
Office of Tribal Government Relations Newsletter ~ March 2014

Welcome to the March edition of our VA Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) National Monthly Newsletter.

It is hard to believe that March is already behind us. We were honored this month to meet with delegations from both the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Gila River Tribal Community, and had conference calls with several more, to discuss Reimbursement Agreements for Health Care and the Native American Direct Loan program, among other things. Archie Barnes and I, with Adam Bluth from the VA Office of Rural Health, and Rachel Ryan, a Presidential Management Fellow from the Division of Tribal Affairs at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, had a wonderful tour of health centers serving the Navajo and Hopi Nations. With Rod Sepulveda, Rural Health Coordinator, from the Northern Arizona VA Health System, as our guide, we met with officials from the Winslow Indian Health Care Center, the Hopi Health Care Center, and the Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation. The tour was extremely informative, and gave us a great introduction to the challenges faced in providing health care to a rural Native population.

Terry Bentley, OTGR specialist for the Western Region, has attended numerous events with Tribes and VA partners in March, including the IHS/CA Area Office annual tribal consultation session for California Tribal Leaders. Terry was invited to provide a presentation and update on the VA-IHS-THP Reimbursement Agreement program. Terry has also been busy finalizing plans for the Western/Central Region combined Tribal Training Summit, scheduled for April 9 and 10, 2014 (see below for more details).

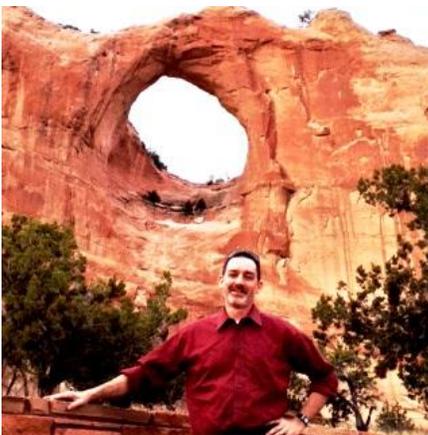
Mary Culley, specialist for the Southern Plains and Eastern (Southeast) regions visited the Goldsby Veterans Corner, to observe how this center helps Veterans apply for VA benefits. Mary is busy planning an Eastern Region Tribal Veterans Training Summit, which will be held May 21 and 22, 2014, on the Mississippi Choctaw reservation in Mississippi.

HoMana Pawiki, our specialist in the Southwest Region, held a very successful Southwest Region Tribal Training Summit, on March 20 and 21, 2014, at the Twin Arrows Resort on the Navajo Nation outside of Flagstaff. There were almost 250 participants, over 20 booths of exhibitors, and a busy agenda of information for Native veterans. Speakers included, Presidnet Ben Shelley, of the Navajo Nation; the CEOs of all the local IHS or Tribal Health Care facilities; Adam Bluth from the Office of Rural Health; Majed Ibrahim, from the VHA Chief Business Office, talking about Reimbursement Agreements; and many others.

Peter Vicaire, in the Central and Eastern (Northeast) Regions, is planning a Veterans Training event at the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe for April 30, which Stephanie Birdwell, the Acting Director of the VA Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, will be attending. He is also jointly planning, with Terry Bentley, the Western/Central Region Tribal Training Summit that is being held April 9 - 10, 2014, in Lewiston, Idaho as well as the event in Choctaw, Mississippi, in May.

We are planning a robust training and outreach schedule for the remainder of 2014. These events provide training and information about access to services and benefits for our Veterans. Dates and Locations are as follows: April 30 and May 1, 2014: A Southwest Region Tribal Training Summit in Towaoc, Colorado. Contact lorae.pawiki@va.gov for more information. April 9 – 10, the Western/Central Region Training Summit will be held in Lewiston, Idaho at the Clearwater River Casino. This Veterans training event will be hosted by the Nez Perce Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of Coeur d’Alene. Contact peter.vicaire@va.gov or terry.bentley@va.gov for more information. On May 21 and 22, 2014, an Eastern Region Tribal Training Summit will be held on the Mississippi Choctaw Reservation. Contact Mary.culley@va.gov or peter.vicaire@va.gov for more information. We will be having other Tribal Training Summits later this year, including in Northern California and Fargo, North Dakota later in the summer. Stay tuned for more information about those events.

Warm Regards - Jerry





VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) Upcoming Training Summits and Health/Benefits Fair



Lewiston, ID - April 9-10: Clearwater River Casino & Resort - Vocational Rehabilitation; DOL-VETS; Wyakin Warrior Foundation (2) ; Idaho State Department of Veteran Affairs; Veteran Benefits Administration; Housing; Native American Direct Home Loan Program (NADL); Specially Adapted Housing (SAH); HUD; VA Homeless Programs: Grant and Per Diem; Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF); Fully-Developed Claims; VHA "Healthcare 101"—Eligibility, Enrollment and Billing; Tribal Health Reimbursement; Social Security Administration; Illegal State Taxation of Rez-Domiciled Servicemembers; Veterans Courts/Tribal Courts; Listening Session With Senior VA Leaders; Camp Chaparral Program. To register (FREE) please visit the website here: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/veterans-training-summit-tickets-9852083848> or contact Terry Bentley at 541-440-1271 – Terry.Bentley@va.gov or Peter Vicaire at 651-405-5676 - Peter.Vicaire@va.gov. Rooms can be booked at the Clearwater River Casino (\$49.95/night) 208-746-0723 or at the Red Lion Hotel (\$88/night) 208 799-1000.

Hayward, WI - April 30: Lac Courte Oreilles Casino Lodge & Convention Center - Voc Rehab/Vet Success; Eligibility/Enrollment; Mental Health (PTSD/TBI); Native American Direct Home Loan; Specially-Adapted Housing; Department of Labor/Veterans Employment Training Services; IHS; Vet Centers; VA For Vets (job seeking); Center for Veterans Issues; Tricare; Minneapolis VAMC (Minority Veterans Program Coordinator; WDVA-Outreach/State Veterans Benefits; WDVA- Claims Office-; NW Veterans Memorial Cemetery; Veterans Homes; Veterans Assistance Program; County Veterans Service Officers from: Hayward, Price, Washburn, and Barron counties; Mobile Vet Center. Contact Peter Vicaire - Peter.Vicaire@va.gov (651) 405-5676; Mark Montano - mmontano@lcoha.org (715) 634-2147 or Nate Nez - Nate.Nez@dva.wisconsin.gov (715) 492-1595; Vern Martin (715) 865-3379.

Choctaw, MS - May 21-22: Silver Star Casino and Hotel
Save the Date: more information soon. Contact Mary Culley (Mary.Culley@va.gov) or Peter Vicaire (Peter.Vicaire@va.gov).



2016 Native American \$1 Coin Designs Feature Code Talkers

For the original (March 14, 2014) CoinNews.net article by Mike Unser, and a better look at all of the coins, [click here](#)

Artists working for the U.S. Mint have been busy. 2014 Native American \$1 Coins become available next Thursday, March 20, and already designs candidates have been [unveiled for next year's coin](#) and for the one in 2016, the topic of this coin news article.



Eighteen proposed designs are competing for the reverse or tails side of the 2016 Native American \$1 Coin. Each of them is emblematic of the contributions made by Native American code talkers who served the United States Armed Forces during World War I and World War II. Code talkers describe Native Americans who used their tribal languages as a means of secret communication during wartime.

“Trib Talk”: The Importance of Sweat Lodges to Veterans



Sweat lodges will continue at the VAMC in Salt Lake City. Last month, [there was a dispute](#) about how frequently they would be allowed at the facility and who would lead them after a sweat lodge leader abruptly left his VA post. Click [HERE for a video](#) [34:10] discussing the issue.



How to Establish Reimbursement Agreements Between the VA and Tribal Health Programs

See below for a recently made video [58:13] explaining the process for Tribal Health Programs (THPs) to enter into a reimbursement agreement with VA for treating Veterans. Please note, there is a minor glitch and the video actually starts at the **5:40** mark. <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/va-channel-2>. As of March 14, 2014, there has been almost \$5.5 million reimbursed to IHS and THPs.

Total Disbursement	Disbursement by Program		Total Unique Veterans
\$5,402, 971.27	IHS	\$2,800, 057.10	1943
	THP	\$2,482, 310.74	322
	N/A	\$120,603.43	63



Cherokee Veteran and Psychology Graduate Student Seeking Research Input From Native Veterans on PTSD

See below for the original request from Greg Urquhat

“Hi, I am a Cherokee Veteran of Iraq turned graduate student and am hoping you would be willing to help me out with a survey I am doing about Native American Veterans and their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions towards PTSD. You do not need to have been deployed or have PTSD to do the survey. Also, for the purposes of this survey Native American means anyone who identifies as being at least part Native Alaskan, Native American, Native, Native Hawaiian, Native Guamanian, or Native Puerto Rican. Below is a letter with more information about the survey and a link to the survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/nativeveterans>.

Please consider filling this survey out, passing it along to others (such as fellow chapter members, friends from the service, etc) or both. It is my hope that this survey will help our voices to be heard by organizations that provide services to native veterans. Sincerely, Greg Urquhart - greg.urquhart@wsu.edu”



CONGRESS APPROVES UPDATED NATIVE AMERICAN VETERAN' MEMORIAL AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2013 NEXT STOP FOR AMERICAN INDIAN VETERANS – EDUCATION CENTER OF THE VIETNAM WALL

Here's some information submitted by Stephen Bowers, Seminole Veteran and Liaison, Governor's Council on Indian Affairs

In early December of 2013, the United States Congress approved the Native American Veterans' Memorial Amendments Act of 2013 which provides for a veteran statue to be placed on the grounds of the National Museum of American Indians (NMAI). President Obama signed the Act into law on December 26, 2013. The fundraising for this statue will be the responsibility of the Museum. We congratulate NMAI for this milestone in their history.

In the fall of 2010, the Seminole Tribe of Florida spearheaded a project to build a veteran statue on the National Mall in Washington DC near the Vietnam Wall Memorial that would provide recognition for American Indian/Alaskan Native and Pacific Islanders veteran contributions and sacrifices in the US military. "We fought side by side with those groups honored through the *Three Servicemen Statue* at the Wall, the Caucasian, African American and Hispanic. Why shouldn't we be recognized alongside our brothers with whom we served?" Numerous veterans believe that an American Indian soldier should be near that statue, but Congress thought otherwise, so we accept it and move on.

We [*my wife, Elizabeth and I*], are starting our fourth year working to obtain a prominent place of recognition for the American Indian military service to this country in time of war through the American Indian Veterans Memorial (AIVMI). Whenever the United States went into battle, the American Indians/Alaska Natives and Pacific Islanders participated in greater numbers than any other group. "We want a more profound recognition of service beyond just a statue at the National Museum of American Indians. Why does everything Indian have to go into an Indian Museum?"

While campaigning for a statue at the Vietnam Wall Memorial area, we had the chance to meet on multiple occasions with Jan Scruggs, the Founder of the Vietnam Veteran Memorial Fund (VVMF). He started this organization in 1979 to lobby Congress for the land the "Wall" sits on now, and raise the money

needed to build the Wall using private donations. This task was accomplished in less than three years which is amazing considering the “hoops” one has to go through to get things passed by Congress, let alone to get permission and approval for something to be built on the National Mall.

The next big undertaking on VVMF’s agenda is to build *The Education Center at the Wall* to be located across the street from the Vietnam Wall and in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial. We have been invited to have an exhibit in the Center that will honor the “First American Veterans” involvement in military service from the Revolutionary War through Afghanistan. The Education Center will provide an innovative space where visitors will come face to face with those who gave their lives in service to this country. It will also provide a time line of the Vietnam War, and display memorabilia that has been left at Wall since it was dedicated in 1982.

We have established a working relationship between AIVMI and VVMF to help raise the funds for building the Education Center, and have committed to raise \$10 million. Our success will ensure that we will have an American Indian Veterans Memorial exhibit be part of the Education Center. In an addition to touring the Center, multimedia programs will exist online to help students, educators and all visitors deepen their understanding of American Indian/Alaska Native and Island Pacific veteran contributions and sacrifices.

The Education Center is an exciting opportunity for “Honoring First American Veterans”. The Education Center at the Wall will offer a place for our people to be truly recognized and can become a rallying point for younger generations to learn more about their warrior heritage.

The following are the goals of the “Honoring First American Veterans” Campaign.

Objective 1. Raise at least \$10 million to build the Education Center at The Wall, pledged at the earliest possible opportunity and paid through the end of the campaign on December 30, 2018.

Objective 2. Collect the missing 67 photographs of First Americans Veterans who fell in the Vietnam War. During the Vietnam conflict, 227 American Indian/Alaskan Native and Pacific Islanders made the ultimate sacrifice for this country. These young men hailed from thirty states and territories, and served in all branches of the Armed Forces. They deserve proper recognition and honor on the National Mall through the Honoring First American Veterans Campaign.

Objective 3. Collect photographs and remembrances of American Indian/Alaskan Native and Pacific Islanders who served in America's wars from the Revolutionary War through today's conflicts.

As Jan Scruggs puts it, "The Education Center at the Wall will make it possible for this and future generations to connect with those who served wearing our nation's uniform, as well as those who died, ensuring that their service and sacrifices will always be treasured and that their legacies will never be forgotten."

As Chairman of the Honoring First American Veterans (HFAV) Capital Campaign, I am honored to be associated with a group led by someone who has never stopped at his unflinching drive to honor our veterans. For more information on how you and your tribe can participate in the HFAV Campaign, contact Stephen Bowers, Seminole Tribe of Florida, 6311 Stirling Rd, Hollywood FL 33024, 954-966-6300 x11480, sbowers@semtribe.com www.aivmi.org

Community, Family, and Culture: Protective Factors in the Promotion of Native Men's Health



Community, Family, and Culture: Protective Factors in the Promotion of Native Men's Health webinar focuses on men's roles as part of community and traditional indigenous culture as positive ways of promoting men's health. The webinar is being hosted by the Indian Health Service (IHS), Men's Health Network (MHN), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Office of Minority Health (OMH) and Society of Public Health Education (SOPHE). This webinar affords a unique opportunity to hear from three outstanding speakers. Dr. Clayton Small, CEO for Native PRIDE, will share his inspiring work instilling culture-based resilience among Native men and boys. Mr. Albert M. Pooley, founder of the *Fatherhood is Sacred* and *Motherhood is Sacred* programs, will share his culture- and family-based approaches to restoring Native men's health. Mr. Bill Ward will share his background in community-based cancer education throughout a number of Native communities.

WHAT: *Community, Family, and Culture: Protective Factors in the Promotion of Native Men's Health* webinar; **WHEN:** Wednesday, April 2, 2014, 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. EST; **HOW:** <http://ihs.adobeconnect.com/r77im31j7f9/> - Room Passcode: ihs123 - Conference Phone Number: 1-800-832-0736 - Please enter Room Number 7360200; **WHY:** American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) males experience death rates 200 to 500 percent greater than AI/AN females

for suicide, HIV/AIDS, homicide, unintentional injuries, diabetes, firearm injury, and alcohol-related deaths and 10 to 50 percent higher than AI/AN females from cancer, heart disease, and liver disease. The AI/AN population is the only racial group in which males experience higher levels of self-reported psychological distress than females. The disparities above are similar in other Indigenous populations, including Native Hawaiians. To date, these disparities are not widely acknowledged and subsequently, native male-focused interventions have rarely been attempted.

Mohican Revolutionary War Veterans



In last month's issue, we included an article describing the contributions of Native Veterans throughout the history of the United States, but did not include descriptions of Mohicans during that time period. Roger E. Miller, Mohican Veteran, U.S. Marines-Vietnam Era, provided some interesting information of Veterans from his tribe during that era.

Hendrick Aupaumut (Mahican) ~ (1757-1830) A native diplomat and grand sachem of the Mahicans, Hendrick Aupaumut was an important leader of the Stockbridge Indians during the last forty years of his life. He was described by Timothy Pickering, a special peace agent to the western tribes, as an intelligent man, fluent in English (which he wrote legibly). His elevation to leadership came at a critical time in Stockbridge history. That history had been remarkable as an example of racial and cultural survival. The Stockbridges, of which the Mahicans formed the largest part, included remnants of tribal groups that had once inhabited the entire Hudson River Valley. At first contact, the Mahicans had controlled the territory on both sides of the river from the Catskills north to Lake Champlain. To the south were other Munsee groups with whom the Mahicans had close relations and with whom they controlled the valley down to Manhattan. By 1700, however, they had been reduced from an estimated 4,000 to about 500 as a result of epidemic diseases, warfare, displacement, and amalgamation with other groups. Their decline continued in the eighteenth century. In 1735, missionaries were sent to the Mahicans and others on the Housatonic River in western Massachusetts, where they established a mission town at Stockbridge, to which were gathered the remnant tribes of the region. In 1740 Moravians established a mission for the Mahicans in New York; when New York officials ordered the Moravians to cease their efforts a few years later, the Mahicans dispersed to Pennsylvania, Canada, and elsewhere, including Stockbridge. Aupaumut, born at Stockbridge, had been educated by the Moravians. At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, he and many other Stockbridges enlisted in the Continental Army.

Following the battle of White Plains in 1778, he was commissioned captain and saw extensive service during the remainder of the war. After the war, the Stockbridges decided to move because of terrible losses during the war, the takeover of Stockbridge by whites, and the Stockbridges' susceptibility to the vices of their white neighbors. At the invitation of the Oneidas, they moved to Oneida Creek, New York, in the mid-1780s and established New Stockbridge.

Aupaumut became influential after the removal. By virtue of his loyalty to the United States, he served as an important go-between for the government and the Indians during the early 1790s. When the native groups of the Northwest Territory, encouraged by British intrigue, made war against the frontier settlements, Aupaumut was sent by General Arthur St. Clair in 1791 with a proclamation and offer of peace. At the request of Secretary of War Henry Knox in 1792, he traveled for eleven months among the Delawares, Miamis, Shawnees, and others. After this journey Aupaumut wrote "A Short Narration of My Last Journey to the Western Country," a detailed account of his journey and negotiations with the various peoples. In 1794, he was at the Battle of Fallen Timbers with General Wayne and attended a session of the treaty negotiation with the Six Nations and others at Canadaigua; he signed the treaty that was drafted and continued to work as a negotiator for a number of years. In 1808 or 1809 he was seen in Washington with Nicholas Cusick, a Tuscarora, on their way to North Carolina to try to obtain reparations from the North Carolinians for lands that the Tuscaroras had been forced to abandon in the eighteenth century.

By the time of his travels to the Western country, Aupaumut was convinced that the Stockbridges must move farther west. He was afraid of the influence of not only the local whites but the Oneidas, who discouraged farming by the Stockbridge men. When the Oneidas attempted to introduce the religion of Handsome Lake to the Stockbridges, Aupaumut stopped them. In his search for a new home, Aupaumut sought out the Munsees and Delawares who had settled on the White River in Indiana, to whom he was appointed agent in 1808. Attempts of the Stockbridges to find a new home in the West were disrupted by the War of 1812, during which he adamantly opposed the efforts of Tecumseh to organize tribes on the frontier. In 1818 a group migrated to the White River to join the Munsees and Delawares, only to find that the lands had been sold. In 1821, Aupaumut's son Soloman took a small group to Wisconsin, where they settled on Menominee lands and were joined by others from Indiana and New York. In 1828, land was purchased for them on the Fox River, and in 1829, the year before Aupaumut's death, the last Stockbridges, including Aupaumut himself, removed to the West.

Aupaumut's "Narration," sprinkled with flaws in English idioms, attests to

the struggle of a Native American, working in a second language, to record an Indian history full of speeches and dramatic episodes. The “Narration” provides the reader with rare insights into Indian manners, diplomacy, and protocol. Aupaumut himself takes on complex dimensions through his narrative. Despite what the colonists had done to his own people, Aupaumut was fiercely loyal to the United States. He had faith that the new nation would treat the Indians fairly. Always the diplomat, he carefully avoided discussing topics that might alienate the Indians, and he presented his hearers with logical arguments, stressing a preference of negotiation over warfare. Written about 1794, the manuscript went unpublished until 1827, after it was found among the papers of Isaac Zane of Philadelphia. Besides this piece, Aupaumut also recorded Mahican tribal traditions in 1791 and was author of a number of speeches and letters published during his lifetime.

<http://wisconsinhistoricalmarkers.blogspot.com/2012/08/marker-236-revolutionary-war-veterans.html>



Social Security Announces New Expedited Disability Process for Veterans

Carolyn W. Colvin, Acting Commissioner of Social Security, along with Congressman John Sarbanes (D-MD) today unveiled a new initiative to expedite disability claims by veterans with a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation rating of 100% Permanent & Total (P&T). Under the new process, Social Security will treat these veterans’ applications as high priority and issue expedited decisions, similar to the way the agency currently handles disability claims from Wounded Warriors.

“Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country and it is only right that we ensure they have timely access to the disability benefits they may be eligible for and deserve,” said Acting Commissioner Colvin. “Social Security worked with Veterans Affairs to identify those veterans with disabilities who have a high probability of also meeting our definition of disability. I am proud of our collaboration and happy to announce this new service for America’s vets.” In order to receive the expedited service, veterans must tell Social Security they have a VA disability compensation rating of 100% P&T and show proof of their disability rating with their VA Notification Letter. The VA rating only expedites Social Security disability claims processing and does not guarantee an approval for Social Security disability benefits. These veterans must still meet the strict eligibility requirements for a disability allowance. Social Security plans to launch the expedited process in mid-March. For information about this service, please visit www.socialsecurity.gov/pgm/disability-pt.htm.



No Peace Without Justice: 3rd Biennial Gathering of Peacemakers

Here's some information regarding Native American Rights Fund's (NARF) Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative (IPI) website link and conference announcements. If you do Veteran justice outreach to Indian Country it may be beneficial to your practice to understand Peacemaking

“Peacemaking provides a safe structure where people can talk together to resolve conflict. It is a community-based process that addresses the concerns of all interested parties. This process uses traditional rituals, such as the group circle and Clan relationships, to involve parties that are in a conflict. A circle can involve supporters, elders and interested community members. Within the circle, people can speak from the heart, and together identify and agree upon the steps necessary for healing.”

The Tribal Judicial Institute, in collaboration with the Chickasaw Nation, NTJC, FVTC and NARF, will be hosting **No Justice Without Peace: 3rd Biennial Gathering of Peacemakers** at the Artesian Hotel in Sulphur, OK on April 23-24, 2014. This conference will introduce participants to indigenous justice methodologies and examples of how such methodologies are being incorporated into tribal justice systems. **Targeted Audience:** Tribal Leaders, Tribal Judges, Peacemakers, Tribal Court Planners, Tribal Prosecutors, Tribal Attorneys and Tribal Justice System Officials.

TO REGISTER – visit this website: www.law.und.edu/tji/events.cfm - Presented by the Tribal Judicial Institute of the University of North Dakota, with a grant from the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). For questions, contact Lynnette at 701-777-6306 or lynnette.morin@ad.ndus.edu This training is being hosted in collaboration with the host Chickasaw Nation; National Judicial College; Fox Valley Technical College; and NARF



Strategies for Improving Rural Behavioral Services for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families

The archive of the webinar entitled, “Strategies for Improving Rural Behavioral Health Services for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families,” is now available for viewing. Sponsored by SAMHSA’s Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) Technical Assistance Center, the presenters of the webinar provided an overview of the distinctive needs and characteristics of rural SMVF. They explored opportunities for partnerships with veteran service organizations, community-based health center, peers, clergy, volunteers, family, and friends. The webinar also included examples of new, integrated models of care and emerging technologies.

[Please click here to view the webinar replay and access materials](#) and [Please click here to view the webinar slides](#)

Presenters: Byron D. Bair, M.D., M.B.A., Director, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – Western Region, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Rural Health; Hilda R. Heady, M.S.W., A.C.S.W., Senior Vice President and Chair of the Rural Health Research and Policy Group, Atlas Research



VA Removes Annual Income Reporting Requirement *Eliminates Burden on Veterans, Improves Customer Service*

WASHINGTON –The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is eliminating the annual requirement for most Veterans enrolled in VA’s health care system to report income information beginning in March 2014. Instead, VA will automatically match income information obtained from the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration.

“Eliminating the requirement for annual income reporting makes our health care benefits easier for Veterans to obtain,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “This change will reduce the burden on Veterans, improve customer service and make it much easier for Veterans to keep their health care eligibility up-to-date.”

Some Veterans applying for enrollment for the first time are still required to submit income information. There is no change in VA’s long-standing policy to

provide no-cost care to indigent Veterans, Veterans with catastrophic medical conditions, Veterans with a disability rating of 50 percent or higher, or for conditions that are officially rated as “service-connected.”

VA encourages Veterans to continue to use the health benefits renewal form to report changes in their personal information, such as address, phone numbers, dependents, next of kin, income and health insurance. For more information, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/cost or call VA toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

Care and Benefits for Veterans Strengthened by \$164 Billion VA Budget



WASHINGTON – Continuing the transformation of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) into a 21st century organization, the President has proposed a \$163.9 billion budget, a 6.5 percent increase over Fiscal Year 2014, that will support VA’s goals to expand access to health care and other benefits, eliminate the disability claims backlog, and end homelessness among Veterans. The budget includes \$68.4 billion in discretionary spending, largely for healthcare, and \$95.6 billion for mandatory programs – mostly disability compensation and pensions for Veterans.

“This budget will allow us to continue the progress we have made in helping Veterans secure their place in the middle class,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “It is a tangible demonstration of the President’s commitment to ensuring Veterans and their families have the care and benefits they’ve earned and deserve.” The \$68.4 billion total in discretionary spending includes approximately \$3.1 billion in medical care collections from health insurers and Veteran copayments.

“We remain committed to providing Veterans the opportunity to pursue their education, find meaningful employment and access high-quality health care,” Shinseki added. “From the men and women of ‘the greatest generation’ to the Veterans who have returned from our most recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, no one deserves it more.” VA operates one of the largest integrated health care systems in the country with nearly 9 million enrollees; the ninth largest life insurance program; monthly disability pay, pensions and survivors payments to more than 5.1 million beneficiaries of monthly pay, pensions and survivor benefits; education assistance or vocational rehabilitation benefits and services to 1.2 million students; mortgage guaranties to over 2 million homeowners; and the largest cemetery system in the nation.

Western Region

Native Veterans Summit – Gathering of Warriors II – July 10-11, 2014



The Native Wellness Institute and the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde will be hosting a 2-day event for Native Veterans. Featured Speakers will be: Navajo Code Talkers and Linda Wood. Workshop topics will be: PTSD; Mental Health; Suicide Prevention; Self Care; Transition from soldier to civilian; Vocational rehabilitation, and more.

In addition there are some planned activities, including: talking circles; support meetings; veterans benefits coordination (bring your DD214); employment information; health/dental care; healing village; traditional games; massages; haircuts; cultural activities/ceremonies; parade of Color Guards



It will take place at the Spirit Mountain Casino Resort (27100 SW Salmon River Hwy, Grande Ronde, OR (503) 879-2350 – 1-800-760-7977 – www.spiritmountain.com. The room rate is \$69/night, mention the Native Wellness Institute to receive the group rate. Camping is also available at no cost. Limited tents and sleeping bags are available on a first come/first serve basis. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Marce West Veterans Pow Wow will take place July 11 - 13, 2014 after the Native Veterans Summit. All meals will be provided.

There is no fee to attend, however, everyone is required to register. You can register by fax (360) 877-4051; mail- Native Wellness Institute, 2830 SE Cleveland Drive, Gresham, OR 97080 or online: www.NativeWellness.com For More Information, contact Will Penn at 360-490-7463 or by email at info@nativewellness.com



California Department of Housing and Community Development Awards Nearly \$4 Million for Homeless Veterans

Sacramento – The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) today announced an award of nearly \$4 million to help develop Mather Veterans’ Village, a supportive, multi-faceted living environment for veterans who might otherwise be homeless.

“HCD is proud to be part of this effort to help veterans in the Sacramento area who are homeless or disabled,” said Acting HCD Director Randall A. Deems. “Mather Veterans’ Village will offer more than just a temporary bed for veterans. The service-rich community will address many of the challenges homeless veterans are facing today and help guide them toward independent living.”

There are approximately 1.9 million veterans in California, the most in any state in the nation. Unfortunately, veteran status can increase the risk for homelessness for both men and women; Mather Veterans’ Village will help to address this need for low income veteran housing in Northern California.

“When veterans return from military service, many are faced with challenges of finding employment, reintegrating back to civilian life and in some cases dealing with wounds of war, some physical and some mental or emotional, but one challenge they should never face is homelessness,” said California Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Peter J. Gravett. “This project will help veterans in the Sacramento region struggling with that transition and give them a safe place to call home.”

Mather Veterans’ Village will be developed by Mercy Housing California, a nonprofit organization that has developed over 11,000 affordable homes in California. Mather Veterans’ Village will serve a spectrum of disabled homeless veterans in and around the Sacramento region by providing permanent supportive housing.

“The HCD commitment to Mather Veterans’ Village has made this dream of so many people and organizations one giant step closer to reality,” said Stephan Daus, Regional Director of Housing Development for Mercy Housing. “We’ve reached this stage through a collaborative public-private partnership like none other. Under the leadership of the City of Rancho Cordova, the County of Sacramento, the Air Force, Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency,

and the Veterans Administration all played a significant role in bringing us to this critical juncture. We are thrilled to add HCD to that list of partners.”

The four new construction residential buildings that make up Mather Veterans’ Village will hold a mix of 50 one and two-bedroom apartment homes. Rents will be affordable to veterans earning between 20%-30% of the Area Median Income.

Onsite services will enrich the resident’s daily experiences with independent living workshops, individualized coaching, financial management, health and wellness and employment counseling.

HCD’s awards for this development come in the form of \$3 million from the Multifamily Housing Program and \$941,522 from the Infill Infrastructure Grant Program. The financing comes from the voter-approved Housing and Emergency Shelter Trust Fund Act of 2006 (Proposition 1C).

President Obama Awards Long Overdue Medals of Honor to Californians - Alvarado, Duran, Gomez, Gandara and Lara



President Obama today [March 18] awarded long overdue Medals of Honor to five Californians who served our country valiantly during WWII, the Korean War and War in Vietnam. Although these men received the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation’s second highest military award back then, a review of Jewish American and Hispanic American Veterans through the Defense Authorization Act of 2002 found that these men were more than eligible to receive the Medal of Honor.

“These Medals of Honor have been a long time coming and I am most pleased that such a regrettable oversight is finally being addressed,” said Peter J. Gravett, Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet). “These men fought for our country and their fellow soldiers with bravery, commitment and patriotism and now their descendants can receive comfort in knowing they descend from authentic American heroes.”

On Tuesday, May 27, 2014, CalVet will hold a special ceremony to recognize the bravery and gallantry of these patriotic Hispanic soldiers on the West Steps of the Capitol in Sacramento. Being recognized will be:

- Specialist Four Leonard L. Alvarado
- Specialist Four Jesus S. Duran



- Sergeant Eduardo C. Gomez
- Private Joe Gandara
- Private First Class Salvador J. Lara

From a White House news release:



In 2002, Congress, through the Defense Authorization Act, called for a review of Jewish American and Hispanic American veteran war records from WWII, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, to ensure those deserving the Medal of Honor were not denied because of prejudice. During the review, records of several Soldiers of neither Jewish nor Hispanic descent were also found to display criteria worthy of the Medal of Honor. The 2002 Act was amended to allow these Soldiers to be honored with the upgrade - in addition to the Jewish and Hispanic American Soldiers.

Women Veterans Summit



The next Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veterans Summit is scheduled for **Saturday, September 20, 2014** at the Spokane Convention Center (see attached Save the Date). The theme of the conference is *"Dare to Dream - A Celebration of the Warrior Within"* and the Summit is open to Women Veterans of all ages, National Guard and Reserve, and Transitioning Military. The artwork for our Summit was painted by Spokane Valley resident, Pam Evenson. The following is a link to an article about Ms. Evenson and she will also be at the event: <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2013/mar/02/spokane-valley-artist-embraces-natural-gift/>

The convention center is located in a picturesque setting along the Spokane River, adjacent to Riverfront Park, and right downtown next to shopping, restaurants, and more. Check out the following link for more information about Spokane: <http://www.visitspokane.com/>

Barbara Logan, Management Analyst - Executive Assistant for Veterans Services
WA State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), PO Box 41155, Olympia,
WA 98504-1155, 1-800-562-2308 Toll-free - 360-725-2227 Direct Line
360-586-1093 Fax - barb@dva.wa.gov - Office hours are 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Mondays – Fridays



Central Region

Menominee Nation First Annual Golf Outing

The Veterans of the Menominee Nation are organizing their First Annual Golf Outing Fundraiser on Sunday, June 22, 2014. The Golf Outing will be at Pine Hills Golf Club with a tee time of 10:30 AM. This event is a four (4) man scramble (teams) with a shotgun start, so everybody will be done approximately the same time. We are limited to 36 teams, please register as early as possible.

Dinner will be at the Menominee Casino/Conference Center. Dinner will be at 5:00 pm. Cocktails will be available at 4:30 PM. After Dinner will be the prize giveaway and raffle items. Arrive early and look over the raffle items.

We have a limit of 200 seats available for this event. Tickets will be given out at the door for pre-registered parties. Walk-ins will be available at a limited basis.

Make your plans to attend this fun filled event and please spread the word to your friends, family and neighbors who might want to share some time with you, while supporting the veterans.

Please mail the completed form – on back - along with your check to the following address, postmarked or delivered by **June 18th** so we can give a dinner count to the Casino. Veterans of the Menominee Nation, P.O. Box 1054, Keshena, WI. 54135 - Contact Andy Boivin 715-851-2127 or John Teller - 920-562-3762



1st Annual Veteran's Resource Conference

SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, April 30, 2014 9:00 a.m. — ?
Lac Courte Oreilles Convention Center
Hayward, WI

For more information contact:

Nate Nez, Regional Coordinator

Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

715-492-1594—nate.nez@dva.wisconsin.gov

Peter Scott Vicaire,

Tribal Government Relations Specialist

US Department of Veterans Affairs

651-405-5676—Peter.Vicaire@va.gov

Lac Courte Oreilles Housing Authority

715-634-2147

Vernon Martin, Tribal Veterans Service Officer

Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe

715-865-3379

- ◆ Representatives from over 15 Veteran's agencies including: the Veterans Administration, IHS, and CVSO's/TVSO's will be providing presentations and be available to discuss your veterans benefits. (Formal Agenda will be available soon)
- ◆ **Keynote Speaker:** Stephanie E. Birdwell, M.S.W., Director, Office of Tribal Government Relations.
- ◆ **Hotel Reservations** can be made by calling the LCO Casino Lodge at (715)634-8574 or 1-800-526-2274 group #42914. Rooms are limited (72) so book early. Cut off date is April 22, 2014. Alternate lodging can be made at the Flat Creek Inn & Suites 715-634-4100.
- ◆ Lunch and Dinner will be provided.





SAVE THE DATE



ONEIDA CODE TALKERS CEREMONY
ONEIDA VETERANS MEMORIAL WALL
ONEIDA, WI

05.23.2014
10:30 AM

For more information:

<https://oneida-nsn.gov/OneidaCodeTalkers>
or call: 920.869.4270 or 920.869.4281



facebook.com/OneidaNationWI
#OneidaCodeTalkers2014

Southern Plains Region



Comanche Indian Veterans Association 9th Annual Armed Forces Day Banquet

9th Annual Armed Forces Day Banquet - May 17, 2014 - Comanche Community Center in Apache - Starting at Noon - *Guest Speaker* - Mary Culley, Department of Veterans Affairs



Recognition to: CPL James Patterson, US Army; MSgt Kenneth Atavich, US Air Force, Persian Gulf War and War on Terror; LT Kristopher Wermy, US Army and OKARNG, War on Terror; LT Kent Tomah, US Army

Open to Comanche Veterans and one guest - Serving the Comanche Nation since 1976 - Information George Red Elk 512-2225 or Lanny Asepermy 678-4629