

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a white sign. The sign has the words "NICWA" and "STRONG" written in blue, hand-drawn capital letters. The person's hand is visible on the left side of the frame, holding the sign. The background is dark and out of focus.

NICWA  
STRONG



**NICWA Member of the Year  
Jill Kehaulani Esch (Courtesy  
photo)**

In April, the National Indian Child Welfare Association honored Jill Kehaulani Esch, Esq. as 2017 NICWA Member of the Year. NICWA's annual Member of the Year award honors and recognizes an individual or organizational member of NICWA who has demonstrated outstanding service, contributions and leadership in his or her profession, as well as involvement as a member of NICWA.

Kehaulani Esch has long been involved with promoting her Native Hawaiian culture. After moving to Minnesota nearly two decades ago, she became part of the Minnesota American Indian Bar Association as a member, board member and secretary, as well as fundraising for their Native law scholarships. NICWA said her appointment in 2013 as the Minnesota Ombudsperson for American Indian Families is testament to her commitment to native children and families. In this role, she investigates complaints for non-compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act, and statutes, rules and policies that involve child protection cases.

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