

Two-Time Grammy Award Winner Shares his Culture with Southwest Region

Photos and story by Joe Early



Mirabal is described as a Native American "Renaissance man." Traveling all over the world to perform, Mirabal has many talents and is an internationally recognized musician and composer. He is also known as a painter, master craftsman, poet, actor, screenwriter, horseman and farmer.

The Southwest Region had the honor of hearing from New Mexico native and two-time Grammy Award winner, Robert Mirabal, as he spoke of his Pueblo heritage through music and words. Mirabal maintains a traditional lifestyle, *"keeping the centuries-old customs of the Taos Pueblo people."*

Through arrangements made by Native American Special Emphasis Coordinator, Jacqueline Early, Mr. Mirabal graciously donated his time and talents to perform for and educate the employees about the spiritual and cultural connection of the Native people to the land and natural resources that the Service works to protect and conserve.

Mr. Mirabal spoke of how we are all related, not only as human beings, but people of the earth and that we need to work together to preserve it for future generations. He also thanked the Service for working on mutual conservation goals and encouraged the continued protection of fish, wildlife and natural resources.

A special moment in the presentation was when Mr. Mirabal referenced his admiration for the Service's logo. In the logo he saw a mutual connection to his values and beliefs as the mallard duck and its feathers are used for cultural purposes. He also noted that the water, fish, and mountains resembled the sacred Blue Lake and lands adjacent to the Pueblo of Taos.



Opening the presentation, Jacqueline Garreaux-Early shared that she is of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Eagle Butte, South Dakota. She explained the importance of knowing one's lineage to Native Americans as she spoke of her Sioux/French heritage, the meaning of her Sioux name, and family relationship to several well known tribal leaders, including Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Chief Gall, Chief Bigfoot, Chief High Bear and Chief Charger. Jackie is married to the Southwest Region's Native American Liaison, Joe Early, who is from the Pueblo of Laguna.



Near the end of his presentation, Mr. Mirabal surprised everyone by giving his hand-made, "Indian time," watch made of leather and wood to one of the employees in the audience. The watch purposely doesn't have a face as it is one of the ways Mr. Mirabal explains an important aspect of the Native American culture. It also provided a way to share a little humor about the different perspectives held in relation to time and what it means to different cultures.

In addition to the presentation, a cultural sampling of venison, fry-bread, and Pueblo Indian cookies were shared to explain the cultural importance of food to the Native American people at gatherings.



"Indian watch" recipient, FWS SCEP Katie Boyer

Visit www.mirabal.com to learn more about Robert Mirabal