Greetings and welcome to the winter edition of the VA Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) newsletter. I hope this finds you rested after the holiday season. The past few months were quite busy with training, outreach and senior level engagement with tribal leaders. Two highlights of recent months included VA Secretary Wilkie’s speaking engagement during the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) conference held in Anchorage this past October. The AFN meeting was preceded by tours of tribal health care facilities in the region, which continue to serve as critical points of access to care for Veterans across Alaska. Secretary Wilkie was impressed with these site visits and encouraged VA leadership and staff across the VA enterprise to continue to expand and cultivate effective partnerships between tribal governments, tribal health care programs and the VA.

In November, Secretary Wilkie then ventured to Oklahoma where he was graciously welcomed to Chickasaw Country by Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby and Lieutenant Governor Jefferson Keel as co-hosts of a Tribal Nations Veterans Town Hall held in Ada, OK. The Secretary offered opening remarks and fielded questions from the audience on a variety of concerns expressed by Veterans during the session. He enjoyed breakfast hosted by tribal leadership and toured both the Chickasaw Nation Medical Center and the Chickasaw Nation Veterans Lodge where he expressed both appreciation and admiration for the quality of Chickasaw Nation facilities. His visit affirmed the commitment to continue to work to cultivate expanded partnerships and collaborations with tribal governments in the days ahead. We look forward to supporting future Secretarial visits and engagements with tribal leaders as we move into the new year. I would be remiss if I didn't extend my thanks to our teammates Clay Ward, Mary Culley and Henry Huntley (Henry is from the VA Intergovernmental Affairs side of the organization) for the staff support they provided to these engagements.

As I reflect on this past autumn season, it might easier for me to list the efforts and activities our team accomplished in collaboration with the three VA administrations, external partners such as the State Departments of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Health and Human Services – Administration for Native Americans, just to name a few. The VA OTGR team continued to work with tribal communities to complete the “Your Service, Our Mission: Bringing Benefits Home” presumptive VA claims campaign across Indian Country for 2018. The OTGR team partnered with tribal and State Departments of Veterans affairs, the VA Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the VA Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Veterans Service Organizations to host claims events focused on reaching Veterans who may have presumptive health conditions because of their service, or who may be eligible for pension benefits. The 2018 campaign included twenty-three tribal governments and thirty-two locations in twelve states with twelve VBA regional offices involved. The VA estimates there were over 1000 Veterans and family members served over the course of the 2018 claims events initiative across Indian Country.

Our Tribal Government Relations Specialist Terry Bentley partnered with the Nevada State Department of Veteran Services to host the Nevada Veterans Advocate Conference on October 20-21 in Elko, NV. This event was a two-day workshop to offer training to help connect Veterans, active-duty military, guard/reserves and their family members to earned benefits, resources and services.
During November, I traveled to New Mexico where I was invited to participate in the New Mexico VA Health Care System/Indian Health Service (Albuquerque Area Office) Veterans Health and Wellness Symposium held at Isleta Pueblo. The event was initiated by retired Indian Health Service Albuquerque Area Director and Marine, James Toya, and has been going strong through the dedicated effort and leadership of a joint VA/IHS/Tribal planning committee for 17 years. The symposium was an excellent forum for information sharing, outreach, networking and combined resources to effectively reach and serve Veterans across the region. If you have the chance to attend next year, I recommend you do so as you’ll find it to be time well spent. A few days later, I was fortunate to participate in the Veterans Day commemoration held at Taos Pueblo. I was humbled and honored to pay tribute to Taos Pueblo and area service members, Veterans and their families. I’m thankful to the gracious hospitality of Taos Pueblo leadership and to the planning committee who worked hard to make the event a success.

On December 4-5, Terry Bentley coordinated a Tribal Veteran Advocate Training with the Native American Rehabilitation Association (NARA), an urban Indian health program. Presenters for this 2-day training event were from VHA Portland, VBA Portland, ODVA, WDVA and SAMHSA, and was for service providers (TVRs) and those interested in learning more about working with Native American Veterans.

On December 7, 2018, VA and the Pueblo of Acoma signed a VA Native American Direct Loan (NADL) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The signing of the MOU will increase opportunities for eligible Veterans and their spouses to use VA home loan guaranty benefits on federal trust land. In addition, VA and non-VA agencies and organizations assembled for a benefits fair for approximately 125 community members from Acoma Pueblo and surrounding communities.

Peter Vicaire was out in upstate New York where he and Mary Culley organized a veteran town hall meeting with Seneca Nation as well as assisted the Veterans Committee of the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) with their agenda, and which was meeting nearby at the Seneca facility in Niagara Falls. Peter was then out at Penobscot Nation in Maine for a small outreach claims event, followed by a Wisconsin Tribal Veteran Service Officer meeting at Stockbridge-Munsee. After attending a conference on elder justice, he rounded out the year by implementing a full-day veterans training event with the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming and then briefed tribal leaders on veteran programs at the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council in Hinckley, MN.

Peter is also pleased to announce that the first Native veterans in Kansas have started to receive money back from the state for taxes which were illegally taken from them while they were in the military. Kansas now joins Arizona and New Mexico as the only states (of twenty-six) to remedy this issue and Peter is looking forward to 2019 with the hopes he can also help Native veterans who were wrongly taxed by other states.

We are excited for what the new year ahead holds in store for our team, working with tribes and serving Veterans. We plan to place a strong emphasis on building working alliances and bridges between VA and Urban Indian Health Programs as well as VA and senior citizens programs across Indian Country. We
have more Indian Country claims events in the works, we have informational webinars being planned and we also hope to highlight funding opportunities tribes may choose to pursue through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Administration for Native Americans.

One event coming up soon after the new year will be held January 23-24, 2019. This is a Tribal Veteran Representative Training with the California State Department of Veterans Affairs, hosted by the Rincon Tribe of California, which will be held at the Rincon Tribal Hall in San Diego, CA. Please email terry.bentley@va.gov for more information about the event.

I hope you find our newsletter informative and helpful. If you have submissions to the newsletter, please email content or questions to tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov. I wish you a blessed and peaceful holiday season and I look forward to working with you in the coming new year.

Happy reading.

Stephanie Birdwell

Links to non-Federal services are provided solely as a service to our readers. These links do not constitute an endorsement of these organizations or their programs by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and none should be inferred. VA is not responsible for the content of the individual organization web pages found at these links nor the information provided on these events by organizations or individuals.
U.S. Veteran Affairs secretary promises permanent grave markers, other benefits for Alaska

Here’s an article by Alex DeMarban, which ran in the Anchorage Daily News on October 20, 2018

Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie told the Alaska Federation of Natives convention on Saturday that the agency is expanding benefits for veterans and families of service members in Alaska.

Speaking before hundreds of Alaska Natives, and later in a listening circle with dozens of veterans, Wilkie said he was impressed with the longtime military service of Alaska Natives, with the highest enrollment rates in the nation. "It is what Sen. Sullivan calls Alaska’s special kind of patriotism," Wilkie said, referring to Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, who had urged Wilkie to visit Alaska before he was confirmed in July.

Wilkie’s comments helped cap AFN’s 52nd annual convention, a three-day spectacle of culture, art and politics. On Saturday, thousands of delegates from around Alaska called for new efforts to combat sexual assault in Native communities. In a remarkable moment Friday, Gov. Bill Walker announced he was ending his re-election bid with weeks left.

Speaking on Saturday, Wilkie said the agency will use Alaska as a testing ground for an electronic medical-records program that will smooth the transition from military to post-service life as veterans pursue health care.

Wilkie also complimented Alaska’s unusual health system, with tribally run clinics in villages providing care to veterans in villages. Over the last few days, Wilkie said he’d visited the Alaska Native Medical Center, providing health care in Anchorage, and the group’s that manage the center, Southcentral Foundation and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.

Wilkie said the agency was renewing reimbursement agreements with tribes through 2022, as part of the program. Since 2012, the agency had reimbursed tribal-care provides $21 million, he said. [Note: that figure is $88 million nationally]. "The greatest lesson I learned is you help Veterans Affairs more than I help you,” he told the convention.

Speaking in a more intimate listening session after his speech, seated in a circle with some 30 Alaska Native veterans, Wilkie said the agency will provide permanent grave markers across Alaska, for families with deceased veterans. A lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, Wilkie said Sullivan had leaned on him to take that step, and other efforts in Alaska. Sullivan, a colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, sat beside Wilkie. Sullivan said the grave markers will replace old markers crumbling in Alaska’s rugged weather. "We pressed hard for that," Sullivan told the veterans.
Sullivan told a reporter after the hearing that work is underway to bring other benefits to Alaska, including the creation of a Veterans Affairs residency pilot program. The goal is that physicians in training will conduct residency programs in Alaska and base their careers here, combating a shortage of doctors.

Sullivan had inserted that language into the VA modernization bill signed earlier this year. On Friday, Wilkie attended the annual Stand Down Anchorage event where homeless veterans are able to access social services and other help. At the AFN listening session on Saturday, George Shoogukurk, 67 and a U.S. Army Vietnam-era veteran, said the Veteran Affairs agency helped him get into his own home, after he had been homeless. "Today, I'm good," he said.

VA Reimburses over $87 Million to IHS and Tribal Health Programs

Tribal health programs interested in entering into a reimbursement agreement with VA for serving veterans should send an initial note of interest to: tribal.agreements@va.gov

Standing Rock Veterans Cemetery Getting More Federal Money

Here's an article from U.S. News & World Report, which ran on December 13, 2018

The Standing Rock Sioux tribe is getting $291,000 from the federal government to expand and improve the All Nations Veterans Cemetery in Fort Yates. The money is through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The agency last year gave the tribe nearly $5 million to build the cemetery. The 8-acre cemetery is expected to serve more than 2,200 tribal veterans and their families.
Almost everyone is familiar with the name John Philip Sousa, the famous "March King," who in 1880, at the age of 26, became Director of the U.S. Marine Corps Band. He composed countless songs that are familiar to us now, like "The Stars and Stripes Forever" and "Semper Fidelis," the official march of the U.S. Marine Corps, along with dozens of other military marches that shaped American music as no other. He even had a musical instrument--the sousaphone--named after him. However, many people aren’t aware that a talented American Indian, John Kuhn, was part of Sousa’s famous band and an acclaimed musician in his own right.

John Kuhn was born on July 4, 1882, to John Kuhn/Koon and Mary No Eyes on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation near Poplar, Montana. He was part of the Assiniboine-Sioux tribe and his birth name was Red Cloud. In old interviews he recounted that his earliest memories were of music--namely his mother singing--and at special ceremonies he heard women sing old tribal songs. Music had long been an essential part of Native American culture and John Kuhn wanted to preserve more of it in his life.

He was among the first students to attend the Fort Shaw Indian School, founded in 1892, and it was there that he learned to play horns. Kuhn credited Louis H. Goings, an American Indian shoe and harness maker employed at the school with developing his musical aptitude. He then attended the Haskell Indian School near Lawrence, Kansas, where he continued his music studies. There his passion for music grew and he mastered the sousaphone--a tuba that had been specifically adapted, at the request of John Philip Sousa,
for concert performances. The first sousaphone was built for John Philip Sousa by J.W. Pepper in 1895.

John Kuhn’s professional career as a musician began by playing in bands for the Campbell Brothers Wagon Shows, the Sells and Forpaugh Circus, and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show where he toured in the latter as “Chief” or “Big Chief” Red Cloud in Europe, Canada, and across the U.S. Buffalo Bill’s grueling schedule interfered with his musical ambitions, so he left the show to play with the Dennison Wheelock Indian Band. Dennison Wheelock, member of the Oneida tribe, Carlisle Indian School graduate, and first bandmaster for the school, was considered an equal to John Philip Sousa and had made a name for himself as conductor and composer. He composed a Sousa-inspired march entitled, "The Carlisle Indian School March" in honor of the school’s superintendent, Capt. Richard H. Pratt, its staff and students. Performing with Wheelock’s band enabled John Kuhn to eventually cross paths with John Philip Sousa’s band at the Pan American Exposition in 1915 near San Francisco. It was then that he achieved one of his life’s dreams and was selected to play in Sousa’s band.

After the U.S. entered World War I in April 1917, Sousa enlisted with the Navy. Lieutenant Sousa then established a Navy band and set up a school for musicians at the Naval Training and his 1,700-piece Navy band, featuring John Kuhn, toured the U.S. to promote sales of Liberty Loan bonds. In ads promoting their concerts, John Kuhn was often listed as a distinguished soloist. In December 1918, one month after the Armistice to end the war was signed, Sousa’s famed Navy band was disbanded and a small band of 150 pieces was established in its place. John Kuhn remained with Sousa’s band for a few years after the war.

The development and evolution of radio and phonographs in the early 20th century, placed John Kuhn at the heart of a cultural musical phenomenon. Soloists and orchestral
ensembles, alike, helped ignite the Big Band era where music studios, phonograph records, the sheet music industry, and radio stations became cemented as part of American culture. They provided music for radio and vaudeville shows, the burgeoning film industry, nightclubs, and special events. It was a great time to be a musician.

After seven years with Sousa’s band, John Kuhn left to perform with the Isham Jones Orchestra in 1922. Isham Jones wrote the popular songs "We're/You're In The Army Now," that became a recurring tune in Hollywood movies, along with "It Had to be You," and many others. Kuhn settled in Chicago where he performed with many bands and radio shows and enjoyed a long musical career during America's Big Band era. John Kuhn was one of two known American Indians to play in John Philip Sousa's band; the other was Robert Bruce, another student inspired by Louis H. Goings; he played the euphonium. John Kuhn died on January 10, 1962, and was buried at Acacia Park Cemetery in Chicago.

Isham Jones Orchestra (includes photos of John Kuhn):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78ojjyo234

National Gathering of American Indian Veterans 2018 Report

Trickster Art Gallery is proud to present their final report from the 4th National Gathering of American Indian Veterans, which took place at Cantigny Park in Wheaton, IL. Please save the date for the next gathering, which will take place July 26-28, 2019. Click link above or image below for the report
First VA Facility Named After an American Indian

by Darlene Richardson, Historian, Veterans Health Administration, November 7, 2018

The first federal veterans’ hospital facility to carry an honorary name dates to 1921 when the Public Health Service (a VHA predecessor) took over the Speedway Hospital, under construction at the time, near Chicago, for use as a hospital for World War I veterans. The seller of the hospital property required that the new veterans’ hospital be named after his son, who died in France during World War I, as a condition of the sale to the government. Since World War II nearly half of VA’s medical facilities have been bestowed with honorary names after military veterans, presidents, or politicians. On June 15, 2006, the Muskogee VA Medical Center in Oklahoma was the first to be re-named in honor of an American Indian: World War II Medal of Honor recipient and member of the Cherokee nation, Jack C. Montgomery.

Jack Cleveland Montgomery was born on July 23, 1917 near Long, Oklahoma, to John Cleveland and Emma Benge Montgomery. He attended the Chilocco Indian School and graduated from Carnegie High School in 1936. He then attended Bacone College in Muskogee and, later, the University of Redlands in California where he earned a degree in physical education and was a popular gridiron star.
Shortly after the attacks on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Jack Montgomery enlisted for military service. He joined the 180th regiment, 45th Division, an Oklahoma National Guard unit, and found himself reunited with many of his Indian friends from Bacone College. Roughly 50 American Indian tribes were represented in the division and they chose the nickname "Thunderbirds," after the mythical bird of rain, for themselves. They trained at Camp Barkeley in Abilene, Texas, and were initially sent to North Africa in 1943 but eventually fought in Italy.

On February 22, 1944, near the Anzio beach head in Padigilione, Italy, Lt. Jack Montgomery was leading his troops when they encountered German forces. Using his rifle and hand grenades, Montgomery crawled up a ditch until he came upon a small mound. From there he fired his rifle and threw grenades so accurately that he killed eight Germans and captured four others. He then returned to his platoon and they attacked other German positions. His actions resulted in 11 enemy dead, 32 prisoners, and an unknown number of wounded for which he was cited for the Medal of Honor. Montgomery was wounded in the encounter, but survived. President Franklin D. Roosevelt personally bestowed the Medal of Honor on him at a White House ceremony in January 1945. He was one of seven Native Americans to receive the Medal of Honor during World War II. The 45th Division returned to the states in 1946.

**Report: Long-term Services and Supports for Native Veterans**

Here's a (December 2016) report from Department of Health & Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The link to the CMS website is [HERE](#) and the link to the (38 page) report is [HERE](#).

“Long-term care needs among Native Veterans are high, and tribal LTSS programs can help connect Veterans with care. The resources below describe the care needs of Native Veterans and offer program planning considerations for improving access to care for Veterans.

While Native Veterans tend to be younger than Veterans of other races, they are more likely to have a disability. Native Veterans are also more likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder, which can lead to other health problems as Veterans age. Veterans in Indian Country also face barriers to accessing health care, including VA health care benefits they may have earned through military service.

Through collaboration with Veterans, IHS, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, tribal LTSS programs can help connect Veterans with the support and care they need.”
Veteran of the Day: Marcella Ryan LeBeau

VA’s "Veteran of the Day" (November 30, 2018) was Marcella Ryan LeBeau.

“Ninety-nine-year-old Marcella Ryan LeBeau enlisted in 1943 and served in the Army Nurse Corps in WWII, reaching the rank of 1st Lieutenant. Marcella received orders to join the 76th General Hospital unit and was shipped out to England, followed by Wales, France and Belgium, supporting the European Theatre Operations and caring for those injured in the Normandy Landings and on the front line during the Battle of the Bulge. Marcella is from Eagle Butte, South Dakota where she is a member of the Two Kettle Band of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. During WWII, on the 60th anniversary of D-Day, Marcella traveled to France where she was presented with the French Legion of Honor Award. Marcella continues to participate at many Veterans’ events, speaking of her military experience in World War II.

In 2006, Marcella was inducted into the South Dakota Hall of Fame, being recognized for her military achievements as well as her 31 years in nursing. Marcella has raised a family of eight children and remains a fierce advocate for Veterans, the Lakota language and culture and much, much more. Thank you for your service, Marcella.”

Nominate a Veteran for #VeteranOfTheDay
Do you want to light up the face of a special Veteran? Have you been wondering how to tell your Veteran they are special to you? You’re in luck! VA’s #VeteranOfTheDay social media feature is an opportunity to highlight your Veteran and his/her service. It’s easy to nominate a Veteran. All it takes is an email to newmedia@va.gov with as much information as you can put together, along with some good photos.

Visit our blog post about nominating to learn how to create the best submission.
Oklahoma ‘Doughboy’ Statue Restored, Rededicated

Here’s an article written by Chesley Oxendine, which ran in the Muskogee Phoenix on November 12, 2018

MUSKOGEE, Okla. (AP) — District 6 State Representative Chuck Hoskins said he sees his uncle when he walks past the "Spirit of the American Doughboy" statue at Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center.

"It not only stands for my uncles, but for all of your relatives who took part in that war," Hoskins said to a gathered crowd at the recent rededication ceremony for the statue. "We have to make sure our children and their children understand what this statue means."

The ceremony comes on the heels of a $25,000 restoration project to clean and restore the statue, one of 143 existing "Doughboy" statues nationwide, according to a release from the event, and one of two memorializing Native American wartime service. The statue is a "hollow" version made of copper infused bronze sheets pressed over a frame.

"Doughboy" is an informal term for a member of the U.S. Army or Marine Corps.

The statue was originally brought to memorialize the service of the Five Civilized Tribes during World War I. Part of the restoration process was adding a small monument extending that memorialization to all veterans who have served in all wars, Graham said.

"Tulsa Monuments sandblasted it using finely ground pecan shells, and then cleaned it. After that, they resealed it and they cleaned all the granite, and attached a plaque to mark it for the National Register of Historic Places," Vandelia Graham, Green Country director for the Oklahoma State Daughters of the American Revolution, told the Muskogee Phoenix.

The ceremony saw a large crowd pack into the medical center’s chapel to hear from a variety of speakers like Hoskin. Members of the DAR spoke about relatives who had fought in World War I, sharing stories of grandfathers and uncles. Dr. Ferlin Clark, president of Bacon College, shared a Navajo honor song to commemorate code talkers who had assisted in both World Wars.

Graham said the turnout was "wonderful."

"I didn’t nearly expect so many people to attend," she said.

One of those people was Ruth Summers, a Muskogee native whose relative served in World War I.

"This is just incredible to me," Summers said. "To see all this community support — it really tells you what Muskogee thinks of her veterans, I think. They mean a lot to this place."
First Native American Woman Pilot

Mary Riddell (Kus-De-Ca) - First Full-Blooded Native American Woman Pilot

by Darlene Richardson, Historian, Veterans Health Administration, November 16, 2018

In the aftermath of World War I, pioneering Army aviators were discharged and returned home, while hundreds of military airplanes were excessed and sold to the public. Some former "flyboys," purchased old planes and became barnstormers or opened flight schools to teach others to fly. The 1920s and 1930s was considered the golden era of aviation as thousands of men, women, and children were exposed to aviation and airplanes for the first time in their lives. Air circuses or barnstormers flying overhead in small towns excited the imagination of almost everyone—including Mary Riddell, a young Native American woman in the state of Washington.

Marie Agnes "Nannie" Riddell was born on April 22, 1902, the only daughter of Albert Riddell (Quinault) and Elizabeth Bob Riddell (Clatsop). Her given name was Kus-De-Ca, spelled in some sources as Kus-De-Cha, which meant kingfisher—a type of brilliant-colored bird. Indian census records show that her Indian name was Marie Agnes, while her English name was Nannie, and her last name was spelled as both Riddell and Riddle throughout her life. She had two brothers, Thomas (1901), and Valentine (1904). During her youth she attended an air show and was smitten by what she saw.

In 1929, at the age of 18 she applied to the Spartan Aeronautical School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was one of the top flight schools in the country at that time. The school was run by former World War I pilot and flight instructor, Lt. James G. Haizlip. The school opened a brand new facility adjacent to the Tulsa airport in April 1929 and in September of that same year opened its classes to women. Mary completed her instruction with honors and in 1930 she became the first full-blooded woman of Native American heritage in the U.S. to earn a pilot’s license.
Tex Rankin, her instructor, taught well over 2,000 people to fly in his lifetime. Some of his students included Hollywood actors Jimmy Stewart, Errol Flynn, Edgar Bergen, and many women. He became a stunt pilot in Hollywood movies and was an important government contractor during World War II where he trained pilots for the Army. He died in 1947 while piloting a new airplane during a promotional tour. The Spartan Flying School, where Mary Riddell originally learned to fly, expanded to other cities and airports and taught thousands of British Royal Air Force (RAF) as well as U.S. pilots during World War II.

Civilian aviation was severely restricted during World War II, so Mary Riddell temporarily gave up flying. Her injuries from the 1937 air show continued to plague her and instead of serving as a Women’s Air Service Pilot (WASP) during the war, she served as a civilian aluminum sheetmetal worker in the repair shops at the Army Air Field in Malden, Missouri. She died on October 25, 1981, and was buried in Sunset Memorial Park in Hoquiam, Washington. She remained connected to aviation throughout her life and her legacy continues to inspire women interested in aviation.

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Photo credits:

top - June 15, 1930, announcement of Mary Riddell/Riddle obtaining pilot’s license, Star Tribune, no page noted.

bottom - October 1, 1933, Tex Rankin, her aerobatics instructor, and Mary Riddell/Riddle, Chicago Tribune, part 5, p. 9.
First Indian Woman Air Pilot

Miss Marie Riddell of the Quinault tribe of Northwest Indians, shown at Seattle with her instructor, C. K. Rankin, is the first Indian woman air pilot. Her ambition is to become a stunt flyer.
Can you apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability (SSDI), Medicaid or Medicare at your Tribal Social Services Office?
Yes, you can apply for benefits in your Tribal Social Services Office. If there are no Social Security Administration (SSA) personnel available on site, your Tribal Social Services Office can help you fill out the SSA forms and collect the information you need to complete them. You can also:

- Apply online at [www.ssa.gov/applyforbenefits](http://www.ssa.gov/applyforbenefits),
- Call our toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213, to make an appointment to file a claim at your local Social Security office or to set up an appointment for someone to take your claim over the telephone; and
- Visit your local Social Security Field Office to file.

What income and resources do I need to report if I receive SSI benefits?
You need to report all of your income and resources to Social Security so we can calculate the correct amount of your SSI check, if you are eligible. Income is any item you receive, in cash or in-kind, that can be used to meet the basic needs of food or shelter. We do not count all income for SSI, but the income that we do count reduces the amount of your SSI check. Resources are things you own such as cash, bank accounts, vehicles, property, or anything else you own, and can sell or convert into cash. We do not count all resources, but the resources we do count may affect your SSI eligibility.

These are some common types of income and resources tribal members must report:

- Per capita payments received from your tribe or from funds held in trust by the Secretary of Interior;
- Distributions from Alaska native villages or village corporations;
- Distribution of Settlement or Judgement Funds (e.g., Tribal Trust Accounting and Management Settlement payments);
- All Tribal program payments (e.g., Elder care payments). The factors of eligibility used to determine eligibility to any tribal program payment must be provided to SSA to determine if the payment is countable or excluded as Assistance Based on Need (ABON);
- Interest of Individual Indians in Trust or Restricted Lands;
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Individual Indian Money Accounts (IIM) and revenue distributions; and

SocialSecurity.gov
Trusts Established under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA Trust)
You can find more information using the following links:
- Information on Trusts
- Trusts established with the assets of an individual on or after 1/1/2000
- Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE)

Not all income and resources are counted against you. The following are some of the exclusions we will consider, when determining your SSI eligibility and payment amount:
- Indian-Related Exclusions;
- SSI Income and Resource Exclusions;
- What is NOT income for SSI purposes;
- Support and Maintenance Assistance; and
- Exclusion from Resources, provided by other statutes.

You need to report changes in income or resources to Social Security as soon as possible, but no later than the 10th day after the month in which there is a change.

Can I go to my Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program to use my Ticket to Work?
Yes, if your tribe has a vocational rehabilitation program, you can use your Ticket there or through another employment network (EN) provider. Although all Tribal VR programs are automatically eligible to become EN service providers, there are currently only three Tribal VR programs operating as EN providers who can accept a Ticket: the Jemez Pueblo, the Moapa Band of Paiute, and the Eastern Shoshone Tribes. You can find more information online about Social Security's Ticket to Work program.

Can I use Medicare and Medicaid for medical services at an Indian Health Service (IHS) clinic or reservation hospital?
Yes, you can use Medicare and Medicaid at an IHS clinic or reservation hospital for medical services the Indian Health Service does not cover. The Indian Health Service (IHS) is the "payer of last resort" so individuals must apply for all alternate resources available including Medicare and Medicaid. IHS provides health care and disease prevention services to eligible applicants through a network of hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, and contractors, during the 24 month waiting period for Disability Beneficiaries. You can find more information using the following links:
- CMS American Indian/Alaska Native Center
- VIDEO: The Role of CMS in Indian Health Care
- Medicare -- Items and Services Furnished by a Federal Provider of Services or Federal Agency
- Medicare is the primary payer and the IHS the secondary payer
- Indian Health & Medicaid
Fact Sheet
SOCIAL SECURITY

2019 SOCIAL SECURITY CHANGES

Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA):
Based on the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W) from the third quarter of 2017 through the third quarter of 2018, Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries will receive a 2.8 percent COLA for 2019. Other important 2019 Social Security information is as follows:

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<tr>
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NOTE: The 7.65% tax rate is the combined rate for Social Security and Medicare. The Social Security portion (OASDI) is 6.20% on earnings up to the applicable taxable maximum amount (see below). The Medicare portion (HI) is 1.45% on all earnings. Also, as of January 2013, individuals with earned income of more than $200,000 ($250,000 for married couples filing jointly) pay an additional 0.9 percent in Medicare taxes. The tax rates shown above do not include the 0.9 percent.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retirement Earnings Test Exempt Amounts</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under full retirement age</td>
<td>$17,040/yr. ($1,420/mo.)</td>
<td>$17,040/yr. ($1,470/mo.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The year an individual reaches full retirement age</td>
<td>$45,360/yr. ($3,780/mo.)</td>
<td>$46,920/yr. ($3,910/mo.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: One dollar in benefits will be withheld for every $2 in earnings above the limit.

NOTE: Applies only to earnings for months prior to attaining full retirement.
age. One dollar in benefits will be withheld for every $3 in earnings above the
limit.

| Beginning the month an individual attains full retirement age | None |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Security Disability Thresholds</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Blind</td>
<td>$1,180/mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind</td>
<td>$1,970/mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial Work Period (TWP)</td>
<td>$850/mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum Social Security Benefit: Worker Retiring at Full Retirement Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$2,788/mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SSI Federal Payment Standard</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>$750/mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>$1,125/mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SSI Resource Limits</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SSI Student Exclusion</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly limit</td>
<td>$1,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual limit</td>
<td>$7,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estimated Average Monthly Social Security Benefits Payable in January 2019</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before 2.8% COLA</td>
<td>After 2.8% COLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Retired Workers</td>
<td>$1,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged Couple, Both Receiving Benefits</td>
<td>$2,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed Mother and Two Children</td>
<td>$2,797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged Widow(er) Alone</td>
<td>$1,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled Worker, Spouse and One or More Children</td>
<td>$2,072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Disabled Workers</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS FOR NATIVE AMERICANS

RGG Services has been contracted by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to provide Native American small businesses specialized training to address economic and business development issues and to help implement actions to improve their community.

Workshops will start in December 2018 and run through June 2019.

Cost:  
FREE

Workshop Locations:

- Aberdeen, SD
- Pheonix, AZ
- Las Vegas, NV
- Albuquerque, NM
- Raleigh, NC
- Dallas Ft. Worth, TX
- Norman, OK
- Tulsa, OK
- Billings, MT
- Wausau, WI
- Mount Pleasant, MI
- Anchorage, AK
- Grand Rapids, MN

Click Here to Register Today

Course Topics:

- Is Owning a Business a Good Fit for You?
- Financial Management
- Banking Services
- Insurance
- and More
May 17, 2016

Greetings,

My name is Martin Duarte, Master Gunnery Sergeant, USMC, (Retired). I work for Wounded Warriors Family Support (WWFS) in the programs department. I am the coordinator for Native American Veterans Support, Transition and Respite (NAVSTaR) program. This program ensures that Native American veterans, especially those who are combat wounded, are helped in a meaningful way.

If your Tribe is in need of a vehicle, please provide me with the below requested information so I may vet your request through our administrative process.

1. Location of Tribe so we can find the closest Ford dealership.
2. Closest Veterans Affairs Office, i.e distance (mileage) from the Reservation.
3. Number of Native American Veterans in tribe.
4. Number of Veterans that the tribe transports at one time to their appointments, this will give us an idea on the size of the vehicle.
5. What type of vehicle will meet your requirements (i.e. 4x4 or 4x2).
6. Tribe W9 (Tribe Identification Number and Certification).
7. Tribes major challenges assisting Veterans.

Administrative Note:
Please advise that if Wounded Warriors Family Support is able to support the request, the tribe will be responsible for titling the vehicle, insurance, gas, and regular maintenance.

WWFS is a national organization that supports and advocates for our nation’s Veterans wounded warriors. WWFS has donated many vehicles nation-wide to other tribal veteran-related programs. If any questions or concerns should arise pertaining to this matter, I may be reached via my cell phone at (760) 405-7777 or by e-mail at martin.duarte@wwfs.org.

Sincerely,

Martin Duarte
Assistant Program Director/Outreach

920 S 107th Avenue, Suite 250 Omaha, Nebraska 68114 Phone (402) 932-7036 Fax (402) 916-4399
Veterans Crisis Line

Are you a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one?

Connect with the Veterans Crisis Line to reach caring, qualified responders with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Many of them are Veterans themselves.

**HOW TO CONNECT WITH A RESPONDER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call</th>
<th>Chat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-800-273-8255 and Press 1</td>
<td>Connect online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Support for deaf and hard of hearing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>838255</td>
<td>1-800-799-4889</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This free support is:
- Confidential
- Available every day, 24/7

And serves:
- All Veterans
- All Service members
- National Guard and Reserve
- Their family members and friends
Suicide Surveillance Strategies for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

Here’s a link to a (38 page) report on suicide prevention strategies. “This report summarizes findings and recommendations from SPRC’s exploration of suicide surveillance among American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities across the country. Each section describes challenges and provides strategies and resources to help AI/AN communities gather data on suicide to inform and evaluate their prevention efforts. The report was developed with input from national experts in tribal suicide data collection, including Garrett Lee Smith project staff and other AI/AN prevention professionals and community members. It is designed to support tribal Garrett Lee Smith grantees in their data collection efforts but could be useful to any practitioners working in suicide surveillance to learn about the challenges specific to tribal populations, as well to those already working with AI/AN communities.”

Information
- **Type:** Report
- **Author:** Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC)
- **Publisher:** Education Development Center (EDC)

See This Resource
- Suicide Surveillance Strategies for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities (1004.58 KB)
OTGR Southern Plains Region
(KS; OK; TX)

OKC CHOCTAW/INTER-TRIBAL
VETERANS ASSOCIATION POST 319 &
CVA
MONTHLY MEETING

WHEN: 1ST Saturday of each month
WHERE: Choctaw Alliance Center
5320 S Young’s Blvd, OKC OK 73119
TIME: 1000 am – 1200 pm
WHO: All Native Veterans in the surrounding OKC area

OUR MISSION: To foster camaraderie among native veterans who served honorably. To serve our veterans and our communities in any which way we can. To advocate for all native veterans.

VISION: Ensure that native veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country.

POC: POST COMMANDER-Harold Marris
PHONE: 405-326-2621 or 405-456-4845
EMAIL: chatachafa@live.com
We invite you to a Social Security Summit hosted by the Oklahoma City Area Indian Health Service and the Social Security Administration. The purpose of this session is to provide a forum for participants to comment on SSA and its programs. Following are some details on the session:

WHAT: Quarterly Oklahoma Tribal Leadership and Advocate Summit
WHERE: Oklahoma City Area Indian Health Service
Redbud Conference Room
701 Market Drive
Oklahoma City, OK 73114
WHEN: Wednesday, January 9, 2019; 10 AM – 12 Noon
WHY: To provide a forum to learn about and comment on SSA programs
AUDIENCE: Oklahoma Tribal Leadership and Advocates

Social Security representatives will attend to hear your comments and address concerns. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at (214) 787-3407. Send RSVP to DA.RPA@ssa.gov. If you cannot make the session but have comments that you would like to have considered, please email them to DA.RPA@ssa.gov. We look forward to seeing you in Oklahoma City, OK!

Tribal Consultation Announcement
Oklahoma State Department of Health

The OSDH is committed to working with our sovereign tribal partners in a government-to-government manner. Please join us as we discuss and seek input on priority agency rule updates from areas like: Newborn Screening, Immunization Service, Medical Facilities Guidelines, Tobacco Control / Clean Indoor Air / Smoking in Public Places, and Acute Disease / Public Health Laboratory regarding reportable diseases and timeframes for reporting.

Additionally, we are seeking feedback regarding Oklahoma’s medical marijuana program. The Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority (OMMA) is currently operating under ‘emergency’ rules which will require legislative action in 2019 to make permanent. A public comment period will be open in February, in advance of the rule submission to the legislature by April 1, 2019.

Please direct any questions, comments, suggestions or RSVPs to StephenW@health.ok.gov.
OTGR Western Region
(AK; CA; ID; NV; OR; WA)

FREE LEGAL CONSULTATION
for
VETERANS

January 23, 2019
March 13, 2019
May 15th, 2019
other dates may follow

This service is free and offered on a walk-in basis
for Veterans. Where: CRRC 308 SW 1st Ave.
When: Please arrive by 10am to sign up—first come first
served.

Services offered may include: OREGON specific
expungements, felony reductions, employment law, DMV
issues, consumer debt, criminal warrants, restraining
orders, landlord/tenant law, sex offender registration.

Questions? Please contact Veterans Justice Outreach Program
at 503-721-1025

VA assumes NO responsibility for the
professional ability or integrity of the
organizations offering this service. This
referral does not constitute an endorsement
or recommendation by VA