
Office of Tribal Government Relations Newsletter ~ November/December 2014

Greetings and welcome to the special combined November/December edition of the VA Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) newsletter. We close out 2014 by reflecting on a number of milestones. This past year, VA reimbursed Indian Health Service and Tribal Health Programs (IHS/THP) approximately \$15 million dollars for direct care provided to American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans. We saw more tribes signing Memorandums of Understanding with the VA for the Native American Direct Loan program than during the previous 5 years. The VA Office of Tribal Government Relations hosted 6 Veterans Training Summits, all within tribal communities. Ground breaking occurred for new Veterans cemeteries located within Indian Country. Three formal tribal consultations were initiated on different topics affecting Veterans living within or near tribal communities. Finally, the FY 2015 budget authorized HUD-VASH vouchers for homelessness to be administered by tribes.

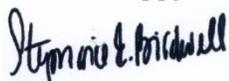
As we look forward to 2015, the tribal government relations specialists, along with fellow VA colleagues plan to make several intergovernmental site visits to tribal communities nationwide in order to obtain a better understanding of tribes' efforts to serve Veterans living within the local community as well as to provide and assist with coordinating technical assistance, as requested. Our readers will be hearing more about these site visits during the coming year. We're also planning our annual Veterans Training Summits, but please note that not every region will host a summit in 2015 so be careful to follow the training announcement schedule to ensure you don't miss out. The summits offer up to date information on Veteran services and benefits, provide excellent networking opportunities and offer the chance for tribes to inform our VA colleagues of the challenges and opportunities that exist when VA collaborates and engages with tribes.

If you haven't visited the www.va.gov/tribalgovernment website recently, please take a moment to check out our website for updates. The VA/IHS/THP step by step Reimbursement Agreement process and relevant forms can now be found in one location, making the information easier to find. We plan to continue working to make the information as accessible and user friendly as possible during the next month, so please continue to check in to the site.

As many of you are aware, Congress passed the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014. Section 102 of the Choice Act included some specific provisions affecting tribes. VA is preparing to post a Federal Register notice of tribal consultation relative to certain provisions of Section 102, followed by a Dear Tribal Leader Letter in the coming days. Please do not hesitate to email me at tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov for more information.

In closing, I would like to extend a warm thank you to the tribal leaders, Veterans, service providers, advocates, Veterans service organizations, federal, state and other partners who've worked so hard to reach and ensure our Veterans are honored and served. We are grateful and inspired by your passion and commitment to serving our Nation's heroes. We look forward to another collaborative and productive year of building and strengthening bridges between VA and Indian Country.

Happy New Year and Happy Reading – Stephanie





USA Today ~ Native American Veterans

Here's an [article](#) (pg. 80) which recently ran in a USA Today Special Edition.



SPIRIT GUIDES

Native American veterans prefer culturally appropriate help

By Mary Helen Berg

OUTSIDE THE SWEAT LODGE, buffalo graze in the distance. Inside, under a frame of diamond willow branches, Marine Corps veteran B.J. Rainbow discovers a way to heal the survivor's guilt that has followed him home from Iraq. Turning to his Dakota and Chippewa roots, Rainbow finds comfort and renewal in the steam and smoke of the ancient ceremony.

"If I didn't have these ceremonies, I don't know where I'd be," said Rainbow, 34, of Bismarck, N.D., who served six months in Iraq in 2003.

Native Americans consistently serve in the military at a proportionately higher rate than other ethnic groups, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. When they return from war, up to one in three suffers lingering and sometimes-crippling post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), twice the rate of white service members, according to the VA's National Center for PTSD.

Treating the disorder can be complicated for any veteran. Native Americans are often daunted by confusing layers of care, geographical barriers and treatments that have no cultural or spiritual meaning for them.

Shedding light on the challenge is a recent Washington State University survey of more than 440

CHARLY TRIBALLEAU/JAPYGETTY IMAGES

Descendants of Comanche Indian soldiers pray on Utah Beach in northwestern France on the 70th anniversary of D-Day in June. Native Americans have a long history of service in the military, and they look for culturally appropriate health care when they become veterans.

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MARGARET WHEELDEN

The sweat lodge at the Fargo, N.D., VA hospital, left, serves a large population of Native Americans who prefer traditional healing methods. The process involves fasting and ritual cleansing. A separate ceremony called smudging involves sacred, natural items such as eagle feathers and herbs, below.



MARGARET WHEELDEN



STAN HONDA/AP/GETTY IMAGES

The Native American
Women Warriors organization raises awareness about female vets. Members dress in traditional garb at public events, such as New York's 2013 Veterans Day Parade.

Native American vets from 200 tribes. According to the study, 77 percent of participants believe that veterans with PTSD don't receive adequate treatment from the VA. Traditional Native American healing rituals, such as pipe and smudging ceremonies, sweat lodges and equine therapy, were found to be helpful by 72 percent of the group, while about half said that individual counseling either had no impact or made their symptoms worse. Rural vets are most likely to use traditional healing methods.

Researchers Greg Urquhart and Matthew Hale, both Native American veterans and graduate students

at Washington State University's College of Education, presented their unpublished findings at the American Psychological Association conference last summer. The pair is still collecting data for the study.

"In Native American cultures, you can't treat a person without focusing on the spiritual component," said Urquhart. "Unfortunately, at our VA centers, they focus on the dominant culture, which is Eurocentric in nature."

The VA has long recognized the need to address cultural

differences in care, and the VA's national PTSD center offers information on how spirituality impacts trauma. More than 70 VA facilities across the country offer Native American healing services. Rituals include smudging — a ceremony that involves the burning of herbs to create cleansing smoke — and sweat lodge ceremonies, talking and drum circles and treatment by traditional healers.

But even when a service is offered, it isn't necessarily readily available. In Fargo, N.D., for instance, the VA health care system's sweat lodge is rarely used, in part because hospital patients have relatively short stays. Native American healers can also be difficult to schedule, explains Jack Klugh, chaplain for the facility, which serves 2,761 Native American veterans in North Dakota and parts of South Dakota and Minnesota. Sometimes, to fulfill patient requests, the facility's minority affairs officer, who is Native American, performs smudging ceremonies.

"This is a unique service, and it's a rare service, so sometimes (Native American spiritual practitioners) are hard to find," Klugh said. "And we cover such a large geographical area, if we have a provider out in Standing Rock (Indian Reservation), it's hard to even make contact."

The VA's Office of Rural Health estimates that more Native American and Alaskan Native veterans live rurally than any other group of veterans. About 40 percent of these vets live in remote places on tribal lands or Indian reservations. A VA facility with traditional healers or mental health experts may be hundreds of miles away.

"For myself, it's well over a four-and-a-half hour drive to the Seattle VA," said one WSU study participant, a Marine Corps veteran and member of the Makah tribe of Neah Bay, Wash., in an anonymous comment collected by Urquhart and Hale during their study.

And while Native American vets with PTSD have layers of health care available to them through the VA, Indian Health Services (IHS) and tribal health programs, they are often frustrated by figuring out where to go for care. Lack of coordination between the agencies has sometimes resulted in care being denied.

In recent years, federal initiatives have acknowledged these shortcomings and demonstrated a will to address them, said Stephanie Birdwell, director of the VA Office of Tribal Government Relations. The office was created in 2011 to help implement a memorandum of understanding that allows the VA to reimburse IHS for direct-care services from non-VA medical facilities closer to home.

"Many veterans living on reservations actually receive their health care from Indian Health Service hospitals and clinics or tribal health programs located in the local community," Birdwell explained in an email. "IHS and tribal health programs serve as important access to care sites for veterans and this special ... partnership can open doors to more collaborations focused on bringing care closer to home."

The National Congress of American Indians passed a resolution last summer demanding that the VA reimburse referred health services provided through Indian Health Service and tribal health programs, as well as the cost of care for non-Native American family members, such as a pregnant woman married to a Native man.

To bridge geographic and cultural distances, the VA has also developed telehealth services and increased transportation and outreach to tribes over the past decade, said Dr. Jay Shore, who works for the Office of Rural Health as the VA's lead for the Native Veteran Domain Veterans Rural Health Resource Center-Western Region.

The permanent re-authorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act in 2010 and the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 reinforce the federal government's commitment and require "outreach to tribal health programs in an effort to increase awareness of opportunities for partnerships with VA," Birdwell said. The 2014 law also requires the VA to cover visits to eligible non-VA facilities for vets living more than 40 miles from a VA facility.

But good intentions haven't brought enough results. A June report by the Government Accountability Office found that "Native American veterans and their representatives (report) mixed views on whether access to care has improved over the past three years."

In North Dakota, where the Native American population is more than four times the national average, Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D., agreed.

"Not every reservation has (a memorandum of understanding), and quite honestly we have a long way to go," Heitkamp said. "I understand all the good intentions, but we need to see results on the ground. You hear about this process or this procedure or this initiative, but it really doesn't translate to any more assistance on the ground or in Indian country." ●



VA Hospitals ~ Native American Veterans

Here's a bit of information on three Native American veterans who have VA Hospitals named after them. Further down are some old newspaper articles with some more information on these brave men.

Did you know that three VA hospitals are named after American Indian veterans?

Location		Honorary Name	Honoree
Muskogee, OK	First VA facility named for an American Indian veteran on June 15, 2006	Jack C. Montgomery Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center	 <p>Jack C. Montgomery - Cherokee, World War II veteran, Medal of Honor (MOH) recipient</p>
Tulsa, OK	Second facility named for an American Indian on November 15, 2007	Ernest Childers Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic	 <p>Ernest P. Childers - Creek, World War II, first American Indian MOH recipient of World War II</p>



Asheville, NC	Third VA facility named after an American Indian on December 26, 2007	Charles George Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center	 <p>Charles George – Cherokee (Eastern Band), Korean War, MOH recipient</p>
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The
New York
Times

**Commando Kelly Finally in U. S.;
He and Childers Tell of Feats**

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WASHINGTON, April 24—Commando Kelly, Pittsburgh hero who punched a large hole in the ranks of the German Army at Salerno last September, is home at last.

Winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor, Tech. Sgt. Charles E. Kelly, as he is known to the paymaster, destroyed, single-handed, forty of Hitler's "invincibles," with an assortment of weapons.

Today in an interview arranged by the War Department at the Pentagon Building he shared the applause of three Congressmen and 150 reporters with Second Lieut. Ernest Childers of Broken Arrow, Okla., also a winner of the country's highest honor for gallantry against the enemy.

While Pittsburgh and Broken Arrow fretted with impatience to

see their native sons, both stopped off here long enough to recount in calm recitals details of their destruction of the enemy in the face of great odds.

The two bronzed and battle-hardened veterans are on twenty-one-day leaves. Neither exhibited the slightest nervousness as they faced interviewers and photographers. Each told his story in calm, matter-of-fact tones and when they finished the listeners rose and applauded.

Sergeant Kelly, who summed it all up by saying, "You just take care of Germans" with whatever weapon comes to hand, looked slight of stature beside his companion. Lieutenant Childers, 6 feet 2 and weighing 185 pounds listened with

Continued on Page 6

The New York Times

COMMANDO-KELLY FINALLY GETS HOME

Continued From Page 1

interest as Sergeant Kelly told his story.

The 23-year-old sergeant began his story by observing:

"If you've got enough nerve you soon find out how the gun—any gun—works."

He blushed as he recalled the tight spot in which he found himself on the night of Sept. 13. He was assigned then to protect the rear of an ammunition storehouse. During the day he made himself "useful" by locating and neutralizing enemy machine gun nests, scouting through enemy lines and rushing up ammunition to his own lines.

He arrived at the storehouse at the same time as a heavy German attack and remained there all night.

"Toward morning," he related, "when the Jerries came after us hard again, I went to one of the windows and started firing with my automatic rifle. Finally," he added in rueful retrospect, "the gun locked from overheating. I picked up another one and kept firing away until it, too, locked.

"It began to look as if we'd be overrun. I picked up a 60 mm. shell," he said, "but I didn't have any idea how the thing worked. So I pulled a safety pin and threw it, like a grenade. It worked—killed five Germans."

Orders came then to evacuate the position, but Sergeant Kelly volunteered to hang on, while the detachment withdrew.

"I went down into the cellar to find something that would shoot," he continued, "and I found a 'ba-

zooka.' I learned how to load and fire that, too."

While Sergeant Kelly blasted away with this device, his unit withdrew to safety. He prepared to leave, also.

"As I ran," he recalled, "I turned and saw the Germans coming in the front door," but he rejoined his detail "without a scratch," except for some cuts inflicted by shell fragments. An official tally, made after the engagement, credited Sergeant Kelly with killing forty Nazis.

Lieutenant Childers, who said he "didn't want to hang around the first-aid station," told how he and eight enlisted men went after three enemy machine-gun nests on a hill near Oliveto, Italy, Sept. 22.

Despite a fractured instep, Lieutenant Childers flanked the nests while the men set up a base of fire at its front.

"I got right along," he explained, "until I was back of the Jerries and started crawling toward them. I had to pass a house which, I soon discovered, had a sniper in it. I saw him peeping out the window. He didn't peep again.

"I waited for a German to raise up out of a fox hole," he said, "but nothing happened and I waited. So did they. I was fresh out of grenades and I couldn't think of a way to get them far enough out of their hole for me to take care of them."

At this point an idea came to Lieutenant Childers. He began to throw rocks at the hidden Nazis. This worked fine. The Germans took the stones for grenades and two of them leaped out. "I took care of one of them," said the Lieutenant, and, shaking his head ruefully, he added, "One of my men beat me to the other one."

The New York Times

Childers Is Welcomed Home

BROKEN ARROW, Okla., April 26 (AP)—Home folks from all parts of this cattle section extended today a heart-warming welcome to their war hero, Lieut. Ernest Childers, 26-year-old Creek Indian.

For miles around, cowhands, dirt farmers and Indians, and military and civil officials paid homage to the infantryman who distinguished himself on the Anzio battlefront, winning the Congressional Medal of Honor.

He was "mighty pleased" with it all, he said time and again during the ceremonies.

He plans to spend most of his twenty-one-day leave on the farm of his step-brother, George, near here.

The New York Times

Published: April 27, 1944

U. S. Honors Indian Hero

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6 (UP)—An American Indian from Whittier, N. C., has been awarded the Army's sixty-eighth Medal of Honor in the Korean war. He smothered an enemy grenade in an action that cost his life and saved two soldiers from death or serious injury. He was Pfc. Charles George, 20, a Cherokee, born in Cherokee, N. C. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob George, live at Whittier. He was a rifleman in a Forty-fifth Division.

The New York Times

Published: February 7, 1954

The New York Times

CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR GOES TO LIEUTENANT, COMMANDER AND PRIVATE



President Roosevelt congratulates Lieut. Jack C. Montgomery after he received his decoration for heroism in battle in Italy. Members of the lieutenant's family are in the background.

The Chief Executive extends his greeting to Comdr. David McCampbell, our leading Navy ace, after he received his award.



Federal Transit Administration ~ Tribal Transit Program Notice of Funding Availability

FTA Tribal Transit Program Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) was published in the Federal Register on December 9th. More information in the Federal Register can be found here: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-09/pdf/2014-28792.pdf>. It will also post to [FTA's website](#) and [Grants.Gov](#) with the application instructions and required forms.

Please note there are some key changes in this year's notice that include **expanded operating assistance eligibility for those tribes that received less than \$20,000 in formula funds (regardless of under which TIER)**. The other is an **emphasis/prioritization for projects that support Ladders - e.g. access to work, healthcare, and education**. FTA hope tribes will highlight these connections in their applications. Finally, depending on the FY15 appropriations, we are hoping to include FY15 resources in this competition allowing us to award 2 years' worth of funding to the tribes. **Applications are due February 18, 2015.**



U.S. House of Representatives Passes H.R. 4329 - NAHASDA Reauthorization

On December 2, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 4329, Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Reauthorization Act of 2014 agreed to by a voice vote. This legislation authorizes and funds the Native American Housing and Self-Determination Act at \$650 million through 2018. **In addition, it includes a new program, the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH) which makes Indian tribes eligible to participate in a program that addresses homelessness of Native American veterans by providing housing and rental assistance program, and appropriates a 5 percent set aside.** This program would be administered jointly by HUD and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R. 4329 will be forwarded to the U.S. Senate for consideration. NCAI has resolution #REN-13-070 supporting the swift reauthorization of NAHASDA.

NCAI urges Indian tribes to contact your Senate delegation to support the passage of the reauthorization of NAHASDA. To obtain information on your Member of the Senate, please click on this [link](#).

National Indian
Health Board



NIHB Funding Opportunity for Tribes

The National Indian Health Board and the CDC are pleased to announce a new funding initiative that will provide funds to Tribes to support activities and efforts towards achieving public health accreditation. This funding program, titled the Tribal Accreditation Support Initiatives (Tribal ASI) will fund 5-10 Tribes at amounts ranging from **\$5,000 to \$10,500** to work in one or more categories related to strengthening the Tribal Health Department and working towards accreditation as defined by the Public Health Accreditation Board. Funds can be used for (but not limited to): completing pre-requisites activities, compiling documentation aligning with standards and measures, engaging in quality improvement activities, and supporting accreditation application fees. NIHB has created a short application that asks for details on how the funds will be used and a statement of commitment from the Tribe to work towards accreditation. The request for applications (RFA) is downloadable from [here](#). It can be downloaded, completed as a Word document, then turned into a PDF for submission. Completed applications are due to NIHB via email by **Wednesday, January 7, 2015, by 11:59pm EST**.



Remarks by the President at the Tribal Nations Conference

Here's a transcript from President Obama's speech, which he gave on December 3rd at the Tribal Nations Conference. It can also be seen here on [The White House's website](#).

THE PRESIDENT: Hello, everybody. (Applause.) Kahee. (Applause.) Well, thank you so much. Everybody please have a seat, please have a seat.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Love you!

THE PRESIDENT: Love you back. (Laughter.) It's good to see you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We love you, man!

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Love you more! (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, welcome to the 2014 White House Tribal Nations Conference. (Applause.) Five years ago, when we held this meeting for the first time, it was historic -- the largest-ever gathering of tribal leaders at the White House. And we got some valuable work done. So we thought, hey, this is a pretty good idea, let's do this again. And now we're meeting for the sixth time. This conference has become an institution. (Applause.)

And I want to thank every tribal leader here for making that happen, especially those of you who come year after year, committed to making our nation-to-nation relationship as strong as it can be.

I also want to thank the members of Congress who are here today. I want to thank Sally Jewell, our outstanding Secretary of Interior. (Applause.) Sally is also the Chair of the White House Council on Native American Affairs. And I'm proud to have Native Americans serving with dedication and skill in my administration, including somebody I love -- Jodi Gillette of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. (Applause.) Everybody here knows Jodi, my Special Assistant for Native American Affairs -- as well as Raina Thiele -- (applause) -- who is Denaina and Yup'ik, and works in the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

If I could, I'd give a shout-out to every nation here today. Each is a unique and



cherished part of our American community. To all of my adopted Crow brothers and sisters -- hine wabeh itchik. It is a good day. (Applause.)

I hope you'll allow me this indulgence before I get started talking about what we have accomplished and what we still have to accomplish -- because one of the things about being President is news breaks, and it's important for people to hear how I feel and how I'm thinking about some important issue that we face in this nation.

Some of you may have heard there was a decision that came out today by a grand jury not to indict police officers who had interacted with an individual with Eric Garner in New York City, all of which was caught on videotape and speaks to the larger issues that we've been talking about now for the last week, the last month, the last year, and, sadly, for decades, and that is the concern on the part of too many minority communities that law enforcement is not working with them and dealing with them in a fair way.

And there's going to be, I'm sure, additional statements by law enforcement. My tradition is not to remark on cases where there may still be an investigation. But I want everybody to understand that this week, in the wake of Ferguson, we initiated a task force whose job it is to come back to me with specific recommendations about how we strengthen the relationship between law enforcement and communities of color and minority communities that feel that bias is taking place; that we are going to take specific steps to improve the training and the work with state and local governments when it comes to policing in communities of color; that we are going to be scrupulous in investigating cases where we are concerned about the impartiality and accountability that's taking place.

And as I said when I met with folks both from Ferguson and law enforcement and clergy and civil rights activists, I said this is an issue that we've been dealing with for too long and it's time for us to make more progress than we've made. And I'm not interested in talk; I'm interested in action. And I am absolutely committed as President of the United States to making sure that we have a country in which everybody believes in the core principle that we are equal under the law. (Applause.)

So I just got off the phone with my Attorney General, Eric Holder. He will have more specific comments about the case in New York. But I want everybody to know here, as well as everybody who may be viewing my remarks here today, we are not going to let up until we see a strengthening of the trust and a strengthening of the accountability that exists between our communities and



our law enforcement.

And I say that as somebody who believes that law enforcement has an incredibly difficult job; that every man or woman in uniform are putting their lives at risk to protect us; that they have the right to come home, just like we do from our jobs; that there's real crime out there that they've got to tackle day in and day out -- but that they're only going to be able to do their job effectively if everybody has confidence in the system.

And right now, unfortunately, we are seeing too many instances where people just do not have confidence that folks are being treated fairly. And in some cases, those may be misperceptions; but in some cases, that's a reality. And it is incumbent upon all of us, as Americans, regardless of race, region, faith, that we recognize this is an American problem, and not just a black problem or a brown problem or a Native American problem. This is an American problem. When anybody in this country is not being treated equally under the law, that's a problem. And it's my job as President to help solve it. (Applause.)

Now, when I visited the Crow Nation in Montana, I was a candidate for this office, and I made it a point to meet with tribal leaders on the campaign trail as often as I could, because I wanted to make sure our country did better by our First Americans. Talk was cheap and there had been too many promises that hadn't been kept. And I tried to make sure that I didn't over-promise. I tried to make clear to the leaders that I met with that I wasn't going to be able single-handedly to reverse hundreds of years of history, but what I could do is listen and learn and partner with you.

I wanted to change the relationship between our governments -- to elevate your voices in Washington and give your tribes greater say over the decisions that affect the lives of your people every day. And I wanted to turn the page on a history that is riddled with too many broken promises, write a new chapter with a spirit of respect and trust. And today, more than six years later, I'm proud of everything that we've done to make that happen. (Applause.)

Together, we've strengthened your sovereignty -- giving more power to tribal courts and police, restoring hundreds of thousands of acres of tribal trust lands. We've expanded opportunity -- permanently reauthorizing the Indian Health Care Improvement Act -- (applause) -- speeding up the process for businesses signing leases in Indian Country, building roads, expanding high-speed Internet access, and moving forward on renewable energy projects. We've delivered justice -- resolving legal disputes that have dragged on for decades, untying



your hands when it comes to dealing with domestic violence. (Applause.)

So as I said earlier, as I said on the campaign trail, we haven't solved every problem, but I've been able to keep a promise to all of you that I would learn and I would listen, and I'd treat you with the respect that you deserve. (Applause.) And we have more work to do. But when we step back, we see there's virtually no area in which we haven't made significant progress together. We can take pride in that.

And I made another promise that I'd visit Indian Country as President. And this June, I kept that promise. I know that the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe is here. Where are you all? (Applause.) So Michelle and I traveled to their reservation in North Dakota. It was a day I'll never forget. We attended the annual Cannonball Flag Day Powwow. (Laughter.) Students were singing the Lakota National Anthem. There was a drum group that performed a veterans' song as American flags flew in the breeze -- and it was breezy. It did make me think about I'm glad I was there during the summer. (Laughter.) But this drum group was honoring a tribal citizen who served -- each was honoring a tribal member who had served in our military. People of all ages wore the traditional regalia with pride. And it was clear how deeply this nation values its culture and its history. And it was clear how deeply they cared for each other, especially their young people.

And so it was arranged for me to meet with some of these young people. Michelle and I, before the powwow, sat down with a group of Lakota young adults. There was no press, no teachers, no parents -- it was just us. And folks were invited to say whatever was on their minds. And these young people could not have been more poised and they could not have been more thoughtful. And they talked about their families, and their friends, and their dreams for the future. But they also talked about the pain in their hearts, and the obstacles they had had to overcome, and the problems they had seen with loved ones who had been brought down by drugs or alcohol or violence or poverty.

One young man was raising his four little brothers by himself. All of them knew somebody that they loved who had attempted suicide, committed suicide, died in a car accident before their time. Some of them had spent time living in a bus. And there were tears in that room pretty much the entire conversation, and the sense that schools weren't always preparing them properly and that they weren't sure about the possibilities of a better future.

And Michelle and I were honored that these young people opened up to us. But more importantly, we were moved because they were like Malia and Sasha --



just as smart, just as hopeful, just as beautiful. But at their core, there was a nagging doubt that they would have the opportunities that my daughters had. And nothing gets me more frustrated than when I hear that. Nothing gets me angrier than when I get a sense that our young people early in life are already feeling like opportunities are foreclosed to them -- because that's not who we are.

And so Michelle and I ended up staying longer than we had planned, and we got a lot of hugs in, and we walked away shaken because some of these kids were carrying burdens no young person should ever have to carry. And it was heartbreaking. And we told them, because they were such extraordinary young people -- strong and talented and courageous -- we said, you've got to believe in yourselves because we believe in you. We want to give those young people and young Native Americans like them the support they deserve. We have to invest in them, and believe in them, and love them. And if we do, there's no question of the great things they can achieve -- not just for their own families, but for their nation and for the United States. (Applause.)

And the truth is those young people were representative of young people in every tribe, in every reservation in America. And too many face the same struggles that those Lakota teenagers face. They're not sure that this country has a place for them. Every single one of them deserves better than they're getting right now. They are our children, and they deserve the chance to achieve their dreams.

So when Michelle and I got back to the White House after our visit to Standing Rock, I told my staff -- I brought Sally in, and I brought Arne Duncan in, and I brought whoever else was involved in youth and education and opportunity and job training, and I said, you will find new avenues of opportunity for our Native youth. You will make sure that this happens on my watch. (Applause.)

And as I spoke, they knew I was serious because it's not very often where I tear up in the Oval Office. I deal with a lot of bad stuff in this job. It is not very often where I get choked up, so they knew I was serious about this.

And so here is what I want you to know that we're working on as a consequence of these conversations. Number one, today, we're releasing a report on the unique challenges that Native youth face -- because we cannot solve these challenges without a comprehensive picture of the problem.

Number two, I'm instructing every member of my Cabinet to experience what Michelle and I did at Standing Rock -- to sit down with Native young people and



hear firsthand about their lives. Sally Jewell has already done it. Arne Duncan has already started. I want everybody to do it. (Applause.)

And the Department of Education has launched a new initiative with a handful of tribes called the Native Youth Community Projects. The idea is, we're working with tribes to give schools and students intensive support across a range of areas -- from nutrition, to mental health, to culturally relevant curriculum. We know that learning about the history and language and traditions of one's people can make a huge difference in a child's education. And in the long run, if it's done right, it can help more of them be prepared for college and careers. We want to help make that happen.

Number three, to cultivate the next generation of Native leaders, we're creating a national network called Generation Indigenous, to remove the barriers that stand between young people and opportunity. And the first class of "Gen-I" Youth Ambassadors are here today. We are launching a new National Tribal Youth Network to connect and support talented young people in your nations. And next year, we will hold the first White House Tribal Youth Gathering. (Applause.) It will look a lot like this conference -- only younger. (Laughter.) That's all right, you see my gray hair. I can't say nothing about that. (Laughter.)

Number four, the budget I submit to Congress in February will include smarter, stronger investments in several areas that are really important to Native youth, especially education. We're going to invest in connecting tribal schools to high-speed Internet. We're going to fill them with the best teachers and principals. We're going to make sure that children and families get the support they need to stay secure and healthy. And we are going to keep fighting to meet our obligations to your nations. (Applause.)

We're going to fight to reauthorize the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act, because every young person deserves a safe place to live. (Applause.) We're going to keep promoting economic growth in Indian Country, because every young person deserves the chance to work and get ahead.

We're going to keep working with your communities to deal with the very real impacts of climate change. And I want to thank the tribal leaders who have advised me on how to do that as members of my Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience.

I also want to recognize those tribes that have done exceptional work in their response to climate change, including two that we named Climate Action



Champions this morning -- the Blue Lake Rancheria Tribe and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. (Applause.) And we're going to keep working with all of you to protect your natural resources, and restore tribal homelands, resolve disputes over water rights, to make sure your sacred lands are protected for future generations. (Applause.)

The United States shares a sacred bond with our Native nations. We have a sacred responsibility to all our young people, including Native youth. Every day that I have the honor to serve as your President, I will do everything I can to meet that responsibility, and honor that trust, and to do right by your nations, and your children and future generations. (Applause.)

Which brings me back to what I said at the beginning -- because too many promises haven't been kept, I've tried not to over-promise. But when I've made a promise, I've tried to make sure that I meet that commitment. So when Michelle and I said goodbye to those teenagers in Standing Rock, we told them we wanted to return their hospitality and we asked them to come visit us at the White House. And a bunch of them told us later they didn't think they were ever going to hear from us again. (Laughter.) Because, they said, you know what, we've had a lot of adults make promises to us that didn't get kept. Well, two weeks ago, they came by and we took them out for pizza. (Laughter.) And they got a tour of the White House. And they met with officials from across my administration. And everybody here who had a chance to meet them said how terrific they were.

And I understand that on their last night in Washington, their hotel had a blackout, and sitting together in their pajamas in the dark, they did what I understand was a very Lakota thing to do -- they wrote a song about their trip. And so I'm going to just go over what the song says -- here's how it went. I'm not going to sing it, though. (Laughter.) And I'm sure it sounds better in Lakota. (Laughter.)

It says: "We returned from the White House. We knew without a doubt we were the first of many voices of Indian Country. So if you hear this song, listen and learn it to sing along. We are all one family. Let's not make this just a dream." (Applause.)

We're all one family. We're all one family. Your nations have made extraordinary contributions to this country. Your children represent the best of this country and its future. Together, we can make sure that every Native young person is treated like a valuable member not only of your nation, but of the American family -- (applause) -- that every Native young person gets an equal shot at the American Dream.

That's what I'm working for. That's what you're working for. I'm proud every single day to be your partner. "We are all one family. Let's not make this just a dream."

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.



Veterans Choice Program

Here's some information on the Veteran's Choice Program, which is part of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA). More information can be found at <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/index.asp>

Many Veterans will now have the option to receive non-VA health care rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility. Beginning November 5, 2014, the new Choice Program will begin to cover non-VA care for eligible Veterans enrolled in VA healthcare. Veterans are eligible if any of these situations apply to you:

(1) You have been told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days from your preferred date or the date medically determined by your physician; (2) Your current residence is more than 40 miles from the closest VA health care facility; (3) You need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home; (4) You face a geographic challenge, such as extensive distances around water or other geologic formations, such as mountains, which presents a significant travel hardship

Every Veteran will receive a letter and a Choice Card in the mail with details about the program. Veterans will be eligible for the program and receive cards in three phases: (1) Veterans who may live more than 40 miles from a VA facility. (2) Veterans who are currently waiting for an appointment longer than 30 days from their preferred date or the date determined to be medically necessary by their physician. (3) All remaining Veterans enrolled for VA healthcare who may be eligible for the Choice Program in the future. To set up an appointment with a non-VA provider, call the VA at 866-606-8198 and we will work with you to ensure you are approved for care in your community.



Social Security Administration ~ Disability Benefits for Wounded Warriors

DISABILITY BENEFITS FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS

Military service members can get their disability claims processed quickly by Social Security.

Benefits available through **Social Security** are different than those from the **Department of Veterans Affairs** and require a separate application.

The expedited process is used for military service members who become disabled while on active military service on or after **October 1, 2001**, regardless of where the disability occurs.



www.socialsecurity.gov

or call toll-free, **1-800-772-1213**

(for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY
number, **1-800-325-0778**)



Social Security Administration ~ Disability Benefits for Wounded Warriors

Honoring Tribal Veterans

Kimberly Yellow Robe
Social Security Administration
San Francisco Region
Tribal Liaison

As we move forward Honoring Veterans this November 11, 2014, I would like to take a brief opportunity to share with OTGR Readers valuable information from the Social Security Administration.

SSA unveiled a new initiative to expedite disability claims by veterans with a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation rating of 100% Permanent & Total (P&T). Under the new process, Social Security will treat these veterans' applications as high priority and issue expedited decisions, similar to the way the agency currently handles disability claims from Wounded Warriors.

The sacrifice Veterans have made for our country and through this process is ensuring timely access to the disability benefits they may be eligible for and deserve. The collaborated efforts between the VA and SSA will definitely benefit Tribal Veterans throughout Indian Country.

In order to receive the expedited service, Veterans must tell SSA they have a VA disability compensation rating of 100% P & T and show proof of their disability rating with their VA Notification letter.

The VA rating only expedites SS Disability claims processing and does not guarantee approval for SS disability benefits. These Veterans must still meet the strict eligibility requirements for a disability allowance.

SSA launched the expedited process in mid-March 2014.

For information about this service, please visit www.socialsecurity.gov/pgm/disability-pt.htm.

For more about Social Security's handling of Wounded Warrior's disability claims, please visit www.socialsecurity.gov/woundedwarriors.

(Author, Kimberly Yellow Robe is an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and has served as SSAs Tribal Affairs Specialist since August 2000. You may reach her at Kimberly.Yellow.Robe@ssa.gov)



Colorado Center Helps Native American War Veterans Heal 'Wounded Hearts'

Here's an article by Michael De Yoanna, which first ran (November 24) on the Colorado Public radio website, which can be found [HERE](#).

"Approximately 140 soldiers returned to Fort Carson last week after a nine month deployment in Afghanistan, a sign that the U.S. combat mission there is winding down. As more soldiers come home, public health experts at the University of Colorado are paying close attention to a subset of U.S. troops: Native Americans. That's because American Indians and Native Alaskans who serve in combat are two to three times more likely than their white peers to suffer mental anxiety including post-traumatic stress disorder, says Spero Manson. He teaches public health and psychiatry and leads the [Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health](#) at the University of Colorado's School of Public Health.

Manson says conditions like PTSD are age old. If you read for it, they're even in Homer's ancient Greek epics, "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey." "The returning warriors of that time came back to their local villages and communities exhibiting many of the same symptoms that veterans today, who have seen combat, do," Manson says. "They're irritable, quick to fight, they distance themselves from others. They're very difficult to reintegrate into their communities."

Soldiers in the World Wars I and II had similar experiences, Manson says, and were often told to "buck up and move on." But overcoming psychological trauma isn't that simple, he says. It's true not just for troops, but also civilians, he adds, citing the events of Sept. 11, 2001. The attacks have demonstrated on a wide scale the ongoing psychological impacts for survivors, first responders and even those who watched on television, he says.

And the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have brought PTSD to the mainstream. "Today, with the returning veterans and the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide, and traumatic brain injury, I think it's become part of our everyday discourse," Manson says. American Indians and Alaska Natives constitute roughly 1 percent of the current military and veterans, but suffer from PTSD at a disproportionate rate. Overall, veterans of the Vietnam War suffer rates of PTSD as high as 30 percent, [according to the Department of Veterans Affairs](#). For veterans of the recent Iraq war, it's about 20 percent. For American Indians and Alaska Natives, the rates are much higher according to studies, Manson says.

Manson has a few explanations for why that's the case, and says it has nothing to do with past theories that native peoples somehow lacked the moral character to cope with trauma as effectively as other Americans.



Instead, Manson says, native peoples who serve in the military tend to be exposed to more combat than their non-native peers, adding, “The greatest predictor of trauma among veterans is, in fact, exposure to combat,” Manson says. Several factors explain why native people are more likely to serve in combat, Manson says, including a persistent stereotype that plays out in the lives of native troops. “There’s this notion of American Indians as somehow ‘at one’ with the environment,” Manson says.

He tells the story of a Marine serving in Vietnam whose commander and fellow soldiers volunteered the Marine to lead a patrol simply because he was Navajo. The Marine knew nothing of Vietnam’s jungles, its thick underbrush and rivers. He had come from buttes and open spaces of New Mexico and Arizona. Another factor that drives native peoples into combat roles is that they are raised to be protectors and to accept such roles when called on, Manson says.

Not only are native people more likely than white peers to suffer from PTSD and other mental traumas; they can also have a harder time dealing with it. About 40 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native veterans live either in rural areas or on reservations that are far from U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs clinics.

Manson and his staff work to bridge the gap by reaching native veterans through teleconferences. The staff at CU-Denver’s Anschutz campus in Aurora communicates with veterans located hundreds of miles away. Manson says native cultures can play a powerful role in soldiers’ recovery. For instance, tribal ceremonies, such as the Lakota Wiping of Tears, where tears are symbolically brushed from the cheeks, are effective. Ceremonies conducted before combat, he says, can help lower the likelihood of PTSD. Ceremonies that take place after combat can reduce the duration and severity of PTSD for native troops returning home.

To illustrate what coming home looks like, Manson, who is from the Pembina-Chippewa tribe, tells the story of his son, a Marine, who returned from Iraq in 2004 after a horrible firefight. “For months later, as we talked and we walked or we sat and we visited, I’d always find him on guard, constantly looking and scanning,” Manson says. “I felt like he wasn’t really paying attention to me. He was paying attention to everything that was going on around him.”

His son suffered from nightmares after losing several comrades in Iraq. “He something known as ‘survivor guilt:’ ‘Why me? How could I survive? And, here, my buddies didn’t make it,’” Manson says. “And of course, all soldiers are really fighting not just for country, but for the person who is standing in line next to them.” His son received help from his community and the VA. He found a job and now helps others recover by sharing how he overcame his challenges, Manson says.

Many people are finding healing, he adds. “We just have to figure out how to enable them how to do that and to support them in the process,” Manson says.”



Department of Defense - Face of Defense: Native American Vets Celebrate Heritage

Here are two articles by Shannon Collins, which first ran (November 26) on the Department of Defense website, which can be found [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

“SOUTH GATE, Calif., Nov. 26, 2014 – As the smell of white sage wafted through the air and the sun slowly climbed the sky, the spiritual adviser blessed the circle and the drummers took their place at the two-day Native American Veterans Association’s annual Veterans Appreciation and Heritage Day Pow Wow here. The local community enjoyed fried bread, arts and crafts, face painting, intertribal dancing, and Native American music during the Nov. 8-9 event. Attendees also viewed an Indian village with an authentic Arapaho teepee. The pow wow also gave Native American veterans and their family members a chance to honor their heritage and meet with veteran service representatives.

Beth Henderson, who works for NAVA, attends the annual pow wow to honor her two uncles who served in World War II and her mother who served during the Korean conflict. She is a member of the Wabanaki-Micmac tribe. She encourages veterans to utilize veteran organizations like the Vet Center, or to reach out to their fellow veterans or neighbors for help. “This event is important because veterans need to be recognized and shown appreciation,” she said. “They also need to know the benefits they can get out there, where they can go, what they can do to get help, or to get through whatever it is they’re going through at the time.”

Pow-wows Provide Sense of Self-identity

World War II Navy veteran Paul Duronslet, from the Cherokee tribe, has attended the NAVA pow wow since it began 13 years ago. When he was growing up in Los Angeles in the 1920s, he said, people were prejudiced against Native Americans. He said his father raised him under the assumption that he was French and later confessed to him that he was Cherokee. “Nobody wanted to be Indian when I was a kid,” he said. “When I was older, I ran into a man who asked me what type of Indian I was. I told him I was French. He said, ‘No, you’re not. I lived in Oklahoma with Indians. I know an Indian when I see one.’ When I went home, my dad was in a good mood, so I asked him, and he admitted I was Indian.” Duronslet said the annual pow wows provide him with a sense of self-identity that was previously missing. “I’m whole now; I have a background now,” he said. “I go to these pow wows and reservations and see things that are going on today that’s no different than way back in the 16th and 17th centuries. It’s hard to believe.”

Tony LittleHawk, an Army Vietnam veteran and a member of the Cherokee tribe, said he didn’t run across many fellow Native Americans during his time in the military. “We were very few [Native Americans in the military], even in basic, there was only one other Native beside myself,” LittleHawk said with a chuckle. “We became friends right away. There were very few Natives in medical school and jump school but what was



funny is when I was in Vietnam, I ran into my next-door neighbor, who was Sioux. I used to go out with his sister. We ran into each other when I was out on patrol, and we ended up in a foxhole together in Vietnam.”



Paul Duronslet, U.S. Navy World War II veteran, and a Cherokee tribesman from Los Angeles, participates in dancing festivities at the Native American Veterans Association's annual Veterans Appreciation and Heritage Day Pow Wow in South Gate, Calif., Nov. 8, 2014. More than 4,000 people represented their tribes and their respective military service branches with intertribal music, dancing, arts and crafts, and storytelling during the two-day event Nov. 8-9, 2014. DoD photo by Marvin Lynchard

Thanks for Vietnam Veterans' Service

The highlight for many of the veterans at the pow wow was the Veteran's Roll Call. The Vietnam veterans said they'd received no accolades when they had returned from war. During the roll call, each service member announced name, service branch and his or her respective war or conflict. Non-Native Americans entered the circle as well, along with family members who spoke on behalf of their veterans. "It doesn't matter how long it takes. We want to make sure every veteran, Native or not, is heard, and we want to make sure that they are personally welcomed back home or given the respect and told, 'Thank you for your service to our country' and 'Thank you for serving,'" said Army Vietnam veteran and Tigua tribe member Ted Tenorio, the president of the National American Veterans Association.

Angelina Alvarez, from the Pascua tribe, drove from Tucson, Arizona, with her 2-year-old son Pedro to honor her father, a Navy Vietnam veteran who was on SEAL Team 2. He had earned a Navy Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts. He passed away in 2009. "It's very humbling and touching to be here, but we dance for my dad," Alvarez said, choking back emotion. "It's all for my dad and it's all for the veterans. It's very important for us. Our family is very military. It's in honor of them."

For Greg Simon, an Army veteran from the Osage and Cherokee tribe, the Veteran's Roll Call is a chance for finally getting the recognition he missed when he came home from Vietnam. "I remember getting spit at when I came home -- this is why I had anger. You're a warrior, and that's the highest honor you can have as a Native American but it was frustrating when I came home," Simon said. He was adopted by the Blood Reserve, Blackfoot, and was the head man dancer during the Pow-wow. He



said an Arapaho elder and medicine man brought him back to his culture and helped him heal. Then he started coming to the pow wows. “These pow wows are extremely therapeutic,” Simon said. “Just being in the circle and being recognized in a positive way, that’s all there is. To a veteran, just to be acknowledged, what else is there? That’s all you want. I don’t need any more. I don’t need gifts. I don’t need anything else.”

Sharing Stories

“I like hearing everybody’s stories,” said Crow tribe member Linda Old Horn-Purdy, a retired navy chief petty officer and Operation Enduring Freedom veteran. She grew up on the Crow Agency Reservation in Montana. “It makes me appreciate that somebody has something where we couldn’t,” Old Horn-Purdy said. “They have some experience that we don’t have. Sometimes finding out what they’ve been through makes you appreciate what we have, even our arms, our legs, our health or our mind. We have a lot to be thankful for.” Air Force Vietnam veteran, retired Army veteran, and Muskogee tribe member William Givens, NAVA’s founder and CEO, agreed that other veteran’s stories were compelling. “I act like a macho man, and nothing makes me cry but when they tell their stories, sometimes, I tell you, I get a lump in my throat,” he said. “I read about some veterans who save other’s lives, and it brings tears to my eyes,” Givens said.

Warrior Culture

The veterans said Native American heritage is a way of life for them. “We teach our kids to grow up to be warriors,” said Apache tribe member Antonio Quezada, a Marine Corps Vietnam-era veteran. “We don’t write stories but we have storytellers. I’m one of them, and I pass that on to my nephew’s nephews.” Quezada has family members who’ve served in the Marines, Army or Air Force. Native American veterans’ heritage is “something we’ve always had,” Simon said. “It’s so important to us; it gives us balance in life. It is something we need. We’re living in two worlds. This is our world, this is where we started. To be able to come back to it and feel good about it is the most important thing, and to be able to get out there and dance with the other veterans and shake hands and just tell each other welcome home -- that’s something we never got.”

Military Service Part of Native American Heritage

The veterans also said serving in the military is part of their heritage. “Indians have defended America since the beginning, and it’s in our blood,” Old Horn-Purdy said. “Their ancestors were warriors in the past, and they wanted to keep the tradition going,” Givens said. “You will find more Native people in the service from a minority of origin than any other minority.” “If you go to any Native American home on the reservation, you would see on top of their TVs or on top of their mantels, photos of their grandfather all the way to their grandchildren and nephews who are in the military, because they’re following a tradition,” Tenorio said.

As November draws to a close on National Native American Heritage Month, Old Horn-Purdy encourages people to attend any of the pow wows held in their communities or to read up on Native American heritage. “It’s good for people to learn and see what we’re about,” she said.”



Face of Defense: Native American Navy Veteran Paved Way for Women Sailors

"SOUTH GATE, Calif., Nov. 28, 2014 – The head woman dancer at a recent Native American Veterans Association pow wow is a retired sailor who helped blaze the path for women in the Navy.

Retired Navy Chief Petty Officer Old Horn-Purdy, from the Crow tribe, took part in the annual Veterans Appreciation and Heritage Day Pow Wow here on Nov. 8-9, 2014. She was one of the first females in the Navy to serve on a combatant ship. Long before she ever set out to sea, however, Horn-Purdy's journey began on the Crow Agency reservation in Montana.

"I grew up around very traditional grandparents, and my father would pass down stories. We had oral history," she said. "They would teach us from our ancestors. Nothing was written down. I grew up knowing some of my language, but my first language was English. I went to school off the reservation, so I lived in both worlds." She said it was a culture shock when she went to the school off the reservation, but she had to adapt.



Retired Navy Chief Petty Officer Old Horn-Purdy, from the Crow tribe, took part in the annual Veterans Appreciation and Heritage Day Pow Wow in South Gate, Calif., on Nov. 8-9, 2014. DoD photo by Marvin Lynchard

Military Benefits

Horn-Purdy said she joined the military for the benefits, such as education, training and travel. "I needed a place to sleep, something to eat and, for me, that was good enough," she said, adding that she wanted to "learn, that was the main reason." She said she can relate to other military people coming from other countries who are just glad to have some place to sleep, eat and work.

When she got to her ship in 1985, she found out she was among the first group of



women on her deployed ship. Then, in 1999, she found out that she was to be among the first group of women on a combatant ship. “It was hard, but we had to adapt if we wanted to continue and learn and do our job,” she said. She was in engineering but wasn’t allowed to call herself a machinist at that time. She said that, at her three-year mark in service, the career field opened up to women.

One of the First

“I ended up becoming a machinist, one of the first women in there,” she said. “I ended up advancing quickly through that because not too many people wanted to be in there. I don’t know if it was because I was naïve or young, but I used to think, ‘I’m going to be tough. I’m Indian. I’m going to make it.’ It was hard to learn the theories and engineering principles. I’m thankful for the co-workers who helped me through it. It was hard, but I got through it. “I’m appreciative of those particular men who would look beyond my race and gender and would try to teach me and help me to think the way I should think so I have a lot to be thankful for. They helped me learn,” she said.

Serving in the military is also a Native American tradition. Her paternal grandfather, Allen Old Horn served in the Army in World War II and her maternal grandfather, George Thompson, was in the Navy in World War II. Her great uncles Barney and Henry Old Coyote were code talkers in World War II, and great-grandfather James Red Fox was also one in World War I. Old Horn-Purdy said her father, Sarge Old Horn Sr., encouraged her throughout her time in the military and is proud of her time in the uniform.

Since the Beginning

She said Native Americans have defended America since the beginning. “Native Americans weren’t given medals or accolades that we get now for defending America,” she said. “But we still have to protect America, no matter what. It’s in our blood.” She encourages people to attend pow wows in their communities to learn more about Native American culture. “You don’t have to be Indian to be at a pow wow,” she said. “Many people don’t know anything about Indians so it’s great to educate them about us, because Indians have a different viewpoint and different stories. It’s good for people to learn and see what we’re all about.””



VA/Tribal Health/IHS Reimbursement Program Reimburses More Than \$15.2 Million

Tribal health clinics interested in entering into a Reimbursement Agreement with VA should send an email: tribal.agreements@va.gov



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH
WASHINGTON DC 20420

November 24, 2014

Dear Tribal Leader:

This letter provides an update on the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Tribal Health Programs (THP) Reimbursement Agreements for direct care services for eligible American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Veterans. Since the signing of the agreement in December 2012, we are pleased to report that over \$15 million has been reimbursed to Indian Health Service (IHS) and THPs. As of August 2014, VA has completed implementation steps with all IHS sites; signed over 60 THP agreements; and over 70 more tribes are in process of signing agreements. This marks an important partnering achievement for VA, IHS, and Tribal Governments. Our partnership is key to promoting quality health care; increased access to health care; coordination and resource-sharing that benefits eligible AI/AN Veterans. This also demonstrates our commitment to sharing resources outlined in the 2010 VA-IHS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The basic principles of the reimbursement agreements allow for eligible AI/AN Veterans to receive direct care services at their local tribal facility, and in turn, the tribal facility will be reimbursed by VA for that care per the terms of the agreement. The agreement benefits focus specifically on providing AI/AN Veterans.

Access to Care: AI/AN Veterans can choose to receive care at the nearest VA Medical Center or Tribal Health Care Facility.

Care Coordination: VA Medical Centers and Tribal Health Programs will have an increased means to coordinate and communicate Veteran health care.

VA is encouraged by the successful implementation of IHS and THP facilities in 2013; and looks forward to welcoming more agreements with THPs in the coming year. The agreement process allows for THPs to be reimbursed for direct care service as quickly and efficiently as possible. We look forward to working with you towards our collective goal of increasing access to care for our AI/AN Veterans.

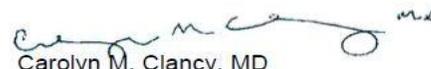


Page 2.
Tribal Leader

Please contact the VHA Chief Business Office or local VA points of contact to obtain more information about VA health care programs and how to establish reimbursement agreements with VA. Questions should be sent to the following mailbox: Tribal.Agreements@va.gov. Program information to include templates, provider guides, and fact sheets can be found on the VA Office of Tribal Government Relations Web site: <http://www.va.gov/tribalgovernment>.

I appreciate your continued support of our mission.

Sincerely,



Carolyn M. Clancy, MD
Interim

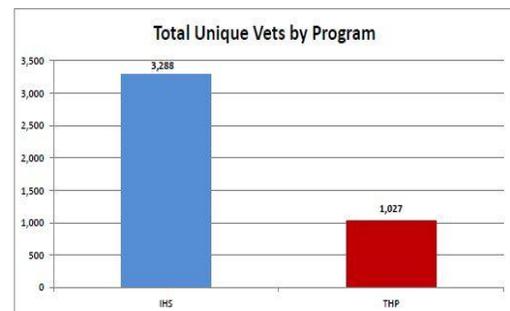
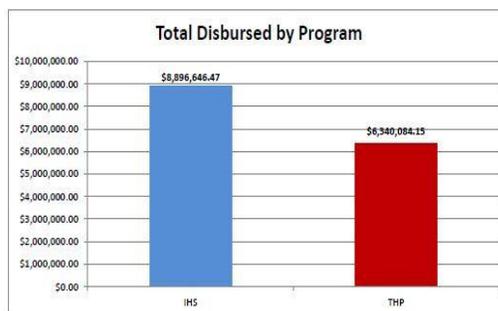
CBO Purchased Care, Program Oversight and Informatics
Department of Informatics (10N3B)

Indian Health / Tribal Health Program

Transaction through 11/30/2014
Last Updated: 12/16/2014
Extracted by: Jenoya Lee

Purpose of Report
The purpose of the report is to capture the total amount disbursed, total unique Veterans, total billed charge, total VA amount Paid, and total number of claims using the Central Fee Files & Fee Basis Claims System (FBCS) for the Indian Health & Tribal Health Program

National Data				
Total Disbursement for entire IHS/THP Program - Agmt Date to FYTD \$15,236,730.62	Total Disbursement by Program - Agmt Date to FYTD			Total Unique Veterans for entire IHS/THP Program - Agmt Date to FYTD 4,301
	Program	Total Disbursed	Total Unique Vets	
	IHS	\$8,896,646.47	3,288	
	THP	\$6,340,084.15	1,027	
Total Disbursement - Out of System Retirements (only) \$7,535.00	Total Disbursement of Out of System Retirements (only) - <i>payments are included in above totals</i>			Total Unique Veterans - Out of System Retirements (only) 258
	Program	Total Disbursed	Total Unique Vets	
	IHS	\$3,228.00	175	
	THP	\$4,307.00	83	





Veteran Employment Services Office

Effective Monday, December 1, 2014, access to VESO's *VA for Vets* website to translate military skills, build resumes, take skills assessments, and apply for federal jobs will no longer be available. You are strongly encouraged to download your information from the *VA for Vets* site in advance of December 1, 2014, store it on personal computers, and visit the [Veterans Employment Center on eBenefits](#) to translate your military skills, build your resume profile and search for jobs in the public and private sectors.

You will continue to have access to the high-touch career readiness services provided by VESO staff, VA-specific job opportunities, information on the federal hiring process, training information, checklists, and guides on building resumes for federal occupations. This information will be available to you on the rebuilt version of the *VA for Vets* website. The URL to the site will remain the same- vaforvets.va.gov-however, you are encouraged to reestablish bookmarks/favorites to the URL.



OTGR Western Region

(AK; CA; ID; NV; OR; WA)

2015 NW Regional Critical Access Hospital Conference & NW Regional Rural Health Conference

**13th NW REGIONAL CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITAL CONFERENCE
March 17, 2015 & 28th NW REGIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE
March 18-19, 2015**

2015 Invitation to Exhibit

**Reserve Your Spot at the
Largest Rural Health Gathering in the Northwest!**

The exhibit hall has sold out the past few years, weeks before the registration deadline! Register early for best placement. This is your chance to have face time with rural health professionals and advocates across five Northwest states.

Registration Deadline: February 28, 2015

Location

Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane, WA
Rates start at \$103 – guaranteed through February 16, 2015
Reservations: 800-733-5466 use code, **NWRE0316**, or online at www.redlion.com

More Information

Exhibit and Sponsorship details, space and move-in logistics, etc:
<http://extension.wsu.edu/ahec/conferences/cah-rhc/exhibithall/>

Register online:

[Click Here to Register for this Event](#)



Tahoe National Forest - Forestry Aid/Technician Jobs Opportunities

Outreach Notice

Temporary Forestry Aids/Technicians Recreation Positions

Tahoe National Forest
American River Ranger District
Yuba River Ranger District
Truckee Ranger District

The Tahoe National Forest will soon be advertising positions for our Recreation management program. These positions will be located at the following duty stations:

Foresthill CA	Recreation	Mo Tebbe: (530) 478-6254 ext. 247 or mtebbe@fs.fed.us
Truckee, CA	Recreation	Mary Westmoreland: (530) 587-3558 ext. 261 or mwestmoreland@fs.fed.us
Nevada City, CA	Recreation	Cecilia Reed: (530) 478-6263 or ccreed@fs.fed.us

The vacancy announcements will be posted by vacancy announcement numbers at (www.usajobs.gov). If you would like to be notified when the vacancy announcements for these specific positions are posted, please fill out the attached outreach form attached at the end of this outreach notice. We anticipate posting the Vacancy Announcement on January 02, 2015 thru January 08, 2015. Please plan accordingly if interested in applying to these positions.

Position Title	Description	GS Level	Announcement #
Forestry Aid	General	GS-462-2	15-TEMP0517-104102DT-MC
Forestry Aid	General	GS-462-3	15-TEMP0517-104263DT-MC
Forestry Technician	Recreation	GS-462-4	15-TEMP0517-104246DT-MC
Forestry Technician	Recreation	GS-462-5	15-TEMP0517-104082DT-MC

POSITIONS:

Recreation: This position provides a variety of work in support of the unit recreation program. Contacts visitors to provide information about recreation regulations, opportunities, and current restrictions. Provides information on resource management practices in the area. Ensures that recreation areas and trails are maintained in accordance with standards. Constructs and rehabilitates minor recreation areas, facilities and trails. Makes safety checks of public use areas and takes corrective action. Maintenance of facilities may include tasks such cleaning of toilets or safe operation of power tools.

HOUSING: Space in Forest Service barracks may be available at approximately \$4-\$7 per day. These rates may vary and applicants are encouraged to check with the identified contacts above regarding any changes in barrack rates & barrack availability for their respective locations.

DATES: Approximate dates of employment for these vacancies are April 2015 thru September 2015. Please respond to this Outreach Notice by Tuesday, December 30th, or before the vacancy announcement closes and you will receive information when the vacancy announcement becomes available with instructions for completing an application.

The USDA Forest Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer



Tahoe National Forest - Forestry Aid/Technician Jobs Opportunities

OUTREACH NOTICE FORM

Temporary Forestry Technicians

Recreation Positions

Tahoe National Forest

Respond By Date: December 30, 2014

If you are interested in applying to these temporary recreation positions please submit the outreach form to the persons listed below:

Foresthill CA, - Recreation – Mo Tebbe: mtebbe@fs.fed.us

Nevada City –Recreation- Cecilia Reed: ccreed@fs.fed.us

Truckee, CA – Recreation – Mary Westmoreland: mwestmoreland@fs.fed.us

This outreach form does not constitute an application. Applicants are encouraged to setup their profiles in USAJobs Website. Applicant will be notified when the positions are posted in the USAJobs Website (<https://www.usajobs.gov/>). We anticipate posting the Vacancy Announcement on January 02, 2015 thru January 08, 2015. Please plan accordingly if interested in applying to these positions.

NAME: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____

AGENCY EMPLOYED WITH (if a federal employee): USFS BLM OTHER _____

TYPE OF APPOINTMENT: PERMANENT TEMPORARY TERM

VRA PWD OTHER

CURRENT REGION/FOREST/DISTRICT: _____

CURRENT SERIES AND GRADE: _____

CURRENT POSITION TITLE: _____

EDUCATION: _____

IF **NOT A CURRENT PERMANENT** (CAREER OR CAREER CONDITIONAL) EMPLOYEE, ARE YOU ELIGIBLE TO BE HIRED UNDER ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SPECIAL AUTHORITIES:

- PERSON WITH DISABILITIES
 VETERANS READJUSTMENT
 DISABLED VETERANS W/30% COMPENSABLE DISABILITY
 VETERANS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ACT OF 1998
 FORMER PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER
 PATHWAYS PROGRAM (FOR CURRENT STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADUATES)
 OTHER _____

Duty Location Preference:

Foresthill, CA _____ Truckee, CA: _____ Nevada City, CA _____

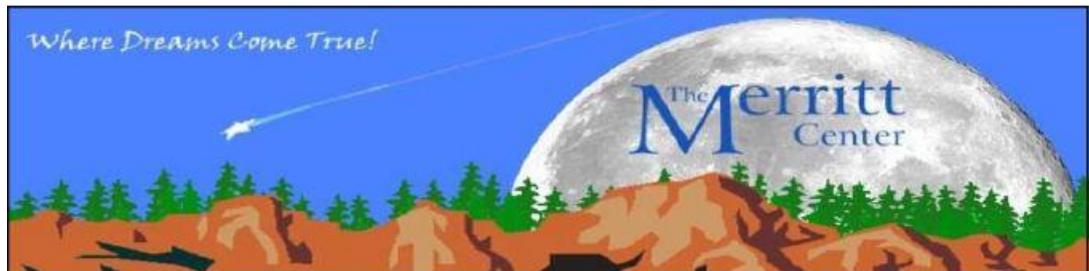
All Locations _____

How did you learn of this vacancy? _____

Thank you for your interest in our Vacancy

OTGR Southwest Plains

(AZ; CO; NM; UT)



**FREE 7 Day Program
for Vets Returning from Combat**
A program of seven days
basic training for integration and civilian reentry
in Payson, AZ 2014: Men: Sept. 15-21
2015 Women: Apr.22-29, Men: May 13-20
Call 928-474-4268 for application
www.merrittcenter.org

The Merritt Center, a non-profit organization, offers a free 7 day program, beginning with a welcome-home talking circle: learning about the cycle of life, releasing the experience of war, and creating the dream of a new life. With veteran mentors in group sessions, returning vets will: recognize and release triggers of combat experience and reorder priorities; release the toxins of mind, body, emotions and spirit through a star lodge ceremony; have a therapeutic massage or an emotional clearing energy session; and conclude with a graduate celebration.



The Merritt Center Veteran Program
Basic Training for Life

For more information or application:
www.merrittcenter.org
800.414.9880 • 928.474.4268



Veterans Home Improvement Program

Application Process

STEPS TO TAKE

1. The **first step** is for you to complete the brief inquiry form by visiting our website at: <http://www.hsd.maricopa.gov/MCHIP.aspx>
2. After you have completed and submitted the form, you will be contacted by MCHSD staff. Helpful staff will discuss your eligibility and the application requirements for the program.
3. The **second step** is for you to complete a program application.

DOCUMENTS FOR APPLICATION

Documents required of all applicants include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Proof of all income for the most recent 90 days (more if instructed by the caseworker);
- ◆ Proof of applicant's home ownership (deed or title);
- ◆ Disability Rating Decision Letter or other acceptable verification from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs;
- ◆ Social Security card of the applicant and household members;
- ◆ Proof of citizenship or lawful presence of the applicant;
- ◆ Recent gas and electric bills with account numbers and service address listed; and
- ◆ Photo ID for applicant.



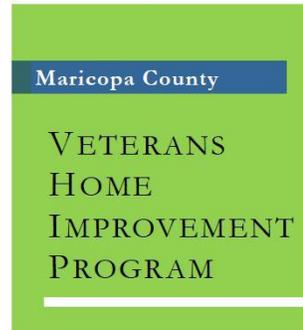
Maricopa County Human Services
Community Development

234 N. Central Ave, 3rd Floor
Phoenix, AZ 85004

Phone: 602-506-5911
TDD: 602-506-4802
E-mail: HOME@mail.maricopa.gov

Visit our Website:
<http://www.hsd.maricopa.gov/HOSDV.aspx>

Maricopa County



Housing Opportunity for Service
Disabled Veterans Program
(HOSDV)



Helping Veterans
Stay in Their Homes



Phone: 602-506-5911
TDD: 602-506-4802



Program Information

Are you a veteran with a service-connected disability who owns a home?
Does your home need disability modifications or accessibility improvements?
We may be able to help!

Maricopa County Human Services Department (MCHSD) is pleased to offer veterans assistance with modifying their home to provide greater accessibility through the Housing Opportunity for Service Disabled Veterans Program (HOSDV). Funding is provided by the Arizona Attorney General's Office.



Human Services Department
MARICOPA COUNTY

TYPES OF IMPROVEMENT

Eligible improvements are disability modifications to owner-occupied homes of veterans that have a service related disability. The HOSDV loan program funds home modifications that enhance accessibility which include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Widening doorways or hallways;
- ◆ Lowering countertops;
- ◆ Adding exterior ramps; and
- ◆ Installing grab bars or roll-in showers in bathrooms.

Eligibility Requirements



WHO IS ELIGIBLE

Home modification for service disabled veterans is available in all areas of Maricopa County. Additional eligibility requirements include:

- ◆ Home must be owned and occupied by Applicant, or under purchase contract as Applicant's primary residence.
- ◆ Home must be located within Maricopa County.
- ◆ Applicant must be a U.S. Veteran with a service-connected disability. The application must include their Disability Rating Decision Letter or other acceptable verification from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Such verification shall determine the homeowner is a U.S. Veteran with a service-connected disability.
- ◆ The improvements made to the home must be directly related to the service-connected disability.
- ◆ The service-connected disability is a medical determination indicating that improvements and structural alterations are necessary or appropriate for the effective and economical treatment of his/her disability.

What are the Terms?

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Loans are zero interest, zero payment loans forgivable after 7 years if the home is not sold, transferred, rented, or re-financed.
- ◆ Qualified MCHSD staff will assist eligible veterans with application and, if eligible for the program, during the bid and construction process.
- ◆ Homeowners may be eligible for more than one home improvement program through Maricopa County, including Weatherization or Rehabilitation services. MCHSD will inform applicants if other services are applicable.

To Start the Inquiry Process Visit:

Complete the Inquiry Form here:
<http://www.hsd.maricopa.gov/MCHIP.aspx>

Questions?
Phone: 602-506-5911
TDD: 602-506-4802
E-mail: HOME@mail.maricopa.gov



SAVE THE DATE



9th Annual Salt River Veterans Recognition Weekend

March 27-29, 2015

Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, AZ.

All Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve Personnel, Families of Veterans, Veterans Organizations, Veterans and those that support Veterans are welcome to participate and/or attend.

Friday Evening, March 27

Odham/Piipaash Social, Chiyeer (Bird) Singing and Dance Contest

Salt River Ballfield

Saturday Morning, March 28

Veterans Recognition Parade

SR Two Waters Complex to SR Community Building

Saturday, March, 27—Sunday, March, 29

SRPMIC Veterans Recognition Pow-Wow

Salt River Ballfield

Pow-Wow info. email pacer.reina@srpmic-nsn.gov
Parade information email RedMountainRiders@yahoo.com