Office of Tribal Government Relations

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of Tribal Government Relations Newsletter ~ August/September 2013

Welcome from the VA OTGR Director, Stephanie Birdwell

Greetings and welcome to the August/September special 'double issue' edition of our VA Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) National Monthly Newsletter.

It has been eventful summer and we are anticipating an equally busy fall season. I'll take a few moments here to offer a look back at some of the highlights from the past couple of months. In August, VA for the second year in a row partnered with the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) to offer a Veteran's Track during the NIHB Annual Consumer Conference held in Traverse City, Michigan. We are especially thankful to VA Battle Creek Medical Center Director, Dr. Mary Beth Skupien and her outstanding team for offering their expertise and staff support for the event. VA Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Deputy Assistant Secretary John Garcia served as one of plenary keynote speakers and we were fortunate to have support from Veterans Benefits Administration Regional Director David Leonard and representatives from the Veteran's Health Administration Chief Business Office during a Listening Session held during the Veterans Track. Many questions were raised regarding the reimbursement agreement process between the VA, the Indian Health Service (IHS), and Tribal Health Programs (THP). We are pleased to report that to date, VA has reimbursed IHS and THP sites just over $1.6 million dollars for direct care IHS and THP facilities provide to Veterans. We're looking forward to additional THP sites coming online as reimbursement sites during fiscal year 2014. The reimbursement agreements can open doors for health care options offered closer to home for Veterans in Indian Country.

Looking further out west, Terry Bentley teamed up with the Oregon State Department of Veterans Affairs to sponsor Tribal Veteran Representative (TVR) training for tribes within the Western Region (Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California and Nevada). The event was hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians at the Chinook Winds Casino Resort in Lincoln City, Oregon. Approximately 14 TVRs/Veterans advocates participated in the event. Also occurring in the Western Region, Camp Chaparral, the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 20 supported experiential cultural sensitivity training event was hosted by the Yakama Nation. The event completed its 19th successful year (Terry has been involved in the project since its initial inception). Annually, VISN 20 sends 60 VA health care employees (representing a broad range of health care disciplines) to this cultural immersion program to participate in the event which offers the opportunity to obtain an understanding of how American Indian culture and traditional beliefs can influence clinical outcomes for Veterans in Indian country. Camp Chaparral is one of 3 sites nationally where VA supports this opportunity for its providers and employees to better

understand how culture can have a positive impact on helping Veterans to heal. The other sites are located in VISNs 18 and 23.

Peter Vicaire in the Central Region traveled to Montana, visiting the Northern Cheyenne and Crow reservations. Next, even closer to the Midwest, Peter met with several Tribal Veteran Service Officers, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Tribal Services Coordinator, Nate Nez along with the VA Medical Center Director and County Veterans Service Officers in Tomah, Wisconsin to discuss coordination and collaboration efforts. Over in South Dakota, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe dedicated its Sicangu Akicita Owicahe Tribal Veterans Cemetery in August. VA awarded the tribe a $6.8 million cemetery grant in 2011. We are also pleased to report that the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is the recipient of VA cemetery grant award in the amount of approximately 1.3 million this past month. For more information regarding the VA tribal cemetery grant program, email Joshua.deLeon@va.gov

Continuing on in in the Southern Plains Region, Mary Culley has been coordinating support from the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center for Veterans benefits fairs held at Chickasaw Nation, the Lawton Indian Health Service hospital and Comanche Nation Fair. The Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation also hosted a Veterans benefits enrollment fair right after Labor Day. A Veterans Listening session was held with the Absentee-Shawnee Tribe's Veterans Organization to offer VA officials the opportunity to hear first-hand the concerns and priorities expressed by Absentee Shawnee Veterans.

Over in the Southwest, Homana Pawiki attended the 8th Annual Governor's Native American Summit "Turning Vision into Action" which provided the chance to network with tribal officials and learn more about priorities of tribal leaders and Veterans living within tribal communities in Utah. Homana also just wrapped a successful Southwest Region Veterans Training Summit held on the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community (SRPMIC). The summit offered the opportunity for tribal officials, Veterans, federal agency partners and Veteran service providers to receive training on the services and benefits Veterans have earned through their service. We are especially thankful to Pacer Reina, SRPMIC Veterans Representative for his support and advocacy dedicated to bringing this event to the Phoenix area. This was the 12th Veterans training summit for Indian Country since April 2012. Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community President Diane Enos, addressed the audience during the event, and emphasized to all attendees that it is the active duty military and our Veterans who defend the United States Constitution, and that the sacrifice of our Veterans is *always* relevant whether it happened generations ago or in more recent years.

We hope you find this special double issue newsletter edition informative and as always, we look forward to receiving your feedback via phone call or email: www.tribalconsultation@va.gov. I also always like to remind our readers to continue to check out our website: www.va.gov/tribalgovernment for news and updates regarding our activities with tribal governments and work with VA colleagues, agency partners and Veterans across Indian Country. We look forward to hearing from you.
Warm Regards and Happy Reading – Stephanie

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VA/Tribal Health/IHS Reimbursement Agreements

VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) has been working with VA's Chief Business Office (CBO) as well as Indian Health Service and Tribal Health Partners to implement reimbursement agreements for serving veterans' health needs. The goal of these agreements is to reimburse facilities for direct care services provided to eligible Native American Veterans. If you work with a Tribal Health Program and would like more information on the possibility of entering into one of these agreements, drop a line to VA's CBO at tribal.agreements@va.gov to express your interest. Immediately below is the most recent breakdown of those IHS and Tribal Health Programs that have completed the process and which are now receiving VA reimbursement funds.

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Indian Health Service/Tribal Health Programs Metrics

Row Labels	Sum of # of Veterans	Sum of # of Claims	Total VA Amt Paid
IHS	244	562	$161,289.41
VISN 1 Summary	2	3	$900.00
Togus VAMC	2	3	$900.00
VISN 16 Summary	19	31	$8,699.27
Jack C. Montgomery VAMC (Muskogee)	14	25	$6,899.27
Oklahoma City VAMC	5	6	$1,800.00
VISN 18 Summary	75	176	$51,690.09
Carl T. Hayden VAMC (Phoenix)	2	5	$1,500.00
New Mexico VAHCS	10	18	$5,112.65
Northern Arizona VAHCS	60	150	$44,468.02
Southern Arizona VAHCS	3	3	$609.42
VISN 19 Summary	38	99	$26,633.25
Salt Lake City VAMC	4	4	$1,200.00
VA Montana HCS	34	95	$25,433.25
VISN 20 Summary	13	36	$11,310.00
Portland VAMC	13	36	$11,310.00
VISN 23 Summary	97	217	$62,056.80
Black Hills VAHCS	80	192	$54,955.68
Fargo VAHCS	7	10	$2,601.12
Sioux Falls VAHCS	10	15	$4,500.00
THP	197	944	$783,860.09
VISN 16 Summary	67	129	$10,609.11
Jack C. Montgomery VAMC (Muskogee)	67	129	$10,609.11
VISN 20 Summary	130	815	$773,250.98
Alaska VAHCS	130	815	$773,250.98
Grand Total	441	1,506	$945,149.50

Claims Informatio
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Code Talker Congressional Gold Medals

CCAC

For the full story online, see here. During a meeting held on June 25, 2013, the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee (CCAC) reviewed the obverse and reverse design candidates for Congressional Gold Medals to be issued honoring the Native American Code Talkers of seven different tribes. The CCAC has reviewed design candidates for one or more Code Talker medals on five separate occasions. Previous coverage can be found here, here, here, here, and here.

Under the Navajo Code Talkers Congressional Gold Medal Act passed in 2000, the Congressional Gold Medal was awarded to Navajo Code Talkers for their contributions during World War II. Under the Code Talkers Recognition Act of 2008, additional tribes will be recognized for their contributions during World War I and World War II. As of late January 2013, an updated list of Native American Code Talkers who served in the armed forces during both wars has grown to include 32 different tribes.

After the selection of the designs, production, and presentation of the gold medals, the authorizing legislation states that the Smithsonian Institution shall accept and maintain the gold medals and is encouraged to create a standing exhibit for Native American code talkers or Native American veterans. Silver duplicate medals will be awarded to members (or their next of kin or other personal representative) of the recognized Native American tribes who served in the Armed Forces as a code talker. Bronze duplicate medals are expected to be struck and made available for sale.

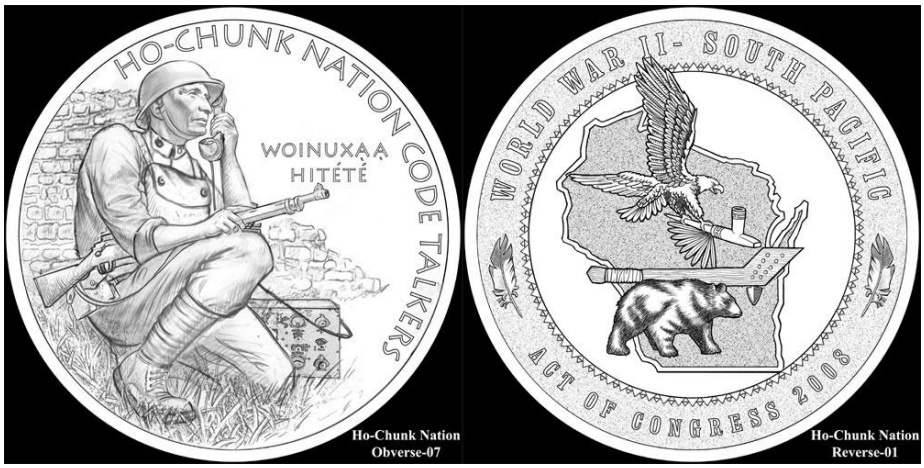
Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes

From a field of five different obverse design candidates featuring the elements of the Infantry helmet and radio communications equipment, the CCAC recommended candidate 1. From four different options for the reverse, the CCAC recommended candidate 3, featuring an

outline of the Fort Peck Indian reservation and the 41st Infantry Division Patch. Both recommendations matched the tribe preferences.

Cherokee Nation

Five different obverse design candidates were provided featuring Cherokee National code talkers communicating on the field phone. One of the candidates incorporated a second figure using binoculars. The CCAC recommended design 5 featuring a code talker with a field phone and also writing. For the reverse the CCAC recommended design 3, featuring the Cherokee Nation seal. The seven-pointed star represents the traditional seven clans of Cherokee: the Bird, Wild Potato, Deer, Long Hair, Blue, Paint, and Wolf Clans. The wreath of leaves and acorns represent the sacred fire of the Cherokee. The CCAC's recommendation for the reverse matched the tribe preference. No preference was provided for the obverse.



Ho-Chunk Nation

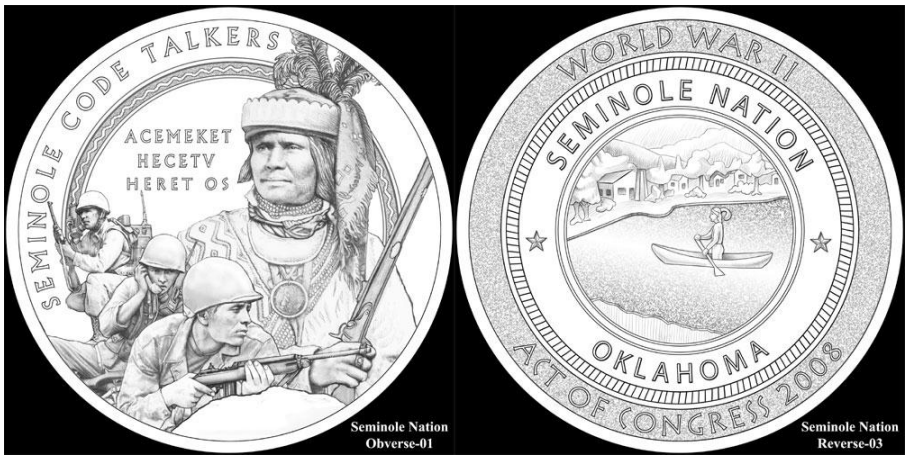
From seven different obverse design candidates featuring Ho-Chunk Nation code talkers in action, the CCAC recommended design 7. The tribe had preferred an alternate design. For the reverse, the CCAC recommended design 1, featuring the Ho-Chunk Nation seal and matching the preference of the tribe.

Meskwaki Nation

From four different obverse design candidates, the CCAC recommended alternative 4, matching the preference of the tribe. The inscriptions on each candidate incorporated "ne me skwa, ki i be na," which translates to "We are the Red Earth People." For the reverse, the CCAC recommended alternative 3, featuring the Meskwaki Nation Tribal logo. This matched the preference of the tribe.

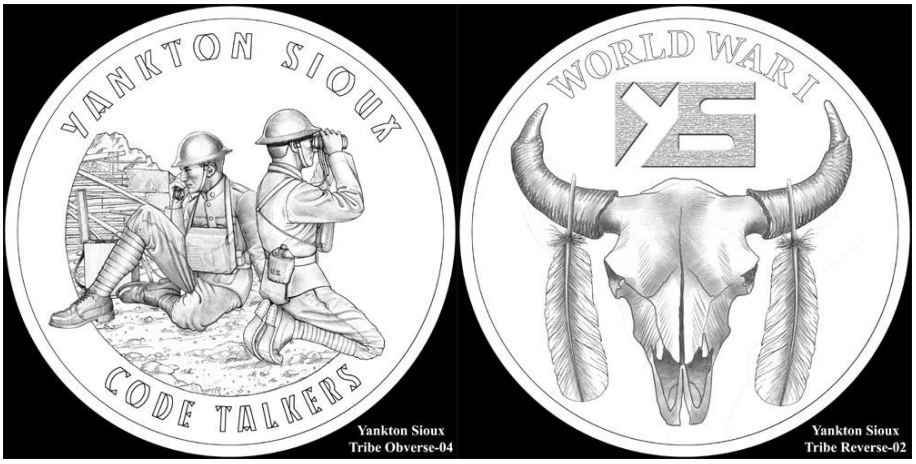
Oglala Sioux Tribe

There were three different obverse and six different reverse design candidates provided for the Oglala Sioux Tribe code talkers medal. The CCAC recommended obverse 1 and reverse 3, matching the preferences of the tribe. The CCAC did make a motion to remove the inscription "World War II" from the bottom right arc on the reverse. The reverse design is based on the Oglala Sioux Tribe flag. The nine tipis represent the nine districts of Oglala, Porcupine, Wakpamni, Medicine Root, Pass Creek, Eagle Nest, White Clay, PR Village, La Creek, and Wounded Knee.



Seminole Nation

Six different design candidates each were provided for the obverse and reverse of the Seminole Nation Code Talkers Medal. The CCAC recommended obverse 1 and reverse 3 matching the preferences of the tribe. The obverse design includes an early period chief in the background with an inscription “ACEMEKET HECETV HERET OS”, which translates to “It is Good To Climb and See.” The reverse depicts the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma seal. The CCAC made a motion to add the word "of" to the reverse inscription.



Yankton Sioux Tribe

Six different obverse design candidates were provided featuring Yankton Sioux Tribe code talkers delivering messages in various ways. Two different reverse designs were provided featuring a drawing of a buffalo skull with tribal colors submitted by the Yankton Sioux and painted in honor of tribe veterans. The CCAC recommended obverse 4 and reverse 2, matching the tribe preferences.

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VA Grants up to One Year Retroactive Benefits for Veterans Filing Fully Developed Claims to Help Reduce Backlog

New Benefit Takes Effect August 6 for First-Time Filers

WASHINGTON (Aug. 1, 2013) – The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today that Veterans filing an original Fully Developed Claim (FDC) for service-connected disability compensation may be entitled to up to one-year of retroactive disability benefits. The retroactive benefits, which are in effect Aug. 6, 2013, through Aug. 5, 2015, are a result of a comprehensive legislative package passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama last year.

"VA strongly encourages Veterans to work with Veterans Service Organizations to file Fully Developed Claims and participate in this initiative, since it means more money in eligible Veterans' pockets simply by providing VA the information it needs up front," said Allison A. Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits. "At the same time, it helps reduce the inventory of pending claims by speeding the process."

Filing an FDC is typically the fastest way for Veterans to receive a decision on their claims because Fully Developed Claims require Veterans to provide all supporting evidence in their possession when they submit their claims. Often, this is evidence that VA legally must attempt to collect on the Veteran's behalf, which is already in the Veteran's possession, or is evidence the Veteran could easily obtain, like private treatment records.

When Veterans submit such evidence with their claims, it significantly reduces the amount of time VA spends gathering evidence from them or other sources -- often the longest part of the claims process. While VA will still make efforts to obtain federal records on the Veterans' behalf, the submittal of non-federal records (and any federal records the Veteran may have) with the claim allows VA to issue a decision to the Veteran more quickly. Typically, VA processes FDCs in half the time it takes for a traditionally filed claim.

FDCs can be filed digitally through the joint, DoD-VA online portal, *eBenefits (www.ebenfits.va.gov)*. VA encourages Veterans who cannot file online to work with an accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSO) who can file claims digitally on Veterans' behalf. While submitting an FDC provides a faster decision for any compensation or pension claim, only Veterans who are submitting their very first compensation claim as an FDC are potentially eligible for up to one-year of retroactive disability

benefits under the newly implemented law.

FDCs help eliminate VA's claims backlog because they increase production of claims decisions and decrease waiting times. Also, VA assigns FDCs a higher priority than other claims which means Veterans receive decisions to their claim faster than traditional claims. VA continues to prioritize other specific categories of claims, including those of seriously wounded, terminally ill, Medal of Honor recipients, former Prisoners of War, the homeless and those experiencing extreme financial hardship. As part of its drive to eliminate the claims backlog in 2015, VA also gives a priority to claims more than a year old.

In May, VA announced a new partnership with Veterans Service Organizations and others known as the "Community of Practice," an effort that seeks to reduce the compensation claims backlog for Veterans by increasing the number of FDCs filed by Veterans and their advocates.
VA is continuing to implement several initiatives to meet the Department's goal to eliminate the claims backlog in 2015. In May, VA announced that it was mandating overtime for claims processors in its 56 regional benefits offices to increase production of compensation claims decisions through the end of FY 2013. In April, VA launched an initiative to expedite disability compensation claims decisions for Veterans who have a waited a year or longer

As a result of these initiatives, VA's total claims inventory remains at lower levels not seen since August 2011. The number of claims in the VA backlog – claims pending over 125 days – has been reduced by 17 percent compared to the highest point in March 2013. Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense—VA web portal *eBenefits* at www.ebenefits.va.gov, and the FDC program at www.benefits.va.gov/fdc/.

NAHASDA – Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Reauthorization Act of 2013

See S. 1352 – of the Bill under "TITLE IV--OTHER HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR NATIVE AMERICANS", Section 401 contains language that allows the HUD Secretary to utilize up to 5% of amounts made available for rental assistance to carry out a supportive housing program **for the benefit of Indian Veterans** who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness and who are residing on or near reservations.

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NATIVE SUN NEWS

Shawnee Rae Red Bear Grew up in the Marine Corps

By Christina Rose - Native Sun News Correspondent - (Contact Christina at christinarose.sd@gmail.com) ~ Copyright permission by Native Sun News

Shawnee Rae Red Bear recently returned from Afghanistan where the local mode of transportation was by pack animals.

PINE RIDGE — Shawnee Rae Red Bear, 21, was recently honored at the 25th Annual Veteran's Day Wacipi for serving 4 years in the Marine Corps. Her next goal had been to attend New York University in the fall, but with the unexpected passing of her grandmother, Theresa Red Cloud, Red Bear is looking at life a little differently. "My grandmother passed away and we had her funeral last week," Red Bear said sadly. Red Bear strongly feels her grandmother's death could have been prevented, so to honor her grandmother, she will be attending Kaplan University in California instead. There she will train to become a health care assistant and ultimately become a registered nurse. "I want to get into the field to care for people," Red Bear said adding that she wants to "save a loved one the hurt I feel in losing my loved one."

As the oldest grandchild, Red Bear called her grandmother her role model who had a major impact on her life. "I want to be there 24-7," she said, "so you can always take that extra step to prevent complications." The decision feels like a calling to Red Bear. "I am very satisfied with my decision and I feel very passionate about it," Red Bear said, noting that her grandmother died only three weeks after Red Bear returned from the Marines.

Red Bear was only 17 when she joined the Marines, which required that her reluctant mother sign a waiver. But Red Bear was determined to go. "I didn't

want to stay on the reservation, but I couldn't pay for college so I joined the Marine Corp to secure funding. I was rebellious so that was tacked on with other issues on the reservation."

Looking back at her high school career, Red Bear now knows she didn't put enough of an effort into her high school academics. "I was kind of slacker, which showed me I wasn't ready for the challenge." So Red Bear headed for Basic Training which she said broke her down mentally and physically for three months. "It's just brutal. They teach you basic knowledge of being a Marine. They enroll you into their system, their codes of ethics, their leadership training for a month. It is very strict and they change every mistake you make," she remembered. "They tap into a part of you that you didn't know you had. Some girls couldn't handle it."

In 2011, Red Bear was shipped off to Afghanistan, which brought even more challenges to the young girl. There she spent her time as a Logistics Embarkation Specialist, which she called her "primary military occupation specialty position." At only 17 years old, she was in charge of personnel. "I enjoyed it and flourished, and in my last year in Afghanistan, I was in charge of the Female Engagement Team, which was a very small exclusive group. I was trained to live with infantry tactics, as well as deal with cultural awareness in Afghanistan. Two in my team were embedded within the infantry, and we did everything they did. They were out to secure and patrol and we were there to bridge the gap," Red Bear said.

The Taliban took advantage of the fact that military men could not touch or speak to the women in Afghanistan, and used women to move drugs and weapons. "So we had to search the females. We also built relationships with women as much as we could; we'd go into their homes, which were often just mud huts with almost no electricity, no running water. We'd try to develop that community to bring revenue growth, education, teach classes on personal hygiene, teach them to brush their teeth, wash their hands, how to properly care for themselves." Some of the teams set up schools for girls and women, which had never been done in the male dominated culture. Because every community had different views, Red Bear said things went well if the men allowed them to help but if they didn't, "We respected their culture. Sometimes it was up to the elders of the village."

During her time in the rural areas of Southern Helmand Province of Afghanistan, Red Bear said, "It felt like biblical times. Goats, camels, donkeys were their vehicles of transportation. There was a lot of farmland but we were only about a five minute helicopter ride from a large base."

While Red Bear said she never faced danger, danger was always a possibility.

"We were at wartime with Afghanistan. There were explosive devices, and we encountered this lot, but no one got hurt when I was on patrol. But a lot of squads did." Through her experience there, Red Bear built relationships all over the world and US. "I wouldn't trade that experience for anything. It was hard, and there were times I felt I couldn't go on. There were times where we didn't eat and I didn't shower for weeks on end. It was a struggle but I loved every minute of it, and I would do it again in a heartbeat," she said.

Now that Red Bear is home she is grateful for things she never before appreciated. "Coming back made me grateful for a lot of simple pleasures. I am so grateful for flushing toilets, running water, and having the opportunity to take a shower everyday...and electricity! I never realized how hard it was to live without electricity!" All of the challenges gave Red Bear the strength that comes from having a direction, knowing where one fits in, and having strong convictions. "It's all about wanting to better yourself. I have a drive now. The Marine Corps changed me because I never had a purpose. I didn't know where I belonged, I was rebellious. After belonging to such a big family in the Marines, I feel like I fit in and I have a hunger to better to myself. It matured me in more ways I can think of." Red Bear said, "I grew up with nothing. My mother was single with two children, and we moved to reservation when I was four. At age 9, I was sent to foster care for three years. I hardly saw my family and was in and out of group homes where I was beat up and my stuff was stolen. It was a survivor environment, and at age 12, I knew I never I wanted to go through that again."

Having gone through so much, losing friends and family to drugs, death, and alcohol, Red Bear knew she wanted more in life. "In high school, we lived in a lived in a one room cabin and I worked three jobs. I did everything I could but mentally, I couldn't deal with it. And when the opportunity came I took it, and that is another reason I joined the Marines."

Red Bear smiled and said that now her mother has bragging rights. "She is so proud of me! And I have my benefits, I have myself, I have my will, I have my car, I have a great family, and I make her proud every single day. I want my grandmother to smile down on me and I know she is, and she is getting me through it." Looking over the impact the Marines has had on her, Red Bear states, "I grew up in the Marine Corps. In those four short years, it showed me the world and gave me every opportunity to better myself. If I take anything away from this, it's that it doesn't matter what you do in life; as long as you want to improve, you will be successful. No one has the right to judge how others make a living for themselves. It's all about knowing yourself."

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Agicida Cande (Warrior's Heart)

Agicida Cande (Warrior's Heart) is a short documentary (20 minutes) about healthy relationships with the young American Indian men from the Fort Peck Reservation in North East Montana. Keeping in line with the oral traditions, it is filled with honest heartfelt stories with words to live by. This project was a community based participatory research between Fort Peck Tribes and Montana State University-Bozeman funded by the Office of Population Affairs. The purpose of this documentary is to serve as a teaching tool for not only young American Indian men, but also the public at large. For a free copy of the DVD, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Rink at:Elizabeth.rink@montana.edu.

Military→Civilian: Connecting Veterans and Their Families with Civilian Opportunities, Both Stateside and Overseas

From the organization: "Military-Civilian is a woman-owned business, and our mission is twofold: 1. We are dedicated to providing proactive assistance for veterans and their families with their transition back into the civilian workplace. 2. We offer a personalized service to make sure companies can reach out to this audience of exiting Military Professional, their Spouses and Dependents, DoD Employees and Contractors, Retirees, National Guard Active/Inactive and Veterans that have left the military and are already in the civilian workforce looking to advance their careers."

Companies post descriptions of their open jobs on our Careers Directory. It is free to view job postings, and candidates may submit their resumes directly to the hiring representative of the company.

We periodically email our "Hot Jobs" newsletter to individuals who have subscribed to our mailing list. The newsletter contains excepted descriptions of all current postings in our directory, as well as information about upcoming hiring events and other useful links. For more information, contact: Lucy Jensen Email: **lucy@military-civilian.com** Phone: 310-455-2002"

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Central Region

The Ho-Chunk Nation Code Talkers

On November 20, 2013, at the Capitol Building in Washington, DC, seven Ho-Chunk Nation Code Talkers will receive Medals for their distinguished and honorable service in WWII. For more information, contact TVSO Sandra Winneshiek at 715-284-4563 or email her at Sandra.Winneshiek@ho-chunk.com. Also, a dinner honoring the seven Ho-Chunk WWII Code Talkers, is being planned for December 13, 2013, by invitation, and will be held at the Ho-Chunk Nation Hotel Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells. The medals will then be presented to the Next-Of-Kin. More information will be forthcoming.

Southern Plains Region

3rd Annual All Nations Rally ~ "One Day At a Time" November 9-10, 2013

Native Flute Playing, Cedar Smudging Ceremony, Sobriety & AlaNon Countdowns, Flashlight Meeting, Indian Tacos, Indian Corn Soup w/Frybread, Bingo, Meditation, OU/OSU/Bearclaw Tipi Raffles, Shirts/Hoodies for sale, Sobriety Ribbons - Quartz Mountain Resort www.quartzmountainresort.com 2469 Lodge Road, Lonewolf, OK 73655, 877-999-5567- Rooms $79 until October 19, 2012 - For more info, contact: allnationsrally@yahoo.com

Oklahoma Women Veterans Recognition Day

Who: This program is open to all women veterans, those currently on active duty, and women who have served in the Armed Forces and their guests.
When: October 26
Where: Wyndham Tulsa, 10918 E. 41st Street, Tulsa, OK 74146
For vendors, a door prize is requested in lieu of a fee – (1) 6' table and 2 chairs per vendor. Space is limited so register early! For more vendor information, contact MSG Christina Smith, USA retired, at christinas258@gmail.com or call her at 918-810-6703.

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Western Region

Women Veterans Vocational Rehabilitation

"There is an expansion of services for women Veterans at the Women's Health Clinic at Mather VA Medical Center in Sacramento, CA. A Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is hired to provide vocational support services for women Veterans such as advocacy, resume preparation, job search, establishment of individual vocational plan, resources referral and other employment related services to meet the unique needs of women Veterans. Please distribute information to service providers and women Veterans. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at 916-366-5453 or email me at rebecca.stallworth@va.gov. Thank you for your support to provide better services for women Veterans."

Monument Dedication at Miramar National Cemetery

Check out the link here to see a video [1:41] of a monument dedication which took place at Miramar National Cemetery in San Diego. A Medal of Honor recipient gave a speech at the dedication for veterans groups.

Chula Vista 2013 POW WOW

Here are some pictures from the Chula Vista Powwow which took place on August 8-10. The American Indian Warriors Association, (AIWA) participated and Richard Garcia, Lipan Apache and USMC veteran was the Staff carrier this year. Images by Gary Ballard.

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CalVet Women Veterans Conference

CalVet is hosting their 2013 Women Veterans Leadership Conference from Wednesday, September 25 to Friday, September 27 at the Marriott Mission Valley (8757 Rio San Diego Drive) in San Diego. Follow this link to see their website, this link to see their draft agenda, and this link to see 5 reasons why you should attend.

New Perce Stand Down & Resource Fair

There will be a Veteran Stand Down and Resource Fair on October 10 at the Clearwater River Casino Event Center in Lewiston, ID from 0900-1500. There will be complimentary bus rides *for veterans* from Appaloosa Express on their regular scheduled route to attend this event—Be prepared to show your veteran ID card to the bus driver. *Valid only for October 10, 2013*. There will be a flu clinic, military surplus supplies (priority for homeless veterans) and Idaho legal Aid will be there. Veterans will need a military ID, VA card, DD214, or veteran membership card such as VFW, Combat Vets, American Legion, etc. For more info, contact Kylie at kyliep@nezperce.org or 208-621-4738 or Don at Donald.erickson@labor.idaho.gov or 208-799-5000 (ext. 3526)

Sleeping Warrior Veterans Honoring Powwow ~ Pala Rey Youth Camp, Pala Indian Reservation

Saturday (November 9th): 11:00am and 7:00pm Gourd Dancing - 1:00pm and 8:30pm Grand Entries - 5:00pm-7:00pm Dinner Break - 11:00pm Retire Colors - CALIFORNIA BEAR DANCE FOLLOWING POWWOW - **Sunday (November 10th):** 11:00am Gourd Dancing - 1:00pm Grand Entry - 6:00pm Retire Colors - Emcee: Randy Edmonds (Kiowa/Caddo) - Head Woman: Shannon Whitecloud (Jicarilla) - Head Man: Richard VanDyke (Omaha) - Head Gourd Dancer: Richard Garcia (Rincon Band) - Arena Director: Jared Manga (Comanche) - HOST DRUM: "Wolf Leader" (Max Watan) – Weatherford, OK - INVITED DRUM: "Dancing Cloud" (Steve Mojado) – San Luis Rey - SPECIAL CONTESTS: "Prettiest Shawl" $300 Winner Take All - "Crow Hop" Men $500 & Women $500 Winner Take All
"Two-Step" $500 Winners Take All - **Specials Sponsored by:** Donna Dominguez in Honor of Lavato Family Veterans (Robert Sr., Duane, Robert Jr. Michael, Angelo) Sylva Lavato in Honor of Parents Edna Purley (US Army) and Charles Rutledge (US Army) Other Specials TBA

ALL DRUMS &DANCERS WELCOME - CAMPING AVAILABLE
VENDOR INFORMATION ($75/DAY + Item for Raffle) –(FOOD BOOTH

$125/DAY) CONTACT ANGELO "TUBBY"LAVATO (760/742-1605 OR 760/802-8444) COME & JOIN US IN HONORING OUR SERVICEMEN AND SERVICEWOMEN - SPONSORED BY PALA BAND OF MISSION INDIANS VETERANS - Cindy Sullivan (US Army – Retired) 1st Native American Woman Vet to Place a Wreath at Tomb of Unknown Soldier – Washington, D.C.
Bring Your Chairs -- Not Responsible for Injuries, Theft, etc.
NO ALCOHOL OR DRUGS ALLOWED

American Veterans Outings: Sailing on the Bay

American Veteran Outings (AVO) is looking for Veterans and their families who would like to sail the San Francisco Bay! AVO is a non-profit organization offering recreational outings for Veterans and their families at NO COST. To learn more about American Veterans Outings and to sign up for a sailing trip, contact Warren Roll at 530-865-1984

Report -Blind Rehabilitation Rural Outreach Clinic

The 4th quarter Blind Rehab Rural Outreach Clinic using the Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) for FY13 took place July 22 thru July 26, 2013, serving Veterans in rural Clallam County, WA. Once again, clinic location was split between Sequim, hosted by the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, and Port Angeles, hosted by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. A heartfelt "thank you" and sincere appreciation is extended to the two tribal communities and their Tribal Veteran Representative, Al Fletcher and Jerry Charles. Their hospitality made it possible to bring services to Veterans in that part of the state!

As in the other previous outreach clinics this year, Blind Rehab was joined by a number of fine folks, including Minority Veterans Program, Primary Care, Health Plan Management, Tacoma Vet Center, and Bellingham Vet Center. Veterans were able to walk in, be enrolled into the VA health care system, receive primary care services including a vesting physical, have their difficulty with vision resolved, consult with Minority Veteran Program Coordinator, fill out a means test, stop to check on their VA claims, AND walk in for a session with the counselors from the Vet Center…. All in one day, right there in their own backyard!! Blind Rehab was blessed by the following groups and individuals that made this week of outreach so successful:

- Cathy Davidson, Minority Veterans Program Coordinator
- Jonathan Wolman, Merle Cole, General Medicine Service; Melinda DePellegrini, Health Plan Management Enrollment Specialist; George Coffee, Environmental Management Service; Doris Kent, VSO, Bellingham Vet Center, Center for Vietnam Veterans of America; Mark Buckler, Jason Scott, Tacoma Vet Center; Al Fletcher, Tribal Veteran Representative, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe; Jerry Charles, Tribal Veteran Representative, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe; Frances Charles, Chairwoman, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe; Phil Dan, Tribal Veteran Representative, Swinomish Tribe; Judith Morris, Constituent Services Representative, Representative Derek Kilmer's office; Ed Bowen, Voices for Veterans; Debbie Hunt, Homeless Veterans Program.

The mission for this week was again two-fold. Our first mission continues to be bringing blind rehabilitation and low vision services to rural visually-impaired Veterans. Our second mission is to outreach to Native American Veterans in the rural Clallam County area. The week was overall a huge success, with 61 Veterans served. This is the highest number of Veterans served all year!

ALL GOOD THINGS……

This was the last rural outreach clinic for this fiscal year. It certainly has been an amazing year!! A total of 166 rural Veterans received services from a collaborative group of simply awesome folks! The part that made it so remarkable is the people! We were blessed with individuals, both VA and non-VA, tribal and non-tribal, with a heart for serving others. These are people who go out of their way to help a Vet, who see a need… meet a need, who doesn't know when quitting time is as long as there is still people to be helped. The Tribal Veteran Representatives are truly bridge builders. They are visionaries who open their hearts and doors to connect available services to their tribal warriors. It has been truly an awesome year of collaboration and friendship!!

Next year, the outreach effort will be led by the capable hands of Cathy Davidson, Minority Veterans Program Coordinator. Blind Rehab will continue to be part of this wonderful journey. I look forward to even greater things!!

By the way, while we are out, we don't have any fun at all, as you can see!!
Respectfully submitted, Irene L. Yang, OD, FAAO, Blind Rehabilitation Unit
VA Puget Sound Health Care System - August 5, 2013

Office of Tribal Government Relations

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Out of the Darkness Community Walk for Suicide Prevention

For more information on (or to register for) the 8th Annual Out of the Darkness Walk, contact Whitney Baugher at 619-445-1188 (ext. 207) or email her at wbaugher@sihc.org This suicide prevention event will take place on Saturday, October 19th at 0830 at Embarcadero, N. Seaport Village, San Diego, CA. It's free to register.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

San Francisco Veterans Film Festival ~ "A Salute to Women"

October 5th, 2013, 12 Noon – 9PM, Mission Culture Center for Latino Arts - 2868 Mission St, San Francisco, CA 94110 (24th Street Bart Station)

The SFVFF is an educational opportunity for the community to learn more about the issues facing our returning vets. This year we celebrate "A Salute to Women", don't ask don't tell, women in combat, same-sex marriage, military sexual trauma (MST) and other issues facing our female service members, past and present. Enjoy a preview of work by **Cuban Female Artists**, courtesy of **Cara Cabezas Contemporary**; we plan to exhibit works that represent the current trends, concepts and methods of Contemporary Cuban Art. The mediums represented will include paintings and photography from the period between 1990 and 2013. A performance by the US Air Force Quartet-The Golden West Winds, part of the United States Air Force Band of the Golden West from Travis Air Force Base, California and much more! Please join us for this impactful and educational evening of cinema, art and community. Food will be available for purchase, donations accepted, fund raiser to follow film event.

The following films are proposed for showing: Short Films by local film makers - Warriors Return-Diné Veterans of Canyon de Chelly; Camouflage Closet; Sand Strom; and more TBD. Sponsored by ONE VET ONE VOICE, Cesar E. Chavez Post 505, American Legion, Golden Gate Chapter 120, Air Force Association in Partnership with Cara Cabezas Contemporary, Mama Art Café, San Francisco State Doc Film Institute, Hilton Hotel - For more information, call Eddie Ramirez 415-244-7100 or email at eduardo.ramirez@att.net

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CAL VET WOMEN VETERANS

Military & Veteran Women's Appreciation Day

This is a self-care event to honor and appreciate all military and Veteran women(Active duty, Veterans, Reserve and Guard) on 10/26/13 from 9:00 to 2:00 pm at B.T. Collins Army Reserved Center (Sacramento). Registration is required only for lunch. Self-care resources and activities will include:

- Self-care classes including Yoga, funky dancing, Nutrition and Healthy Food Demonstration as well as a Relaxation and Self-acupressure technique workshop are offered in the morning.
- Massage services, empathetic touch (energy healing), facial waxing, and make-up makeover services are available from 9:00 to 11:45 pm. Photo booth is set up for participants to take pictuers after make-up makeover services.
- Resource fair is from 9:00 am to 11:45 am. VA and community service providers such as Sacramento Vet. Center, Project Hired, Prided Industries and California Department of Veteran Affairs and Veteran Benefit Administration are available to give out resource information to all military and Veteran women.
- Luncheon, networking and entertainment are from 12:00 to 2:00 pm. Registration for luncheon is required.

Military and Veteran Women are welcome to register online through eventbrite. If you have questions, please contact Rebecca Stallworth at 916-366-5453.