



The Talking Leaf

SAIGE FALL NEWSLETTER - November 2023

MESSAGE FROM THE SAIGE CHAIR



FREDERICKA JOSEPH

It has been a busy year for us at SAIGE with the planning and execution of our Annual National Training Program (NTP) held in June at the River Spirit Casino Resort in Tulsa, OK.

Our NTP was successful with over three hundred attendees. It was great seeing our friends and meeting new friends. The Environment Protection Agency (EPA) was our major sponsor this year. EPA brought forty-one employees to the NTP and hosted a one-day meeting with agency employees and Special Emphasis Program Managers. I understand it was quite successful. A big shout out to Rafael DeLeon, EPA Deputy Director of the Office of Site Remediation Enforcement (OSRE),

for supporting SAIGE and once again displaying his commitment to diversity through engagement. Employees are the number one asset in any agency or organization and by placing emphasis on how leadership views employment engagement enhances the morale and productivity of an agency. I hope that EPA will continue to sponsor the SAIGE conference.

The planning committee did an outstanding job selecting topics, speakers and presenters for the plenary and workshops. In this newsletter, you can read all about the NTP highlights from our 2023 NTP Co-Chairs, Sue Morris and Jay Spaan. I also want to thank Sue and Jay for serving as our Co-Chairs!

The Warrior Society and SAIGE Youth Program did not disappoint! We honored ten Warriors who displayed exemplary examples of honor and service to our country. We are also proud of our Indigenous youth and the commitment they have in staying in school and completing their education. This year we had fourteen students from Haskell Indian Nations University participate. One of the students recently graduated and I understand she was selected to work at EPA. Again, thank you Rafael! You can read more about the Warrior Society and Youth Program in this newsletter.

We are rolling out our mentorship program and I hope to have something disseminated by next month. I have had interest from both board members and others so please be on the lookout for this information on our website. Also, do not forget to consider SAIGE as the CFC Campaign is underway. Our number is 26052. Please look us up and donate!

Next year, the NTP will be in Spokane, WA, June 3-8, 2024 at the [Northern Quest Resort and Casino](#), owned and operated by the Kalispel Tribe. We will be providing reservation information sometime in April-May. Please be sure to add this training in your Individual Development Plan (IDP) so you can join us next year!

We will be holding elections next month. To qualify to join the Board of Directors you must be a member in good standing for one year prior to being nominated. You need to let your chain of command know you are running for a seat on our board. There are time commitments that will be identified in the formal announcement which will be disseminated next month and on our website at www.saige.org.

Have a great fall and holiday season!

Freddie

SAIGE WARRIOR SOCIETY

2023 - What an Amazing Year as SAIGE Warriors Soared to new Heights!



by Edward Blauvelt
Warrior Society Director

Hensci!

As we reflect on the past year, it's impossible not to be filled with gratitude and a sense of excitement for what lies ahead. In June, we had the incredible opportunity to come together for our annual NTP at the beautiful River Spirit Casino Resort in Tulsa, OK. One of the most pleasing moments at the NTP was the chance to honor Danny Garceau, the outgoing founder, and Director of our Warrior Society. Danny has dedicated himself to our service members and veterans, and we wanted to express our deep appreciation for his exceptional service. While he will continue to be a part of SAIGE, his new role will focus on forging partnerships with government and public allies, further strengthening our mission. Thank you, Danny, for laying the strong foundation upon which we can elevate our Warriors.

The NTP Warrior program was a moving tribute to our past and current service members. We kicked off the event with the Kiowa Black Leggings as the honor guard, and their presence was truly awe-inspiring. It's always a privilege to hear directly

from our elders, who carry with them a wealth of historical knowledge and experience. We only wish we had more time to soak in their stories. Our keynote speaker, Colonel Louis P. Hawkins of the U.S. Army, stepped in at the last minute and provided invaluable insights into leadership within the Army's artillery and aviation branches. We're incredibly grateful to him for making time in his busy schedule to be with us. Another highlight was Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kaylan Harrington, Ms. American Veteran. She shared her incredible journey of serving as a female engagement team member in the challenging terrain of eastern Afghanistan, where she made a significant impact by assisting Afghan women and children in the midst of a war zone. Following CWO Harrington, we had the privilege of hearing from Brandon Whiterock, the son of U.S. Army Specialist Lori Piestewa, the first American Indian woman to lose her life in combat and the first woman in the U.S. military killed in the Iraq War. Brandon's touching account of coming to terms with his mother's sacrifice and how it shaped his dedication to supporting veterans left a lasting impression on us all. Our final guest speaker, Mr. Harvey Pratt, a Vietnam veteran, and the designer of the National Native American Veterans Memorial, shared the profound meaning behind his design and how the memorial came to life on the National Mall next to the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.



Kiowa Black Leggings Honor Guard

The climax of our program was the military awards ceremony and a delightful lunch. I had the honor of reading the impressive accomplishments of ten outstanding military servicemembers and veterans to a captivated audience of 300 attendees. These remarkable men and women exemplify the very best of what our nation stands for, and we are incredibly proud of their dedication to maintaining global peace while preserving our rich history and culture.

We concluded the Warrior program with a heartfelt prayer and travel song led by Mr. Tilford Brown. The day's festivities continued with a Gourd Dance hosted by Mr. David Bible of Southwest Trading Company.

As we bid farewell to this remarkable year, I want to express my profound gratitude and humility for the privilege of serving as your Warrior Society Director. The people I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with have filled me with hope and optimism for our future together. What an incredible journey it has been!

I'm already hard at work planning next year's NTP, and I can promise you that we have some exceptional guest speakers and the opportunity to honor ten more American Indian Warriors for their outstanding service to our great nation and its people. I sincerely hope to see each and every one of you in Spokane, WA, next June! Until then, I send my blessings and warmest wishes to all of you.



Photo: Military Award Winners with Warrior Society Director. L to R: A1C Ryan Lesensee, USAF, Jemez /Zuni, SSG Evan Blauvelt, US Army, Tawasee/Mohawk, MSgt Frances Dupris, US Space Force, Arapaho/Lakota, SSgt Marvis Lemare, USAF, Nakoda/Aaniih/Cree/Chippewa, SSgt Tranpas Hooke, USAF, San Carlos Apache, CSM Eric Chastain, Cherokee, TSgt Janel Rattling Leaf, Rosebud Sioux, Mr. Ed Blauvelt, Warrior Society Director

American Indians - America's Unsung Heroes

by Ed Blauvelt, SAIGE Warrior Society Director

In October of this year, I lectured on the First World War at the World War I museum in Kansas City, MO (if you get a chance, go there). While there, I contemplated on all our brothers and sisters who fought and continued to keep the world free from tyranny and the sacrifices they made in the fight for Native recognition.

When the First World War ended, all people hoped that this was the war to end all wars. Sadly, this wasn't so. After years of stalemate battles along several battlefronts, America entered the war, resulting in a quick end on November 11, 1918. In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson issued a message on November 11, 1919 to America on the first Armistice Day, in which he expressed what he felt the day meant to Americans. It wasn't until 1920 that U.S. Congress adopted a resolution proclaiming the observance of November 11 as Armistice Day. It wasn't until after World War II in 1954 that the holiday expanded to cover all wars and was renamed Veterans Day.

Veterans Day honors all our military veterans who have served the nation. While the day primarily focuses on celebrating the sacrifices of veterans from various backgrounds, it is essential to acknowledge the significant contribution of American Indians to the country's armed forces. For generations, American Indians have played a vital role in defending the nation, often serving with unwavering dedication and resilience.

American Indian support and collaboration with the U.S. military has a long history, dating back to colonial times when tribal nations aided Europeans in various conflicts. However, their contributions became more prominent during the American Revolutionary War. Tribes like the Oneida, Tuscarora, and Catawba allied with the colonists against the British and helped birth and provide the foundation for this nation.

By the Civil War, American Indians were senior leaders on both sides. Brevetted Lieutenant Colonel Ely S. Parker, Seneca, served on General Ulysses S.

Grant's staff, and wrote the final draft of the Confederate surrender terms at Appomattox. On the Confederate side, Brigadier General Stand Waite, Cherokee, led the 1st Cherokee Mounted Rifles, taking part in the battles of Wilson's Creek and Pea Ridge, and was the last Confederate General to cease field operations when he surrendered in June 1865.

One of the most remarkable aspects of American Indian involvement in the military is the legacy of the Code Talkers, a group of Indigenous soldiers who used their native languages to transmit secret messages during both World Wars. During World War I, American Indians volunteered in large numbers despite challenges like discrimination and limited rights. The Ho-Chunk became the first code talkers during the war and would play a crucial role by using their native language as an unbreakable code that baffled German codebreakers. Soon, the U.S. commander would employ other tribes like the Choctaw to gain the upper hand against German forces. In the next World War, the Navajo Code Talkers are renowned for their extraordinary contributions to the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. The enemy never cracked the Navajo code, and Navajo service was instrumental in securing victory in the Pacific theater.

In Vietnam, 42,000 American Indians served. During this time, military recruiters constantly sought out American Indians, emphasizing that Indian people were natural fighters and military personnel. Often assigned as the Point Man in the squads, the dangerous position of first into the conflict, the Indian soldiers provided comfort to non-Indian squad members as they viewed the Indians as able to see and hear all and that nothing could get past an Indian leading on point.

American Indians continue to serve in the U.S. military with distinction. Their participation is crucial in various branches as some of the armed force's greatest warriors, servants, and leaders. American Indian warfare tactics have become so ingrained into the U.S. military that they are the basis of all American

warfare tactics. Native American soldiers bring their unique cultural perspectives, resilience, and a strong sense of duty to their service. Their contributions extend beyond the battlefield, with many American Indian veterans advocating for improved healthcare, education, and support for their communities.

Despite their invaluable contributions, American Indian veterans have encountered numerous challenges. Historically, they have struggled with discrimination and inadequate access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. Many veterans from tribal nations return to reservations with limited resources and face unique challenges in transitioning to civilian life.

Some tribal nations established Tribal Veterans Service Offices to address veteran's challenges. These offices provide essential support, including assistance with VA benefits, mental health services, and employment opportunities. They serve as a bridge between American Indian veterans and the resources available to them.

On Veterans Day, it is crucial to recognize the significant role American Indian veterans have played in defending the United States. Their historical and contemporary contributions are a testament to their dedication and unwavering commitment to the nation. The legacy of the Code Talkers and the ongoing service of American Indian veterans remind us of the diverse and resilient spirit that has always been at the heart of the U.S. military. Without the American Indian, there would be no America.

As we honor all veterans on this day, let us also reflect on the challenges American Indian veterans face and support efforts to ensure they receive the respect, recognition, and assistance they deserve. American Indian veterans are unsung heroes who have served our country and our people with honor and deserve our deepest gratitude on Veterans Day and every day.

Students Receive Motivational Presentations from Alumni

by JoAnn Brant, SAIGE Youth Track Coordinator

The 2023 SAIGE Student Program featured speakers from the SAIGE Alumni, including Kelly Berry, who attended the first Student Youth Track held in Washington, DC. Kelly is an enrolled citizen of the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma and has affiliations with the Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Choctaw Nations. Kelly is the Indigenous Initiatives Research Associate in K-State's College of Education, working alongside faculty and principal advisor Dr. Alex Red Corn. He is a co-instructor for the newly constructed K-State Indigenous Educational Leadership Graduate Certificate Program, where he serves as a design team member. His presentation was well received.



Photos: SAIGE Youth Alumni Julian Guerrero, Jr., Kelly Berry and Taylor Morris.

Taylor Morris was an alum presenter. He received his Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) degree from the University of Oklahoma in 2016 and completed an ASHP PGY1 pharmacy residency with the Indian Health Service in Albuquerque, New Mexico 2017. He works at the Claremore Indian Hospital as the Pharmacy Clinical Coordinator. Taylor is happily married to his high school sweetheart, Leah, for eight years. He has two beautiful daughters, ages 2 and 4. He is a member of the Cherokee Nation and looks forward to working with the Indian Health Service for the entirety of his career. His presentation was from the heart and motivational to the students to step out of their comfort zone to achieve their goals.

Julian Guerrero Jr. spoke at the plenary session. His presentation was very motivating, full of energy and emotion. Julian is the Director of the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education. An enrolled citizen of the Comanche Nation and affiliated with the Kiowa Tribe, Julian has been a civil servant at the Department since 2020. He oversees and administers 195 million dollars in Title VI Part A programs, including 1,300+ formula grants nationwide, 400+ competitive discretionary grants, the National Indian Education Study, and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education. His vision emphasizes how Tribal consultation and data-driven collaboration can bring authenticity to the work of the Office of Indian Education.

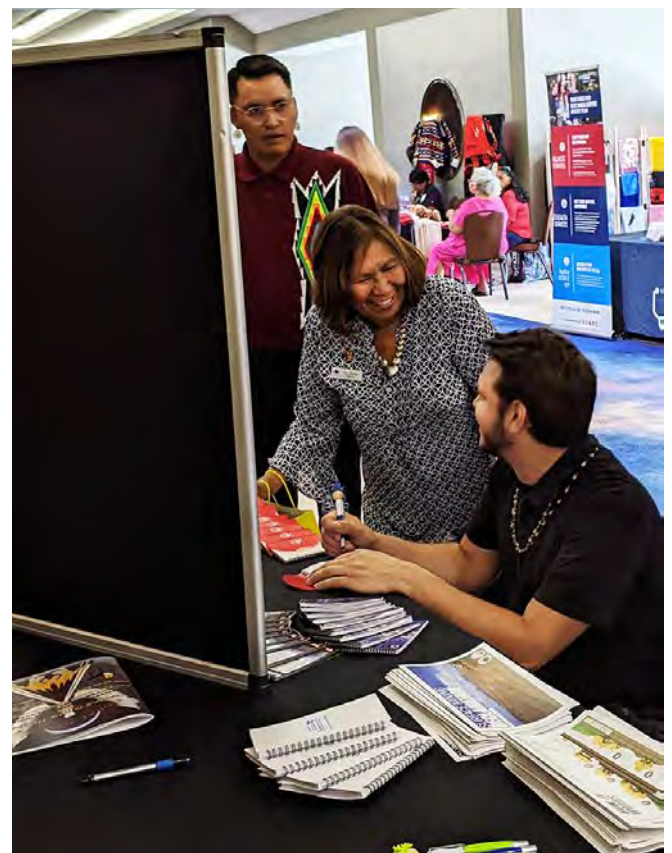


Photo: JoAnn Brant, SAIGE Youth Track Coordinator, Julian Guerrero, Jr. and Freddie Joseph.

Ryan Aguilar, Individual Placements Program Coordinator, Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (ALCC), spoke about when he first came to SAIGE as a student and how it affected his life. His presentation was remarkable and motivational. Ryan (he/him/his) comes from the Pueblos of A:shiwi (Zuni) and Kewa (Santo Domingo) in New Mexico. His clans are Corn and Child of Frog. Ryan started with the ALCC Individual Placement Program in May 2015 based out of El Morro National Monument, NM and in 2020, helped grow the Individual Placements Program as the coordinator. He also brought several students to the conference.

We had SAIGE students from Chippewa Cree, Lakota, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Navajo Nation, Pueblo, Ojibwe, Santo Domingo Pueblo, White Mountain Apache, Crow, Winnebago, Santee Sioux Nation, and Siuslaw Indians.

Overall, the SAIGE student participants were very engaged with the presentations from the plenary sessions. They enjoyed speaking to the Federal Employees and attending the Career Fair. There were 37 students from several Tribal Colleges and Universities, University of California, Berkeley, and the University of New Mexico.



SAIGE 2023 NTP: A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS

by Jay Spaan, SAIGE 2023 NTP Co-chair

SAIGE held its annual national training program (NTP), June 20-22 at the River Spirit Resort & Casino in Tulsa, OK, where we promoted the recruitment, retention, development, and advancement of American Indian and Alaska Native government employees. The theme for the 2023 event was *Tribal Nations: Soaring to New Heights* and our speakers did a great job educating attendees on Tribal Sovereignty and the success of Tribal Nations. Attendance for the NTP reached nearly 300 federal employees, tribal officials, students, and others—a great turnout for SAIGE's return to in-person training since 2019.



Photo: Jay Spaan, SAIGE NTP 2023 Co-chair and guest speaker Arlando Teller.

The NTP included many tremendous and inspirational speakers, including:

- Geoffrey Standing Bear, Chief, Osage Nation, provided an overview of their Nations and welcomed attendees to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.
- Arlando Teller, Assistant Secretary for Tribal Affairs at the Department of Transportation. Assistant Secretary Teller stressed the importance of Native representation in federal leadership roles and encouraged Native attendees to bring their unique experiences and culture with them when filling those roles.
- Geri Wisner, Attorney General, Muscogee (Creek) Nation provided an update on implementation of the Supreme Court's *McGirt* decision.



Photo: Geoffrey Standing Bear, Chief, Osage Nation.

- Morgan Rodman, Executive Director for the White House Council on Native American Affairs, shared updates from the Administration.
- Julian Guerrero, Director, Office of Indian Education, Department of Education, highlighted his journey from SAIGE youth track participant to agency director.



Photo: Geri Wisner.

Beyond the scheduled sessions, a few key takeaways from the 2023 SAIGE NTP included:

- Dozens of vendors and exhibitors, including local Native artists and entrepreneurs, federal agencies recruiting for open positions, and organizations sharing important information with SAIGE NTP attendees.
- Ample opportunities for networking

and making new connections.

- Attendees shared ideas, forged new partnerships, and engaged in thought-provoking conversations, setting the stage for future collaborations and endeavors.
- The cultural reception, hosted by



Photo: Dancer at Cultural Reception.

the Tulsa Indian Club and Oklahoma Federation of Indian Women, provided attendees with a fun opportunity to learn more about Native culture in Oklahoma.

In conclusion, the 2023 SAIGE NTP was a tremendous success. But do not just take our word for it... here are some comments from registered attendees:

"The whole conference and the speakers were all really good and engaging."

"My favorite moments of the conference were learning about the students and hearing their plans for the future and hearing that they were positively impacted by who they met and what was happening at the conference."

"I enjoyed the 'Protecting Tribal Sovereignty' panel and the presentation about treaty rights by Tim Wolfmeyer. As a federal employee, it is important to understand the issues that impact tribes and nuances in the gov-to-gov relationship."

We look forward to seeing you at the 2024 SAIGE NTP!

The Road to Healing

By Nieva M. S. Brock, SAIGE BOD Member

United States Secretary of the Interior, the Honorable Deb Haaland, made history when President Biden selected her as the first-ever Native American to serve as a cabinet secretary. Secretary Haaland is a member of the Pueblo of Laguna, a federally recognized tribe located in New Mexico. One of Secretary Haaland's initiatives when she began her service was having the United States face – head on – the horror and wrongs committed against Native families via the “Federal Indian Boarding Schools.”

Between 1819 through the 1970s, the United States executed policies that established and fully supported Indian Boarding Schools across the nation. The primary goal of these schools was to culturally assimilate American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian children, and in the case of the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and some African American Children by removing them from their families, communities, cultural traditions, languages, religion, etc. These schools were essentially charged with “kill the Indian, and save the man” as espoused in 1879 by Richard Henry Pratt, the founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. These boarding schools caused the death of many children and even more who endured physical and emotional abuse. More than 500 children died over the course of these schools' existence in the United States and 1,400 in Canadian residential schools.

In an effort to develop a comprehensive program to recognize the horrible legacy of the federal Indian boarding school policies, address their intergenerational impact, and bring to light the traumas



Photo: Ciricahua Apaches at the Carlisle Indian School, Penna., 188-?: as they looked upon arrival at the School. [Photograph]. (1885 or 1886). Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.

of the past, Secretary Haaland instituted the [Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative](#). This initiative is a comprehensive review of the troubled legacy of federal boarding school policies.

“The Interior Department will address the inter-generational impact of Indian boarding schools to shed light on the unspoken traumas of the past, no matter how hard it will be. I know that this process will be long and difficult. I know that this process will be painful. It won't undo the heartbreak and loss we feel. But only by acknowledging the past can we work toward a future what we're all proud to embrace” – Secretary Deb Haaland

The Initiative began in 2021. It included and investigation about the loss of human life and the lasting consequences of residential Indian boarding schools. The Department of Interior identified boarding school facilities and sites, the location

of known and possible student burial sites (DOI) located near school facilities, and the identities and Tribal affiliations of children interred at these sites. In May 2022, DOI issued Volume 1 of its [Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report](#). Volume 2 is still being developed.

After receiving this Report, Secretary Haaland launched her “Road to Healing” tour. The tour is a year-long commitment to travel across the United States to meet with American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian survivors of Indian Boarding Schools. These survivors have and continue to share their stories, assist in developing a collection of a permanent oral history, and connect communities with “trauma-informed support.” Secretary Haaland has visited more than nine communities in her Road to Healing Tour and is championing the cause of all survivors and the legacies of those lost.

SAIGE PARTNER - EPA

EPA: A PROUD SPONSOR OF THE 2023 SAIGE NTP

EPA was proud to be the top sponsor of the SAIGE National Training Program (NTP) in Tulsa, Oklahoma from June 20 – June 23, 2023:



- For the first time in the twenty-year history of the SAIGE NTP, EPA was a platinum sponsor. EPA was the only federal government agency to reach this status at the 2023 SAIGE NTP. Nineteen EPA offices and regions collectively participated, and four EPA offices and regions contributed to the agency's financial sponsorship of the SAIGE NTP.
- EPA marketed its new EPA brand "Be EPA" and exposed approximately 300 conference attendees to the EPA as an employer of choice.
- Collected and brought over 50 vacancy announcements ranging in grades GS-4 through the SES at the SAIGE NTP Career Fair.
- Provided leadership and career training opportunities for 51 EPA employees at the SAIGE NTP. The NTP offered workshops and plenary sessions which enabled EPA employees to enhance their leadership skills, develop diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) skills, and to learn about current topics of interest in Indian Country (i.e., Tribal Self-Governance, Government-to-Government relationships, Indian Law Updates, etc.).
- Conducted an EPA Agency Forum. The Forum's panel discussions and topics included:
 - o The State of American Indian/Alaska Native Employee's at EPA
 - o Navigating your Career: GS13-15 Career Development Panel
 - o Discovering the Senior Executive Service: SES Tips and Advice Panel
 - o Speed Mentoring Session
 - o Haskell Indian Nations University MOU In Action: Student Meet and Greet with EPA Management & Staff
- Through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between EPA and Haskell Indian Nations University, Region 7 facilitated the participation of 14 students at the EPA forum and SAIGE Youth Track.
- A panel from Muskogee Creek Nation (conference host) discussed "Tribal Environmental Challenges" and shared day-in-the-life stories about working in a Tribal Environmental Program.



SAIGE PARTNER - OSMRE

AN IMPACTFUL CONFERENCE

By: Larisha Y. Warner, Affirmative Employment Program Manager, Office of Equal Opportunity, OSMRE HQs, Washington DC

In June 2023, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE), a bureau of the Department of the Interior, continued our long-standing partnership with SAIGE and its membership at the 2023 National Training Program (NTP). Nearly a dozen OSMRE staff traveled to Tulsa, OK, to attract prospective American Indian and Alaska Native employees.

From the point of check-in, OSMRE staff members felt welcomed and honored to be a part of such a premier national training conference. From the educational sessions, the federal agency roundtable discussion to the student career fair, each moment of this conference was impactful.

During the recruitment career fair and federal roundtable discussion with SAIGE college students, OSMRE staff shared insight regarding OSMRE's mission, history, work culture, and current career and student internship opportunities. The students were eager to learn how to best marry their current studies and work experiences with our specialized career paths. As a result, OSMRE is better positioned to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility into our hiring practices.

OSMRE looks forward to building stronger connections with Tribal communities, including colleges and universities, while strengthening our relationship with the SAIGE organization.

This year's conference provided our staff unmatched opportunities to build expertise and share best practices for attracting potential American Indian and Alaska Native government employees.

On behalf of the OSMRE team, we are very proud of what we have accomplished in collaboration with all the attendees and look forward to the 2024 National Training Program!

Visit www.osmre.gov/resources/careers to learn more about working at OSMRE.



Photo: Youth leaders Brian Barlow and Jared Massey interview Larisha Warner, Affirmative Action Employment Program Manager, OSMRE Headquarters.



Photo: OSMRE employee Robbye Goddard, from the Tulsa Field Office speaking with a student at the OSMRE exhibit booth. Credit: Min Kim, Chief of the Technical Services Branch at the OSMRE Mid-Continent Regional Office.



Photo: A student asks a question.



Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement

At OSMRE, we ensure that coal mines are operated in a manner that protects citizens and the environment and assure that the land is restored to beneficial use. We mitigate the effects of past mining by aggressively pursuing reclamation of abandoned coal mines.

Interns and recent graduates are needed nationwide. Come join our team:
<https://www.osmre.gov/get-involved>



Work where your Nation Depends on YOU.

Your perspective is mission critical,
see where you can join us at [CIA.gov/careers](https://cia.gov/careers)



CIA

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SAIGE PARTNER - USDA/NIFA

Empowering Learning and Growth in Indian Country: NIFA's Impact

In the heart of Indian Country, USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) stands to stimulate inspiration, fostering learning, opportunity, and well-being. NIFA awards research, education, Extension, and economics grants of all sizes and in all disciplines, many of which have components directly related to indigenous issues. While we highlight five specific grants below that focus on indigenous communities, these are only some of the offerings available for potential indigenous grant seekers. NIFA also encourages all individuals to explore careers on our website.

Strengthening Indigenous Education

At the core of NIFA's mission are the grants that empower the 1994 Land-grant Institutions, also recognized as federally acknowledged tribal colleges. These grants, numbering four, serve as pillars of support for diverse educational initiatives. The Tribal Colleges Equity Grants Program is a testament to NIFA's commitment to formal education, uplifting the academic pursuits of these institutions. Through the Tribal Colleges Extension Grant Program, a web of informal, community-based learning opportunities takes root. From food sovereignty to youth development and Traditional Ecological Knowledge, these grants give Tribal communities opportunities for enhanced agricultural productivity, community resilience, and economic growth, by extending the reach of innovations in research and technology and enhancing informal, local educational programming.



Empowering Research and Capacity

The Tribal College Research Grant Program helps 1994 Land-grants become centers of scientific inquiry and learning for remote and rural reservation communities. The 1994 Land-grants often serve as the primary institution of scientific inquiry, knowledge and learning for reservation communities.

Adding to the tapestry of empowerment, the Tribal College Endowment Program (Capacity Grant) underscores NIFA's innovative approach. This targeted formula fund, designed for the discretion of institution leadership, bolsters financial resilience. This program taps into annual appropriations from Congress, fueled by the interest earned in the preceding year. The allocation to each institution, influenced in part by the native student count, is a testament to the personalized attention NIFA extends. Institutions seeking information about their funding for the current fiscal year can readily access it through NIFA's capacity page.



Cultivating Growth through Community

In the spirit of collaboration, NIFA's Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) takes the lead in bolstering community ties. This program establishes an Extension presence and supports Extension outreach on federally recognized Indian reservations and tribal jurisdictions of federally recognized tribes. FRTEP empowers 1862, 1994, and 1890 Land-grants to conduct programs and activities that deliver science-based knowledge and informal educational programs to tribal communities, facilitating youth development, agricultural literacy and productivity, and community health and vitality.

A Unified Pursuit of Progress

NIFA's grants stand as a testament to the agency's unwavering commitment to Indian Country. By championing learning, nurturing research, and fostering community ties, NIFA amplifies the voices and aspirations of indigenous communities. These grants do more than offer financial support; they illuminate a path toward a brighter future, one built on the foundation of trust, education, opportunity, and relationships. In the intricate tapestry of Indian Country, NIFA's grants weave threads of opportunity. From formal education to community-based learning and scientific exploration, these initiatives stand as a testament to NIFA's commitment to enriching lives and catalyzing change. As the sun rises over indigenous communities, it finds a partner in NIFA, working together to illuminate the path toward prosperity and indigenous sustainability.



NOTEWORTHY NIFA PRIORITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

HIRING AND RECRUITMENT

The agency now has a full staff of highly qualified employees thriving in a remote work environment. NIFA offers a suite of remote work equipment, training and support to ensure employees have the tools they need to succeed.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

NIFA Equal Opportunity staff is piloting a new program, DEIA Forward, in conjunction with the Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University. It is a pilot training program and instrument of institutional cultural transformation.

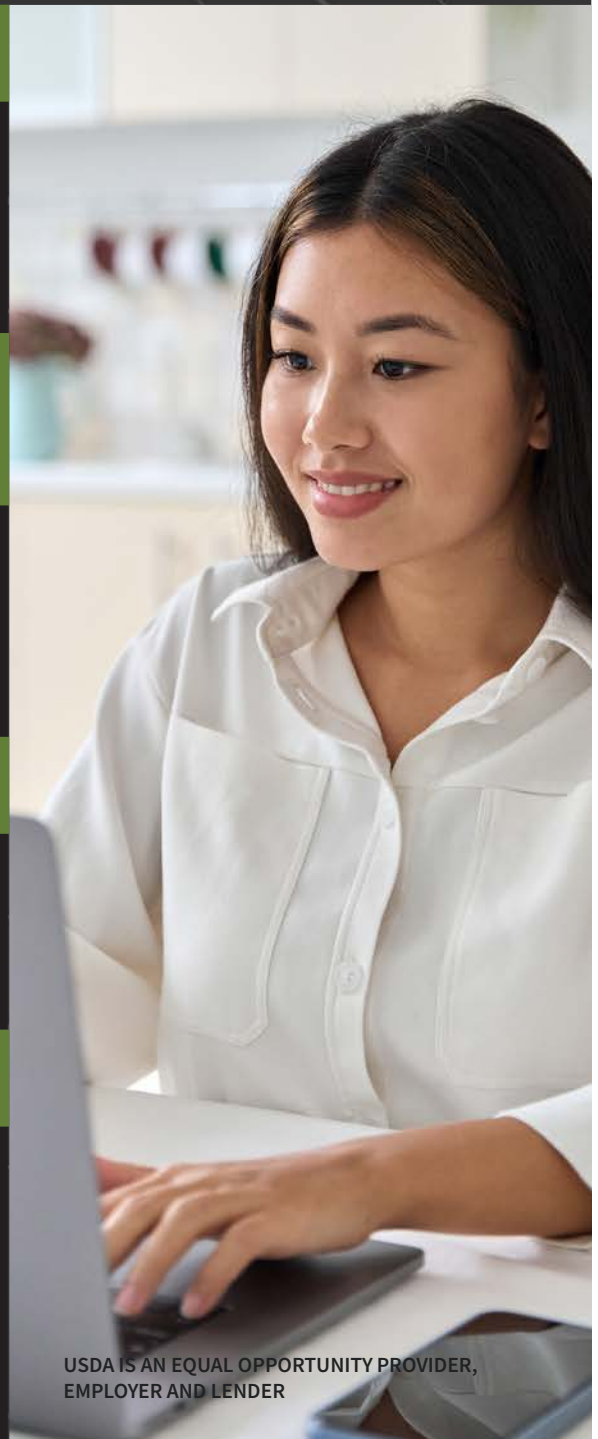
HIRING AND RECRUITMENT

NIFA implemented several new efforts to address employee needs for Work Life Balance including Meeting-Free Fridays, Midweek Mindfulness, Thoughtful Thursday, and Healthy Happenings.

HIRING AND RECRUITMENT

To promote professional development and training opportunities, NIFA established a Learning & Development team to create and deliver training in a remote environment to enhance job satisfaction for employees.

LEARN MORE AT [NIFA.USDA.GOV](https://nifa.usda.gov)



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In addition to EPA, OSMRE, NIFA and CIA, we want to Thank all of our Partners!



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SEE YOU IN SPOKANE, WA 2024



Talking Leaf Newsletter

TALKING LEAF NEWSLETTER is issued twice a year - Spring and Fall. Do you want to contribute to the newsletter? 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.

JOIN THE SAIGE NETWORK

info@saige.org

www.saige.org



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*Society of American Indian
Government Employees*

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