



Rose Martin (Nokia)

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The Passing of a Truly Iconic Woman and Native American Advocate

In 2005 Ada Deer came to speak at our Naperville campus during November. She has been an inspiration to me ever since the day I met her. She had a truly generous spirit.

Ada was a scholar and civil servant who was a member of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin. Ada was the first woman to lead the Bureau of Indian Affairs (1993) where she served for four years and helped strengthen federal protections and rights for hundreds of tribes. She remained active in academia and Democratic politics in the years before her death and was inducted into the National Native American Hall of Fame in 2019.

Ada was a trailblazer and fierce advocate for tribal sovereignty. She played a key role in reversing Termination Era policies of the 1950s that took away the Menominee people's federal tribal recognition.

She was born on the Menominee reservation in Keshena, Wisconsin and was the first member of her tribe to graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She went on to get a master's in social work from Columbia University. Ada was the first Native American woman from Wisconsin to run for Congress.

Ada Deer passed away on Tuesday at the age of 88. To her family, Ada is remembered as kind, generous and a calming presence. She will be missed.



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