

# South Dakota National Guard

## Public Affairs Office

Phone: 605-737-6721 Email: [ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil](mailto:ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil) Web: [sd.ng.mil](http://sd.ng.mil)



### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## SD National Guard recognized for excellence in diversity

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. – The South Dakota Army National Guard won a National Guard Bureau Excellence in Diversity Award for fiscal year 2017 presented at the National Guard Diversity Training Workshop at the Professional Education Center at Camp Robinson, Oct. 24.

The NGB Excellence in Diversity Awards are presented to outstanding National Guard individuals, organizations, states and territories for significant contributions to diversity and inclusion initiatives.

For the second year in a row, the SDARNG received the award in the Army National Guard organization/unit category, which recognizes significant contributions to readiness with regard to participation, leadership, new initiatives, and exemplifies diversity of thought and inclusion of non-traditional leaders of all ranks.

“Enhancing diversity and inclusion has been one of my top priorities since being appointed to this position in 2011,” said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, SDNG adjutant general. “The closer that our units represent the overall demographics of the State of South Dakota, the better we will be.”

The SDARNG and its Army Diversity Council have led the state in diversity initiatives, along with other community-based organizations, and promoted broader diversity and cultural understanding. These initiatives have served to embed diversity in strategic initiatives, as well as within its force development and recruiting and retention marketing approaches, and showcase various internal and external diversity programs linking directly to unit combat readiness.

Several of these initiatives included: working with community partners to host cultural awareness events; increasing efforts to recruit and retain women and minorities; promoting a culture where all service members can achieve the highest levels of leadership; building allied nation partnerships during training exercises and events; and to develop, mentor and retain top talent reflective of the communities the National Guard serves.

“Engagement is the key, and with engagement comes increased cultural education and competence, which helps us be a more inclusive organization and thus reflective of our state,” said Carstin Jerzak, state manager of the SDNG Office of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. “When leadership challenges us to cross the lines of comfort because it’s the right thing to do – the whole organization will progress, inclusion will be broader and diversity will grow as a result.”

A SDARNG highlight event included the hosting of a Native American cultural awareness day during its annual Golden Coyote training exercise. The event featured a wacipi with ceremonial dancing and music, traditional food and artifacts, and informational booths, exhibits and craft classes. The event exposed more than 1,000 service members that participated in the exercise to Native American culture, customs and heritage.

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High resolution photos are available at [www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard](http://www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard)



**181104-Z-TL287-0001:** Senior leaders with the South Dakota National Guard and members of its Army Diversity Council proudly display the National Guard Bureau Excellence in Diversity Award at Camp Rapid, in Rapid City, S.D., Nov. 4, 2018. For the second year in a row, the SDARNG received the award in the Army National Guard organization/unit category, which recognizes significant contributions to readiness with regard to participation, leadership, new initiatives, and exemplifies diversity of thought and inclusion of non-traditional leaders of all ranks. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,** please contact the SDNG Public Affairs Office at (605) 737-6721 or e-mail [ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil](mailto:ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil)