



Report for the Period of 5/9/2024 to 7/31/2024

## Duties of the Ombudsperson for American Indian Families

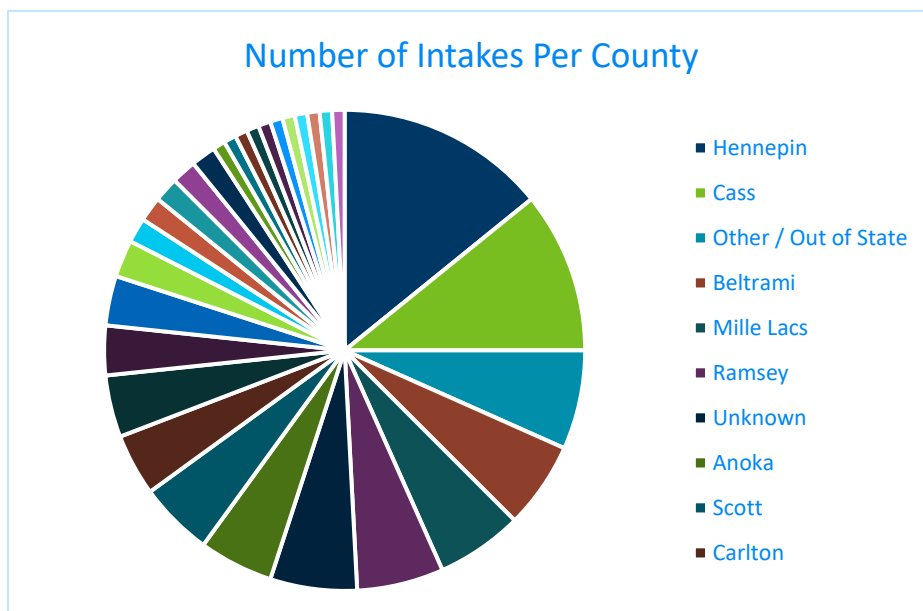
The Ombudsperson for American Indian Families investigates complaints for non-compliance of the Indian Child Welfare Act, the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act, Tribal State Agreement, Minnesota Statutes, Court Rules and DHS Policies that involve child protection cases, including placement, public education and housing issues related to child protection that impact American Indian children and families. The Ombudsperson is advised by and reports to the American Indian Community-Specific Board, who are all appointed by the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council. [OAIF Statute](#)

## Executive Summary

After developing and testing a prototype, the Agency implemented their online case management system. The Public can now submit a complaint via the Agency’s website. The Agency is in the interview phase of hiring an investigator, with input from the American Indian Community-Specific Board. The Agency presented to the Guardian ad Litem Board and other stakeholders and partners. The Women of Shakopee Program was relaunched in July 2024 – educating incarcerated moms of Native children on their rights when their children are in child protection. The Ombuds attended the National Citizens Review Panel Conference in San Diego.

## Geographical locations of intakes (online, telephone, and email)

**Table 1. Counties identified during reporting period.\***



\*Counties with less than 4% are not shown in the legend; electronic version provides the full list.

## Tribes

**Table 2. Tribes identified during this reporting period.**

<b>Tribe</b>	<b>Number of Cases</b>	<b>Number of Cases (% of col)</b>
Unknown Tribe	21	17.50%
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	16	13.33%
Red Lake Nation	16	13.33%
White Earth Nation	12	10%
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe	8	6.67%
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	7	5.83%
Other – Tribe Known	6	5.83%
Oglala Sioux	5	4.17%
No Tribe	4	3.33%
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians	4	3.33%
Cherokee Nation	3	2.50%
Bad River Band of the Lake Superior	2	1.67%
Bois Forte Band of Chippewa	2	1.67%
Lower Sioux Indian Community	2	1.67%
Rosebud Sioux	2	1.67%
Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation	2	1.67%
Standing Rock Sioux	2	1.67%
Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	1	0.83%
Ho-Chunk Nation	1	0.83%
Non-Federally Recognized Tribe	1	0.83%
Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	1	0.83%
Yankton Sioux	1	0.83%

## Cases by Concern

**Table 3. Reasons for Contacting the Agency**

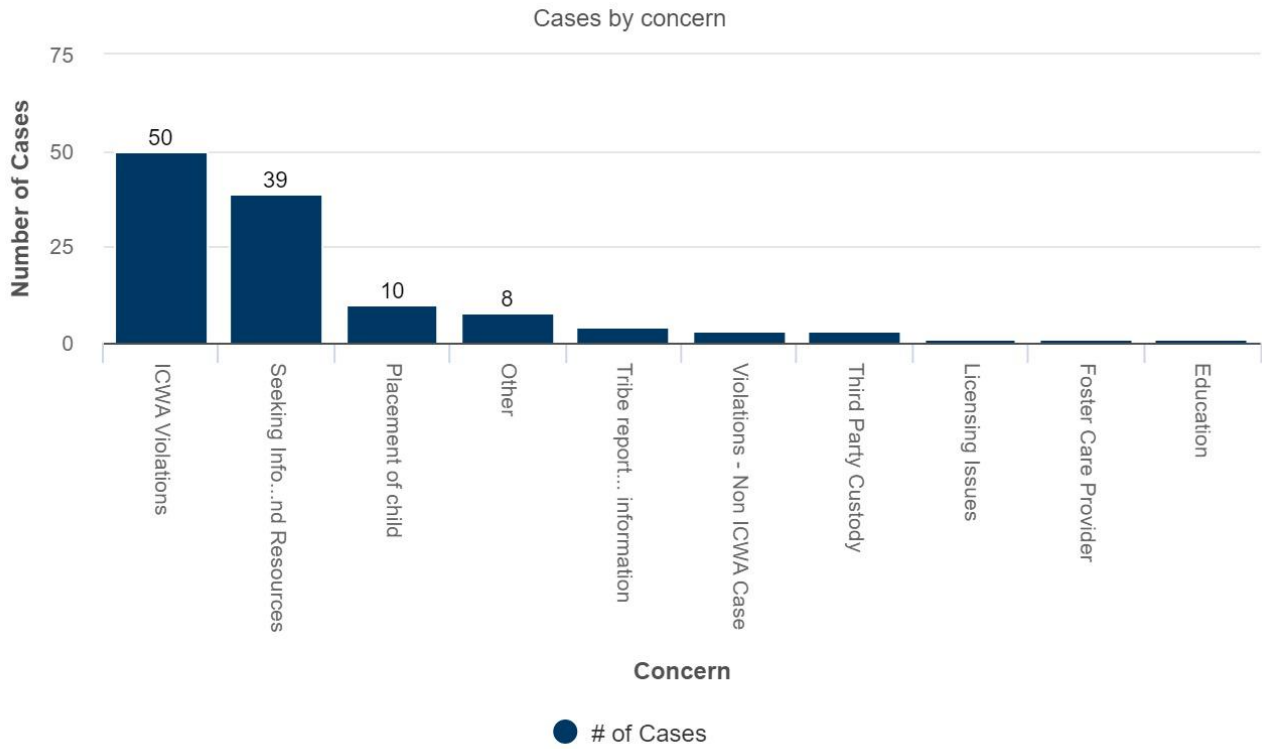


Table 3 shows that ICWA Violations, Seeking Information and Resources, and Placement of Child as the three top concerns that have been received as submissions.

## Website

Table 4. Website user data for <https://mn.gov/oaif>

Period	Total page views	Total users	Avg. Events/user
August 2022 to July 2023	4,589	1,422	9.4
August 2023 to July 2024	5,325	1,452	10.7

## Selected Matters from Cases During the Period of this Report

- A mother inquired why in one county ICWA did not apply, but in a different county a few years later, her youngest child was ICWA eligible – same parents for all the children.
- A parent attorney reported that a judge said at a hearing that the judge had spoken with a Supreme Court Judge who said that ICWA did not apply in the case. The parent attorney was ordered to file a legal memorandum as to why ICWA/MIFPA applied. A Tribe had been participating in the case.
- When the Ombuds asked an Assistant County Attorney to please provide the Zoom link for a court hearing and email addresses for the attorneys, his response was: *“To be blunt, it really isn’t my job to make it so you can appear virtually at your convenience nor is it my job [to] provide everyone’s contact information to you. I recognize that my client has certain obligations vis a vis your office, but they don’t include providing support staff for these rather menial tasks. I am paid to solve child protection and truancy problems. I will provide (one attorney’s) email because having searched for it myself via the internet, I know its difficult to find... The other two are easily found via the internet.”*

## Feedback from the Community

In 2015, an American Indian mother and father were introduced to the Ombudsperson through an ICWA advocate. The parents’ three school-aged children were in placement for the third time due to neglect, and the County was seeking to terminate the parents’ rights. The Ombudsperson worked with the family and other parties and the children were reunified with their parents.

The mother provides this 9-year update since her children were returned home. *“It has been 9 years since my children were returned home. I’ve been sober over 9 years this year. Last year, I became a foster mom. Children are now 15, 16 and 17 years old and doing really well – going to school, working and driving. We just moved to a 4-bedroom house. I have my own business and I am starting a real estate business too. My children’s father is no longer living with us, but he is still trying to stay sober. We have 2 dogs and a cat too. And thank you Jill, you always have our back!”* - Native Mother, July 30, 2024.

## Report from the American Indian Community-Specific Board

The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council appoints the members of the American Indian Community-Specific Board. The Board advises and assists the Ombudsperson for American Indian Families pursuant to [Minn Stat. §3.9216](#) and attended and/or worked on the following in their capacity as Board Members:

- Meetings with the Ramsey County Transforming Systems Together re: grant.
- Attended National Citizens Review Panel Conference in San Diego.
- Four Board Members attended the two-day Summer Institute in American Indian Child Welfare Training in Duluth.
- Hosted a Community Board Meeting in Duluth.
- A Board Member joined and participated in a domestic violence co-design group in Ramsey County. This group will work to improve responses to 911 calls for domestic violence.