The Talking Leaf

SAIGE FALL NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2026

GREETINGS FROM OUR SAIGE CHAIR



Hensci!

Blessed National Native American Heritage Month!
As we enter this season of reflection and gratitude, I extend my warmest greetings to our SAIGE family, friends, and supporters. National Native American Heritage Month provides us with an opportunity to celebrate the rich histories, cultures, traditions, and enduring contributions of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples. It is also a time to recognize our ancestors' resilience, honor those who continue to serve our communities, and reaffirm our responsibility to future generations.

Despite the challenges and changing circumstances our organization faces, SAIGE continues to move forward with determination, innovation, and purpose. Throughout this year, we successfully conducted quarterly online training programs, providing meaningful professional development opportunities and strengthening connections among our members.

We also dispatched Ms. Georgeie Reynolds to represent SAIGE at the Advancing Indigenous Science and Engineering Society (AISES) conference. Her participation strengthened our relationship with AISES and helped us explore opportunities for greater collaboration. Building partnerships with organizations sharing our commitment to Indigenous education, professional development, and advancement remains essential to our mission.

One of our most anticipated events is our annual SAIGE National Training Program (NTP). Once again, circumstances require us to gather virtually; however, our commitment to delivering an outstanding educational experience remains unwavering. This year's program celebrates success stories across Indian Country, highlighting our people's innovation, leadership, and determination.

We will begin by recognizing our outstanding Native American military service members through our annual Warrior Society recognition program. Our featured presentations will include Mr. Ben Jacobs, entrepreneur, founder, and chef at the restaurant Tocabe, who will discuss Food Sovereignty, and Ms. Suzanne Singer, who will address Clean Energy Sovereignty. Additionally, our Youth Program will share valuable perspectives on the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of Native youth navigating today's educational institutions and workplaces.
I encourage everyone to join us for this inspiring program. Register at https://linktr.ee/saige_org.

I am also pleased to welcome our new Warrior Society Director, MSgt Bryce Dick, and his two Co-Directors, MSgt Darrell Charliee and Yeoman Kylie Mobigila. Faced with new constraints, this dedicated leadership team developed an entirely new approach to identifying and recognizing our deserving Native American warriors. Their creativity, perseverance, and commitment exemplify the very best of SAIGE. Outstanding work, team!

Finally, SAIGE Board elections are approaching, and we need dedicated members willing to help guide our organization into the future. If you have been a SAIGE member for at least one year, I encourage you to consider serving. Your experiences, ideas, talents, and perspectives are essential as we navigate an evolving federal workplace and changing national landscape.

SAIGE's strength has always rested with its people. Together, we will continue advocating for professional excellence, honoring our cultures, supporting our youth and warriors, and creating opportunities for future generations.

Thank you for your continued dedication to SAIGE and the communities we proudly serve.

Mvto!

Edward J. Blauvelt, Chair, SAIGE

The Other 364 Days

By MSgt Darrell Charlee, Vice Director, SAIGE Warrior Society

Every November the country sets aside a day for its veterans. There's a parade and a free meal, and a stranger shakes your hand and means it. Then it's November 12th, and most of the year is still ahead.

Picture an Indigenous veteran on that morning. She took a government job because it came with a mission she still believes in. She may be the only Indigenous person on her floor. She has a badge, a desk, a performance plan, She also has a deployment she doesn't talk about at work. Her coworkers don't see it, and she works at that.

I say this everywhere I go, and I'll say it here. The enemy isn't overseas anymore. It's depression and PTSD and the things a veteran carries home, and it shows up on an ordinary Tuesday, in a silence at dinner that runs longer than it used to, in a phone you let ring. We all got the same lesson in training and CBTs that we all clicked though, that nobody goes out alone, and that rule didn't expire when we came home.

When that enemy wins, it doesn't only take one of us. It empties a chair our nations needed filled, and it empties it quietly. Someone stops answering messages, then stops coming in, and one day the badge is turned in and no one on the floor can say why. If that's your chair, this part is for you, because that chair matters more than it looks like it does. Our nations and the United States deal with each other as governments. That relationship is written down, in treaties the Constitution calls the supreme law of the land and in the statutes that followed, and what is written down only gets carried out by the people inside the agencies. A commitment on paper still needs a person to keep it, and you already know how to keep one. You raised your hand, and you held to it when it cost you. You know what the paper says because you work in the building that wrote it, and you know what it looks like at home because your people live on the other end of it. An agency can hire plenty of people who have read the regulation. It has a much harder time finding one who has lived on both ends of it. And somewhere back home there's someone trying to figure out whether the government is a place for people like us, and the only evidence that someone has is you.

If you leave, the chair goes to someone who must learn from a binder what you learned at home. You didn't take this job for the pension. You took it because somebody back home needed one of us in that building, and that's still true on the hard days.

Now, the word warrior. A lot of us earned it in uniform, but we earned it for the people back home, and they're the ones who get to use the word. Every warrior society our people ever kept had one job in common. When one of ours was hurt, the rest showed up. That's the job of the SAIGE Warrior Society, whether it's the Veterans Track at the National Training Program or a Tuesday in somebody's office. We are SAIGE's veterans and service members, already inside the government, in the same buildings and on the same floors, and we have decided to be the ones who show up. Nobody here needs rescuing, and we take care of our own.

So if you served and never joined, because you figured Warriors was for somebody else, it is for you. If you're still in, you already know what the enemy looks like this year, and the ones who came home before you need that from you. Either way, you've been doing this alone long enough.

The Chair carried this section himself in the spring issue. Thank you, Ed. We'll carry it from here. The Warrior Society has a new leadership team as of this fall: MSgt Bryce Dick, Director; MSgt Darrell Charlee, Vice Director; YN1 Kylie Mobiglia, Women Warriors, Vice Director. We're new to this, and the first thing we're doing is listening. The spring issue will tell you what we heard.

So I'm asking for one thing. Join. If you're a SAIGE member, send an email to chair@saige.org with the subject line Warrior Society, your name, your period of service, and your status, and you're in. If you're not a member yet, that comes first, at saige.org. Then tell me what this society should be for you, whether in one sentence or ten pages at darrell.charlee@us.af.mil. You'll hear back from me.

The country gives its veterans one day. We've got each other for the other 364 days. Somebody in a federal office is going to have a quiet November 12th. Go sit with them for a while.

The Warrior Spirit: When Our Greatest Responsibility Is to Lead

Honoring Indigenous Warrior Values Through Service, Leadership, and Legacy

By Kylie Mobiglia, U.S. Coast Guard, Vice Director, SAIGE Warrior Society

What Does It Truly Mean to Be a Warrior?

When we hear the word warrior, we often envision battlefield courage, sacrifice, and the willingness to defend others. These qualities have long defined military service. Yet as service members advance into leadership roles, the warrior spirit evolves.

How do we honor the warrior spirit when our greatest responsibility is no longer to fight, but to lead?

For many American Indian and Alaska Native service members, the answer lies in values passed down through generations. Across Tribal Nations, warrior traditions encompass far more than combat. They reflect courage, humility, service, cultural preservation, and responsibility to one's community.

A Legacy of Service

American Indians and Alaska Natives have a distinguished history of military service, serving at disproportionately high rates relative to their share of the U.S. population. From the Code Talkers of World Wars I and II to today's military leaders, Indigenous service members have demonstrated extraordinary dedication to protecting their communities and Nation. Their contributions represent more than individual accomplishments. They reflect generations of resilience, sacrifice, and commitment to something greater than oneself.

The Warrior Spirit in Leadership

Traditional warrior values offer lessons applicable to every military leader, regardless of background.
Courage is not limited to confronting an enemy; it includes making difficult decisions, defending what is right, and advocating for those without a voice. Humility reminds leaders that authority is a responsibility, not a privilege. Service requires putting others' welfare above personal recognition, while integrity demands accountability even when no one is watching.

Perhaps most importantly, the warrior spirit emphasizes responsibility to future generations. Leadership is measured not only by missions accomplished or ranks achieved, but by the people we develop, the values we uphold, and the legacy we leave behind.

For Indigenous service members, these principles often connect military leadership with cultural identity. Leading with a warrior spirit means honoring those who came before us while creating opportunities for those who will follow.

Carrying the Warrior Spirit Forward

The military will always require warriors prepared to defend our Nation. Equally important are leaders willing to mentor, protect, inspire, and serve those entrusted to their care.

Through organizations such as SAIGE and its Warrior Society, we can recognize Indigenous contributions, strengthen cultural understanding, and encourage future generations of leaders.

The warrior spirit does not diminish when we trade the battlefield for leadership roles. It takes on greater responsibility.

Our greatest legacy as warriors may not be the battles we fight, but the people we lead, the communities we strengthen, and the generations we inspire.

SAIGE - 23RD NTP & WARRIOR SOCIETY AWARDS PROGRAM

Shared Future: Sovereign Nations, Stronger Together
23rd SAIGE National Training Program & Warrior Society Awards Ceremony
Saturday, November 14, 2026
- free and open to the public -

11:00-11:45 AM - Warrior Society Awards Ceremony
12:00-3:00 PM - National Training Program

We have another fantastic program this year, including success stories from across Indian country:
- Revitalizing Indigenous Food Systems
- Indigenous Led Off-Grid Solar
- Tribal Self-Governance
- Former SAIGE Student Program Scholarship Recipients

Don't miss this opportunity to feel motivated and engaged—mark your calendar!
Register online today - https://linktr.ee/saige_org



SAIGE MEMBER PROFILE: Danny Garceau, Lifetime Member

Danny J. Garceau, Waabijiizi Ma'iingan (He is a Grey Wolf), is a lifetime member of SAIGE. He is Anishinabe (Ojibwe) and his ancestors include members of several tribes of the Lake Superior Chippewa in northern Wisconsin. He traces his family back to Madeline Island, where his ancestor Animodoskwan (Plenty Dogs), was a clan leader of the LaPointe Indians.



Danny joined SAIGE when he attended the first SAIGE National Training Program in 2004 (Fort Lauderdale, FL.) At the time he was serving on the Michigan Army National Guard Diversity Council as the Native American SEPM and Senior Recruiting and Strength Advisor. He has attended all the annual SAIGE training programs since then. In 2007 he retired from the military after serving for 30 years of active duty in the US Amry and Michigan Army National Guard and moved back to Ishpeming, MI, where he was born and raised.

His involvement with SAIGE quickly increased and he was elected to the SAIGE Board in 2007. He served as the Vice Chair in 2008 and was elected and served as the SAIGE Chair from 2009 through 2012. During that time, he started developing the SAIGE Warrior Society, whose purpose was to act as a subgroup within SAIGE to be a liaison with the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration, all the military branches (including National Guard and Reserves), military government employees and veterans, along with accepting responsibility for the military training and awards program at the SAIGE NTP.

The Warrior Society was officially approved in 2012, and Danny became the first Director of the program where he served for the next 10 years. In addition, he was nominated, elected and served four more terms on the SAIGE Board from 2014-2022. He always says that anything he gave to SAIGE, came back many times over again. He will always be extremely grateful to SAIGE, especially to the SAIGE officers and board members who served with him.

Danny has so many fond memories of the 20 plus years with SAIGE, all the National Training Programs, the people, the training and the locations, which included Florida, Washington D.C., Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, California, Oklahoma, Minnesota, New Mexico, Colorado, Wisconsin, Washington State, and Michigan. He also has some unique memories of the cross-country motorcycle rides to several of those programs. He remembers the special presenters, entertainers and attendees, all who became part of the SAIGE family. Most of those connections, friends and the SAIGE family continue today. He looks forward to when we as a SAIGE organization will again gather in person to meet, train and share once more.

Danny left the board in 2022 to focus locally with the many veteran and tribal groups he has been involved with since retiring 20 years ago, such as; Amvets, Jacobettii Home for Veterans, Wiikwedong Ogichidaa Society, Unit 5 of the Sault Ste Marie Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Morning Thunder Drum, Teal Lake Singers and the band indigenous rock band Waawiyeyaa.

He continues to ride his motorcycle with the Patriot Guard Riders, Blackhorse Regiment Motorcycles, Wisconsin Indigenous Riders, Michigan Bikers Helping Veterans and has made the Wounded Knee Memorial Ride and annual must ride event. He has also been involved with bringing an annual Pow Wow back to his hometown of Ishpeming with the support of the Keweenaw Indian Community.

Danny is a cultural speaker, storyteller and musician who presents throughout the year for many groups in the region, including tribal, veteran, youth, senior and community organizations. He has also been kept busy with his growing number of grandchildren. For many years it was just Nish, but now it includes Kiki, Wizi, and Makoons, all who enjoy as much time as they can get with Mishomish (Grandpa).

AISES Conference - Weaving Innovation

by Georgeie Reynolds, SAIGE Board of Directors

This year's Advancing Indigenous Science and Engineering Society (AISES) conference met in Portland, Oregon, October 14-17 at the Portland Convention Center, with the theme "Weaving Innovation." 2600 people registered, down from a recent 4000, due to the current administration's position on DEI. AISES has had to cut costs due to decreased funding from various sources, especially the Federal government. In fact, only three government entities participated: Indian Health Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Department of Energy. In fact, two of their biggest donors in past years, Boeing and Lockheed-Martin were not represented at all. AISES no longer includes luncheons with registration. This year's T-shirt was a beautiful pale-blue shirt with a Pacific Northwest salmon design available for sale.



Fifteen concurrent breakout sessions were offered, some of these broken down into smaller subjects. About 100 subjects were covered in all. Some of these include "Smart Money, Smart Travel: Financial Literacy and Rewards for Emerging Leaders," "Level up your Multiverse: Mastering the Sovereign Life Dashboard," and "Rooted in Resilience, Walking in Balance: A Wellness and Resilience Workshop."

Added to the agenda were other perks, such as a popular resume room where students got help crafting, editing, and printing out their resume in time for the career fair. And thoughtfully, a quiet room was also provided for those wanting a bit of tranquility during the meetings.

Traditional blessings were offered when each day began. The conference ended Saturday on a high note with a talking circle, the awards banquet, and a pow-wow. The crowd was vast, the energy high, as students, attendees, speakers, and tribal officials reconnected with each other and made plans for the future.

I hope that SAIGE will be well represented for the AISES conferences next October in Aurora, Colorado. SAIGE and AISES have a Cooperative Agreement to support each other in our major functions, their annual Conference and our National Training Program. Signed most recently in 2019 by current AISES president Sarah Echo Hawk and by our own Fredericka Joseph, it covers advertising in each publication, booths at each's career fair, and attendance at social events during our proceedings.

While SAIGE welcomed AISES to our National Training Program in Tulsa in 2023, neither organization has fully made use of it in recent years. I was proud to represent SAIGE in Portland and look forward to a renewal of the MOU that will benefit both AISES and SAIGE for years to come.

WHAT IS THE GOURD DANCE?

by Ed Blauvelt



I've danced the Gourd Dance for many years now. People that I know who are familiar with our dances always ask me what the Gourd Dance is, what it signifies, and why it is the first dance.

The Gourd Dance is more than a simple dance. It is a ceremony our people have carried through suppression and revival, and it has something of everyone in its presence, dancer and observer alike.

Several sources discuss the development of the Gourd Dance, but the most common is that it comes from the Kiowa People. The story goes that a warrior received the songs and dance from Red Wolf. The Red Wolf told the warrior to take it back to his people and honor them for their deeds. The howl that is heard during the songs is dedicated to Red Wolf.

We once used the Gourd Dance in our Sun Dances. When the government outlawed the Sun Dance, we also lost our Gourd Dance. Our Veterans helped bring back the Gourd Dance after World War II. Kiowa veterans performed one of the first recorded Gourd Dances after World War II at Carnegie, Oklahoma, in 1946, and again at the American Indian Exposition in Anadarko, OK, in 1955. In January 1957, the Kiowa Gourd Dance Clan was formally organized. The Gourd Dance then spread to many other nations and powwows throughout the Southern Plains region and other areas that have adopted it into their societies.

Gourd Dances are normally the first dance at most Native American events and powwows. The Calling song begins the dance, and the Head Gourd Dancer starts it. Organizers choose a Head Gourd Dancer because of their community involvement, leadership, and dedication to the dance.

The dance steps are simple: rise onto our heels and shake our rattles. We do not move around much during the dance. The women stand behind the Gourd Dancers and will sway with the music.

Our regalia is also rather simple. In most cases, we wear a red-and-blue vest or blanket draped over our shoulders. We wear a bandolier of Mescal beads over one shoulder and a sash tied around our waist. We hold a metal rattle in one hand and a fan in the other. The metal rattle is what gives us our name. We use our rattle to help with our dance and raise it high in the air when each song is finished, just as Red Wolf did. We shake our rattle over the area to cleanse it. This is how we prepare the ground all will dance on and the spectators who will watch, blessing all who attend.

The Gourd Dance has been passed down through many hardships. It blesses us and reminds us of our past. We remember those hardships and our people and raise our rattles to honor them.

Talking Leaf Newsletter

The Talking Leaf Newsletter is issued twice a year - Spring and Fall. SAIGE welcomes your stories, suggestions, and ideas. If you want to contribute to the newsletter, please email Georgia Madrid at newsletter@saige.org

SAIGE Board of Directors

OFFICER POSITIONS

- Chair: Ed Blauvelt (Muskogee/ Mohawk Descent)
- Vice Chair: Fredericka Joseph (Kaw Nation)
- Secretary: Luke Jones (Chickahomeny and Pamunkey Indians of Virginia)
- Treasurer: Sue Morris (Comanche Nation of Oklahoma)

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- Phil Hamel
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- Jay Spaan (Cherokee Nation)
- Lori Windle (White Earth Chippewa)

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

About SAIGE

The Society of American Indian Govemment Emplovees (SAIGE) is the first national non-profit organization representing American Indian and Alaska Native (Al/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 Al/AN government employees.

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www.saige.org