

Five Questions with Melody Black and Graham Keenan

November is Native American Heritage Month, which is near and dear to Oklahoma as “Land of 39 Tribes,” and Chesapeake is proud to spotlight two of our Native American colleagues, Melody Black (Accounting/Supplier Quality – Supervisor) and Graham Keenan (HSE Compliance Assurance – Advisor).

In addition to her work at Chesapeake, most of Melody’s free time is spent with her family, supporting her two kids’ artistic interests and traveling. Graham also has two kids and a grandson. You can find him talking about baseball, mountain biking or barbequing in the backyard.

Melody – Your educational background is non-traditional for Chesapeake. How did you leverage your bachelor’s degree in apparel and textiles marketing management into a nearly 14-year career at the company?

My retail background taught me the value of hard work and dedication, qualities I think many people with a retail background possess. When I decided to pursue a job elsewhere, something I found appealing about Chesapeake was its corporate culture. I’ve been with Chesapeake for 13 years now, starting as an accountant. In my early interviews, I was able to pivot my retail management skills, including budgeting and people management, to my role in accounting. My unique experience allows me to see the potential in other non-traditional job candidates.

Graham – You’ve had a long career in environmental, health and safety that has taken you both across the U.S. and around the world. What interested you in this field and what keeps you passionately involved today?

I’ve been interested in this field since at least college when I studied environmental management. Working in EHS aligns my interest in being on the front end of environmental sustainability design without giving up technological advancements and progress. To me, progress and prevention/environmental protection are not mutually exclusive concepts.

I have seen the power of the U.S. industrial complex and the efficiencies that we have standardized. Oil and gas are critical, and the world needs reliable, low-cost energy. The challenge is, how do we get it safely to people and also drive environmental stewardship at the same time? This drives my passion to continually improve business processes to achieve that goal.

You collectively have 20 years of experience at Chesapeake. How do you describe your responsibilities today?

MB: I am on the Supplier Relations team, serving as a bridge between Chesapeake and our suppliers. We help to set up suppliers in our system and manage inquiries and billing questions. I work closely with the Supply Chain team, as well as other teams across the company, including Investigations and Security. I am currently pursuing a fraud certification at OCU, which will further enhance my ability to serve in this role.

I also manage our Supplier Diversity Program. Supplier diversity is self-reported, so we are encouraging our suppliers to provide additional information, which we are tracking to better understand how we can grow this program.



Operations Accounting Supervisor
Melody Black and her family



HSE Advisor Graham Keenan and
his family

GK: In my role, I get to assess, from an HSE perspective, all the company's business unit assets, which gives me a great overview of our systems and the opportunity to apply continual improvements via audit. I also work with a great team of people who are responsible for ushering the company through our responsibly sourced gas (RSG) certification process.

Native American Heritage Month is, in part, a celebration of the culture and traditions of the Native American people. Please tell us about your Native American heritage.

MB: I am a member of the Choctaw Nation on my dad's side. Growing up my family didn't talk about being Native American, and I struggle with that now. It almost feels like I need to "earn" my Native American lineage. This heritage is a part of me, but I'm having to seek it out and explore what it means vs. having grown up with it. We're trying to better educate our kids about their heritage, and we've been impressed with what they've learned in school through a group geared to teach Native American students about the culture, among other topics.

My family was born and raised in Oklahoma, and I'm very aware that I don't look Native American. It's taught me to be careful about judging others as you have no idea what the person across from you has been through or experienced. We can't put people in boxes.

GK: I was born and raised in Claremore, Oklahoma. I am Chickasaw and Chahta (Choctaw) on my father's side. As a family we celebrate our Chickasaw/Choctaw heritage through the many stories of our ancestors. The goal of both the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations emphasizes the importance of faith, family, community and the importance of learning and acquiring knowledge. We have instilled these principles in our children.

Lastly, in a month when we also celebrate gratitude, what are you thankful for at Chesapeake?

MB: I am most grateful for the people. I love coming to work every day because everyone is so supportive, both inside and outside of work. I have never been told "no," but rather encouraged to try. I also want to add that my team leadership, especially our male leaders, have been champions for the women on our team, and I appreciate that.

GK: I am grateful for the opportunity to share lessons learned through my diverse background. I am also proud to be part of the solution to the world's energy needs!

Interested in learning more about Native American culture? Oklahoma City's First Americans Museum shares the cultural diversity, history and contributions of 39 distinctive First American Nations in Oklahoma today. Chesapeake proudly supports this museum and its mission to promote awareness and education.