CONNECTIONS

Linking EEO, Diversity and Science

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Guiding Our Destiny with Heritage and Tradition: NOAA Boulder at AISES Conference

The 2013 theme for National Native American Heritage Month held in the month of November was *Guiding Our Destiny with Heritage and Tradition*. The purpose is to celebrate the diverse histories and cultures and contributions of American Indian and Alaska Native people. This year, NOAA Boulder participated in the American Indian Science & Engineering Society (AISES) conference in Denver, CO, October 31 to November 2, 2013.

Employees staffed the NOAA exhibit booth at the Career Fair, helped judge student research presentations, both oral and poster, and volunteered on the AISES Local Volunteer Prize and Outreach committee. In addition, Robbie Hood, NOAA UAS Director provided a workshop titled, "Five Leadership Lessons I Have Learned," and Roger Pulwarty, PSD, was a part of a panel discussion, "Climate Change & Native American Communities: New Directions and New Careers in Science and Engineering."

The highlight of the conference was to see Robbie Hood, Cherokee, receive the 2013 AISES Executive Excellence Award. The AISES Professional Awards program is to acknowledge recipients for their significant contributions made to the STEM disciplines as leaders, innovators, and role models. Robbie Hood was nominated by OAR for her UAS program leadership, creative vision and people skills, as mentioned in her nomination package, "Ms. Hood and her team are making significant progress in transitioning the first low-altitude UAS into operational application for marine monitoring by 2015, and they will be conducting a comprehensive evaluation of high altitude UAS observations to assist in maintaining weather forecasting services of high impact events such as hurricanes. They are able to advance this progress more quickly due to Ms. Hood's remarkable way with people."

The AISES National conference is the premier event for Native American STEM professionals and students attracting over 1,600 attendees from across the country.

Annie Reiser, Robbie Hood, 2013 AISES Executive Excellence Award Recipient, Wilford Buggs and Georgia Madrid at the Closing Ceremony/Traditional Banquet.

It was a great opportunity for NOAA to participate and showcase its science as well as learn how cultural heritage plays a major role in the AISES organization and its STEM initiatives. To learn more about AISES, visit: www.aises.org.

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Inside this Issue

Special Emphasis - Native American Heritage Month

STEM—for the Good of All, My AISES Experience

By Annie Reiser, ESRL Office of Director

This year I was honored to represent NOAA at the 35th AISES Career Fair; my first time at the annual AISES National Conference. A few colleagues and I set up our expandable display that filled the booth with colorful images of NOAA research. We arranged our information flyers and a few NOAA "tchotchkes" on the table to attract interest to our booth. Unlike other conferences, where participants are most interested in what we have to hand out, the highly motivated AISES students wanted to learn about our science and what path they should take to pursue a career with our organization. Though I was there to "teach" and inform, I came away with an enriching experience that taught me so much about the American Indian spirit and motivation for learning Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).

Participants wore traditional outfits to the Closing Ceremony/Traditional Banquet.

First, I was amazed at the diversity of the AISES membership. I learned that there are more than 500 officially registered tribal communities in the United States. The ethnicity, language, and culture for those are also much more diverse than our stereotypical expectation of the Indians portrayed by Hollywood.

After hearing various talks by AISES leaders, students, and elders, during the Opening Ceremony, I was struck by a shared theme; *to protect and promote the well-being and growth of all people.* This is a natural fit for students in STEM education who also effortlessly weave their innovative skills with their traditional culture for the good of the community and environment. I was inspired by their stories; many having overcome serious hardships on their path to success in academics and STEM jobs.

Annie talking with students at the NOAA exhibit booth.

Robbie Hood giving her presentation.

A highlight for me personally was attending Robbie Hood's presentation, "Five Leadership Lessons I Have Learned," delivered to a standing-room-only group of students. Hers was just one of the Professional Leadership Development Track sessions offered at the conference. Robbie is a NOAA colleague and winner of the 2013 AISES *Executive Excellence Award* for her successful journey to leadership as Director of NOAA's Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Program. Robbie credits her professional accomplishments to being American Indian; she is a descendant of John Ross, the first elected chief of the Cherokee Nation, who led his people through the "Trail of Tears" forced relocation to Oklahoma. All speakers I heard shared the same admiration of their heritage. Their pride, integrity, and knowledge elevated all who attended.

NOAA SEAS AND SKIES CHAPTER OF FEDERALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN (FEW) Pilot Mentoring Program

This year, the NOAA Seas and Skies Chapter of FEW offered a pilot mentoring program. It's year long activities included a Kick-off, Orientation, Mentor Meeting, Mentor Training, Mid-Term and closing ceremony and graduation. One of the participants was OAR's Paul Johnson, Director of Budget Execution and Analysis. He was a mentor to Tiffany House. Below is an interview with Paul on his participation:

Why is mentoring important?

Mentoring is a tool that organizations can use to nurture and grow their people. As we continue to strive to retain hard earned experience and wisdom, I view mentoring as a form of interpersonal knowledge management. Mentees are able to observe, question and explore, while mentors demonstrate, explain and model. Mentoring can help employees navigate organizational culture, solve problems and advance their careers. Mentoring is a great way to make sure the talent pipeline is filled with people ready to manage and lead.

Paul Johnson with Tiffany House.

What are the benefits of the mentor-mentee relationship?

There are many benefits of the mentor-mentee relationship. Mentees gain invaluable insight beyond their own education and experience. Mentoring programs are designed primarily for the benefit of mentees. Mentees are afforded access to a support system during critical stages of their career development. Mentees can gain an insider's perspective on navigating their career. Mentees are able to identify skill gaps and build a greater knowledge of career success factors. Finally, mentees can build a foundation of a lasting professional network. While mentoring programs are designed primarily for the benefit of mentees, mentors enjoy rewards as well. As a mentor, I was rewarded by sharing professional knowledge and skills by helping others succeed. It was also a way for me to give back to my organization and community. Mentoring requires a willingness to share, listen, and provide advice in a flexible relationship shaped by the needs of the mentee.

2013 NOAA Seas and Skies Chapter Pilot Mentoring Program participants.

How has mentoring impacted your career?

My participation in the FEW Mentoring Pilot Program has helped me to develop my ability to motivate and encourage others. I believe that it has also helped me to be a better manager, employee, and team member. I was able to refine my leadership skills and strengthen my on-the-job performance.

Ilisagvik, "A Place to Learn"

By Bob Rabin, NSSL Meteorologist and EEO Advisory Committee Member

I participated in a STEM course held on the campus of the Ilisagvik College in Barrow, AK. Ilisagvik means "A place to Learn" in the Inupiaq language. Attendees were North Slope Alaska Native high school students from Barrow, other smaller villages, and the Bethel area.

Entrance to Ilisagvik College, Barrow, AK.

The course was titled "Climate Change in Cultural Context." The course helped the students learn about weather, climate, ecology, carbon chemistry and air pollution, as well the physical impacts on permafrost, water distribution, and waste disposal. Students were exposed to place based and traditional knowledge on climate by learning the observations of local Elders. Information gained from their experience was to help the students develop and enhance their personal understanding of the permafrost's significant relationship and impact on their local villages and communities.


Students at the radar site.

The students were introduced to sharing their insights through the use of technological tools such as the iPod touch, and social media applications. Ten students attended this course on July 31-August 12, 2013.

I presented activities on the first five days of the course. The activities were designed to give the students on opportunity to learn about remote observations, such as satellites, and how they are used in research and weather forecasting. Topics included basics of satellite observations (from CIMSS), observed trends in climate of the arctic, real-time weather observations (including GOES satellite imagery), high resolution imagery from MODIS and scatterometer imagery of ice, snow, and vegetation cover, and effects of weather changes on local food sources such as caribou. The students were given an opportunity to forecast the local weather based on the interpretation of forecast models. The students then participated in a contest based on their forecasts of temperature, precipitation and wind for the following days.

The students helped with the initial assembly and testing of a surface weather station which will eventually be installed on the campus of Ilisagvik. A hand held infrared thermometer was used to measure land and ocean temperature and to compare with satellite measurements.

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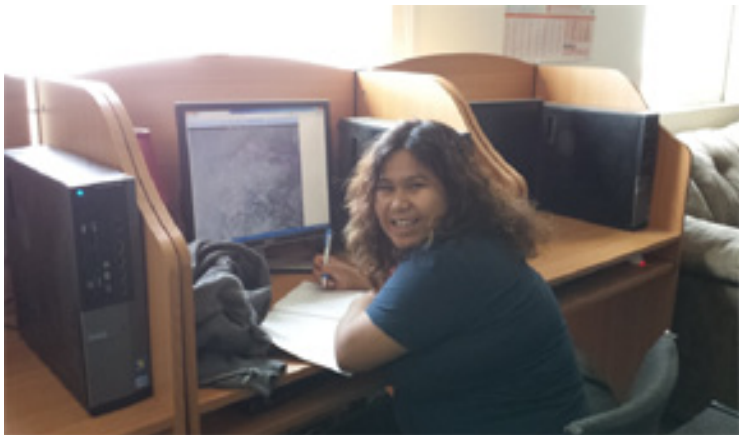

In the lab, interpreting GOES satellite imagery.

The students used an App installed on IPADs (developed at the CIMSS University of Wisconsin-Madison) to help validate NASA MODIS satellite imagery of land and cloud characteristics with photos taken from the ground.

Topics covered by other scientists included the carbon cycle, land cover changes, permafrost, data visualization and documentation. For successful completion of the course, students prepared talks on a topic of their choice. The presentations were rated on the basis of quality. The top students were selected to attend the National Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) conference in October in San Antonio, TX.

Student participants with their camp advisors at the SACNAS conference, San Antonio, TX, October 2013.

I assisted with tours and hands-on activities for the students at the National Weather Service, Weather Service Office (WSO) in Barrow (with Dave Anderson, Officer in Charge), the ESRL/Global Monitoring Division (with Matthew Martinsen), the University of Alaska Sea Ice monitoring radar in Barrow, and the Barrow Global Climate Change Research Facility (funded in part by NOAA.

This was the first exposure to atmospheric sciences and remote sensing for many of the students, and as such the material was a bit demanding for some. In general, I think the students could grasp the basic principles and had a positive experience.

Barrow is located 500 miles north of Fairbanks. There are no roads in this sparsely populated, vast region. One can imagine a similarity to some aspects of life in North America before European settlement. The Barrow community and the smaller villages depend heavily on subsistence living. The connection with the environment is very strong. There seems to be a keen awareness and concern of the effects of the weather on food supply, e.g. whaling and hunting caribou.

Uploading validation pictures of the sky for comparisons with satellite imagery.

Materials used in the presentations are available on-line: http://www.ssec.wisc.edu/~rabin/alaska/
The cost of the STEM course (including my travel) was covered by a grant from the Arctic Slope Community Foundation.

Photos by Bob Rabin.

NOAA Research EEO/Diversity Program Office

CONNECTIONS 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 programs.

If you have any newsletter ideas, suggestions and stories, please email to Georgia Madrid **georgia.madrid@noaa.gov.**

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EEO MISSION: To bring awareness to employees, applicants for employment and management about EEO through the following:

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, Special Emphasis programs and *Connections* newsletter.

Evaluation: Monitor employment statistics to prepare reports for NOAA, DOC, EEOC and OPM.

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