Dr. Bryan Brayboy Speaks on Indigenous Higher Education

by Ken Lokensgard

On September 27, Washington State University welcomed Dr. Bryan Brayboy to its Pullman campus. Dr. Brayboy was brought to campus by the College of Education to deliver the Suwyn Family Lecture on Native American Education. His visit was also sponsored by Native American Programs and the WSU Graduate School. Dr. Brayboy’s lecture was entitled “Tribal Nation Building: Listening to the Heart and Engaging Love in Indigenous Higher Education.” It was delivered to a completely full lecture hall. Attendees included students, faculty, and various members of Tribal communities.

Dr. Brayboy, who is a member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, is the President’s Professor and Borderlands Professor of Indigenous Education and Justice in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. He has written extensively on matters related to Native American undergraduates, graduates, and faculty.

Prior to the Suwyn Family Lecture, Dr. Brayboy attended various meetings with faculty and staff. He first visited Dr. Francene Watson’s “Diversity in Education” class. He also visited Dr. Zoe Strong’s graduate level “Indigenous Epistemology & Methodology” class. Besides being a faculty member of the Educational Psychology Program, Dr. Strong is the Plateau Center’s Research Fellow. During lunch, Dr. Brayboy met with Native American undergraduate and graduate students, including Tribal Nation Building Leadership students, in the Native American Center.

In the afternoon, Dr. Brayboy took the time to meet with WSU faculty and others, who are committed to mentoring Native American graduate students or conducting collaborative research with Tribes. The meeting was arranged by the Plateau Center and the Graduate School, as part of their work with the NSF–funded PNW–COSMOS Alliance to increase numbers of Native graduate students and advanced degree holders in STEM fields (NSF AGEP–T Grant # 1432932).

The highlight of the Dr. Brayboy’s visit, the Suwyn Family Lecture, took place after his meeting with Faculty. Before beginning his address, Dr. Brayboy was formally welcomed to the region by Nakia Williamson, Cultural Resources Director for the Nez Perce Tribe. During his inspiring talk, Dr. Brayboy identified ways in which Higher Education can contribute to nation building, a process through which tribes are strengthening their communities and expanding their sovereignty. Upon conclusion, the College of Education gifted Dr. Brayboy a beautiful Pendleton, which will serve as a reminder of his trip to Washington State University.

The Plateau Center is grateful to the College of Education for arranging Dr. Brayboy’s visit and the Graduate School for helping to support it.