

Tohono O'odham Nation Visits Santa Clara Pueblo

On Thursday, March 4th a delegation from the Tohono O'odham Nation lead by Vice Chairman Verlon Jose visited Santa Clara Pueblo in northern New Mexico. The tribe from Arizona hoped to learn from a sister tribe their experience converting from a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) operated school to a tribally controlled school system. The collaboration comes as Santa Clara Pueblo is an inaugural recipient of the BIE Tribal Education Department (TED) grant converting the Santa Clara Day School to tribal control on July 1, 2016 and the Tohono O'odham Nation is a recent recipient of the Sovereignty in Indian Education (SIE) grant.



Figure 1: Left to Right: SCP Youth and Learning Director Jeremy Oyenque, TON Education Consultant Alberto Siqueiros, TON Executive Director of Education Marietta Martin, TON SIE Program Manager Frances Benavidez, SCP Governor J. Michael Chavarria, TO Vice Chairman Verlon M. Jose

The visit began with SCP Youth and Learning Director, Jeremy Oyenque presenting on the tribes course of action in the conversion process including feasibility studies that was conducted by the tribe. The conversation expanded on the many intricacies of the conversion process including governance structure, human resources, finance, facilities, curriculum and policies and procedures developed to operate the school. Partnerships that Santa Clara Pueblo has utilized including the NACA Inspired Schools Network, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, University of New Mexico: Center for Participatory Research, were also a key topic. After the presentation, the Tohono O'odham visitors were able to meet with Acting Principal Steve Marsh and hosted for lunch at Santa Clara Day School. Principal Marsh was able to expand on the ground level impacts that the conversion process was having on the current staff, student body, and overall community.

After a quick stopover to see the 5th grade class in progress, the Tohono O'odham visitors met with Governor J. Michael Chavarria at the Santa Clara Pueblo Tribal Administration building. The Tribal Leaders, Governor Chavarria and Vice-Chairman

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Jose discussed the responsibilities and governance of the tribes in regards to education, and even expanded into possible intergovernmental partnerships for health issues. As the day came to a close, the Tohono O'odham staff was given a tour of the Tribal Administration focusing on the programs of the Department of Youth and Learning, including the Community Library, Tewa Language, Recreation and Education programs.



Figure 2: Santa Clara Pueblo Governor J. Michael Chavarria and Tohono O'odham Nation Vice-Chairman Verlon M. Jose