



# The Talking Leaf

SAIGE WINTER NEWSLETTER - January 2022



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

*Fredericka Joseph*

*Spirit Returning to the Ancestral Roots; Career Pathfinder and Updates in Tribal Consultation.* The Warrior Society had a great training day on Thursday, September 16th. We tried something new this year and made some sessions available to the public during Native American Heritage Month.

Rob Russell, Sade' Heart of the Hawk and Phil Hamel will be rotating off the board this year. I want to thank them all for serving on the board, having stepped up and taken on new roles and responsibilities in promoting SAIGE and helping SAIGE grow. Thank you for your service to the Board and SAIGE. Roberta Lewis has been appointed to the office of Secretary for a year, and we look forward to working with her in this capacity.

We welcome three new Directors to our board this year: Luke Jones, employed at the EPA, Brant Mitchell, employed at the Gun Lake Tribe of Pottawatomis Indians/Gun Lake Tribe, and Ed Blauvelt, employed by the Air Force. We also welcome returning Directors Tilford Brown, VA, and Carl Etsitty, USDA. All will be serving two-year terms. We look forward to their contributions to SAIGE.

We are planning our NTP scheduled for June 20-23, 2022 at the River Spirit Resort Hotel owned and operated by the Muscogee Creek Nation. This will

be our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary so we hope you will attend this very special event. We will send out more information on how to submit a workshop proposal. Our main tracks are Federal Indian Law; Professional Development; Diversity/EEO; Natural and Cultural Resources.

We lost a valuable member of our SAIGE family. Kevin Duty, Treasurer of our Kansas City Chapter, walked on in 2021. Kevin served his chapter by keeping track of their funds. He was also a Lifetime member along with his son and daughter! We want to keep Kevin's family in our thoughts and prayers for their loss of a father, brother, son, Uncle, and friend.

We thank our sponsors who have committed time and financial resources to SAIGE. SAIGE would not be as successful as we are without our financial sponsors. They are more than just sponsors, they are family and we appreciate their support over the years! We also give a big thank you to our Federal partners who continue to attend the NTP and support SAIGE throughout the year!

We hope you will enjoy this newsletter. We thank Georgia Madrid, who retired from Federal service but has graciously agreed to serve as a volunteer by compiling our newsletters.

## Warm Greetings to Our Membership!

This is an exciting time for us as we finished another successful Native American Heritage Month. Several of us gave presentations at Federal agencies on unconscious bias, diversity within the workplace and how to use SAIGE as a resource! We are willing to provide presentations throughout the year, Please send an email to [info@saige.org](mailto:info@saige.org) and someone will reach out and try to accommodate your request.

We held our virtual annual National Training Program (NTP) from September 14-16, 2021. Our agenda was packed full of great information including *Maintaining Your Cultural Values in the Workplace; Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Your Organization; Guidelines for Considering Traditional Knowledge in Climate Change Initiatives; Two*

## Introducing the New Directors for the 2022-2023 Term



**E**dward J. Blauvelt is of Muskogee (mother) and Mohawk (father) descent, is an active member in local American Indian community, and has been the Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph American Indian Heritage Committee Chairman for the past 11 years. Ed currently serves as the International Affairs Lead Operations and Manpower for the Air Force Security Assistance Training Squadron (AFSAT) within Headquarters, Air Education and Training Command. Ed was honored with the SAIGE Meritorious Service Award in 2015 and 2018. He also received the U.S. Air Force Outstanding Aviation Resource Management Non-commissioned Officer of the Year Award in 1998. Ed met his wife, Nicole, in England and they have been married for nearly 40 years. Together they have three children and three grandchildren. Ed's hobbies include military history, Gourd Dancing, photography, fishing, and astronomy. "With SAIGE I will have a great opportunity to interact and serve my people and learn from them and their experiences. I want to use those experiences to reach out and assist other American Indians to achieve their dreams and expand our impact in America. Thank you for your consideration."



**L**uke Jones is a Senior Analyst in EPA's American Indian Environmental Office (AIEO) and has helped lead EPA's tribal program for more than 20 years. As a lineal descendant of the Chickahomeny and Pamunkey Indians of Virginia, Luke has worked to improve federal Indian program administration more than 30-years and is an active member of the Native American community. Luke leads EPA's Direct Implementation Work Group, coordinating EPA program implementation activities for Indian country, and Chairs the EPA American Indian and Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Advisory Council. "My goal in serving on the SAIGE board is to maximize federal employment opportunities for our Native American community through expanded inter-agency collaboration. Specifically, I hope to help establish lasting institutional infrastructure for federal agencies interested in hosting paid Native American interns and offering internship experiences that qualify for academic credits. I also hope to promote strategic federal workforce planning to improve federal agency capacity to identify Indian country employment opportunities under their unique programs. I am excited to help SAIGE serve as a community building and community bonding forum where life-long associations and friendships can take root and blossom."



**B**rant Mitchell. Aanii, Boozhoo, Tiigomizh ndesh na kas, wabizhishe ndootem, Odawa/Ojibwe, Michillimackinac and SE Michigan ndochbya, SW Michigan ndeda. Brant is employed with the Match E Be Nash She Wish Pottawatomi (aka: the Gun Lake Tribe of Pottawatomi Indians/Gun Lake Tribe) as the Emergency Management and Safety Manager, Brant has been employed with the Gun Lake Tribe since September 2015, and with their Gun Lake Casino as the Safety Coordinator from 2013 – 2015. He has a diverse professional background developed from working in the Environmental Emergency Response, Fire Service/EMS, Construction and Business fields. Brant served in the U.S. Navy Construction Battalions (SEABEES) as a Heavy Equipment Operator. In his spare time Brant enjoys fishing with his grandson, spending time outdoors, and sharing time with his adult children. He also enjoys time with his two canine partners Storm (retired Search & Rescue (SAR) and Moon (in training for SAR), which he trains himself. "I look forward to utilizing my life skills, continuing to learn and grow, while maintaining the traditional ways of planning and supporting our members and the seven generations from now."



## A MESSAGE FROM THE SAIGE WARRIOR SOCIETY Director, Danny Garceau

I would like to wish everyone the best, for a new year filled with many blessings. I hope you were able to spend time with family and loved ones during the past holiday season. Let us all keep in our prayers those who are not able to be with family, for whatever reason. I remember my first Christmas away from home serving on the East/West German border back in the 70's. Cell phones and internet were not yet around, phone calls were allowed once a month but were expensive and limited to a short period of time, but we had mail, and it was appreciated knowing someone was thinking of you. Those letters took a little of that loneliness away from not being with loved ones and made the season a little brighter despite being far from home. Let us always remember those deployed or away from family.

At the virtual SAIGE NTP in September, the 2021 Warriors/Veterans Track was well attended with great reviews. Our agenda included an honor song and prayer by Tilford Brown and a welcome from our SAIGE Chair, Fredericka Joseph. Speakers included VA Director Stephanie Birdwell, Capt Haida StarEagle, CSM (retired) Monshi Ramdass, Pamela End of Horn, Teresa Pittman, Deana Vorta, Michelle Sauve, and Elizabeth Pfenning. Subjects included VA updates, USDA partnership programs for veterans, suicide prevention, veteran programs through tribal HUD-VASH, homeless veteran reintegration programs and missing and murdered indigenous women/sex trafficking. Moderating the event was Juanita Mullen. The posting and retiring of the colors were done virtually by the Comanche Indian Veteran Association (CIVA).

The 2021 SAIGE Military Meritorious Service Award winners were honored at the Wednesday evening recognition and appreciation event. Listed in

alphabetic order are the 2021 SAIGE Meritorious Service Award winners.

- Mrs. Rosemary Cook, GS6, US Air Force Civilian (USAF Veteran), Altus AFB, Oklahoma
- CPT Matthew Cordell, US Army, ROTC Minneapolis, Minnesota
- SMSgt Jeremy Fogleman, US Air Force, Joint Base Andrews, Maryland
- Mr. Jeffrey Johnson, GS9, US Air Force Civilian (USAF Veteran), Randolph AFB, Texas
- PO2 Corylee Redhorse, US Coast Guard, USCG Base Los Angeles Long Beach, California
- GySgt Stephanie Roman, US Marine Corps, Camp Pendleton, California
- PO Dayna Sandoval, US Coast Guard, Air Station Sacramento, California
- MSgt Kristal Stacey, US Air Force, Keesler AFB, Mississippi
- Maj Teresa Thompson, US Air Force, Davis Monthan AFB, Arizona
- SSgt Lesa Vaughn, US Air Force, Holloman AFB, New Mexico

During Native American Heritage Month, I was able to speak with several organizations including US Custom and Border Protection, Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General, Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System, United States Department of Agriculture, Georgia VA Health Care System and Northern Michigan University. During those speaking engagements I promoted our SAIGE Warrior Society along with explaining our culture's propensity to serve at a higher level than any other demographic.

The next SAIGE NTP will be held June 20-23, 2022 at the River Spirit Resort in Tulsa, OK. Mark your calendars, plan to attend, spread the word, and



Photo: Danny with grandson

bring some fellow veterans with you. The Warrior/Veteran day will likely be on Thursday of that week, as it has in the past. The planning process has just begun, if there are specific subjects or a speaker you would like to see during the Warriors/Veterans portion, please send me an e-mail as soon as possible at [danny.garceau@saige.org](mailto:danny.garceau@saige.org).

The Warrior Society conducts a voluntary teleconference meeting the last Tuesday of each month. It provides an opportunity for the membership to help plan our training program along with sharing information and comradery. Notification and reminders of the meeting go out to our membership via the SAIGE Warrior Society listserve. If you are currently serving or a veteran but not yet a member of the Warrior Society and wish to be, please contact me.

I would like to end my message by asking you to never forget those deployed, never forget our brothers and sisters who are serving or who have served. If you have an address, an email or phone number for veterans you served with or know, give them a call, send them a message, let them know you are thinking of them.



*2021 SAIGE Military Meritorious Service Award winner, Dayna Sandoval from Taos Pueblo, featured in the Taos News*

Read More: [https://www.taosnews.com/news/local-news/taos-pueblo-woman-recognized-for-meritorious-service/article\\_a04dd4c5-52b9-50bf-bd42-8242d0a06b38.html](https://www.taosnews.com/news/local-news/taos-pueblo-woman-recognized-for-meritorious-service/article_a04dd4c5-52b9-50bf-bd42-8242d0a06b38.html)

Courtesy Photo: AET2 Dayna Sandoval is pictured with her son Tayshuz Martinez, 7, holding the shadowbox of an eagle feather award from the SAIGE.



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# Guest Column: Our Cultures Are our Cure: Why the Restoration of Indigenous Languages is So Important

By Sadé Heart of the Hawk, Mi'kmaq First Nation

*With the loss of so many Indigenous languages, it's crucial to save those that remain says Sadé Heart of the Hawk.*



*Photo: Sadé Heart of the Hawk*

I remember like it was yesterday, even though it was nearly 40 years ago. I had driven from Connecticut to Ossipee, New Hampshire, where my Native Teacher, a member of the Abenaki Nation, lived on a beautiful lake. The Abenaki are one of the five Tribes of the Wabanaki Confederacy, of which my own Nation, Mi'kmaq, is one. Together we were heading up to nearly the last stop in Maine before you get to the border of what is now called Canada, to the reservation of my Relatives, the Aroostook Band of Mi'kmaq. The Aroostook Band are the only federally recognized Mi'kmaq on this side of Turtle Island, now called the United States. We were there for a Powwow and a feast, both of which would be held the following day. My Teacher and I laughed and talked during our 7-hour drive.

As we got closer to the Reservation, I noticed signs in Mi'kmaq, with both English and sometimes French translations under the Mi'kmaq words. I had seen enough words in my tribal language to recognize them, and it made my heart glad and sad at the same time.

I am a first-generation survivor of the residential school. This means that a parent, in my case, my mother, was forced to endure the horrors that were part of her existence in the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School in Nova Scotia, where she was

“incarcerated” between the ages of 6 and 16. On both sides of that artificial border, between what is now known as Canada and the United States, Indigenous children were taken from their Tribes by force and threat of imprisonment and placed in residential “schools.”

These institutions were run mostly by religious organizations, although some were run by the governments, but the aim was the same— to “kill the Indian to save the man.” The goal of these “schools” was the complete acculturation and destruction of the children’s cultures and identities. While there were varying degrees of actual education in these institutions, the levels of spiritual, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse that took place in these places is mind and spirit numbing. And so it was with my mother. She would never talk about what happened to her. I didn’t learn about the horrors to which she was subjected until I had a chance to learn about her life in Shubenacadie from my Auntie who had been there with her. I felt robbed-robbed of my Indigeneity, robbed of my ceremonies, robbed of my medicines, but most of all, robbed of my language.

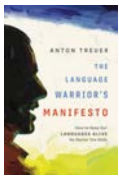
Many of the words in our beautiful languages tell stories. One word may take an hour for its story to be told. So much of our cultures live in those words. The very first thing they did to those children in those institutions was to take their tongues. They were punished severely, beaten, and had their mouths washed out with lye soap for speaking their mother tongues, and consequently, many of our languages have been permanently lost.

Continued on page 6

As an Elder Mi'kmaq woman, I will probably never be fluent in my tongue. However, I see "language nests" popping up all over Turtle Island, where both children and adults can be immersed in their languages. I see Culture Camps for our young people, where all the activities are conducted in the mother tongue, and immersion schools, where subjects are taught to children in their languages, are becoming more common. There are a few in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as well as many others all over Turtle Island which gives me hope. Much more attention is being paid to revitalizing the languages that were so brutally taken from those Indigenous children in the schools. We will grieve for the languages that were destroyed, but we also will fight to preserve those languages that refuse to die.

Let us conclude this post by returning to the Aroostook Band of Mi'kmaq Reservation and the weekend of the Powwow. As my Teacher and I got out of our vehicle and were welcomed by the Relatives there, I noticed groups of folks walking by, chatting together, but it was not in English—it was in Mi'kmaq. I was moved to tears. I might not have known what they were saying, but the words resonated in my heart. The Talking Circle around the sacred fire that night was mostly in Mi'kmaq. As I listened, the words of the Ancestors were clear: "Our language is our culture. Our culture is our cure."

### NATIVE LANGUAGE RESOURCES:



*The Language Warrior's Manifesto, How to Keep Our Languages Alive No Matter the Odds* by **Anton Treuer**. Anton, Bemidji State University, was the guest luncheon speaker at the 2015 SAIGE NTP in Welch, MN. He presented a talk on Ojibwe Language and Culture in Minnesota.

WEBSITE: <https://antontreuer.com/>

Departments of the Interior, Education, and Health & Human Services Launch Multi-Agency Initiative to Protect and Preserve Native Languages - <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/departments-interior-education-and-health-human-services-launch-multi-agency-initiative-protect-and-preserve-native-languages>

Indian Affairs Announces Funding for Living Languages Grants

<https://www.bia.gov/news/indian-affairs-announces-funding-living-languages-grants>

[Cherokee Nation and Global Indigenous Languages Caucus Launch Event for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages](#)



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## Federal Partner - Office of Trust Services/DEMD Present at the 2021 Virtual NTP

The Office of Trust Services/Division of Energy and Mineral Development's (DEMD) Deputy Division Chief Winter Jojola-Talburt presented on the topic of "The importance of Tribal Sovereignty in Energy Development" at the 2021 SAIGE NTP.

DEMD believes that safe renewable/non-renewable energy resource development is a key resource for tribes to attain sovereignty. DEMD promotes a comprehensive energy and mineral resource development plan as a major strategy for developing resilient, self-sufficient tribal economies. DEMD provides American Indian nations and Alaska Native villages with technical assistance developing their energy and mineral resources. DEMD accomplishes this task through many avenues. A few of these are: Grant programs, tribal economic development strategies, business formation, and, technical assistance with with mineral identification and assessment, oil and gas potential, and renewable energy potential.

With the ultimate goal of tribal sovereignty, the development and use of tribal energy resources will only accelerate this notion that sovereignty is, in fact, 100% attainable. For more information, please visit their website at <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots/demd>



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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](mailto: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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Carl Etsitty (Diné (Navajo Nation))

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