



VOICES

Advancing diversity and its unique contributions in the NPA

Clay Center Named Great Place to Work

By Eduardo Casas

In October, 2006, *The Scientist* magazine published an article indicating the "Best places to work, 2006." The USDA-ARS, U. S. Meat Animal Research Center (USMARC), in Clay Center, Nebraska, was placed 27th in the ranking. There are many reasons why I believe the USMARC deserves a high ranking, but I will limit my comments to some of the factors involved in the survey. The answers given in the

survey, and my comments, are from the researcher's point of view. The factors used to determine a good place to work were: (1) personal fulfillment, (2) sense of mission, (3) collaboration, (4) freedom to do research, (5) living costs in surrounding community, (6) research resources, (7) geographical location, and (8) the ability to teach and mentor. In this overview, I will address each criterion.

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New Recruits Join Diversity Task Force

By Barbara King



Shannon Osborne
Brookings, SD



Emily O'Hearn
Laramie, WY

In June, two Task Force members decided to step down when their terms expired, and three other members - Holly Johnson (Mandan), Diona Austill (Miles City), and Eduardo Casas (Clay Center) - had their terms extended another three years. Sincere thanks are extended to Missy Stuart (Laramie) and Janet Fergen (Brookings) for their past contributions to

the NPA Diversity Task Force. We will miss Janet and Missy and wish them well as they return to their regular duties. We also welcome their replacements, Shannon Osborne (Brookings) and Emily O'Hearn (Laramie).

Dr. Osborne is a Cat 1 Agronomist at the Brookings location, with an expertise in developing crop management practices for sustainable agriculture. Shannon joined ARS and NPA in 2000, and says she has not looked back,

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File photo by Stephen Ausmus, ARS Image Gallery

USMARC among "Best Places to Work" in 2006! Chemist Tim Smith and cattle wrangler Randy Scott at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, NE.

New members...

Continued from page 1

because she says, with a hearty laugh, "I don't have time to wonder where the years have gone." Besides maintaining a productive research agenda, Shannon also treasures time with her husband and two sons, six-year-old Samuel and four-year-old Adam.

Emily O'Hearn joined the Laramie location as a biological sciences technician about 3-1/2 years ago, and is currently working on the design of an assay for the detection and differentiation of BTV (Bluetongue Virus) and EHDV (Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease Virus). As much as Emily enjoys her job, she also finds that Laramie is the near-perfect location for her to pursue her other passions – camping, hiking, fishing, golfing, rock climbing, snowboarding, and even knitting.

Please join us in welcoming Shannon and Emily! ■

"VOICES" is a biannual publication of the
USDA Agricultural Research Service's
Northern Plains Area Diversity Task Force
distributed by USDA-ARS Northern Plains Area,
Office of the Area Director.

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Northern Plains Notes By NPA Area Director Will Blackburn

The annual ARMPs road trip is one of my favorite trips each year because it affords me the chance to visit with location staff, tour the locations, and hear first-hand about the science being conducted throughout the Area. An added benefit is the opportunity to enjoy the beauty and diversity of the northern plains states. The NPA locations, science, and people represent the best work of the agency, and combined with the never-ending beauty of the rolling plains, I can't imagine a better place to work or a finer group of people to work with.

On-Site Reviews

This spring and summer has also brought several outside groups to selected locations for on-site reviews. Locations and/or units reviewed so far this year have been the Bee Lab in Logan, the Grain, Forage & Bioenergy Research Unit in Lincoln, and the Human Nutrition Research Center in Grand Forks. Each of these reviews requires an extraordinary amount of preparation on the part of the research leaders, individual scientists, and support staff. These reviews, although time-consuming, provide units the opportunity to demonstrate to the review committees the quality and depth of the research, as well as the dedicated commitment on the part of employees. I am happy to report that the units reviewed so far this year have all received high marks from the reviewers.

Survey Results Preview

I also want to bring attention to the strong showing of support by permanent employees for the recent employee survey. The survey generated a response rate of 54%, which is well over the 26% or so usually considered to be acceptable. The survey results will be compiled into a report that will be delivered to all Area employees later this year, and the Task Force will study the results to

help determine future areas of emphasis. Until then, some general comments have been noted.

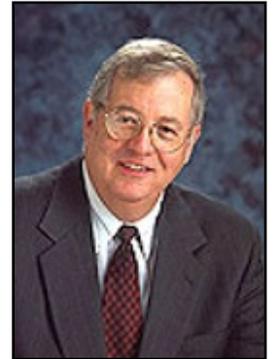
The questions dealing with recruitment indicate that

almost 50% of the respondents heard about their current job from someone at the location (31%); from a professional contact (9%), or from a university contact (9%). While employees are always urged to "spread the word" about a vacancy, if we are serious about diversity we need to reach out and spread the word among more than just our good friends, neighbors, and those whose backgrounds we have in common.

In terms of recruiting activities, 74% of respondents agreed with the statement that it was important for them to be involved in recruiting activities, and by far the most commonly cited activity was attending a candidate's presentation. The mentoring questions indicate that employees view mentoring positively. For example, 94% of those employees who had a mentor indicated that the mentoring was helpful, while 76% of employees who did not have a mentor thought that they would have benefited from having had a mentor.

Slightly over 75% of respondents indicated they would take their job again, that they were satisfied with their work:life balance, and that they felt their work was valued.

These were just some of the many findings from the survey. The results should prove to be very useful to the Task Force, and I extend my sincere thanks to each of you who took the time to voluntarily participate in this survey. ■



NPA Workforce: Changing Faces?

By Barbara King

One can hardly open a newspaper or magazine without reading about the impending impact of Baby Boomer retirements. Yet, there is little consensus about how and when Boomers will retire. For instance, Boomers are said to be redefining retirement, from delaying retirement, or working part-time, or embarking on another career, to not having any real plans to leave the workforce. Certainly, many Boomers are simply unprepared financially for the classic retirement. In FY 06, about 14% of the NPA workforce was eligible to retire, although that number jumps to nearly 25% by 2010.

Whether the projected retirements will be a flood or a trickle, there are bound to be changes in the workforce of the NPA. How likely is it that employees will retire as soon as they are eligible? As retirements occur, at whatever rate, how can the NPA market itself to attract the next generation of employees?

The NPA, like most federal agencies, has an enviable turnover rate – about 5% a year for the last 10 years, split almost equally between resignations and retirements. During FY 06, out of about 800 permanent NPA employees, there were 22 employees aged 65 and older working full time, 12 of who had 40 or more years of service, and there were 57 employees with 30-39 years of service. If the past is any indication, many NPA employees will work beyond when they are eligible to retire.

Additionally, the average age of new hires in NPA during FY 06 was 38, compared to 36 (new hires without prior service) and 39 (those with prior service) government-wide. At least for now, for whatever reason, Millennials seem to either not be choosing, or are not being chosen by, the federal sector.

One reason might be that many positions are in the senior grades, requiring experience and education. Another reason (according to OPM) is that older workers are turning (or returning) to the federal service for better jobs, pay, and retirement benefits.

Provided our budget allows for replacement hires and continues to allow new positions, the NPA will

likely find itself increasingly in competition with other agencies and private employers for younger talent.

The two younger generations tend to have different approaches, skill sets, and expectations about work than Boomers and Traditionalists. Probably two of the primary differences are the expectation for a balance between personal life and work life and the expectation that work will be both rewarding and fun.

Technological know-how, teamwork, recognition, feedback, personal fulfillment, flexibility, comfort with diversity, expectations of steady if not rapid advancement, and opportunities for training, are other general characteristics of these generations.

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Successfully marketing jobs to the Millennial and Gen X generations requires a different approach from what has been used in the past.
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A Taste of the NPA!



Alvin Harding, Jr.
 Lincoln, NE

Alvin Harding, Jr. is the first contributor to a new "Recipe Corner" where we hope to share ethnic and regional recipes from employees across the NPA. Alvin retired after serving 25 years in the U.S. Navy and has been the Safety &

Occupational Health Specialist at the ARS- Lincoln Location since 1996. He was born and raised in southern Louisiana where shrimp is a common ingredient found in the region's famous Cajun and Creole cuisine. "It's not all about heat and spice," he says, "and if you think you don't like eggplant, try this recipe."

EGGPLANT with SHRIMP or HAM

- 1 1/2 Pound eggplant
- 2 Cups shrimp or ham
- 1/4 Cup chopped onion
- 2 Tablespoons chopped green pepper
- 1 Clove garlic, minced
- 1 Cup soft bread crumbs
- 1 Cup buttered bread crumbs
- 2 Tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1/2 Teaspoon salt
- 1/4 Teaspoon pepper

Split eggplant. Cook covered, in boiling water, until slightly tender. Remove and drain. Scoop out pulp, leaving 1/4-inch shells. Set shells aside. Chop pulp. Melt butter; add pulp, onion, green pepper and garlic. Sauté until onion is transparent. Chop shrimp or ham, add with bread crumbs, salt and pepper to onion mixture. Spoon blended mixture into shells. Cover with buttered bread crumbs. Bake in 375-degree oven for 20 to 30 minutes. ■

Institutional Wisdom

• Special Feature •

It wasn't hard to find Northern Plains personnel who have been with the ARS for 20 years, or more, since our annual employee turnover rate is only around five percent. It may have taken a little more persuasion to get them to share their "institutional wisdom" ... what they've witnessed, why they've stayed, and what they might advise a newcomer ... but they have done so graciously and freely, and we thank them.

Participating in this exchange are:

Veteran technicians:

- *Ellen Klomps (22 yrs)
of Logan, UT*
- *Glen Trostle (27 yrs)
of Logan, UT*
- *Brian Barnett (23 yrs)
of Manhattan, KS*

Veteran support staff:

- *Louise Dalton (42 yrs)
of Ft. Collins, CO*
- *Barb Marn (35 yrs)
of Manhattan, KS*

Veteran scientists:

- *Lynn James (~50 yrs)
of Logan, UT*
- *Jeff Pederson (20 yrs)
of Lincoln, NB*

Note: Answers are paraphrased except when in quotations.

Long-time NPA Employees Reflect on Workplace Changes - Good and Bad

By Theresa L. Pitts-Singer and JoAnne Gresens

Q *What are the biggest changes you have observed in the ARS workplace/workforce?*

TECHNICIANS

Ellen and Glen: Changes for the better are that safety rules and regulations are more formalized, scientists are more sensitive to "real" customer needs, and a new Logan building was made with input from technical staff so that it is work-friendly. Changes for the worse have been a promotion/hiring emphasis on the level of education rather than the years of experience, research is more influenced by outside agents making for "less proactive and more reactive research," and congress has gotten slow about resolving the budget.

Brian: Although our budget has suffered the last couple of years, we still have good support in comparison to our university partners. There's been a de-emphasis on "farm work/studies" with a reorientation towards industries that might provide funding. Emphasis on security has changed the way we do business. It's not bad, but can be a nuisance once in awhile. There are more administrative procedures and policies these days and "I feel a disconnect because so many seem more of a hindrance than a help."

SUPPORT STAFF

Louise: Computers. Email and all the electronic gadgets keep administrators in contact. For example, Sharepoint is great. However, because of all the technology, there is more stress that causes more illness. Safety issues have also changed and one has to be aware of what is going on around oneself.

Barb: There are definitely more non-

ARS workers onsite than there used to be. Scientists collaborate extensively and sponsor or mentor more graduate students and visiting scientists than ever before. Our (Manhattan) workforce is fairly diverse because of that, but we lost half of our female ARS scientists and "if my math serves me right, that leaves us with one." Purchase cards are a major change. We used to have a lot of charge accounts set up locally and an imprest fund to cover others. Through CATS, fund holders can now get a status of funds whenever they want which results in fewer surprises.

Years ago, if a family member became ill, you almost hoped it was a communicable disease so you didn't have to use annual leave...which was pretty much non-existent, anyway, if you had small children. Family leave has been a positive change.

SCIENTISTS

Lynn: In the last ten years or so there has been a major shift to increased accountability and oversight, which has resulted in new regulations, policies and procedures. This can be seen in how and why research is conducted. For instance, an increased emphasis has been placed on research outcomes and performance. In addition, since 9/11 the demands for ever-increasing physical and cyber security systems are seemingly never-ending. Together, these shifts have resulted in a steady drain of resources – time, people, and funding – away from science.

Jeff: There aren't as many 80 hour work weeks as there used to be. Some PIs still put in lots of hours, while others spend more time with family or other activities. Flextime is good and allows for that.

Workplace Changes... *Continued from page 4*



*Barb Marn - 35 years
 Manhattan, KS*



*Brian Barnett - 23 years
 Manhattan, KS*



*Jeff Pederson - 20 years
 Lincoln, NB*



*Glen Trostle - 27 years
 Logan, UT*

Not Pictured
*Louise Dalton - 42 yrs
 Ft. Collins, CO*

*Lynn James - ~50 yrs
 Logan, UT*



*Ellen Klomps - 22 years
 Logan, UT*

E-mail is both good and bad. It allows you to spread the good word, but it can take a lot of time. I don't appreciate getting electronic requests for information on "everything I know about a certain topic" for someone's term paper, knowing the request was sent as a mass mailing. I do enjoy helping those individuals that are obviously doing their own legwork.

The workforce population here, not just federal employees, has representation from most groups of race/ethnicity. There's a big potential shift in future scientists based on numbers of women entering science fields. Probably half of the (agronomy) graduate students are female.

I get along with my RL just fine, but one big improvement is...not having to share a hotel room with him while on travel!

Q *Why did you stay with ARS all of these years?*

TECHNICIANS

Ellen and Glen: The work (with bees) is pleasing, challenging, ever-changing and thus offers many learning experiences.

Money is not the highest priority for staying at the job. If working this job was not possible, a new career would not be in science.

Brian: "Just look around at today's unstable job market." I enjoy the work, and the benefits are good, plus our renovated facility, in spite of some glitches, makes this a nice place to work.

SUPPORT STAFF

Louise: "...Due to my husband's job at the time, I took what was available in the area [Weslaco, TX] and actually liked it. When we moved to CO, I transferred and was really glad to stay with ARS. There are always some restrictions when you have a family but I don't regret any of that...I enjoy what I do and always have, plus I have been lucky enough to have good people to work with all these years. [I've] never let the few exceptions to that bother me. As long as I feel good, I intend to work. My husband is not too happy about it but is resigned to it at this point. Money doesn't hurt anything, either, even though people tell me that it's not worth working after about 42 years. That depends on why you are working. I just like it."

(Continued on page 6)

EAP: Valuable Benefit Often Overlooked

By Missy Stuart

As federal employees we all know there are a number of benefits we all value. Some of the major benefits include health insurance, life insurance, the federal employee retirement system, the thrift savings program, and the list goes on. Another benefit to you, as a federal employee, that may be under-utilized is the Employee Assistance Program, or EAP, which is offered through the Federal Occupational Health (FOA) and funded through the NPA Area Office.

Employees in the NPA can access a variety of services through the EAP, including personal counseling (individual, family, couples), crisis intervention, work issues, and information on a broad range of topics from financial planning, to legal advice, to pet care and just about anything in between. Let's face it; the demands between work and home are never clearly delineated and the balance between the two can be daunting at best. The EAP can also provide assistance to supervisors in dealing with interpersonal and/or behavioral issues with or among employees.

At minimum, EAP can provide you with information on a multitude of topics, and at maximum can help you by referral or direct counseling during a crisis situation. The program is free to you as an ARS/NPA employee and is often free to your immediate family members as well. Services are confidential, and assistance is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Employees can receive a limited number of free sessions (typically three visits). Most insurance plans will cover any additional sessions. EAP counseling sessions occur in your area by licensed providers on your schedule.

The best way to get more information on the program and the multitude of topics covered is to visit the website at www.foh4you.com, or call 1-800-222-0364. Remember, they are available 24/7 and its free!! ■

Workplace Changes...

Continued from page 5

Barb: This is a very transient town, between the university and the military, but we maintain a stable employee base at GMPRC. It's allowed me to develop strong working relationships with coworkers and to meet people from all over the world. My husband has taught in the local school system for many years and this is where we raised our family.

SCIENTISTS

Lynn: "I liked it. I aligned myself more with [the customers]."

Jeff: The biggest shift in technology has been the development of molecular biology, allowing much deeper investigation. ARS is very responsive to new technologies and supportive of scientists utilizing new technologies in their research. Also, ARS clearly outlines what you have to do in order to succeed and reach your professional goals. Over the last twenty years, RPES

has gotten better and better. As ARS scientists, we are all raising young professionals. The greatest impact, personally, from nurturing students from diverse backgrounds is that it's fun!

Q *What advice would you give to a new ARS employee?*

TECHNICIANS

Ellen and Glen: Just put up with the bureaucracy and "don't sweat the small stuff." Try to be understanding of the rationale behind the rule; there is usually a good reason for it. You will unknowingly break rules, but mistakes are expected and just try to do your best to learn and comply.

Brian: Establish your career path early on. At some point you need to weigh in on what's most important to you, whether it's chasing a bigger paycheck with another agency or staying in a

community where you might have family ties, a family to raise or a spouse with a career of his/her own.

SUPPORT STAFF

Louise: "Do the best that you can possibly do, no matter what the job is. And don't take things personally. Treat others like you would like to be treated. Don't lose your sense of humor."

Barb: Everything is subject to change. Just "go with the flow".

SCIENTISTS

Lynn: "Never forget your constituency and support, or they will forget you...you share with them." Get them involved with older staff early on. "These kids need to come and talk to me first."

Jeff: "All you need to know is what your job is and do it well." ■

Changing Faces...

Continued from page 3

Whether the complexity of rules and regulations, layers of bureaucracy, and the rigidity of the pay and grade systems are impediments to attracting the Millennial and Gen X generations remains to be seen. Probably one of the biggest challenges is to convince Millennials and Xers that the federal sector in general and NPA in particular offer a wealth of opportunities in an engaging and rewarding environment, despite the bureaucracy.

Successfully marketing jobs to the Millennial and Gen X generations requires a different approach from what has been used in the past.

Some suggested strategies are:

- Write an announcement that has some pizzazz (don't simply copy the job description jargon);
- Post jobs on sites such as www.careerbuilder.com, www.monster.com, and www.craigslist.com (for locations in larger cities);
- Post jobs on location web sites and make the sites interactive;
- List a contact person who can enthusiastically describe the job, location, and community; and
- Move quickly, especially from receiving the cert to conducting the interviews and making an offer.

- Finally, truly embrace EEO by advertising as widely as possible, considering all qualified applicants, and moving away from preferring candidates who have some connection to the location.

The bottom line is that these generations use technology and turn to the Internet for entertainment, news, jobs, staying in touch, buying and selling, blogging, social networking, and anything else that can be done on-line. Go where your audience goes, work to their strengths and interests, and market aggressively.

Incorporating these strategies will help ensure that the NPA will continue to recruit and retain a smart, motivated, and productive workforce. ■

Diversity Workshops Provide Insights for Employees

Discovering Diversity in Northern Colorado

By Barbara King

Women's safety, Buddhism, disabilities, end of life decisions, and cultural outreach may not seem to have a common thread. Yet, on a warm spring day in April, about 200 federal employees spent the day on the NRRC campus in Fort Collins, CO learning about these and other faces of diversity during the bi-annual event "Discovering Diversity in Northern Colorado." This day-long event included opening and closing sessions, a mayoral proclamation, morning and afternoon concurrent workshops, a catered lunch, entertainment, and even a silent auction.

Workshop topics were: What is it Like to Be an Immigrant?; Domestic Violence in the Workplace; Buddhism—It's Unity and Diversity; Five Wishes at the End of Life; Ancient Healing Modalities—Modern Alternative Medicine; Yoga; Consumer Credit Issues; A Journey to Understanding—Native Americans in the 21st Century; Intercultural Competence—One Key to a Thriving Organization; Outreaching to a Latino/Diverse Community; Disabled Persons Successfully Working With Government Agencies; a showing of the "Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes" video; Long Term Care—Understanding Your Options; A Diverse Conversation: Gays, Lesbians, Bisexual and Transgendered in Our Community; Muslim Americans—Still Feeling the Backlash;

Not in Our Town—Anti-Discrimination Forum, and Identity Theft and Seniors. American Indian drummers and Mexican and Middle Eastern (belly) dancers provided the entertainment.

This mini-conference is sponsored by the Larimer County Federal Employees Board, and is designed to celebrate diversity as well as raise funds for scholarships for dependents of federal employees. This year, nearly \$6,000 was raised for the scholarship fund, most of which was revenue from the \$20.00 registration/tuition fee for each participant. The planning committee included representatives from five federal agencies and one private employer. This latest event was by far the best attended, and evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. ■

Native American Intern Workshop held at UTTC

By Beth Redlin

Today is a good day! (And it was.) The traditional greeting, delivered in the Lakota language, opened the 2007 Internship Cultural Awareness Workshop for the USDA-ARS Northern Plains Area. The workshop, held at the United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, ND, last May included more than 30 NPA location participants and the UTTC students they will be hosting under this year's NPA Native American Internship Program. Instituted last year, the workshop is designed to educate ARS location staff/researchers on cultural and historical differences that could impact the student-mentor relationship in the program.

reinforcement for those who had participated in the inaugural workshop the previous year. The day brought into focus the impact Native American history, beliefs and cultural practices have on both how Native Americans view Western science and the scientific contributions they themselves have made.

The workshop focused on four different areas and asked the ARS participants to step outside the familiar Western world view and examine the Native American tradition and experience from an Indian perspective. Areas of discussion included: 1) Who is an Indian? 2) Land issues 3) Indian cultural features, and 4) How Indian People View Research. Presenters included UTTC administrators and faculty, including Dr. Harriet Skye, Intertribal Programs VP; Dr. David M. Gipp, UTTC President; Dr. Phil Baird, UTTC Academic VP, Karen Paetz, UTTC Land Grant

Director, Lisa Colombe, Tribal Environmental Science Instructor, and Dr. Cheryl Long Feather, Research Director.

The question "Who is an Indian?" was posed by Dr. Baird. The answers include everything from familial relationships to land to blood quantum. Baird noted that there are over 500 recognized Tribes in the United States, and that each Tribe has its own governmental structure, as well as its own cultural identity. Additionally, Baird noted that each Tribe has its own definition of what constitutes Tribal membership (for instance blood quantum, family lineage, Tribal recognition, or some combination), and that cultural traditions vary among Tribes. Major issues in Indian country include Trust lands, Tribal enrollment (especially because enrollment relates directly to land ownership and related

It was an eye-opening day for new ARS participants and a valuable

Native American Intern Workshop... *Continued from page 7*

benefits as well as to the continuation of Tribes), and Reservation versus non-Reservation experiences and affiliations.

In short, there is not one definition for the question "Who is an Indian?"

Land issues are major concerns within Indian country, especially since much Reservation land has been sold to non-Indians. The importance of Tribal land cannot be overstated, and the issues are complex and tied to history and to the future of Indian culture. The UTTC has prepared a comprehensive video on Indian Land Tenure, and each Location was given a copy.

Several of the speakers addressed some cultural differences between the dominant (White) culture and Indian cultures. Chief among those differences are communication styles, work styles, kinship/family definitions, and how research is viewed. In terms of communication, eye contact and silence are two styles where Indians and non-Indians may have different meanings. For example, in some Indian cultures, maintaining eye contact is seen as disrespectful, while in many non-Indian cultures maintaining eye contact is interpreted as engaging with the other person and also demonstrates sincerity. Silence in some Indian cultures is used to convey disagreement, while in many non-Indian cultures silence is interpreted as agreement. The speakers advised the ARS participants to always strive to communicate with one another as individuals, and "check things out" personally with their Intern rather than make assumptions based on stereotypes. That same message of "checking things out" was also conveyed to the students as part of the application process. As Ms. Lisa Colombe said, "Communicate, communicate, communicate!"

Work styles, especially in relation to time, is another area that may result in some confusion between Indian and non-Indian cultures. "Indian time,"



2007 NPA Native American Intern April Blackbird (right) and Sidney, MT-ARS summer student Rebecca Kollman collect soil samples from a Montana sugar beet field to measure the persistence of biocontrol fungal field applications against the sugarbeet root maggot.

while often used in a dismissive or derogatory fashion by non-Indians, is not about being late, the presenters explained, rather it's a reflection of the Native American world view that focuses on the "long-term" rather than the short-term. It means things will get done when they're meant to get done and when all those who should be involved have been consulted or are present. However, with that said, the presenters stressed that Interns have been made aware of the importance of being reliable, and contacting their supervisor if they will not be at work.

Kinship and family definitions with Indian culture often is more expansive than that found in non-Indian cultures. For example, immediate family in non-Indian cultures is typically limited to the nuclear family (parents, children, and perhaps grandparents), while within many Indian cultures family includes parents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and even friends and neighbors.

For instance, under a close-knit tribal family system individuals have more than one mother and father as their aunts and uncles are also considered their parents. By the same token, one's nieces and nephews are also one's daughters and sons, and one's cousins are one's brothers and sisters. The family's central role in the lives of many Native American students is evident in other ways as well. For example, students participating in an internship program will often bring other family members to live with them. Or, because of the large extended family system, an Intern's child or children may stay with another family member during the Internship period.

While differences like these exist, the presenters also pointed out that Native American students are like any other full-time students, desiring to know what is expected of them up front.

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Native American Intern Workshop... *Continued from page 8*

For many students the Internship may be the first job outside of family and/or Tribal connections, and there will likely be some transitional issues for Interns as they learn not only the job but the location culture and expectations.

A Native Research Paradigm

In addition to addressing cultural differences evident in everyday life, the UTTC workshop also specifically addressed differences in Western and Indian views of science and research that, again, could impact the intern-mentor relationship. Because of early abuses, such as the use of faulty research to “prove” Native Americans had lower IQs or to justify taking children from their families and placing them in boarding schools, “research still carries a stigma in Indian country,” according to UTTC Research Director Dr. Cheryl Long Feather. But Native Americans have begun to reclaim their own historical research process. “We’re nosy people,” she said, adding that early Native Americans learned much about health and medicine, animal and human behavior, astronomy and agriculture as a result of their curiosity and their desire to improve the lot of their community.

Native Science, she says, is about the interrelatedness of science and the natural world, and also about how Native Americans view research. In Indian culture, research is valued for how it can be applied to benefit the community – “What question do we need to answer to make our situation better?” Scholarly knowledge is not itself sufficient reason to undertake a new study unless it will reasonably lead to improved conditions. And it’s not just the findings that have to be of benefit to the community, but also the process used to reach those findings.

In many Tribes, the Elders play an important role in nearly all Tribal activities, and especially so with

research initiatives. Accordingly, any research that will be conducted on Tribal lands or with Indian people must go through each Tribal/Reservation Elders and/or Tribal Council.



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The underpinnings of the Native-based research protocol being taught to students at UTTC starts with the scientific method, Long Feather says, but is premised on essentially Native concepts of science. It’s a circular model made up of eight parts:

Inquiry – involves prayer, reflection, ceremony; the goal is to avoid unintended negative repercussions of research.

Exploration – includes a literature search along with researching cultural

perspective, history, impact and implications.

Causality – clarifies and determines the research question and the relationships impacted by the line of inquiry and the outcome of the project.

Approach or Methods – incorporates both scientific and cultural considerations. New scientific approaches such as DNA testing may need additional reflection, consultation and prayer regarding their use.

Action - research is conducted in a respectful manner that takes into consideration cultural protocols and frames of reference for collecting and interpreting data.

Analyzing the data – analysis uses a cultural framework, and considers how interpretations might differ between Western science and Native understandings and how those differences can be resolved.

Determining place – a unique concept that requires reflection and discussion of the “place” in the community for the results or findings, i.e., are they appropriate, helpful or useful to the community? Here the protocol can vary significantly from the scientific method in that the research could be dropped, i.e., not published, if the findings are determined to be inappropriate or harmful, or just of no use/value to the community.

Sharing – research results are conveyed through Western and Native protocols, such as publishing the findings, talking to and with the community regarding the implications and/or conducting special ceremonies, and asks the question of “what further research do these findings merit?” which leads naturally to step 1, Inquiry, and the process begins anew. ■



1. Ride 'em, Cowboy!...but where?



2. (Re)-facing government property at?

Where in the NPA?

How well do you know your Area?
Can you identify which locations
these characters come from?

(Answers on page 10.)

Show your own location pride!
Share your pictures of scenic
landmarks, fun festivities or
occupational oddities that make
your location uniquely you!

(See Answers panel for details.)

Best Place to Work.... *Continued from page 1*

Personal fulfillment. This was the # 1 factor in determining workplace satisfaction. This concept may mean different things to different people. I have thought about this concept and the only thing I came up with was the following: To me, personal fulfillment comes when our research team can prove a hypothesis, and what we prove can be used by the producer. I enjoy my job and draw great satisfaction from it.

Strong sense of mission. The mission of the USMARC is clear: "Develop scientific information and new technology to solve high priority problems for the U.S. beef, sheep, and swine industries." We strive to accomplish this mission.

Collaboration. At the USMARC we have the critical mass needed to pursue almost any objective. We have scientists working on most areas of livestock production and we interact frequently. There must be very few projects (if any), where only one scientist is involved. Most are interdisciplinary teams working to tackle specific problems. We also collaborate with other institutions (national and international) that have produced excellent results.

Freedom to do your own research. Isn't it great? I can do whatever I want. Of course it has to be within the USMARC

mission statement, but, isn't that why I am here? You bet!! I get to do the research I am interested in and have a great time doing it.

Surrounding environment reasonably priced. Unless you live in Fort Collins, CO (my apologies for picking on you), or in a huge mansion in your community, I think we can all agree that most NPA research locations are in reasonably priced locations. Clay Center is no exception; we can get the most out of our money.

Research resources. For some reason this factor was listed as a weakness for the Center. We have excellent animal resources (one of the best, if not the best in the world). We have female populations of approximately 6,800 cattle, 3,200 sheep, and 700 litters of pigs. We also have an adequate source of funding (from ARS). From my perspective, this is one of the strengths of the USMARC, not a weakness as it was published.

Geographical location. My guess is that people working in Fort Collins, CO (here I go again picking on the people working in Fort Collins), wouldn't complain about this factor because they live in a place where they have many things to do. Well, neither do I. Clay Center,

Nebraska, (for many of you) is in the middle of nowhere. The USMARC is far from many "points of interest", but the surrounding communities are great places to raise a family, fish (yes, we do have water reservoirs), hunt, etc. It is even a great place to do research. Why? If you have to ask this question you obviously have never visited the USMARC. There is nothing surrounding the USMARC, therefore, when you are here you either do your job or get bored to death. I would rather be doing something productive. Of course, if your idea of a great location is wherever there is an amusement park, then this is not where you would want to work.

Teaching or mentoring. This is not a USMARC strength because not all of us have students working with us. Not all of us do teaching or mentoring on a regular basis, but we enjoy the little that we do.

After reviewing all these factors on why USMARC is one of the best places to work, I don't know why we would have to limit them to the Center. If I am not mistaken, these factors apply to most NPA-ARS research facility locations. We have a great place to work. ■



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Where in the NPA? - Answer Key
1. This cowboy takes flight at the University of Wyoming in Laramie.
2. ARS-Miles City, MT Technicians Brooke Ship and Sue Reil decided to liven up this hay/silage wrap with a little creative face-painting.
Share Your Favorite Pictures!
E-mail your photos and captions to Barbara King or Beth Redlin (addresses on this page).

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