



We the People THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION

Directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress.

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History, Culture and Government Taught in Navajo Nation Experience Seminar, Sept. 26–28

CHINLE, Ariz. – Thirty educators from 14 states will meet in Chinle this weekend to immerse themselves in Navajo history, culture and government during The Navajo Nation Experience, Sept. 26–28. Sponsored by the Center for Civic Education, the three-day seminar includes lectures by Navajo leaders, historians and scholars, plus trips to important historic and cultural sites including Canyon de Chelly and Monument Valley.

“The Navajo Nation Experience gives teachers greater content knowledge about indigenous tribes and nations, a subject often not covered adequately in social studies classes,” said Robert S. Leming, director of the Center’s We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution program. “The seminar covers an important aspect of American history and challenges these educators to think about basic constitutional values in a new context. For example, citizenship has a different meaning to the Navajo and indigenous tribes than it does to the vast majority of Americans.”

Implemented nationally in upper elementary, middle and high schools, We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution teaches students the fundamental principles and history of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. More than 30 million students and 81,000 teachers have participated in the program since its inception in 1987. We the People is funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by Congress, and is directed by the Center for Civic Education.

The Navajo Nation Experience was initiated in 2008 to provide classroom teachers a counterpoint to the We the People book and materials. “Teachers gain a deeper understanding of the American

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colonies, expansion of rights, the federal system and the idea of citizenship through the perspective of the American Indian,” noted Leming. “This experience in turn enriches their students’ understanding of our country’s fundamental constitutional principles.”

These issues are examined in “Navajo Citizenship and Constitutional Law,” a lecture by Professor David Wilkins of the University of Minnesota. Wilkins teaches and writes in the areas of comparative politics, American political theory, federal Indian policy, tribal government, and the history of colonialism and native peoples.

Wilkins is joined by the following Navajo leaders, American Indian historians, and Constitutional scholars:

- Timothy Begaye, chair and faculty administrator, Center for Dine Teacher Education, Dine College
- Jennifer Denetdale, history professor, Northern Arizona University
- Laverne Garnenez, law clerk, Navajo Nation Supreme Court
- Peter Iverson, history professor, Arizona State University
- Robert Leming, director, We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution

The content sessions are enhanced by trips to Canyon de Chelly and Monument Valley, where teachers study Navajo architecture, artifacts and rock imagery and witness the beauty and grand scale of the landscape. “The excursions provide an important cultural and spiritual reference to Navajo history that cannot be gleaned from a book,” Leming explained.

About the Center for Civic Education (www.civiced.org)

The Center for Civic Education is an educational, nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering the development of informed, responsible participation in civic life by citizens committed to the values and principles fundamental to American constitutional democracy. The Center has offices in Washington, D.C., and Calabasas, Calif.