

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Title IV-B, Subparts 1&2

2010-2014

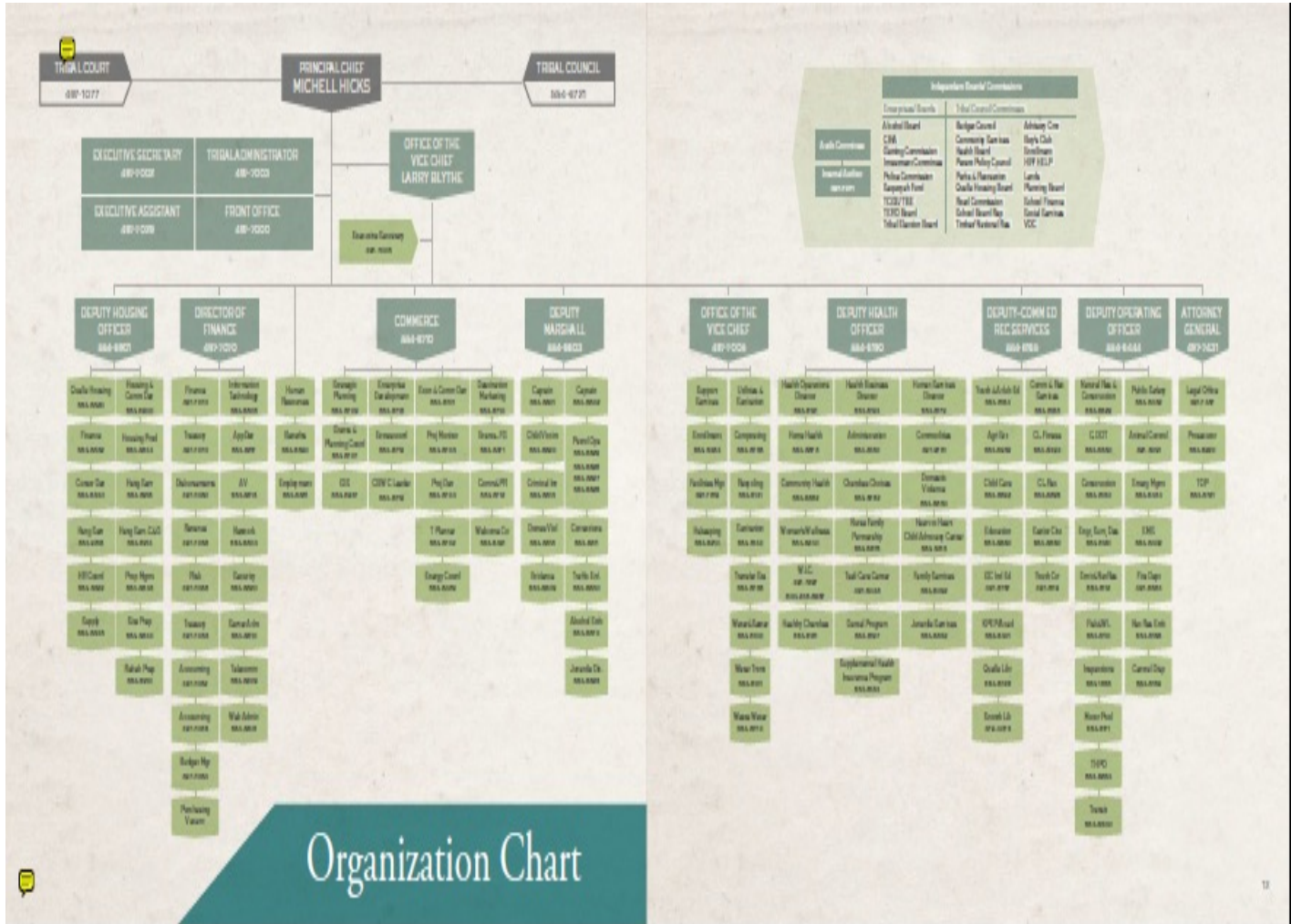
Final Report

Submitted By:

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Background Information

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians is one of three federally recognized Cherokee tribes in the United States. Located in Cherokee, North Carolina, the Reservation rests at the feet of the Great Smoky Mountains and the Blue Ridge Parkway. There are 14,520 Eastern Cherokee members of which 8,140 live on the Reservation. Properly called the Qualla Boundary, the Boundary is slightly more than 56,000 acres held in trust by the federal government specifically for the Eastern Band.

Since earliest contact with European explorers in the 1500's the Cherokee have been identified as one of the most advanced among Native American tribes. Cherokee culture thrived for thousands of years in the Southeastern United States before European contact. After contact, Cherokee society and culture continues to develop, progressing with acquisitions from European settlers. Soon, we shaped a bicultural government and a society that matched the most 'civilized' of the time.

In the 1830's, gold was discovered in Georgia. The settlers thirst for the Cherokee Homeland become even more insatiable, and a period of Indian Removals began to make way for more white settlement. In 1838, thousands of Cherokee men, women and children were rounded up and marched (known as the Trail of Tears) 1,000 miles to Indian Territory, known today as Oklahoma. Thousands died in the internment camps, on the trail, and after arrival (due to the effects of the journey, starvation and smallpox).

Today, the descendants' of those who defied the removal make up the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. We are a strong and sovereign nation of 14,000 people that now cover 100 square miles. We still carry the traditions and stories of the thousands that stood before us. We are the Aniyuwiyah, the "Principle People".

The Eastern Band of Cherokee has a tripartite form of government which included judicial, executive and legislative branches.

Executive power is vested in the Principle Chief, the legislative power in the Tribal Council and judicial in the Tribal Court.

The position of Vice-Chief is also part of the Executive branch. The Chief and Vice-Chief are both elected positions with four year terms. Tribal Council is also elected positions and they serve 2 year terms. Tribal members must be registered with the election board in order to be eligible to vote.

The 12 member Tribal Council is the legislative branch of government and represents the seven communities, in three county jurisdictional areas of the Eastern Cherokee.

Family Support Services (FSS) is a comprehensive social services program. FSS has two offices, one on the Qualla Boundary the other located in the Snowbird community. FSS implements an array of services funded by Tribal, State and federal money. Some program funding includes private donations as well. Family Support Services works closely with the Tribal government and Tribal programs such as; Tribal Court, Ernestine Walkingstick domestic violence shelter, Qualla Housing Authority and the Tribal Housing program, Cherokee Transit, BIA, Tribal Child Care and Head Start, Cherokee Children's Home and the Zero to Three program. In addition to, the County Departments of Social Services, the District Courts serving the 30th Judicial District as well as other districts in North Carolina and the North Carolina Department of Human Services located in Raleigh, North Carolina.

In February 2014 Family Support Services programs and all staff were transferred from the employment of the Cherokee Boys Club, Inc. to become employees of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. This was the beginning of the Social Services reorganization and development which the Tribe anticipates will be a two year process.

Mission, Vision and Values of Family Support Services

The mission of Family Support Services program is to **“Restore and Strengthen Native American Families”**. To this end we are committed to providing family centered, strength based services. And in keeping with the Indian Child Welfare Act, we believe that Cherokee children have the right to be raised in their own families, their own communities and their own culture. We also believe that families are their primary source of love and affection for their children and their first and most effective connection to Tribal culture.

We believe that all families have the right to self-determination. Our agency involvement with the families is merely to support, encourage, guide and enhance the strengths that each family already possesses.

Family Support strives to provide services at the convenience of the family. In-home services, follow-up and referrals are all vital resources to the family's success.

Safety and permanency of our Cherokee Children is paramount. The well-being of the children and their families is the driving force of service delivery. Stable homes and happy well-loved children result in healthy communities.

To this end we will strive to improve program services and the overall child welfare system of the Eastern Cherokee.

1. Accomplishments and progress for each goal and objective; including improved outcomes for children and families, as well providing more comprehensive, coordinated and effective child and family services Continuum (45 CFR 1357.16.(a)(1))

Goal 1: In-home case work services will be provided to 22 Cherokee families who are at risk of having children removed from the home. In-home services will help to insure the continued safety of the child/ren and increase family stability while working to eliminate problematic areas.

Objective 1: Administer the North Carolina risk assessment tool

Objective 2: Assist family in developing goals to guide forward progress

Objective 3: Assist family in identifying strengths and weakness

Objective 4: Assist families in developing strategies for achieving goals

Improved outcomes: Stable homes, well-adjusted child & family relationships and family cohesiveness.

2013 Accomplishments: Family centered strength based case work services were provided to 41 Cherokee families (80 parents and 130 children).

Goal 2: Time Limited Reunification Services will be provided to 15 Cherokee families to expedite the reunification of families and securing permanency for children in the least amount of time as possible.

Objective 1: Assist families in completing court ordered case plans whose children are in foster care or kinship placement.

Objective 2: Attend court hearings to better serve families.

Objective 3: Social Worker will visit child in the home at least monthly and before each court hearing.

Improved outcomes: Timely return of children to home, parenting skills improved, Parents learning to reach for help before problems escalate. We will continue to collaborate with county and tribal partners to provide effective services such as supervised visits, transportation, and case work services while keeping children safe.

2013 Accomplishments: There were 46 parents participated in time-limited reunifications services. Sixteen (16) home studies were completed for kinship and adoptive placements and 121 home visits were completed.

Goal 3: Assist County DSS in joint Foster Care Initiative by recruiting Cherokee families to serve as foster homes to Cherokee children. We would project at least 3 Cherokee families recruited and licensed each fiscal year.

Objective 1: Assist County DSS in the recruitment of potential Cherokee families

Objective 2: Assist County DSS in providing pre-foster care training.

Objective 3: Continue researching the possibility of the Tribe becoming a licensed child placing agency.

Improved Outcomes: Children remain in their community and culture while family issues are resolved.

2013 Accomplishments: No families were licensed during this fiscal year. There was one re-certification completed. And there are 4 individuals expressing interest in becoming licensed foster homes. The initiative between Jackson County DSS and the Tribe has taken off and now includes Swain and Graham Counties as well. Jackson County DSS has been an invaluable partner to the EBCI in this initiative. Recruiting bill boards have been secured; bulletins have been designed and are being distributed throughout the Cherokee Community. This recruitment video has been completed. Two individuals and two couples including the Principle Chief and his wife, Marsha) participated in the making of the video. All are foster/adoptive parents. After the Christmas holiday the video will be aired on the local TV station. In addition the Family Services program manager will visit each community to do a recruitment presentation. We will also be distributing the bulletins to local churches in addition to placing them in high traffic locations such as the government offices, Post Office, BIA and Hospital.

Goal 4: Provide Parenting Education classes to at least 25 Cherokee families. Providing classes that will give parents the tools needed to raise children in a safe and nurturing environment. Insuring children will grow to be more productive and responsible now and in the future.

Objective 1: Provide parenting education classes 4 times a year or on an individual basis as requested.

Objective 2: Provide child care and transportation as needed

Objective 3: Research and purchase a parenting curriculum specific to Native American populations.

2013 Accomplishments: Family Support provided a combined total of 190 parenting groups and individual classes to 39 parents this fiscal year. Sixty five (65) children's homes were impacted by this service.

Goal 5: Provide court ordered supervision to 20 families insuring safety of the child while preserving the parent child relationship.

Objective 1: improving parenting skills through demonstration and coaching.

Objective 2: evaluate and refer to other community partners as needed

Objective 3: assist family in identifying barriers to reunification

Objective 4: provide court report to Judges to assist in the family reunification, parent/child reunification decision making process.

Improved Outcomes: A more loving and nurturing home environment with parents better prepared to problem solve and/or ask for help before situations are out of control. Children will be raised and nurtured by the best possible source, their parents.

2013 Accomplishments: Three hundred and three (303) courts ordered supervised visits occurred this past fiscal year. Preserving, supporting, improving and in some cases terminating the parent child relationship.

Barriers or Unexpected Events:

The only identified barriers were lack of staff to provide the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting, which the State requires, perspective foster parents to participate in.

The recruitment of foster homes was truly our only unsuccessful area. During the course of the five year plan only 2 homes were licensed on the Qualla Boundary. One home being a specialized foster home and one licensed home, both are non-Cherokee but located within the Boundary. In addition a long standing licensed foster home received recertification.

A lot of work has been completed during the five year plan in preparation of recruitment. In collaboration with Jackson and Swain Counties an adoption and foster care video has been completed, using an interview type format, Cherokee people including the current Principle Chief and his wife, discussion candidly being a foster/adoption parent. Also completed are pamphlets promoting fostering and adoption, in addition to bill boards scattered throughout the roads into Cherokee

appealing to Cherokee people to become licensed foster homes and or an adoptive home.

Identified Agencies and Organizations as related consultation & coordination:

The Tribal agencies that are a part of the ongoing Child and Family Services plan include; Tribal TANF, Heart to Heart (child advocacy), Zero to Three, Nurse Family Partnership, Home health, Juvenile Services, Cherokee Choices, Children's Dental, Juvenile Services and WIC. Other partners would include local County DSS and the State Department of Health & Human Services.

Tribes Own Evaluation and Development of a more Comprehensive C&F services Continuum:

The Eastern Band has embarked upon a colossal undertaking to develop their own child welfare program. After the death of an enrolled member child the Chief out of his compassion for children felt that we as a Tribe could better serve our community.

A consulting firm was hired; initial plans to reorganize the current social services system began. And what was once a fragmented and scattered system is slowly evolving into to a coordinated, better organized, collaborating system. Scattered programs that once were foreign to each other are now providing services to families in a coordinated fashion. Managers that didn't know each other's names are now collaborating to secure more services for their clients in a more efficient manner. And this is just the beginning. This is merely the result of reorganization. Immediate future plans include the Tribe implementing and providing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid eligibility as early as October 2014. During the course of the next six months numerous things will be occurring such as; the Title IVE program being prepared for submission, laws, policies and job descriptions will be written, hiring of social workers, training programs developed and social workers trained, court & judges trained and prepared, foster home recruited, trained and licensed all in preparation to the projected opening date, October 2015 of the Eastern Bands of Cherokee's new Child Welfare Unit.

It is an exciting and scary time here within the Tribe, but as it was once said "Who can better serve our community and people than us?"

Plan Availability:

A copy of the Eastern Band's Final Report 2010-2014 is available to anyone upon request. A printed copy may be obtained at the Family Support office. The electronic copy can be obtained at the Public Health and Human Services website (Eastern

Band of Cherokee-PHHS.com). In addition an electronic copy will be emailed to Kevin Kelly at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.