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[News home](#) > [Top stories](#) >

Watson celebrates Native American Heritage Month

The month of November marks National Native American Heritage Month in the United States. To honor this significant occasion, the Watson Diversity Council hosted a series of events on Wednesday, November 3rd to celebrate the ancestry, past history and future possibilities for tribal communities in North America and beyond.

First, the council hosted Sandra Begay-Campbell, the 2009 recipient of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society's Lifetime Achievement Award (also known as the Ely S. Parker Award). Currently working at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, MN, on the topic of energy security, Sandra kicked off the day of events at Watson with a talk entitled: "Harnessing clean renewable energy for Native American tribal lands."

"There is a lot of potential for tribal lands in the United States from an energy standpoint," Sandra explained. "Although Indian land comprises 5% of the land area in the United States, it contains an estimated 10% of all energy resources in the country." Her talk highlighted the growing ability of the nation's Native American population to generate and in some cases sell energy from renewable resources on tribal lands.

[\[View the webcast with Sandra Begay-Campbell here\]](#)

During her visit, Sandra met with several IBM researchers and emerging business professionals in the area of photovoltaics. Not only did they discuss current renewable energy projects presently supported by Sandia National Labs, but they also explored possibilities for future collaboration.

The Watson Diversity Council also hosted a fellow researcher, Dr. Ann Marie Maynard from the Human Ability & Accessibility Center. Currently working to transform bilingual education through advanced technologies, Ann Marie is a Consecrated Elder of the Taino pueblo El Concilio Taino Guatu-Ma-cu A Boriken, the indigenous natives from Puerto Rico.



After starting her session by playing original compositions on Taino flutes, Ann Marie gave a very entertaining and informative talk about advances in the understanding of Taino "history" due to recent Mitochondrial DNA studies. "To date, most of what has been written about the Tainos has drawn upon the written record of the Spanish," Ann Marie explained. "Because they had their own objectives and perspective, they weren't able to understand what they were observing. However, while history may have been written by the 'victors', mitochondrial DNA is rewriting history." These studies showed that the Tainos, once thought to be extinct, did indeed survive Spanish conquests, and that now some 61% of all Puerto Ricans carry Taino mitochondrial DNA.

[\[View the webcast with Dr. Maynard here\]](#)

Dr. Ann Marie Maynard

In addition to the talks mentioned above, the Watson Diversity Council also worked with the Watson's Women's Network to organize a Brown Bag Lunch Event during which Sandra Begay-Campbell and the group discussed career paths and the value of mentoring in technical careers.

National Native American Heritage Month runs until the end of November, with November 26, 2010, being Native American Heritage Day. By watching the webcast recordings of these talks and learning about the past and current predicament of Native peoples, you can help honor and celebrate the importance of this community to our Nation and our world.



Sandra Begay-Campbell (left) visits the Watson Concentrator Photovoltaic Prototype in Yorktown with Enrique Vargas, IBM Business Development Executive (right)