

SAIGE Annual Report 2005

Letter from the National Chair:

Dear SAIGE members,

I was elected as your National Chair in November of 2004, and then formally installed in January of 2005. I had some very large shoes to fill as the retiring National Chairwoman Lori Windle was such an excellent leader. She served this organization with distinction and professionalism, and I am grateful for the path she blazed; it provided me and the current Board a great course to follow.

When I ran for this office, I laid out several goals that I hoped to see accomplished by SAIGE during my tenure. They were to increase membership in SAIGE, to enhance member services, to make SAIGE an even greater national voice on issues important to our members, and to reach out to Native youth. A lot has happened over the nine months since I began my term of office, so I would like to highlight some of the things the Board and dedicated members, like you, have accomplished in support of these goals.

Increasing our membership:

Through several fronts, we are strategically working to build our membership and it appears this is paying off as we have more than doubled SAIGE membership and we hope to see even more new members join through our National Training Conference in August.

• *We revised and enhanced the SAIGE website at www.saige.org.*

This was all done by one woman - Crystal Wallace. Crystal is our webmaster and she works tirelessly on behalf of all of you to provide a professional image of SAIGE. In fact, the website is often times the first "face" and first impression of our organization and it is a full time job making that impression a positive and informative one. Of course, we have no paid staff and Crystal is performing this service on top of her own full time job. Her work for SAIGE is a personal commitment and her payment is the gratitude of the Board and, we hope, some kind words from all of you.

• *We conducted our 2nd Annual National Training Conference (NTC).*

The 2005 National Training Conference Planning Committee Chair was Fredericka Joseph and she and her committee members are to be commended for an outstanding job! Conference attendees received a paid membership in their registration and through the NTC alone, we nearly doubled our membership in SAIGE!

• *We publicized SAIGE in a myriad of venues:*

- An article announcing our organization and soliciting membership appeared in the July 2005, Department of the Interior's newsletter, "People, Land, and Water".

- I was interviewed on the nationally syndicated Native America Calling radio program where I talked about the goals of SAIGE and our 2005 conference. Native America Calling is heard on more than 30 stations in the United States and in Canada by more than 37,000 listeners each week.

- I participated as a panel member in the National Training Conference of Federally-Employed Women (FEW) where 1800 participants were provided the opportunity to hear our message.

- I was the keynote speaker during American Indian Heritage Month at three different federal agency events where I talked about SAIGE and our organization's goals and services.

- Our Treasurer, Shana Greenberg, presented at the National Coalition for Equity in Public Service (NCEPS) Diversity Conference in Washington, DC where she also talked about SAIGE and what we have been up to. (You will see more on NCEPS later in this report).

Increasing member services:

• We have now established several standing committees and they have or will soon begin to work on putting products and/or services together for our members.

We encourage all of you to contact the chairs of these committees if you wish to help serve this organization by being involved; the committees and email addresses are listed on the SAIGE website under Organization.

• We are in the process of establishing a SAIGE scholarship fund to assist current AI/AN federal employees to gain credits toward a Bachelors, Masters or Doctorate degrees.

Recent OPM statistics show that American Indians have the lowest average grade level among Federal employees and fewer Indian employees have college degrees. We hope that this fund will assist SAIGE in turning these numbers around. You will soon receive information on this and how to apply in the coming months. This first year, we will be offering \$1000.00 worth of tuition assistance; we hope to significantly increase as our membership grows.

• We continue to provide vacancy announcements to our members so they are aware of and can share career advancement opportunities both inside and external to the federal government.

• We provide scholarship announcements so that our members can apply for scholarships to enhance their professional growth and development.

Members also share this information through their Native networks and with their family/friends to assist Native students in securing college scholarships.

• We provide an annual training conference focused on providing presentations and workshops which emphasize professional growth and development topics.

This year's conference will be held in Anchorage, Alaska at the Hotel Captain Cook from August 28-August 31st. We will soon begin registration and have pertinent information and online registration available from our website. Please keep an eye out and please help us to market this exciting training, recruitment, and networking opportunity!

• We assist organizations to set up SAIGE chapters within their agencies/bureaus/departments.

Currently, we have 4 organizations who have or are working on getting local SAIGE chapters recognized! *since my last writing, we now have 7 chapters being organized!

• We established a partnership with AVUE Technologies (see below) making their services available free of charge to our members

(resume building, KSA tips, Leadership competency helpers, etc.).

• *Recruit more young American Indians and Alaska Natives into careers with the Federal government.*

- SAIGE, in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency, held its first Youth Track as part of our Second National Training Conference. Ten American Indian and Alaska Native students were selected based on their applications and essays. They earned attendance to the 2005 conference. All were extremely talented individuals who represented our people well. Mentors were assigned to the students; they also attended a career session where they heard from different agencies about career opportunities and they met individually with agency representatives. We are hoping to secure enough funding so that these students can assist with our Youth Track for 2006 and provide a building block for this program. It is our goal to have our 2006 conference have a youth track involving two or three times the number of student participants; we hope you will encourage your organization to provide support to do this! Maybe you can provide travel funds for students or pay for a speaker?

- We have invited the Government Relations Council (GRC) of American Indians in Science and Engineering (AISES) organization to work with us to develop a national outreach and recruitment strategy for Native students interested in federal careers. While we anticipate GRC will want to have an emphasis on career fields related to Science and Engineering, it is SAIGE's goal to expand whatever strategy is built for our use overall in recruiting AI/AN students into careers with the federal government regardless of academic emphasis. It is also possible that the Department of Veteran Affairs, BLM, and Department of Defense may also participate in this forum.

Organizational/Administration:

- Conducted monthly conference call meetings of the board and a face-to-face board meeting at the conference of those able to attend.

- We will soon conduct an election to replace retiring board members and to fill out 2 year terms beginning in January of 2006. We are soliciting nominees and although slightly delayed, the election will be completed in January/February of 2006. *As you know, the election has occurred and I will send out a separate email to the list serve announcing our new Board. We are very excited about the caliber of people who represent all of you in SAIGE!

- We modified our bylaws to allow rotation of half the board members each year to maintain organizational knowledge on the board and continuity of action on issues before the board.

- We modified our bylaws to allow voting by associate members and to allow them to hold local chapter elected office.

- We updated our web site to enhance our professional image and access by others.

- We circulated information on the list serve concerning conferences, training, etc. to enhance professional and personal development opportunities for our members and the people and communities they serve.

Developed Partnerships:

- ***Provided support and funds to the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) "Embassy of Tribal Nations".***

NCAI has long envisioned establishing an "Embassy of Tribal Nations" and purchasing a building in our nation's capitol to house NCAI and related tribal organizations. SAIGE's National Chairwoman Cheryle Zwang presented NCAI President Tex Hall with a donation to their building fund at the 2005 National Training Conference. Congruent with our mission, SAIGE wanted to demonstrate our commitment to NCAI's vision of Tribal Nations having a strong and visible physical presence in Washington, D.C. The Embassy will provide a place for a national unified voice for Tribal Nations and promote greater public awareness of NCAI and Tribal governments and issues.

- ***SAIGE joined and signed an Memorandum of Agreement with the National Coalition for Equity in Public Service (NCEPS).***

NCEPS Board of Directors is comprised of the National Presidents of SAIGE, Federally Employed Women (FEW), Blacks in Government (BIG), Hispanic government employees (IMAGE, Inc.), and Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC). This partnership allows SAIGE time on the NTC agendas of each of these organizations where we can market our organization and strengthen our national presence and voice on matters important to Native American federal employees.

- ***SAIGE contributed to Hurricane Katrina aid efforts for Native People***

A number of Tribes in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama were affected by the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. SAIGE Board members voted to provide \$1000.00 to National Relief Charities (NRC), a tribally-focused organization which was heavily involved in efforts to assist Tribal Nations/individuals affected by the Hurricane. More information on this organization can be obtained at: www.nrcprograms.org We also encouraged our members to do the same as individuals and offered a number of mechanisms to do so: the National Congress of American Indians (www.ncai.org), the Red Cross and Salvation Army, and National Relief Charities (NRC).

- ***We signed a partnership agreement with AVUE Technologies.***

Under this agreement our members will be able to access and use Avue's services which include job announcements both within and outside federal government, helpful tips and templates for resume building, and helpful tips and templates for addressing Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs), among other things. Board members are working with AVUE right now to get the link established on SAIGE's website so that members can take advantage of these services right away. We also anticipate AVUE will be helping to sponsor SAIGE's 2006 Training conference in Anchorage and will be conducting workshops to assist members in using these powerful tools to enhance their professional growth and development.

- ***We are partnering with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop a national recruitment strategy to increase employment of American Indians and Alaska Natives within VA.***

We worked toward equitable and fair treatment of American Indians and Alaska Natives in government departments and agencies:

SAIGE Board members met with the Regional Administrator, Capitol Region, of the GSA regarding offensive murals in the EPA building in Washington, DC. We worked with the National Congress of American Indians and they passed a national resolution asking for removal of the murals; this resolution went to GSA. Through

these efforts, GSA began the Section 106 process to receive public comment on the disposition of the murals, including their potential removal. SAIGE and NCAI were invited to participate in this process as consulting parties and a letter was sent by SAIGE as part of the public comment process asking for removal of these offensive murals from the federal workplace and citing creation of a hostile work environment as a primary factor. We also solicited public comment on this subject from our membership and shared information on this subject to the membership of our NCEPS sister organizations at their national training conferences.

We developed and provided national training for Federal employees on American Indian and Alaska Native issues and their relationship to the federal government. SAIGE successfully held its 2nd annual National Training Conference (NTC) in Washington, DC, August 15-18, 2005, with over 160 attendees. The NTC focused on implementation of the SAIGE mission - to promote the development, recruitment, retention and advancement of American Indian and Alaska Native employees; to learn about and assist our respective agencies in the implementation of initiatives and programs which honor the unique Federal-Tribal relationship; and to provide a national forum for issues and topics affecting American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) federal employees and federal employees, in general.

Attendees were provided with plenty of learning and networking opportunities to enable them to develop professionally and to deliver quality public service. The training was approved by the Office of Personnel Management and the Department of Interior sponsored a pre-conference Diversity Forum in conjunction with the NTC.

The conference included a reception and cultural presentation of traditional dance, storytelling and native flute playing. SAIGE, in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), hosted its first Youth Track and ten AI/AN students were selected to participate in the NTC where they learned about careers in the federal government, were partnered with mentors, and participated in the general session as well as focused presentations targeting youth. Participants also heard from national leaders within and outside of government, including Tex Hall, President of the National Congress of American Indians and Chairman of the Mandan-Hidatsa Tribes; William Ragsdale, National Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); Annabelle Romero, National Director of the Office of Indian Programs for USDA; Ed Parisian, Acting Director for the BIA's Office of Indian Education; and Roger Willie, a nationally recognized Navajo actor and motivational speaker.

Summary: This was a brief summary of the many actions we have completed in 2005. I hope that you feel like you are part of a proactive and successful organization. Again, every organization is only as great as its members choose to make it so please find something that excites you in SAIGE and join in so that we all benefit from your skills and knowledge. We all have something unique to contribute and you will ultimately be making a difference in the lives of many AI/AN people if you step up and get involved!

Cheryle Cobell Zwang
SAIGE National Chairperson