**Writing Tribal Reports for State Courts**

Judges appreciate concise writing that is able to tell the story of the child and family while providing insight and perspective of the tribe/village. Being able to effectively communicate and make recommendations in writing is a critical skill for representing the tribe/village in state court.

For Native people, everything is carried in our stories--our creation, our values, and our connections to one another, to the land, water, and our spiritual beliefs. They give us lessons, teach us about our culture, describe our history, and bring about healing. Our stories carry our past, teach us about living in the present, and preserve our future.

It is important to write court reports that are effective in telling the story in a way that state courts will understand. While templates are helpful and standard language and format is appreciated, it is important to tell the story while describing strengths and challenges of the child and the child’s family, recommending culturally appropriate services, and focusing on the tribe’s/village’s commitment to the safety of the children involved.

**To prepare for writing a court report, the most recent copies of following documents will be needed:**

1. Court order
2. Court report (and case plan if there is one)
3. Letters from therapists, psychologists/psychiatrists, school teachers, or any other person involved with the child and family
4. Notes about visitations/parenting time and/or other services
5. Educational status of the child
6. Medical information about the child
7. Reports from the foster parent, foster care agency, or facility care

**Effective written reports will:**

* Provide information that will assist the court in making decisions
* Focus on the issues related to the child’s safety, permanency, and well-being
* Provide facts and recommendations not personal opinions
* Be professional in tone
* Avoid acronyms and jargon
* Be clear, brief, and well-organized
* Be submitted on time or early