

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

My name is Lahoma "Sue" Parton. I was born on May 25, 1950 in Oklahoma City, OK to Lowell B. and Evalu Ware Russell. I am enrolled member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma. I have two children, Lance Parton of Oklahoma City, OK and Melinda Quick of Albuquerque, NM. I reside in Albuquerque, NM where I have lived for the past 44 years.

I have been around Native education the vast majority of my life. My father was a music teacher. Early in his career he taught at Cheyenne River Boarding School in South Dakota, then Ft. Wingate Boarding School, near Gallup, NM. I attended both schools, then graduated from Gallup High School in 1968. I received my college education at Bacone College, in Muskogee, OK and El Reno Jr. College in El Reno, OK. I then received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from Central University of Oklahoma in Edmond, OK in 1975.

My first teaching position was at the federally operated Albuquerque Indian School in 1976 where I taught physical education and coached girl's athletics. AIS was 638-contracted to the All Indian Pueblo Council in 1977, eventually moved to Santa Fe and became Santa Fe Indian School. I was hired at the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque in 1978, which was then a vocational technical residential school, operated by the BIA for Native students. SIPI became a national community college in the early 1980s, offering Associates degrees in several fields including Liberal Arts. I was hired at SIPI to teach Health and First Aid classes to support the voc-tech programs. The academic programs, at that time were individualized and operated on open enrollment. I became a teaching assistant in the basic math program, then when SIPI evolved to a community college, I developed and taught curriculum for the remedial math courses from then until 2005, as well as developing and teaching various courses in Health, Wellness and Physical Education. I established a social service club called the Women of Indian Nations and served on various college committees to enhance the educational experience for students.

In 2005, SIPI, under an "alternative personnel system", conducted a Reduction In Force, abolishing 28 full-time positions, most of which were encumbered by Native American employees who were also older employees. I was the union steward for "Indian Educators Federation" and worked with our national affiliate, American Federation of Teachers, to file a grievance, went to arbitration and prevailed, after 18 months, to retain the positions and backpay for all impacted employees. However, to avoid the RIF myself, I was offered and accepted a position of Tutor Coordinator, which I still currently occupy on the organizational chart at SIPI. In 2008, I was approached by the BIE Employee/Labor Relations Specialist who offered for me to be on full-time release from my federal position, continue to receive wages and benefits, but work full time for the employees union, which became the Federation of Indian Service Employees. I accepted, since I was no longer "qualified" to teach at SIPI.

At FISE, I worked under an a federally appointed Administrator who had been hired by the BIE and DOL to operated and rebuild the local with the assistance of the AFT. My duties included working with the AFT field representatives and collecting employee information for a lawsuit to recoup owed monies for incorrect application of overtime earnings. In 2010, I ran for President of the newly re-established FISE Executive Board and was elected. I am currently in my third term as FISE President.

I have and continue to learn a lot about employee/labor relations in this position. I led negotiations twice at the national level to build the Collective Bargaining Agreement, under which federal employees and management agreed as to the working conditions for Indian Affairs employees. FISE represents approximately 5600 federal employees who work for the four agencies under the Department of Interior, whose mission is to provide federal services to the Native American people. The 350 worksites are located in 22 different states, on or near tribal reservations.

My philosophy has always been that our Union's priority will be to fulfill the mission of the four federal agencies we represent. Our job is to ensure that the federal employees are given the utmost opportunity to do their part in providing the services that the native people and communities deserve and are entitled to through treaty obligations and trust responsibilities. I believe that the federal government should treat our members with fairness and respect. During my tenure as FISE President I have worked very hard to establish good professional relationships with management and labor/relation specialists throughout the country to promote collaboration and respect for the men and women who work in their federal positions.