

# BIG LAGOON RANCHERIA



## **Two Feathers Native American Family Services McKinleyville, California**

<b>Founded:</b>	1998
<b>Service area:</b>	8 tribes in Humboldt County, California
<b>Population:</b>	128,419 in Humboldt County, 5.75 percent Native American
<b>Source of funding:</b>	federal, tribal, county, state
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## **Program Description**

Two Feathers Native American Family Services (Two Feathers) is located in Humboldt County in northern California. It provides services to child and adult victims of abuse as well as comprehensive family services, advocacy, crisis intervention, Native foster home recruitment, referrals, and cultural groups for members of all eight federally recognized tribes within the county. Two Feathers' unique approach to services balances cultural traditions and a modern healing process for individuals, families, and the community. Two Feathers also acts as a liaison to other county and tribal services and has provided leadership on cultural competency initiatives to improve the way non-tribal entities work with the tribes in their service area. Two Feathers' programs have provided some successful approaches for integrating cultural elements into healing and victim support and for offering wellness activities that strengthen the community's response to the needs of victims.

Two Feathers was established in 1996 and initially provided primarily Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) services. In 1998, the agency received

funding from the Children's Justice Act Partnership program from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). At that time, Two Feathers had two staff members. Initially, community members seemed uncomfortable embracing a victim services program. However, after listening to the concerns of community members, the staff determined that a positive, culturally based scope of services would separate their services from those provided by the state and county that were not specifically designed for Indian people. Community members wanted to hear about healthy families and how their culture contributes to making healthy families. Focusing on these ideas, Two Feathers developed services and cultural groups that promoted healthy families and built a reputation as a safe and healthy place that provides assistance to families. In the past 4 years, with much hard work and dedication, the staff of 2 has evolved into a staff of 12, with expanded services and stronger relationships with the non-Indian agencies in the county.

## **Services**

Two Feathers provides numerous services to the Native community in Humboldt County. Two

staff social workers work directly with crime victims in the local state court system. Services include

- ◆ Crisis intervention.
- ◆ Filing restraining orders.
- ◆ Court accompaniment and liaison.
- ◆ Moral and emotional support.
- ◆ Individual and group counseling.
- ◆ Transportation for victims and nonoffending family members to attend and participate in services and activities.
- ◆ Family and individual case management.
- ◆ Advocacy.
- ◆ Assisting with victim-witness financial claims.

To avoid scheduling and transportation problems, the counselors often travel to the local schools and hold appointments there. Transportation is also available to bring victims of crime to the Two Feathers office, where they can participate in cultural groups or support groups.

## Innovative Cross-Cultural Connections

Training other agencies is an integral part of Two Feathers' mission. Using a "community readiness assessment," Two Feathers staff identified the level of cultural competency among collaborating state and county agencies involved with Indian families, children, and victims. Using information gathered by the assessment, Two Feathers staff

W was designed to give a hands-on approach to Native culture in the county and surrounding tribal areas as well as information about the services available at

referrals to Two Feathers. WOW served as a guided field trip that provided participants with a history of the tribes and the region from the tribal point of view as well as specific education on the important role that culture can play in a crime victim's healing and the restoration of long-term well-being. State and county employees had an opportunity to visit several tribal communities and learn about the strengths of contemporary American Indian culture. Because of WOW, more state and county agencies refer Indian people needing support and services to Two Feathers, and those agencies are usually more respectful in their interactions with tribal members at all levels.

Two Feathers continues to offer cultural competency and resource training to anyone who is interested in learning more about their services and to work with tribes in the region on issues related to child and adult abuse. Because of the large number of Indian children involved in state child abuse and neglect proceedings and the role of ICWA in the work being done at Two Feathers, the staff is making a video about ICWA that can be used to train new county social services employees as well as to inform the community about rights under ICWA. Two Feathers also reaches out in other ways to the surrounding community. Two Feathers hosts tribal ICWA workers, providing them with an opportunity to discuss foster care issues and receive support from each other. Two Feathers also hosts an Intertribal Women's Advocacy Network (ITWAN) for Indian women working in the family violence field. ITWAN provides an opportunity for women to network, discuss issues, support each other, and plan for improvement.

## Cultural Relevance

Cultural groups are an important element of the services available at Two Feathers. Elders and experts in northern California Indian culture are brought in to teach Native American art and traditions to the youth. Not only do the groups provide an opportunity to learn important skills, but the cultural groups also allow young people who have been victimized to support each other and develop friendships. Examples of cultural activities include

- ◆ A basketmaking group for teenage girls. The group leader helps the girls gather the appropriate materials and teaches them weaving skills.
- ◆ A Native Women's Healing Group for adult women. The group combines therapy and basketry. A therapist and a cultural expert are coleaders. The basketmaking process is integrated into the group therapy sessions.
- ◆ A boy's group focusing on traditional games. This group, led by a young man, helps boys learn about their culture and provides a positive outlet for boys who are dealing with victimization.
- ◆ The youth drum group. In this group, an elder teaches youth how to drum and sing. Later, the elder accompanies the group to powwows to lead the group in song.

The cultural groups have been instrumental in helping the youth heal and grow. Many youth have been with Two Feathers since the program began 6 years ago, and the staff have watched them grow and heal as they made their own regalia, danced at their first powwow, and sat in on their first drum group. Through the cultural groups, the youth are becoming more successful, developing strong self-esteem, and preparing to become contributing members of their tribes.

The programs of Two Feathers Native American Family Services demonstrate the success of integrating healthy cultural traditions with victim services, resulting in strong and healthy families. The victims and their families who were served through these programs will no doubt share the traditions and lessons they learned with their own children and communities.

## Keys to Success

- ◆ Build on the tribes' cultural strengths. Most tribes have abundant examples of members who live violence-free lifestyles that advocate spiritual, mental, and physical well-being. The use of cultural values, philosophies, and practices can enhance the credibility of the programs and increase the

success of the services for victims.

- ◆ Develop partnerships through memorandums of understanding with outside agencies to help victims find the resources they need.
- ◆ Provide transportation services so that victims will be able to participate in the programs.
- ◆ Educate the non-Native service provider community on local history, culture, and strengths. Reach out to a wide range of service providers, including social services, non-profit organizations, law enforcement, and court staff.

## Quotes

*We took a lot of nonnative agencies on a tour through Indian Country, and educated them on our ways and our beliefs. The program was a big success and word got out in the nonnative community about our "Workshop on Wheels" and now there is a waiting list of people wanting to get on that bus.*

—Sandra Aubry-Rivas  
Social Worker

*By addressing change at an administrative level [of the state and county agencies], we're hoping to increase cultural competency at a systemic level.*

—Sandra Aubry-Rivas  
Social Worker

*Two Feathers' mission is to promote the stability and security of families, and to protect the best interest of Indian children. We are committed to incorporating cultural traditions that encourage a balance of emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual health. We are dedicated to collaborating with both Indian and non-Indian agencies to achieve these goals and to honor the privacy of Indian families.*

—Two Feathers Web site