



The Talking Leaf

SAIGE FALL NEWSLETTER - November 2022

MESSAGE FROM THE SAIGE CHAIR

Greetings!

Fall is around us and the weather has begun to bring cool air and temperatures. It's exciting to welcome another season as this year begins to wind down. This time of year brings SAIGE some hustle and bustle because we are being contacted regarding National Native American Heritage Month activities. This year's theme is: "Celebrating Respect, Culture and Education." We celebrate respect for tribal sovereignty and the respect we have for one another. We celebrate the many vibrant cultures that comprise Indian Country and educational opportunities that enhance the understanding of native issues and the government-to-government relationship. Many of us grew up learning respect for our elders and our communities. I remember my father taking me with him to meet with elders and instructed me to be quiet and listen. Then he would ask me questions later!

This year we are busy with requests from agencies to participate in their events. We are excited to serve in that capacity as well as to serve as a resource for agencies on their outreach efforts to Indian Country. In June, we held our virtual 20th Anniversary Annual National Training Program (NTP). We had great speakers from Indian country sharing items of interest that are going on throughout our native communities. It was an exciting event. We are now prepping for next year's event that will be held June 20-22, 2023, at the tribally owned River Spirit Resort, owned by the Muscogee Creek Nation. We will be offering our Federal Indian Law; Professional Development; Natural Resources/Culture; and Equal Employment Opportunity/Diversity training tracks.



FREDERICKA JOSEPH

We need volunteers to help with the planning committee and our grant management committee. If you have written grants and/or helped in reviewing grants, your assistance would be greatly appreciated. The planning committees are overseen by the Board of Directors, but volunteers can assist on various committees and learn more about SAIGE. As a national organization we continue to reach out to our membership. We believe that engagement with the Board builds a stronger sense of community and insight into the workings of SAIGE. If you are interested, please send me an email with your contact information and the area you are interested in volunteering. My email address is fjoseph@saige.org.

Please continue to visit our website at www.saige.org for more information about our 2023 NTP. We will be hosting students next year allowing agencies an opportunity to sponsor native college students. Agencies can also purchase a booth, and meet with students during our Career Day. Our popular Warrior Society will also hold their training track, open to the local community, NTP attendees and students.

Annual elections will be held in December. If you are interested in joining our Board, you can either be nominated by someone or self-nominate. Please be sure that your membership dues are up to date by contacting our Membership Coordinator, Luke Jones at Luke@saige.org. Only members in good standing can be nominated and can vote in the election. Our website will have the announcement and instructions next month so watch for that and participate in selecting the new SAIGE board.

Have a great holiday season and stay tuned to our website and member's listserv for upcoming announcements.

A MESSAGE FROM THE WARRIOR SOCIETY DIRECTOR

Boozhoo/Greetings,

In May, we have Memorial Day, a day to remember and honor those who gave the ultimate sacrifice in uniform. In June, we celebrate Armed Forces Day, honoring those who are currently serving and wearing the uniform. In November, we not only celebrate National Native American Heritage Month, but we also celebrate Veterans Day. It is a day to honor and thank those who once wore the uniform, serving our country and people. Hopefully many of you will attend a Veterans Day program, maybe some of you will be active participants in the program. Although humility is one of the seven grandfather teachings, it is okay to quietly feel that pride that you are one of many Native American veterans, a group that is recognized for having the greatest propensity to serve. It is the Warrior Spirit.

Many veterans feel like they are still serving, even though the uniform was put away many years ago. They serve in different ways, both formally and informally. They serve as volunteers for organizations, groups, and their communities. The same fire of contributing to something greater than themselves that they felt in uniform still burns within them. Once a warrior always a warrior.

This year the 35th Native American was awarded the highest military award, the Congressional Medal of Honor. Specialist Five Dwight Birdwell, Cherokee, was awarded the medal more than 50 years after his heroic actions during the Vietnam War. It was long overdue. He was originally awarded the Silver Star with two Purple Hearts, but after his actions were reviewed many years later it was determined that his actions were without question fitting of the Congressional Medal of Honor. The Medal of Honor is awarded to members of the armed forces who distinguish themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their own lives above and beyond the call of duty. I encourage you all to find out more about Dwight Birdwell, he is an inspiration for us all, a true warrior.

On Wednesday evening at the June NTP, the 2022 SAIGE Military Meritorious Service Award winners were honored. Here are the winners in alphabetic order:



DANNY GARCEAU

Adams II, Gary R., City of Phoenix Police Department, USN, USMC and US Army veteran; Brinkley, Matthew P., Commander, USCG; Edwardson, Robert, USCG, retired USCG veteran; Hudson, Sissy, US Army Corps of Engineers; Lockman II, Randolp R., SFC, WI ARNG; Mergenthaler, David L. Jr., GS12 USCG, retired USCG veteran; Peshlakai, Otis M., SSgt, USMC; Sturdivant, Melissa, GS9, USDA, US Army veteran; Thompson III, Douglas W., 1LT, US Army; Wright, Jody, LTC, National Guard US Army. Congratulations again to these well deserving warriors.

During Native American Heritage month, more than any other time of the year, we are asked about our history, heritage, culture and sometimes even the issues we have today. It also gives us an opportunity to promote SAIGE. I ask each of you to help us grow and encourage other government employees, Federal, Tribal, State, and local, to join SAIGE. There are many reasons and benefits to being a member of SAIGE. Help our ranks grow, promote support for our organization and our mission. Be a warrior for SAIGE and our cause.

Ogitch E Daa Members' Names Placed on the Veterans Wall of Honor at Valley Forge Pennsylvania

by Brant Mitchell

This past September on the 25th, I was honored and humbled to be present at the dedication service for veterans whose names have been listed on bronze plaques at the Valley Forge Washington Memorial Chapel in the Veterans Wall of Honor which sits in the Valley Forge National Park. I am a member of the Match E Be Nash She Wish Ogitch E Daa Society supporting the Match E Be Nash She Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians (aka, the Gun Lake Tribe). We are a society of nineteen active members with service covering the period from the Korean Conflict through the Global War on Terrorism.



Just over a year ago our names and ranks were compiled upon request by the Gun Lake Casino President Sal Semola, his efforts resulted in our members being listed on plaque number 26 in the Veterans Hall. Members who have served or are serving can be posted to the wall. The service included reading of names recognizing our society, but also included veterans dating back to the USA Revolutionary War.

Five members attended "DK Sprague, Sam Austin, Mike Mitchell, Rod VanOeren and me. When we arrived, we requested permission to post our colors; We Daa Se (our Warrior Eagle Staff) and Tribal Flag. Permission was granted without hesitation, the care-takers told us this was the first time an Eagle Staff had been present for the dedication. We rotated members throughout the service to protect We Daa Se and to answer questions and teach about Eagle Staffs.

The service was presented by members who care for the Veteran Wall of Honor and they include historical facts of Valley Forge the training and lodging of the Continental Army over the period of time they were there. One of the speakers was a retired USMC Colonel Tom Church. He gave a rousing talk regarding the history of American Indian serving in the military. There was so much emotion we all felt it is a memory of a lifetime.



<https://wmchapel.org/carillon-wall-of-honor/the-wall-of-honor/>

SAIGE Youth Track Member News

"It is an honor to work with our student leaders. Triston Black is an outstanding leader who deserves recognition for his leadership and commitment to his community."

JoAnn Brant, SAIGE Youth Track Coordinator

TRISTON B. BLACK – CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE



I am Triston B. Black from the community of Tsaile, Arizona, located in the Navajo Nation. I am a member of the New Mexico Indigenous Youth Council & Center for Native American Youth (CNAV) Champions for Change (CFC). I work at the first tribally controlled college, Diné College, as the Projects & Legislative Aide. Aside from work and volunteering, I am a graduate student at ASU in the Indigenous

Education M.A. program and part of the ASU American Indian Policy Institute – Indigenous Leadership Academy.

The CFC program is a Native youth leadership initiative to highlight positive stories of impact from Indian Country. The program, inspired by a 2011 White House initiative, develops young Native leaders through experience-based learning and tailored advocacy training.

The role of a Champion is to enter a close year-long working relationship with CNAV that begins in the spring with a series of recognition events in Washington, DC. This national recognition provides an initial platform for Champions to amplify their leadership stories and benefit from a variety of resources that enhance their advocacy skills. Throughout their term as a Champion, they will receive support, resources, and opportunities to represent themselves and CNAV at various events.

Not only is it an honor, but it is a responsibility. In previous years, I applied for the program but came up short. I was determined to improve myself as an individual, and I aimed to do that through volunteerism. Finding volunteer opportunity in the Navajo Nation has its challenges, but that did not stop me from helping my people or being involved in youth organizations, so I appreciate the support of the Office of Diné Youth, my

alma mater Navajo Preparatory School, and Diné College for allowing me to volunteer in youth programs, youth councils, and student leadership.

I was involved with the SAIGE Student Conference in 2019. As a Dallas Peterman Youth Leadership Recipient, this recognition opened new opportunities for me to explore. The Youth Track helped build my leadership skills, allowed networking with youth leaders across Indian Country recognizing the importance of service, environmental justice, creativity, innovation, tradition, cultural, and language.

In our Navajo culture, we have four clans and those four clans represent our maternal lineage as a people. I credit my family roots and Navajo Culture for always disciplining me and supporting me on this journey called life. Also, the Diyin Diné'é (Holy People) for putting me in places I need to be and guiding my path into the future.

My educational journey in the Indigenous Education M.A. program will invest in language revitalization and cultural learning for future generations to come. Indigenous Knowledge Systems were once strong and powerful tools in healing, restoring, and reestablishing one's well-being. A degree in Indigenous Education will bring forth those sacred tools and practices to begin healing, restoring, and reestablishing our tribal communities. Being a part of the Champions for Change program will strengthen my relations with other peers/networks, elevate Indigenous youth voices, and remain grounded in our traditional life ways.

Advice I would give to youth leaders would be persistent, remain grounded in who you are, and take care of yourself as an individual.

Lastly, I want to personally thank the leadership at SAIGE for always elevating youth voices, creating strong networks, and creating leaders now and into the future. Thank you JoAnn and Elaine for building Indian Country's young leaders across our tribal communities.

Axéhee', (thank you)

Triston Black

2019 SAIGE Youth Track Attendee & Dallas Peterman Youth Leadership Recipient

Read More about Triston and CNAV Champions for Change:
<https://www.cnay.org/champions/champions/>

HEALING AND CELEBRATION 50 YEARS LATER

BY NIEVA M. S. BROCK

History was made in June 1973 when Marlon Brando not only refused to accept his Academy Award for best performance by an actor for his role as Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*, but when he requested a Native American actress, Ms. Sacheen Littlefeather, represent him on stage in his absence. Ms. Littlefeather, an Apache woman, was then President of the National Native American Affirmative Image Committee and member of the Screen Actors Guild. She entered the stage, seen here at Marlon Brando's Oscar® win for *The Godfather* -[YouTube](#) in full native regalia and graciously offered Mr. Brando's regrets for not accepting the award.



MS. SACHEEN LITTLEFEATHER

She further explained that he wished to raise awareness of the unfair treatment of American Indians by the film industry, in television, and in movie re-runs. She also brought attention to the 1973 Wounded Knee protest in South Dakota. Ms.

Littlefeather further expressed her hope that in the future “our hearts and our understandings will meet with love and generosity.” Her short, eloquent, speech was met with both boos and applause.

Unfortunately, that moment affected her life and career for years. On Monday, August 15, 2022, in an unprecedented announcement the President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences issued a formal apology to Ms. Littlefeather:

“Regarding the Academy’s apology to me, we Indians are very patient people—it’s only been 50 years! We need to keep our sense of humor about this at all times. It’s our method of survival,” said Littlefeather. “I never thought I’d live to see the day for this program to take place, featuring such wonderful Native performers and Bird Runningwater, a television and film producer who also guided the Sundance Institute’s commitment to Indigenous filmmakers for twenty years through the Institute’s Labs and Sundance Film Festival. This is a dream come true. It is profoundly heartening to see how much has changed since I did not accept the Academy Award 50 years ago. I am so proud of each and every person who will appear on stage.” Jacqueline Stewart, Director and President of the Academy Museum, said, “We are delighted and humbled that Sacheen has so generously chosen to engage with the museum and Academy to reflect upon her trying experience at the 1973 Academy Awards. Our thanks go out to Bird Runningwater and Heather Rae for helping us foster our cherished relationship with Sacheen. We hope our event on September 17 offers Sacheen and our audiences a moment of collective healing and a new path forward.”

In response, Ms. Littlefeather stated “Regarding the Academy’s apology to me, we Indians are very patient people—it’s only been 50 years! We need to keep our sense of humor about this at all times. It’s our method of survival”

Ms. Littlefeather was a featured speaker on September 17, 2022, at the Academy Museum “for an evening of conversation, healing, and celebration.” Regarding this invitation, Ms. Littlefeather stated “I never thought I’d live to see the day for this program to take place, featuring such wonderful Native performers and Bird Runningwater, a television and film producer who also guided the Sundance Institute’s commitment to Indigenous filmmakers for twenty years through the Institute’s Labs and Sundance Film Festival. This is a dream come true. It is profoundly heartening to see how much has changed since I did not accept the Academy Award 50 years ago. I am so proud of each and every person who will appear on stage.”

SAIGE welcomes this wonderful news and applauds the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for acknowledging the past and seeking a peaceful, collaborative future with Native Americans. Ms. Littlefeather passed away on October 2, 2022.

THE WARRIOR WITHIN

A transformational guide to getting yourself right in order to accomplish the work you were meant to do, from speaker D.J. Vanas, former U.S. Air Force officer, and member of the Ottawa tribe.



Drawing inspiration from Native American philosophy and tradition, *The Warrior Within* outlines a new model for personal power in the face of overwhelming chaos.

Vanas shows how to apply these principles to transform how you show up both for yourself and for those around you. More than an empowerment manual, *The Warrior Within* is a call to accomplish the world-changing work you were meant for by tapping into the power of the warrior spirit.

penguinrandomhouse.com/books/696069/the-warrior-within-by-dj-vanas/

“The Warrior Within” is now available at Penguin Random House Books, Amazon.com in various formats, and other fine booksellers.

D.J. Vanas can be reached at NativeDiscovery.com



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Talking Leaf Newsletter

TALKING LEAF NEWSLETTER is issued three times a year - Winter, Spring and Fall. Want to contribute? SAIGE welcomes your stories, suggestions, and ideas. Please contact Georgia Madrid at newsletter@saige.org for information and newsletter guidelines.

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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<https://saige.org/home/board-members/>