

**Aerospace States Association – 2023 Annual Meeting & Policy Summit  
Boulder, CO**



---

**Colorado Lt. Governor,  
Dianne Primavera,  
Maryland Lt. Governor,  
Aruna Miller,  
Caribou Thunder Founder  
and C.E.O.,  
Rita Peterson**

---

There arises an increasing demand for advocacy, learning, and advancement with the continuous expansion of the aviation and aerospace sectors. The Aerospace States Association (ASA) comprises state lieutenant governors, governor-designated delegates, state lawmakers, representatives from territorial and tribal governments, as well as associate members hailing from aerospace enterprises, institutions, and academia, who come together for an annual gathering. The ASA unites the interests of aviation and aerospace within each state, aiming to enlighten state legislators about issues pertinent to their respective regions. It also facilitates networking opportunities that contribute to job creation and the expansion of economic development. Notably, the ASA stands as the sole organization dedicated exclusively to fostering dialogue and collaboration between state elected officials, the aerospace industry, academic institutions, and trade associations. Its primary objective is to ensure the continued competitiveness and advancement of aerospace sectors at both the state and federal levels.

At the 2023 ASA Annual Meeting and Policy Summit, the four-day event drew to a close with a session featuring a group of accomplished experts who emphasized the significance of the aerospace sector. One of the distinguished panelists chosen to address the audience was Rita Peterson, the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Caribou Thunder, a prominent global engineering services provider. The focal point of this panel discussion revolved around the future workforce requirements in the aerospace industry. With nearly two decades of experience in the field, Rita brings an abundance of knowledge, extensive expertise, and exemplary leadership in the aerospace sector.

During her tenure in National Security, Space, Deep Space, and the Intelligence Community, Rita has surmounted significant challenges within this field, positioning herself as one of the foremost industry figures today. Her journey has been marked by numerous tests, both triumphs

and setbacks, as well as a series of achievements. Nevertheless, her profound resilience has been cultivated through robust partnerships, commitment to compliance and security, a passion for innovation and technology, adaptability and agility, and a relentless dedication to ongoing learning and enhancement. For over a decade, she has proudly held the helm of a National Security engineering services small business, fervently dedicated to driving positive change within the Defense and Intelligence realms. Her passion lies in safeguarding our nation through the implementation of innovative solutions, ensuring the protection and security of our country with unwavering dedication.

“As an esteemed member of the Indigenous Community, I carry a profound connection to my ancestral heritage, fueling my unwavering commitment to empower and uplift Indigenous People. It is my fervent mission to pave the way for inclusivity by creating unprecedented opportunities for Indigenous talent within the National Security Industry, ultimately dismantling barriers and collectively building a future that shines brightly for all.” This passion has driven Rita to establish the philanthropic non-profit organization, Indigenous Minds. “Due to my personal background and observations, recognizing the need to support underserved communities, this organization is based on our beliefs and the importance of STEAMS (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math, and Spirituality).”

Caribou Thunder and Indigenous Minds are dedicated supporters of women aiming to break down barriers in their engineering careers, particularly in the context of National Security, Space, Deep Space, and the Intelligence Community. Our commitment lies in addressing societal and community requirements, acting as advocates, and fostering awareness on this important matter.

“I am passionate and committed to being part of the change that is desperately needed in the Indigenous communities.”

Rita's message is not only strong, bold, and courageous but also resonates deeply with industry partners and colleagues. “I invite you to unite and embark on this transformative journey alongside us. Let us collaborate, innovate, and pave the way for a future that not only ensures our collective security but also fosters diversity, equality, and excellence in every aspect of our endeavors.”



---

**Rita Peterson** speaking on  
*Future Aerospace Workforce Needs.*

---



CARIBOU THUNDER  
ENGINEERING SERVICES



---

**Caribou Thunder Chief Operating Officer, Tom Piffarero,  
Colorado Lt. Governor, Dianne Primavera,  
Caribou Thunder Founder and C.E.O., Rita Peterson,  
Caribou Thunder Technical Program Director, Ted Wallace**

---