

Bad River Child Car Seat Program Saves Lives

A Success Story

Nothing emphasizes the importance of the correct use of child car seats than a motor vehicle crash (MVC) involving a child. Child safety seats are proven to reduce MVC – related injuries and death in children. Yet surveys show that car seat usage rates, as well as correct usage, are very low in many rural communities.

To address this issue, the Bad River Indian Reservation in Wisconsin operates a child car seat distribution program. Funding for car seats has been provided by the Bemdiji Area Indian Health Service. Through the Bad River Honoring our Children Program, Maria Nevala, a certified CPS Technician, provides child car seats with educational sessions emphasizing correct installation. Here is Maria's story.



Maria provided training and a car seat to Jill Miller for her toddler Amber. A few months later, Jill's sister Mary Kaulaity gave birth to a beautiful baby boy, Garrett. Mary bought a used infant seat to bring her son home from the hospital, but never received training in correct use of this seat. While babysitting both children several months later, Jill was in a crash while driving to town 10 miles away. Amber and Garrett were transported to the local hospital. Jill believes that neither child sustained any injuries because she had them both in their car seats correctly.



The next day, Maria received a call from Mary requesting an appointment for an educational session and a new infant seat. Upon checking her seat belt system, Maria noted that Mary needed a locking clip to keep the seatbelt tight. There was nothing to hold her son's seat in correctly—for two months she had been driving that way. As Maria relates, Mary's voice was very shaky, trying to hold back tears, as she said "***I can't believe the hospital let me drive away like this, I hate to think if it had been me in the accident instead of my sister***". Maria replaced both sister's child car seats free of charge.

Special thanks to Maria Nevala, Bad River Honoring our Children Program, for this story and photographs. For more information about Tribal Injury Prevention activities, visit <http://www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/InjuryPrevention/index.cfm>