

Australia sends student, professional group to Diné College

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 26 January 2018 09:49



TSAILE, Ariz. — A little more than a week into 2018, Diné College opened its doors to an educational touring group from Down Under.

The mix of five students and professionals visited the main campus's "Hogan Room," toured nearby Canyon de Chelly and walked the halls of the Ned Hatathli Building at the Tsaile campus.

The visit was set up so that the group could learn more about education methods around the Navajo Nation and acquire ideas about applying that knowledge to the Aboriginal Australians.

Note: Australia is commonly referred to as "Down Under," a term recognizing the country for its position in the southern hemisphere. The Aborigines are descended from groups that existed in Australia, and the country's surrounding islands, prior to British colonization.

"The visit went well and we already want to put Diné College on our agenda again as soon as we can," Scott Miller, an international student advisor with Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colo, said. Fort Lewis sponsored the tour. "The people in the group were really impressed with the College and the people."

Diné College Interim Director of Marketing Ed McCombs, a 30-year plus employee of the College, said the Jan. 9 visit wasn't the first by a traveling educational group from Australia. McCombs said such visits bode well with respect to the marketing of Diné College.

"To a large degree, this is something that the College advocates," McCombs said. "In more

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ways than one, visits like this put [Diné College] on the international map.”

Gary Knight, a retired education instructor at Fort Lewis College who came along as a chaperone for the group, said additional visits were made to the Toadlena Trading Post, the Shiprock Flea Market and at the Aztec Ruins in San Juan County.

“It was terrific,” Knight said of the travel excursions. “For a lot of the people that were here with the group, it was their first time experiencing Navajo culture.”

Some Background

Fort Lewis College is a public liberal arts and former boarding school that used to be a military fort. Approximately 16 percent of baccalaureate degrees earned by Native Americans around the U.S. come from Fort Lewis.

The Hogan Room at Diné College is a place where moccasin-making, weaving and cultural lectures take place. It is also where a lot of art work hangs that was done by Navajos over the years.

Besides Miller and Knight, among those who attended the educational tour were Lawrence Cole, Stacey Paull, Madeline Kappler, Jessica Frost, Steven Sizgoric and Yuriko Miller.

Paull, a college student studying teacher education, said she picked up pointers on Native instruction and methodology. Sizgoric, a marketing representative, said the tour was eye-opening.

“It was amazing, amazing,” Sizgoric said. “It was definitely a learning experience. Everyone enjoyed the people and the places we went.”