

#### With Honor and Humility

**Rethinking State Court ICWA Practice** 

Presented by Judge Smith & Commissioner Ressa June 11, 2025 | Temple of Justice, Olympia, WA





'We stand before you not just to inform, but to call for

transformational justice for Indigenous families.'

A call to listen and judge differently

### Tribal Court Perspective

Sovereignty, Healing, and the Higher

Mandate of Justice

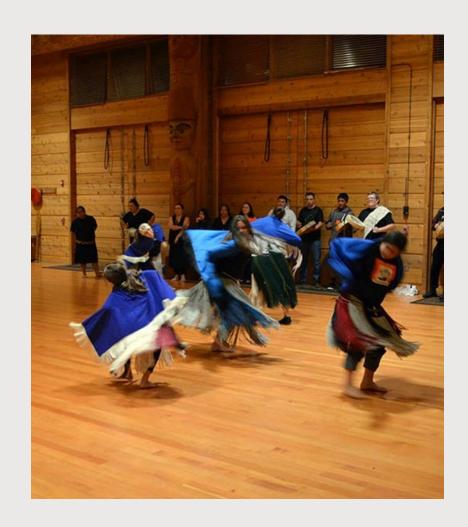
First Contact — the beginning of the harm



'Your decisions either honor Indigenous sovereignty or undermine it. There is no neutral ground.'

# Tribal courts focus on healing and reclaiming identity







### State Court Perspective

- From Legal Compliance to True Justice
- Progress uneven especially in minor guardianships
- Adversarial court processes hurt families
- Restorative ICWA court practices rebuild trust

'Justice demands relational repair, not just procedural compliance.'







'We can either perpetuate systems of custody and control or champion systems of restoration and repair.'

## Closing – With Gratitude

Thank you for your time and leadership

Honor the opportunity to share tribal and state court perspectives

- Justice must be co -created with respect, humility, and courage
- We invite you to join us in restoring trust and upholding sovereignty