

Utah Foster Care Foundation

We serve Utah's children by finding, educating, and nurturing families to meet the needs of children in foster care.



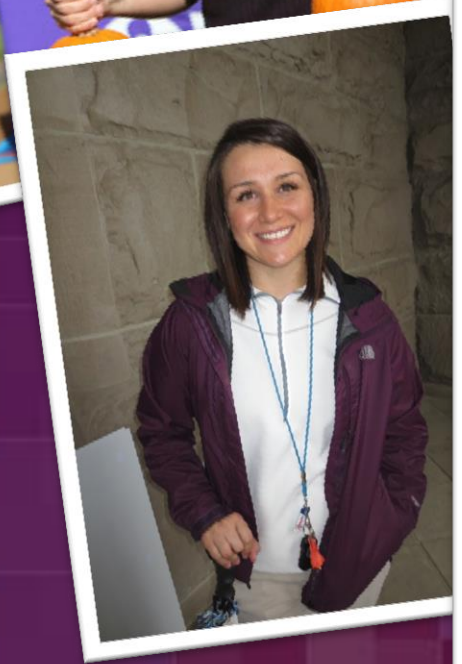
Our Culture, Our Children, Our Future





Relationship





The Salt Lake Tribune

Utahn hopes to recruit American Indian foster families

BY BROOKE ADAMS THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

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Brandi Sweet is a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians of North Dakota, but that heritage is only partly why she is a perfect fit for the newly created post of American-Indian foster family recruiter at Utah Foster Care.

Sweet knows what it is like to be a child in foster care. She was one.

"I was a bad child," Sweet said. "It wasn't because of abuse and neglect. I was in trouble with the law. My mom didn't know what to do with me, which happens a lot of times with a lot of families when they have kids who are just kind of out of control."

Her story is hardly unusual: Extreme poverty led to homelessness, which led to substance abuse, then crime.

At age 15, Sweet landed in Montana's juvenile-detention system. For two years, Sweet moved between 10 different custodial placements. Not one, despite the effort of her relatives, was with a foster family who shared Sweet's cultural background.

"My family was telling them 'We are Native American, we are Native American' and nobody was listening to us at all," Sweet said. "They ended up transferring me 10 hours away from my family. ... The goal of this whole system is family reunification and strengthening, and then you're taking a child whose family can't afford to travel 10 hours [to see] them."

It didn't make sense to Sweet then, and it doesn't now — which has helped propel her along a career path that has focused on making a difference in the lives of tribal members.

Sweet, who moved to Utah about a year ago with her husband, previously worked in Washington, D.C., on numerous projects and initiatives involving American-Indian affairs with the White House and bureaus of Indian Education and Indian Affairs. She launched a consulting business a year ago and has worked with the Consolidated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation, Skull Valley Band of Goshute, Duckwater Shoshone and Ely Shoshone, among others.

Sweet said her new post, which is part time, will give her the opportunity to bring together all these personal and professional experiences to benefit her community. But Sweet, 31, knows she faces a huge challenge.

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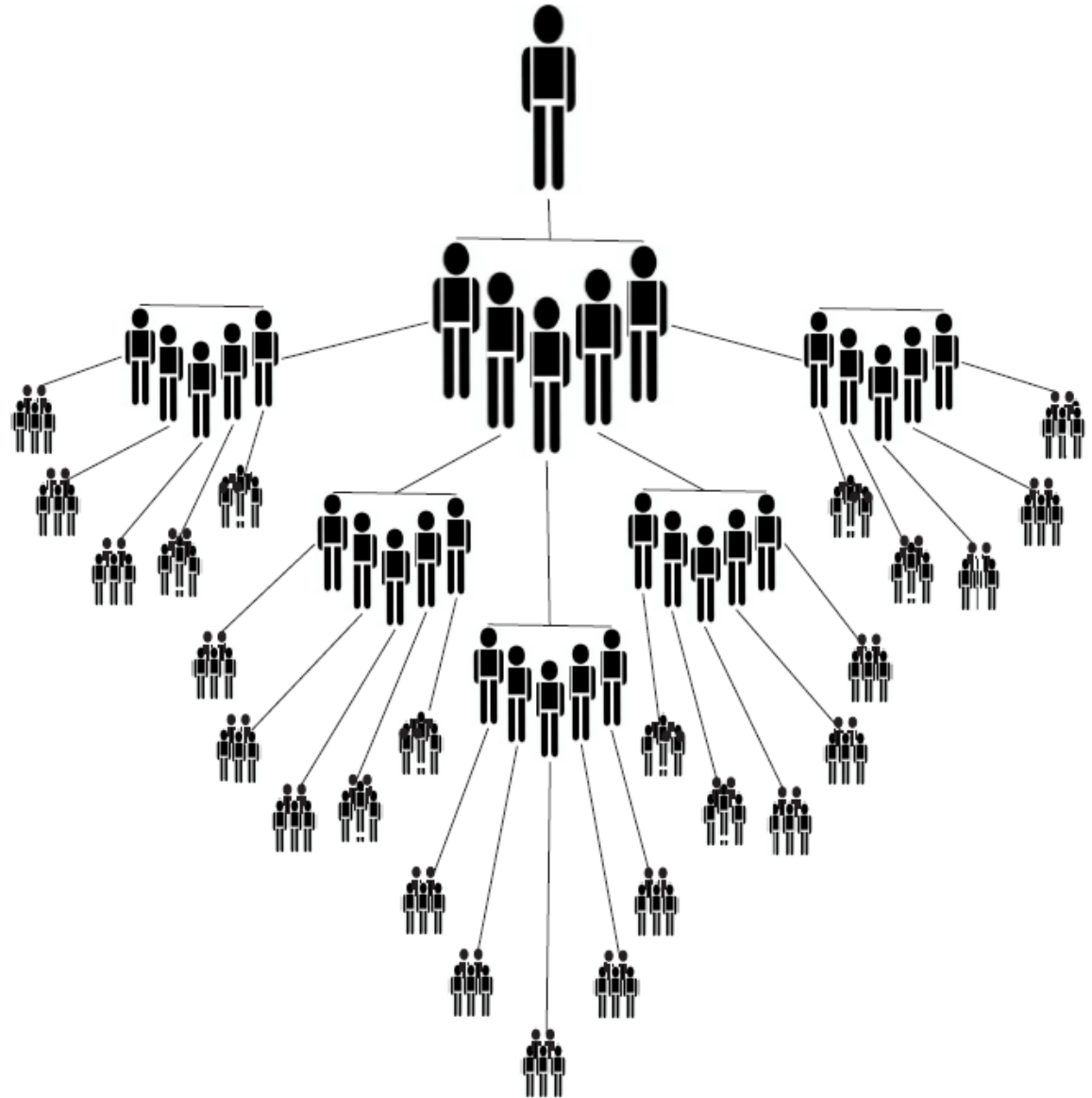


















- **New Foster/Adoptive Families**
- **New Kinship Families**
- **Already licensed families who had not been identified as American Indian**

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What will YOU
do to
Help!?!?

Presentation?

Organization?

Club?

Know someone with potential?

Business?

Church?

Newsletter?

utahfostercare.org/tribe

