Office of Tribal Government Relations

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Office of Tribal Government Relations Newsletter ~ Winter 2017/2018

Note from the Director

Greetings and welcome to the Winter edition of the VA Office of Tribal Government Relations newsletter.

I'd like to share some updates with our readers of where we've been and what we've been up to these past few months, but first I'd like to begin with sharing that we are gearing up for an outreach campaign called "Your Service. Our Mission: Bringing Benefits Home," a targeted effort focused on reaching Veterans across Indian Country and offering both the Veteran and their families assistance with filing disability and pension claims. Twenty tribal governments are participating in the effort, and our team is working closely with the Veterans Benefits Administration, State Departments of Veterans Affairs, Tribal Veterans Representatives (and Service Officers) and Veterans Service Organizations to host and support these claims events. We look forward to sharing outcomes information (e.g. # of Veterans served, total amount of claims approved) for this effort later this year.

Our office has also been involved in discussions with the Smithsonian, National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and the Library of Congress, Veterans History Project. We discovered a while back that our three organizations are working to reach Veterans across Indian Country so it was important for us to stay informed of our collective efforts and to join forces when opportunities arose. The NMAI has an excellent exhibit currently touring the country called *Patriot Nations: Native Americans in Our Nation's Armed Forces* (see link here http://nmai.si.edu/explore/exhibitions/item/?id=958). NMAI is also moving forward with the National Native American Veterans Memorial (see link http://www.nmai.si.edu/support/national-native-american-veterans-memorial/) with an anticipated dedication date of Veterans Day 2020. The Library of Congress, Veterans History Project "collects, preserves, and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war," (see link here http://www.loc.gov/vets/about.html). We've been supporting the Veterans History Project (VHP) effort by attending VHP workshops offered by the Library of Congress and assisting with outreach and engagement efforts to help spread the word and raise awareness of VHP to as many AI/AN Veterans as possible. If Veterans are willing to share their experiences and stories of their time in service, this ensures that the military service contributions of AI/AN people to the United States will be preserved for future generations to know, appreciate and understand.

Now, turning to recent news and activities, VA Secretary David Shulkin addressed the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) during the 2018 NCAI Winter Session here in DC. Secretary Shulkin opened his remarks with sharing the story of Mr. Bill Scott, Chickasaw Nation Korean War Veteran and son of the renowned Chickasaw Nation aviator, Pearl Carter Scott. Mr. Scott served his country valiantly at a very young age and returned home, using the GI Bill to finish college, VA home loan to purchase his home and received care at VA hospitals over the years. Mr. Scott's life is an example of what we should consistently see across Indian Country, AI/AN Veterans return home from service, access their VA benefits over the course of a lifetime which in turn enhances their overall quality of life. Secretary Shulkin also shared his 5 VA priorities which actually align with the 5 priorities identified by tribal leaders and Veterans during the 2016 VA Tribal Consultation in which the agency asked tribes to identify their top concerns and priorities for Veterans across Indian Country). Secretary Shulkin's 5 are: greater choice; modernize systems; focus resources efficiently; improve timeliness; and suicide prevention while tribal priorities included: access to medical care, addressing housing and homelessness, treatment for PTSD and mental health, understanding benefits, including benefits for families and transportation.

Jefferson Keel, NCAI President and Lt. Governor of the Chickasaw Nation, met individually with Secretary Shulkin at VA Headquarters prior to the NCAI session. The visit was both productive and informative for the Secretary, who looks forward to continued engagement as well as formal consultations with tribal officials in the months ahead.

I would be remiss if I didn't share information about the recent work of our tribal government relations specialists.

Peter Vicaire presented information to the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and received a resolution of support for an issue he's working on regarding illegal state taxation of Native Veterans. Kansas is the most recent state in the process of passing legislation which would return these improper taxes. He then travelled to Akwesasne, NY for a successful veterans event he co-planned with St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Sub-Chief Cheryl Jacobs, and then most recently visited the Veterans group of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians in Dowagiac, Michigan.

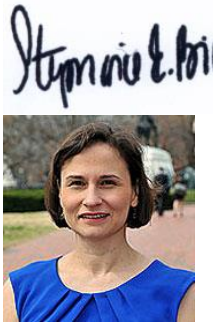
Mary Culley traveled to Washington, D.C. during early February to lend staff support to the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) Veterans Committee during DC Impact week.

Terry Bentley attended (along with VISN 20 staff) the Northwest Portland Indian Area Health Board Quarterly meeting in January where she provided updates to delegates in attendance. She returned to Portland later that month to offer updates and support senior VA officials attending the Winter Session of Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) Veterans Committee.

In the Southwest, Homana Pawiki spent time networking in the state capitals of New Mexico and Arizona. She participated in both Military and Veterans Day and Indian Day hosted by the New Mexico State Legislature, then participated in Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day hosted by the Arizona State Legislature. Homana, along with the other specialists, also reached out directly to tribes participating in the claims events throughout the year, so winter has been a busy time preparing for activities which will be laser focused on linking Indian Country's Veterans to the benefits they've earned and so richly deserve.

As always, if you have suggestions, requests, recommendations or submissions to the OTGR newsletter, please don't hesitate to email us at tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov or check out our website: www.va.gov/tribalgovernment. We look forward to hearing from you.

Warm Regards,



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

Office of Tribal Government Relations

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Secretary Shulkin Addresses National Congress of American Indians

National Native American Veterans Memorial Design Competition

The National Museum of the American Indian will honor Native American servicemen and women in a very visible way: a prominent memorial on the National Mall, a place that draws nearly 24 million visitors annually to Washington, DC.

The National Native American Veterans Memorial represents:

- **a place for reflection**

where generations of Americans can honor the proud and courageous legacy of Native Americans in the military, and look forward to the future;

- **a permanent memorial at the Smithsonian**

planned for the grounds of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, between the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum and the U.S. Capitol;

- **a Native American effort**

driven by the National Museum of the American Indian and Native nations;

- **and a recognition by all Americans,**

a symbol of the country's respect for Native Americans' sacrifice and patriotism. Support from Native American communities and organizations, including our collaboration with the National Congress of American Indians and tribal leaders, is crucial to our success. The memorial is further strengthened with the aid of major corporations and defense contractors, American veterans and their families, and private citizens.

The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian has announced the five finalists for the design of the National Native American Veterans Memorial. View each finalist's design via the links below:

- James Dinh
- Daniel SaSuWeh Jones (Ponca) and Enoch Kelly Haney (Seminole)
- Harvey Pratt (Cheyenne/Arapaho)
- Stefanie Rocknak
- Leroy Transfield (Māori: Ngai Tahu/Ngati Toa)

The finalists shared their visions for the memorial and presented their initial design concepts in a presentation at the NMAI in Washington, D.C., February 7, 2018. You can watch all the presentations HERE and see the design concepts in the next five pages.

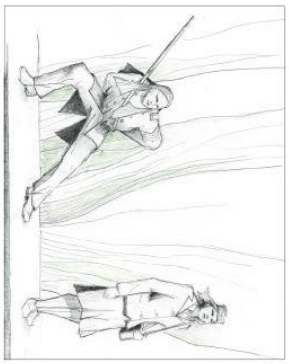
Smithsonian
National Museum of
the American Indian

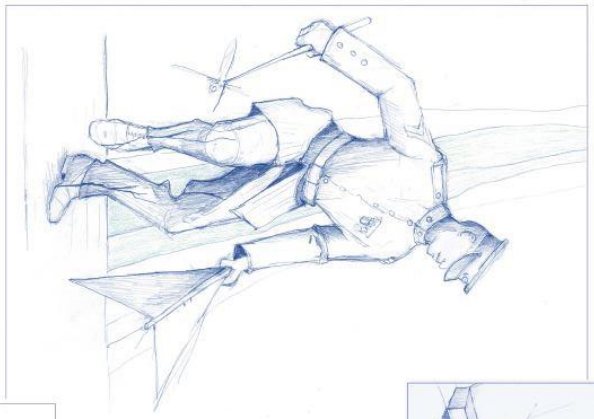
WELLSPRING OF VALOR
James Dinh
The National Native American Veterans Memorial is sited near the Museum's south entrance, next to an old tree, which fosters a deep connection to time and place. A purifying, ever-flowing wellspring serves as the heart of the memorial. From this center five translucent totems reach skyward in solemn dignity to form a star, expressing the nation, the land, and the many brave Native American men and women who served in the five branches of the U.S. Armed Forces to uphold freedom and democracy. Symbolizing those who sacrificed their lives, the middle void is illuminated at night to memorialize their profound absence. The "ripples" of the wellspring extend to an embracing wall of remembrance, on whose face are etched texts documenting each major conflict in U.S. history and acknowledging the contributions of servicemen and women. Individual voices can be quoted to humanize wartime experiences. The concentric circular motif is repeated as light etchings on the wall, like petroglyphs, symbolizing connections across history and boundaries. Emerging from both ends of the wall is an altar-like low platform, for placing offerings and resting, dedicated to family members who wait while their love ones serve. A crescent-shaped, planted landform rises to embrace the wall, recalling ancient earth mounds. Sheltered by the branches of the old tree, the circular area of the memorial provides a contemplative space where people of all backgrounds and generations are welcomed to gather, pray, heal, and reflect on the interconnectedness of life and death, water and earth, land and sky, past and future.
SOUTH ENTRANCE
SCALE: 1" = 8'-0"
N
INDEPENDANCE AVENUE
SITE PLAN

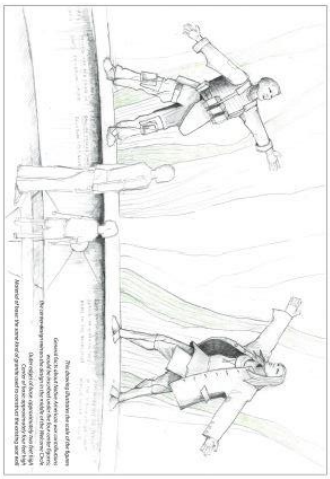
Smithsonian
National Museum of
the American Indian

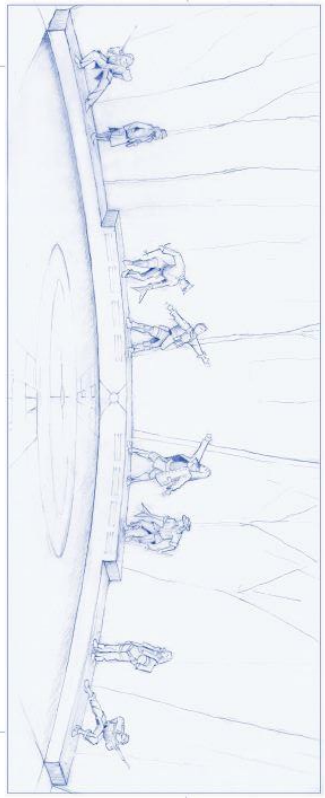
Warrior's Circle of Honor
Harvey Pratt
Sacred Circle
• Surrounds heaven, earth, and pathway followed by Native People who are honor bound
• Wind Spirits can pass through Sacred Circle
• Stainless Steel
Prayer Cloths
• Visitors can tie to lances and vegetation
• Manifestation of prayer, healing, and sacrifice
Lighting
• Accent and directional lighting
Outer Wall
• Four sections
• Five military seals on each outer wall
• Hand-carved granite with openings to allow private meditation space on interior benches
• Gray granite
Water, Fire & Drum
• Central design elements:
• Water = purification, cleansing and reflection. Smooth river rocks in red granite basin
• Fire = strength, courage, endurance, and comfort
• Bronze and Granite Drum = heartbeat of memorial. Connects all elements
• Lava rocks inside drum to sustain fire
Path of Harmony
• Symbolic Path of Harmony is attained by walking Red Road
• Sand colored pavers
Legacy Footprints
• Colored footprints represent warriors of the past, present, and future
• White (Supreme Creator)
• Yellow (Mother Earth)
• Black (Ancestors)
• Poems on end caps are optional
• Semi-precious stones
Warriors Traditional Red Road
• Colored pavers represents a way of life leading to harmony
• Red brick pavers
• Memorial located amongst natural vegetation to allow public to observe and meditate
• Dimensions can be adapted to suit space

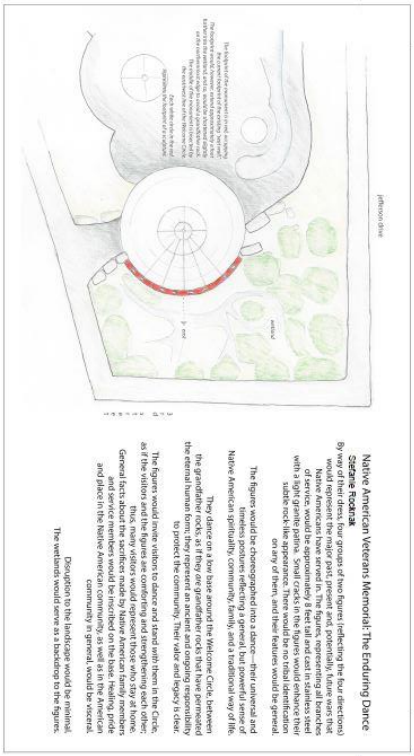
Smithsonian
National Museum of
the American Indian

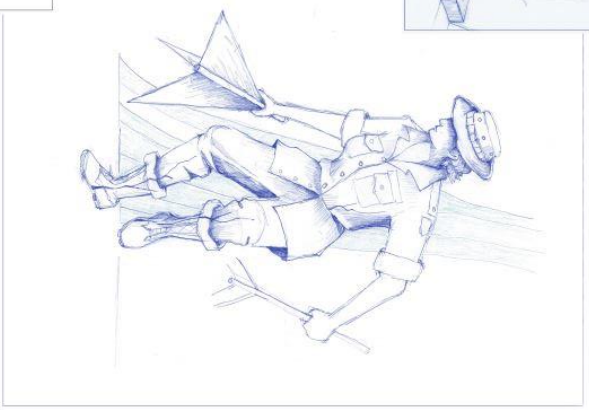




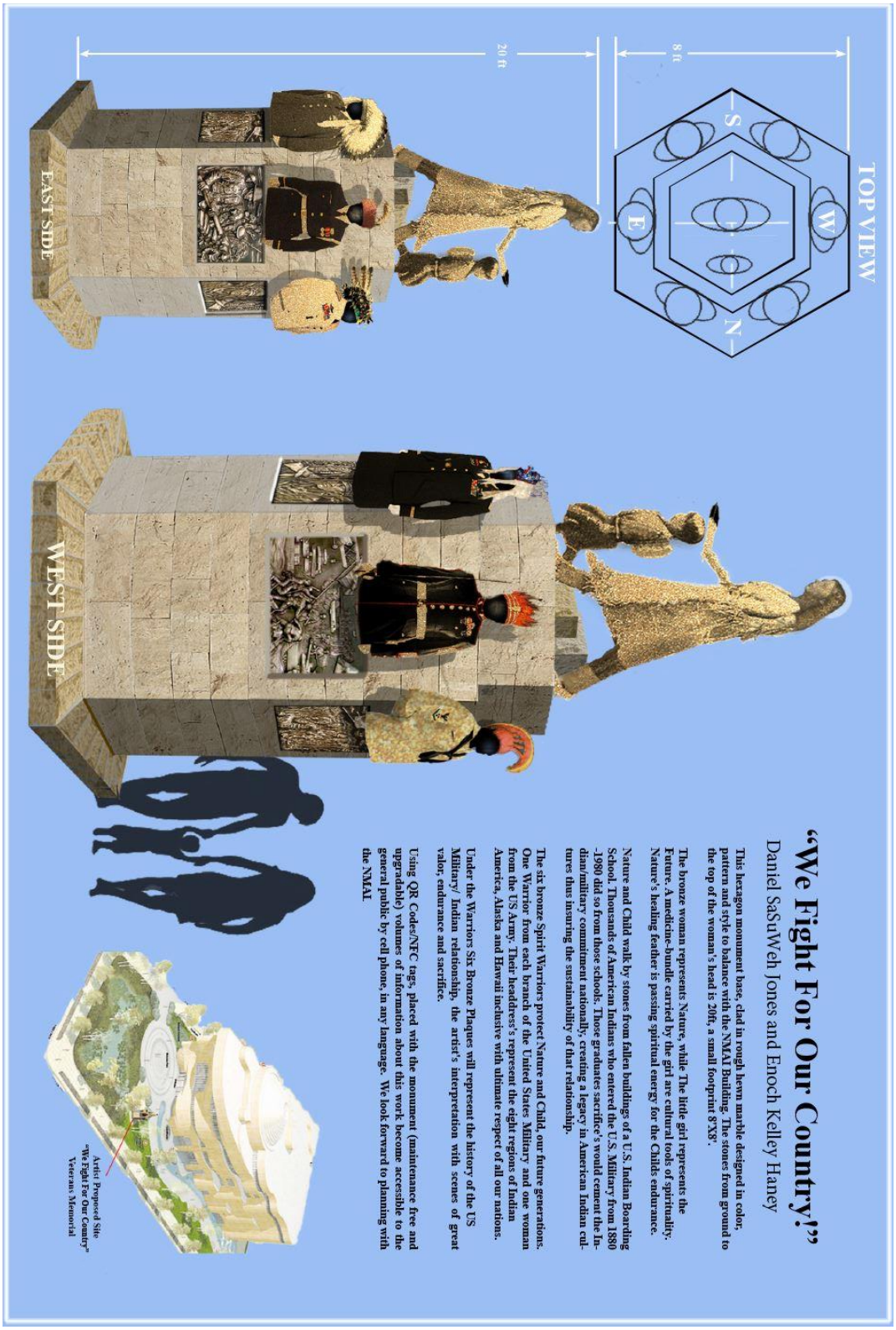




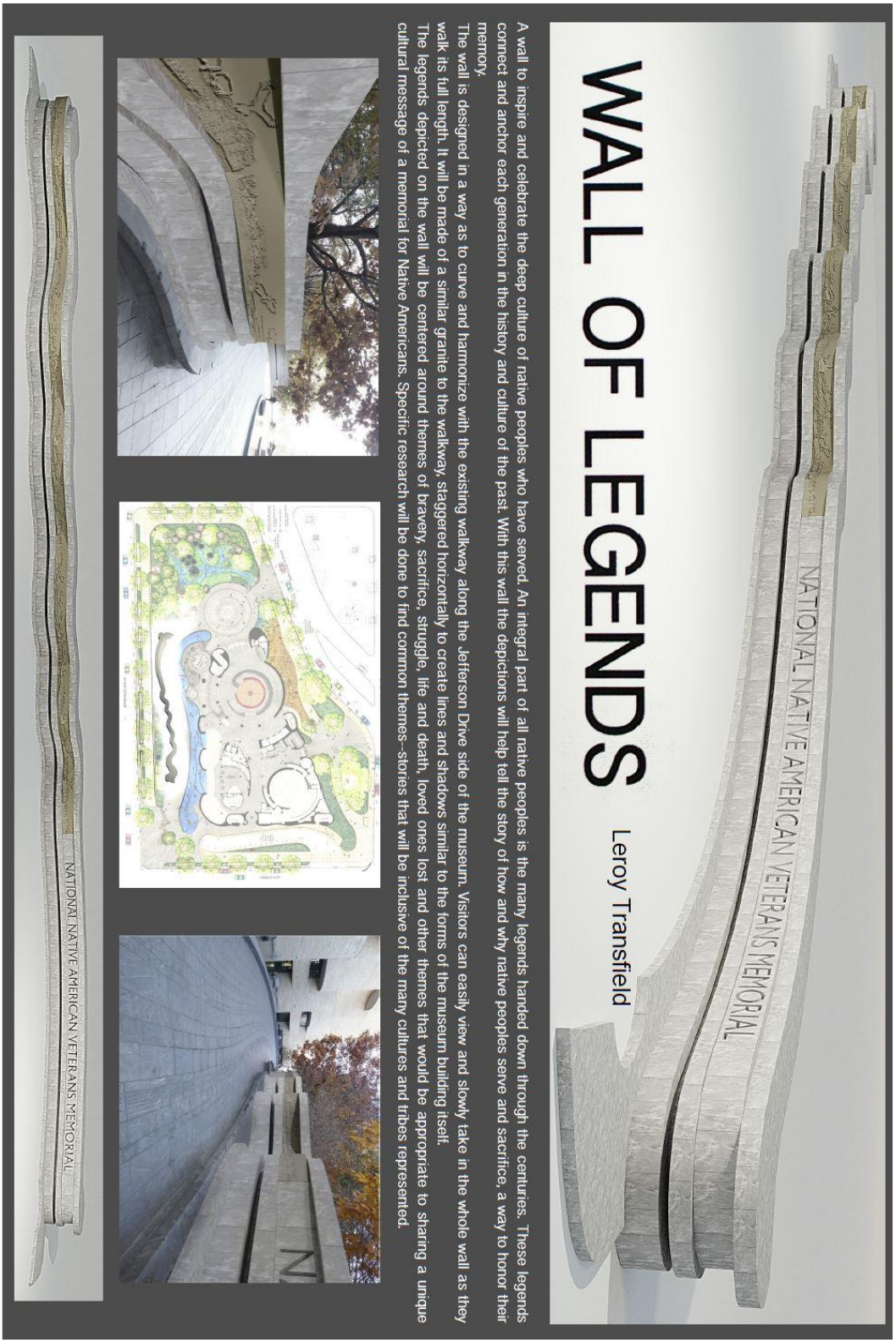

Jefferson Drive
Native American Veterans Memorial: The Enduring Dance
Stefanie Rodriguez
By way of their dress, four groups of two figures (reflecting the four directions) would represent the major past, present and, potentially, future wars that Native American veterans have served in, including the Indian Wars. Each pair of service men would be approximately 8 feet tall and cast in stainless steel with a light granite patina. Small cracks in the figures would enhance their subtle rock-like appearance. There would be no tribal identification on any of them, and their features would be general.
The figures would be choreographed into a dance — their universal and timeless postures reflecting a general but powerful sense of Native American spirituality: community, family, and a traditional way of life.
They dance on a low base around the Welcome Circle, between the grandfather rocks, as if they are grandfather rocks that have permeated the eternal human form; they represent an ancient and ongoing responsibility to protect the community. Their valor and legacy is clear.
The figures would invite visitors to dance and stand with them in the Circle, as if the visitors and the figures are comforting and strengthening each other; thus, many visitors would represent those who stay at home.
General Lecture about the Sacred Circle, Native American veterans, and Sacred Circle Ceremonies would be hosted on the base. Healing, pride and place in the Native American community as well as in the American community in general, would be visceral.
Disruption to the landscape would be minimal.
The wetlands would serve as a backdrop to the figures.



Smithsonian
National Museum of
the American Indian


TOP VIEW
W
S
N
E
8 ft
20 ft
EAST SIDE
WEST SIDE
"We Fight For Our Country!"
Daniel SaSuWeh Jones and Enoch Kelley Haney
This hexagon monument base, clad in rough hewn marble designed in color, pattern and style to balance with the NMAI Building. The stones from ground to the top of the woman's head is 20ft, a small footprint 8'X8'.
The bronze woman represents Nature, while The little girl represents the Future. A medicine-bundle carried by the girl are cultural tools of spirituality. Nature's healing feather is passing spiritual energy for the Childs endurance.
Nature and Child walk by stones from fallen buildings of a U.S. Indian Boarding School. Thousands of American Indians who entered the U.S. Military from 1880 -1980 did so from those schools. Those graduates sacrifice's would cement the Indian/military commitment nationally, creating a legacy in American Indian cultures thus insuring the sustainability of that relationship.
The six bronze Spirit Warriors protect Nature and Child, our future generations. One Warrior from each branch of the United States Military and one woman from the US Army. Their headdress's represent the eight regions of Indian America, Alaska and Hawaii inclusive with ultimate respect of all our nations.
Under the Warriors Six Bronze Plaques will represent the history of the US Military/ Indian relationship, the artist's interpretation with scenes of great valor, endurance and sacrifice.
Using QR Codes/NFC tags, placed with the monument (maintenance free and upgradable) volumes of information about this work become accessible to the general public by cell phone, in any language. We look forward to planning with the NMAI.
Artist Proposed Site
"We Fight For Our Country"
Veterans Memorial

Smithsonian
National Museum of
the American Indian


NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL
WALL OF LEGENDS
Leroy Transfield
A wall to inspire and celebrate the deep culture of native peoples who have served. An integral part of all native peoples is the many legends handed down through the centuries. These legends connect and anchor each generation in the history and culture of the past. With this wall the depictions will help tell the story of how and why native peoples serve and sacrifice, a way to honor their memory.
The wall is designed in a way as to curve and harmonize with the existing walkway along the Jefferson Drive side of the museum. Visitors can easily view and slowly take in the whole wall as they walk its full length. It will be made of a similar granite to the walkway, staggered horizontally to create lines and shadows similar to the forms of the museum building itself.
The legends depicted on the wall will be centered around themes of bravery, sacrifice, struggle, life and death, loved ones lost and other themes that would be appropriate to sharing a unique cultural message of a memorial for Native Americans. Specific research will be done to find common themes--stories that will be inclusive of the many cultures and tribes represented.
NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL

The Washington Post

Native American veterans will be honored with memorial on National Mall

Here's an article from Tara Bahrampour, which ran in The Washington Post on January 14, 2018. Click on the link to see pictures in the article.

The Mall is studded with monuments to iconic people and events, from presidents to wars to civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Later this month, finalists will be announced for a memorial to a group with less name recognition: Native American veterans.

In the 20th century, Native Americans served in the United States military at a higher per capita rate than any other ethnic group, and their service stretches back to the Revolutionary War. This might sound surprising, given their fraught history with the U.S. government. Why would so many choose to fight and sacrifice for a country that has often treated native tribes so badly?

The answer lies in the way many see their patriotism, as inextricably connected with the land itself, said Rebecca Trautmann, project curator of the National Native American Veterans Memorial at the National Museum of the American Indian, upon whose land the memorial will be built. "They have described an inherited responsibility to protect their homeland, their families, their communities and their traditional way of life," she said.

Or as Debra Kay Mooney, a Choctaw who is a veteran of the Iraq War, put it: "Our ancestors are the very groundwork of the United States because we died here first. It's our ancestors' bones and marrow that has degraded into the ground that is actually in the roots and the tops of the tallest trees. . . . We needed to protect our ancestors' bones."

While Congress approved the erection of the memorial in 1994, it did not authorize fundraising for it until 2013. (It is scheduled to be unveiled on Veterans Day in 2020). Museum staff and members of an advisory committee traveled around the country, meeting with tribal leaders and veterans, and came back with a few directives: Be inclusive of all tribes and traditions; don't leave out women; remember the sacrifices of family members; and include an element of spirituality.

The design must be broad enough to encompass the vast array of tribes (567 are federally recognized) yet specific enough that veterans and their families will recognize themselves and their stories. That will not be easy for the panel of experts tasked with selecting the design. For example, some tribes' history of service goes back longer than others; to some, horses were integral, while others never rode them.

"What an intriguing memorial this will ultimately be if it is able to encompass for the casual observer and for Native Americans the oddities of where we stand today as Native Americans in the 21st century," said Kevin Brown, chairman of the Mohegan tribe, who along with Mooney is on the advisory committee. "You have native scouts who were on both sides in the

The Washington Post

Indian Wars, you have the first Native American to die in the defense of what would be called the U.S.A., in the Revolutionary War," a relative of Brown.

The placement of the memorial is significant, said Jefferson Keel, lieutenant governor of the Chickasaw Nation, who is co-chair of the committee. "Anyone who goes out of the Capitol, down those steps, that will be the first thing they see. To me, that's exciting." Keel acknowledged the contradictions inherent in serving a government that did not always serve its native population fairly. "I think it's in the warrior tradition to protect the freedoms that we have, even though we were not allowed to be citizens in general until [the 1920s]. Even before they were allowed to vote, they served." The memorial, he said, is "long overdue."

Many Americans don't know the extent of the more painful history of Native Americans, as well as many of their accomplishments, he said. "We're not what they learned about in public school systems."

That history includes the forcible removal of native children from their families to be educated in boarding schools — which in some ways helped prepare them for service. "Students were taken from homes, their hair cut short, put into military uniforms and made to lead regimented lifestyles — so, often, the military recruited them," Trautmann said.
Among the best-known Native American veterans are the Choctaw, who passed messages in their own language during World Wars I and II — a code the enemy was unable to break. And Ira Hayes, one of six U.S. servicemen to raise the flag at Iwo Jima, became the subject of a Johnny Cash song.

Even among Native Americans there is a knowledge gap about their contributions, said Wayne Don, an Alaska Native who is a colonel in the National Guard. "I didn't know that my two grandfathers were Alaskan territorial guardsmen until I picked up a book," he said.
Over 31,000 Native American men and women are on active duty, and more than 140,000 veterans identify as Native Americans or Alaska Natives. Typically, they are celebrated in their own communities, with ceremonies and warrior societies that help them when they return from service. In 2004, a powwow was held in a combat zone near Fallujah, for which family members sent clothes and other items from the United States.

But despite the high status of warriors in many tribal traditions, Native Americans often have a harder time than the general population gaining access to veterans' benefits, Trautmann said. "On the one hand, they have this support from the community that other vets don't, and on the other hand, it can be harder for them to access medical and social services," she said. "Many of them turn to traditional healing to deal with some of the PTSD from combat."
An important aspect of the memorial is that "it's intended to welcome these vets and be a healing experience for them, whether it's for vets who served many years ago, vets just returning from service or families who lost members in service," Trautmann said. One of those is Allen Hoe, a Native Hawaiian and Vietnam veteran whose 27-year-old son Nainoa was killed in Iraq in 2005.

The Washington Post

"He was very proud of the fact that his ancestors for 100 generations were warriors," said Hoe, who has another son in the military. "He wanted to step forward and provide the gratitude to his ancestors and conduct himself the way they would want him to."

Hoe said he was originally shocked and disappointed to learn there was not already a memorial honoring Native American veterans. "I was puzzled as to why not," he said, adding that he has since become active in veterans' initiatives such as the memorial. "There's not a lot you can do to change the past, but you can do your best to set the way forward."
While many served with distinction, recognition was not always accorded to them in their lifetime.

Master Sgt. Woodrow Wilson ("Woody") Keeble, a full-blooded Sioux, served in World War II and later in Korea. He was recommended for a Medal of Honor, but the paperwork was lost; he was finally given the award posthumously, in 2008. "He would be very honored" to see the memorial, said Keeble's stepson, Russell Hawkins. "He comes from a warrior culture that epitomized all the values of honor and bravery, and he would want the story to be told."

Hawkins also hopes the memorial, by highlighting Native Americans' service and sacrifice, will do something else. "I think the most bigoted white supremacist, when he reads what Woody did, saving the lives of his fellow soldiers, he'll say, 'Gee, maybe these guys aren't so bad after all. Maybe they deserve a little bit more understanding, a little bit more compassion.' "I think even the hardest heart will soften."

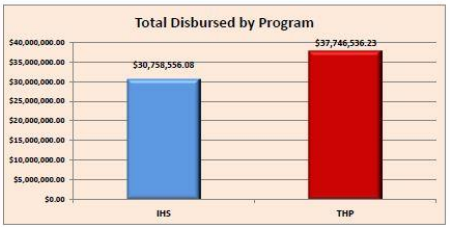
VA Reimburses over $68.5 Million to IHS and Tribal Health Programs

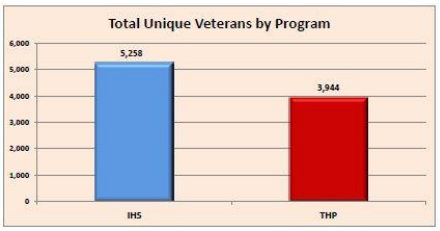
Tribal health clinics interested in entering a reimbursement agreement with VA for serving veterans should send an initial note of interest to: tribal.agreements@va.gov

Indian Health Service/Tribal Health Program

National Data				
Total Disbursement for IHS/THP Program Agreement Date to FYTD	Total Disbursement by Program - Agreement Date to FYTD			Total Unique Veterans for IHS/THP Program Agreement Date to FYTD
	Program	Total Disbursed	Total Unique Veterans	
$68,505,092.31	IHS	$30,758,556.08	5,258	8,994
	THP	$37,746,536.23	3,944	

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





Free Veterans Welding Course

Wounded Warriors Family Support has partnered with United Auto Workers and Ford Motor Company, to offer a Veterans Welding Training Program. This program is specifically for Purple Heart Recipients, however if we do not have enough Purple Heart Recipient submissions, the program is extended to Honorable Discharged Veterans.
**The training is offered at no cost or use of benefits to the Veterans.

Veterans can obtain up to six certifications through the American Welding Society.

- Shield Metal Arc Welding (SMAW or Stick)
- Gas Metal Arc Welding (GMAW or MIG)
- Gas Tungsten Arc Welding (GTAW or TIG)
- Oxy-acetylene welding, cutting and brazing (stick)
- Plasma cutting
- Brazing and soldering

The following are the course dates:
course commences 9April 2018 and graduates 18 May 2018.
course commences 20 May 2018 and graduates 29 June 2018
course commences 1 Oct 2018 and graduates 9 Nov 2018

Below are the logistics:

1. Location of Training, Technical Training Center, 25500 Outer Drive, Lincoln Park, MI
2. Hours of Operations are 6:30 AM to 4:30 PM
3. Training hours 7:00 am to 3:00 PM
4. United Auto Workers and Ford Motor Company covers the cost of the Welding Training Program.
5. Provide Breakfast and Lunch Monday through Friday
6. WWFS, covers the following:
   A. Transportation from home of residences to Detroit Michigan
   B. Dual Loading at the Lincoln Park, MI, Marriott, Hotel.
   C. A weekly per diem check in the amount of $100.00 dollars for local participants and $200.00 dollars for out of town/State participants.
   D. Upon graduation, transportation from Detroit Michigan to home of residences.

If you have any Purple Heart Recipients or any Veteran with an Honorable Discharge interested on attending the Veterans Welding Training Program, have them go to the below link and submit their online application.

To apply for the Veterans Welding Training, please fill out the following application. For more information about the program, call Martin Duarte at *Wounded Warriors Family Support*: (760) 405-7777. Or E-mail at: martin.duarte@wwfs.org.

http://www.wwfs.org/wounded-warriors-family-support/training/veterans-welding-training-program

Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Veterans Receive New Vehicle through Wounded Warriors Family Support and Copper Country Ford.

Here's an article and video [1:34] by Mariah Powell, which ran in the NBC TV6 on December 12, 2017. Tribes in need of a vehicle for veterans should make a request to Martin Duarte at Wounded Warriors Family Support at (760) 405-7777 or martin.duarte@wwfs.org

"Well, it is a brand new Explorer and we are really glad to help. We've been supporters of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community for years and when they tie it in with the Wounded Warriors, it gets me all warm and fuzzy and I really feel good about supporting both causes at one time," said Copper Country Ford owner and general manager David Johnson. The 2018 Ford Explorer XLT will give veterans reliable transportation to doctor's appointments and other events year round.

"I can't wait for us to get this. It is going to be a safe means for veterans to be able to get in and out of their vehicle safely without having to climb in and out of a van and to be able to get to their appointments, pretty much like the Marine Corps, any time and place," said Rodney Loonsfoot of the Marine Corps Keweenaw Detachment. Loonsfoot is the first Michigan Veterans Service Member for a tribe in the state.

"The whole idea is to have tribal veterans have somebody advocate, help and file their benefits, their compensation and their educational claims and then be able to help them navigate the VA system the way it is," said Loonsfoot.

The KBIC veterans program welcomes new members. They will hold a coffee social for interested tribal veterans after the holidays.

Office of Tribal Government Relations

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

WOUNDED WARRIORS FAMILY SUPPORT
WOUNDEDWARRIORSFAMILYSUPPORT.ORG

May 17, 2016

Greetings,

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Martin Duarte

Martin Duarte
Assistant Program Director/ Outreach

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

Mississipi Band of Choctaw Indians Signs VA Native American Direct Home Loan Agreement

Here's an article from WTOK which ran on December 4, 2017.

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians has signed a memorandum of understanding with the VA Loan Guaranty Service to benefit tribal veterans. Chief Phyliss Anderson and the program's director, Jeffrey London, recently signed the document that will make the process of applying for a VA home loan easier for eligible Native American veterans, active-duty military and their spouses on federal trust land. The loans could be used for building, buying or renovating a home. "Many people have been working diligently for years to make this happen," said Anderson. "This agreement between the tribe and the VA will greatly benefit many Native veterans, especially our Choctaw veterans."

Tribal Chief Phyliss J. Anderson and Jeffrey London, director of the VA Loan Guaranty Service, sign a memorandum of understanding to offer low interest loans to veterans, active-duty military and their spouses to build, purchase or refurbish a home on the reservation.

The Choctaw Mortgage Program, located at the Choctaw Town Center, will serve as the local office to assist veterans with their VA home loan application process. Home ownership counselor, Daniel Tubby, will be the point of contact and may be reach at 601-656-0056, ext. 2678, or by email at daniel.s.tubby@choctaw.org.

2018 National Veterans Day Poster Contest

Calling all artists! The 2018 National Veterans Day Poster Contest is underway. Each year the Veterans Day National Committee publishes a commemorative Veterans Day poster. The poster is selected from artwork submitted by artists nationwide and is distributed to VA facilities, military installations around the world across cities and town in our nation. It also serves as the cover of the official program for the Veterans Day Observance at Arlington National Cemetery.

Over the years these posters have illustrated the rich history of our country's service men and women. The poster clearly reflects our pride and patriotism in saluting Veterans while providing the thematic artistry for the year.

2018 marks the Centennial Commemoration of the end of World War I on November 11, 1918. The theme for the 2018 Veterans Day Poster is: "The War to End All Wars".

The origin of Veterans Day came from Armistice Day.

Poster guidelines, submissions must:

- Be 18" x 24" at 300 dots per inch, scale down submissions to 9"x12."
- Submissions are not restricted to "human centric" presentations, such as a joint color guard. Imagery of American icons, monuments or scenery can qualify, for example, the American flag.
- Representative of the Veterans serving during World War I. The Committee may select a particular submission but ask the artist to make modifications to the original design. Additional changes may be required prior to printing.
- Include sufficient information to demonstrate that the image is the work of the artist and is not copyrighted material (i.e. photos and concepts).
- To view examples of past winning submissions visit: http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/gallery.asp

Submit electronic versions as jpg images or PDF files by email to vetsday@va.gov or send copies of artwork on a CD with artwork files to:

Veterans Day National Committee (002D)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

To view examples of past winning submissions visit http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/gallery.asp.

The deadline for submissions is 1 April, 2018. The Veterans Day National Committee will convene a selection sub-committee in May 2018 to review submissions and make a final selection.

Questions? – contact the Veterans Day Coordinator at vetsday@va.gov.

Tillman Scholar Program

PAT TILLMAN FOUNDATION

The Tillman Scholar Program unites and empowers remarkable military veterans and spouses as the next generation of public and private sector leaders committed to service beyond self.

The fellowship supports Tillman Scholars with academic scholarships, a national network, and professional development opportunities so they are empowered to make an impact in the fields of medicine, law, business, policy, technology, education and the arts.

Deadline: March 1, 2018 at 11:59 p.m. (PT)

The scholarship assists with academic expenses, and can be used for tuition and fees, living expenses, and books. Tillman Scholars can expect an average award of $10,000. Read our Application One Pager and explore profiles of the Tillman Scholars to see what distinguishes our most successful applicants. Questions? Review the FAQs.

http://pattillmanfoundation.org/apply-to-be-a-scholar/

The following candidates may apply to become a Tillman Scholar:

- Veteran and active-duty military service members
  - Pre-and post-9/11 service eras
  - From all branches of the U.S. Military including National Guard and Reserve
- Current spouses of veterans or active-duty service members, including surviving spouses
- Service members or spouses pursuing a degree as a full-time* student:
  - Undergraduate (Bachelor's or above)
  - Graduate or professional degree
  - At a public or private, U.S.-based accredited institution

***Full-time as determined by your institution and program of study**

Society of American Indian Government Employees

OTGR Central Region

(IA; MI; MN; MT; ND; NE; SD; WI; WY)

Fargo Air Museum Honors Native American Soldiers and Veterans

Here's an article and video [2:19] by Cassandra Rohlfing from WDAY6, which ran on October 19, 2017

FARGO—A new addition at the Fargo Air Museum is honoring Native American veterans and soldiers from across the state. Inside the Fargo Air Museum, Flags representing the five North Dakota Native American nations will now be hung from the museum's ceiling among dozens of other national flags. Some people say, it's about time.

If you ask Tyrell DeCoteau why he chose to serve in the military, the answer for him stems back to his ancestors. DeCoteau said, "Was always my people's main mission. To protect our families, our communities, our people and our way of life."

To carry on his Native American heritage, is something he holds near to him. "Always stay true to our people, it's not going away. As long as we have people willing to share the tradition," said DeCoteau. DeCoteau isn't alone. He's one of over 1,500 Native veterans across the state.

Now, at the Fargo Air Museum, is a permanent reminder of those men and women.
At a ceremony Thursday morning, flags from three of the five North Dakota Tribes were presented to hang along the Museum's national flags. An honor that some say should have happened long ago, because of how prominent Native Americans are in the armed forces.

"More Native Americans, volunteer for the military at a higher rate than any other ethnicity," said DeCoteau. In fact, according to the National Museum of the American Indian, Natives have served in every major conflict since the revolutionary war. But, like DeCoteau, these honored veterans didn't join for recognition. They joined to serve and protect. The five nations are Turtle Mountain Chippewa, Three Affiliated Tribes, Spirit Lake, Standing Rock and the Sisseton-Wahpeton tribe.

Huge Turnout for Akwesasne Veterans Benefit Summit

Here's an article by Mahlon Smoke which ran in Indian Time on February 8, 2017.

Within the Akwesasne Housing Authority training room, an enormous group of Veterans from US military branches gathered to learn about the many benefits that are available to them. Speakers from all around New York State such as US Department of US Veterans Affairs, Gerald H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery, a Mobile Veterans Center with a Readjustment Counselor, and Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation program came to offer support and education about every benefit that they have to offer. Veterans arrived not only from Akwesasne but also from Kahnawake and Kanatsiohareke. They had come to find benefits for Canadian territories previously thought unavailable by many community members.

The Akwesasne Benefits Summit was co-coordinated by Sub-Chief Cheryl Jacobs and Peter Vicaire, from Veterans Affairs, Office of Tribal Government Relations. Jacobs met Vicaire last year at a summit where she expressed interest in bringing something similar to Akwesasne. Two years ago, the American Legion Post 1479 held a summit for Veterans, but Jacobs wanted to bring it back again. She kept in contact with Vicaire and they began to arrange the many speakers and programs. She felt that there was a need to reach out to brothers and sisters of various communities about the services available to them, not only in the U.S., but in Canada as well. Being a veteran of the US Military herself, she was amazed about all the information that was out there and wanted to educate those who didn't know about it.

This summit was a year in the making and on February 1st, 2018, it was ready to go and was met with a room filled to the brim with Veterans who were all eager to learn about all the programs that were at their fingertips. The summit began at 12:00pm sharp with opening remarks by Sub-Chief Jacobs, Dr. Judy Hayman of Syracuse VA Medical Center, and Jordanna Mallach of NYS Division of Veterans Affairs. The afternoon was filled with educational lectures about important topics such as the Native American Direct Loan, VA Health Care Eligibility/Enrollment, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder counseling, Suicide Prevention, and many other benefits and services.

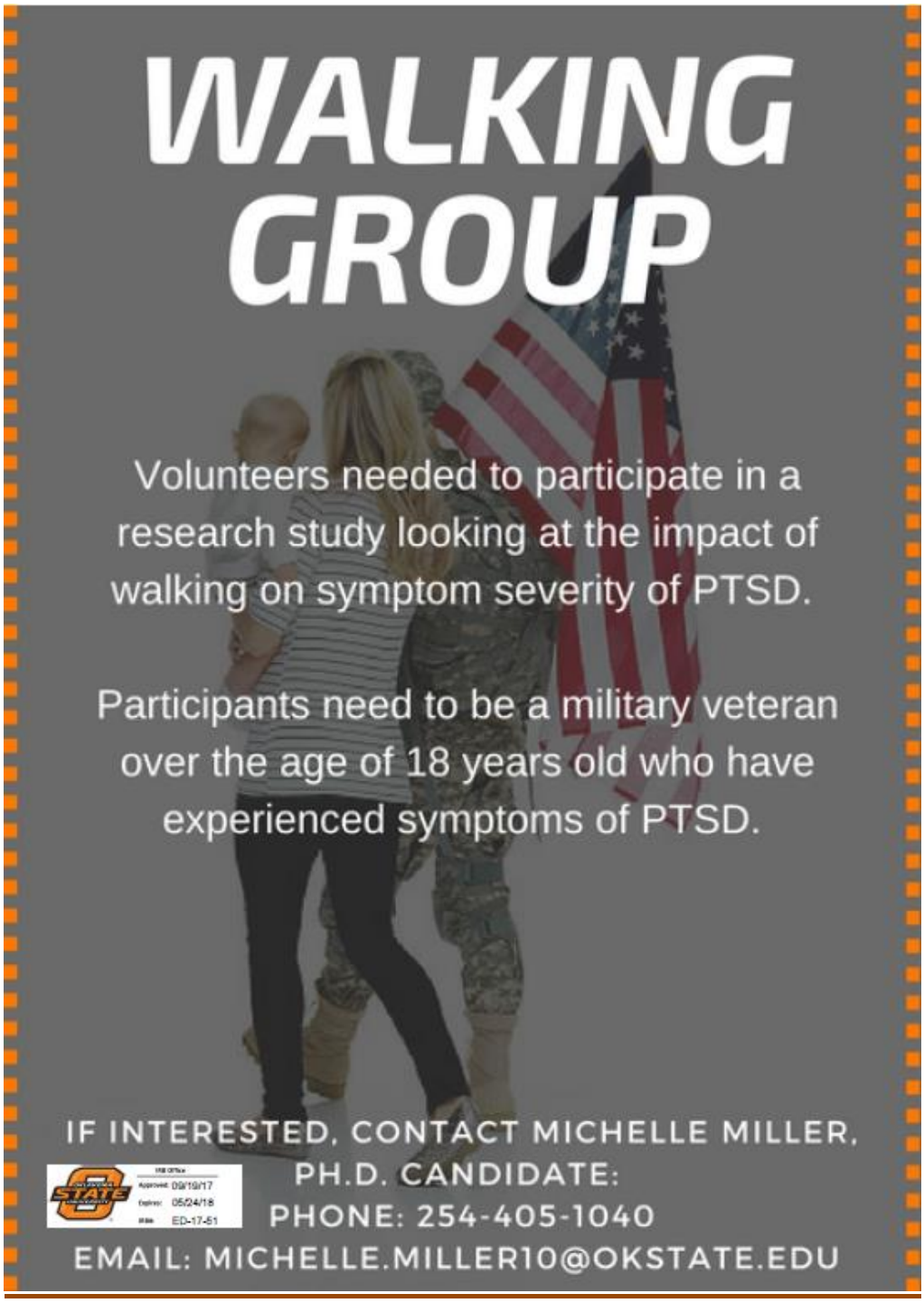
One other program that came was outside the Training Room: a large RV held the mobile office of Shawn Crandall, a Readjustment Counselor. His work is to help out those who have returned from war with counseling not only for them, but their families as well - free of charge. Crandall came to the Akwesasne Summit to make connections and meet people who could benefit from what services he offered, especially those who live in Rochester, NY area where he is based. His inclusion as well as other programs was part of Cheryl Jacobs' final speech at the end of the night and before the spaghetti dinner that was provided for everyone.

"I really need to thank Lori Thompson, Courtney Jacobs, Anne Bero, and all the tribal employees who helped make this summit a reality," Sub-Chief Jacobs said.

Jacobs also presented gifts to everyone who had come to give lectures and of course ended the day with a free dinner. Sub-Chief Jacobs hopes that they can have another summit similar to the one held and she expressed gratitude to everyone involved.

OTGR Southern Plains Region

(KS; OK; TX)



FLYINGTEE
fun / food / games / golf
FIRST RESPONDER FRIDAY
POLICE - EMS - FIRE - ACTIVE MILITARY - VETS
PLAY FOR FREE
JANUARY 12
FEBRUARY 9
MARCH 9
APRIL 13
MAY 11
JUNE 8
YOU SERVE FOR US ALL.
LET US SERVE YOU!
*Valid ID required. Must have Honor Roll Membership to receive Free bay time.
WWW.FLYINGTEEGOLF.COM

Register Now!

March 25-28, 2018

University of Oklahoma American Indian Institute

2018 Native Women and Men's Wellness and Diabetes Prevention Conference • New Orleans

aii. ou. edu

Registration is Now Open

Conference Registration Fee $495

See below for links

Aii at the University of Oklahoma invites you to join us in New Orleans for the 2018 Native Women and Men's Wellness and Diabetes Prevention Conference. Aii was established in 1951 and for 66 years we have presented Native Americans and others with hundreds of professional conference opportunities on Native American Wellness and Diabetes Prevention. We are growing and expanding!

Please join us at the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel in the French Quarter, corner of Bourbon Street and Canal Boulevard in New Orleans.

• National speakers • CEUs provided • Networking opportunities
• Materials that can be brought back to enhance your current prevention services

Two Post Conference Opportunities:

March 28-30, 2018

1 LifeCentrics STRESSCARE Mastery™ AND MENTOR TRAINING
Energize • Empower • Enjoy
Registration Fee $425

2
Native Fitness Training Workshop
Registration Fee $425

Upcoming Events for Service Members

Date	Event	Contact
February 14th, 2018 10:00 AM Tulsa Library 400 Civic Center	Veterans Job Club Free Parking in Library Garage	Jeff Fryer 918-682-3364x233 jeff.fryer@oesc.state.ok.us amie.farinella@oesc.state.ok.us
February 20th, 2018 7:00 PM—9:00 PM 4021 W Broadway St in Muskogee	Veteran Town Hall at American Legion Post 15 Discussing Eastern OK VA Healthcare System	http://www.legion.org/systemworthsaving
February 21, 2018 6:00 PM—8:30 PM Near Downtown OKC	First of Free Six-Session Education Program On Supporting Veterans with Mental Health Conditions	Register: http://bit.ly/NAMIHomefront More Info: Wendy 405-601-8283 wendy@namioklahoma.org
February 28th, 2018 10:00 AM Workforce Ctr 717 S 32nd St in Muskogee	Veterans Job Club	Jeff Fryer 918-682-3364x233 jeff.fryer@oesc.state.ok.us amie.farinella@oesc.state.ok.us
February 28th, 2018 6:00 PM—9:00 PM Smitty's 7104 S Sheridan Rd in Tulsa	Smitty's Garage "Night of Giving" Benefitting CSC's BRRX4VETS Program	
February 28th, 2018	Last Day for Presentation Proposals To Zarrow Symposium	Apply: www.zarrowsymposium.org Info: JoBeth Hamon 405-898-8704 jhamon@mhaok.org
March 2nd—5th, 2018 Chesapeake Energy Arena in OKC	Big 12 Women's Basketball Championship Discounted Military Tickets: $5	https://okcallsports.regfox.com/military Promo Code: MILITARY Or bring Military ID/proof of service to counter
March 9th, 2018 FlyingTee	First Responder Friday Play for Free	More Info: www.flyingteegolf.com
March 10th, 2018 8:15 AM—4:00 PM Wes Watkins Center at OSU Stillwater	Women Veterans Symposium "Be a Force for Change"	RSVP by March 3 to: militaryveterans@okstate.edu
March 15th, 2017 7:00 PM FUMC 112 E College St in Broken Arrow	Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day	Military History Center 918-794-2712
April 10th, 2018 3:30 PM—7:30 PM Exchange Center—Expo Square	Free Home Builders Event	
April 13th, 2018 FlyingTee	First Responder Friday Play for Free	More Info: www.flyingteegolf.com
April 14th, 2018 9:00 AM—2:00 PM Canyon Crossing, 1651 E Old N Rd	Oklahoma Women Veterans "Spiritual Retreat" In Sand Springs	Reserve a place with: Chaplain Nancy McCoy 918-577-3760
April 21st, 2018 8:00 AM—12:00 PM Location TBA	Heroes on the Water Northeast Oklahoma Chapter	neokla@heroesonthewater.org
April 27th, 2018 4:00 PM Albert E Schwab Statue, Tulsa Airport	Wreath Laying Ceremony	

Date	Event	Contact
April 28th, 2018 8:00 AM Floral Haven in Broken Arrow	Veterans Breakfast	
April 28th, 2018 9:30 AM Floral Haven in Broken Arrow	Wreath Laying Ceremony Medal of Honor Walk	
April 28th, 2018 1:00 PM Veterans Park in Tulsa	Medal of Honor Day Ceremony	
May 12th, 2018 8:00 AM—12:00 PM Location TBA	Heroes on the Water Northeast Oklahoma Chapter	neokla@heroesonthewater.org
May 17th, 2018	Veterans and Military Appreciation Day	Mary Meeks 580-559-5541 mmeeks@ecok.edu
June 23rd, 2018 8:00 AM—12:00 PM Location TBA	Heroes on the Water Northeast Oklahoma Chapter	neokla@heroesonthewater.org
July 21st, 2018 8:00 AM—12:00 PM Location TBA	Heroes on the Water Northeast Oklahoma Chapter	neokla@heroesonthewater.org
August 11th, 2018 8:00 AM—12:00 PM Location TBA	Heroes on the Water Northeast Oklahoma Chapter	neokla@heroesonthewater.org
September 15th, 2018 8:00 AM—12:00 PM Location TBA	Heroes on the Water Northeast Oklahoma Chapter	neokla@heroesonthewater.org
October 4th-5th, 2018 Cox Business Center in Tulsa	Zarrow Symposium	www.zarrowsymposium.org
October 27th, 2018 12:00 PM—4:00 PM Location TBA	Heroes on the Water Northeast Oklahoma Chapter	neokla@heroesonthewater.org

Recurring Events for Service Members

Date	Event	Contact
Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 6:00 AM Turkey Mountain	TAP into Resilience Trail Run/Walk Group	Stacy Hester 918-891-1419 stacy@transitionandpurpose.com
Tuesdays 3:30 PM—4:30 PM Tulsa Vet Center	Guitar Lessons Open to Veterans eligible for Vet Center Services	918-628-2760 www.vetcenter.va.gov
Tuesdays 6:15 PM—7:30 PM Rebel Yoga, Broken Arrow	Rebel Flow Yoga	jennifer.kuntz@teamrwb.org More at: RWB Tulsa's Facebook Page
Tuesdays Coffee Bunker	Lady Bunker	Scott Blackburn 918-637-3878 www.coffeebunker.org
Tuesdays (all but 2nd of month)	The Community Foodbank of Eastern Oklahoma Mobile Eatery	Jim Lyall jlyall@okfoodbank.org
Tuesdays, Thursdays 6:00 AM Calisthenics Park 56th&Riverside	TAP into Resilience Stretches & Calisthenics Groups	Stacy Hester 918-891-1419 stacy@transitionandpurpose.com
Wednesdays 3:00 PM—5:00 PM Coffee Bunker	Employment Assistance	Scott Blackburn 918-637-3878 www.coffeebunker.org
Wednesdays 12:30 PM Coffee Bunker	The Community Foodbank of Eastern Oklahoma Mobile Eatery	Jim Lyall jlyall@okfoodbank.org
Thursdays 11:45 AM Tulsa Vet Center	The Community Foodbank of Eastern Oklahoma Mobile Eatery	Jim Lyall jlyall@okfoodbank.org
Fridays 12:30 PM Coffee Bunker	The Community Foodbank of Eastern Oklahoma Mobile Eatery	Jim Lyall jlyall@okfoodbank.org
Fridays 5:30 PM Valor Strength & Fitness Midtown	Functional Fitness	jennifer.kuntz@teamrwb.org More at: RWB Tulsa's Facebook Page
Saturdays 8:00 AM Valor Fitness—6th & Lewis	Run/Walk/Roll	jennifer.kuntz@teamrwb.org More at: RWB Tulsa's Facebook Page
Saturdays 9:15 AM The Phoenix—6th & Peoria in Tulsa	Coffee, Tea, and RWB	jennifer.kuntz@teamrwb.org More at: RWB Tulsa's Facebook Page
Saturdays 12:00 PM—1:00 PM Coffee Bunker	Fighting Addiction	Scott Blackburn 918-637-3878 www.coffeebunker.org
1st and 3rd Thursdays 9:30 AM Kirk of the Hills Church, Room B8	Veterans Gathering Lunch Served after Meeting by All Veterans Association, Inc.	Jim DeLoach 918-298-2882 David Rule 918-698-5395 Jim Holman 918-640-8556

Office of Tribal Government Relations

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Date	Event	Contact
2nd Monday Each Month 6:30 PM Family Center 6420 S 129th E Ave in BA	Military Order Purple Heart Chapter 589	Mitch Reed mitch@valornet.com
2nd Tuesday Each Month 5:30 PM—7:30 PM Oklahoma Joe's 6175 E 61st St Tulsa	Veterans Gathering	Jim Holman hii@tulsacoxmail.com
2nd Wednesday Each Month 10:00 AM — 12:00 PM Tulsa Library (Aaronson Auditorium)	Veterans Job Club	Jeff Fryer 918-682-3364x233 jeff.fryer@oesc.state.ok.us
2nd Thursday Each Month 11:30 AM—1:30 PM CSC Office, 2nd Floor	Warrior Partnerships of Eastern Oklahoma	Peter Luitwieler pluitwieler@csctulsa.org
2nd Saturday in Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec 10:00 AM Woodlake Church 7100 E 31st St, Tulsa	Oklahoma Women Veterans Organization Tulsa Chapter 0212	womenvetstulsa@gmail.com
3rd Thursday Each Month 9:00 AM—1:00 PM S Tulsa Community House, 5780 S Peoria	Monthly Veteran's Day Grocery Program: Veterans may get enough groceries to feed their household for 5-7 days.	southtulsacommunityhouse.org 918-742-5597 communityhouse@tulsacoxmail.com
3rd Thursday Each Month 2:00 PM VFW Post #577	Mayor of Tulsa Veterans Advisory Council Meeting	Sandy Oxford 918-628-2760 sandra.oxford@va.gov
3rd Saturday Each Month 9:30 AM Golden Corral 21st & Memorial	USMC Northeast Oklahoma Chosin Few	Jim Holman
3rd Saturday Each Month 11:00 AM—12:00 PM American Legion Post 308	USS Tulsa Memorial Fleet Reserve Association Branch 280	Cher Garrett 918-504-0155 www.fra.org
3rd Wednesday Each Month 10:00 AM—12:00 PM OK Workforce 717 S 32nd St in Muskogee	Muskogee USAJOBS Workshop USAJOBS account must be established, Spots Limited, Must RSVP to Attend	Jeff Fryer 918-682-3364x233 jeff.fryer@oesc.state.ok.us amie.farinella@oesc.state.ok.us
4th Wednesday Each Month 10:00 AM—12:00 PM OK Workforce 717 S 32nd St in Muskogee	Muskogee Veterans Job Club	Jeff Fryer 918-682-3364x233 jeff.fryer@oesc.state.ok.us amie.farinella@oesc.state.ok.us
4th Thursday Each Month 9:30 AM Legend at Tulsa Hills 701 W 71st St	All Veterans Assoc., Inc. Meeting	Jim DeLoach 918-298-2882 David Rule 918-698-5395 Jim Holman 918-640-8556
4th Saturday Each Month 9:00 AM VFW Post 577	Tulsa Marine Corps League Schwab Det 857	http://www.mclschwabdet857.com/
4th Saturday Each Month 12:00 PM—4:00 PM Coffee Bunker	Healing for Veterans (Contact for Monday Appointment As Well)	Nancy Scott creekladyhealer@gmail.com
Last Tuesday Each Month 9:00 AM Tapestry at Woodland Hills	Veterans Breakfast (RSVP Requested)	Crystal Nichols 918-893-6177 http://www.tapestrytulsa.com/
September 1st—December 31st Flexible Hours—Call Forge of Honor	Free Blacksmith & Welding Instruction for Veterans and First Responders	Don Johnson 918-510-7074 don@forgeofhonorfoundation.org
1st Thursday Each Month 5:45 PM Ollie's at 41st W & Southwest Blvd	Tulsa Militaria & Gun Club	Jim DeLoach 918-298-2882 David Rule 918-698-5395 Jim Holman 918-640-8556

WP Warrior Partnerships of Eastern Oklahoma — Connecting Veterans

Ongoing Events for Service Members

Community Service Council — Improving Oklahomans' Lives Through Research, Planning & Action

Date	Event	Contact
Paralyzed Veterans of America 125 Main Street, Room 1B-26 Muskogee, OK 74403	PAVE: Paving Access for Veterans Employment	Melody Banneck 918-781-7768 melodym@pva.org
Walking Group	Volunteers Needed to Participate in a Study Examining the Impact of Walking on PTSD	Michelle Miller 254-405-1040 michelle.miller10@okstate.edu
Four Year Research Project	'Operation Deep Dive' to Examine Veteran Suicide Causes and Factors	Read More Here

Native American Combat Veterans Group

Location: Norman First American United Methodist Church
1950 Beaumont Drive, Norman, Oklahoma, 73071

Purpose:
This group provides the opportunity for Native American Combat Veterans to transform the way PTSD impacts them and their life.

Eligibility:
Contact Billy Grimes with the Oklahoma City Vet Center to determine eligibility by phone at (405) 456-5184.

Meeting Days: 3rd Monday of every month

Meeting Times: 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Dates:

March 6, 2018	March 20, 2016
April 3, 2018	April 17, 2018
May 1, 2018	May 15, 2018
June 5, 2018	June 19, 2018

To be added to the distribution list for this calendar or to contribute upcoming events for Veterans, please email:

Pete Luitwieler
pluitwieler@csctulsa.org

GOODWILL TULSAWORKS CAREER ACADEMY

Enroll in Career Readiness Training and move on to other classes:

Employment Essentials, Workplace Computer Skills (Outlook, Word, Excel), Computer Support Tech, Hospitality, Private Security, or Forklift.

Schedule and class descriptions at:

www.goodwilltulsa.org

Disclaimer

Links to non-Federal and Federal organizations are provided solely as a service to our users. These links do not constitute an endorsement of these organizations or their programs by the Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa or the Federal Government, and none should be inferred. The Community Service Council is not responsible for the content of the individual organization Web pages found at these links nor the information provided on these events by organizations or individuals.

OTGR Southwest Region

(AZ; CO; NM; UT)

OTGR Western Region

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

"VA a Vital Partner for this Military Community"

By Bret Bowers, Public Affairs Officer, Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center, November 2017

Fairchild Air Force Base Commander, Col. Ryan Samuelson praised VA's role in serving all those who've served in uniform as part of his Veteran's Day remarks at the Spokane Veterans Memorial Arena last Saturday.

Ms. Tracye B. Davis, Interim Medical Center Director at MGVAMC, commented how 2018 will be VA's 70th year in Spokane, serving and honoring Veterans, much like Spokane's Lilac Festival & Armed Forces Torchlight Parade as it approaches its 80th year. "We [VA] are happy to be a part of this community's celebration of all Veterans," she smiled. "We continue to improve and the VA is proud to be a vital community partner in this region's health care industry. It is Spokane and its support of Veterans, our military, our National Guard and Reservists, that together have risen to become among this nation's greatest military communities. Congratulations! We at VA are proud to be a part of it."

The Honorable Mayor David Condon, outlined the region's goal of ending homelessness among Veterans and expanding the resources to further assist those in need who previously served the military.

The keynote address by U.S. Army Veteran Dave BrownEagle, Chairman of MGVAMC's American Indian Veterans Advisory Council (AIVAC) earned him a standing ovation. He discussed the patriotism and honor Native American Veterans share with all past generations of Veterans. He spoke of why Native American Veterans have served (per-capita) more than all other ethnic groups who fought in wars throughout American history. "It's not about color, it's about courage, honor, distinction, family, and most of all, because [like you], this is our home."

BrownEagle, a former Army Medic and X-Ray Technician described the horrible wounds he faced while serving in the Army at the end of the Vietnam War. But the packed Veterans Day crowd at the arena drew eerily quiet as he spoke of ancestral stories of Indian Wars around the region, including the War of 1858, Battle at Steptoe Butte, Hangman Creek, Horse Slaughter Camp, and the Battle along the West Plains, west of Spokane.

"I learned as a young Native American, our country has endured those wars, and all of the wars overseas, that we had those battles, so we could also have today... Veterans Day to honor our warriors."

(more)

Several hundred packed the arena concourse for the event, which also welcomed back the talented musicians of the 560th Retired Military Veterans Band. They played each service's military medley, national anthem, and also greeted and sent Veterans and guests home with an extra "pep in their step" with their wonderful, patriotic music.

Veterans Day in Spokane also honors Illuminating Heroes Salute to Courage a new Veterans Memorial honoring all Post 9-11 Service men and women who have sacrificed their all for this grateful nation. Boy scout troops hung new service flags at the monument, which rests just outside the southeast (lower) entrance to the Spokane Veterans Memorial Arena. The service preceded MGVAMC's, VFW Post 51, and the gracious staff at the Spokane Public Facilities District who've hosted this annual event for years, but never on a day when Country Music Entertainer of the Year – Garth Brooks was performing two concerts later the same day at the arena! The event honored Gold Star Mothers. Bugler and former Army Lt. Colonel John Kowzan performed... and the Spokane Area Veterans Honor Guard performed a 21-gun salute!

The event Master of Ceremonies was MGVAMC's Nick Sangil, (USMC Veteran) who did a masterful job of sharing a warm welcome to all Veterans and guests. He had people laughing early on, "please let me begin with a belated Happy 242nd Birthday to the only armed service that was founded in a bar ("Tun Tavern")... the United States Marine Corps – Semper Fi!"

As Sangil, a VA Employment Specialists for Veterans looking to improve their lives, gently guided the audience through the program elements, he reminded everyone, "the service members we honor today came from all walks of life, but they shared several fundamental qualities. They possess courage, pride, determination, selflessness, dedication to duty, and integrity – all the qualities needed to serve a cause larger than one's self. Our gathering is just one small spark in the flame of pride that burns across the nation today and every day."

I CARE

Choose VA