

The Origins of SAIGE

“Prior to May 2000, the concept of a national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native federal employees was only a wish mentioned among friends at a local meeting. It was only when several people from the four directions began putting their minds together as one that the idea became a concept, then a movement, and finally a functioning organization.” Les Tate

Before the advent of email, American Indian and Alaska Native government employees networked amongst themselves. They formed groups within their own federal agencies, such as the NRCS, EPA and FAA. They also met in Special Emphasis groups within their agencies, like HUD, and diversity subcommittees in local Federal Executive Boards across the country. Whenever possible, they renewed acquaintances with colleagues at national professional and scientific conferences. Most Federal workers got the internet and email in their offices around 1995, and suddenly there was a whole new way to communicate and to reach out to others, some of whom they had never met. People developed their own far-reaching email lists of contacts to share job information with and to announce events.

In 2000, a gestalt of sorts took place, when improved technology and the desire to connect with other native government employees came together, with the focused intent of forming a national non-profit organization to advocate for American Indians and Alaska Natives working in government. What sparked was an idea whose time had come.

“Very shortly after I retired (15 Mar 2000) you sent a message to your private mailing list about Vi Rogers having expressed a desire for a national organization similar to the Federal Executive Board you had in Denver,” Les Tate, SAIGE elder and archivist recalled. What Les didn't say was that he immediately set about developing a Discussion Listserv that people could sign up for to talk about this idea with other like minded individuals. Without his action in doing this, SAIGE as we know it would not have existed. Recently, Les dug up the first email entitled “Let's get started,” sent to an expanded list of people, assembled like a pebble hitting the water, forming circles upon circles; by contacts providing contacts who might be interested in forming this organization. (Sidebar)

Names for the organization were solicited and voted on, with the Society of American Indian Government Employees – SAIGE - being established as the organizational name on June 9, 2000. By the fall of 2001, this group which numbered about 65 at its height, had discussed and developed what they wanted this fledgling organization to look like, and what they wanted it to be.

On the day the bylaws passed, September 10, 2001, the people listed below were on the email list and are the ones who helped to organize SAIGE. (An asterisk by the name indicates bylaws contributor.)

Subject: Lets get started
From: Lori Windle
<lwindle@OSMRE.GOV>
Reply-To: Lori Windle
Date: Tue, 16 May 2000 11:53:08 -0600

Greetings!

First I would like to say a really big thank you to Les Tate and Larry Stephens for taking the bull by the horns and creating this Listserver. I think it is a critical step in beginning the development of an organization for American Indian government employees. I hope it will precipitate participation in a discussion as to why we would like such an organization, what we would hope to accomplish, who should be included, the issues we would like to address, as well as issues we need to consider carefully while formulating our organization.

Secondly, I would like to make a small correction to the initial welcome message. Les is correct in stating that years ago he and I had discussions about connecting Indian federal groups nationally. However, it was a suggestion recently by Vi Rogers of the SSA which prompted me to “put out feelers” to various folks as to whether there is the interest and commitment out there in creating a nation-wide independent non-profit group.

So far, the response I have personally received has been overwhelmingly positive, and the general reaction is - Its about time! I am hoping the time is right now, and that we have enough strength in numbers and character to make it happen.

For those who don't know me, I am a mixed-blood Ojibwe. My family is from the White Earth reservation where I am enrolled in the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. I work in Denver where I was raised, at the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement, which is part of Interior. I am the American Indian Special Emphasis program coordinator for my agency, and my agency's representative to the American Indian Program Council, which is a subcommittee of the Federal Executive Board here. I would encourage everyone who participates to introduce themselves as well, since this is a national group, and although Indian circles may be small, we actually do not all know each other!

What is the most logical topic to start with on this list?

Mii gwetch-
Lori Windle

*Les Tate
 *Carl Etsitty
 Garett Moravec
 *Joe A. Diaz
 *Sarah Eagle-Horse
 *Terry Begay
 *Belva Morrison
 *Bob Stockman
 *Valerie Lavender
 *Marcia Warren
 *CWayne Brewer
 *Jesse James
 *Lori Windle
 *Alan Moomaw
 Chuck Hedin

*Richard Wilson
 Veronica Vasquez
 Shana (now) Barehand
 Kit Farwell
 Mickey Hartnett
 Lawrence Baca
 Ciro Lo Pinto
 Susan Marcus
 *Becky Redhorse
 Chris Chaney
 Vickye M. Santiago
 Debbie Ross
 John Antonio
 Tony Bynum
 John Nicholas

Luke Jones
 Richard Robbins
 Jane Wilson
 Ellen Baier
 Duane Matt
 Buzz Cobell
 Shawna Y. Clay
 Sarah Deer
 Richard Regan
 Marla Drapeau
 Robin Slate
 Gary Chandler
 Myrna Mooney
 Susan Cade

FOUNDING MEMBERS OF SAIGE

Note: "SAIGE Founding Member" is defined as those who were paid members (full or associate) up to the date when the first board election was conducted in mid-August 2002. This eliminates all those who may have contributed to the discussion about forming SAIGE, but who failed to join SAIGE (that is, pay a membership fee) by the date of the first board election and, therefore, were ineligible to vote at that time.

Joined 2001

Jesse James, Jr.
 Landon Taylor
 Leslie (Les) Tate
 Joe Diaz
 Rebecca Tudisco
 Kit Farwell
 Diana Jackson
 Shana Arnold (now
 Barehand)
 Luke Jones
 Lori Windle
 Duane Matt

Nancy Sockabasin
 Susan (Sue) Marcus
 Marcus (Mark) Paiva
 Richard Regan
 Grace Sage
 Alex Escarcega
 Alan Moomaw
 Carol Berry
 Rebecca (Becky) Redhorse
 John C. Nicholas
 Terry Begay

Joined 2002

Crystal Wallace
 Stephen C. Parsons
 Carl Etsitty
 James Kitchens
 Violet (Vi) Rogers
 Patrick (Pat) Broyles
 Cheryle Zwang
 Ruby Pippenger
 Leland (Lee) Grooms
 Donna Stone

Norene Blair
 Cynthia Wood
 Randy Criss
 Roy Stanley
 Mickey Hartnett
 JoEllen Nickles
 Margaret (Peggy)
 Beier
 Brenda Ladage
 Kathrin Mathias

Finally on August 16, 2002 a full Board of Directors was elected, and SAIGE was born.

SAIGE FOUNDING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS:

CHAIRPERSON - Lori Windle

VICE-CHAIR - Jesse James

SECRETARY - John Nicholas (resigned, replaced by Fredericka Joseph)

TREASURER - Shana Barehand

BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE:

Patrick (Pat) Broyles
 Alex Escarcega
 Leland P. (Lee) Grooms
 Duane Matt

Alan Moomaw
 Violet J. (Vi) Rogers
 Nancy Sockabasin
 Donna N. Stone
 Cheryle Cobell Zwang



**First SAIGE Meeting, Pre-Incorporation, at Sadie's
in Albuquerque; DOI Conference on the Environment
March 2001**

L to R:

Carol Berry, Bureau of Reclamation

Lori Windle, Office of Surface Mining

Luke Jones, Environmental Protection Agency

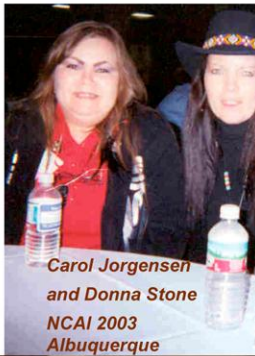
Valerie Lavender, Bureau of Prisons



Duane Matt
2000



Carl Etsitty
2003



Carol Jorgensen
and Donna Stone
NCAI 2003
Albuquerque



John Nicholas
2002



Sue Marcus



Pat Broyles



Jesse James
First SAIGE Conference
Ft. Lauderdale
2004



Cheryle Zwang and daughter Dannielle
at First SAIGE Conference
2004



Brenda Takes Horse
2004



Barehand Family
NMAI Opening
Sept. 21, 2004



Shana Barehand
Fredericka Joseph
Frank Sherwood

First SAIGE Conference
Ft. Lauderdale
2004



Society of American Indians Government Employees