
VA Office of Tribal Government Relations Newsletter ~ Summer/Fall 2022

Greetings and welcome to the late summer/early fall “mega” VA Office of Tribal Government Relations newsletter. This welcome note will be short and sweet as we have a lot of content for you to dive into with this edition.

The pandemic continues but travel restrictions have eased up a bit, so this past summer the VA OTGR team picked up the pace by working with tribes located within their respective regions to host Veterans benefits claims events in local tribal communities. Some of the summer highlights include happened during late June when VA Secretary Denis McDonough took a trip to Gallup, New Mexico, where he co-hosted a Veterans town hall with members of the New Mexico congressional delegation, visited the Gallup VA Community Based Outreach Clinic (CBOC), where 25% of the personnel are Navajo, then paid a visit to the Indian Health Service (IHS) Gallup Indian Medical Center (IHS/GIMC) accompanied by Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and IHS Navajo Area Director Roselyn Tso. A broad range of priorities were discussed including the need for access to timely VA care/care coordination for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Veterans in the Gallup area and from across the region and the need to identify Veteran consumers of both IHS and VA health care services in order to provide more informed expert care to the Veteran population based on their unique health care needs.

July was quite a remarkable month for my father, Dwight Birdwell, a former United States Army soldier and citizen of the Cherokee Nation who received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions in the Vietnam War during the Tet Offensive attack, January 31, 1968, on Tan Son Nhut air Base on January 31, 1968. I was honored and humbled to be able to witness the ceremony at the White House. This experience (in addition to the day-to-day stories and relationships we build with tribal leaders and Veterans across the nation) affirmed for me the importance of the work being done in service to our Veterans and their families who have sacrificed so very much for all of us. Our team will continue to push and work as hard as we can to make an enduring, positive impact on the lives of our brave men and women to serve our nation, our homelands since time immemorial.

As we moved into August, the VA Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs, the statutorily-created committee responsible for making recommendations to the VA Secretary regarding the development and implementation of policies that will result in improved outcomes for AI/AN Veterans, held their second meeting (the first was held virtually in January of this year) in Albuquerque, NM. The “VA TAC” meeting is a public forum and the three days were constructive work sessions for the representatives. The afternoons included site visits to the Pueblo of Isleta Veterans Association offices, a VA Vet Center, the First Nations Community Health Source (an Urban Indian Organization), Santa Fe National Cemetery, the Fisher House located on the Albuquerque VA Medical Center campus and the IHS Santa Fe Indian Hospital. The goal of these site visits is to expand and inform the expertise of the VA TAC representatives and assist each representative by providing information that will enable them to consider and be made aware of the array of programs, services VA offers, and how to strengthen engagement in those program and service opportunities for AI/AN Veterans.

Looking to the fall, there will be four VA-focused engagements (including plenary remarks from the VA Secretary) during the National Indian Health Board's conference to be held in DC (the VA portion will be 9/27), the VA TAC will be meeting again, hopefully in person, in DC the week of November 7 and the Smithsonian, National Museum of the American Indian will hold its official dedication of the National Native American Veteran's Memorial on November 11.

Our VA Tribal Government Relations specialists will be busy during the fall (Mary Culley from Southern Plains is organizing a claims event to be held in October with the Muscogee Creek Nation then an AI/AN women Veteran's conference in early November; Terry Bentley from the Western Region will be supporting VA efforts at the Alaska Federation of Natives conference and the National Congress of American Indians; Peter Vicaire has several presentations and site visits scheduled with tribes located across his region and Homana Pawiki is also busy with follow up outreach work with the tribes located in her region.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that VHA established the Office of Tribal Veteran Health, with Travis Trueblood, Choctaw, serving as the first director of that office and Christie Prairie Chicken serving as his deputy. We are excited for the work that will be coming from this VHA tribal team as the office continues to staff up in the weeks ahead.

I promised I would make this note short, but as usual, I could really go on and on.

Take care, stay well and happy reading.

Warm Regards,



Stephanie Birdwell
Director, VA OTGR



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Medal of Honor Monday: Army Spc. 5 Dwight W. Birdwell

Here's an article by Katie Lange, which ran on the [U.S. Department of Defense's website](#) on July 25, 2022.

Army Spc. 5 Dwight W. Birdwell was one of the first U.S. soldiers to engage with the enemy during the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. He wasn't in charge of his unit, but when soldiers fell, he stepped forward to fill the leadership gap. The Silver Star he earned for his bravery was recently upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

Birdwell was born on Jan. 19, 1948, in Amarillo, Texas, but he grew up in the small town of Bell, Oklahoma, a mostly Native American community. Birdwell, who is Cherokee, said he learned to fish and hunt from his father— skills that likely helped him survive in Vietnam.



Birdwell graduated from Stilwell High School in 1966 and joined the Army shortly thereafter. He received training at the Armored School in Fort Knox, Kentucky, and was sent to Korea, according to the Stilwell Democratic Journal. According to the newspaper, after coming home on leave in September 1967, Birdwell was reassigned to the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armored Division, which was already in Vietnam. Birdwell was eventually reassigned to the 4th Cavalry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division.

The 20-year-old was near Saigon in South Vietnam when the Tet Offensive began in late January 1968. He was assigned to Troop C of the regiment's 3rd Squadron.

[Spotlight: Commemorating the Vietnam War](#)

On Jan. 31, Troop C was ordered to move south to help repel an enemy attack on Tan Son Nhut Air Base. They were the first U.S. ground unit from outside of the air base to respond.

As their column of tanks and armored vehicles approached the base's west gate, they came under intense enemy fire. The unit didn't know it, but they had driven directly into the midst of three enemy battalions.

Troop C tried to push through the attack, but their lead tank had been crippled by a rocket-propelled grenade and was blocking their ability to move forward.



As enemy fire came from both sides of the road, Birdwell ran to his wounded tank commander's aid and moved him to safety. Birdwell then mounted the tank and took over. From the tank commander's hatch and with his upper body exposed, Birdwell used the tank's .50-caliber machine gun and its 90 mm main gun to subdue the enemy.

When the 90 mm gun ran out of ammunition and the machine gun overheated, Birdwell switched to his M-16 rifle. In doing so, he exposed his entire body to the enemy several times so he could gain a better vantage point.

Birdwell finally moved when a U.S. helicopter crashed nearby. Still under enemy fire, he ran to the chopper to collect two M-60 machine guns and ammunition that were inside. After giving one to a fellow soldier, he remounted the tank and began using the other until the M-60 was damaged by enemy fire.



Birdwell suffered injuries to his face, neck, chest, and arms, but he didn't quit. He got off the tank, refused medical attention, and rallied his fellow soldiers to move toward the front of the armored column to set up a defensive position.

There, by a large tree, Birdwell and his men continued to fire M-16s and grenades. As the enemy fire lessened, Birdwell grabbed more ammunition from disabled vehicles and helped wounded soldiers move to safer positions.

Birdwell's strength and courage inspired his fellow soldiers to continue the lopsided fight, which they eventually won. The 3rd Squadron was able to keep enemy reinforcements from getting near the base. By the afternoon, the base was once again secure.

During the course of his service in Vietnam, Birdwell earned two Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star for meritorious service and two Silver Stars, the first of which was for the battle at the air base. He earned the second Silver Star on July 4, 1968, by risking his life again to rescue more Americans who were stranded in a battle zone in an enemy-occupied village.



Birdwell came back to the states in December 1968 and got married a few months later. He and his wife, Virginia, had two children, a daughter named Stephanie and a son, Edward.

Army Gen. Glenn Otis, Birdwell's commander in Vietnam, worked for decades after the war to get Birdwell's Silver Star from the air base battle upgraded to the Medal of Honor. In a 2011 letter to an Oklahoma congressman, Otis asked for support for Birdwell's cause, saying "bureaucratic missteps" were the reason for the initial oversight that he was hoping to correct. Otis died in 2013, but others took over the effort, which eventually got the attention of the Pentagon.

Recently, that decades-long quest was realized. Birdwell, 74, received the Medal of Honor from President Joe Biden on July 5, 2022, during a White House ceremony. Two other soldiers who served in Vietnam were also given the nation's top honor for valor that day. A fourth soldier was awarded the medal posthumously.

Birdwell is the 33rd Native American to earn the Medal of Honor.



After Vietnam, Birdwell left the Army and enrolled at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. He continued his education at the University of Oklahoma, graduating with a law degree in 1976.

Birdwell was a member of the Judicial Appeals Tribunal (Supreme Court) of the Cherokee Nation from 1987 to 1999, serving as its chief justice twice. He still practices law in Oklahoma City with a focus on energy, natural resources and Native American law.

Birdwell also co-wrote a book called "A Hundred Miles of Bad Road," which detailed his experiences in Vietnam.

Dwight W. Birdwell: Medal of Honor Official Citation

Here's the official citation for Dwight Birdwell's Medal of Honor, the U.S. military's highest medal for valor.

Specialist Five Dwight W. Birdwell distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving with C Troop, 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 25th Infantry Division in the Republic of Vietnam on 31 January, 1968. On this date, C Troop was ordered to move south to help repel an enemy attack on Tan Son Nhut Airbase. As the C Troop column of tanks and armored personnel carriers approached the west gate of Tan Son Nhut Airbase, it came under intense enemy fire from a building to its right. Unbeknown to C Troop, it had driven directly into an enemy force consisting of three battalions. The column tried to push through the initial attack but the lead tank, crippled by a rocket-propelled grenade explosion, was blocking the way forward. C Troop immediately came under heavy enemy fire from both sides of the road. Specialist Five Birdwell, upon seeing that his tank commander was wounded by enemy fire, immediately went to his aid. Under intense enemy fire, he lowered the injured tank commander to the ground, and moved him to safety. Specialist Five Birdwell then, with complete disregard for his own safety, mounted the tank and assumed the tank commander's position. Standing in the tank commander's hatch with the upper half of his body exposed to heavy enemy fire, Specialist Five Birdwell used the tank's .50 caliber machine gun and 90mm main gun to suppress the enemy attack. With the ammunition for the 90mm main gun exhausted, he continued to fire the .50 caliber machine gun until it overheated. At this point, Specialist Five Birdwell, rather than abandoning his position, continued to engage the enemy with his M-16 rifle, sometimes exposing his entire body to enemy fire in order to engage the enemy from a better vantage point. When a U.S. helicopter crashed nearby, Specialist Five Birdwell, under withering enemy fire, dismounted and moved to the helicopter where he retrieved two M-60 machine guns and ammunition. After giving one M-60 and ammunition to a fellow soldier, he remounted his tank and used the other M-60 to again engage the enemy. Specialist Five Birdwell continued to engage the enemy with complete disregard for his own safety until the M-60 he was firing was hit by enemy fire. Specialist Five Birdwell, now wounded in the face, neck, chest, and arms, dismounted the tank but refused to be medically evacuated. Instead, Specialist Five Birdwell, under enemy fire, rallied fellow soldiers to advance toward the front of the armored column where they set up a defensive position by a large tree. From this position, he and the other soldiers engaged the enemy with M-16 fire and grenades. As the enemy fire lessened, Specialist Five Birdwell gathered ammunition from disabled vehicles and helped wounded soldiers move to safer positions. His leadership and tenacity under fire inspired the other C Troop soldiers to continue fighting against the superior enemy force, and directly contributed to the enemy's ultimate defeat. Specialist Five Birdwell's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

HUD AWARDS MORE THAN \$840,000 TO PROVIDE RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES TO NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Here's a [press release from HUD](#), which was released on August 8, 2022

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) today awarded \$841,113 in Tribal HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (Tribal HUD-VASH) expansion grants to three Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs) to help house 45 Native American Veterans experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. Funding was awarded to two existing Tribal HUD-VASH grantees, Cook Inlet Housing Authority and Tohono O'odham Ki:Ki Housing Authority, and one new Tribal HUD-VASH grantee, White Mountain Apache Housing Authority.

The Tribal HUD-VASH program provides housing and supportive services to Native American Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness by combining rental assistance from HUD with case management and clinical services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

HUD Deputy Secretary Adrienne Todman announced the awards at the Association of Alaska Housing Authorities (AAHA) and Enterprise Community Partners' Housing Innovation Summit in Anchorage, Alaska. Deputy Secretary Todman also announced that HUD will soon release Tribal HUD-VASH renewal awards to connect even more Native American Veterans experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness with rental assistance and supportive services.

“Our Veterans sacrifice so much to keep us safe. The least we can do is make sure they have a safe and stable place to call home,” **said Deputy Secretary Todman.** “This is funding that can and will help Native Veterans find relief – and find home.”

In 2015, Congress authorized funding for a Tribal demonstration program in order to expand the HUD-VASH program into Indian Country. HUD was directed to coordinate with Tribes, TDHEs, and other appropriate Tribal organizations on the design of this program and to ensure the effective delivery of housing assistance and supportive services to eligible Native American Veterans.

Since its inception, the program has housed more than 600 Native American Veterans and has provided case management services to almost 1,000 Veterans. Tribes will be able to reach more Veterans with today's expansion of the program.

The awards announced today constitute the second round of expansion awards announced under the Tribal HUD-VASH program. HUD [awarded](#) \$1,021,818 in round one expansion grants in September 2021.

The FY 2021 Tribal HUD-VASH expansion awards announced today are:

Grantee	City	State	Amount of Renewal Award	Description of Project
Cook Inlet Housing Authority	Anchorage	AK	\$154,869	This grant will be used to provide rental assistance to approximately 10 Native American Veterans, as well as administrative funding to support the program during the period of performance.
Tohono O'odham Ki:Ki Housing Authority	Sells	AZ	\$500,304	This grant will be used to provide rental assistance to approximately 20 Native American veterans, as well as administrative funding to support the program during the period of performance.
White Mountain Apache Housing Authority	Whiteriver	AZ	\$185,940	This grant will be used to provide rental assistance to approximately 15 Native American veterans, as well as administrative funding to support the program during the period of performance.
		Total	\$841,113	

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Government Accountability Office Report Native American Veterans: Improvements to VA Management Could Help Increase Mortgage Loan Program Participation

GAO released a [report](#) on April 19, 2022, regarding the Native American Direct Home Loan Program (NADL). Click on the links below to access or email Peter.Vicaire@va.gov for a copy.

[Highlights Page \(1 page\)](#)

[Full Report \(83 pages\)](#)

[Accessible PDF \(94 pages\)](#)



 **Cheyenne River
Housing Authority**

Veterans... Are You Interested in Homeownership?

Sign up for our NEW Veterans-only Homebuyer Readiness class exclusively designed for our Veterans and their families. Held online, via Zoom, you can access the training on a computer or mobile device.

Class topics include:

- In-depth review of the Native American Direct Loan Process
- Create Healthy Saving & Spending Habits
- Review Credit and Credit Reports
- Review Trust vs. Fee Simple Process
- Discuss Utilities, Insurance & much more...

Got Questions? Please Contact Krazy or your local Tribal Veterans Service Officer to sign up Today!
Krazy Dog Eagle, kdog eagle@crhanetwork.org
(605) 964-4265

**2022 Virtual Homebuyer Readiness
Class Schedule**

September 6, 2022 - December 6, 2022
Tuesdays, 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. MST



"New Home, New Beginnings, New Memories"



National Museum of the American Indian to Dedicate National Native American Veterans Memorial Nov. 11

Join the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian to dedicate the [National Native American Veterans Memorial](#) Friday, Nov. 11. The dedication ceremony will take place on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., as part of a three-day event (Nov. 11-13) to honor Native veterans. A Native veterans procession will take place before the start of the dedication ceremony.

Information about the dedication and how to register to participate in the Native veterans procession can be found by visiting the [memorial's website](#). "The dedication of this memorial is an opportunity to gather and reflect on the extraordinary service and sacrifice of Native veterans and their families," said Cynthia Chavez Lamar (San Felipe Pueblo, Hopi, Tewa and Navajo), the museum's director. "I hope everyone will join us for this momentous occasion, so together we can offer them our thanks for their contributions to our country."



Photo by Alan Karchmer for the National Museum of the American Indian

Events Nov. 11 will begin in the afternoon with a Native veterans procession, which will make its way along the National Mall to the dedication ceremony. There will be viewing areas along the procession route for supporters to gather to honor the participating veterans and watch the ceremony. Throughout the weekend, the museum will host special programming in honor of the dedication of the memorial, including hands-on activities, films in the Rasmuson Theater, performances in the Potomac Atrium and a dedicated veterans hospitality suite. The museum will remain open until 8 p.m. on Nov. 11.

Visitors can also visit the exhibition ["Why We Serve: Native Americans in the United States Armed Forces"](#) on the museum's second floor. The exhibition, which tells personal stories of Native Americans, Native Hawaiians and Alaska Native veterans who have served in the U.S. armed forces, brings long overdue recognition to those who have served their country selflessly and with honor for more than 250 years. The dedication ceremony will also be livestreamed on the website so those who cannot attend in person can also watch.

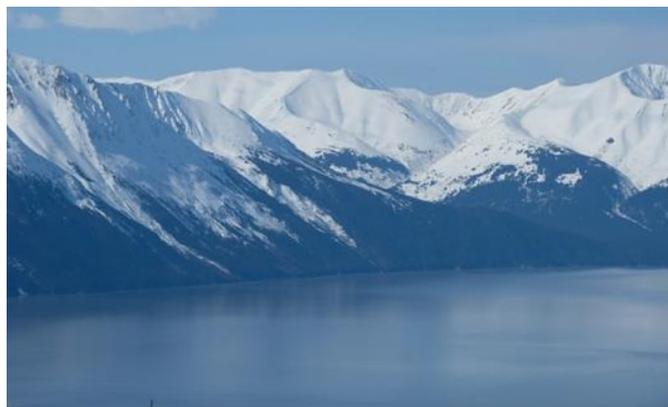
Interior Department to Open 27 million Acres of Federal Land to Selection by Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans

Here's a press release from the Bureau of Land Management, released on April 21, 2022.

ANCHORAGE — During a roundtable discussion today with Alaska Native Vietnam-era veterans, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Director Tracy Stone-Manning announced that the Department will open approximately 27 million acres of federal lands to selection by eligible Alaska Native veterans.

“We have a sacred obligation to America’s veterans. I honor the sacrifices made by those who serve in our military, and I will not ignore land allotments owed to our Alaska Native Vietnam-era veterans,” said **Secretary Deb Haaland**, whose father served during the Vietnam War. “I am grateful to the veterans we met with today for their patience as we have worked through the needed analyses, and to the BLM team that moved expeditiously to deliver on this promise.”

The Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Program was established by the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019 and was championed by the Alaska Congressional delegation. Through this program, the BLM can provide eligible individuals the opportunity to select an allotment of up to 160 acres from available federal lands in Alaska. Currently there are approximately 1.2 million acres of available federal lands open to allotment selection.



This represents the third time that federally managed land has been offered to Alaska Native Vietnam veterans, who did not have access to land allotments while serving during the Vietnam War. The BLM recently completed an [environmental assessment](#) and issued a finding of no significant impact on the effects of opening of federal lands within the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula, Ring of Fire, Bay, Bering Sea-Western Interior, and East Alaska planning areas to selection under the 2019 Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Land Allotment program.

BLM will now complete the legal descriptions to open the lands to selection. Lands are available for selection through December 29, 2025. For more information on the Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Program and how to submit interest, please visit [BLM's program page](#).

U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs meets with Bemidji area veterans

Here's an article by Nicole Ronchetti which ran in the [Bemidji Pioneer](#) on May 23, 2022

Veterans from across northern Minnesota came together for an early morning town hall with U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough in Bemidji on Friday, May 20. Invited by the White Earth Tribal Council to tour the area, McDonough came to Bemidji to hear from local veterans about different programs being run that he hopes can be recreated in other veteran communities across the country.

"I wanted to come here because there's something special going on here," McDonough said. "It speaks to the commitment from this community, from these tribes, from this state." This led to the organization of the town hall in Bemidji, which took the time to introduce McDonough to the success of the local Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Support Club that is available for veterans.

Various club members at the event shared what the group has meant to them, and how it has changed their lives for the better. "It turned out to be a turning point in my life," said John Pearce, who joined after he met with Grant Bauer, a former counselor at the Bemidji VA Clinic. "(He) saved my life, and saved all of our lives."

Started in 2008 by three veterans, the support group now includes around 30 members who meet multiple times a week. "The meetings are the high points of the week for many veterans," said Larry Djernes, a veteran and member of the support group. The club has proven to be a vital line of support for the region's veterans, providing a space for them to connect with each other, grow friendships, share experiences and stay active in their communities.

Last year alone the club raised more than \$30,000 for veterans, and in the past it has hosted events to raise awareness about issues like veteran suicide. "We stay active, which is the key," Pearce said. "We're going to keep on doing that." Another key aspect of the club is that it's veterans supporting veterans, something that Pearce said the group was working on extending to younger veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

"They're going through what we went through," Pearce said, "a war that nobody cares about and nobody remembers." Some issues specific to Indigenous veterans were also discussed, such as how generational trauma can complicate a veteran's experience of military related PTSD.

"We face a lot of things that stem back a couple hundred years with the military," said Robert Durrant, a veteran from White Earth Nation. "We face these kind of issues all the time, because the atrocities were passed on to us."

Moving forward

As McDonough heard from the veterans gathered at the event, he expressed a desire to try to replicate these programs so that other veteran communities could also benefit. "I think a lot of what you've had to say is applicable in communities across the country," McDonough said. "As I said, there's something special here."

Veterans also shared with the secretary what they would like to see locally, such as a regional VA office located in Bemidji, a way to help veterans be able to get to the support club’s meetings, and the addition of another mental health specialist at the clinic.\

“The veterans I’ve seen throughout this region have sometimes had to overcome barriers to receive their care,” Bauer said. “Sometimes it helps just to gather and hear what our health care is like for veterans.”

McDonough agreed to look into different local possibilities, and seemed hopeful that some of the ideas brought forward during the town hall could be beneficial to veterans across the country.

“We’ll see what we can do on that,” McDonough said. “You continue to do us a great service as you take care of each other, to see this up close is really moving.”

VA Reimburses Over \$180 Million to Indian Health Service (IHS) and Tribal Health Programs (THPs)

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

VA-IHS/THP Reimbursement Agreements Through July 2022

Executive Summary				
	Jul-22	FY21	FY22	Since Program Inception
Disbursed	\$3,065,982.55	\$27,386,004	\$28,705,493.68	\$180,230,639
Unique Veterans	2,309	7,268	6,518	~14,650
Inpatient Claims	102	629	448	8,275
Outpatient Claims	5,820	62,597	61,152	467,260
Total Claims	5,922	63,226	61,600	475,535

	IHS/THP July 2022	
	IHS	THP
Claims	2128	3,616
Unique Veterans	820	1490
Disbursed	\$782,058.26	\$2,283,924.29

VA expands reimbursement agreement program to Urban Indian Organizations

Here's a VA press release from April 28, 2022

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs partners with Health and Human Services' 41 Indian Health Service grant-funded Urban Indian Organizations serving eligible American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans. The collaboration is part of a recent expansion of VA's health care [Reimbursement Agreement Program](#).

UIOs provide unique access to quality health care and culturally appropriate services for AI/AN people living in urban areas, who may not have access to Indian Health Service or Tribal health care services because they do not live on or near a reservation or reside outside of an IHS area.

The partnership is possible through Section 1113 of the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021](#) which amended [Sharing Arrangements with Federal Agencies](#) to allow UIOs to participate in the department's Reimbursement Agreement Program to deliver health care to the 70% of AI/AN Veterans now living in urban areas.

"VA has partnered with the Indian Health Services/Tribal Health Program since 2012 to deliver the Reimbursement Agreement Program — which continues to evolve to meet the needs of all Veterans," said Acting Chief Medical Officer of VA's Office of Integrated Veteran Care Sachin P. Yende, M.D. "Partnering with Urban Indian Organizations will widen access to culturally sensitive care and build mutually-beneficial relationships to better serve American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans."

Visit [Community Care](#) for more information on VA's reimbursement Agreement Program and eligibility. Find more information on the [41 Urban Indian Organizations](#).

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'Historic Day' for Navajo Veterans

Here's an article by John Christian Hopkins which ran in the [Lake Powell News](#) on May 6, 2022.

The Navajo Nation Veterans Administration was officially recognized May 2 as a tribal organization that meets the criteria and standards to be accredited under the Tribal Representation Expansion Program, to assist veterans with benefit claims.

U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough made the announcement, which makes the Navajo Nation the first tribal nation to earn such recognition in the country.

"This is a historic achievement for the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration and a big step forward for Navajo veterans," Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez said. "When the United States called upon our people to protect and serve, our Diné warriors answered that call and kept their part of the promise. For many years, we've heard from our Navajo veterans about the challenges of having to travel long distances to file claims for federal VA benefits. Through the hard work of Navajo Veterans Administration Director James Zwierlein and his team, progress is being made and we are seeing results."

Among many requirements that had to be met through the U.S. Veterans Affairs' application process, the NNVA had to demonstrate its capability, resources, and commitment to maintain a policy to provide complete claims services to veterans.

"I love doing this job. Being able to improve the situation for our veterans is rewarding beyond words and being able to get things done without malicious interference," Zwierlein said. "Imagine what we could accomplish if certain individuals weren't constantly trying to keep me from doing my job under the law – we could be so much further along."

The application process required substantial work, and Veterans Administration Deputy Director Hubert Smith was instrumental in helping to get the application across the finish line and approved, he added. Zwierlein was also selected last year, to serve on the federal VA's Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs.

"The construction of new homes for Navajo veterans is underway and now our veterans will be able to process federal claims closer to home," Nez said. "Recently, we visited the construction site of a new home for 89-year-old Korean War veteran, Kee C. Nez, which is being built through the Navajo Veterans Housing Program."

More homes are under construction for Navajo veterans, Nez noted. "Director Zwierlein and his staff members are producing results and building stronger relations at the federal and state levels to provide support for our Diné warriors," Nez added.



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 28, 2022

**U.S. Veterans Secretary McDonough recognizes the Navajo Nation
Veterans Administration as a tribal veteran service organization**



PHOTO: (left to right) Navajo Nation Veterans Administration Director James Zwierlein, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, U.S. Veterans Secretary Denis R. McDonough, and U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich at the University of New Mexico in Gallup, N.M. on June 28, 2022.

GALLUP, N.M. – On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez joined U.S. Veterans Secretary Denis R. McDonough in Gallup, N.M., as he officially recognized the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration as a tribal veteran service organization that meets the criteria and standards to be accredited under the Tribal Representation Expansion Program, to assist veterans with benefit and pension claims. The Navajo Nation is the very first tribal nation to earn such recognition in the entire country.

Among many requirements that had to be met through the U.S. Veterans Affairs' application process, under the leadership of Director James Zwierlein the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration had to demonstrate its capability, resources, and commitment to maintain a policy to provide complete claims services to veterans.

"This is a milestone achievement for the entire Navajo Nation and a big step forward for Navajo veterans. When the United States called upon our people to protect and serve, our Diné warriors answered that call and kept their promise. For many years, our Navajo veterans have traveled long distances to file claims for federal VA benefits. Through the hard work of Navajo Veterans Administration Director James Zwierlein and his team, progress is being made and we are seeing results. We also thank Secretary McDonough for his support and for coming to our region to hear from Navajo veterans," said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.

Director Zwierlein reported that five staff members under the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration are now accredited to process benefits claims for veterans. Since May 2, they have taken in and submitted 83 claims into the federal VA system. With the accreditation, the employees are able to represent the claims on behalf of the veterans. In the past, Navajo veterans had to travel to VA centers located off the Navajo Nation to submit claims.

Prior to the ceremony, President Nez spoke about the importance of providing more expansive health and clinical services for Navajo veterans during a meeting held at the Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Gallup, N.M., where many Navajo veterans go for health care services and treatment. The group also took a tour of the facility and met with the health care workers.

During the Secretary's visit, the federal VA announced that four Community-Based Outpatient Clinics for veterans in Gallup, Las Vegas, Raton, and Española in the state of New Mexico will remain open. On March 14, the Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission recommended the closure of the four CBOC's, resulting from the 2018 VA MISSION Act, which required the Department of Veterans Affairs to research, develop and publish a list of recommendations intended to modernize VA medical facilities and health care delivery including through facility expansions, relocations, closures or changes in services.

President Nez also joined Secretary McDonough, U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), and U.S. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández (D-N.M.) for a town hall at the University of New Mexico Gallup Campus, where they heard from veterans, members of the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council, state



PHOTO: Navajo veterans address U.S. Veterans Secretary Denis R. McDonough during a town hall held at the University of New Mexico in Gallup, N.M. on June 28, 2022.

leaders, and tribal leaders regarding health care and benefits claims and the need for expansive care for traditional healing and mental health services. New Mexico State Sen. Shannon Pinto and Reps. Wonda Johnson and Anthony Allison were in attendance to offer their support for veterans. Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council members were also in attendance including Billy Goodman, Gabriella Mehl, Vern R. Lee, Linda Onesalt, and Elouise Brown.

In March, President Nez and Navajo Veterans Administration Director James D. Zwierlein, who was selected last year to serve on the federal VA's Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs, met with Congressional leaders to advocate for the establishment of the proposed veterans benefits outreach center and a veterans hospital that would provide clinical and mental health services to help Native American veterans with PTSD and other health care issues.

"I appreciate all of our Navajo veterans who came out to speak about their concerns and issues directly to Secretary McDonough and our congressional leaders. We also thank the Biden-Harris Administration for keeping their word to have a seat at the table for the Navajo Nation. We have a lot of great momentum on veterans issues and we will continue working together to move forward to help our Diné warriors," added President Nez.

The group also visited the Gallup Indian Medical Center where they received updates on veterans health care and efforts to improve the health care system for Navajo people from Navajo Area IHS Director Roselyn Tso. Officials also spoke about efforts to construct a new hospital facility to replace the current Gallup Indian Medical Center.

###

S.1725 – A Bill to Grant a Federal Charter to the National American Indian Veterans, Inc. (NAIV) (ROUNDS – LUJAN**)**

This bill seeks to provide a congressional charter to the National American Indian Veterans (NAIV).

- The NAIV was chartered under the laws of South Dakota, in 2004, with its headquarters located at the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, SD.
- The National Commander is Mr. Don Loudner, who resides in Mitchell, SD. There are four national vice commanders; Bryce In the Woods (Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, SD), Greg Richardson (Raleigh, NC), Chris Cornelius (Oneida Indian Reservation, WI) Cecilia Sandoval (Navajo Indian Reservation, AZ)
- The NAIV is a non-profit, non-partisan organization.
 - NAIV formed as a result of a request by Senators Akaka, Inouye, and Nighthorse-Campbell during a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing in 2004.
 - The national leadership was elected at a meeting of 59 tribes in Phoenix, AZ in 2004.
 - NAIV has testified before Congress multiple times and often is the only National Native Indian Veterans Organization invited to testify before Congress on issues facing Native Veterans nationwide.
- The NAIV serves the interests and needs of Native veterans in all 50 states. It conducts activities in collaboration with its national leadership and its 14 regional offices.
 - Tribes rotate to host regional and state NAIV meetings.
 - This is done in a decentralized manner, respecting the independence of all tribal nations.
- The NAIV is organized and operates solely for charitable, literary, educational, scientific, patriotic, and civil improvement purposes.
 - NAIV provides a voice to Native American Veterans whose unique needs are not represented adequately by other organizations.
 - NAIV works closely with Tribal Veterans Services Officers to assure benefits, compensation, and resources – that have been earned by Native American Veterans – are provided.
 - NAIV provided critical support for construction of an American Indian Veterans Memorial at the Riverside National Cemetery, March Air Reserve Base, CA (Groundbreaking - 25 SEP 2020).
 - NAIV has distributed over 300,000 facemasks to Native American Veterans, nationwide, since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis.
 - The large number of COVID-19 cases on reservations remains a critical concern.
 - NAIV provides significant support to the National Native American Museum in Washington, DC, which is part of the Smithsonian Institution.
- According to 2020 VA statistics, there are over 140,000 Native American Veterans across the nation. Discussions with tribal leaders indicate that this number is most likely an undercount – and the true number likely approaches 200,000.

- This legislation has been endorsed by Former Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell and the organizations listed below:
 - Organizations
 - National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)
 - National Office of the Military Order of the Purple Heart
 - Korean War Veterans of America
 - National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs
 - Vietnam Veterans of America
 - American Gold Star Mothers
 - Jewish War Veterans of the USA
 - Tribes
 - Navajo Nation
 - Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes
 - Cherokee
 - Chickasaw
 - Choctaw
 - Muscogee (Creek)
 - Seminole Nation
 - Jena Band of the Choctaw Indians
 - Poarch Band of Creek Indians
 - Mohegan Tribe
 - Catawba Nation
 - Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina
 - Southern Ute Indian Tribe
 - Bois Forte Band of Chippewa

***** As of August 2022, no Native American veterans' organization has ever received a congressional charter.**

Co-sponsors (as of 8 August 2022)

Senator Thune
Senator Rubio
Senator Sullivan
Senator Inhofe
Senator Cramer
Senator Daines
Senator Cassidy
Senator Moran
Senator Cornyn
Senator Murkowski
Senator Graham
Senator Tillis
Senator Braun
Senator Burr
Senator Lankford

Senator Kelly
Senator Klobuchar
Senator Padilla
Senator Sinema
Senator Ossoff
Senator Smith
Senator Warnock
Senator Heinrich
Senator Bennet
Senator Hickenlooper
Senator Cortez Masto
Senator Rosen
Senator Warren

EMPLOYEE EDUCATION SYSTEM

VHA TRAIN

Course Announcement

Suicide Risk Management for Rural Native Veterans

Program Description:

This recorded program will provide context and overview of providing mental health care to Rural Native Veterans and discuss approaches in suicide risk management.

Location: VHA TRAIN

Access links: Non-VA employees click [here](#). VA employees click [here](#).

Audience: Physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, pharmacists and rehabilitation counselors

Modality: Virtual conference (webinar)

Credit/hours: 1

Accreditations: ACCME, ACCME-NP, ACPE, ANCC, APA, ASWB, CRCC, JAIPCE, NBCC, NYSEDSW, NYSED-P

Questions?: If you require assistance, please contact the VHA TRAIN Help Desk by email at VHATRAN@va.gov.

VHA TRAIN is supported by the Veterans Health Administration Employee Education System, an internal education and training office of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The EES-developed training programs found in VHA TRAIN support the continuing education and professional development needs of community-based health care providers and public health officials, with a focus on Veteran-Centered care.

MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH
June 27, 2022



The Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health is pleased to announce Mr. Travis Trueblood as the Director, VHA Office of Tribal Health, effective June 19, 2022.

Travis Trueblood is an expert on Native American affairs and has over 13 years of federal government experience. His previous leadership experience includes serving as Chief of Staff to the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians and as a Senior Special Agent at the United States Department of the Interior.

Mr. Trueblood is also a licensed attorney who has represented numerous tribes, individuals and businesses for more than 20 years. His teaching experience includes the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and Florida State University College of Law. He holds a Master of Law from University of Miami along with a Juris Doctor, Master of Business Administration and Bachelor of Arts from Florida State University.

Mr. Trueblood is a Veteran of the United States Navy and continues to serve as a Judge Advocate in the United States Air Force. He is an enrolled tribal citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Let's extend a warm welcome to Mr. Trueblood to his new role in service to our nation's Veterans.



A MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH July 22, 2022

The Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health is pleased to announce **Dr. Christie Prairie Chicken** is detailed to the role of **Acting Deputy Director**, VHA Office of Tribal Health, effective July 17, 2022.

Dr. Prairie Chicken is an expert on Native American health care and has over 30 years of federal government experience. Her national leadership experience includes serving on The White House's Committee on Native American Affairs (2022) as a liaison for the FACA: Tribal & Indian Affairs Health Sub

Committee (2022), The White House: Nation to Nation Dialog COVID-19 Response (2021), and The White House Tribal Nations Summit (2021).

Dr. Prairie Chicken has served in multiple leadership positions within VHA to include; National Deputy Director, Communications & Stakeholder for the Office of Veterans Access to Care; National Associate Director, Employee Education System, VACO/VHA; National Director for Transformation Integration, VACO/VHA; Chief of Education (DLO), Alaska VA Healthcare System; and Behavioral Health Clinician, Veterans Homeless Services. She has also served as Director of Solider/Family Services for the U.S. Army 6th Recruiting Brigade, and Family Service Outreach Coordinator for both the U.S Navy and U.S Army. Additionally, she has served on the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) Committee and holds the distinction as a national guest speaker for Native American Heritage Month as well as a global guest speaker for Six Seconds on Traditional Healing for PTSD. Dr. Prairie Chicken serves as a traditional leader for Lakota sacred ceremonies and sings on a Pow Drum.

Dr. Prairie Chicken earned her doctorate degree from Fielding Graduate University and published her dissertation, "The SIYO Circle: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of a Medicine-Wheel Orientation" to Finding Your Sacred Balance.

Over the decades in VHA, Dr. Prairie Chicken has a proven record of serving Veterans by Connecting Healthcare & Culture through Partnership, Respect, and Understanding.

Let's extend a warm welcome to Dr. Prairie Chicken in her new role, as she continues her dedicated service to our Nation's Veterans.

“Dano” Tabor, Oneida Nation’s only Navy SEAL, turns 60

Here’s an [article by Christopher Johnson](#), which ran on Oneida Nation’s website on October 5, 2021

The only Oneida Nation citizen, to date, to have earned the right to wear the coveted “Trident” insignia of the United States Navy SEALs turned 60 years old September 22.

SOC (Ret) SEAL Dan Tabor, a 22-year veteran of the Navy, nineteen of which were spent as an operator and instructor with the SEAL Teams, reflected on his military career in a recent interview with the Kalihwisaks. The son of Air Force Veterans, Dorothy Cornelius and Donald Tabor, the future frogman grew up on the southeast side of Chicago where he attended Lutheran church and became an accomplished high school athlete. By the time he graduated from George Washington High School, Tabor had lettered five times in wrestling and swimming.

“That was a really good base for going into the SEALs because I could swim and I was physical,” Tabor says. “I graduated at 17 and was a bit small, but by the time I turned 19 I hit a growth spurt and shot up to 210 pounds right before I joined the Navy.”

Upon enlisting in the Navy in 1984, Tabor received some good-natured teasing about not joining the Air Force like his parents. He would joke that he was simply the ‘black sheep.’ “The guys I knew that were in the Navy loved it so much and just seemed so cool that I decided to go that route. I’ve never looked back.”

After finishing boot camp Tabor began extensive training to become an air crewman on CH-46 helicopters. The part of training he was most looking forward to was the Search and Rescue (SAR) swimming. In a bizarre twist of military abnormality, Tabor wasn’t allowed to become a SAR swimmer because of an apparent depth-perception issue.

“I was the best swimmer in my SAR class, but right before graduation I was pulled because I couldn’t tell which ring device was closest to me right away. So, I was allowed to become an air crewman but I couldn’t deploy in the water and pick people up. Then, when I put in for SEAL training, I passed all my eye tests perfectly. So, go figure, I couldn’t become a Navy rescue swimmer but I ended up becoming a Navy SEAL,” Tabor says with a laugh.

“I first served as an air crew member flying onboard CH-46 Sea Knights,” Tabor says. “I had made two Western Pacific cruises and towards the end of the second deployment we picked up some SEALs. That encounter really put the bug in me. These guys wanted to go skydiving in Subic Bay (Philippines), and they told me if we could set up a jump for them they’d help explain how I could get into the SEAL pipeline. Well, we set it up with some of the younger pilots, and these guys came walking off the bus for their jump wearing UDT (Underwater Demolition Team) shorts, Teva sandals, and their parachutes. No headgear, no shirts, and I thought ‘Man, these guys are so cool, I’m hooked.’”

The unit name SEAL stands for Sea, Air, and Land, the environments that these highly skilled warriors operate in. The modern Navy SEAL Teams owe their lineage to the famed UDTs of WWII who scouted and cleared beachheads for amphibious invasions like those executed on D-Day.

Tabor arrived at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, just outside of San Diego, California, in 1988 in excellent physical condition for SEAL training. Known as BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL), the initial SEAL training course is a six-month selection process widely considered to be the toughest military training on the planet.

Divided into three 8-week phases, BUD/S pushes every candidate to their physical and mental breaking point which is why students must be fully prepared, mentally and physically, upon arrival.

“I was the best swimmer in my SAR class and one of the top runners,” Tabor says. “When I got to BUD/S, no joke, I was a nobody. There were so many incredible athletes in my class that I never even saw the guy that finished first in the four-mile timed runs. These guys were nothing short of phenomenal.”

The then-Petty Officer Tabor survived his six-months of training at BUD/S, including the notorious Hell Week, during which trainees receive no more than four hours of accumulated sleep across a six-day period, and Pool Comp (essentially Hell Week underwater) while on his way to graduation. Statistically, nearly 80 percent of all SEAL hopefuls will wash out of training and never realize their dream. Tabor’s first duty assignment to an operational team was with Virginia Beach’s SEAL Team Two, where he was dubbed “Dano” by his teammates.

“That was the best thing in the world because I absolutely loved Two,” says Tabor. “Two was the powerhouse, full of studs team. I was a pretty big guy, but when I got to Two I kept my mouth shut around those guys. There were just a ton of tough, tough, guys there.” There was also an incredible history in SEAL Team Two, most of which will never be available for public examination.

“I was so fortunate because legendary Master Chief Rudy Boesch was still walking the halls, and Medal of Honor recipient Mike Thornton would cruise through once in a while. That team was just full of so many heroes that you will never hear about.”

Life in The Teams is non-stop hustle and extremely dangerous.



“My team was conducting ship take-downs during Desert Shield/Storm and our helo went into the water with 20 guys onboard,” Tabor says. “The crewmen and my whole platoon of SEALs were on an H-3 Sikorsky

when we hit the water at over 80 knots. Fortunately we had an experienced pilot who was able to keep it nose up, but then the tail rotor hit and we started spinning. But he kept the bird flat and we didn't flip. We ended up in the water for over two hours and it did eventually flip and sink.

"We had seen so many hammerhead sharks in the water a few days earlier on a previous op, but there must have been enough JP-5 (jet fuel) from the crashed helo that they weren't a threat," Tabor says with a laugh. "A CH-53 arrives to pick us up and the helicopter crewman kicks the life raft out to us. But he forgot to hook it to the airframe before sending it out. This activates the cartridge that inflates the raft, so he sent it out and it hit the water and sank. Another Sikorsky, exactly like the one we had just crashed in, finally shows up and starts hoisting us up. I remember flying back to our ship and seeing another Sikorsky on its way out to pick up the rest of our guys because we didn't want to hit any weight issues on the rescue birds." During Tabor's Desert Shield/Storm deployment with SEAL Team Two, life brought a major blessing, albeit one he was unable to attend.

"I was laying in my rack on the USS Kennedy and I remember my Lieutenant saying, 'Hey Dan, your wife just had a baby girl.' He handed me a piece of paper from the Radio Department and that's how I found out my daughter was born. I didn't get to see her until she was over three months old. No pictures- nothing. These days if a team is experiencing a high operational tempo, they'll send the father home for a short time because we can get back and forth fairly quickly now."

Another potential downside to becoming a SEAL is there are no typical nine-to-five, Monday through Friday assignments. This doesn't make for a stable family life and divorce rates among these all-male commando units are high.

"I ended up getting divorced from my first wife because we were just gone so much. I was in the Navy before I got married, but it's so tough on families and you miss a lot of birthdays."



Following three hitches with SEAL Team Two, Tabor headed back to the West Coast for another two with SEAL Team Three before being called upon to become a BUD/S instructor. However, right before he could begin training students, life as we all knew it changed.

“I was on leave getting ready to transfer to BUD/S and then 9/11 happened,” Tabor recalls. “When that went down I had to ride my bike into the compound because there was no getting onto or off that base in a vehicle. Our guys were on top of the buildings locked and loaded and ready to rock and roll. I called the detailer right away and told him I wanted to stay with Team Three because I knew where they were headed. I was told ‘no’ and kept my BUD/S orders, but I did get to deploy over there in 2004.”

That joint SEAL Team deployment to the Middle East would be his last. Every SEAL knows when you play the game long enough, injuries are inevitable. “I jumped out of a Humvee and twisted my knee,” Tabor says. “I was 43 at the time, and when we got back to Coronado I ripped up my meniscus pretty badly. I then spent a good 15 years after that grinding away on that knee and it finally got to the point that I had to get it replaced a few years ago.”

By the time he called it a career in the Navy, the now-Chief Tabor had deployed eight times, participated in more missions with The Teams than he can count, and put numerous would-be frogmen through BUD/S. Finding it impossible to stay away from the camaraderie of his close-knit brotherhood, Tabor now spends his time working as a contractor putting other SEALs through land warfare training.

“The funny thing is some of these SEALs are guys I put through BUD/S, and now they’re my boss,” Tabor laughs.



Although he didn’t spend a significant amount of time on the Oneida Reservation during his formative years, Tabor is more than familiar with his family, his Native heritage, and the Oneida warriors that came before him.

“My mom Dorothy Cornelius was born and raised in Oneida in 1933 and was the youngest of ten kids,” recalls Tabor. “Her siblings were Hayward, Leo, Billy, Dempsey, Louie, Ruth, Rebecca, Margie, and Mary. My uncle Kenny House was an iron worker who helped build the Sears Tower, and that’s how we ended up in Chicago because some of the sisters’ husbands were also union iron workers.

“My uncle Dempsey Cornelius, who just turned 100 years old, is a Bronze Star recipient from WWII. I just love him so much and I’m so glad I have his blood in me, warrior to warrior.

“I got choked up when Ernie Stevens Jr. asked if I’d be able to make it up to the Oneida Pow Wow in 2005 for my eagle feather presentation. I had given a tour of the Naval Special Warfare training facility (BUD/S) to

him and several elder Oneida warriors, so when I was asked to come to the Pow Wow and help lead the Grand Entry, I was honored,” Tabor says.

“I walked out with the veterans for the Grand Entry and it was fantastic. Uncle Dempsey was there along with almost all of my Cornelius, Hill, and Skenandore cousins. In addition to my eagle feather presentation, Oneida warrior and artist Kenny Metoxen presented me with an amazing tomahawk he handmade that I still show off to my buddies to this very day. That thing is so authentic it would crack a Kevlar helmet.” Fully aware of his ethnicity, Tabor always made it a point to keep an eye out for any Native Americans entering the SEAL pipeline.

“There haven’t been a lot of Native Americans that went through SEAL training, so when I became aware of anybody I would always make the effort to get to know them.”

The United States Navy offers recruits a chance at the adventure of a lifetime with vast job opportunities. For young people considering a career in The Teams, the best advice the former BUD/S instructor has is to simply go for it.

“Take the chance because who knows what you are capable of. Don’t be afraid to try and fail because you’ll almost always have another chance when you’re young. Where there’s no risk, there’s no reward. Don’t be afraid to try because in today’s climate we need more SEALs than ever.”



BUD/S is tough for a reason, and it’s often the little things that speak volumes to the instructors. “Believe it or not, the goal of BUD/S is to try and get you through, but it is not going to be easy. We mess with the guys because it’s necessary. We’re going to put your entire class into that cold water until someone quits (known as ‘surf conditioning’), because if that makes you quit....we need to know that you’re not going to bail out on us when it gets real and the bullets start flying.

“If you make it to The Teams you’re almost like a Ferrari,” Tabor explains. “The Navy has just spent a lot of money training you and turning you into a warrior, so once you get to your team they’re going to expect you to deploy. There’s no asking for days off. With BUD/S, another six months of SQT (SEAL Qualification Training), all your pre-deployment workups, they are preparing you for war. I will always tell young people

that being in the military means you'll be asked to step up and fight for your country, and that's especially true in The Teams. When you're a SEAL and they tell you that you're deploying, you're going- and you're going to be expected to fight. Sometimes that's a very hard pill to swallow for some young guys."

These days the retired frogman continues to work in the Naval Special Warfare community, and he wouldn't have it any other way. "Man, I absolutely loved being a Team guy. I got to work with some of the most amazing people in the world and I wouldn't change a thing. Being able to still work in the community when I was retiring was something I hadn't quite expected, but they came and asked for me specifically and there was no way I was going to say 'no.'"

Having a more stable home life in retirement without all the demanding deployments has also gone over well with his children.



"Obviously he was deployed a lot when I was growing up," Tabor's now adult son says. "But for most of my elementary and middle school years he was a BUD/S instructor, and my favorite part of that was during the summer I got to go to work with him and watch him hammer on the students. That was so cool for young me to see, because then I knew I wasn't the only one getting yelled at for getting in trouble. Turns out there were a whole lot of other guys as well.

"He was a great dad who never brought his work home," his son continues. "Obviously if I got in trouble, I deserved what I got, but it was cool as a young man to see what my dad did firsthand in a teaching capacity. Even though he was harsh, he took it upon himself to lead the way and set the example for the students. His job was to be hard on the them because they have to be tough given the nature of what SEALs do. But he would also take students aside and give them guidance because the water can only be so cold, and the training can only last so long.

"As I got older he deployed again and I was very fortunate to have my dad come home safe because a lot of other kids didn't get that chance. I am very grateful for that and as I got older it really hit home thinking about other people who didn't have that opportunity. I love my dad and I would do anything for him. It's really cool to have him here and now we get to hang out and spend the rest of our lives together." His ethnicity isn't lost on the younger Tabor, either.

“Being Native American is a real source of pride and it means a lot. We’re not 100 percent but it is really special. My grandmother Dorothy was a great lady and I really miss her. She raised a great son and I’m so fortunate for that because from her through him I feel like I was raised very well also.”
And the daughter who was born while her dad was busy chasing bad guys in the Persian Gulf? She’s also all grown up now and is beyond proud of everything her warrior father has accomplished.

“Growing up I didn’t really understand what my dad did for a living,” she says. “All I knew was that he had an important job and he had to be away which was hard, and my brother and I would receive post cards from his travels. He was trying to do right by us, because he wanted a stable job and he was very proud of what he was a part of.

“I’m also proud of the sacrifices he made because sometimes certain people have to put their careers first for the greater good. But I had a happy childhood and I wish people would be more appreciative of the men and women who have jobs like this. They don’t always get to spend time with their kids because they’re here to protect everybody. The pivotal point for me was knowing the bad men in this world who would still be here if it weren’t for the type of men like my dad.

“I know he’s proud of his career and it’s just crazy knowing my dad is this total (tough guy),” says his daughter. “I didn’t envy anybody who crossed him when he was in his prime. You see all these Marvel superhero movies; well my dad was the real deal. He’s one of the silent heroes you never hear about and I want to thank him. I know it wasn’t easy and I know he had to make some tough choices for himself, but in the end it was all for the greater good. I love you, dad.”

“I know who Valder John was,” says Tabor. “Jim Overman who flew 300 consecutive missions in an AC-130 during Vietnam, uncle Dempsey, Loretta Metoxen, and all the other Oneida Nation warriors. I am truly honored and humbled to be among them.”

Dan Tabor has remarried and expanded his immediate family. He resides on the West Coast.

New memorial honors Wyoming's Native-American veterans

Here's an [article from the American Legion](#) which ran last year on August 24, 2021.

A memorial more than a decade in the making and spearheaded by the local American Legion post became a reality on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming on Aug. 12. And in doing so, it became what might be the only memorial in the state honoring Native American veterans.

The Path of Honor Memorial in Fort Washakie opened to the public this month and was a collaboration of Richard Pogue Post 81 and the Wind River Development Fund (WRDF). It's located at the Frank B. Wise Business Center, which is named for the Legionnaire who donated the land and also was a collaboration between the post and the WRDF.

Eastern Shoshone member Lyle Wadda, who has spent 20-plus years as Post 81's adjutant, said Post 81 was formed by World War II veterans but never had a permanent home – something they spent years trying to find.

The post and the WRDF teamed up to build the Frank B. Wise Business Center in 2007, and then agreed to partner to build a memorial adjacent to the center.

"It was quite a project to get to where we needed to go with this," Wadda said. "We've been working toward this, and when we started we still had several World War II guys with us yet. Most of them are gone now. We still have a couple. This is the goal that we were trying to achieve for these guys that had the original vision (for the post)."

Wadda said Post 81's members did some fundraising for the project, which cost around \$300,000, but did a lot of the groundwork: getting permits and raising awareness about the project – "telling people what we were doing and why it was needed," he said.

Approximately 900 tribal members from the Wind River Reservation have served in the U.S. military during wartime dating back to World War I. They are honored on four large stones representing four eras of military service: pre-World War 1 and World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and post-Vietnam War. A red path winds through the stones.

"It's not specifically a Native-American (memorial)," Wadda said. "It's for all veterans that lived on the reservation: a lot of different people, nationalities, what not."

The dedication ceremony was attended by Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon, state leaders and even a representative from the U.S. Department of the Interior. Wadda spoke at the dedication as did U.S. Army veteran Felicia Antelope, commander of American Legion Post 96 in Riverton and a Northern Arapaho Tribal member who deployed to Iraq in 2004.

Seeing the memorial dedicated created “a tremendous feeling to be able to accomplish something like this,” Wadda said. “To see something that the World War II guys wanted ... it was just a great feeling that we’re fulfilling those obligations.





This is an opportunity for **Indigenous undergraduate student veterans** (no age criteria) in the US majoring in ANY STEM degree!

Along with providing the critical financial support undergraduate Native Veteran students who need to successfully complete their STEM degrees, USAA is also sending some scholars to the 2022 AISES National Conference.

The goal of the AISES Akicita (Warrior) Network is to provide academic, social, and career support to Veteran Native undergraduate students through the creation of a cohort provided with professional development programming, networking opportunities, and resources specific to the scholars' areas of interest.

Learn more: <https://www.aises.org/USAA%20Scholarship>



Applications open until filled - with great odds of applicants being approved for the program - so apply now!

Questions? Email mhabeck@aises.org



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The Summit Program | Hesperus

The Summit Program is a full-time, 15-week, no cost technical training program that incorporates live virtual instruction, hands-on virtual labs, real-life application scenarios, and opportunities for certifications to prepare students for challenging networking and cyber tech jobs in any industry. The inaugural Summit Program start date is Tuesday, May 31, 2022.

Hesperus is committed to empowering Native American veterans with opportunities through relevant training that leads to meaningful careers in tech.



This program is powered in part by Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) to honor and empower post-9/11 injured service members, veterans, and their families



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Successful completion of the Summit Program results in three CompTIA computer certifications – CompTIA A+, CompTIA Net+, and CompTIA Sec+, and job interviews with Hesperus Technology Partners. The Summit Program specializes in basic networking and cybersecurity technologies for entry-level information technology jobs.

In addition to technical curriculum, The Summit Program offers a variety of professional development opportunities. Hesperus provides Summit Program students opportunities to engage with technical mentors and industry leaders in a professional and technical capacity. Hesperus also partners with Summit Program students in career planning, professional skills-building (including resume writing and interview techniques), and job search strategies with our employment partner networks.

TRAINING LOCATION AND HOURS

LOCATION: Virtual - You must have regular, dependable broadband internet access to take this course

SCHEDULE: The Summit Program takes place Monday-Friday 0800-1700 Arizona time

DATES: Please visit us at Programs – Hesperus for the most up to date information

HOW DO I APPLY?

Visit us at www.hesper.us/programs and fill out a Summit Program Information Request and we will contact you

Eligibility:

The Summit Program is open to all Native American veterans.

VETERANS MUST:

- Discuss The Summit Program with the Program Administrator to determine eligibility
- Submit a DD214 showing proof of military service
- Enrolled members of federal and state recognized tribes will be prioritized for admission



HESPERUS
www.hesper.us
(602) 377-5666



Trickster Cultural Center
190 S. Roselle Road, Schaumburg, IL 60193
info@trickstergallery.com (847) 301-2090

tricksterculturalcenter.org

We are honored to recognize the contribution Joseph Podlasek has made to the Native American Community at large through his tireless efforts as President and CEO of the Trickster Cultural Center. The Board of Directors has accepted his request for retirement effective July 22, 2022. Joe's hard work and dedication to Trickster's mission, vision and values are without measure.

From its onset, Joe Podlasek grew Trickster Cultural Center into the internationally respected organization that it is today while keeping its roots deeply embedded in the local Native community. Beginning with the Village of Schaumburg, Joe networked tirelessly with numerous Government, Civil and Community entities such as the Field Museum of Chicago, the Chicago Community Trust, the Chicago Cultural Alliance, the U.S. Department of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and the Chicago Blackhawks to educate and integrate cultural awareness on behalf of the Native American Community.

He garnered relationships with Native Veterans on a local, tribal, national, and international level, advocating on their behalf with Congressional and Military leadership over a decade to pass legislation such as honoring the Eagle Staff as the Nation's First Flag. Joe is perhaps best known in Chicagoland for the work he led to establish the annual National Gathering of Native American Veterans partnering with Cantigny and the McCormick Foundation.

He also partnered with International Veterans groups and the Pentagon to formally recognize the role of Native American Veterans in the Armed Services, honoring their role in World War 2, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, and Afghanistan eras. This effort culminated in greater awareness of the contribution of Native American Veterans as well as the social and medical challenges uniquely faced by women and all veterans. As a result of these relationships, he has been able to bring Trickster to the forefront of Native Veteran advocacy through numerous programs which included an award of the multi-year federal Administration for Native Americans (ANA) grant, national awards such as the "Telly" Award and Emmy Nominations for the Veteran documentaries produced and the formation of the D-Day Delegation to honor our WWII fallen.

Student, activist and healer: This Native veteran fights for mental health, social justice

Here's an article by Natasha Brennan, which ran in [Indian Country Today](#) on May 28, 2022

This profile is one of a series on the contributions, cultural knowledge and strength of Native peoples in celebration of Washington state's Indigenous peoples year-round. In 2016, Greg Urquhart was a graduate student studying psychology at Washington State University. Being Eastern Band Cherokee, he felt compelled to take his daughter with him to the Dakota Access Pipeline to drop off supplies to protesters and water protectors. When clouds of tear gas went into the air, he jumped into action, using his military training to treat the injured. "I had the skills from the Combat Lifesaver Course to flush people's eyes and help people out on the bridge. I had no intention of being an activist. At the end of the night, I came home, but I couldn't stay. I had to go back," he said. The experience inspired Urquhart to create South Sound Street Medics, a group that provides basic medical services at protests or demonstrations, as well as Red Road Rising — an Indigenous-led spiritual group in Olympia. "I'm a father of three, married for almost 20 years. My family's my life and I'm an avid activist in many different ways: through promoting social justice advocacy, through research and inclusion of Native Americans and on my journey of psychology," he said.

NATIONAL GUARD TO DOCTORATE Urquhart grew up with a deep love of the outdoors — walking around the waterfront at Ruston Way in Tacoma, fishing on Owen Beach, hiking, hunting, bird watching and foraging for edible and medicinal plants. He attended Woodrow Wilson High School and lettered in bowling at Stadium High School. Shortly after graduation, he joined the National Guard at 18. He'd hoped to help his community, expecting to fight fires or provide local aid with the promise of G.I. Bill benefits to help pay for college at the end of his service. By the time he was 21, Urquhart was married, a father of two and being deployed for two tours in Iraq as an M1 armor crew member and a cavalry scout.

When he returned to the U.S., he attended Tacoma Community College and created a veteran student group, but providing for his family came first. "I worked a lot of overtime and took one to three classes a quarter. I chipped away at that degree forever and changed my major a few times. It took eight years to get a two-year degree," Urquhart said. He finished his bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Washington, Tacoma, in 2010 and continued on to his master's at Washington State University. Though successful in college, he didn't return from his military service unaffected. Urquhart sought help for his post-traumatic stress disorder with Veterans Affairs. "It just was a really cold experience, they seemed like they didn't really care. They had no understanding of how I view the world and a lot of vets that go there don't feel heard or feel appreciated," Urquhart said.

This experience is especially common for Native veterans seeking help from Western therapies, he said.

In 2014, he conducted the largest pan-Tribal veteran study in the nation. Using social media and the Internet, he tracked down members of countless veterans groups and Tribes seeking Native veterans to survey. He included more than 200 Tribes with participants from every branch of the military. “We found (the VA had) a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity in a pan-Tribal sample representative of all Native Americans across the U.S. That was my passion and what moved me into psychology,” he said. “It’s stuff our communities already knew. A lot of times our vets go to the VA and they’re not understood because it’s a Eurocentric culture.” Now, as a Ph.D. student at Washington State, he is completing his final requirement of a one-year internship at UW Tacoma’s Psychological and Wellness Services, a placement he describes as a “full-circle moment.”

“It’s the best job I’ve ever had — individual counseling with clients and co-facilitating groups. It’s really rewarding to impact students’ lives, help them out,” he said. After graduation, he hopes to find employment at a university counseling center to help all students with a special expertise in helping veteran and Native students. **ACTIVISM AND HEALING** Combining his love for the earth and his community with his military experience, Urquhart founded South Sound Street Medics. Now with nearly 100 members, the group will celebrate two years since its founding in June 2020. The group recently went out to support elders and activists who, for more than 500 days, held demonstrations to protect an old-growth forest at Fairy Creek in the southern Vancouver Island region of British Columbia.

“I hope they learn the value and importance of honoring our traditional and ancestral ways, Mother Earth and honor our promise to the Creators. And if we don’t, this world will look drastically different,” he said about the protest. The street medic group’s goal, on top of protecting their community, is to train more street medics to aid the injured at demonstrations. He said his professors have always been supportive of his activism. “Whatever I could manage without failing my classes, everyone understood,” he said.

On the weekends, Urquhart finds healing with his Red Road Rising group. They gather as the sun rises over the waters in Olympia. “When I came back from Iraq, I realized I always knew some part was missing. I was thrown into an existential crisis and I looked into where I come from,” he said. As he explored his Cherokee roots, he walked into the Native center on campus. “I peeked my head in and ran out and a woman ran after me. She reassured me it was a safe place. I didn’t know if people would accept me, if it was a safe place to explore my roots and traditions. I’m more of an urban Native, but I’ve come to have a lot of elders that are Coast Salish and First Nations,” he said. “Olympia has provided community and support to those who reconnect with Indigenous roots. A lot of us didn’t grow up that way. That knowledge has been lost to us, but there’s a desire to reconnect. So we provide space to reconnect and are open to everyone who comes in a respectful, good way,” he said.

Now, the outdoors is where he finds peace and continues his mission to heal himself and others through Indigenous knowledge, psychological wellness and fighting for social change.

“How VA Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP) can support
Native American military Veterans”
By Trulesta J. Pauling

The VA Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP) is dedicated to ensuring all Veterans get first-class benefits and services they have earned. CFBNP mission is to engage, educate and inform faith-based and community organizations about VA tools and resources that will equip them to better serve the Veterans, their families, survivors, caregivers, and other beneficiaries within their organizations.

How CFBNP Can Support Native American Veterans

- Facilitating the coordination of training sessions on suicide prevention for clergies in Native American communities, congregations, and faith-based community groups/members/organizations
- Assisting Native American families after the transition from active-duty Servicemember to Veterans status
- Reach out to Native American Veterans and their families, caregivers, survivors and other beneficiaries in underserved populations or with special needs.
- Serving as a resource and referral point for Native American faith-based organizations and non-profit faith-based community organizations (FBCOs) providing and sharing information at faith-based organization's local, regional, and national events
- Hosting quarterly webinars on various topics focusing on faith-based and community organization stakeholders. Webinar topics have included the following: VA Medical Foster Home Program, HUD/VASH & Geriatrics Extended Care, GI Bill Update and Benefits for Dependents, Overview of VBA Benefits & Services, Pre-Need and Eligibility Burial Benefits, Overview of VA Benefits for Survivors/Widows, How to Start a Veterans Ministry to name a few

How Your Faith-Based Organization Can Help the VA CFBNP

Your faith-based, nonprofit, or community/neighborhood organization can help the VA CFBNP in the following ways:

- Let us know of gaps you see in services to Veterans in your organization and local community; lets us help connect the dots to get you the help you need
- Volunteer to host a webinar, summit, or conference on issues facing Veterans, their family members, survivors, caregivers, and other beneficiaries. We will work with you to

secure the appropriate subject matter expert and electronic and written resources to share with your community

- Contact us to schedule a webinar or in-person event
 - Email: VACFBNP@va.gov

Non-profit Faith-Based Community Organizations (FBCOs) can help Veterans in the following ways:

- Provide Veterans with transportation to medical appointments
- Help recently housed Veterans obtain furniture and housing supplies
- Educate yourself, Veterans, and others about VA benefits and services and how a Veteran can apply for them
- Learn the signs of a Veteran or a Veteran's family member in distress
- Encourage Veterans to use VA services she or he has earned
- Volunteer with VA Voluntary Service (VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement)
- Visit a hospitalized Veteran
- Provide drop off child-care services for a Veteran family with young children
- Establish a Veterans Ministry and Welcome Center
 - You may signup to create a Veteran ministry at: **[SIGN-UP TO CREATE A VETERANS MINISTRY OR WELCOME CENTER](#)**

To learn more about the VA Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP) or to subscribe to upcoming webinars and events or see recorded webinars visit our website at www.va.gov/cfbnp

You can also visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/VACFBNP/> to view additional information we share from other federal Centers for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. **For more information** send emails to VACFBNP@va.gov.

Ever Wonder Why Army Helicopters Are Named After Native American Tribes?

Here's an article from [SOFREP](#) which ran on March 11, 2022. You can follow the link for more pictures and to listen to the article being read (3:24)

When military people hear the words Kiowa, Apache, Comanche, Lakota, and Black Hawk, automatically know that these are US Army helicopters. The civilian world generally knows them as the names of Native American tribes. This is not just some coincidence or some sort of random name-choosing. In fact, the US Army had been naming its helicopters after Native American tribes for decades now.



A Croatian Bell OH-58D Kiowa Warrior at AirVG 2018.

American Indian Wars

Beginning the earliest colonial settlements in the 17th century until the early 20th century, The American Indian Wars were fought first by European governments and the colonists in North America. Later on, it became the United States and Canadian governments and their respective settlers versus American Indian and First Nation Tribes. Various wars occurred due to a lot of factors.

The European governments and their colonies enlisted their allied Indian tribes to help them conduct warfare against other colonial settlements. Many local conflicts in certain states and regions were frequently due to disputes over land use, but as settlers spread westward across North America, the armed conflicts between settlers and various Indian and First Nation Tribes grew in size, duration, and intensity. The most intense, perhaps, was the War of 1812 when major Indian coalitions in the Midwest and the South battled against the United States and lost. After then, conflicts became less common and were quickly resolved by treaty. In 1830, the Indian Removal Act was signed and authorized the American government to

enforce the removal of the Indians from east of Mississippi River and to the Indian Territory on the west American frontier. The Indian tribes were relocated to reservations. But above all these, the Native Americans also fought alongside the United States as some of the fiercest warriors, and they did so for more than 200 years. In fact, 32 Native Americans were recipients of the Medal of Honor.

Birth of The Tradition



An Apache attack helicopter of the Army Air Corps in Afghanistan fires rockets at insurgents during a patrol in 2008. (Staff Sergeant Mike Harvey)

Before the Native American names, the US Army had two helicopters named “Hoverfly” and “Dragonfly.” Army General Hamilton Howze was not too pleased with the names. After the Air Force split from the Army in 1947, he was [tasked with a job](#) to “develop doctrine and the way forward when it came to naming Army aircraft in a way that reflected how they would support warfighters on the ground.” He instructed the helicopters to be named after their abilities. He came up with the idea, as [Army](#) wrote,

Howze said since the choppers were fast and agile, they would attack enemy flanks and fade away, similar to the way the tribes on the Great Plains fought during the aforementioned American Indian Wars. He decided the next helicopter produced — the well-known H-13 of “M.A.S.H.” fame — would be called the Sioux in honor of the Native Americans who fought Army Soldiers in the Sioux Wars and defeated the 7th Cavalry Regiment at the Battle of Little Bighorn. A few years later, in 1969, it was solidified with the Army Regulation 70-28.

Army Regulation 70-28

As per the regulation, Army aircraft required “Indian terms and names of American Indian tribes and chiefs,” with the names to choose from provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. There were also other categories for tanks, which were to be named after American generals and assault weapons from fearsome reptiles and insects.

Following are the listed criteria for the name choices. They had to:

1. Appeal to the imagination without sacrificing dignity.
2. Suggest an aggressive spirit and confidence in the item’s capabilities.

3. Reflect the item's characteristics, including mobility, agility, flexibility, firepower, and endurance.
4. Be based on tactical application, not source or method of manufacture.
5. Be associated with the preceding qualities and criteria if a person's name is proposed.



Traditional dancers perform in honor of the South Dakota National Guard's newest aircraft, the UH-72A Lakota Light Utility Helicopter.

According to the [Army's](#) article published in 2008, they would need to ask for approval first, which usually takes 12 to 18 months. Once all the permissions were received, the aircraft would then be part of a ceremony that Native American leaders would attend to give it tribal blessings. Even when the AR 70-28 has been rescinded, that tradition still continues to this very day.

VETERAN RITES
Circle of Return

MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA
WOMEN'S CIRCLE OF RETURN

ONLINE PEER EMPOWERMENT FACILITATED BY
SARAH L. BLUM, RETIRED VIETNAM VETERAN
NURSE/PSYCHOTHERAPIST AND AUTHOR OF WOMEN
UNDER FIRE: ABUSE IN THE MILITARY.
(WWW.WOMENUNDERFIRE.NET)

EVERY OTHER MONDAY AT 3PM PST

WWW.VETERANRITES.ORG/GATHER

OTGR Eastern Region

(AL; CT; FL; LA; MA; ME; MI; NC; NY; RI; SC;)

NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN CENTER OF BOSTON & VETERANS AFFAIRS

Emcee:
George Thomas

Head Man:
Tatanka Iap
Gibson

Head Lady:
Kerri Helme

Host Drum:
Wicozani Singers

Invited Drum:
Red Hawk Singers

Drummers
Dancers
Storytellers
Vendors
Native Foods
Activities
& More

1ST ANNUAL VETERANS POW WOW

September 17 - 18, 2022
Gates open at 10:00am
Grand Entry at 12:00pm
Prowse Farm
5 Blue Hill River Road
Canton, MA 02021
Contact powwow@naicob.org

Admission:
\$5 Adults
\$3 Elders
\$2 Children
FREE for
NAICOB Members,
Veterans, VA Staff
with ID

OTGR Southern Plains Region

(KS; OK; TX)

TRIBAL WOMEN VETERANS SUMMIT

THURSDAY
NOV 3, 2022

River Spirit Conference Center
8330 Riverside Parkway
Tulsa OK
8am-3:30pm



Pictured:

Debra Mooney, Choctaw Nation, Iraq War Veteran
Stephanie M. Jefferson, Muscogee Nation, Iraq War Veteran
Kiowa Women Warrior Color Guard

Register Here or follow the QR Code:
<https://forms.office.com/g/zd6CDxyggf>

Host by The Muscogee Nation Veterans Affairs
Service Office; U.S. Department of Veterans
Affairs-Office of Tribal Government Relations;
Muskogee Regional Benefits Office & the
Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs



Office of
Tribal Government
Relations



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System

Connection,
Comradeship,
Community.

VETERAN RESOURCE FAIR

TUESDAY
SEPT 27, 2022

3PM - 6PM

Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic
Overflow Parking
8921 S Mingo Road Tulsa

Live Whole Health.
va.gov/wholehealth

SSVF
Supportive Services for Veterans Families
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

GRACE HOSPICE

Muskogee County Health Department

DAY OKLAHOMA

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

CDCE
VA Center for Development & Career Engagement

IPVAP
INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

CREOKS
Health Services

Humana.

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

prizes, corn hole, snacks

OKLAHOMA
Employment Security Commission

COMPASSUS

Parkside
Psychiatric Hospital & Clinic

Valley Hope
ADDICTION TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

EAGLE OPS
WWW.EAGLEOPS.ORG

VA | OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

All Veterans, Service Members, Family and Supporters are welcome to attend.

SERVICE OFFICER AVAILABLE TO HELP WITH CLAIMS

Call 918-616-9813

daphne.hillhouse@va.gov

HAVE QUESTIONS? CONTACT US BY PHONE OR EMAIL

24 SEPTEMBER 2022

"Honoring our Woman Warriors"
3RD ANNUAL VETERANS POWWOW
KIOWA-COMANCHE-APACHE
INDIAN VETERANS ORGANIZATION
A Salute to Service








COMANCHE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
EXPO CENTER
920 SW SHERIDAN ROAD, LAWTON OK 73505

Head Staff

MC
Cy Ahtone & Eugene Blackbear
Eddie Onco

Headman
Shaunde "Don" Ahshapanek

Head Lady
Audrey Svitak

AD's
C.C. Whitewolf & Travis Codynah

Security
Alan Hadley

Head Singers
Kiowa-Charlie Horse
Comanche-Bubba Sovo
Apache-Harold Neconie

Schedule of Events

9:00 AM Opening Prayer & Posting of Colors/
Flag Songs

11:00 AM Honors for Women Warriors

1:00 PM Beginning of Pow Wow (Victory &
Scalp Dance)

2:00 PM Gourd Dancing

5:00 PM Tribute to Women Warriors

5:30 PM Supper Break for all in
attendance/ Music from 77th Army Band

7:00 PM Grand Entry (all Color Guards and
Dancers)

8:00 PM Intertribal Dancing (all are invited to
dance)

10:00PM Closing Prayer

Free and Open to all!
Public is Invited! Please bring your own chairs
 POC AND VENDOR INFORMATION CONTACT: KRISTOPHER KILLSFIRST @ 580 699-0896
FACEBOOK@KCA Veterans Annual Powwow
 KCAIVO is not responsible for accidents, thefts, or injury. No Alcohol or Drugs allowed



**2022 Farmer Veteran Stakeholders
Conference Set for November 13-15 in
Oklahoma City**



**'Growing Together' is the theme for this
year's conference and will be held at the
Sheraton Midwest City Hotel at the
Reed Conference Center.
Website: farmvetco.org**





2022 OKLAHOMA SYMPOSIUM FOR VETERAN SERVICES

Come join us for ODVA's annual conference for Veteran Services. We will spend two days learning practical skills and tools to better serve Oklahoma's veterans and our state's veteran service organizations.

EVENT DETAILS

- **Date:** 13-14 September 2022
- **Time:** 8:00AM - 4:00PM
- **Registration:** Use the QR Code
- **Location:** Wes Watkins Center, OSU, Stillwater, OK

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

Register now for your seat at the Symposium located this year at OSU's Wes Watkins Center in Stillwater, OK



"Honoring our Women Warriors"
3RD ANNUAL KCA VETERANS
POW WOW
KIOWA • COMANCHE • APACHE
INDIAN VETERANS ORGANIZATION



COMANCHE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
EXPO CENTER • 920 SW SHERIDAN RD, LAWTON OK 73505
SEPTEMBER 24, 2022

HEAD STAFF

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

CY AHTONE & EUGENE BLACKBEAR
EDDIE ONCO

HEAD MAN DANCER

FRANK SWIFT

HEAD GOURD DANCER

SHAUNDE "DON" AHSHPANEK

HEAD LADY

AUDREY SVITAK

AD'S

C.C. WHITEWOLF & TRAVIS CODYNAH

SECURITY

ALAN HADLEY

HEAD SINGERS

KIOWA - CHARLIE HORSE
COMANCHE - BUBBA SOVO
APACHE - HAROLD NECONIE

SCHEDULE

9:00 AM OPENING PRAYER & POSTING OF COLORS/FLAG SONGS
11:00 AM HONORS FOR WOMEN WARRIORS
1:00 PM BEGINNING OF POWWOW (VICTORY & SCALP DANCE)
2:00 PM GOURD DANCING
5:00 PM TRIBUTE TO WOMEN WARRIORS
5:30 PM SUPPER BREAK FOR ALL IN ATTENDANCE/ MUSIC FROM
77TH ARMY BAND
7:00 PM GRAND ENTRY (ALL COLOR GUARDS AND DANCERS)
8:00 PM INTERTRIBAL DANCING (ALL ARE INVITED TO DANCE)
10:00 PM CLOSING PRAYER

FREE AND OPEN TO ALL! PUBLIC IS INVITED! PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN CHAIRS.
POC AND VENDOR INFORMATION CONTACT: KRISTOPHER KILLSFIRST @ 580-699-0896
FACEBOOK@KCA VETERANS ANNUAL POWWOW
KCAIVO IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCIDENTS, THEFTS, OR INJURY. NO ALCOHOL OR DRUGS ALLOWED.

OTGR Southwest Region

(AZ; CO; NM; UT)

VETERANS STAND DOWN Yoori Taewai (Day of Healing)

(New Location)

AMERICAN LEGION CONRADO F. BILDUCIA POST 124 and
O'odham Veterans Celebration Committee



October 1, 2022, 0900-1200

Guadalupe Mercado

9201 S Avenida del Yaqui, 85283

POC: Ralph Cota 602-615-1555

Email: guadalupepost124@gmail.com



MUST SHOW PROOF OF MILITARY SERVICE

O'odham Veterans Celebration



All Veterans and their Families,
Veteran's Widows and Widowers
are Welcome



Continental Breakfast & Hot Noon Meal Auxiliary Unit 124

Thanks VA, Auxiliary 124, Town of Guadalupe
Arizona Department of Veterans Services and
Various Veterans Services Organizations
FOR SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS

Blood Pressure/Vascular screenings by Ohana Cardiology
Phoenix Vet Center



Limited supply of DOD Surplus



A Drug and Alcohol-Free Event

**Funded in part by the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services as
made available through the Arizona Veterans' Donations Fund."**

6/17

APPLY FOR VA BENEFIT CLAIMS WEB CAMERA SESSION

Veterans and Widows of Veterans can now apply for VA disability compensation or pension claims at our office.

Using web camera technology, an Arizona Department of Veterans' Services Benefits Officer will speak directly with you to apply for VA claims.

Please bring a copy of your military discharge document (DD Form 214); an ID card; social security card; marriage and/or divorce documents; birth and/or death certificates; and any financial award letters.

Who: Veterans and Widows of Veterans

How: Call (928) 734-3461 or 734-3462 to schedule an appointment.

Where: Hopi Veterans Services office
Tribal Complex DATS Building, First Floor
Kykotsmovi, AZ.

Why: To qualify for the VA benefits you earned!



Thank you for your service.

Now let us serve you.



APPLY FOR YOUR VA BENEFITS TODAY!

NAVAJO VETERANS RESOURCE EVENT

Supporting Navajo
Veterans, Spouses, Gold
Star Families, and
Veteran Caregivers



COME RECEIVE FOOD, WATER, FIREWOOD AND
GAIN ACCESS TO OTHER AVAILABLE
RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS

Friday, October 21, 2022 Starting at 9:00 a.m.

Navajo Nation Veterans
Administration
Tuba City Office

1000 Maloney Street
Tuba City, AZ 86045
928-283-3030



Veterans Medical
Leadership Council



BOB WOODRUFF
FOUNDATION
Investing in the Next Chapter for Our Veterans



FOCUS MARINES
FOUNDATION
WHERE THINGS START TO GET BETTER

Registration is required. Please contact Karen Shirley at 928-583-2079.

We're proud to be a BWF local partner. Our thanks to the Bob Woodruff Foundation and Craig Newmark Philanthropies for this funding to help us in our efforts to combat food insecurity among service members, veterans, their families, and their caregivers

The Coalition for American Indian Veterans

13th Gathering of American Indian Veterans

October 29, 2022, 8:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.

Casino Del Sol Conference Center (5 miles west of I-19)
5655 W. Valencia Road Tucson, Arizona 85757

*“Graciously Hosted by the Pascua Yaqui Tribe and the Casino Del Sol,
Luncheon provided by Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Casino Del Sol,
Tohono O’odham Nation and the Desert Diamond Casino.”*

- Registration starts at 8:00 am
- Bring your DD214 to enroll for services at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System
- Information Tables for Veteran Community Partners, Programs and Resources
- Health Screening
- Children Activities
- Honoring Ceremony and Coin Presentation
- Lunch Provided for Veterans in attendance
- Gourd Dance

Funded in part by the Arizona Department of Veterans Services as made
available through the Arizona Veteran’s Donation Fund

For more information: Laura Ybarra at (520) 792-1450 Ext. 1-6622 or Marlene Jose at (520) 884-7131



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health
Administration

Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS)

SAVE THE DATE

Friday, November 11, 2022
8am - 4pm
Isleta Resort and Casino



Southwest Native American Veterans Health and Wellness Symposium 2022



Sponsored by:
Isleta Pueblo Veterans
New Mexico VA Healthcare System
AARP New Mexico

Hosted by:
The Pueblo of Isleta Veterans Association



O'ODHAM VETERANS CELEBRATION 2022

SITE SCHEDULE



August 27, 2022
9:00am

★ San Carlos Apache Tribe
PFC Michael A. Noline
Community Building
Hwy 70 & Rodeo Lane
Peridot, AZ
Veronica Duncan
Veronica.duncan@va.gov
928-200-7739 ★



★ **September 10, 2022**
7:00am Blessing ★

Pascua Yaqui Tribe
American Legion Post #125
7418 S Camino Vera
Tucson, AZ 85757
Jose M. Hernandez
chukuli45@gmail.com
520-809-5073

September 16, 2022
8am

★ White Mountain Apache Tribe
American Legion Post #60
312 N. Chief Ave.
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
Dennis Faden
d.faden@hotmail.com
360-522-7366 ★



★ **September 24, 2022**
8am –12pm Drive Thru ★

Gila River Indian Community
Location Pending (Drive Thru)

Doug Juan
dougjuan50@gmail.com
602-327-5973

October 1, 2022
9:00am

★ Guadalupe
Guadalupe Mercado
9201 S. Avenida del Yaqui
Guadalupe, AZ 85283
Ralph Cota
guadalupepost124@gmail.com
602-615-1555 ★



★ **October 8, 2022**
9am—12pm Drive Thru ★

Tohono O'odham Nation
Live Stock Complex
Hwy 86 Mile Post 110
Hank Cannon
hank.cannon@tonation-nsn.gov
520-840-0232

October 22, 2022
8am—1pm

★ Salt River Indian Community
Lehi Community Center
1231 E. Oak St
Mesa, AZ 85203
Troy Truax, Jr
troy.truax@srpmic-nsn.gov
928-594-0066 ★



★ **November 5, 2022**
Blessing 7am & 9am Start ★

American Legion Post #95
2258 S. 3rd Ave.
Solomon, AZ 85551

Raymond Apodaca
rapodaca41@icloud.com
928-965-0785



Salt River O'odham Veterans Celebration

Saturday, October 22, 2022

8AM-1PM



Lehi Community Center

1231 E Oak St, Mesa, AZ 85201

(SW Corner of Oak Street & Stapely Rd.)

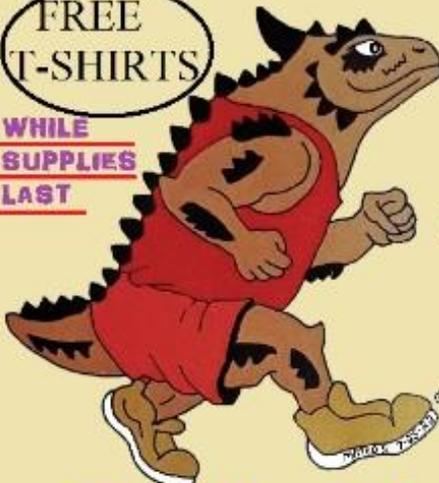
This event is **FREE & OPEN** to ALL Veterans,
family members, and community Veterans.



Face Coverings are **recommended**.

*Requirement is subjected to change based
on CDC and SRPMIC COVID-19 Guidelines.*

FREE T-SHIRTS
WHILE SUPPLIES LAST



**Klagetoh Veterans
Nonprofit
Organization Inc**
Proudly Sponsors
FUN RUN & FUN WALK



*For Klagetoh Well Water
Contamination Awareness*

**FRUIT CUPS AND
FRUIT BOWLS FOR
PARTICIPANTS**

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 17TH 2022
**All runners and walkers will meet in
front of the Chapter House gates and
event will be on the Bus Loop Road.**

Public Awareness for the Klagetoh Community:
Navajo Nation EPA routine inspection of the Well Water
Pump was found to have been contaminated with unsafe
levels of toxins. Klagetoh Community Members are
encouraged to get involved and be aware of this problem.



**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE KLAGETOH
VETERANS PODCAST AND AUTO CLUB**



This is an alcohol and drug free event!

**Klagetoh Veterans Nonprofit Organization Inc & the Klagetoh Chapter House are
not responsible for lost or stolen items or for any personal injuries that may occur!**

3rd Annual Virtual VA Be Connected Community Mental Health Summit

This Year's Theme is "Reconnecting"

September 21, 2022
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

To Register- Click on the Link below or copy the URL to your device:

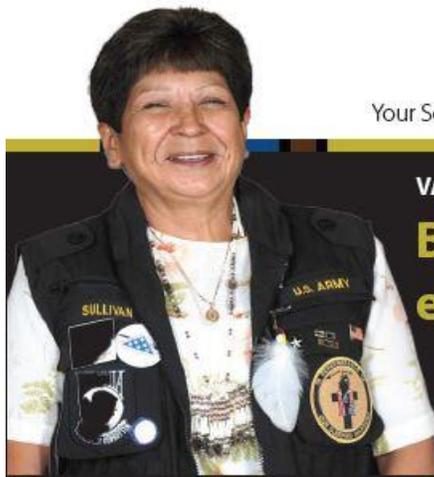
<https://2022mentalhealthsummit.eventbrite.com/>

More information please contact Mary Dillinger (928)717-7587



OTGR Western Region

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



Your Service. **Our Mission.**

VA WILL BE HOLDING A

Bringing VA Benefits Home
event in your hometown.



During the event, you can:

- ✓ Speak with a VA representative
- ✓ Get answers to VA claim and benefits questions
- ✓ File your claim



EVENT DATE & TIME/S:

September 30, 2022, 8am-3pm
hosted by Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians

LOCATION:

Viejas Casino Resort, 5000 Willows Road, Alpine, CA
Hosted by Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians

POINT OF CONTACT:

Terry Bentley, VA Office of Tribal Government Relations

PHONE NUMBER:

Terry Bentley, terry.bentley@va.gov; 541-440-1271

Your Service. Our Mission.



VA WILL BE HOLDING A
Bringing VA Benefits Home
event in your hometown.



During the event, you can:

- ✓ Speak with a VA representative
- ✓ Get answers to VA claim and benefits questions
- ✓ File your claim



EVENT DATE & TIME/S:

September 14, 2022, 9am-3pm
hosted by Hoopa Valley Tribe

LOCATION:

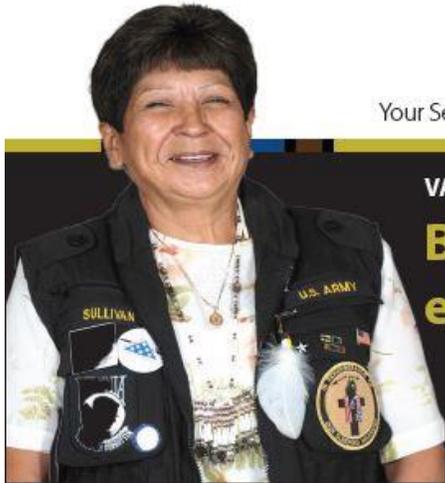
Hoopa Valley Tribal Court
12530 State Hwy. 96, Hoopa, CA 95546

POINT OF CONTACT:

Ashtyn Colegrove, Hoopa Valley Tribe or
Terry Bentley, VA Office of Tribal Government Relations

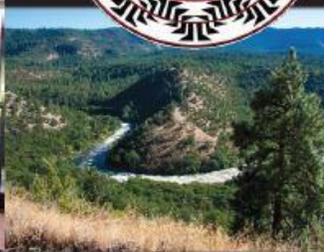
PHONE NUMBER:

Ashtyn Colegrove, hvtcourtcoordinator@gmail.com;
707-499-2187 or Terry Bentley, terry.bentley@va.gov;
541-449-1274



Your Service. Our Mission.

VA WILL BE HOLDING A **Bringing VA Benefits Home event** in your hometown.



During the event, you can:

- ✓ Speak with a VA representative
- ✓ Get answers to VA claim and benefits questions
- ✓ File your claim



EVENT DATE & TIME/S:

September 15, 2022, 9am-4pm
hosted by Yurok Tribe

LOCATION:

Yurok Main Administration Building, 190 Klamath Blvd.,
Klamath, CA 95548

POINT OF CONTACT:

Jessica Carter, Yurok Tribe or
Terry Bentley, VA Office of Tribal Government Relations

PHONE NUMBER:

Jessica Carter, jcarter@yuroktribe.nsn.gov; 707-482-0415, x1335 or Terry Bentley, terry.bentley@va.gov; 541-440-1271

"Honoring our Women Warriors"
3RD ANNUAL KCA VETERANS
POW WOW
 KIOWA • COMANCHE • APACHE
 INDIAN VETERANS ORGANIZATION

COMANCHE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
EXPO CENTER • 920 SW SHERIDAN RD, LAWTON OK 73505
SEPTEMBER 24, 2022

<p>HEAD STAFF</p> <p>MASTER OF CEREMONIES CY AHTONE & EUGENE BLACKBEAR EDDIE ONCO</p> <p>HEAD MAN DANCER FRANK SWIFT</p> <p>HEAD GOURD DANCER SHAUNDE "DON" AHSHAPANEK</p> <p>HEAD LADY AUDREY SVITAK</p> <p>AD'S C.C. WHITEWOLF & TRAVIS CODYNAH</p> <p>SECURITY ALAN HADLEY</p> <p>HEAD SINGERS KIOWA - CHARLIE HORSE COMANCHE - BUBBA SOVO APACHE - HAROLD NECONIE</p>	<p>SCHEDULE</p> <p>9:00 AM OPENING PRAYER & POSTING OF COLORS/FLAG SONGS 11:00 AM HONORS FOR WOMEN WARRIORS 1:00 PM BEGINNING OF POWWOW (VICTORY & SCALP DANCE) 2:00 PM GOURD DANCING 5:00 PM TRIBUTE TO WOMEN WARRIORS 5:30 PM SUPPER BREAK FOR ALL IN ATTENDANCE/ MUSIC FROM 77TH ARMY BAND 7:00 PM GRAND ENTRY (ALL COLOR GUARDS AND DANCERS) 8:00 PM INTERTRIBAL DANCING (ALL ARE INVITED TO DANCE) 10:00 PM CLOSING PRAYER</p>
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FREE AND OPEN TO ALL PUBLIC IS INVITED! PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN CHAIRS.
 POC AND VENDOR INFORMATION CONTACT: KRISTOPHER KILLSFIRST @ 580-699-0896
 FACEBOOK@KCA VETERANS ANNUAL POWWOW
 KCAIVO IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCIDENTS, THEFTS, OR INJURY. NO ALCOHOL OR DRUGS ALLOWED.