

Native American Engineers Visit College of Menominee Nation

Visit Overview

Two prominent Native American engineers visited the College of Menominee Nation (CMN) this academic year. Last winter NASA Astronaut John Herrington (Chickasaw) met with college students, faculty, staff, and local middle school students. This spring Ms. Sandra Begay had the opportunity to tour the campus and meet with students, faculty, and staff.

The visits are part of a larger initiative to bring awareness and inspire students to pursue STEM degrees, particularly engineering, as part of a transfer agreement with CMN and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, College of Engineering. The visits were made possible through a grant funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF).

The visit was divided into three sections: meet and greet luncheon, campus tour, and the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) tour.

Meet and Greet Luncheon

The meet and greet luncheon was attended by people and provided time for Ms. Begay to introduce herself and share her background. Students, staff, and faculty had the opportunity ask questions and engage in conversations about Ms. Begay's educational journey. The conversation focused on Ms. Begay's current job working with Native communities and her transition from a community college to a large state school, the University of New Mexico.

Ms. Begay talked about strategies to stay connected to her family and community while she was away earning a master's degree at Stanford. She also discussed how she found



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her own group of peers during her graduate program and how they served as her support system.

The luncheon also provided an opportunity for Ms. Begay to share her personal connection with the Menominee Nation. During the summer of 2007, Ms. Begay was an energy consultant for the Menominee Nation. During that time, the Keshena area was hit by a devastating tornado which resulted in a large scale power outage. Ms. Begay recapped the event leading to the tornado and discussed the aftermath.



Campus Tour

The campus tour provided a brief overview of the College's history. The tour was led by Dale Kakkak and Tessa James. Several notable stops along the tour include the student run coffee shop, Glen Miller Hall, S. Verna Fowler Academic Library/Menominee County Library, Community Technology Center, and Shirley Daly Hall.

Sustainable Development Institute Tour



The SDI tour provided Ms. Begay an opportunity to learn about the sustainable and renewable initiatives taking place at SDI. The tour included a walking tour of the community gardens and a discussion on future renewable initiatives at SDI and CMN. The tour was lead by SDI Director Chris Caldwell.

Sandra Begay Biography

Ms. Begay serves as a key member of the Technical Staff at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico. As a Native American woman in engineering, Ms. Begay feels personally connected to her job responsibilities providing technical assistance for renewable energy practices to hundreds of remote communities on the Navajo Nation.

Some of her many accolades include the American Indian Science and Engineering Society's Lifetime Achievement Award and the New Mexico Commission's Governor's Award for Outstanding Women. Sandra holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from the University of New Mexico and a Master of Science degree in Structural Engineering from Stanford University.

