

DePoe and Google: A life enriched by technology, taking every opportunity to grow

My name is Suzanne DePoe and in this article I'm sharing a little bit about myself and how my journey got me to where I am today. I celebrated 10 years in December 2020 as a test engineer for Google Inc, the sixth most valuable company in the world, a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc.

I am an elder and a member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. My Tribes are Tututni, Chippewa and Southern Cheyenne. I'm also Swedish and English from my mom.

I am the great-great-granddaughter of Charlie Depoe, a Tribal leader of the Joshua Band of the Tututni. His son, Robert DePoe, married Mary Hauser, Southern Cheyenne/German, both school teachers and graduates of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Penn., class of 1897.

My grandfather, William DePoe Sr. (Chief Antelope), married Marie LaFrance, Turtle Mountain Chippewa/French. My father is William DePoe Jr. (Chief Chewescla). I have one daughter, a son-in-law and three grandchildren, plus one sister, two brothers and lots of extended family.

My love for discovery has been with me my entire life. I have been fortunate to have been around my Indigenous family all those years. When I was young, my dad loved basketball and Indian basketball tournaments. His team, the Seattle Thunderbirds, traveled and participated in these tournaments.

My uncle, Pete DePoe, was in Redbone, a famous Indigenous band with a famous song still played today, "Come and Get Your Love!"

Early on in life I also fell hard for basketball and became a three-year letter-woman. I've been a successful basketball referee for 28 years and have refereed at 10 Washington state girls/boys basketball tournaments (WIAA). Contact your state associations as officials are needed.

I graduated high school and attempted community college as there was no funding for me at that time or I didn't know of it or didn't qualify. I worked and went to school during those early years. It was at this time I began learning of my Indigenous family and who we were – the DePoe family.

I began to participate in sweat lodge ceremonies, learning how to pray not only for myself but for my family. It was during this time that I met my daughter's father and traveled the country making and selling jewelry, visiting and digging at the Pipestone, Minn., quarries.

It was during this time I had my daughter, whom I raised for nine months on a cradleboard and lived in a tipi for nine months. As she grew, we began to attend pow-wows. By this time, it was my daughter, Dawn, and I.

Dawn began dancing when she was young and got serious in junior high school. We sewed and made fancy and jingle dance regalia, so many colors. We



Courtesy photo

Suzanne DePoe

traveled to many big-name pow-wows and she was crowned princess a couple of times.

We were happy being around our pow-wow family and as years passed, more family joined in the circle. It's been wonderful to see the culture shift in our family.

In the mid-1980s, it was time to get to work and figure out my future as my daughter was 4 years old. I tried going to a four-year college – I knew then where to locate funding – but I failed to complete my schooling. Raising a 4-year-old and attending college – I couldn't do it. I needed money.

I changed my path again and took another route, Griffin Business College in Seattle. I was successful and completed secretary/administrative courses. I got lucky and was hired at my first interview, Nordstrom Inc., Store #01, as a customer service and cash room money counter.

I had no business attire for a fancy retail store, back then nylon leggings were required. My mom met me at the store and purchased two outfits for me to get started. I moved from customer service to working in computer support in the Nordstrom corporate offices five years later.

My first computer was an IBMXT286. Voice mail wasn't even a thing back then and this was before cellphones were the norm. This got my career in technology running full speed ahead.

I left Nordstrom in 1992 as I hit a pay ceiling of \$26,500 and started to work for Attachmate Corporation. Attachmate developed emulation software and 3270/5250 boards.

Representing Attachmate, I visited Fortune 500 companies while in support, then officially moved into software test engineering, testing all versions of the software, emulation boards and dial-up technologies, and reporting bugs.

Every opportunity that opened for me, I took it. I had family to support me for my daughter's care if I had to travel. After 13 years with multiple titles, Attachmate was sold and I was laid off.

Always hopeful and never giving up, I had a short three-month break and moved to a Paul Allen company, Digeo Inc. It developed a Multimedia Moxi Media Center(DVR box) for TV and video.

The commute was awful, however, so I moved to another company, Widevine Technologies. Its location allowed me to take the commuter train to work.

Widevine developed a video streaming content protection and registration software for providers to create databases of movies available for rental and develop client libraries installed on all devices today to secure content. In December 2010, Google acquired Widevine Technologies.

Technology has always challenged me and thrilled me at the same time. I've worked with most operating systems out on the market today and in the past. I enjoy using Linux, a terminal-style interface, which also has a graphical user interface (GUI). I've worked with most devices out on the market today, verifying playback on phones, tablets, Chromecast, Amazon, Netflix, SmartTVs, Roku, computers, along with all browsers.

Working in software engineering has inspired me, so many great technologies for one to follow and learn. The field of computer programming pays well and has so many avenues to go down.

I've been one to inspire students with Google Inc. and the possibilities in engineering as I'm now a test engineer for Corporate Engineering Tools and Engagements. I've invited students from rural communities in Eastern Washington to tour Google and hear about Google's projects and what it takes to be a computer scientist.

Holding up my cell phone to students, I ask them, "What if you developed an app and it was published on the GooglePlay Store?" The software to develop these apps is OpenSource, in other words, anybody can download it, install it and create apps.

So back to the app, "The app sells for .99 for each download, you sell 1 million. How much money is that?" Light bulbs go off, eyes light up. Their minds start thinking about the possibilities. I tell them, "You know what your generation likes. Build an app that fills a need/want!"

It was during this time that the Google American Indian Network (GAIN), one of Google's Employee Resource Groups (ERG), contacted me and invited me to be on the Leadership Council. I jumped at the opportunity. I've been on the leadership council for 2+ years.

I worked with The Dalles Data Center in 2019 to provide three years of Wi-Fi service to the residents of Celilo Village. In 2020, I worked with the Goldendale School District to administer a grant to provide Wi-Fi access to a small community on the Yakama Nation. Google's grant to the Goldendale School District allowed for Viasat Satellite dishes to be installed that will provide the much-needed bandwidth to this community of 19 homes.

Life still surprises me as events continue to guide my path. Being a leader on GAIN allows me opportunities to share about our culture and assist in ensuring Indigenous Googlers know we are here for them. Here are some events I've participated in last year:

- Summer 2020, American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES). Recorded video for my "Path to Google," sharing how I got here.
- Participating in CareersOnAir, Spotlight Series on the Google American Indian Network (January 2021)
- "Elevating Women of Color at Google," where Michelle Obama was one of our speakers (January 2021)
- Belonging – I presented to Siletz Valley School on my journey to Google and some projects at Google (October 2020)

I have had an opportunity to influence how Google moves forward, ensuring Indigenous peoples are not forgotten or left out. It's been an amazing journey.

In 2020, I lead the GAIN outreach team to inform Tribes of the FCC's 2.5GHz Rural Tribal Priority Window for Tribal Nations, assisting with questions. This year, I will focus on outreach to Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) along with student organizations at public and private schools, ensuring they are aware of Google's resources and internships available to them.

GAIN has proposed to replace "Indian" with "Indigenous" for our name to be more inclusive. I 100% support this effort.

My current position is with Corporate Engineering Tools and Engagements as a test engineer. I am engaged with the Corporate Engineering REWs Works Physical Security Team for Googler's safety and working on the return-to-work efforts.

Technology is growing and being developed; the world needs students and adults to think big and learn a technology. No matter where you live, jobs are everywhere. College is a good start, but you can learn online as well. YouTube.com is awesome.

Companies are learning in this time of the pandemic that working on site is not always going to be the case, opening many opportunities as the world moves forward. If you like putting together puzzles, you might want to consider software engineering. So many businesses will need an online presence. Who's going to build those sites? Be a part of it all.

If you like gaming, go that route. Find your endless opportunities if you're looking for a job and livelihood in the field of technology. Corporations, community programs and Tribal infrastructure around the world are looking for leaders to take them through the 21st century. It will test you but if you're up for a challenge, come join the world of technology.

CTSI Jobs

Tribal employment information is available at ctsi.nsn.us.

Note: "Open Until Filled" vacancies may close at any time. The Tribe's Indian Preference policy will apply. Tribal

government will not discriminate in selection because of race, creed, age, sex, color, national origin, physical

handicap, marital status, politics, membership or non-membership in an employee organization.