



Celebrating Olivia Ben

When first entering the social work program at the University of North Dakota, Olivia Ben, had goals of becoming a therapist. Fortunately, she landed her second internship with Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara (MHA) Nation as a Foster Care Case Manager, which pulled her heart towards the child welfare field and working with Indigenous children and families. While completing her master's degree Olivia was introduced to NCWWI and enrolled in their stipend program. Shortly thereafter Olivia graduated with her master's in social work from UND in 2021. Olivia continued to work with MHA Nation, and after being there for only 10 months she was promoted from Case Manager to Family Preservation Supervisor.

Olivia is most proud of the education she has received relating to the trauma Indigenous children and families were exposed to. This knowledge has helped her gain great insight and a better understanding of her family as Native Americans who went through boarding schools and the effects of trauma on their lives today. Within the short time she has worked with MHA Nation, Olivia has reunified 12 children with their families. She explains that she is someone who believes in the families she works with and is their biggest cheerleader. Although, there are major challenges that Native American families face and the work can get hard, the one thing that inspires her to keep going is her passion for working with Native American families. Olivia also has an aunt who was the only social worker working in the Navajo Reservation as the foster care and CPS worker who also inspires her. Her aunt endured many hardships while taking care of children, in and out of foster care, all while going to school for her master's degree and never gave up on the children or families she served. This dedication helps Olivia to keep pushing no matter what.

Olivia urges new child welfare workers to start off in smaller agencies where you can learn the most and still have opportunities for growth. Olivia looks forward to staying with the Tribal agency and growing into more leadership positions in order to improve processes for child welfare professionals, as well as, for children and their families.

*"If you know who you are,
then you'll know where going."*