Hello and welcome to 2017!

We are extremely excited to begin this new year alongside our friends and families—including you. As one of our supporters, you are incredibly important to us, and we want to keep you up to date on what we’re doing here at DIFRC. Therefore, we are extremely pleased to introduce our first newsletter of the year.

In 2016, DIFRC continued to shift aspects of our work towards prevention of child maltreatment, allowing families to remain intact and avoid systems-level involvement. Sixty-four families received family preservation and reunification services in the form of intensive case management and supervised visitation. We developed and implemented the Native Youth Empowerment Program to cultivate leadership skills in Native youth ages 12-17; a total of 12 youth graduated from this brand-new program which we hope to offer again in the summer.

Over the last year we served over 600 individuals from 450 families in all of our programs and services.

Though we define success in multiple ways, our largest indicator continues to be the percentage of families who reunify or children who remain in the home with parents/caregivers or kinship providers. In 2016, 89% of families who received DIFRC’s family preservation and reunification services were preserved. In comparison, only 54% of Native children are reunified with their families nationwide.

We could not have achieved this collective impact without the support of Denver’s Native community and the families that we have served, as well as all of our constituents, including Board of Directors, staff, contractors, volunteers, and funders. We know that with the hard work of our staff, and our supporters behind us, 2017 is going to be a great year – allowing us to bring the same quality of service to the community that you have come to expect from us.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at info@difrc.org or (720) 500-1020. We are extremely pleased to work with all of you this year, and hope we can continue to make a difference together through your engagement with DIFRC.

Sincerely,
Dennis Swain
Executive Director
Seven Stars Collaborative Finishes Its Second Year

In February 2015, DIFRC began hosting the Seven Stars Collaborative, a monthly meeting open to agencies in the Denver metro area looking to increase their cultural awareness and responsiveness towards working with the American Indian and Alaska Native population. About 20 agencies come together to attend each meeting and share information about their programs and services while learning more about programs and services available to the community.

This month, DIFRC recognized six community partners who have consistently attended meetings since the beginning:

- Denver Department of Human Services
- Denver Indian Health and Family Services
- The Family Tree
- Jefferson County Public Schools - Indian Education Program
- Rocky Mountain Victim Law Center
- Savio House

We thank these agencies and the nearly one hundred others who have joined our meetings over the past two years!

If you are interested in learning more about the Collaborative, please contact Sarah Nelson at snelson@difrc.org.

Announcing our Annual Meeting and Fundraiser Dinner!

We had a great time hosting many of our supporters at our first annual Fundraiser Dinner in 2016 and look forward to continuing the tradition this year.

This year’s event will be held on Thursday, April 13, at the Joy Burns Center at DU. Don’t forget to save the date!

The Annual Meeting starts at 5:30 p.m. We will review accomplishments from 2016, give an update about our endowment, and talk about our plans for 2017. The Annual Meeting is free and open to the public.

The Fundraiser Dinner, starting at 6:30 p.m., will include a silent auction, dancers, and words from our speaker (to be announced). All proceeds will support programs and services at DIFRC. Please plan to arrive at 6:00 p.m. Tickets start at $100. Please go to our event page at difrc.org/april-13-2017 to learn more about the event, sponsorship opportunities, and how to donate to the silent auction.

New Native Youth Empowerment Program a Success

Based on the community's request for more youth programming targeted towards Native youth, DIFRC developed the Native Youth Empowerment Program (NYEP). Ten youth from across the metro area attended our summer program and graduated with improvements in life skills, an increased understanding of their culture, and new friendships.

DIFRC partnered with Jefferson County Public Schools' Title IV Indian Education Program to offer the program after school in the fall. Ten youth attended the program over the course of the semester while Native families within the Jefferson County school district connected with DIFRC and our services.

JCPSIEP’s Coordinator, LeRoy Saiz, stated, “NYEP allowed for our students to network with each other and create a safe space where important aspects of American Indian cultural identity were celebrated. NYEP allowed for our students to grow; furthermore, it allowed for them to plant seeds that will be nourished with their Indigenous identities throughout their lives.”

DIFRC looks forward to continuing to offer NYEP in June 2017! We congratulate and thank all of the youth who participated in NYEP and started off our first year of the program in a positive way.

Upcoming Events

Learn more details at difrc.org/calendar!

- **Nurturing Parenting Program**
  Thursdays 5:00 - 7:30 p.m.; pre-registration required

- **Social Connections**
  Third Monday of the month 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

- **Culture Night**
  February 27, March 28 - 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

- **Denver March Powwow**
  March 24-26, [www.denvermarchpowwow.org](http://www.denvermarchpowwow.org)

- **Annual Meeting and Fundraiser Dinner**
  April 13, 5:30 and 6:30 p.m.

Too many mailings? Not enough?
New address? Let us know at:
[difrc.org/donate-now/sign-up](http://difrc.org/donate-now/sign-up)
Our Staff

- Dennis Swain, Executive Director
- Sarah Nelson (Ojibwe), Deputy Director
- Whitney Kizer (Choctaw/Washoe), Finance Coordinator
- McKenna Ganz, Development Manager
- Kathryn Redhorse (Lakota/Navajo), Family Services Supervisor
- Verla Howell (Pawnee/Flandreau Santee Sioux), Family Engagement Specialist
- Wilma Yellow Cloud (Oglala Lakota), Family Engagement Specialist
- Ceriss Blackwood (Navajo/Taos Pueblo), Resource and Referral Specialist
- Katie Brown, Community Program Coordinator
- Madeline Pielert, Family Services Intern
- A.J. Myers, AmeriCorps VISTA

Our Board

- Deborah Esquibel Hunt (Cherokee Tribe of Northeast Alabama), Chair
- Jack Soto (Diné/Cocopah), Vice Chair
- Veronica Lane (Navajo), Treasurer
- Michael Johnson (Arikara/Hidatsa/Ojibwe), Secretary
- Del Nutter (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma)
- David Weiden (Sicangu Lakota)
- Emily Petoskey (Odawa)