Office of Tribal Government Relations

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of Tribal Government Relations Newsletter ~ November 2015

Note from the Director

Greetings and welcome to the November edition of VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) monthly newsletter. We hope everyone had an enjoyable November, a month that included celebrations of Veterans Day, Native American Heritage Month and Thanksgiving. November began with the 7th White House Tribal Nations Conference which brought many tribal leaders to D.C. who shared their priorities and engaged in policy discussions with senior federal leaders and officials. The week ended with a White House sponsored round table with tribal leaders which focused on homelessness in Indian Country. VA officials participated in the round table and shared, along with HUD officials, updates regarding the launch of Tribal HUD VASH. Meanwhile, out west, OTGR specialist Terry Bentley collaborated with the Indian Health Service (Warm Springs Service Unit), to facilitate the final Veterans Training Summit of the year, held in Warm Springs, Oregon. We are thankful to the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs for hosting and supporting the event and we very much appreciate our VHA, NCA and VBA leaders, colleagues as well as other key federal, state and non-governmental partners who stepped forward to make the event successful for our Veterans and Veteran service providers.

Terry also supported the National Congress of American Indians Annual Convention by staffing the Veterans Committee for several VA presentations and worked to ensure VA was on hand to man the outreach booth during the conference. A Vet Center, which provides counseling services to combat Veterans, was on site to offer assistance as well. We very much appreciate the support of the VA San Diego Health Care system, provider subject matter experts, our VBA colleagues and others who offered presentations and updates during the course of the event. A presentation in particular I wanted to mention was former Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell was on hand to announce that the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), is launching the American Indian Veterans Memorial project, which is planned to be housed on the grounds of the NMAI in D.C. Listening sessions, tribal leader and Veteran engagement focused on the memorial will be ongoing throughout the next year. We'll be including more specific information and updates regarding the effort during one of our early 2016 OTGR newsletters, so please stay tuned for more information.

Meanwhile, over in Oklahoma, OTGR specialist Mary Culley served as the keynote speaker during the Muskogee VA Medical Center's Native American Heritage Month celebration. Her remarks for the event focused on Native Women Warriors. Native American Heritage Month was further commemorated in VA facilities across the country, here at the VA Central Office, Deputy Assistant for Intergovernmental Affairs, James Albino, served as the executive sponsor for the DC activities. The House Veterans Affairs Committee teamed up with the Navajo Nation and acclaimed filmmaker Marcia Rock to show a special brown bag screening of her documentary "Warriors Return," a moving film about the challenges associated with access to care and benefits experienced by Navajo Veterans returning home to their tribal communities following their military service. The film also touches upon the impact felt and experienced by the Veteran's families. Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye facilitated a question and answer

session following the screening which highlighted efforts underway to improve the quality of life of Navajo Nation's Veterans. Warriors Return has been previously screened on local public television stations and can be found online at the following site http://www.servicethefilm.com/warriorsreturn.

OTGR specialist Homana Pawiki coordinated an outreach booth and participated in the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) conference held in Salt Lake City, UT. The event was well attended and offered opportunities for ongoing communications between VA and CANAR in the days ahead. Over in the upper Midwest, Peter Vicaire traveled to Lansing, Michigan to attend two events hosted by Michigan State University's Native American Institute - held to honor American Indian Veterans and Tribal Leaders. Peter provided some opening remarks prior to a listening session that offered Veterans the opportunity to share their experiences and recommendations. Peter made some great contacts during the event and will be scheduling follow up calls and meetings in the days ahead. He also had the chance to hear Warriors in Uniform author Herman J. Viola speak about his writing and work focused on the contributions of Native Veterans. He also attended a Native Veterans dinner at the Minneapolis American Indian Center where he met with veterans from several different tribes in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Looking ahead, December will find most of the OTGR staff staying closer to home, catching up on work pending back at the office and making plans for 2016. We're excited to share with you what is on the horizon during 2016 and wish you and yours all the best during the coming holiday season.
Happy Reading,

Stephanie

Office of Tribal Government Relations

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

SAMHSA

Working Together with Native Communities to Support the Healing of our Service Members, Veterans, and their Families

SAMHSA's Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Technical Assistance Center Presents: *Working Together with Native Communities to Support the Healing of our Service Members, Veterans, and their Families*

Webinar Date: Fri., Dec. 11, 2015, 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. EST

Presenters: Seprieono Locario, M.A. | Tribal Action Plan and Wellness Coordinator, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Tribal Training and Technical Assistance Center; Lieutenant Colonel John Frederikson, USA Ret., Ed.D. | University of Montana, National Native Children's Trauma Center
Moderator: Mirtha Beadle, M.P.A. | Director, SAMHSA's Office of Tribal Affairs and Policy
Register: https://goto.webcasts.com/starthere.jsp?ei=1085077

Native communities have one of the highest records of military service per capita of any other ethnic group. To move toward more successful outreach to American Indian (AI) and Alaska Native (AN) tribes and communities, both tribal culture and military culture must be honored. Possessing cultural knowledge and skills to build successful relationships is key to behavioral health providers working with tribal service members, veterans and their families (SMVF).

This webinar will include information on cultural beliefs, healing practices and strategies for working with tribal leadership in rural communities. Presenters will outline available resources and discuss how to address and prevent behavioral health issues in tribal SMVF.

Learning Objectives:
• Describe the need for AI/AN cultural information, knowledge, skills, and competencies among SMVF providers and peers working in rural communities
• Discuss strategies to increase access to traditional and non-traditional tribal warrior health and healing programs for rural SMVF
• Explore opportunities for collaboration and coordination among tribal community partners and state and federal behavioral health systems
• List at least three best practice resources, tools, and/or strategies that can be used for enhancing outreach and engagement of tribal SMVF in rural communities

Target Audience: Representatives serving SMVF from state, territory and tribal behavioral health systems, workforce development and training staff, providers, mental health and addiction peers, military family coalitions and advocates. If you have any questions about your registration, please contact Sarah Degnan, Project Assistant, at 518-439-7415 ext. 5272 or by email at sdegnan@prainc.com.

Office of Tribal Government Relations

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Reimburses over $30.5+ Million to IHS and Tribal Health Programs

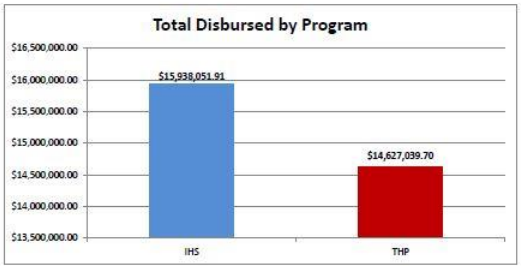
Office of Tribal Government Relations

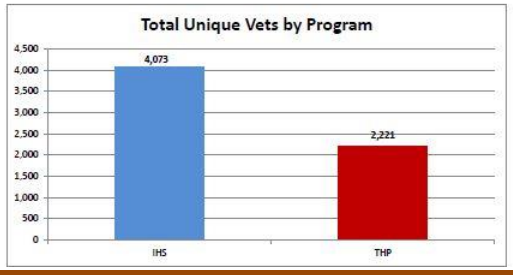
Tribal health clinics interested in entering into a reimbursement agreement with VA for serving veterans should send an initial note of interest to: tribal.agreements@va.gov

National Data

Total Disbursement for entire IHS/THP Program - Agmt Date to FYTD	Total Disbursement by Program - Agrmt Date to FYTD			Total Unique Veterans for entire IHS/THP Program - Agmt Date to FYTD
	Program	Total Disbursed	Total Unique Vets	
$30,565,091.71	IHS	$15,938,051.91	4,073	6,226
	THP	$14,627,039.70	2,221	

Total Disbursement - Out of System Retropayments (only)	Total Disbursement of Out of System Retropayments (only) - *payments are included in above totals*			Total Unique Veterans - Out of System Retropayments (only)
	Program	Total Disbursed	Total Unique Vets	
$38,427.00	IHS	$22,021.00	972	1,382
	THP	$16,406.00	410	





NATIVE ONE STOP

Native One Stop

Native Americans seeking information on a variety of topics now have a new tool, Native One Stop - www.nativeonestop.gov - Whether you are a **Native American veteran** who is looking for a home loan or a student looking for an educational grant, the site is a quick resource finder.

Veterans Health Administration: Agent Orange

VA has recently updated the list of ships that operated in Vietnam to add 22 new ships. The list can help Vietnam-era Veterans find out if they qualify for presumption of Agent Orange exposure when seeking disability compensation for certain related diseases. http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/shiplist/index.asp

Indian Country TODAY MEDIA NETWORK

"Feds Expand Homeless Services for Native Veterans"

Here's an article written by Mark Fogarty which ran in Indian Country Today on November 11, 2015 and can be read HERE.

"After consulting with tribes, two federal departments are launching a novel joint outreach to assist American Indian veterans who are homeless or likely to become so. The effect is to add a Native component to services reservation Indian vets had been shut out of before. The U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs are now ready to launch a demonstration program to offer a permanent home and supportive services to Native vets. The Tribal HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (Tribal HUD-VASH) program will combine $4 million in rental assistance from HUD with case management and clinical services provided by VA to serve approximately 600 Native American veterans.

HUD Secretary Julián Castro announced the program at the recent annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians in San Diego. He also announced the program back on January 30, but six tribal consultations have gone on in the meantime.
HUD is inviting 30 eligible tribes to seek Tribal HUD-VASH vouchers to help house and serve an estimated 600 Native American veterans who are currently experiencing homelessness or at extreme risk of becoming homeless. Four million dollars has been allocated to the demonstration program. HUD will be providing the rental assistance, while VA will deliver supportive case management services.

The HUD-VASH program has been running for seven years, but only through HUD's Public Housing Authority program, and not the parallel Indian Housing Authority program. Since 2008, more than 79,000 vouchers have been awarded and approximately 90,000 homeless vets have been served through the broader HUD-VASH program. The net effect is that urban Native vets could be served by this program through the PHAs, but reservation Indians on the IHA side were not.

Six consultations were held, starting with one in Phoenix in February. HUD said it held a national listening session at the National American Indian Housing Council's legislative conference in February, followed by regional listening sessions held at each of the six Office of Native American Programs field offices. HUD also received a number of comments from tribes through letters and emails. Generally, the comments were supportive of the program, the agency said.

"The tribe/TDHE (tribally designated housing entity) will provide a monthly rental assistance payment for a specific housing unit in which an eligible Native American veteran will reside," HUD said. "The housing unit will be specifically designated as a unit that is available for Native American veterans eligible under this program. Project-based rental assistance may be provided to privately owned housing with a contract with the owner of

the housing, or a unit that is owned or operated by the tribe/TDHE."

On the case management side provided by the VA, "eligible homeless veterans will receive services through the Department of Veterans Affairs. VA may provide these services directly or through a community-based outpatient clinic. Alternatively, the VA may engage in a contractual relationship with a tribal healthcare provider or the Indian Health Service for service delivery. Native American veterans participating in this program will be housed based on a Housing First approach, said HUD, "where homeless veterans are provided housing assistance and then offered the supportive services that may be needed to foster long-term stability and prevent a return to homelessness.""

Improving Care for Veterans by Sharing Medical Records with VA

This blog post was written by Indian Health Service CDR Mark Rives, DSc, Chief Information Officer and Director of the Office of Information Technology.

November is the month that we celebrate and recognize veterans. This is a great time to highlight how information technology advances at the Indian Health Service are improving medical care for American Indian and Alaska Native veterans. The Indian Health Service and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs are working together to improve the health of American Indian and Alaska Native veterans. You might think that veterans get all of their medical care from the VA's Veterans Health Administration. This is not the case. Many American Indian and Alaska Native veterans receive care from IHS facilities.

VA and IHS have a history of successful collaboration. In 2010, we renewed an agreement to coordinate and share resources. And in 2012, we signed a reimbursement agreement, so VA compensates IHS for health care provided to American Indian and Alaska Native veterans.

IHS has always been a leader in electronic health records. With this latest initiative, IHS and VA are testing interoperability, allowing providers to use a secure health information exchange to share important medical records. This offers IHS providers better access to medical records documenting the care their patients receive at VA facilities, and vice versa. These tools make it easier for providers to work cooperatively to improve the quality of patient care. The exchange ensures that providers have access to the most accurate and most recent data about their patients. Learn more about the IHS health information exchange. American Indian and Alaska Native communities have a proud history of military service. And here in the IHS Office of Information Technology, we are proud to be serving those who served.

Last remaining Bataan Death March survivor from Taos Pueblo honored

Here's an article written by Stuart Dyson which ran in KOB Eyewitness News 4 on November 11, 2015.

"Veterans Day ceremonies at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center on Wednesday honored all American veterans – but focused special honors on a 99-year-old man from Taos Pueblo who survived the Bataan Death March at the dawn of World War II. Tony Reyna was 25 when he joined the New Mexico National Guard - just in time to get sent to the Philippines with the regular Army – just in time for the Japanese invasion – the American defeat – the Death March – and almost four years of slave labor as a prisoner of war.

Wednesday was his day. Taos elders draped Reyna with a Pendleton warrior blanket after singing a Bataan song in his honor. 11 men from Taos Pueblo went to Bataan – five survived the war. Reyna is the last one still alive. He started an Indian arts and crafts store at Taos Pueblo in 1950. It's still there, run by his son. Reyna served two terms as governor of the pueblo. "I served my country," Reyna said. "I served my people. I'm still serving. I'm available anytime they ask me!"

There were veterans present from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. All could click with Reyna's amazing story of survival. He says it all comes down to determination. "I was determined to survive, to come back – which I did," Reyna said.

Native Americans join the military and serve in great numbers that are far out of proportion with their share of the population. It's been that way for generations. Wednesday's event was packed with Indian veterans, but there were also veterans from just about every race and background – warmly embraced by their brothers in arms. Tony Reyna will turn 100 years old January 31.

WOUNDED WARRIORS FAMILY SUPPORT
WOUNDEDWARRIORSFAMILYSUPPORT.ORG

Wounded Warriors Family Support Donates Van To Lakota Sioux Tribe

Here's an article written by Kevin Hurd from KDLT News which ran on November 23rd and can be accessed HERE.

A donation from Wounded Warriors Family Support, a group based in Omaha, will have a large impact for veterans on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The group presented a van donation Monday morning to representatives of the Lakota Sioux tribe. It seats 10 people - and will be used primarily to take veterans to VA facilities.

John Yellow Bird Steele, President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, says considering how large Pine Ridge is, this gift will benefit a lot of veterans. "We're rural, we need transportation," Steele said. "The veterans have a hard time making appointments and the wounded warriors association out of Omaha found out about our problem and is helping to take care of it."

Drivers picking up veterans need to travel anywhere between one to 90 miles on Pine Ridge. The nearest hospitals are then 60 to 120 miles away. Colonel John Folsom, president of Wounded Warriors Family Support, says this gift honors many Native Americans who served in the military. "The American Indian, for the size of the population, gives more of its people as soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and any other demographic group in America," Folsom said. "We need to appreciate that, we forget that."

Folsom says the van was originally supposed to be delivered in March 2016. But executives at Ford fast-tracked the project, so the van could be donated Monday.

VA Makes Changes to Veterans Choice Program

Changes Remove Barriers and Expands Access to Care

Here's a VA press release that came out on December 1, 2015.

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced a number of changes to make participation in the Veterans Choice Program easier and more convenient for Veterans who need to use it. The move, which streamlines eligibility requirements, follows feedback from Veterans along with organizations working on their behalf.

"As we implement the Veterans Choice Program, we are learning from our stakeholders what works and what needs to be refined," said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. "It is our goal to do all that we can to remove barriers that separate Veterans from the care they deserve." To date, more than 400,000 medical appointments have been scheduled since the Veterans Choice Program went into effect on November 5, 2014.

Under the old policy, a Veteran was eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she met the following criteria:

- Enrolled in VA health care by 8/1/14 or able to enroll as a combat Veteran to be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program;
- Experienced unusual or excessive burden eligibility determined by geographical challenges, environmental factors or a medical condition impacting the Veteran's ability to travel;
- Determined eligible based on the Veteran's current residence being more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.

Under the updated eligibility requirements, a Veteran is eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she is enrolled in the VA health care system and meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Told by his or her local VA medical facility that they will not be able to schedule an appointment for care within 30 days of the date the Veteran's physician determines he/she needs to be seen or within 30 days of the date the Veteran wishes to be seen if there is no specific date from his or her physician;
- Lives more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility with a full-time primary care physician;
- Needs to travel by air, boat or ferry to the VA medical facility closest to

his/her home;

- Faces an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, a medical condition, the nature or simplicity or frequency of the care needed and whether an attendant is needed. Staff at the Veteran's local VA medical facility will work with him or her to determine if the Veteran is eligible for any of these reasons; or
- Lives in a State or Territory without a full-service VA medical facility which includes: Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire (Note: this excludes New Hampshire Veterans who live within 20 miles of the White River Junction VAMC) and the United States Territories (excluding Puerto Rico, which has a full service VA medical facility).

Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program or wanting to know more about it, can call 1-866-606-8198 to confirm their eligibility and to schedule an appointment. For more details about the Veterans Choice Program and VA's progress, visit: www.va.gov/opa/choiceact.

Native American Heritage Month – Veterans Day

Office of Tribal Government Relations

In honor of November's Native American Heritage Month and Veterans Day, here are a few historical stories of interest.

In 1822, twenty years after the U.S. Military Academy first opened in West Point, New York, David Moniac, a Creek Indian, became the Academy's first Native American graduate. David Moniac was born in 1802 to parents Sam, also known as "Red Eagle," and Sahoy Moniac. His father had been involved in many meetings between other Native American tribes and the U.S. government over land and living issues, which may have been an important factor in David's application to the military academy. David left his home in the Mississippi territory (now known as Alabama), bound for West Point, at the age of 15 in 1817. He graduated 39th in his class on July 1, 1822.

1819.] MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT. 845

REGISTER OF CADETS—Continued.

Names.	Date of appointment.	PROMOTIONS.		REMARKS.
		Corps or regiment.	Date of appointment.	
Mason, Thomas,	Feb. 5, 1816,	- -	- -	Resigned December 1, 1817.
Madison, Ambrose,	July 9, 1816.			
Mead, Henry S.	Feb. 1, 1817,	- -	- -	Resigned August 31, 1818.
Mansfield, Joseph,	Sept. 4, 1817.			
Moniac, David,	Dec. 25, 1817.			
Morris, Thompson,	Feb. 14, 1817.			
McRay, John,	Oct. 9, 1817,	- -	- -	Resigned September 1, 1818.
Montgomery, D. M.	Sept. 11, 1817.			
Morris, Gouverneur,	May 20, 1818,	- -	- -	Admitted September 30, 1818.
Morrison, John B.	May 20, 1818.			
McLain, G. W.	Aug. 19, 1818.	- -	- -	Admitted September 30, 1818.

Upon graduation he was commissioned as a Brevet Second Lieutenant with the Sixth Infantry Regiment, but retired from military service shortly afterwards to pursue life as a cotton farmer and horse breeder in Alabama. He married a cousin of Osceola, a prominent Seminole leader, and enlisted in the state militia.

When the Second Seminole War began in December 1835, he returned to military service as Captain for a regiment of "friendly" Mounted Creek Volunteers and was soon promoted to Major. He was the only American Indian officer. In an engagement with Seminoles in the Wazoo swamp, David Moniac was killed in action on November 21, 1836. He was 34 years old. He was buried on land that is now known as VA's Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida.

Heart Butte rancher was first Native American female in the U.S. Marines

Here's a story written by Peter Johnson from the Great Falls Tribune. The story (and more pictures) can be accessed HERE.

"Women have served in the U.S. military since the Revolutionary War, when Gen. George Washington diplomatically took aside a woman disguised as a male soldier, congratulated her for her service and handed her discharge papers. After experience primarily as nurses on both sides during the Civil War, more women began serving larger, noncombat roles during World War I. That trend was especially true during World War II, when more than 250,000 American women served in the armed services, while hundreds of thousands more women took factory jobs.

Minnie Spotted Wolf, a slender, but tough family ranch hand from Heart Butte was one of the early women determined to play her part. She is believed to be the first Native American woman to join the Marine Corps Women's Reserve in September 1943, and because of her gumption and background, was featured in stories, photographs and even a girls' comic book story that promoted the war effort. Spotted Wolf died in 1988 after a 29-year teaching career. Her daughter, Browning public health nurse Gerardetta "Gerry" England, will speak at today's ceremony.

"My mom would have been very proud to have been honored at this ceremony," England said in a telephone interview. "She was very proud to have been a Marine, wife, sister, mom and grandmother." Spotted Wolf grew up on an isolated ranch on White Tail Creek about 15 miles northeast of Heart Butte, and helped her parents raise cattle, sheep and horses. "Mom was real outdoorsy and helped her father with the animals," England said. "She was really good at breaking horses, and folks said she could outride guys into her early 50s."

Spotted Wolf started thinking about joining the military shortly after the U.S. entered World War II when she was 18, but initially was discouraged by a recruiter who told her "the war was really not for women," England said. "But Mom really wanted to go into the

www.greatfallstribune.com GF TRIBUNE A GANNETT COMPANY

military to serve her country. Her brother had died, and she knew nobody else in the family would be able to serve." When Spotted Wolf finally got ready to sign up, she almost had to back out because her father was seriously injured in a horse riding accident. He soon died from those injuries, but her mother and sister urged Spotted Wolf to pursue her dream.

"The girls and I can manage," Spotted Wolf's mother told her, according to England. "Your country needs you more." She went through Marine boot camp training at Camp Lejeune, N.C.. She later was quoted in promotional blurbs describing boot camp as "hard, but not too hard" after all the physical labor she had done on her father's ranch, including "cutting fence posts, driving a two-ton truck and breaking horses." Military public relations teams put out photos and stories showing Spotted Wolf standing next to her horse and holding a rifle just before joining, working with two other Indian women recruits and even shooting a bow-and-arrow - a photograph her daughter now thinks "was kind of phony." However, a dramatic, four-page comic-book-style recounting of Spotted Wolf that appeared in the "Calling All Girls" magazine for teen girls was an accurate accounting of what happened to her mother the year before she joined the military, England said.

Titled "One Little Indian," the tale starts by stating "20-year-old Minnie Spotted Wolf, full-blooded Blackfoot Indian, did a man's job before the war. Now she's taking a man's place in the United States Marines." The comic book shows her riding a horse through deep snow to get provisions for her family after a severe blizzard, then correctly predicting the spring melt would cause bad flooding. After helping her father move the cattle to higher ground in the spring, she and her sister survived a severe truck rollover on a backcountry road. Soon after that accident, her father was severely injured after being bucked from a horse.

England said her mother's family kept close to the ranch and visited bigger Montana towns only a few times a year. "So she loved being able to travel, visit bigger cities and meet people of different backgrounds in the military," England said. Spotted Wolf spent four years in the military, including time at Hawaii and California bases working as a heavy equipment driver, a job usually done by men. She was 5-foot-5 and weighed just 95 pounds when she joined the military, but was wiry and grew to 110 pounds with a special diet and exercise. Spotted Wolf drove trucks on the ranch and male military friends taught her how to drive and repair other vehicles.

"She said she was soon able to keep up with the guys, and could take apart and rebuild an engine," her daughter said. Spotted Wolf's roles in the military included driving trucks loaded with heavy equipment and ferrying visiting generals around bases as a Jeep driver. "A few people picked on her for being an Indian, but most people treated her well," England said. "Mom was proud of who she was. She wasn't in the military just for herself, but for the Indian people. She wanted others to know who she was and where she came from. "Mom always told us four kids as we grew up to remember that our people have been here for a long time, to be proud of everything you can learn about Indian culture and to take care of the land," England added. After being discharged in 1947, Spotted Wolf went to school at Northern Montana College and received a bachelor's degree in education from the College of Great Falls. She married Conrad farmer Robert England in 1952, and they had four children.

Spotted Wolf taught elementary school for 29 years in reservation schools and tiny country schools throughout Montana. She usually kept a horse for riding near where she worked. Spotted Wolf remained patriotic and was active in Browning American Legion Post 127, wearing the post uniform as she carried a flag during the annual Indian Days celebration and while attending military funerals. She was buried in that uniform, with black slacks and coat, when she died at age 65 in 1988, England said."

First Native American Women Veterans

The first recognized Native American women veterans were Lakota Sioux nuns from a small order in North Dakota who served as nurses during the Spanish American War. The Spanish American War was a short war that arose out of Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain. In January 1898 President McKinley sent the American battleship *USS Maine* to Cuba to protect U.S. interest. Three weeks later, the *USS Maine* was sunk in Havana Harbor; a mine had been placed under the ship and detonated, killing nearly 300 men. On April 25, 1898, the U.S. formally declared war on Spain and calls for troops, doctors, and nurses went out. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), American Red Cross, and other organizations, including several religious orders of nuns, provided nurses for the war.

Father Craft with four nuns from the American Sisters order,
U.S. Military Hospital, Havana, Cuba, 1898, NARA

The Native American nuns were part of a small religious order formally established with the help of Catholic missionary Father Francis M.J. Craft. The order has been known under several names: American Order of the Sisters, Convent of Indian Sisters/Sacred Heart Mission, and Order of the Red Sisters of St. Benedict. Father Francis M.J. Craft was descended from a Mohawk chief and served as a missionary among the Dakota-Lakota Indians on the Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Standing Rock reservations from around 1884 to

Office of Tribal Government Relations

1900. He was present at the Wounded Knee Creek massacre in 1890 and was seriously wounded in the back and lungs, but miraculously survived his injuries.
Father Craft established the first order/congregation of Native American nuns around 1891 at Fort Berthold Agency, North Dakota, at the request of Sacred White Buffalo, daughter of Chief Crow Feather (Sioux). She and several other young women in the tribe were interested in becoming nuns. He sent them to a Catholic Indian school to learn English and other subjects and after three years founded the congregation. Sacred White Buffalo's name was changed to Mother Catherine and she is considered the true foundress of the order. Mother Catherine saw her dream realized, but died shortly afterwards in May 1893 at the age of 26, so she was not among the nuns who served during the war. Mother Mary Liguori Sound of the Flying Lance (Alice White Deer), daughter of Chief White Deer (Sioux), became Prioress for the order after Mother Catherine's death.

Father Craft volunteered himself and five of the nuns, all daughters of Indian chiefs, to serve as nurses during the Spanish-American War. Four of the American Order of the Sisters known to have served as nurses were: Mother Mary Anthony Cloud Robe (Susie Bordeaux)(Brulé), Sr. Mary Joseph (Josephine Two Bears) (Hunkpapa), Sr. Mary Gregory or Gertrude (Ellen Clark)(Hunkpapa), and Sr. Mary Bridget (Annie Pleets)(Hunkpapa).

Mother Mary Catharine Sacred White Buffalo
(Josephine Crowfeather), foundress, 1892,
Marquette University.

The nuns first served at Camp Cuba Libre in Jacksonville, Florida, then Camp Onward in Savannah, Georgia, before going to Cuba: "owing to their excellent work and the fact that they were considered immune from yellow fever, five were sent to Cuba and located with the First Division hospital of the Seventh Army Corps at Pinar del Rio." The Spanish American War officially ended on December 10, 1898, when a peace treaty was signed in Paris. The treaty gave Cuba its freedom, ceded Puerto Rico and Guam to the U.S., and allowed the U.S. to purchase the Philippines for $20 million. Roughly 3,000 lives were lost during the war.

Office of Tribal Government Relations

Native American Veterans Affairs Innovator

One of VA's earliest known Native American medical innovators was Dr. Madge Skelly. In 1965, at the age of 62, Madge Skelly, Ph.D., was hired for VA's Audiology and Speech Pathology Service at John J. Cochran Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri.

Madeleine Skelly was born on May 9, 1903 near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Charles J. and Juliet Skelly. Her family were members of the Iroquois-Onandaga tribe. She graduated with a B.A. in education from Seton Hill in 1924, obtained an M.A. from Duquesne University in 1928, and got married that same year. At Duquesne University she went on to become Dean of Drama and Dean of Women. She became a well-known and acclaimed playwright, writer, actress, director, and producer, and was a true creative force in theatre and early television. She was a mentor to actor James Earl Jones when he first started acting.

In the late 1950s she became interested in helping people with speech problems, so she left theatre, and returned to school to pursue a Ph.D. in speech pathology. She was Associate Professor of Speech at Fontbonne University in St. Louis prior to coming to VA in 1965. She also held the position of Director of Speech Pathology Services at Shriner's Hospital while she was with the Veterans Administration. In 1974 she received the Federal Woman's Award.

Dr. Skelly developed the Amer-Ind Gestural Code in late 1960s and early 1970s. It was a "thought-related, non-verbal method of communication" comprised of 250 signals for use by people who had suffered brain damage, were disabled, or otherwise unable to communicate in verbal language. Her code was based on a form of Native American communication used for meetings between tribes that spoke different languages. She consulted with numerous American Indian chiefs in developing the code. During the experimental phase, she used it at both VA and Shriner's hospital to determine its usefulness and it proved to work for both disabled veterans and children. In modern times her code has been adapted by those working with autistic children. The Amer-Ind code, often spelled as Amerind, proved to be of universal use for overcoming communication difficulties despite differences in language, age, and disabilities.

Office of Tribal Government Relations

World War I was a game-changer for Native Americans who served in the U.S. military.

Prior to World War I, American Indians had served as guides, interpreters, scouts, mostly as contractors, to the growing number of European colonists since the 1600s and their warriors fought alongside the new Americans in every war. If they were enlisted into the Regular forces at all, it was only for very short periods, and they didn't receive veterans benefits because they weren't citizens. However, some successfully obtained disability pensions through special acts of Congress.

Tobias Frazier
World War I code talker

Beginning in the 19th century the U.S. government embarked on a massive assimilation effort to convert American Indians to the Euro-American way of life. Laws were passed that removed them from their homelands, outlawed their language, religion, cultural ceremonies and other rituals, and forced their children to live at residential schools away from home and family for the sole purpose of assimilation and indoctrination. Efforts to assimilate American Indian men into the military as Army Regulars began as an experiment in the 1890s with some serving in the Spanish American War.

Once the U.S. entered World War I on April 6, 1917, men of all races were sought to fight the war. World War I was the first war in American history where American Indians and African Americans crossed an ocean to fight in a foreign land for the U.S. There was an unforeseen psychological advantage in having American Indians fighting in Europe: the Germans had a fascination for stories of the American West, so they were terrorized by thoughts of American Indian warriors loose in their homeland.

At the same time that American Indian children were in schools being forced to give up their native tongue, some of the children's fathers and uncles were serving in the war and asked to use the very language the U.S. sought to annihilate as a tool to confound the Germans. By conversing in what sounded to the Germans like an indecipherable code, a small group of roughly 20 Choctaw Indians serving in the 36th Division became the first unit of "Code Talkers" and prevented the Germans from knowing U.S. troop movements. Their

"code" helped save lives and facilitated a swift end to the war. Because of the proven success of "Code Talker" units during the First World War, these specialized units were used again during World War II.

American Indians' use of camouflage proved useful during World War I and the military adopted it into their array of battle tactics. Indian American warriors proved their bravery and battle skills as never before during World War I and major newspapers soon carried news of their fascinating exploits. While the intentions of some reporters may have been to deride their military service, the effects ultimately helped to change public opinion. Out of roughly 33,000 eligible to enlist, over 10,000 American Indians served during World War I. Despite their exceptional service in battle no American Indian received a Medal of Honor during World War I largely because of racism at the time. The World War I "code talkers" finally won their overdue recognition by the U.S. when President George W. Bush gave them the Congressional Gold Medal in 2008.

Roughly 14 American Indian women are believed to have served in World War I as nurses, and only two—including Charlotte Edith Anderson Monture (Mohawk)--are known to have served overseas. They were the trailblazers who forged a path that other Native American women have since followed. In later wars, they served in roles other than nurses.

Charlotte Edith Anderson Monture
Mohawk Nurse

For the first time in history, American Indians who served in World War I became eligible for U.S. citizenship, gaining access to veterans benefits. Public Law 66-75, signed on November 6, 1919, authorized citizenship five years before the overall Native American population, as a whole, became eligible for citizenship.

Office of Tribal Government Relations

In Honor of Native Americans Veterans

Throughout the Colonial period, Native Americans provided services as guides, scouts, and interpreters to European colonists. Sacagawea, a Shoshone woman originally from what today is known as the state of Idaho, was an early scout who she helped guide the Lewis & Clark "Corps of Discovery" expedition team to the Pacific Coast in 1805.

Native Americans lived off the land and were keenly observant and attuned to nature. They were experts at reading and interpreting nature's many subtle signs. They could also communicate with many other native tribes despite language differences. Their versatile skills came to be of great use to the U.S. military, which contracted with or enlisted Native Americans as scouts beginning in the Colonial period.

Scouts furnished their own horses, guns, and ammunition, and received food rations for themselves, their families, and their horses as part of their pay. Most scouts were paid in goods, such as blankets or supplies, instead of cash. They did not receive government benefits unless authorized through treaties or individual acts of Congress. In 1842 several Cherokee warriors received federal pensions for their services during the War of 1812. It was not until 1858 that the heirs of Richard Farren, "a friendly Creek Indian" who also provided services during that war, were paid $600 for their loss. During the Civil War, Indian scouts served in segregated regiments on both sides along with Union and Confederate volunteer and Regular forces.

Apache scouts at Fort Wingate, N.M., 1891

When the Army was reorganized in 1866, after the Civil War, Native American infantry and cavalry units were authorized. Being an Army Indian Scout was not an easy job. The men were separated from their homes, families, and own people for

long periods, faced blatant racism on a daily basis, often tracked fellow Native Americans, and were exposed to alcohol and other military-related vices. Native American scouts and soldiers served in many of the Indian campaigns during settlement of the American West and several of them received Medals of Honor for their service.

Some Native Americans were recruited for the Regular Army under General George Crook's "experiment" which began in 1891 near the Mexican border. Crook knew that Native Americans were excellent fighters, so he thought they would easily adapt to Army life, but he greatly under-estimated the value of family and tradition in Indian life, which did not assimilate into Crook's plans. Despite the experiment being declared an overall failure in 1894 by the War Department, Native Americans soldiers were a success story at Fort Sill and other posts. Native Americans continued to seek military service and proved themselves as valuable warriors for the U.S.

Sergeant I-See-O, the last Kiowa scout, 1920

The Army officially ended its Indian scout program in the fall of 1947 when the last four scouts were retired from Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Hunting Horse (Kiowa), Ely Parker (Seneca-Iroquois), Chief Two Bears (Choctaw), Harvey Fawcett (Arapahoe), I-See-O (Kiowa) and Jeff King (Navajo) were among hundreds of Indian Scouts who served with the U.S. military. Their deaths, one by one, closed an important chapter in the history of America and the Army. These Native American warriors and their legacy of service to our nation must never be forgotten.

.

Job Opportunity ~ Health Science Policy Analyst

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is recruiting for the position of Director of the Tribal Health Research Office, a newly created office in the NIH Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives in the Office of the Director, NIH.

The vacancy announcement is posted on USAJOBS. It opened on November 30 and is scheduled to close on December 4, 2015.

- Merit Promotion: https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/422633900
- Delegated Examining: https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/422501600

Tribal Health Research Office

The Tribal Health Research Office will:

(1) coordinate tribal health research-related activities across NIH;
(2) serve as a liaison to and NIH representative on tribal health related committees or working groups;
(3) coordinate and support the NIH Tribal Consultation Advisory Committee;
(4) collaborate with NIH Institutes and Centers on the development of reports on tribal health topics;
(5) manage information dissemination related to tribal health research coordination
(6) convene trans-NIH committees, workshops, meetings and other activities related to tribal health research and scientific priorities; and
(7) coordinates with NIH Institutes and Centers to leverage resources or develop initiatives to support tribal health research.

OTGR Southern Plains Region

(KS; OK; TX)