



Society of American Indian  
Government Employees

# The Talking Leaf

SPRING ISSUE

SAIGE Newsletter

May 2015

## *Message from the Chair, Fredericka Joseph*



As we have done in the past we have a great three days of excellent speakers and trainers who are experts in their fields offering training to our federal, state, and tribal employees. This year we will have the opportunity to learn more about what cultural and natural resources are available within the state of Minnesota. Our tracks which include, Professional Development, Federal Indian Law, Indigenous Natural Resources, Indian Country/Cultural, will offer everyone something that they can take back to their agency and share with their leaders and co-workers.

I am excited to announce our National Training Program on June 15-18, 2015, at the Treasure Island Hotel and Resort located in Welch, MN. This year's theme: **"Growing Native Leaders: Enhancing Our Seven Generations"** is focused on our native youth and the President's Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) Initiative. As Native people we have been reminded of our Seven Generations and moving our native youth forward with education and opportunities by which they can learn and grow. It is our pleasure to host our native youth every year and we thank the agencies and their representatives for providing insight to our native youth when it comes to public service to our country.

Our Youth Track offers leadership training that begins on June 14, and ends on Thursday afternoon, closing the NTP with youth presentations. We are honored to acknowledge that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is the corporate sponsor for our youth this year offering them training on "Leading Project Team Development."

Our Warrior Society's Veterans Program is opened to all local veterans and their families on Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup>. This year the Coast Guard will be the host sponsor for the Veterans group. Thank you to our sponsors for all they do!

We still have a few booth spaces left if your agency is interested in attending. We appreciate the support of the Federal

agencies and corporate organizations that support our mission and continue to come back year after year. We are proud to meet a number of Executive Orders (EO) our agency partners work with such as the EO 13562 Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Grads, EO 13583 Establishing a coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce, EO 13270 Tribal Colleges and Universities and the President's Memorandum on Tribal Consultation. We work hard to ensure our workshops and speakers provide as much information in these areas as possible to enlighten our attendees.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the hard and dedicated work our planning committee has been doing to ensure anyone who attends walks away with a vast knowledge of information that will help them in their work at their agencies. Each year the Board of Director's and other volunteers meet to discuss possible agenda items and work overtime to meet the goals of a successful training program. Thank you for all your work and diligence to enhance the quality of learning for all of us!

We hope to see you in Welch in just a few weeks. Registration can be located on our website, [www.saige.org](http://www.saige.org) under <https://www.etchouches.com/saige2015>.



## SAIGE Warrior Society

by Director Danny J. Garceau

The SAIGE Warrior Society was initiated two years ago. This past January it became an official entity of the SAIGE organization. In the first three months over two dozen SAIGE members joined the group. Another dozen have joined SAIGE so they could be part of the Warrior Society. The most common initial comment from new members is, "More American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) uniformed personnel and veterans need to be made aware of the SAIGE Warrior Society, it serves as a network and provides opportunity and benefit."

Any SAIGE member who has or is honorably serving in military uniform can ask to join the group. The group is an opportunity for those who share similar military experiences to network and focus on veteran and service related issues, along with sharing in camaraderie.

The Warrior Society performs several duties for SAIGE including: planning and conducting the Veterans/Military portion of the annual training program, acting as a liaison between SAIGE and military and veteran organizations, providing the SAIGE honor guard, and serving as an information and resource network for military/veteran issues.



Veterans Track Awardees from 2014 conference.

For this year's SAIGE NTP, the Warrior Society has put together a great Veterans Track which includes presentations on Veterans Benefits and Updates, PTSD, *Way of the Warrior* AI/AN in uniform during and after war, and *Warriors Move among Us* by Rea Cichocki and Enrique Rudino.

Many see that belonging to SAIGE and the Warrior Society is a tool in finding their next career when they transition out of uniform. Please help our past and present warriors by letting them know about the SAIGE Warrior Society.

## Meet Warrior Society Member:



Tilford C. Brown

Tribal affiliation – Dine' (Navajo) Nation

Where you work – New Mexico VA Health Care System, Albuquerque, NM

Military Service – U. S. Marine Corps

Your main reason to belong to the Warrior Society

SAIGE allows me to be with my fellow Brothers and Sisters who served this beautiful country of ours. SAIGE respects and shows empathy for all Veterans of War & Peacetime. SAIGE gives us Veterans, who went over the Big Water to fight for our Native Traditional ways to continue for future generations; an outlet to receive comfort and hope, so we may live in harmony everyday of our lives. SAIGE has given me the opportunity to sing original Veterans, Memorial, Prayer & Flag songs for all Veterans and People of the Earth.

Benefits of attending the National Training Program

SAIGE will open doors for you, so you can meet fellow Federal and State employees from all parts of the country; learn from each other and make lifelong friendships. SAIGE will provide you a family type atmosphere where you can feel the warm energy of all involved. The SAIGE speakers and presenters give so much knowledge and wisdom that it will motivate oneself to be a better, more focused employee and leader. SAIGE, above all, provides Hope, Happiness, Humility and Harmony; that our Native First Nation Cultures will be able to assimilate and accommodate into mainstream society.

## Youth Track Participants Share their Perspectives

**Sarah Zavala**



Han,

My name is Sarah Zavala. I come from the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. Last summer, I attended the 2014 SAIGE Leadership Conference in Albuquerque, NM. I am planning to graduate this May 2016 from Nebraska Indian Community College with my Associates Degree in American Indian Studies and plan to pursue my studies to become a lawyer.

From attending this conference, I have learned and enhanced many valuable skills that I will be able to utilize in the professional world. This conference gave me the confidence that I needed to achieve my educational goals. Seeing and hearing stories of struggle and achievements from successful Indigenous professionals showed me that we are able to achieve and go above and beyond the statistics we are labeled as.

Another thing I really enjoyed from the conference was meeting and networking with all the other indigenous scholars from around the country. These students are the future leaders and the SAIGE conference gives us a jump start. You never know the person sitting next to you may be serving on a board right along with you later down the road. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to SAIGE for giving us the opportunity and learning experience. I am looking forward to going back this summer as one of the Student Leaders.

“Pinagigi”

**Danielle Alvarez**



Danielle is on the right.

Last year I had the pleasure of being accepted into the Youth Track program during the 2014 SAIGE conference. It was not quite what I expected, but I thoroughly enjoyed myself and had a great learning experience. Joann Brant, Youth Track coordinator and her staff of volunteer leaders were very excellent and caring, and helped guide us through the whole experience.

The type of activities we got to work on during the week were both helpful and informative. We had a fieldtrip to a very interesting technology and energy testing site where they showed us around and told us as much as they possibly could about the technology they worked on. The students also had the opportunity to visit multiple booths at the SAIGE Career Fair where we had the chance to speak with people from different agencies and organizations. We asked them about the different career opportunities and jobs their agencies could offer.

Multiple speakers, such as Rush Chance told us about seeking motivation in life and in our careers/jobs. Workshop presenters spoke of the many opportunities the government has to offer people. We participated in a number of Leadership and teamwork exercises and were shown how leadership and teamwork are as important as education and skills. The students also had the chance to work together and learn about each other as we worked on a skit that demonstrated and reflected on all that we had learned about throughout that week and how we would use this knowledge in the future and in our communities.

## LIFE TIME MEMBER PROFILE: SUE MORRIS

By Veronica Vasquez

As part of Native American Traditions, individuals that bring wisdom, honor, loyalty and strength to their tribes are honored and valued. Lifetime members are a valuable resource and influence to SAIGE and as such are held in high regards within the SAIGE Organization.

Lifetime members are any government employees or retirees who support the goals of SAIGE and who have demonstrated this support by paying a lifetime membership fee. SAIGE honors our lifetime members and affords them the rights of full members even if they leave government service.

**B**oard member Sue Morris, a full-blood enrolled member of the Comanche Nation, and a direct descendant of one of the original Comanche Code Talkers, is a lifetime member. Sue shared her impression of the first SAIGE

conference she attended in Washington, D.C. Sue recalls one of the first people she met was Shana Barehand, who she said was very welcoming. After they spoke for a while, Sue realized that they both knew many of the same people. To Sue, Shana was a great advocate of the organization because of her passion

for supporting SAIGE. After attending the conference, and experiencing the many beneficial workshops and networking opportunities, Sue knew she was hooked on SAIGE. The variety of speakers presented were of high quality and the conference was superb.

She went back to her agency and shared what a great experience she had at the conference. She told several people including her supervisor how much she enjoyed the training and the people she met. Her supervisor made



the observation that it was time an organization was available to AI/AN Federal Employees. With her supervisor's encouragement, Sue stayed connected with the SAIGE organization. Since attending that first conference she has not missed any conferences. In 2011 she became a Lifetime member. It was at this time she agreed to and was honored to co-chair the 2011 NTP in Tulsa, Ok along with Fredericka Joseph, currently serving at the SAIGE Chair.

She believes that her decision to become a Lifetime Member was an investment for her. In her words "I love my Indian people and I want to see more success for us, especially the younger members (students). They are the future and it is my hope they can change many of the agencies from the inside out. In order to make the changes, we have to ensure our younger members are prepared, educated and meet the people doing the hiring. I believe SAIGE provides that portal." Sue added, "Every board member with whom I served are dedicated members doing what they can to ensure SAIGE is a premier organization, and I am truly grateful for their commitment and happy to call them more than friends."

### SAIGE 2015 NTP Highlights from the Training Program Co-chairs

The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual SAIGE NTP is rapidly approaching! The NTP will be held at the Treasure Island Resort owned and operated by the Prairie Island Indian Community of Dakota Indians.

Why should you attend? This year's conference offers a variety of tracks that are guaranteed to pique the interest and educate everyone in attendance. These tracks include: **Federal Indian Law/Tribal Consultation; Indigenous Natural Resources; Professional Development/EEO; Indian Country/Cultural.** All of these tracks will be led by the most respected professionals in their respective fields, representing numerous federal agencies, tribes, academia, and non-profits.

A few highlighted plenary speakers include:

**Bill Mendoza, Generations Indigenous, White House Initiative on Native Youth; Katherine Archuleta, Director, Office of Personnel Management, Anton Treuer – Bemidji State University, Kevin Washburn, Asst. Sec. Indian Affairs, Dept. of the Interior**

The training program co-chairs Bryan Sappier and Duane Matt continue to monitor the progress of the (invaluable) planning committee and ensure an exciting and successful NTP! If you have any questions, please contact them at [bsappier@saige.org](mailto:bsappier@saige.org) or [dmatt@saige.org](mailto:dmatt@saige.org). To sign up for the NTP go to: [www.saige.org](http://www.saige.org) for a link to the registration site. See you there!

## UTAH CHAPTER



SAIGE members, friends and family, Linda Willard (back, l-r), Bruce Baker, Don and Adele Stanford, Utah Chapter SAIGE president Coralee Mackay; Bryton Baker (front, l-r), Jonathan Fairbanks and Alayne Fairbanks, volunteered several hours to the Adopt-a-Native-Elder program. Missing from the photo is Pauline Baker.

### Adopt Native Elder (ANE) Volunteer Event

On March 14, 2015, the UT SAIGE Chapter volunteered at the Adopt A Native Elder Warehouse in Salt Lake City, UT, packing food to be delivered to elders in Southern UT and Northern Arizona. As part of the ANE program, each time a person volunteers 24 hours, ANE assigns an elder to the person. Because the UT SAIGE chapter donated over 24 hours collectively, an Elder will soon be assigned to the Chapter.

The ANE focuses on helping traditional Elders live on the Land in the traditional ways of the The People. Elders in the program range from 70 to 108 years of age. Director Linda Myer's commitment from the outset has been to provide assistance for the Elder's basic survival as well as to honor and respect their traditional lifestyle. Many traditional Elders live without plumbing. Many have no electricity, haul water from miles away, and use wood for heat and to cook. Many Elders do not speak English and did not have the opportunity of a formal education.

For more information on the UT Chapter, please email President Coralee MacKay at [3feathersphoto@gmail.com](mailto:3feathersphoto@gmail.com).

## COLORADO FRONT RANGE (CFR) CHAPTER

### Outreach Efforts at RMIICC and Denver Indian Center

On March 20, CFR members Georgia Madrid (NOAA) and Elaine Robles (EPA), participated in the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Rocky Mountain Indian Chamber of Commerce (RMIICC) Indian Biz Expo. They

staffed the SAIGE exhibit booth, handed out brochures and materials and promoted the SAIGE conference. The 2015 Expo also featured a talk by Phillip Whiteman Jr, on the Medicine Wheel Model, luncheon keynote speaker Lance Morgan, Ho-Chunk, Inc, Natives Go Global, and Business Matchmaking Networking. It was a great venue to promote SAIGE and network with the local American Indian community.



L to R: Georgia Madrid and Elaine Robles at RMIICC Indian Biz Expo.

Duane Matt, Physical Scientist for the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE), and SAIGE Board Member, and Janet Cheney, OSMRE Office of Civil Rights/Equal Employment Opportunity, participated in the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Denver Indian Center's job fair in Denver, CO. Both SAIGE and OSMRE shared booth space, and educated all job fair attendees on the mission of SAIGE, and of potential employment with OSMRE. The job fair was well attended and included a wide array of applicants with a variety of backgrounds. The job fair attendees had over 15 potential employers of which to discuss future employment options.

For more information on CFR please contact Chairperson, Carl Etsitty at [carl.etsitty@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:carl.etsitty@aphis.usda.gov).



Janet Cheney, OSMRE, at Denver Indian Center job fair.

## SAIGE 2015 AWARD RECOGNITIONS: Carol Jorgensen Scholarship for Environmental Stewardship Winners

### Luke Black Elk

I was raised in what some would consider an extremely traditional manner on the Cheyenne River Lakota Reservation in South Dakota. I was homeschooled by my mother, not in the mainstream subjects that are experienced by most students, but in the Lakota Way of Life. I never stepped foot into a traditional classroom; rather I was educated by my mother, my elders and other community members, who taught me about the sacredness of Mother Earth and the importance of our ceremonies and treaties. I am thankful for all that I learned, but the desire to further my education has been with me for many years. However, I was overwhelmed; feeling like the unique way in which I was raised would prevent me from being successful in college.

Further complicating my ambitions was the fact that I had absolutely no legal documentation of my birth or U.S. citizenship, as my mother felt these documents were not conducive to a traditional life. Finally, in my 29th year (2013), I found the courage to take the necessary steps to further my education. In the last year, I have gone from a person who did not legally exist - I had no birth certificate, no social security number, and no formal education - to being an official U.S. citizen, a GED graduate, and a full-time college student. So, unlike most college freshman, the very act of walking through the door was a testament to the hardships I have faced and the patience required to finally pursue a formal higher education. The first time I ever sat in a formal classroom was on January 6, 2014. While my mother ensured that I was well read and well versed in tribal politics and social issues, I never learned things like long division or graphing. She taught me to write well, but there were no "five paragraph essays" or lessons in proper grammar. Each day, each class holds a new idea or challenge in learning subjects such as algebra, essay writing, and study skills.

My career goals are to bring positive change to Lakota traditional lands and to my reservation community. I will accomplish these goals by becoming an educator. In this way I can bring knowledge to my people, putting the power to affect positive change back into their hands.

I have always felt that it was my responsibility to give back to my community and to contribute to the well-being of my people. I have no doubt that one person can make great change, and a formal higher education is vital to reaching my goals. I need to understand the issues that impact the health of our land and people, and I need to be able to present evidence, good data, and informed ideas

so that I might work with my tribe and my community to create solutions.

As an environmental science major and a member of the Cheyenne River Lakota Nation, I want to bring positive change to my people. While I believe that we still hold Mother Earth to be sacred in essence, I am incredibly concerned with the way that our land, air, and water have been mistreated. I plan on continuing my higher education, and eventually earning a Ph.D. in Biology so that I can make a greater impact through culturally and community-relevant research.

Although I do feel that I have been an environmental steward throughout my life (my mother made sure we always recycled, repurposed, and never wasted resources), a couple of projects stand out as being truly far-reaching and important. First, I have been working with the Tatanka Wakpala Model Sustainable Community (TWMSC) for the last five years. The TWMSC is striving to build Indian Country's first completely self-reliant community of sustainable homes using wind and solar energy. The intention is for this community to be a model for other families and trib.es. We hope to provide environmentally responsible, inexpensive, and efficient housing, while preserving natural resources by utilizing green energy sources; providing safe, pure drinking water through a proven rainwater harvesting system; planting, preparing and harvesting completely organic, safe foods for our families to eat; and raising and educating our children together in a traditional way, emphasizing mutual respect, culture and self-sustainability.

I have also been chosen as the community gardens coordinator for the Sitting Bull College - Mobridge Site. These gardens provide completely naturally grown, traditional foods for the greater Standing Rock and Cheyenne River communities. We are testing a number of different growing systems to find the best possible methods for our site. For example, we currently have hoop houses, raised beds, traditional row gardens, keyhole gardens, "three-sisters" gardens, and even perennial medicine beds, where we grow traditional Lakota plant medicines.

All of these projects enrich my life and, hopefully, improve the quality of life for my family and my people. I am anxious and excited to do more. I truly appreciate this opportunity to apply for the Carol Jorgensen Environmental Stewardship Scholarship. I hope that I can honor her memory through a continued life of service to my people.

## SAIGE 2015 AWARD RECOGNITIONS: Carol Jorgensen Scholarship for Environmental Stewardship Winners

### Jeremiah Wallace

I am a 33 year old native from the Cowlitz Nation. I am a carver, canoe skipper, weaver, and a singer. I have been attending Northwest Indian College (NWIC) since the winter of 2012. I received my Associates in Fisheries Science at Bellingham Technical College (BTC) in the summer of 2012. I started there in 2008; it was rough going at first, due to the fact that I did not attend high school. However, I quickly caught on and became successful with a 3.73 my first quarter. Halfway through my degree, I decided that NWIC would be a better fit, so I finished up at BTC, and transferred into the four year Native Environmental Science program at NWIC. At first, my goal was to get my Bachelor's and concentrate on fisheries, but ever since I was a boy, there has been something about the woods that I can't stay away from. So, I have decided that I will concentrate on Ethnobotany and Forest Ecology. I will transfer from here when I complete my B.S.N.E.S and go to The Evergreen State College and focus on Ethnobotany and Forest Ecology. When I am finished there, I will then transfer to the University of Washington and get my Doctorate in Forest Ecology. My goal is to go back to my nation and use my education to preserve our culture and traditions.

Last summer, I interned for NASA/Kiksappa in the climate change field; and was invited to Washington D.C. to present my work on November 3, 2014. The people I presented for nominated me to be a NASA Student Ambassador on September 29th, three days before ESRI Online (the people who invented satellite mapping) asked permission to publish my work in their national publication. It astonishes me to see how quickly all of these things fell together. I believe it to be due to my perseverance in my studies, as well as my loyalty to science and my culture. Lately, I have been cloning, and stratifying, Pacific Yew seeds, it is my favorite wood to carve, but it takes several hundred years for them to reach a foot in circumference. I plan to replace every tree I use to carve with a hundred or more. This winter, I plan to clone at least three hundred because it is a very culturally significant tree to my people.

I am very active with my culture; I am one of the lead singers for my tribe, as well as the skipper (the person in charge of the canoe) for our canoe family. In 2009, my cousin taught me how to skipper, I did not think I would do well in a leadership position, but I have proven to myself that I can. In 2013, we paddled to Quinault and had to get up early to beat the tide on our way down the Columbia

River. We were traveling with 6 tribes from our region down the river and out into the ocean. There were about two or three times when things almost went disastrous, but I kept everyone calm. I think we were on the water for approximately 12 days that year. Every night, I would have to stay up until after protocol (each tribes songs and dances) were over, so I would be going to sleep around midnight or one a.m. and let up around three or four a.m.. Even though I was psychically and mentally drained, I always kept my family together, I never showed my doubt that I had in certain pullers (some of the younger ones), I just kept giving them positive affirmations and smiled at them; I also defended them when people would give them flack. I go out of my way to represent my nation. I do the Tribal Journeys, sing, weave, go to all of the council meetings, and volunteer with the youth of my nation. My career goal is to obtain my Ph.D. I in Forest Ecology at the University of Washington and work for my Nation, my tribe has already discussed with The Government to take over forest management of The Gifford Pinchot National Forest, so we would be partners with them, I would like to be involved in that work.

### *About the Carol Jorgensen Scholarship for Environmental Stewardship*



SAIGE established this award to honor the memory and legacy of Carol Jorgensen whose service to her family, community, country, and Mother Earth was an inspiration for all.

Carol was Tlingit from the Yandestake Village in southeast Alaska and was part of the Eagle/Killer Whale Fin House of Klukwan.

She served many years in public service, most recently as Director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's American Indian Environmental Office. She had a deep connection to our shared Earth and was a passionate advocate for protecting the environment and human health in American Indian and Alaskan Native communities.

## 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

### SAIGE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Contact board at:  
chair@saige.org

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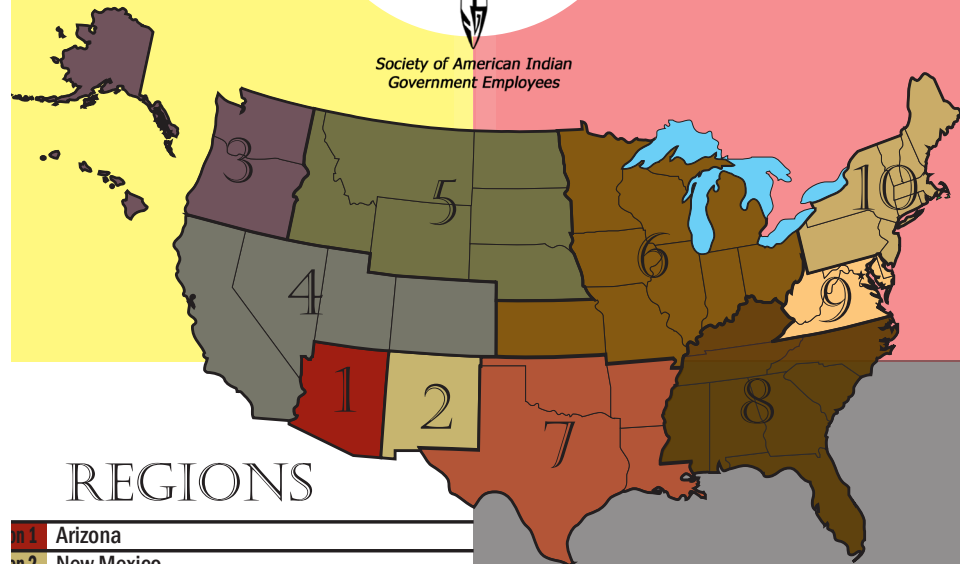
## About SAIGE

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.

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