

Influential Women Highlights Kendra Root-Samples, MA: Tribal Development Manager at Connect Advisors

CLAREMORE, OK, UNITED STATES, May 26, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Advancing Indigenous Sovereignty, Community-Driven Development, and Culturally Grounded Research Through Indigenous-Centered Leadership and Advocacy

Claremore, Oklahoma — Kendra Root-Samples, MA, is a Citizen of the Muscogee Nation and an Euchee descendant whose work as a strategic leader, researcher, and advocate is helping shape Indigenous-centered systems transformation across Indian Country. With expertise spanning Indigenous research, evaluation, policy advocacy, and community development, Kendra has dedicated her career to advancing truth, justice, healing, and long-term wellbeing for Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities.



Grounded in a deep understanding of the social and political dynamics affecting Indigenous populations, Kendra's work emphasizes culturally responsive methodologies that center Indigenous communities as knowledge holders and decision-makers. Her leadership is rooted in sovereignty, accountability, and sustainable systems change that reflects the lived experiences and priorities of Native communities.

Kendra holds a Master of Arts in Native American Studies from the University of Oklahoma and is currently pursuing her PhD in Social Foundations within the College of Education and Human Sciences at Oklahoma State University. Her academic and professional work reflects a strong commitment to Indigenous scholarship, equity, and transformational leadership.

Professionally, Kendra currently serves as Tribal Development Manager at Connect Advisors,

where she supports Tribal Nations through strategic planning, development initiatives, and collaborative partnerships. Her role requires vision-driven leadership, cross-functional coordination, and strong fiscal and organizational management while helping Tribal communities strengthen sustainable opportunities and long-term growth.

Before joining Connect Advisors, Kendra spent nearly six years as a Research Associate with the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC), contributing to national initiatives focused on sovereignty, safety, advocacy, and justice for Native women and children. During her tenure, she helped support and develop trauma-informed, culturally grounded research practices designed to ensure Indigenous voices remained central within policy discussions and systems-level decision-making.

Kendra is also a published author and contributor to *We Are Still Here: Decolonizing Native Data in Service of Socially Just Relations*, in collaboration with Urban Institute. Her work continues to challenge traditional Western-centered frameworks by advocating for Indigenous-led data practices and research methodologies that honor community knowledge, lived experiences, and cultural values.

In recognition of her leadership and impact, Kendra received the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development 40 Under 40 Award in 2023, honoring her contributions to Indigenous advocacy, leadership, and professional excellence.

Kendra attributes her success to what she describes as transformational resilience — the ability to adapt, persevere, and grow through life's challenges while remaining grounded in purpose and community. She believes this mindset has strengthened her both personally and professionally, guiding her decisions and helping her evolve through every stage of her journey.

One of the most meaningful pieces of advice Kendra received came from her mother, who encouraged her to pursue education while trusting that the Creator has a path and purpose for every individual. That guidance continues to shape her outlook on leadership, service, and personal growth.

Kendra encourages young women entering any industry to combine education with practical experience through internships, hands-on work, and intentional networking. She believes it is important to set clear long-term goals and allow those goals to guide professional development and decision-making over time.

According to Kendra, one of the greatest challenges in her field is navigating historically male-dominated industries as an Indigenous woman, particularly within sectors influenced heavily by Western-centered systems and perspectives. At the same time, she sees tremendous opportunity in bringing Indigenous voices, lived experiences, and cultural perspectives into leadership spaces to create more equitable, inclusive, and innovative systems.

The values most important to Kendra in both her work and personal life are spirituality, family, community, and service. Her relationship with the Creator remains central to how she leads, makes decisions, and builds meaningful relationships. She also places tremendous importance on her extended family and community connections, which continue to ground and inspire her work.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Kendra is a devoted wife and proud mother who enjoys supporting her daughter at softball and basketball games. She also enjoys gardening, hummingbird watching, and spending time outdoors, activities that reflect her deep connection to the land, family, and intergenerational community traditions.

Through her leadership, advocacy, and commitment to Indigenous-centered change, Kendra Root-Samples continues to create meaningful impact across Tribal communities while helping build a stronger, more equitable future grounded in sovereignty, resilience, and healing.

Learn More about Kendra Root-Samples:

Through her Influential Women profile, <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/kendra-root-samples>, or through her profile on Connect Advisors, <https://connect-advisors.com/our-team/kendra-root-samples/>

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