



CONNECTIONS

Linking EEO, Diversity and Science

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EEO/Diversity Office Newsletter for NOAA Research

November 2008

Profiles: Native American Scientists promoting NOAA Science

Robbie Hood



Robbie is the Director of the UAS (Unmanned Aircraft System). She is an atmospheric scientist and formerly worked for the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center.

She is one-eighth Cherokee, and a direct descendant of John Ross, the first elected chief of the Cherokee Nation. Mr. Ross, who held the office for nearly 40 years, is famous for leading the Cherokees on the Trail of Tears – their forced relocation from the Southeastern United States to present-day Oklahoma in 1838-1839.

Robbie spent much of her childhood in Neosho, Missouri and Picayune, Mississippi where she developed an interest in weather by witnessing the devastating effects of Hurricane Camille in Mississippi in 1969 and the 1974 Neosho tornado.

Today she pursues this interest in weather by conducting research studies

of precipitation, thunderstorms, and hurricanes using satellite and aircraft remote sensing technology.

Robbie is a member of AISES (American Indian Science and Engineering Society). She credits her Native American heritage for her appreciation of the beneficial contributions that diversity brings to all community sectors.

She said that NASA was very proactive in increasing opportunities for Tribal Colleges and Universities. She hopes that her work at NOAA will inspire other Native Americans to consider a field in science and that NOAA will expand its outreach efforts to Native American communities that is in tune with their culture.

Dr. Suzanne Van Cooten



Dr. Suzanne Van Cooten is a member of the Chickasaw Tribe and a Research Hydrometeorologist at NSSL. She recently completed a Chickasaw Nation TV commercial that highlighted NOAA and NSSL water research

programs.

Suzanne is a strong believer in the need for Native Americans in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) disciplines. She is currently a mentor for a graduate student, Anthony Brown, Comanche Nation, working on quantitative precipitation at NSSL.

Through her work with the Chickasaw Nation, Suzanne sees the need for a Tribal Liaison position at NOAA. She said that weather and water issues are becoming a priority for Tribes and that a champion is needed in fostering relationships with Tribes. “Tribes need to be brought to the science table because water is in native lands.”

Suzanne will be a part of a panel at the AMS conference addressing Indigenous Issues and Climate Change. (see page 2)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	
American Indian Profiles	1
Introduction to Tribal Concepts and AMS Town Hall Meeting on Indigenous Communities	2
EEO Office Outreach	3
NOAA’s 3rd Annual Disability Conference	4
EEO/Diversity Across the OAR Labs: ARL/ATDD and GSD	5
Know Your Rights	6

November is American Indian Heritage Month—Introduction to Tribal Concepts



Introduction to Tribal Concepts

Source: EPA—*Working Effectively with Tribal Governments Training Manual*

Who is an Indian? Person of Indian descent; no single criterion for Indian identity; membership of an Indian tribe.

Who is an Alaska Native? An aboriginal person of Alaska Indian, Inuit/Eskimo, Aleut, etc.

What is an Indian Tribe? A community of Indians who are ethnologically similar, but as a community are also recognized in a legal-political sense.

What is a Federally Recognized Tribe? Tribes that have a special government to government relationship with the Federal Government. There are more than 550 federally recognized tribes in the United States, including 227 village groups in Alaska. Each tribe is unique in culture, history and government structure.

What is Indian Country? Legal term that includes Indian reservations, dependent Indian communities and Indian allotment lands. The largest is the Navajo Reservation of some 16 million acres of land in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah.

Treaties—an international legal agreement between sovereign nations. Treaties are significant to all tribes (even to those tribes who did not enter into treaty relations with the Federal Government) because they establish a pattern of legal and political interaction between two sovereign nations; form the foundation of Federal Indian law; and treaty process is based on consultation and negotiation.

Tribal Sovereignty—Entitles tribes to the right to self government; distinguishes tribal member Indians from other ethnic minorities; helps preserve tribal culture and control over the future of the tribe.

Federal Trust Responsibility—Under the general trust responsibility, the Federal Government is to consult with and consider the interests of the Tribes when engaged in any activity that may affect them; the specific trust responsibility ordinarily arises from some formal action of the U.S.; all federal agencies share in the trust responsibility.

Government to Government Relationship—Each Indian government must be considered as a distinct entity exercising sovereign powers; federal agencies must consult with tribal governments on matters that directly affect the tribes.

RESOURCES

The following can be checked out from the OAR EEO Office, please email becky.rios@noaa.gov.

DVD:

Tribal Nations – The Story of Federal Indian Law Books:

American Indians - Answers to Today's Questions—Jack Utter

The Rights of Indians and Tribes—Stephan Pevar

Magazines:

American Indian Report

Tribal College Journal quarterly magazine

Winds of Change - AISES

Federally Recognized Tribes by Region

http://www.indians.org/catalog/tribal_directory.php

AMS—Town Hall Meeting: Climate Change, Indigenous Communities in the United States, and AMS: Needs and Opportunities—Tuesday, January 13, 2009, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

The ultimate goals of this Town Hall Meeting are to develop a coordinated, strategic, and sustainable collaboration between AMS and native communities; provide a forum for representatives from indigenous communities (including the American Indian and Alaska Native Climate Change Working Group) to outline the climate and meteorological needs in indigenous communities, as well as the opportunities for indigenous knowledge and practice to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of weather, climate, and adaptation/mitigation strategies. Out of these conversations, it is hoped that ways for AMS to support a research and implementation agenda for tribal communities will be identified.

For additional information, please contact Suzanne Van Cooten (e-mail: suzanne.van.cooten@noaa.gov), James Rattling-Leaf (e-mail: james.rattlingleaf@sdsmt.edu), or Raj Pandya (e-mail: pandya@ucar.edu).

EEO Office Outreach—Conferences We Have Attended

Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS)

NOAA Research was a major sponsor of the student poster sessions at the SACNAS conference in Salt Lake City, UT, October 9-12. The theme was *International Polar Year: Global Change in Our Communities*. Over 3000 students and teachers attended the conference.



Georgia Madrid, Sylvia Garzoli and Ernesto Muñoz

AOML employees Sylvia Garzoli, Physical Oceanography Division Director, and Ernesto Muñoz, a post doctoral researcher, also participated. Sylvia gave a presentation, *The Global Ocean and Climate Change* and Ernesto assisted the EEO Office by staffing the exhibit booth and serving as a mentor, a judge, a Post Doc and Climate Scientist. “It was a great experience to talk with students, faculty, teachers and scientists about NOAA and the various research labs,” said Ernesto. Ernesto is from Puerto Rico and was happy to give back to SACNAS in that he used to attend their conferences while in college.

The 2009 conference will be in Dallas, TX and NOAA will be in attendance because SACNAS will continue its geosciences component.

American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES).

AISES celebrated its 30th Anniversary with the theme, *30 Years and Going Strong*. NOAA Research participated in the AISES Government Relations Council meeting and assisted the NOAA Education program and NMFS with their exhibit booth.

The keynote speaker was Billy Mills, 1964 Olympian in the 10,000 meters, who gave an inspirational talk on diversity and perceptions. There were also presentations by NOAA National Ocean Service on collaborative

activities in research and education with American Indians and Alaskan Natives. Over 2000 students, teachers and professional members attended the conference in Anaheim, CA. For more information on AISES, please visit their website at www.aises.org.

BVSD Latino Youth Leadership Institute

The Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) held its 18th Annual Latino Youth Leadership conference at the University of Colorado at Boulder on October 21, 2008. Approximately 130 high school students participated in workshops such as Vida Sagrada (Sacred Life), Teatro de Ustedes (Theatre of the People), Heterosexism and Racism, and Pride in Culture. NOAA Research EEO was a co-sponsor of the event. The goals are to develop leadership skills, build a sense of unity and leadership and promote pride and awareness of the Latino Culture.



David Young and Becky Rios, OAR EEO Assistant, helped staff the registration desk.



Students participating in a workshop at the BVSD Latino Conference.

NOAA's 3rd Annual Disability Conference

NOAA's 3rd Annual Disability Conference was held on October 27 and 28 in Silver Spring, MD. Below are comments from OAR employees who attended the conference.

Informative and Inspirational

By Sandra Knight, PhD, Director, Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation

NOAA's Third Annual Disability Conference proved to be both informative and inspirational. Several key points set the stage for the conference. First, I am "temporarily able". That is, in a blink of an eye, any of us could join this small minority of the population defined as disabled. Second, the Federal Government, through its programs and opportunities sets the benchmark for hiring disabled people (2.3%), yet NOAA falls far below this benchmark (0.4%). Finally, while the disabled may represent a small percentage of the population, they clearly have been great contributors to society and have potential to do more if just given a chance.

The highlight of the conference for me was the inspirational stories of people defying the odds. The testimonials by the luncheon speakers, Ms. Juliette Rizzo and Mr. Claiborne Houghton, demonstrated the extraordinary courage and personal fortitude it took to overcome seemingly hopeless situations. The same challenges many face to overcome gender, race and religious bias that make it difficult to break the glass ceiling or have equal pay for equal work are seemingly insurmountable when compounded with the physical and/or mental challenges of being disabled. The stories of these incredible speakers, seemed to carry a message that in addition to their own personal fortitude, each success story was accompanied by an opportunity provided by a special program or by someone who believed in them.

NOAA through its special programs and hiring authorities can offer an opportunity to someone that just may need a chance. As supervisors and managers, we should all work closely with our work force management to take advantage of these authorities. Let's raise the bar on disabled hiring in NOAA.

Life Teaching Subjects

By Terry Bevels, Deputy CFO

I found the NOAA Disability Conference to be a highly organized, well-developed program of valuable information and training, not only for the workplace but for everyday life. The speakers covered subjects and specific situations that were informative, sobering, instructional and inspirational.

At the outset of the Conference, it was pointed out that often-times disabilities are "hidden" and not immediately obvious to the casual observer. This statement, while both startling and so plainly logical, should give one pause in the conduct of virtually all interpersonal dealings, not only from this perspective, but simply in the manner of maintaining a more open and flexible attitude with (not toward) others in the workplace and society in general. This Conference was a success on a number of levels, and offers a high standard for future conferences on similar life-teaching subjects.



Attendees listening to speaker at the disability conference.

Have You Considered Schedule A?

By Randee Exler, Communications Director, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research

Like many hiring officials, I think the federal competitive hiring process takes too long! I know I've lost candidates because they can not wait out the process and find other employment during the time it takes to work through this system. I think one of the best "take aways" from NOAA's Third Annual Disability Employment Awareness Training Conference was information about how to bring qualified candidates on board without the hassle of competing the position.

"Schedule A" -- a hiring vehicle is for qualified persons with disabilities who meet certain Office of Personnel Management (OPM) criteria -- streamlines the competitive hiring process. Schedule A candidates can be hired non-competitively -- without posting and publicizing the position; and without going through the certificate process.

While I am not hiring right now, I plan to work with Nicole Mason, OAR's Equal Employment Opportunity manager, and the Workforce Management Office to help me find qualified Schedule A candidates the next time I need to fill a vacancy. Schedule A may be the win-win situation -- I get to fill a vacancy more quickly with a qualified employee and NOAA becomes a more diverse, inclusive agency.

EEO/Diversity Across the OAR Labs and Programs

ARL/ATDD Launches Balloons at Festival

Tim Wilson, Simone Klemenz, David Senn, Ron Dobosy, Ed Dumas, Barbara Shifflett, and Mark Heuer participated in the 2008 Pellissippi State Community College Balloon Festival, September 25-27, 2008 in Knoxville, Tennessee.

NOAA's booth included NOAA brochures dealing with weather related safety issues; e.g., hurricanes, severe weather, and lightning. A total of three rawinsonde balloon launches were performed to demonstrate how atmospheric temperature, relative humidity, pressure, and wind speed / direction are measured from an ascending helium balloon. Approximately 7,000 people attended the two-day event.



Students from Hardin Valley Academy assist with rawinsonde balloon launch. Photo by Ed Dumas.

Colorado Girls Explore Hands-On Science

By Annie Reiser, Global Systems Division, NOAA Research

The NOAA Boulder Labs joined a dozen or so other booths on the plaza to display their science and technology and hand out educational resources. Data-based posters like Nighttime Lights of the World, Surface of the Earth, and the GEBCO World Oceans sparked many educational exchanges between the girls and outreach coordinators.

David Khaligi of UCCS said, "The NOAA table was a hit with participants!" With several hundred girls and their parents, teachers, and mentors attending, it's no surprise that NOAA's supplies were nearly depleted before the audience assembled to hear Sally Ride's keynote address.

An enthusiastic Dr. Ride, America's first woman in

space, captured the attention of eager listeners with her stories of space adventure and how she made her dream of becoming an astronaut come true. She answered questions like, "What was your favorite thing about being in space?"; "Were you afraid before lift off?"; and "What kind of subjects did you study in school?" The answers were: "second to none, weightlessness"; "YES!"; and "English, Math, and Science", the basis of in depth and interesting answers that revealed Ride's family background, social situation of the times, and personal character.

Two NOAA Boulder scientists presented their relevant expertise in interactive sessions for the remainder of the afternoon. Robin Warnken of NOAA's National Geophysical Data

Center wowed her classes with the power of Earth's destructive hazards (earthquakes and tsunamis) in her plate-tectonics talk titled, "Shake Rattle and Roll". Carrie Morrill of the National Climatic Data Center busied her classes with an engaging exercise in paleoclimatology, titled, "Climate Detective", in which the budding scientists explored sediment samples and how they tell a story about past climate. Both women talked to the girls about what it's like to have a career in science and expanded on possibilities outside their own areas of study.

NOAA is dedicated to fueling girls' and boys' interests in science, math, and technology and will certainly return next year if this becomes an annual event at UCCS.

- Sally Ride Science: www.sallyridescience.com/
- Read Annie Reiser's full length article: <http://www.fsl.noaa.gov/outreach/education/sallyride/index.html>



Annie Reiser with students at the NOAA Boulder Outreach booth.

Know Your Rights

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP:

Informal EEO Complaints Processing (EEO Counseling)

If you believe you have been subject to discrimination on the basis of your race, color, religion, sex, age (over 40), disability, sexual orientation or retaliation for participating in activities protected by the civil rights statutes, you must contact an [EEO Counselor](#) within 45 calendar days of the alleged discrimination to preserve your rights under the law.

Please contact the **NOAA Civil Rights Office** to initiate EEO counseling:

Voice: 301-713-0500

Toll Free: 1-800-452-6728

TDD: 301-713-0982

FAX: 301-713-0983

Website: www.ofa.noaa.gov/~civilr/disccomp.htm

Mediation

NOAA Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

The NOAA ADR Office provides mediation and other services and seeks early resolution.

Voice: 206-526-6171

Fax: 206-527-6928.

Website: www.adr.noaa.gov

NO FEAR ACT TRAINING

The Department of Commerce is committed to providing a safe, professional, and productive work environment for all employees. The Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act) requires Federal agencies to provide training on a biennial basis with respect to antidiscrimination and whistleblower protection laws.

NOAA Research Employees can take on-line training in December— (<https://doc.learn.com/NOAA>)

Problems with on-line training—contact Maria Krug at 301-665-3766 or email maria.c.krugg@noaa.gov

NOAA Research EEO/Diversity Program Office



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ABOUT US

The EEO Office provides services to NOAA Research employees and to applicants for employment. We are the local point of contact for EEO and Diversity issues. We coordinate EEO program activities and provide EEO training.

The EEO office functions are as follows:

- **EMPOWERMENT** : Consultation services to employees, managers and applicants for employment.
- **EXPOSURE**: Recruitment and outreach activities for short and long-term recruitment.
- **EDUCATION**: Federal EEO Mandated training.
- **EVALUATION** : Monitor employment statistics to prepare reports for NOAA, DOC, EEOC and OPM.

We're on the Web!

<http://eoo.oar.noaa.gov>

NEWSLETTER

Connections is published quarterly by the OAR EEO Office. The purpose is to share accomplishments and to link Diversity, EEO and Science within all of OAR laboratories and divisions. If you have any newsletter ideas, suggestions and stories, please send to Georgia Madrid via email at georgia.madrid@noaa.gov.