

## 2011 REGIONAL CASA MEETINGS

---

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19TH – 9 AM TO 4 P.M.

New York City CASA Program, 50 Broadway, 31st Floor, New York, NY

### PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

**Gregory Owens** was born and raised in Westchester County, and holds a BA in sociology from Rider University and an MSW from the University Of Pennsylvania School Of Social Work. In his 24 years with the NYS Division for Youth/Office for Children and Family Services, he has held many management and leadership positions. He is currently the Director of Special Projects in the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Development and has responsibility for statewide initiatives including mentoring, youth gangs and violence, disproportionate minority representation, cultural competence and responsible fatherhood. Mr. Owens has been a treating clinician for the NFL, and he enjoyed a successful nine-year career as a night host on smooth jazz radio stations in the Capital Region. He is the proud husband of Terry Lynn Owens, and proud father of 14 year old Kayla Deigh Owens. His credo is "Never Give Up. Never, Ever, Ever Give Up!"

**Heather O'Hayre** began with the NYS Child Welfare Court Improvement Project in April 2010 as the liaison for Bronx County. Prior to joining the state courts, Ms. O'Hayre was a forensic social worker with the Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Practice (JRP) in addition to working in private practice to provide forensic evaluations and therapeutic visitation services. While at the Legal Aid Society, she represented children who were the subject of neglect/abuse, PINS and juvenile delinquency proceedings. Heather developed the Legal Aid Society's Adolescent Practice Team (APT), which was created to focus on the ever growing need to advocate both systemically and through the family court process for adolescents who were aging out of foster care to uncertain futures. Ms. O'Hayre has written and trained extensively on the topic of adolescents in the child welfare system. She received a B.A. in Social Work from Colorado State University and a M.S. in Social Work from Columbia University, in addition to her certification as a licensed clinical social worker.

**Honorable PJ Herne** is a member of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe (SMRT) and Chief Judge of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe Court. After high school he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps, and after that he attended SUNY Potsdam where he graduated with honors. He graduated from the University at Buffalo Law School in 1998, and returned home to Akwasasne. He worked first in private criminal defense work, and then briefly with the SRMT Gaming Commission. After leaving the Commission he became the first person from the SRMT to work as Assistant District Attorney in Franklin County which surrounds the SRMT. In 2009 Judge Herne was elected as the Chief Judge of the SRMT Court which had just been formed on the St. Regis Mohawk Indian Reservation. Judge Herne continues to reside on the St. Regis Mohawk Indian Reservation with his wife Alison and two children, KC & LX.

**Jamie E. Gilbert** is the Tuscarora - Native American Coordinator for the Tuscarora Nation at the Niagara Wheatfield School District in Sanborn, New York where she provides assistance in identifying and utilizing Native American community resources and is an advocate and liaison between the Tuscarora Council and the Niagara Wheatfield School District. Previously, Ms. Gilbert worked as a Tuscarora Community Health Worker at the Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center in Niagara Falls, New York. Ms. Gilbert received a B.A. and Teaching Certificate from Trinity College.

**Marguerite A. Smith, Esq.** represents the Shinnecock Indian Nation on the Suffolk County Executives Task Force to Prevent Family Violence. Ms. Smith is an enrolled Shinnecock and an active member of several Native community organizations including the Shinnecock Substance Abuse Mobilization Project, Self-Development of People and the South Fork Community Health Initiative. She has served as a Principal Law Clerk in New York Supreme Court, Suffolk County, as an Associate Attorney General in the New York State Law Department and as a field attorney for the National Labor Relations Board. She is a past member of the Board of Directors of the Native American Bar Association. Ms. Smith is the President of the Board of Directors for the Cornell University Cooperative Extension Association of Suffolk County and also serves on the Board of Directors for the First Nations Development Institute and is its representative to the Board of First Nations Oweesta Corporation. Ms. Smith received a B.A. from Smith College and a J.D. from New York University School of Law.



NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM • DIVISION OF COURT OPERATIONS

## **CASA ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS