



Society of American Indian
Government Employees

The Talking Leaf

SAIGE SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR: Fredericka Joseph



Welcome to our spring newsletter! We've made it through the winter and it is time to share the news of the organization about what we've been doing. Included in this issue you will find news about our Youth and Warrior's programs. SAIGE held its Board of Directors elections. We had five Director's positions and three Officer positions available. We are excited to report we had highly qualified candidates to choose from. Once the membership voted and the votes were tallied the following individuals were elected to serve a two-year term. The Officers were Fredericka Joseph, Chair; Jay Spaan, Vice Chair; and Phil Hamel, Secretary. The following Individuals were elected to fill the Director positions: Danny Garceau; Georgeie Reynolds; Lori Windle; Jim Pete; and Duane Matt. Unfortunately Jim had to resign after elections were held and the Chair made an appointment to fill

his position. We welcome Nieva Brock to our board. I want to thank Jim for his service to SAIGE. He was instrumental in arranging board training and introducing SAIGE to a new partner who provides training on a myriad of topics related to Indian issues. We wish Jim well as he moves forward helping his tribe and community. We also said farewell to Robin Hairston who hosted our musical event during November's Native American Heritage Month. His band, Blue Mountain Tribe, sponsored the event and were a hit to those who attended. Both Jim and Robin will be missed but we know they are still great supporters for SAIGE.

In November, SAIGE held several virtual events in honor of Native American Heritage Month. National Image, Inc. and SAIGE co-sponsored a training event with the Tax Exempt and Government Entities (TE/GE), Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) entitled Resilience in Times of Stress and Uncertainty. The session was an interactive overview of personal resilience concepts, strategies and tools to help manage stress during these uncertain times. The session provided an opportunity for participants to share some of the concerns and challenges everyone faced during this pandemic. As a result of what was provided the participants learned how to strengthen both personal and team resilience. The workshop was presented by Cynthia Dunn, IRS, TE/GE, EDI Director and a Lifetime member of SAIGE. SAIGE held a Zoom Happy Hour sponsored by Marcellus Proctor, a Lifetime member. Several of the Directors and members joined the get together and shared both personal and professional information. The Youth Program sponsored a panel

comprised of leaders from AISES, Unity and SAIGE. Carl Etsitty held a panel of STEM professionals who shared their stories of how they became involved in STEM careers and what type of work they do in their agencies. Jay Spaan conducted a popular webinar with Michael McBride, attorney and federal Indian Law expert, and Jonodev Chaudhuri of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, discussing tribal sovereignty and the landmark Supreme Court decision, *McGirt v. Oklahoma*.

This year we are planning our virtual 17th Annual National Training Program, September 14-16, 2021. The theme this year is ***Grounded in Tradition, Resilient in Spirit*** and reminds us of the difficulty of the past year and how Native communities draw strength from traditional practices, common values and rich longstanding customs to persevere and transcend. This year we made a decision to remain on the side of caution and hold our event virtually. We will continue to provide professional training workshops, Federal Indian Law, Cultural and Diversity training, Natural Resources/STEM and EEO and HR training programs. The cost for the three days is \$350. Stay tuned more information will be forthcoming and listed on our website at www.saige.org.

It was a busy year but we are anxiously planning our virtual training event in September. Until then continue visiting our website and our Facebook page for information both about the training and other events/information that are happening in SAIGE. We look forward to seeing you virtually in September!!!

AN UPDATE FROM THE SAIGE WARRIOR SOCIETY Director, Danny Garceau



Spring is here and it feels like it in more ways than one. Last year changed many things and caused many cancelations. We were traveling less and staying put for the most part to combat an enemy which we did not know a lot about. At times it felt like our world went into a darkness. We did not get everything right, but most of us have been surviving. The changes in our lives brought opportunities to learn how to do things differently. Many of us discovered some of the treasures we have right in our backyards and found ways to give thanks for blessings that we may have overlooked in the past. As we move forward out of the darkness may we remember what we have learned and apply it to make us all better humans and citizens to each other. Let us all again feel sunshine on our face.

The Warrior Society has joined SAIGE in our planning process for the upcoming National Training Program (NTP). As you probably already read in the comments from our Chair, Fredericka Joseph, our NTP has been moved from our traditional June month to September. Along with the lower conference fee, it gives us hope that many more of you will be approved to attend virtually. Yes, we will miss seeing everyone in person and the networking which sprouts at our

NTP. But virtually we have the opportunity for more individuals to attend the training because of the convenience and cost savings of not having to pay for travel, lodging and food. We are encouraging everyone to stress these points of cost savings to their agencies and employers. Along with a lower conference fee this year, gives us hope that many more of you will be approved to attend virtually in September. Two things that will not change this year are, the Warriors Track will be on Thursday, September 16, 2021, and the Warriors track portion of the NTP will remain at no cost to attendees. In addition to this we will be giving out our SAIGE Military Meritorious Awards again this year. However, we are planning to do this during an evening event that will be dedicated to recognition and awards by SAIGE instead of a special military luncheon as done in the past. There is also a change to allow government employee/retired veterans to be nominated for these Military Meritorious Awards. For more information, please check out the announcement on our www.saige.org web page under the Warriors Society section.

May 15th is Armed Forces Day. A day to recognize and honor our warriors who are still wearing the uniform. Many of us keep those warriors in our prayers throughout the year and wear R.E.D. on Fridays to Remember Everyone Deployed. I hope you will have your own special prayers and ceremonies on the 15th honoring our currently serving warriors. If you know of someone still serving, send them a message, give them a call and thank them for their service to our country and people. Today's warriors are tomorrow's veterans.

At the end of May, we will be remembering our fallen warriors during Memorial Day. It looks like many of the ceremonies that had to be canceled last year may again take place this year. Many more of our veteran elders and leaders were lost in the past year, our WWII, Korean War and Viet Nam veteran ranks are thinning. We are also losing too many and too soon Cold War, Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans. Let us not forget anyone who has served us. I hope that each one of you can get out and participate this Memorial Day in remembering and honoring those who have taken their final march. Lay your tobacco down, make your offering to the Creator and let their spirits know they will never be forgotten.

Thank you all for your service and thank you to those who continue to serve.

SAIGE YOUTH TRACK ALUMNI NEWS: Pfawn Eskee, Making a Difference Under Challenging Times

By JoAnn Brant, SAIGE Youth Director

I have been the SAIGE Youth Director since 2005. It has been a blessing to keep in touch with many of the SAIGE student alumni. Recently, Pfawn Eskee, one of our 2010 SAIGE student alumni, was honored at the National Crime Victims Service Award Ceremony. She received the Allied Professional Award. I am very proud of Pfawn's determination to make a difference under challenging times and for being creative in her actions.

Pfawn is currently a licensed counselor with the Utah Navajo Health Systems (UNHS) where she provides services to tribal communities. In her role as a behavioral health professional, Pfawn creates a safe space and understanding for those who are impacted by the effects of traumas, as well as applies the holistic (balanced), culturally informed philosophy into her work. In addition, she serves as Administer for the UNHS website called WeAreNavajo.org. It is an accessible platform for community outreach and information to all. There are various announcements and updates related to the clinic on the website, as well as online resources for families, wellness, and merchandising, giving community ownership and familiarity in the services at the clinic.

The website content is presented in English and Navajo, further expanding the importance of developing culturally inclusive services, merchandise, and wholeness that builds trust and ownership of the services to the people. Pfawn is a professional Navajo woman who is proud of her identity and gives reach to new generations who find new,



PHOTO: Pfawn Eskee, Licensed Counselor, Utah Navajo Health Systems. Pfawn is a former SAIGE Youth Track participant.

important ways to sustain their culture and empower their traditional beliefs. Representation in professional fields not only gives patients a familiar face to work with but it encourages and inspires future generations to see themselves in these important roles and to make a difference like Pfawn does every day.

Pfawn takes part in multidisciplinary meetings and SARTs (Sexual Assault Response Teams) in her ongoing effort to include the intersectional trauma and behavioral health support for survivors. It is this extraordinary skill that I believe has placed Pfawn in the category of allied professional with the field of

victim services. When the network of providing care around survivors can be encompassed holistically and be found within a provider who is also a member of the same community, the journey to healing becomes more inviting to those set to navigate that path. The prevalence of violence and trauma in tribal communities is the highest in the country. Acquiring the available resources to meet the needs of the communities is an ongoing task for community leaders. The UNHS clinic has stepped in to help fulfill an important need in the Navajo communities of Utah. They continue to work to fill gaps, which will continue to strengthen the work and commitment of professionals like Pfawn.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pfawn stepped forward to organize a community effort to provide aid to her communities in Utah that included donations, updates about changes in services and deliveries of essential items to elders and their families. The loss of the Navajo people during this time cannot be overstated and yet, folks were able to find a friendly face that greeted them at the clinic and out in the community, traveling long hours to give hope in the aid she brought to so many families. It is the perseverance of individuals like Pfawn that give promise that the Navajo people and all Indigenous communities will be stronger, kinder and resilient, overcoming hardships as we have for many generations.

Congratulations to Pfawn a job well done. SAIGE is so proud of your work and dedication.

LINKS:

- <https://youtu.be/t7nrtBnfcIA>
- <https://www.suu.edu/everywhere/stories/pfawn-eskee.html>
- <https://navajotimes.com/ae/community/social-media-is-the-only-thing-social-worker-puts-passion-into-practice-with-we-are-navajo/>
- <https://www.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh241/files/media/document/ojp-news-release-0423211.pdf>

SAIGE MEMBERS AND YOUTH TRACK ALUMNI IN THE NEWS!!



Marcellus Proctor was featured in the AISES Sequoyah Fellows – Profiles in Leadership.

Read his story here: <https://aises.informz.et/informzdataservice/onlineversion/ind/bGluZ2luc3RhbmNlaWQ9OTQ5Mzg3NCZzdWJzY3JpYmVyaWQ9MTA5NjM3MzA4Mg==>



Shawna Clay was the NAVAIR Employee Spotlight for National American Indian Alaska Native Heritage Month in November. A member of the Choctaw tribe and a team lead for NAVAIR's American Indian Alaskan Native Diversity Action Team, Shawna Clay has been involved with American Indian/Alaskan Native cultural events at Point Mugu for more than 25 years. Her goal is to improve insight into different cultures and increase morale.



Ciarra Greene, former Youth Track participant, announced that her program Nimiipuu'neewit was selected as a 2021 Environmental Education 30 Under 30 Changemaker Grant by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). The grant will provide funding for another 10-months for the connection, protection, and healing of our Nimiipuu Homelands through culture, science, and education. #ee30u30 #EnviroEd. Photo: Ciarra demonstrating the different structures of seed pods on dried stalks of various qem'es. Candalabra (like a fancy candle) shape on Camassia lechlinii and tucked in pods on Camassia quamash. Can you guess which pose is being demonstrated here?



Biidaaban Moses Reinhardt, former Youth Track participant, received the Prestigious Sloan Indigenous Graduate Fellowship from State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Center for Native Peoples and the Environment. <https://www.esf.edu/nativepeoples/graduate-partnership.htm>. She is an Anishinaabe Ojibwe woman, a citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, and from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.



Robin Hairston, former SAIGE Board Member, was featured in Bakersfield newspaper article, *Blue Mountain Tribe's video a rallying cry for awareness*

https://www.bakersfield.com/entertainment/music/cesareo-garasa-blue-mountain-tribes-video-a-rallying-cry-for-awareness/article_5602f868-815a-11eb-99c2-435076804020.html#tncms-source=article-nav-next

KANSAS CITY CHAPTER - Women's History Month - A Pride in Our History

by John Learned, Kansas City Chapter SAIGE

I often think of the impact my mother — Juanita Learned, Chairwoman of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes — and her friends had in creating the Indian world of today.

While drafting the 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, the government needed a concrete definition of what constituted an American Indian.

I was proud when Mom came home and told the family that a presidential committee had asked her to come up with that definition, in conjunction with her good friend Viola Peterson, a Miami Indian from Michigan.

It was hard work, but it was worth it.

The simple beauty of the foundational work of these women helped Indians come together, where they struggled and prayed over the true definition of an American Indian — something that would represent all tribes and have a lasting effect.

This gave all tribes a starting point to work from. It aided the publication of Cohn's Handbook on Federal Indian Law, now regarded as a key reference work. Later the 2017 American Indian Empowerment Act and the subsequent Indian Determination Act built upon it. Most people do not realize the thought, consideration and deep research that was done in finding an answer to the simple question.

The 1975 self-determination act left the decision of who is or isn't an American Indian to the individual tribes themselves and their membership. Over the years, tribes have adjusted identification requirements, such as looking at blood quantum and official documentation, such as certified birth and death records. This has kept us from going extinct, and it gives tribes an accurate census of their own members.

A few years ago, I had the great fortune to meet Teresa Bradskey, Viola's daughter, and founder of the Harvest Moon American Indian Festival. Teresa reminded me about how Mom and people of that time worked to solidify Indian culture. Teresa educated us about our mothers' lives. She reminisced about their connection, and how my mom became Viola's mentor at her



PHOTO: Juanita Learned, Chairwoman of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes.

suggestion. She shared memories about being in Washington, D.C., on "Indian business" for the first time, and seeking out my mother's counsel.

Teresa shared her delight in knowing that this many years later, in a city where neither of us expected to find ourselves, we have been united to carry forth what had been started a generation ago.

Since those beginnings back in the '70s, the face of Indian country has evolved to reflect many changes. We now know Indians come in all colors, shapes, and sizes. Yet we all have red hearts. We are Indians.

We never did "all look alike," and that is still true. But we share one important part of our "Indianness": a pride in our history, who we are.



Photo: Alan Moomaw with Youth Leader, Brian Barlow. Credit: Jason Edwards

IN REMEMBRANCE: Alan Moomaw, a member of the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla

"Alan was one of the scores of Native American people who answered the call in 2000 to create a new national organization for native Federal employees. He served on the original bylaws committee that developed the foundation that SAIGE stands on today. After the organization took shape, Alan served on the very first SAIGE Board of Directors. He was one of our first Lifetime Members and was always a supporter." Fredericka Joseph, SAIGE Chair

Alan Moomaw left us in December 2020. We honor his life and work and are grateful that he shared that with the SAIGE family. Alan's gentle nature and infectious smile will be missed.

SAIGE - MASTERING THE VIRTUAL PLATFORM

During the pandemic this past year, SAIGE explored conducting activities virtually to keep our membership involved and informed. For the past six months the SAIGE board has been conducting its meetings via Zoom. This communication platform was new to most of the board. In a quick amount of time everyone was comfortable with the move to this medium and it is now preferred to the old way of doing business using a conference telephone line.

November was Native American Heritage Month and SAIGE provided our membership with several programs on the Zoom platform. SAIGE had a successful and fun night with the Friends of SAIGE Virtual Concert, which brought seven Native American artists together over a four-hour period. The artists were Waawiyeyaa, Jetty Rae, Don Chapman, Randy Kemp, Wade Fernandez, Keith Secola and Blue Mountain Tribe. All these artists have played for SAIGE at our National Training Programs over the years, some more than once. It truly was a gathering of great talent and we are blessed to call them all friends of SAIGE. The video of the concert has had 9,400 views on our Facebook page.

As part of our professional development program Alex D. Tremble provided a session on *Strategic Networking in the Government*. Board member Carl Etsitty spearheaded a session called *STEM Talking Circle*, a discussion featuring Native American professionals working government STEM careers. SAIGE Vice Chair Jay Spaan along with Michael McBride conducted the Webinar: *Tribal Sovereignty: Understanding the Impact of the Supreme Court's Decision in McGirt v. Oklahoma*. The Youth program conducted two interesting sessions, *Native Youth Advocacy*, and the *Power of the Internet*, along with *Takes a Village-Native Youth Advocacy Panel* with Sarah Echo Hawk, Mary Kim Titla, Nikki Pitre and Youth Track Leader Brian Barlow. We had 76 individuals attend the live sessions and another 368 view the sessions later.

The success we had using Zoom in November made us feel confident when we had to make the decision to conduct our National Training Program in 2021 virtually. We had learned a lot doing these events in 2020 on our own, and we will be hiring a professional virtual media platform company to help us expand our capabilities and provide the absolute best in September.

In addition to using Zoom to conduct our SAIGE meetings and provide presentations for our membership we also held two SAIGE social evenings allowing SAIGE members to see and visit with each other. These evenings were well received by the members who participated and appreciated the chance to visit and network.

We have been keeping our Facebook page active with posts of information and opportunities. We also conducted a semi-live auction using Facebook in November and have posted pictures of our SAIGE apparel for sale with the store link. Don't forget to visit our Facebook page at least weekly and check our web page www.saige.org for news and updates.



**Society of American Indian
Government Employees**

**Grounded in Tradition,
Resilient in Spirit**

SAVE THE DATE
September 14-16, 2021

17th(Virtual)National Training Program

Professional development, diversity and inclusion, youth and veteran programs, cultural and relevant educational sessions featuring nationally known speakers

Registration Fee \$350

Watch our website for updates
<https://saige.org>

Talking Leaf Newsletter

TALKING LEAF NEWSLETTER is issued twice a year - Spring and Fall. SAIGE welcomes your stories, suggestions, and ideas. Please email: georgiaamadrid2@gmail.com

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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www.saige.org

SAIGE Board of Directors

OFFICER POSITIONS

Chair: Fredericka Joseph (Kaw Nation)
Vice Chair: Jay Spaan (Cherokee Nation)
Secretary: Phil Hamel (Mohawk ancestry)
Treasurer: Sue Morris (Comanche Nation of Oklahoma)

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Sadé Heart of the Hawk Ali (First Nations Mi'kmaq)
Nieva Brock (Higuayagua Taino)
Tilford Brown (Diné)
Carl Etsitty (Diné (Navajo Nation))
Danny Garceau (Anishinaabe)
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Duane Matt (Confederated Salish Kootenai and Pend D'Oreille)
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CONTACT BOARD AT: chair@saige.org



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