

Child Support Enforcement Conducts Father Assessment

BY PRESTON LEIGHTON OFFICE ASSISTANT

This past summer, the Child Support Enforcement Program had the unique opportunity to work with enrolled tribal member Preston Leighton as a temporary Office Assistant. One of the assignments he was responsible for was to help us develop educational materials relating to Child Support. Preston was asked to choose five fathers he felt comfortable interviewing to examine the roles and responsibilities of being a Dad. What he produced is wonderful to read and he wanted to share his results.

Hello, I am Preston Leighton, the son of Josh Jr. and Dawn Leighton. I have two sisters, Joslyn and Chelsey, four brothers who are Garrett, Rielly, Shelby and Kendall, one nephew, Jereese McCormack. He is the son of Joslyn and Jerry McCormack.

I am really happy to get to do these interviews because they helped me to learn about fatherhood, the love and the gifts of raising your own son or daughter. I learned new things I didn't realize and was quite amazed with the things fathers, who I interviewed, do and some hints that will help the kids. I liked the assignment because I am going to have kids one day. I will be a father in the future, so it helps me to learn things I will have to know and to get an idea of the good and bad part of having kids. The bad part of having kids is not the kid's fault; but more of the problems that need to get worked out between the mothers and the fathers and how they communicate with each other.

I will be going back to school this fall at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence Kansas. This coming semester I will be getting my two-year degree and I will live there until I gradu-

ate with my four-year degree in business management. Upon completion I will start my Master's degree program at a college that I am accepted.



JOSH LEIGHTON CENTER, RIELLY LEFT AND PRESTON RIGHT

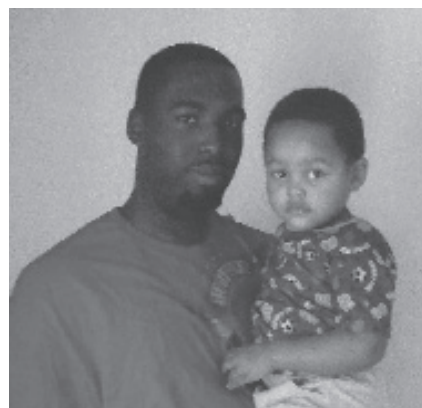
I chose the five people I interviewed, knowing they would help me out. The first tribal member I chose was my father, **Josh Leighton Jr.** He is 45 years old, works for the Lapwai Middle School as a Science Teacher and lives here along with his wife and seven children. I picked him because I want to know and understand what he feels, how my mother and father took care of all seven of us.



AUSTIN DOMEBO IS A FATHER OF A BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER

I chose **Austin Domebo** because we grew up together. Austin is a tribal member and he works for the Law Enforcement as a Civil Officer. He is 22 years old and has one child. Austin is

a grade older than me, which made me think what people our age have to go through and how he handles the ups and downs and the responsibilities of having a child.



CHARLES BROOKS AND HIS SON ROMELO BROOKS

My third choice is **Charles Brooks**, who is not enrolled but has a child with an enrolled tribal member. He is 24 years old and works at the Clearwater Casino Hotel as a Night Auditor. He lives in Lewiston with the mother of his two children. Charles was a good choice because he is not enrolled but the mother of his children is, so that makes him a tribal parent and I wondered how that made things different from an enrolled member. But it turns out that both are just the same because fathers keep the role of "dad" the same. The only thing different is how each father teaches their kid(s) what they need to know.

The fourth tribal member is **Antonio Domebo** who works for Commodity Foods and is 45 years old, raising seven children. Antonio lives with the mother of four of his younger children and has three children from a different relationship. During Antonio's



ANTONIO DOMEBO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHER CHILDREN IN HIS HOME interview I realized that there are a lot of ways that being a father will, or should be, a top priority and ready for all things fatherhood can mean.



JERRY MCCORMACK AND HIS SON JERESE MCCORMACK

Finally, I interviewed **Jerry McCormack, Jr.** who works for the Wildlife Program as a Wildlife Technician. He is 25 years old and lives in Lapwai with his son and mother of his child. Jerry's interview made me realize that it doesn't matter who or what you are, but being a father is a major step in your life to take. You got to step up and do it, so your kids will learn right from wrong.

Here are the responses to the questions I asked them:

Please describe the relationship with your Dad. "Really good relationship with him, play basketball and go golfing, gives me good advice." (JL, AD, CB, AD) "Relationship with my father was tough, had hard times when younger but now we're close. Now to this day we are father and son." (JM)

What does fatherhood mean to you? "Being given the responsibility to raise my children to know right from wrong and love them (JL); given a beautiful gift to take care of your family (AD); fatherhood means being there for your kid in tough times, and raising them to be successful in life (CB); to be there for your child, to comfort, to teach and all around support, show them lots of love (AD); it's more like a challenge in life and you got to step up and take control of your life and raise them right and teach them the right things so they will know how to take responsibilities in their life (JM)." "There are no steps or books, just do what you need for your kids (JL); Every father has a different way of taking care of their family, make sure your child is in a healthy environment and to give love and support no matter what (AD); just providing for them, listening to them, there are no steps (CB); To make sure all their needs are met and every parent wants their child to succeed even further than they did (AD); Raise them right, teach them right from wrong and respect everybody; Dads also have to have income, a job and have responsibility for his family (JM)." "The father is responsible to take care of the child and you got to do it (JL); It's necessary for the fathers who are not there to try to take care of their child and to an extent a father who wants to spend a lot of time with his child provides whatever he can for his child (AD); it's important you need to do this to benefit their health (CB); it is a good thing just to assure your child's needs are met, I didn't understand at first, all the paying and how it makes you feel, it hurts

and it's hard on the father's needs to meet bills, but it works out good now (AD)"; a percentage of the child support should be paid to the kids in an account so when he turns eighteen he will have some money (JM)." "Awesome, it makes me feel great, it makes my heart bigger and more open. I love seeing him smile (JM); I love all my children and the responsibilities of fatherhood, I get to see them grow and receive the love back from my children (AD); it's good to have a male role model in your life (CB); it is a great experience and I love the responsibilities with my child (AD);"

How do you feel about the responsibilities of fatherhood? "Awesome, it makes me feel great, it makes my heart bigger and more open. I love seeing him smile (JM); I love all my children and the responsibilities of fatherhood, I get to see them grow and receive the love back from my children (AD); it's good to have a male role model in your life (CB); it is a great experience and I love the responsibilities with my child (AD);"

Why are men (Fathers) important in a child's life?" Fathers are equally important as the mom's role, family would be more difficult without the father in the family, without the father there would always be something missing in that kid's life and visa versa with the mom (AD); they are important to give different views about life that the other parent might not be able to give (CB); fathers will teach you certain things, so will the mother and they are both important (JL); a father has a different view as what a mother has in life, just looking at different views but come to a neutral understanding, its mutual love for them (AD); a father is different than a mother, he feels more protective, it feels like you could do anything in the world as long as your dad is there nothing can hurt you. He make you feel so safe, you can tell him anything and feel comfortable rather than having to go to mom and explain what you did. He will understand more because he probably did the same thing (JM)." "I shared some of the responses with you but there was a lot more they shared, that I carry with me to help me understand why it is important to step up and take care of all my responsibilities and especially any future children I might be blessed with. Thank you to the fathers who helped me complete this assignment and helped me grow into a man."

NEZ PERCE TRIBAL TANF PROGRAM

MISSION & GOAL

To assist Low Income Nez Perce Families in becoming self-sufficient and financially responsible for their family through gainful employment, and to emphasize education, training, and to identify employment barriers that may prevent participants from finding and maintaining employment.

You may be eligible for TANF Program if:

- If you or a family member are an enrolled member of the Nez Perce Tribe.
- Earned Income, money from employment is \$608.00 or less a month.
- Unearned Income, money from child support, social security, unemployment, etc. is \$299.00 or less a month.

A. Provide family information:

- 1) Birth Certificates, 2) Social Security Cards, 3) Nez Perce Tribal Cards or Certificates of Indian Blood, 4) Proof of Legal Guardianship, 5) Current Idaho Drivers License, 6) Vehicle Registration/Proof of Insurance, and if applicable: 7) Disability Doctor Statement, 8) Third Trimester Pregnancy: Doctor Statement.

B. Complete TANF Forms:

- 1) Employment Verification (former employer), 2) Unemployment Verification Form (Unemployment Claim), 3) Verification of School Attendance (for children), 4) Drug &

- Alcohol Assessment, 5) Child Support Application, 6) Budgeting Class, 7) Verification of Banking Resources, 8) Release of Confidential Information, and 9) Landlord Statement.

C. Interview:

Schedule an appointment and complete the application with intake specialist. Intake specialist will contact you of approval or denial by mail.

D. IF Approved:

Participant will complete an Employability Development Plan (EDP) with caseworker. The EDP will reflect the goals participant needs to complete. Each family will be required to participate in 20 hours a week of work activities as outlined in their EDP.

TANF Program is designed to meet temporary financial needs of low-income families by providing a monthly grant and support services.

Nez Perce Tribal TANF Eligibility lasts for only 60 cumulative months (meaning cash assistance from States or other Tribes will be counted toward the 60

To apply for TANF Program: If you need assistance while completing process, please do not hesitate to call.

(Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) PHONE #: (208) 843-2464

