



Society of American Indian
Government Employees

The Talking Leaf

FALL ISSUE

SAIGE Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2015

Message from the Chair, Fredericka Joseph



Greetings SAIGE Members!

As we draw down on 2015 I want to remind you that the SAIGE memberships run from October to October. If you joined in June or since then, we will extend your time through October so you do not need to rejoin until October of next year.

We will be announcing a call for candidates for the SAIGE Board. This occurs in November and the elections will take place in December. In order to be eligible to run for a Board of Director's seat you must be a member in good standing. If your membership is not current by the time that voting

begins, you will not be able to vote.

We will be electing several Board of Director's positions. If you think you would like to increase your participation or commitment to SAIGE by helping form the direction it takes in the future we encourage you to run for a board seat. When you serve on the board everyone is expected to volunteer their time and attend monthly meetings and serve on committees as we plan our National Training Program (NTP). As a personal note since I joined SAIGE in 2002 I have learned so much about the organization, served on a variety of committees, and served on the board as well as in officer positions. There is no greater satisfaction in giving to this organization than by producing and shaping how SAIGE moves forward each year through education and opportunities for our youth and developing programs such as the Warrior Society whose focus is our veterans. SAIGE recognizes that everyone's input is important and valued so because of this SAIGE has grown each year based

on what our membership and Director's suggest.

I also want to remind you that SAIGE is part of the Combined Federal Campaign family. Currently Federal Executive Boards and agencies are sending out announcements for events and activities that promote the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). These activities introduce Federal employees to non-profit organizations that they can support either by setting up a recurring payroll deduction or a single donation during 2016. The opportunity to sign up for CFC donations runs from September until December 15th. SAIGE is on the CFC for the upcoming 2016 donation year. We thank you for your support as these funds help SAIGE with the National Training Program as well as strengthen our organization. We encourage you to participate in the CFC and when making your decision to support an organization you will choose SAIGE. Our number is 26052.

Thank you!

Freddie Joseph



Youth Track Perspectives..

SAIGE conference Week, it's like the cool thing to do

By Nya Beasley, University of Oklahoma/SAIGE scholar



Nya Beasley.

this could be you...

When my boss first told me about the SAIGE scholarship opportunity for Native American college students/future leaders, and how it changed his life in many good ways, I couldn't turn it down. I knew I had to apply right away. Once I finished the application it was sent to JoAnn Brant, who is the wonderful Director of the Youth Track. In a matter of two days, JoAnn contacted

me, via email, with my scholarship acceptance to attend the conference in Minneapolis, MN. We exchanged contact numbers and JoAnn called that same day to congratulate me and explain what to bring and expect for the coming week. I felt comfort in her voice, as to let me know and I'm sure many other fellow students in the same position, that we were going to be taken care of, while away from home.

As the time to start this new journey was getting closer, JoAnn sent a follow-up email with a list of the participating students and our roommate assignments for the week. Thank goodness for Facebook, I was able to take a look at my future roommate and fellow scholar, who could determine my fate for that week (jokingly)...not saying it's the scariest thing that could happen. But sharing a room with another human-being is kind of a big deal, even if it is just a week. However, everyone seem pleased with their new roomies, at least from the looks of things, and as a matter of fact, today I can honestly say my roommate is now like a sister to me.

So, the week started with a beautiful dinner on a boat ride, right off the lake, where the meet and greet of all students and staff was held. Next a lovely bonfire to cap off the night with stories, laughter, and calmness. But the calmness would only last so long, at least that night, and then BAM!

We were forcefully awakened by our early morning alarms, set the night before to make sure there was no chance of missing anything, and the routine stuck for us. During the day, we would attend our proper classes, discussions, and had the privilege of hearing from various and inspiring guest speakers. In the beginning onto the very last day, we had a chance to work on a music video production as a group with the help from Dr. Martin Reinhardt, to create a song with instruments and photographs from each student,



Students with Dr. Martin Reinhardt.

sharing what education really means to us. We presented our final piece to the SAIGE community.

Likewise, our nights were happily spent with our new friends we made throughout the week, and luckily to keep our young minds busy, there were various activities ready for us to do, like an indoor Pool/Jacuzzi, bowling alley with an awesome arcade, huge casino, and a nice trail surrounding the resort. Essentially, our days were busy, but always educational, hands-on, and inspiring for us future leaders to go back to our communities and share what we'd taken with us. I am forever grateful for SAIGE and the people who make it all possible, it was/is one of my favorite experiences in my young life. It gives young Native American leaders a chance to grow as a person, build connections, develop long-time friendships, and most importantly, create opportunity to succeed in a society of certain inequalities, highly competitive, and ever-changing industries.

In excitement, I am planning on spending another wonderful week at SAIGE next year and meeting many more future leaders, and current leaders/employers. Honestly, I highly recommend this scholarship program to other fellow Native American college students, looking to

achieve future successes or even just a chance to make wonderful connections and life-long friends. Likewise, the people of SAIGE, like JoAnn Brant, Alex Grandon, and all of her amazing assistants, two in particular whom I work for back home in Oklahoma, Mr. Wes Wilson and Ms. Elizabeth.

Furthermore, I asked another student, Jasmine Grika (Minneapolis, MN) about her experience at SAIGE and what it meant to her. This is how she described her experience, "I would have to say was inspirational as well as motivational. Coming together to meet with youth across the nation, who want to make a positive difference within their communities was influential and to meet employees that have, are or going to create change was exciting. It is rare you see passion and success cross and that to me was the driving factor that helped push me to pursue my own work to help my community." I hope readers can see this and want to know more about SAIGE, know their purpose, raise awareness, and encourage other young Native American leaders to pursue their dreams or feel like they can to become influential.

Staying in Touch with the SAIGE Youth

By Stephanie Collier

During the summer of 2015, I arrived at the SAIGE Conference that was held in Minnesota. I was excited and nervous for the unexpected and being in a different state. Along the way I was able to meet many different Native American students who were like myself, representing their tribal communities back home and becoming ambassadors for the next younger generation of leaders. Throughout the conference I got to meet many different speakers who spoke with great wisdom of their life stories, how they overcame the typical stereotype of barriers and what they are doing to help Indian country today.

This was such an inspiration to many students and myself in seeing how these leaders have continued on with their education and not let any obstacles stand in their way. Hearing these speakers tell their stories has allowed me to see them in a different light; by being able to relate and share similar aspirations of wanting to great change and the betterment of my community. Listening to my peers tell their stories, all of us became closer towards the end. We all created stronger ties to one another by encouraging each other to stay in touch through various communications outlets.

As I reflected over the course of the SAIGE conference, it was my great privilege to be able to participate for the first time in an area that had so many empowering young leaders that will go far in helping Indian country. What I took away from the conference was a recharged heart and strength to continue on my journey to accomplish my dreams. I left with great friendship and admiration



Students with motivational speaker James Anderson.

for my fellow peers who will inspire others to follow in creating change. I am glad that I was able to share this wonderful experience in knowing that all of us are making a difference in someone's life by tearing down negativity and establishing positive outlooks.



Stephanie Collier, SAIGE Youth Track participant at Tribal Youth Gathering

SAIGE Warrior Society – Strong and Growing

By Danny J. Garceau, Director



2015 Military Meritorious Award winners.

The SAIGE Warrior Society had a successful year. Our membership numbers are strong and growing. We are gaining some diversity with our membership from throughout the government agencies. Our biggest growth is from the different branches of the armed services.



Dan King, Oneida.

http://07-H&dept_id=23265.

Our veterans program at the SAIGE NTP in Welch, MN was one of the best to date with the exceptional presentation by Dan King, Oneida, Viet Nam War veteran. His presentation was so strong that we will invite him back for an encore presentation in the near future. There was also an interest from many of the attendees on the video that was featured titled, *Way of the Warrior*. The video can be obtained by Vision Maker Media, http://visionmaker.semchor.com/product.asp?s=visionmaker&pf_id=WAYW-

The Warrior Society Honor Guard posted and retrieved colors again for this year's program and wore the black SAIGE veterans vest and new ball caps. This was also the first year that SAIGE conducted the Military Meritorious Awards program without the assistance of the Department of Defense. The 2015 Military Meritorious Award winners were: R. Wahkeitha Banes - United States Air Force, Edward J. Blauvelt - United States Air Force, Lawrence K. DeBoo - Army National Guard, Robert A. Holt - United States Coast Guard, Isaac P. Sandoval - United States Air Force, Weslynn K. Wooten - United States Air Force and Jessica L. Worriax - United States Navy.

Please help our past and present warriors by letting them know about the Warrior Society and encourage them to join. There is no additional cost to belong, you just need to be a SAIGE member in good standing and either currently serving in uniform or a veteran.

Working Together to Service Tribal Warriors

By Candy Klumpp, OKC VAMC and Mary Culley, OKC VA OTGR

The 2015 Inter-Tribal Veterans Stand Down was held in Clinton, OK on October 16, 2015. The following came together and collaborated collectively on this event: the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes, Delaware Nation, Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, VA Office of Tribal Government Relations and the Oklahoma VA Health Care System.

Over 300 individuals from the Lawton, Carnegie, Anadarko, Concho and Clinton Indian communities attended this great event. Speakers included Cheyenne and Arapaho Lt. Governor Cornell Sankey, Oklahoma City VA Assistant Director Edward Woody, Oklahoma City Area Inter-Tribal Health Board Director Jennifer Sheildchief-Gover, Oklahoma Military Department Cabinet Secretary Major General Myles Deering, Oklahoma Secretary of Native American Affairs Deputy Assistant Brian Hendrix, Seneca Scott, Oklahoma State Legislator, Wichita and Affiliated Tribes President Terri Parton, and RADM Kevin Meeks, OKC Area Director, HIS.

Representatives from approximately 55 federal, state and tribal organizations and services came to Clinton to provide



Photo: Cheyenne and Arapahoe Lt. Governor Cornell Sankey (center) with Buddy Bond Inter-Tribal Color Guard (left) and Kiowa Black Leggings Color Guard (right).

services on the spot, as well as to provide information on other services. Veterans received free haircuts, foot exams, hearing tests, dental services and eye exams to name a few. Veterans and Tribal personnel were able to exchange information and build relationships which will benefit our American Indian Veterans.

Utah SAIGE Chapter president attends national training program



Photo: Students at the annual SAIGE national training program stand on the beach of the Mississippi River. Credit: Coralee Mackay

Utah SAIGE chapter president Coralee Mackay recently traveled to Welch, Minnesota, to attend her second national training program. Annually, SAIGE hosts a week of learning, networking, speakers and activities that focuses on professional growth, leadership and fundamental Federal Indian Trust Responsibility topics. This year's theme was *Growing Native Leaders: Enhancing Our Seven Generations*.

The 2015 program focused on youth, continuing professional development and veterans. In her capacity as the official photographer for the event, Coralee was honored to work with each of these three tracks. "I was extremely impressed with the 51 youths selected to attend this year," she said. "Many spoke their native language fluently and were active in their communities."

Coralee said that she enjoyed the guest presenters. "One of the most motivational speakers I've ever heard was Mr. James Anderson," she said. James gave an animated presentation explaining that nothing is impossible with hard work and determination. "He emphasized the importance of education as the foundation to attaining their goals and dreams,"

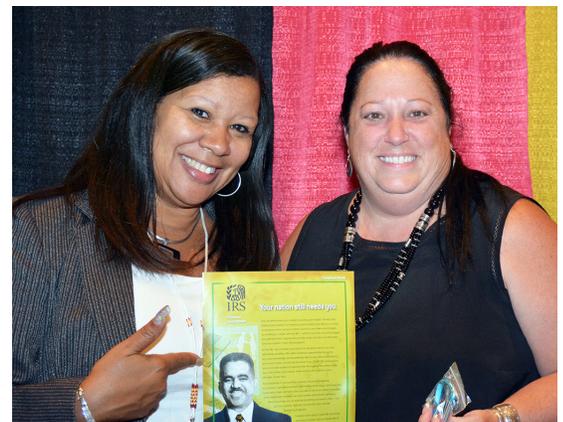
Coralee said. James came from a poor family that worked hard and became successful. His father, Dave Anderson, is member of the Choctaw/Chippewa tribes, an enrolled member of the Lac Courte Oreilles Lake Superior Band of Ojibwa of northwest Wisconsin and founder of Famous Dave's restaurants.

TE/GE Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion manager **Cynthia Dunn** presented two courses in professional development, *I Am an American Indian Special Emphasis Program Manager—Now What?* and *Career Planning for Leadership*. In her training classes, she focused on increasing opportunities and skills for minorities. "The individuals in your organization who can eliminate discriminatory practices are the managers and supervisors," she said. "They have the ultimate responsibility in EEO, diversity and inclusion. As a Special Emphasis program manager, you are the subject matter experts and staff advisors."

Coralee felt this year's training was another success. "The training I received was enlightening, powerful and spiritually recharging," she said. "The networking opportunities

for enhancing education for indigenous people are encouraging for our future generations." Cynthia couldn't agree more. "What another great training program," she said. "Great workshop topics, career fairs with native students and for the veterans, and fantastic sponsors and vendors. I look forward to being an active participant every year as lifetime member of SAIGE."

Article taken from Pg. 8 W&I offline
• August 2015 Ogden, Utah campus newsletter - d11764-e-2015-08-00.pdf



L to R: Cynthia Dunn and Coralee Mackay, who was the official photographer of the 2015 SAIGE NTP.

**Colorado Front Range (CFR)
Chapter Promoting SAIGE locally
and nationally**



Darius Smith at DFC Multicultural Day.

The CFR chapter participated in several American Indian events in Denver, CO as well as nationally. At the SAIGE NTP two of its members, Georgia Madrid and D.J. Lente-Watts were awarded with SAIGE achievement awards, and BOD members Lori Windle and Duane Matt were acknowledged for their service to SAIGE.



L to R: Akenabah Begay, Cisco Minthorn, and Georgia Madrid, CFR member at NCAI.

In July, CFR participated in the *Pathways to Respecting American Indian Civil Rights* conference. They staffed the SAIGE exhibit booth, participated in workshops, and Darius Smith participated in the planning committee. The keynote speaker was LaDonna Harris, President of Americans for Indian Opportunity. In September, Lori Windle and Darius Smith, participated at the Denver Federal Center

Multicultural Day Native American booth, and in October, Georgia Madrid and Carl Etsitty attended the National Congress of American Indians conference in San Diego, CA.

Karen Wilde, Tribal Liaison, National Park Service, Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, and SAIGE BOD, was the narrator for NOAA's *EO 13175 Tribal Consultation Handbook – Development, Guidance and Reporting* training module. The training module is now a part of the Commerce Learning Center that can be accessed by NOAA employees. Karen was asked by Georgia Madrid to do the voice over to be 508 compliant. Georgia heard Karen speak on the Sand Creek Massacre at many events, and thought she had the perfect voice, as well as the knowledge and background on tribal consultation. This project illustrated the collaborative effort between NPS and SAIGE. The module includes the SAIGE NTP as a resource for obtaining training in Federal Indian Law.

Reed Robinson Named American Indian Affairs Program Manager

Article from InsideNPS

Midwest Region has established an Office of American Indian Affairs and has selected Reed Robinson, deputy superintendent of Badlands National Park, as its first program manager.

“This reinforces our commitment to fulfill our trust responsibilities to tribal governments. Reed is the right person to help us continue charting a positive path forward with our tribal partners,” said Regional Director Cam Sholly.

The new office will work to ensure agency policies and actions respect tribal sovereignty and serve to build vital intercultural partnerships. In addition, the office will provide internal cultural competency training, government-to-government

consultation support for parks, and serve as the regional directorate’s lead advisor on American Indian affairs.

An enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe (Sicangu), Robinson is a 25-year veteran of the NPS, having served in eight other parks. Prior to Badlands, Robinson was the superintendent of Devils Tower National Monument (Bear Lodge).

“Historically, tribal people have felt isolated and trust has sometimes been impaired,” said Robinson, “so it is imperative we work to overcome barriers and create a vision together, one that takes us toward a more inspired and holistic form of tribal engagement. In my role as tribal liaison, I want to play a part in deepening the sense of connection between the original peoples of this country and the NPS in a good and sensitive way. I feel very honored, excited and humbled by this new



Reed Robinson, American Indian Affairs Program Manager.

responsibility.”

Robinson will have an office in the Rapid City area of South Dakota and will step into his new assignment on August 23rd.

STUDENT PROGRAMS ABOUND FOR AMERICAN INDIAN YOUTH

Southwest Conservation Corps



Ryan Aguilar, Zuni, at SAIGE.

Conservation Legacy's Southwest Conservation Corps has created opportunities for Native American youth to serve on their Ancestral Lands program since 2008.

This year, Conservation Legacy sent eight representatives to the SAIGE national training program in Welch, MN.

Seven NPS Career Institute Interns and Southwest Conservation Corps' Program Coordinator, Anthony Ciocco, attended the event, at which they had the opportunity to connect and network with Native youth and mentors from around the country. The conference was a great place for the interns to network and make connections to support them in their goals of bringing conservation opportunities to their communities. Each intern was able to speak to the conference attendees about their stories, goals, and accomplishments.



Southwest Conservation Corps presentation at SAIGE.

After attending the SAIGE conference the Interns returned to their home communities to work alongside National Park Service (NPS) staff, tribal representatives and local conservation corps to develop more conservation corps opportunities for native young people. They also continued to develop their own skills and explore career opportunities with the NPS.

Read More about the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (ALCC) FY 15 report at: http://www.conservationlegacy.org/conservationLegacy/assets/File/AL_NPS_Report_2015_SMALL.pdf

Bureau of Indian Affairs – 2015 Water Resources Technician Training (WRTT) program



WRTT students on Mount Lemmon, Tucson, AZ.

Twenty-six students from federally recognized tribes completed the 2015 WRTT program. The students participated in four weeks of intensive water training program that incorporated field trips and applied water concepts. The program was held at the University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ. The goal is to expose tribal members to practical and applied water resource concepts and to offer internships upon completion with both Tribal and Federal agencies. As a result of the Water Corp presentation at the SAIGE NTP, a collaborative effort with NOAA/OAR was formed. Bob Rabin, Meteorologist and SAIGE member, gave a presentation at the WRTT and a student from the program was recruited for a possible internship with the NOAA NIDIS program in Boulder, CO. For more information on the WRTT, please contact Archie Barnes at 202-208-7249.

Opportunities for Native Youth Available through APHIS' Safeguarding Natural Heritage Program

SAIGE member and APHIS Tribal Liaison, Carl Etsitty has been involved in the establishment of this program. "The program got started because when our staff would visit Indian country, we would hear from Tribal leaders that their kids were no longer interested in farming and ranching. It was decided that an agricultural program was needed to get them interested and involved. Carl said it is a great program and they would like to expand the opportunities. Read the blog at: <http://blogs.usda.gov/2015/08/10/opportunities-for-native-youth-available-through-aphis-safeguarding-natural-heritage-program/#sthash.vHsR5s4y.dpuf>.

SAIGE 2015 ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS



SAIGE Award Winners with SAIGE BOD Members: L to R: Georgia Madrid, Bryan Sappier, Lori Windle, DJ Lente-Watts, Duane Matt, Millie Titla, and Ron Harris for USDA/NRCS.

ABOUT THE SAIGE Annual Recognition Awards:

The purpose of these awards is to recognize agencies and individuals (civilian or military), who through their personal commitment and professional initiative have made demonstrable contributions in recruiting, retaining, and providing career advancement opportunities to American Indian and Alaska Native employees in the Federal workforce. Additionally they have assisted with the advancement of American Indian and Alaska Native professionals, role models and future leaders. Deadline is in April of each year for awarding at National Training Program in June. Be on the lookout for the 2016 nomination package!

Georgia Madrid, (Taos Pueblo/Navajo) LEADERSHIP AWARD - - NOAA/Oceanic & Atmospheric Research (OAR)

Ms. Madrid is an EEO Specialist at NOAA/OAR in Boulder, CO. She is a founder and charter member of SAIGE and served on the SAIGE Board in 2009-2010. She is the editor of the SAIGE *Talking Leaf* newsletter, and active member of the CFR chapter. She has worked with the Boulder Valley School District to develop the American Indian Youth Leadership Institute and was their first chairperson in 2004. She was also the AISES Government Relations Council chairperson from 1993 to 2002, and is now on the NOAA Tribal Team as the OAR Co-Tribal Liaison.

Walter Harris, LEADERSHIP AWARD (Honorable Mention) - Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA)

Mr. Harris currently serves as the Section Chief for Technical Support at the Defense Information Technology Contacting Organization (DITCO), DISA. He mentors a multi-cultural community focused on the development and advancement of Native Americans in Federal service. He is on the Scott Air Force Base Native American Heritage Committee, and supports the DISA American Indian employee resource group sessions, providing them with unique knowledge and professional skills to help develop, enhance and promote the advancement of American Indians within DISA. Mr. Harris is a decorated veteran in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dona (DJ) Lente Watts, (Laguna Pueblo) SAIGE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD GS 11-15 - VA

A veteran who retired from the Air Force as a Senior Master Sergeant, DJ works as a Contracting Officer at the Veterans Health Administration Contracting and Business Office in Denver, CO. As a Native American Special Emphasis Program Manager she educated her colleagues about historical truths and realities in Indian Country; and dedicated hours of her own time to organize career workshops with the Denver Indian Center to educate local Native Americans on Federal job opportunities. She demonstrates the VA's Mission by honoring our Nation's commitment to our Veterans, as well as our Native brother and sister Veterans and their families. She is an active member of the CFR chapter and volunteers at many events including the SAIGE NTP.

Millie Titla, (San Carlos Apache), SAIGE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD, GS 11-15 (Honorable Mention) - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

In addition to her duties as the American Indian Liaison, she has been the State Outreach Coordinator, Chairperson of the Civil Rights Advisory Committee, and the Agency Coordinator for the Southwest Strategy Tribal Relations Work Group. Prior to NRCS, Millie worked for the San Carlos Apache Tribe as a Soil Conservationist, and also served as the President of her Tribe's conservation district. She has been both Vice President and President of the NRCS Alaska Native Employees Association; and served two terms on the SAIGE Board, 2011-2012 and 2012-2014. She was the Chair of the 2007 Tucson SAIGE NTP planning committee.

SAIGE 2015 ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS (Continued)

USDA/NRCS - AGENCY AWARD – - received by Mr. Ron Harris, Director of Outreach and Advocacy, NRCS

NRCS has been working with Tribes and Tribal members as cooperators for decades, and has been a supporter of SAIGE. In several states, including Montana, the Dakotas and Minnesota, NRCS negotiated with Tribes to establish part and full time offices with Tribal Offices on reservations through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Forty-five Tribal Conservation Districts have been formed and each one operates independently with the assistance of NRCS. There are approximately 75 NRCS staff who are assigned at least collateral duties to assist with delivering programs to tribes. NRCS has been a supporter of the AISES and has provided scholarship and STEM program development at Tribal Colleges and Universities.

SAIGE Outreach Efforts to Tribal Government Employees

SAIGE is committed to the advancement of all American Indian/Alaskan Native government employees and we continue to seek opportunities to provide relevant and interesting educational opportunities for all AI/AN employees at the National Training Program (NTP).



SAIGE Board of Directors at SAIGE NTP.

One opportunity we are currently pursuing is the addition of several new sessions or workshops at the 2016 NTP. These sessions will be tailored to the specific interests of AI/AN tribal government employees.

In early October, we sent a web-based survey to more than 500 tribal government employees representing more than 200 tribes across the country. The results of this survey will provide valuable insights as we proceed with planning activities.

Based on the results of the survey, new sessions may focus on topics such as Tribal Government Capacity Building, Legislative Priorities and Updates, and the Effects of Recent Judicial Decisions for Tribal Governance. The survey will remain open until mid-November.

These sessions will be offered in addition to the variety of professional development and educational topics that are already offered at the NTP—covering topics such as Federal Indian Law, Professional Development, Tribal Consultation, Equal Employment Opportunities, Diversity, and Indigenous Natural Resource and Culture.

SAIGE is considering additional outreach efforts and incentives to increase tribal government employee attendance and participation in the NTP. If you have specific questions or ideas you would like to discuss, or if you know tribal government employees willing to participate in the survey, please contact Jay Spaan at jay.spaan@saige.org.

Adopt-a-Native Elder Program - Meaningful and Heartfelt

By Pauline Baker, SAIGE UT Chapter

As my son was getting closer to accomplishing his goal to achieve his Eagle Scout Merit Badge, we often discussed the many projects he had available to him. We all agreed it should be something meaningful and heartfelt. We heard about the Adopt-a-Native Elder (ANE) Program (www.anelder.org) several years ago and researched it.

In March 2015, my son and family took the opportunity to volunteer with other SAIGE UT Chapter members at their warehouse located in Salt Lake City to pack food boxes for their spring food run. Bryton informed ANE's Executive Director, Linda Meyers, he was interested in doing his Eagle Scout project with their organization and was given all the information he needed. He chose to do "giveaways" for the Elders. The Giveaway is the native tradition of giving the best one has – things of value and personal importance that honor the Elder, given without attachment or expectation of receiving anything in return.



Bryton Baker with Elders.

We decided for our family vacation we would volunteer for the fall food run in August 2015, in which we would travel to the Olijato and Navajo Mountain Reservations. I personally wanted my son to see and experience a small glimpse of what life is like on the reservation. As a small child, my family would visit my grandmother in Ft Defiance, Arizona every summer. During this time we would chop wood for her, collect water from the well, made repairs to her Hogan and other chores that needed to be done. These are my fondest memories, even to this day. I remember sitting atop the mountainside looking down with my siblings at the vast land, feeling the heat of the day on my face, smelling the sage that surrounded us and listening to the sounds of nature. It was so peaceful and I felt such gratitude to the Creator for the beauty of our world.

As we announced and collected items needed for my son's project we were also given the itinerary and protocol for the food run. The day came to set out on our journey and our truck was filled to the brim with boxes of food and my son's giveaways for the Elders – he collected over 1,970 items! We had been asked to fast on the first day of our travels to help us in the process in becoming one in service and to bring a gift of harvest to the Elders. This could be any kind of fresh fruits or vegetables. The Elders don't receive fresh produce very often and most live several hours away from a grocery store.



L to R: Roger Williams, ANE staff member and interpreter, and Bryton Baker with parents.

Once we reached our destination we were asked to meet for further instructions and to be introduced to all the other volunteers. We had 34 volunteers from all over the United States. After this we were asked to proceed to a designated area for a Circle Ceremony to start our journey in serving the Elders and to end our fast. This was a very spiritual experience as we listened to the prayer given in the Navajo language and taught the symbolism of this ceremony. Each volunteer was asked to share why they chose the harvest gift they brought. As I listened to each of their stories, every story connected their harvest gift with the memories of family gatherings. It gave us each a chance to recognize our blessings that we often take for granted; these gifts will be received and appreciated with much gratitude from the Elders. ANE's volunteers and interpreters Roger Williams and Beverly Benally performed the corn pollen ceremony and water blessing to end our fast. To end the Circle Ceremony, Linda Meyers closed with a prayer to renew our soul and body.

Our journey to the Olijato Reservation took us right through Monument Valley and it was beautiful. Everything was green



At the Senior Center.

and blooming with colorful flowers. Many Elders were already at the Senior Center waiting for our arrival. Linda told us many Elders start writing letters asking when ANE will be there and expressing how much they are looking forward to seeing us and that many prayers were being said on our behalf for our safe journey there.

Before we could meet any of the Elders each of us volunteers were assigned a job to do – unloading food boxes, cases of water, bags of flour and potatoes, opening boxes of give away and assembling them on long tables. Once done, we proceeded with the program with a prayer in Navajo, made introductions, sang “Happy Birthday” to those Elders who were celebrating a birthday that week, playing the Bride and Groom game in which several Elders shared their wisdom on marriage to their newly adopted children (us volunteers). Time was set aside for the Elders to share their gifts of exquisite jewelry and hand woven rugs to their sponsors, to the volunteers, and to ANE.

I was overwhelmed by their generosity. My family was introduced and was told about Bryton’s Eagle Scout Project. Many Elders acknowledged him with their smiles, a wave or a nod of their head. At this time, our interpreter told the Elders of my clan. I am born into the Big Water People, for the Salt People Clan. Their response was voices of “ooh” and lots of smiles. The best way to describe the giving of “giveaways” from each volunteer and ANE was like Christmas morning. It was incredible! The room was filled with energy and much gratitude. It was a pleasure to meet and talk with the Elders and their families. We heard many stories of their long hours of travel to be there.

Our next day’s journey took us to Navajo Mountain. The same process was repeated from the day before. After introductions an elderly woman stood up and began to speak in Navajo. Our interpreter turned to us volunteers and told us what she said – “We would like to express our gratitude for you coming

from far away to share many things with us. As I look and see what you have brought us, it is all the things we need. Everything will be used and nothing will go to waste.” It was a humbling experience to hear her words. When I was helping my son pass out his giveaways, an elderly woman who spoke English said to me, “You are my daughter and you are my son. We are your family and we are from the same clan.” My son was amazed at this because he had never seen these Elders before, yet they had their arms open to him. We both felt such pride and love for them. Another woman told us, “Thank you for feeding our grandmothers.” Words can’t express how I felt...it was so overwhelming and fulfilling.



Bryton with Elder.

As our journey of service came to an end all the volunteers gathered in a circle, holding hands and Linda expressed her gratitude for our sacrifice of time and funds to help on this food run. We each in turn said our good-byes to our new friends. Over these past few days we had become a family and were united in one purpose and truly felt the love for our Elders and for each other as we served side by side. This will be a memory I will never forget and hope to do again soon.

Pauline Baker is an employee of Internal Revenue Service and active member of UT Chapter SAIGE. She is a member of the Navajo Nation and is married to Bruce Baker. They have a daughter Ashlee, and son Bryton.

Ashlee Baker is 20 years old and is on hiatus from Weber State University currently serving on an LDS Mission in California. She will be home March 2016. (SAIGE Student Member).

Bryton Baker is 17 years old and a senior at Ogden High School. Although he was born with Spina Bifida, Bryton is very active. He enjoys playing sled hockey, drawing art, photography and being with family and friends. (SAIGE Student Member).

Talking Leaf Newsletter

A Note from the Editor:

As a member of SAIGE, I know there are a lot of news items that can be shared, e.g. member profiles, outreach activities, recognitions, training events, agency highlights, new Native hires, job opportunities. What is happening in your Region? The *Talking Leaf* is your publication. It is published twice a year. I welcome your stories, suggestions, and ideas. You can email me at: georgia.madrid@noaa.gov. I look forward to hearing from you.
Sincerely, Georgia Madrid

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Contact board at:
chair@saige.org

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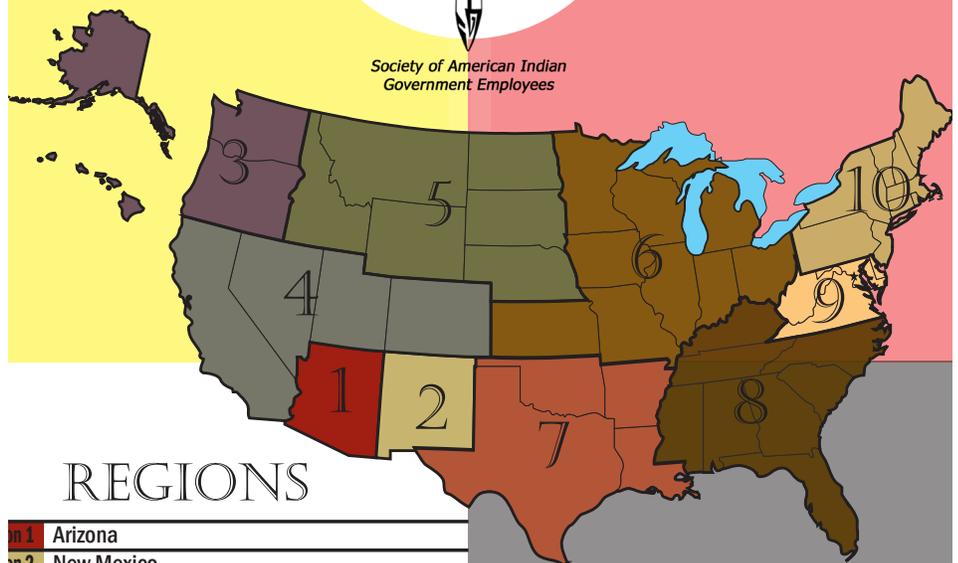
About SAIGE

The Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) is the first national non-profit organization representing American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Federal, Tribal, State and local government employees. Formed in 2002, SAIGE provides a forum on the issues, challenges and opportunities of American Indian Tribal Nations and the government workforce, and to foster a professional network among AI/AN government employees.

JOIN THE SAIGE NETWORK
www.saige.org



Society of American Indian
Government Employees



REGIONS

Region 1	Arizona
Region 2	New Mexico
Region 3	Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii
Region 4	California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado
Region 5	Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska
Region 6	Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio
Region 7	Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana
Region 8	Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Florida
Region 9	Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Washington D.C.
Region 10	Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Maine, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts