs were really involved with. Um, and those were good trainings.

ML: Who organized those?

PC: Betsy Tannian was involved in the ones down here, and I'm trying to remember who was involved with the Micmac training. I know Carol Francis, she-- and actually Carol and Mel Francis were foster parents for Community Health and Counseling, and Carol was Micmac and Mel was Passamaquoddy and I know they helped facilitate that training, I think too, or get it going. Carol was pretty instrumental in that. And, um. So, I think that those trainings were much better and they were more designed-- and I know a lot of staff between Community Health and Counseling and staff from other agencies and DHS participated in some of those trainings and I thought they were good trainings. But you know, there hasn't been, like, a training like that in quite a few years -- at least not for our agency. And I was just realizing this in the last few months as I knew this Truth and Reconciliation was occurring more about it. And I realized, you know, we haven't done a training in a long time. I think it's people get busy and fail to realize the importance of those trainings. Cause it's more about gathering together and having an understanding of where everyone's at and working, so, um, I don't know. I'm sure I'm off base because like, I ramble.

ML: No, no, no, no, not at all. Everything you've said is exactly what we, what we want to know about. Could you describe a situation or situations in which you -- or your agency or staff -- felt very positive about your work with a Wabanaki child and family.

PC: Sure. [00:08:26.03]

ML: And, and please describe this in a general way so we can't identify the family, please.

PC: I mean, I remember, and Betsy Tannian -- she's, she's a very strong advocate lady and when she was working with the Maliseets at the time, and I remember really wanting -- and it's

really interesting because this was a Native American family wanting to adopt Native American-- a Micmac family-- a Maliseet family wanting to adopt Maliseet children. And there were some questions about the family, from the Child and Family team at the Maliseet Indians. Betsy's like, I need you to come over and help convince me to let this family adopt, which was kind of interesting.

But, and it was interesting to me because it was one of their own families that wanted to adopt these kids. And, but you know, I guess when you know people real well you always know the, their, their history and their good and their bad and all that, so maybe that was -- I think that was a part of it too. But, I just felt really good about that experience because Betsy and I went out there and we spoke to their Child and Family Team and the family was allowed to adopt and that was a really good experience to know. And, um, there's been many other good experiences of, I know that we have... presently at Community Health and Counseling, we have more Micmac children in our program than Maliseet. Not, you know, not a tremendous amount, but we do have more. And so, in the last few years I've been working more with the Micmacs and we've taken kids up to the, what they call the Mawiomi, it's their once a year big celebration, and, and it's just been a real positive. We've had kids go up there, real positive experience for the kids and the families. And we've taken kids up there to their health fair, which they do a lot-- and what's great is they do, even in those events like a health fair -- they have singing and dancing and drumming and that's great, you know. And, and we've had really good experiences working with the Micmacs and their Indian child welfare because the, ah, -- workers -- because they've been coming to the foster homes and doing drumming and those kind of things with the kids, and the kids love it when that, you know, they come to the home too -- to the foster home and do those things. So, that's been a real positive experience, so.

I think we're working really well with the Micmacs and the Maliseet tribes up here and, and maybe that's why I hadn't thought about-- we haven't had a training in a long time, but I just think our, our working relationship has been very positive. A lot of good communication, and, and stuff -- not that we don't ever have disagreements, but it's, it's not like, when you don't have a good relationship, you have a disagreement, and it's like, people get in an uproar because they take it personally but now if you have a good relationship you, you have a disagreement and it can, you can, "Oh, well, oh yeah, well ok." We don't agree with that but we can work it out. So I think those are really... it's been really going much, much better in the last, you know, ten years or so, even, so, um... [00:11:43.24]

ML: Um, so this next question might not be a surprise and that's, could you describe a situation or situations in which you or your agency or staff felt less positive about your work with a Wabanaki child and family?

PC: It-- it's really not with the children and the families. I really think our experiences working with the kids and the families is very positive. And sometimes when working with the tribes, it's, it's a-- you have to separate the organization from, from the family. And the family's been great, working with the birth families, we worked at reunification, not always successful, but we work well, but we always have a good relationship with the families and the children we work with. And it's not that we have a bad relationship with the tribes, and I just described that we have a really good one, but we sometimes disagree about things.



And I have to tell you, the thing that I think that I struggle with the most is -- and I understand the Indian Child Welfare Act, and I understand-- I totally believe that every kid, every child no matter what their affiliation or tribe, or even if they're non Native, they should know their background, their culture, their heritage, it's really important because that's their roots and I think it's a very grounding experience for kids to have. And so I think all kids need that. And they also need a future, and I think that what happens is is, that sometimes kids-- there's not a identified, permanent resource for the child, and so the child stays in foster care. And foster care-- no kid should stay in foster care too long. It's not a place for kids to be for long periods of time. It's supposed to be a temporary service. It's supposed to so that, until permanency can be reached, and whatever that permanency looks like.

And I think that sometimes -- and I don't know if this is, I'm not-- anyone's particular fault, I don't blame anyone, because I know the State of Maine really wants kids to be adopted and, and you know, some of the tribes believe in a different form of, uh, permanency and I know that is permanency guardianship, so it's a little confusing at times... but what happens is, is that these kids aren't moving on. I've seen ki-- some Native American children be in foster care for four or five years, and I'm thinking if they were non-Native they woulda been out of foster care by now. You know? And, and, and I--and I-- it's just that they shouldn't be in foster care that long. I mean, that's my point, I think. I wish that there would be more emphasis on finding permanency for Native American children, because it's damaging when these kids have been in foster care so long and they realize, "I'm not staying here in this foster home" -- and for whatever reason, the foster home is not a long term option. Sometimes foster parents don't get into it to be a long-term option, they get into it, just to be that, you know, anywhere from a few months, to a year, to a year and a half to two years, as you know, bridge to permanency. And we have a number of people that are that way.

And, um, but then kids realize, "I'm not staying here. But where am I going?" And they don't know where they're going. And I think that creates a lot of anxiety -- as it would for anybody -- to not know your future. So. And I think, over time, when you see kids that have been in foster care for too long, they really start worrying about their future. "Well, if I'm not going back home because my mom has a substance abuse problem and is not doing the work she needs to do and it's been a few years and now it's still not happening. And, my dad is not in the picture and he never has been..." And no family is stepping forward to, to be a permanency option for some of these Native American children. And that, to me, is very tragic for these kids because they-- staying in foster care is not a good solution. It's not. And we're working with several kids right now that are falling apart because they know their background, they know their heritage. We keep them involved, there is a connection there, but they don't think they have a future. And without the future, they can't function in the present. And that's um, that's sad... because what do you tell them when, you know, your foster family's too old? They feel too old to adopt, they're in their sixties and they don't think they could be there long term for you? And so that's not an option. And there's no one stepping forward for these kids in, in-- for, as a

permanency option. And we're working closely with the Mal-- uh, Micmacs on, on some of these cases but you know, it's-- there's just not an option for these kids, and I guess that's one of the reasons I wanted to speak today, is that definitely needs more work in find permanency options for these kids, they can't stay in foster care too long. I'd be interesting-- it'd be interesting for me to know, do Native American children stay in foster care longer than non Native kids?

ML: But it sounds like you feel--

PC: My experience--

ML: --that's been your experience.

PC: My experience is that is what's happening here. And it isn't that people aren't trying. But they-- it's just not happening and I don't know why.

ML: If I-- well, it sounds like you're saying that not enough families are stepping up to adopt Native American children out of foster care? Is that-- is that what you're saying?

PC: [00:17:03.19] It's, whether it's family or options, whether-- you know, I don't know if-- what needs to be done. I just know what the problem is. And the problem is, is they're staying in foster care for too long, because-- and there's some restrictions. That sometimes, they don't, the Maliseets and Micmacs -- I guess in this case, the Micmacs -- do not want them, kids to be adopted out, they want them to be close by, so they may not be agreeing with adoption. So, there's that, ok, you're looking for permanency guardianship. The problem -- the really hard thing about recruiting for permanency guardianship -- you don't hear people say "Someday I'd like to be permanency guardian of a child!" People say, "I want to foster, or I want to adopt a child" they don't say, "I want to be a permanency guardian for a child." And permanency guardianship sounds, I don't know, it doesn't-- it sounds weird.

ML: It doesn't sound warm and fuzzy. I mean I wonder what that sounds like to a child.

PC: It doesn't sound -- well even to a-- people that you're trying to recruit -- families. You know? "Hey! Did you ever think of being a permanency guardian?" I mean, you wouldn't say-- did you ever think of adopting is a term that people understand. So I think there's-- and it sounds like semantics but I think that, you know, it's hard to recruit families for non adoptive permanency situations.

ML: Well, might I ask what that actually does mean? Being a permanency guardian?

PC: Permanency guardian means basically you are, you have long term guardianship of a child, so that the, and they-- but yet once a year a family can, or interested party can take you back to court. Or, you can go back to court to promote the child returning to the family. But, um, it's just a, it's a unique thing, I think, that the Department of Health and Human Services developed many years ago, and I understand it can be an option other than adoption. But I just think, it's really hard to recruit for that. Because I'm a person that also does a lot-- tries to



recruit foster families -- and adoptive families -- and, um, that's just a hard thing to recruit for. Because, I'm even having a hard time explaining that to you, what it is, yet. So how am I gonna convey that as, this an option to people out there? But it is a hard thing to recruit for.

And I, and I get why, I totally understand why, like, the Micmacs don't want kids adopted to non Native homes because it's like, we're gonna lose our kids and I understand that there's that-- that fear is there. And why that fear is there, I totally get that. I just can't stand seeing these kids languishing in foster care and realizing they have no-- once they-- it's funny because sometimes kids will come in to foster care and they'll do really well in a foster home and, and, and then they settle in -- I mean, after the initial grief and loss and that's really awful stuff, don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to minimize that. But they get comfortable in the home, and feel safe and secure there and then, when they realize, "Wait a second, this isn't like a permanent option for me? I'm not staying here? Then where am I going?" And if you don't-- when kids realize that, you need to have something available to them. And I think what happens is, the kids get older, they realize, "Wait a second, I'm not staying here, where am I going?" You better be ready to find, you know, to have an option for them, for permanency. And I, and some of these kids really don't. And I think that's really tragic and hard. I don't know, I'm sorry, I just rambled a lot.

ML: [00:20:27.07] No, it's all, it's all, important, important stuff. Truly.

MD: I think, if I can -- something just occurred to me, I hate to interrupt the flow, but just for, for Rachel's peace of mind, we should probably also remind you, we should also make sure, as part of recording, that you've understood the dis-- all the disclosure stuff as well, the archiving, that you've understood all, all the, um...

g: Options.

MD: Options, as they were presented to you.

PC: Yeah.

MD: And if you have any questions for them and also anything that you tell us that, about anybody that could be in danger cannot, may not be held confidential.

PC: Right, and I know I've mentioned Betsy Tannian's name and things like that. And she's always been a great resource and person to work with but I-- yeah, I know, I'm talking so. But I do, I do forget, I get going, the flow of things, you're right.

ML: No that was-- that was really something that I should have spelled out in the beginning.

PC: I don't think that would have stopped me in the middle of this, because I would have.

MD: No, not all. It's just part of the permanent record. We just need to make sure that you need to understand all that.

PC: I do understand that, but I'm going to forget and keep talking. I'm sorry.

MD: The information that you're giving us is absolutely wonderful information, so...

ML: Yes.

PC: I mean, I don't know of anyone that does not want to see kids to have a future and be happy. And I know obviously that's a silly thing for me to say, in a way. I know everyone wants that. We just-- it just seems like that is not happening as fast for Native American children. And that is a problem for me to see happening because it's not fair and I would love to see them find whatever that is-- whether that's, you know, whatever permanency looks like - - knowing that they can stay there and grow up, and that's the place they're gonna grow up, that would be great for kids. They need that.

ML: As you think back over your experience as a service provider, were you provided any instructions or training regarding any special responsibilities in working with a Native American child? And if so, please describe. And I know you have told us about the trainings--

PC: [00:22:47.16] Yeah, and it would be trainings mostly that we've, um, participated in. Um, I know, I'm sure way back when, I did have training on the Indian Child Welfare Act, I'm pretty sure of that. I could not describe that, when and where at this time. But, um...uh, and, you know I do think more training is helpful, 'cause I don't think there's been a training recently, at least not for our staff at Community Health and Counseling. I'd like to see that again because we do have staff that come and go. So it would be good for the newer staff to have that information, as well as the more experienced staff to have all that information and it's always great to get together with the tri-- the Native American tribes without -- you know, just to get together.

ML: Without there actually being a problem--

PC: --without a specific agenda that we're looking to resolve, so, that's always a good experience.

ML: Did the placing agency encourage you or help you to link to services or resources that would help the child with his or her traditional tribal events, spiritual customs and social activities? If so, what worked for you, your agency and staff? What did not work? What is your understanding of what the child in your care wanted in terms of connection to his or her community? And I sort of lumped all those together because you have addressed a lot of that as well.



PC: And I will-- and I just ramble anyways, so you know I'm just gonna ramble about it, but um...

ML: Just keep rambling, Peter. You're doing fine.

PC: I will say that, uh-- I get the Micmac [00:24:32.16] newsletter and I'm very happy with that because that tells you about events coming up and we've been able to get kids to the health fair, a sliding party, their Mawiomi. So we have gettin' kids there. There-- occasionally we haven't gotten kids to those things -- some of the kids are, are-- weren't safe to travel because they were so angry or upset about whatever issues, so there have been at times when we've said, "Ok, it's not safe." And, and, not all the kids are close by. If they're close by it's easy to do. When we have kids that sometimes -- and, again, because there's not enough resources even for, for families to care for children always -- in general -- that sometimes they get placed oh, you know, 80 miles away from Presque Isle. And, so, but we do-- those kids have gone to the Halloween party and the health, the health fair, the Mawiomi, and a sliding party all in one year. So, those are good events. They're not close enough to participate in their weekly youth activities because 80 miles is pretty far, especially with kids that don't travel well. I've actually driven those kids, sometimes, to events and we've had-- even to the, those main events, and we've had to to stop along the way because there's kids getting sick and kids having to go to the bathroom or kids having a tantrum. So, they, uh-- these are kids that need lots of supports and 80 miles is kind of far to go for events. So, we do get to the-- we've gotten to the main ones, but, and that-- kids that live closer get more often to events. But I think that's really important they do. And we try our best to do that.

MD: Can I ask about that? Um, you talked about the trainings that you had early on... was this type of outreach ever part of the training that you got from DHHS? About connecting kids to the Mawiomi, the health fair, um...

PC: We get that from, from the ICWA workers. I-- that's really where I think, you know, they're a constant reminder, we need the kids involved in the culture, we need the kids going to events, and, you know I think that's their, their-- they keep us accountable to those things. And you know, they're kind of like that guiding force and they come and do the drumming and things like that with the kids, which is great. So, and making crafts and things. So they come to the foster homes and do that. And so, I think a lot of that direction comes from, um, the ICWA. And I think-- it looks, to my impression, that DHHS works well with the tribes up here and they work well with the ICWA directors and workers. So I think there's, you know -- I think, from my perspective things are working pretty well... except for maybe kids staying too long in foster care, but that's everyone's problem and, you know, we all need to work together on that, to me.

But, um, yeah, so my answer to that is, I think DHS would-- they, they want us, you work with ICWA and make sure when they-- kids come in to our program, we're a contracted service in foster care, and I think the DHS workers are saying, you work with ICWA and make sure they get to their events and whatever needs to happen. So we just coordinate that and try to make that happen with the Maliseets and the Micmacs.

MD And those, and those relationships, have those evolved over time? 'Cause you said early on that there was a lot of tension.

PC: I think back in the 80's or in the 90's there was a lot of tension. And of course, I left DHS in 1995, but there was a lot of tension and mistrust and so, you know, and it-- but I think things have changed in the 2000's. And so I think for a good ten years, things have been pretty good.

And that is good - I think that's, you know, the work of everybody, working together. And not- - it isn't like, one side working extra, I think everyone works together at that relationships, and I think they do a good job up here. And that's my impression. I don't know if other people feel differently, but, that's how I see it.

ML: Did or do you experience any challenges in caring for a child who comes under the Indian Child Welfare Act guidelines? Challenges might include working with agencies, the legal system, other service providers or meeting the needs of the child/

PC: The only thing I'd go back to is the, kids being-- what it looks like, to me, Native American children being in foster care too long. Because I think there's always that struggle on, um, you know, finding permanency. And, and, obviously, ideally permanency is with a Native American family or family member, and then someone within the tribe or some Native American family. But, um, and I just think there's not enough resources for that to have been happening and so, I just hate seeing them in foster care. Sorry -- go ahead.

ML: No, no. It's just, I mean, as I look from these questions, you've really addressed them so much, but I'm just going to go through in case it sparks any other-- anything you haven't shared that you want to.

Did you have contact with tribal child welfare staff? And if so, what were the strengths of those contacts and what were the challenges?

PC: Well, I think I have, I also presently am working with the Penobscot Nation too, we have a child in our program from Penobscot Nation, and I have, I think, a very positive working relationship there. And I personally have a positive working relationship, I think, with all three tribes that I work with, and I think my agency does too, as well. And-- not that we don't disagree at times, but it's not like-- it's just a part of relationships. You're supposed to be able to disagree and work things out, so I think that's a positive working relationship. So, it's-- I'm involved in a lot of our Native American cases up here because I am really invested in making that work. And, and even though we have a lots of competent staff at our agency, I just like to be involved and so I'm involved in most of the cases on some capacity. Whether that as the case manager or, I've been a visit supervisor in some of the cases with reunification, or as, um,



just a coordinator of, um-- you know, supervisor, I just keep myself involved in those cases because I really want those cases to be success-- I want all of our cases to be successful, but I want those kids to-- you know, the permanency piece is kind of where I see the struggle some. Always trying to advocate for those kids, whatever and however that can be.

ML: Were there ways that the DHHS [00:31:51.28] staff provided support for your work with Native American children? Did you wish you something more or different from the staff?

PC: I think they're, they try ver-- I think they're trying their-- I think they're doing well. I think they're doing... a good job at trying to work things out. I, I wouldn't want their job. I think their job is extremely challenging and I have a lot of respect for anyone that works as a DHS worker, a DHHS worker. Because I think they, they work with a lot of systems -- the mental health system, the legal system is so impactful on their work and how they do work and then they work with a lot of different agencies and, and, and Native American tribes. I think their job is extremely challenging and I think they do, I think they do pretty well. I think they're well aware that they are, they have Native American children that need to either be reunified with family or move on. I think they're aware of that. I think they struggle with that as well. I don't blame any one for that struggle. Certainly not the-- I don't blame the tribes, I don't blame DHS... it's just, we're kinda at that place where, what is their future gonna be? And they need-- all I know is they need to be out of foster care. I just don't see that as -- as someone who's worked in foster care for 28 years -- and I realize that it's not a place where children need to grow up or spend a lotta lotta time. They should move on.

ML: [00:33:36.10] What state child welfare policies, practices and events influenced your work with Wabanaki children and families?

PC: What state-- what state what?

ML: The questions reads, what state child welfare policies, practices and events...

PC: Ok. Well [00:33:57.20] I mean, I think the-- you know, other than ICWA there is... it's more about relationships and what the needs are. But, you know, ICWA is what I believe is, totally believe, is what needs to happen. I mean, we work... kids need to know their culture, and I know I've said that, and they need to know their heritage and need to maintain those relationships and it's, and... and they-- but they, you know-- and they need, they need that connection. But they need those relationships too. I just wish those relationships could be where they could stay, and not have to experience the foster care piece. And I wish they could go back into that and not have to experience what they experience. The, the system is not -- the system's not good. The foster care system is not -- and it's not any one fault. It's a large system and it's always -- and I've worked in it for 28 years -- and it always is a struggle. And people ask me, why do you work in a system that's-- because you need good people to work to help

out. You need -- you know, like, you need people willing to do things and step forward, so that's really why I work in a system is I believe it-- I believe it, it needs help and the only way the system gets better is people wanting to make it better and it takes-- not one person's gonna do that, so.

g: Peter, just as a more like a, a theoretical question on that: you've indicated that DHHS, outside of ICWA, has really no policy in working with the communities.

PC: Oh, I don't know. The, they do have policy. *[00:35:47.18]* It's not that I, um, I think there policy is to work with ICWA. I mean, I think if you looked at DHHS, they would have a policy on this is ICWA and we need to follow it and this is how we're going to support that. So, I think that is written in there and I have looked at that policy, but to me that's really just how we work with ICWA, and, uh, they definitely have that policy. And I, and I strongly -- when I talk about ICWA, I'm that is, I know DHHS has a policy on that.

ML: *[00:36:29.19]* Over the course of your work, do or did you see barriers to the successful implementation of Maine's Indian Child Welfare policies?

PC: Well, I think I talked about how the only barrier I see is in, I think that everyone works well together, but, except we can't get them... in my mind, there's-- they're in foster care too long and they need to move on, whether they-- and they need to move on, hopefully, to someplace where they're gonna-- their culture will be preserved and they will maintain those relationships. Um, and they-- but they need that. And I think that's a struggle. It seems like... everyone does good work but when we get to that place where we can't get them in a permanent situation. And, I don't know, to me that's really important, and I think that, because I see that. I see that in what the kids express. And I see them feeling hopeless about their future. And that's not ok.

ML: *[00:37:34.02]* Do you think ICWA does enough to protect the rights of Indian children and/or Indian tribes?

PC: I think the ICWA is a great, great policy and I think that the tribes do a good job with ICWA up here, and I think they do protect the rights of kids. And I think they're involved. I think they're strong advocates. And, um, so, and like I said, I'm working with three tribes and I think all three tribes are very involved in the kids' lives and do a very, very good job at that. So I have no, no concerns there.

ML: *[00:38:20.21]* How could the state child welfare system improve in terms of ICWA? And again, I realize you probably...

PC: And, you know, and I do have a s-- more of a success story, I just think that, uh, the Penobscot Nation's gonna allow a child to have permanency guardianship, an older child that's been in a home for almost a year. And, uh, it's an older teenager and they're gonna allow that child to have permanency guardianship, the child wants that and, um, and so doesn't the foster parents. The foster parents are very involved in, in getting kids to the cultural events and maintaining those relationships, so I think that that's a real success. So I mean when I say that I



guess, I didn't want to imply that all kids are not reaching permanency. Because that's not true. But, you know, it's just some of the kids I'm working with, I, I, it's my frustration is that they're not reaching it. But, so, I did want to say that. I probably didn't answer the question at all.

ML: No, you've been answering the questions very, very thoroughly. Um, and I think I know the answer to this, but if you could change anything or make anything happen for Native American children involved in ICWA, what would you do?

PC: I wish, ah, yeah, well [00:39:41.27] if I had a wish list I'd wish there were more Native American families out there that were available to find, ah, help these kids find permanency. That would be ideal. That's the ideal and I wish that would happen. And I don't have the answer because I know that... the, I know they've, um... I know the Micmacs have worked hard to try to find that answer. And it's not easy and I've advertised for kids -- in a very nondescript way, not even mentioning they're Native American. But just, kids need to be staying in their community and being connected, you know, would you consider adopting, y'know, in the Presque Isle area. I've ran ads -- just on their ages, and not saying much else -- and I'm not getting anything. I mean, I've done that and not got any-- any response! Not even mentioning that they were Native American. Just hoping that if you bring a family in, and -- from the Presque Isle area -- that then you can wo-- you know, decide way before they ever meet the kids if this is something they could do. So kind of opening it open to a wider target and then narrowing it down to people willing to work with -- or actually being Native American -- but if not, being willing to work with the Micmacs and maintain all those important relationships and connections and traditions. But, um, yeah... So, part of my speaking here today was getting my frustration out on that issue, so.

ML: Of course. Last question, but then we'll see if you wanna need to-- want or need to add anything else. What else do you want the Maine Wabanaki TRC to know about your experiences as a service provider to childrens and families in Maine?

PC: [00:41:35.18] I enjoy working with the Maliseets and the Micmacs and the Penobscot Nation -- the three tribes I've worked with. I've tried to recruit Native American families for foster care myself and I've worked with some great Native American families... I just, you know, I just wish there were more families, more families, Native American families available for kids. That would be ideal. That's it.

ML: Any, any other questions?

MD You've been wonderful. Very, and it's a great look at this whole situation from a very, very informed and different angle. So we appreciate it.

PC: Well, again, [00:42:25.08], this is just my... I know it's just my view. But, it's what I see.

MD: And that is how we're learning... is how other people see this.

ML: Absolutely, yes. We thank you so much for being willing to do this, and willing and eager I would say. Am I forgetting anything, Matt, that I need to close with?

MD: I think-- no, I think if you're one then we're done.

g: Hold on, just a couple brief questions... In--in, in terms of lack of resources -- though I think you've been really clear about the lack of families, are there other resources that you would like to...

PC: I, I don't know. I, I've-- I worked, I remember, years ago, I worked with the Maliseets at trying to help them recruit families -- and that was quite a few years ago -- and I think Betsy was, Betsy Tannian, was probably the ICWA director then. And I've been working with the Micmacs a little bit. With Luke Joseph, he's the ICWA director up there. And I just, you know, whatever -- offering my availability or whatever... but I just don't know what it, it takes to recruit families. I don't have the answer. I wish I did. All these years of experience, and most of my experience has been, I've worked a lot with foster families. I was a licensing worker at the State of Maine for 8.5 years, recruiting and licensing foster homes. And that was one of my main responsibilities -- has been one of my main responsibilities at CHCS, but I struggle. I struggle recruiting all families period, but very much so recruiting Native American families. So, um, and helping the tribes do that as well. I've not been successful.

g: Are there non Native American families that you work with that, that are fostering Native kids?

PC: Yes, yeah. [00:44:20.25] In fact, most of the families -- I don't, I don't think I am working with any Native American foster families right now. I think some of them, what happens is the ones we have worked with have adopted and then gotten done, because they got enough going on. So, I ha-- I'm not working with any Native American foster families. The kids that are in our program are, are with non Native foster families who are willing to get kids to whatever they can, and, and allow ICWA to be very much a part of their lives and, and do whatever it takes. And I, so I-- like I said, I've been involved because I think I have some experience making sure we're placing kids with families that can do what we need to have done. Which is being very much involved with their relationships and their culture and heritage. And, and, very much involved with ICWA.

g: Well, that's encouraging.

PC: Yeah, well I think it's really important, so...

ML: Well, thank you again.

PC: Thank you.

g: Thank you, Peter, we really appreciate it.

PC: Yeah, you're welcome. You're very welcome.

[END OF RECORDING]