

General Session Speakers



Fredericka Joseph, SAIGE Chair

Fredericka Joseph is an enrolled member of the Kaw Nation of Oklahoma as well as being Cherokee. Fredericka is a "BIA Brat" living on five different Indian reservations and attending Bureau funded schools. Fredericka (Freddie) is a SAIGE Founding Board member, Lifetime member, and is currently serving as the Chair of SAIGE. She has worked in the Federal government over 29 years and served in various capacities throughout those years. As she began her career she started as a cashier in Augsburg, Germany, and when she returned to the United States she worked as a Social Service Representative in a social service agency. After her youngest child started college, Freddie began her professional career as an Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist serving as a Special Emphasis Program Manager, EEO Counselor, Mediator, Team Leaders Trainer, and Facilitator. Fredericka is passionate about her work and loves what she does. Because she lives in the Washington DC area, she is able to represent SAIGE at federal agencies serving as a representative on

panels, task force meetings, and helping federal agencies develop strategies to increase their diversity in hiring American Indians and Alaska Natives. Freddie is honored to represent SAIGE at the National Coalition of Equity in Public Service training conferences and has a strong relationship with the partners. Freddie currently works as the Youth Coordinator at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Having a small part of the native students' path of growth is invaluable and very humbling. Freddie is married to her college sweetheart who is also a SAIGE member.

Principal Chief John Baker (Cherokee)

Born and raised in Cherokee County, Chief Baker has devoted much of his life in service to the Cherokee people. He spent 12 years as a member of the Cherokee Nation tribal council and was elected Principal Chief in October 2011, and re-elected in July 2015. As a member of the council, Chief Baker worked tirelessly to improve education, health care, and job creation throughout the Cherokee nation. Chief Baker believes in integrity, accountability and honesty. Those are the things he brings to the office of Principal Chief. Under his leadership, new home construction resumed for the first time in a decade, a \$100 million dollar allocation from business profits was invested to expand the tribe's health care system and more Cherokee citizens are working for the tribe and its businesses than at any time in history. More academic scholarships have been awarded for Cherokee students and every eligible applicant earned a Cherokee Nation academic scholarship last year. As Chief, he authored executive orders which raised the tribe's minimum wage and granted maternity leave for new mothers. He secured a historic hunting and fishing compact with the State of Oklahoma and expanded the tribe's car tag compact for Cherokee nation citizens statewide, which provided more than \$4.7 million to public education in northeast Oklahoma, just this year alone. With more than 330,000 citizens and nearly 9,000 employees, the Cherokee Nation is one of the largest employers in northeastern Oklahoma and has an annual economic impact in Oklahoma of more than \$1.5 billion dollars. Chief Baker is a graduate of Tahlequah High School and Northeastern State University., He earned degrees in political science and history. He has also been a small business owner for more than 40 years. Chief Baker resides in Tahlequah with his wife, Sherry (Robertson) Baker. They have been blessed with six children and are the proud grandparents of ten.





Chief James Floyd (Creek)

Principal Chief James Floyd is from the tribal town of Koweta and is of the Wind Clan. He graduated from Eufaula high school, earned an associate degree in Civil Technology from Oklahoma State University, a bachelor of science degree from Northeastern State University in Health Care Administration, and a master's degree from Portland State University. His work history includes being an Environmental Health Specialist and a supervisor for Health Services Administration for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Director of Community Services for Indian Health Service in Portland, OR; Area Director for Veterans Affairs (VA), Network Director for VA Heartland Network, and Director for the VA Eastern Oklahoma Health Care System in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Mr. Floyd is married to Carol (Tustison) Floyd for 36 years and has a son, Jacob, and a daughter, Erin and son-in-law Lloyd.

Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear (Osage)

Chief Geoffrey M. Standing Bear served as Assistant Chief of the Osage Tribe in 1990 to 1994 and as a Member of the Osage Nation Congress in 2010 to 2014. While a Member of the Osage Congress he served at different times as Chairman of the Rules and Ethics Committee, Chairman of the Cultural Committee, and as a Member of the Education Committee, Health Committee, among others. He also served as Chairman of the Osage Nation Water Task Force which set the course to claim the Osage Nation Water Rights. He has been married to Julie (Brave) Standing Bear for 38 years and they have four children and eight grandchildren. Both Julie and Chief Standing Bear are long-time Osage Headright Shareholders.

Chief Standing Bear is an advocate for less government bureaucracy and for more direct benefits to the Osage people. He is a strong believer in Osage preference in employment and contracting and believes the Osage people are among the most educated and talented of any people in the United States of America. His administration is committed to education, good health practices, and cultural tradition of the Osage.



JoAnn Brant, SAIGE Youth Director

At the US Environmental Protection Agency JoAnn works in the Office of Human Resources under the Human Capital Planning Division in recruitment and outreach. She is the Presidential Management Fellows Coordinator for the agency. She works with students for placement in internships and volunteer positions. In June 2014, JoAnn received the Suzanne E. Olive Award for Exemplary Leadership in National EEO-Non-Managerial for her efforts in creating innovative approaches, building constructive relationships, and successfully managing employment outreach. She has also received the Bronze Medal for Commendable Service for exemplary performance in support of EPA's outreach to the American Indian and Alaska Native community. As part of her outreach efforts to Native American students JoAnn coordinates the Youth Program for the Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) annual training conference. The SAIGE Youth Program encourages Native American youth to realize their potential to provide leadership in their community, and ultimately, to seek careers

in the government. JoAnn received her Bachelor of Science degree in Occupational Therapy from University of Buffalo. She owned her own business for seven years which provided the Native American health clinics and hospitals with medical supplies and equipment. She is an enrolled member of the Oneida Thames Indian Nation from the Bear Clan.



Khalilah M. Harris

As a Senior Advisor in the Office of the Director, Khalilah M. Harris provides analysis and strategic advice in support of the Office of Personnel Management's mission, including human capital management policy. Khalilah joined OPM after serving as the first Deputy Director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans, which the President established in 2012. In that post, she focused her efforts on developing interagency relationships and served as a liaison to issue-based work groups and committees relevant to policy priorities of the Initiative and the Administration. This included supporting educational access for Black new Americans and English Language Learners, disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, and working for equity in access to Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics (STEM) coursework and careers. She also concentrated on cultivating opportunities for women and girls of color while serving as a member of the White House Council on Women and Girls' interagency working group for advancing equity and empowerment for women and girls of color. Khalilah has more than 14 years of experience in education, advocacy, and organizational development, including previous service as a founder and member of the leadership team of a Baltimore high school that

focused on social justice. She has a bachelor's degree in political science from Morgan State University, a law degree from the University of Maryland School of Law and is a member of the Maryland Bar. Khalilah is also a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership and Organizational Development at the University of Pennsylvania. Most importantly, Khalilah Harris is the proud mother of three daughters.

LaDonna Harris

LaDonna Harris is a remarkable statesman and national leader who has enriched the lives of thousands. She has devoted her life to building coalitions that create change. She has been a consistent and ardent advocate on behalf of tribal America. In addition, she continues her activism in the areas of civil rights, environmental protection, the women's movement and world peace. Raised in Indian Country on a farm near the small town of Walters, Oklahoma during the Great Depression by her maternal grandparents (an Eagle Medicine Man and a devout Christian woman), Harris modeled a life and career of mutual respect and personal choice and has an abiding belief that there is room for all traditions. Because she spoke only Comanche when she entered grade school and because of her unique upbringing, Harris views all things with the wisdom and values of two cultures.

Harris began her public service as the wife of US Senator, Fred Harris. Her partnership with Senator Harris made her a strong force in Congress where she was the first Senator's wife to testify before a Congressional committee. She was instrumental in the return of the Taos Blue Lake to the people of Taos Pueblo and to the Menominee Tribe in regarding their federal recognition. Her guiding influence on both pieces of legislation led to landmark laws that set a precedent that still guides Indian policy today.

Harris applies much of her energy to reinforcing and strengthening tribal governments. She has encouraged tribes to reweave traditional value-based methods of consensus building into their governance systems. She has worked directly with the Winnebago, Poarch Creek, Oklahoma Apache, Cheyenne-Arapaho, Comanche, Pawnee, and Menominee tribes in assessing how these tribes can reincorporate traditional dispute resolution methodologies into contemporary systems of government. The Indigenous Leaders Interactive System, the process used to facilitate dialogue, was developed by Harris and has been used to facilitate resolution throughout the country and in several international forums. Harris believes that as cultural groups throughout the world struggle for autonomy and as tribal and ethnic strife become the focus of unrest on nearly every continent, tribal America has a unique opportunity to make a positive contribution to our global society.

Harris has raised three children: Kathryn is director of the Railyard Park Trust in Santa Fe; Byron is a technician in television production in Los Angeles; and Laura works with her mother as Executive Director at Americans for Indian Opportunity. Harris is especially proud of her grandson, Sam Fred Goodhope, who calls her by the Comanche word for grandmother, KAQU.





Karen R. Diver

Karen R. Diver is currently serving as the Special Assistant to the President for Native American Affairs at the White House. She previously served nine years as the chairwoman of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. As Chairwoman, she oversaw a workforce of over 2,200 employees which was the second largest employer in northern Minnesota. She also served as Vice-President of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, and chaired the Finance Corporation. As Director of Special Projects for Fond du Lac, she developed and implemented a comprehensive housing strategy, reducing the housing waiting lists by over 50 percent while leveraging new funding and housing models in Indian Country. Ms. Diver served for 11 years as the Executive Director of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Duluth, working on issues ranging from human rights, early childhood education and reproductive rights. Ms. Diver has extensive background in the nonprofit sector, serving as the Board Chair for two terms at both the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and the Women's Foundation of Minnesota. She has an undergraduate degree from the University of Minnesota at Duluth in Economics, and a Master's degree in Public Administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Major General Rita Aragon

Major General Rita Aragon was the first female Oklahoma Secretary of Military and Veterans' Affairs. She is the liaison to the Governor for all Oklahoma military and veterans' issues. She participates and facilitates the Oklahoma Military Strategic Planning Group that helps insure the stability and growth of the communities and facilities of the five military installations in the state. She is tasked to develop programs that support current military and veterans individually and in total. General Aragon served as the first female commander of the Oklahoma Air National Guard, the first female to command a state's Air National Guard and the first female of Native American Ancestry to become a general officer. She is the Senior Military Advisory for the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, and has served on the American Red Cross and Girl Scouts, Juliette Lowe Leadership Society. Her community involvement spans participation in YWCA Purple Sash, Edmond Fine Arts, Go Red for Women for American Heart Association, and the White House Commission on Military Leadership Diversity and the Oklahoma Bar Association's Military Task Force. The General's Awards include Air Force Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal with 2 devices, Air Force Commendation, Army Commendation, Global War on Terrorism, Humanitarian Service Medal and others. Aragon has been recognized as Oklahoma's Woman of the Year by Journal Record, Oklahoma Woman Veteran of the Year, Leadership Fellow Oklahoma Christian University, Leadership Resident University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond Hall of Fame, Valley Forge Freedom Award, Diversity Journal's 100 Women in America to Watch.



Wallace Coffey

Wallace Coffey is the former chairman of the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma. He has served six terms in office, an unprecedented honor. Coffey holds a Master's degree in Education from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. His commitment to representing and empowering Native people has led him to serve in a variety of professional positions including: Dean of Students of the Nebraska Indian Community College, Executive Director of the Nebraska Indian Commission, Executive Director of the Denver Indian Center, and Cultural Resource Specialist at the Institute of American Indian Art. Wallace Coffey is also a renowned orator with a gift of captivating and connecting with his audiences. He has served as Master of Ceremony for thousands of pow-wows and cultural activities throughout the last 45 years. He has been voted Emcee of the Year by his peers on several occasions. Mr. Coffey is active in community affairs. He recently served as Chairman of the United Indian Nations of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas. He has served as Chairman of the

Native American Rights Fund board of directors of Boulder, Colorado. He is also a member of the American Indian Business Leaders Association and a former member of the Advisory Committee of the Arizona State University School of Law. During his six terms, Coffey's unique vision and unparalleled leadership have continued to help the Comanche Native thrive. His deep appreciation for his culture and his passion for serving his Indian people remains strong. Chairman Coffey resides in Lawton, Oklahoma. He and his late wife of 37 years, Debbie Coffey, are proud parents of Robert and Karel Ann Coffey, and grandparents to Debbie Rachel Coffey.

Cara Cowan Watts

Cara is Chief Executive Officer and majority owner of Tulsa Pier Drilling who provides commercial pier drilling services such as turn-key installation of slurry, cased, or bell bottom piers for new construction. Tulsa Pier Drilling was created more than 20 years ago by Cara's husband, Doug Watts. Cara is the founder and owner of Cherokee Star. Cherokee Star has provided facilitation, project management, communication planning, innovative education solutions, presentation development needs and much more in Indian Country for more than ten years. Cara served as the elected Tribal legislator for portions of Tulsa and Rogers counties. She has a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Oklahoma State University at Stillwater, and a Master of Science in Telecommunications Management from Oklahoma State University at Tulsa. Cara earned and defended a PhD in Biosystems Engineering from Oklahoma State University in 2015. Cara is a Louis Stokes National Science Foundation Fellow and former twice elected member of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) Board of Directors. Cara's passion includes educating, mentoring and encouraging youth in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. She has been married to Doug Watts, a Wyandotte Nation citizen and small business owner, for more than ten years and lives on their ranch in Justus, Oklahoma. Cara is an active co-owner and co-operator of the Sideways Cattle Company focused on training American Quarter Horses in competitive roping and building a cow-calf Corriente cattle operation to provide the next generation of roping stock. To learn more about Cara, visit caracowan.com, join Cara's Cherokee Nation News and Events listserv, add yourself to the Oklahoma Professional Chapter of AISES listserv, or follow 'Cara Cowan Watts' on Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Instagram, and Pinterest.



Matika Wilbur

Matika Wilbur (Swinomish and Tulalip) began her extraordinary portrait work after a dream in which her grandmother, Laura Wilbur, a prominent Swinomish tribal leader, urged her to return home from a South American assignment and begin photographing her own people. She first focused on portraits of Coast Salish elders in *WE ARE ONE PEOPLE*. She provided the breadth and complexity of contemporary Native American identity with *WE EMERGE* and a 2011 one-person exhibition, *SAVE THE INDIAN, KILL THE MAN* at the Seattle Art Museum. Ms. Wilbur graduated from the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California and also trained at the Rocky Mountain School of Photography. Ms. Wilbur's photographs have been included and exhibited in a multitude of art museums around the world. Two successful Kickstarter campaigns, sophisticated networking, high profile presentations and major media articles and interviews have fueled tremendous national and international interest in and support for

Project 562. The project will produce a fine arts book series, curricula, documentary, project-derived fashion, and other cutting edge Native American aesthetic material distinct in creativity and quality, origin, and insight.