OTGR Director’s Note - Super Summer Edition

Hello and welcome to what we’re calling the Super Summer edition of the VA Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) newsletter. I hope this note finds our readers staying cool in what is turning out to be a sizzling hot summer for many parts of the country. Our thoughts for relief and safety are with those battling wildfires and the effects of heavy rain in recent weeks. These past few months have been a season filled with significant milestones and activity, including the recent confirmation of VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, who we know is focused on engaging with tribal leaders as soon as possible.

Also, the passage of the Mission Act, which (among other important provisions), calls for the expansion of the VA Caregivers program, requiring the VA to conduct a pilot to establish residency programs at “covered facilities” including both IHS and Tribal facilities. A minimum of 100 residents would be authorized and all costs specific to the residency programs will be covered by the VA. The pilot is authorized through August 7, 2024. The National VA/IHS Reimbursement Agreement has been extended to June 2022 and lastly, our office, along with VA’s Benefits Assistance Service and other VA colleagues working in partnership with over 20 tribal governments, several State Departments of Veteran Affairs and Veteran Service Organizations continued to roll out “Your Service. Our Mission: Bringing VA Benefits Home” campaign. This campaign consists of over 20 intense one and two-day claims events across Indian Country on an (almost) weekly basis since the spring. As I write this, approximately 800 Veterans have been assisted with benefits claims through these events. We’ve been encouraged, seeing retroactive payments issued and disability ratings increased. The feedback we’ve received is that many of the Veterans assisted through these claims events engaged with VA for the very first time, which is an important and positive step for both the Veterans and their families.

We also partnered with the Centers for Medicaid/Medicare Services (CMS) Tribal Affairs group to host a series of 3 webinars focused on: (1) VHA enrollment and eligibility, (2) VA benefits available through the Veterans Benefits Administration and (3) the Reimbursement Agreements program. We’re working on obtaining links to the webinars for future reference. OTGR also released the 2017 VA Executive Summary chronicling VA engagements and outreach to tribes. A link to that report can be found on the OTGR website and in this newsletter.

The month of June ended with long-awaited and very welcome news when the Smithsonian, National Museum of the American Indian, announced that Harvey Pratt, a Cheyenne Arapaho artist from Oklahoma, would be the designer of the National Native American Veterans Memorial. It will be dedicated on Veterans Day 2020.

Our OTGR team has been incredibly busy supporting the claims events while maintaining the day to day requests and duties of their respective field offices and planning for activities as we prepare to close out the end of the fiscal year. In the Southwest, Homana Pawiki is lining up a VA exhibit booth for the Phoenix Area IHS Partnership Conference coming up the week of July 30th at the Phoenix Convention Center. On August 3rd she’ll be supporting a VA claims event that will be held in San Carlos, AZ at Burdette Hall on the San Carlos Apache Reservation. On August 11, Homana will be lining up VA subject matter experts for the Gila River Indian Community Veteran and Family Conference to be held at the Sheraton, Wild Horse Pass Resort and Conference Center located on the Gila River Indian Community Reservation.
Over in the VA Continental District (which we also refer to as the Southern Plains area), Mary Culley supported claims events at Osage Nation, Choctaw Nation and with the Shawnee Tribe in Miami, OK. She also helped the National Congress of American Indians Veterans Committee during their mid-year meeting in Kansas City, MO. She addressed the National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators during their annual conference held in Alexandria, VA and made tribal government site visits, attended Tulsa and Oklahoma City suicide prevention challenge meetings and worked to prepare for the Otoe-Missouria Veterans Stand Down coming up this fall.

On the west coast, in the Pacific District, Terry Bentley worked 7 Veterans claims events held in tribal communities stretching from Alaska to the Central Valley of California. She also facilitated a meeting with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (Pendleton, OR) and the Walla Walla VAMC regarding reactivation of the sweathouse program located on the VA campus. Terry is supporting the VISN 20/Yakama Nation partnership, Veterans Camp Chaparral, which is scheduled to be held the week of August 13. This Veterans Camp has been running for over 26 years and has served to build bridges, promote trust and cross-cultural understanding between VA employees and the Native Veterans they serve. She is also busy planning events to be held in the Pacific District this fall, stay tuned for updates and more information soon.

Out in the Central/Northeast Districts, Peter Vicaire lined up VA segments for CMS conferences in Denver and Chicago, manned an OTGR outreach booth at a National Indian Health Board meeting in Prior Lake, MN (near his hometown), helped implement a veterans claims clinic in Red Cliff, WI, assisted with the filming of an interview with a Penobscot WWII Veteran, provided outreach at a health/benefits fair hosted by the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians in Maine, and most recently, he and I attended the National Gathering of American Indians in Schaumburg, IL. His upcoming events include a claims clinic with the Bay Mills Indian Community in Michigan on August 1st, then he’s off to Prairie Band Potawatomi in Kansas to present information to Veterans on recent state legislation to return an estimated $250,000 to Veterans who were illegally taxed by that state while in the military.

I hope you enjoy this Super Summer edition as much as we enjoyed putting it together. If you have submissions to the newsletter, please email content or questions to tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov. We monitor this mailbox from our DC office and will respond right away. We look forward to catching up with tribal leaders, Veterans, family members, and Veteran service providers during our travels and meetings in the weeks ahead.

Happy Reading

Links to non-Federal services are provided solely as a service to our readers. These links do not constitute an endorsement of these organizations or their programs by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and none should be inferred. VA is not responsible for the content of the individual organization web pages found at these links nor the information provided on these events by organizations or individuals.
The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released the 2017 OTGR Executive Summary Report, which provides a comprehensive summary of VA’s Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) activities during 2017. This report, prepared by OTGR, highlights tribes’ top priorities for serving American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans, identified through consultation.

The 2017 report can be downloaded at the link provided above, and print copies are being mailed to federally recognized tribes.

VA recognizes and respects the sovereignty of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal nations and is committed to regular, meaningful consultation with tribal governments to gain input on VA policies, programs, and services, with the goal of better serving American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans.

For more information about VA and OTGR, please visit the OTGR website at: www.va.gov/tribalgovernment. Feedback and suggestions can be submitted by email to tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov.
VA and IHS Extend Reimbursement Agreement to June 30, 2022

AMENDMENT 3

AGREEMENT BETWEEN
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
AND
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE
FOR
REIMBURSEMENT FOR DIRECT HEALTH CARE SERVICES

In accordance with paragraph E. of Section X. GENERAL PROVISIONS and notwithstanding Amendments 1 and 2, effective on the date when this Amendment is signed by the last party:

1. Paragraph E. of Section VII. REIMBURSEMENT FOR DIRECT CARE SERVICES is amended to read as follows:

E. Pharmacy Services. To the extent pharmaceuticals are reimbursable under this Agreement, VA shall reimburse IHS as follows:

1. Formulary. VA shall reimburse IHS only for pharmaceutical drugs on the formulary used by VA in accordance with National VHA policy and applicable Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) and local VA Medical Center (VAMC) policy for medication orders. The Pharmacy Benefits Management Services (http://www.pbm.va.gov/nationalformulary.asp) webpage contains the VA National Formulary. Requests for reimbursement of pharmaceutical drugs not on the VA formulary shall be submitted by IHS for approval by VA in advance of the request for reimbursement to the local VAMC Pharmacy (as specified in the VA-IHS/THP Provider Guide) and will be processed by VA in accordance with VA policy on non-formulary drugs. If IHS is requesting reimbursement for a VA Non-Formulary pharmaceutical, IHS must attach the approval documentation with the submitted pharmacy claims.

2. Outpatient Pharmacy Services. VA shall reimburse the actual cost paid by IHS for the drugs for outpatient emergent need prescriptions or other outpatient prescriptions provided through the IHS facility to Eligible AI/AN Veterans. This includes reimbursement for long-term prescriptions (prescriptions for more than a 30-day supply).
VA Reimburses over $79 Million to IHS and Tribal Health Programs

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

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| Total Disbursement of Out of System Repayments (only) - Included In National Data |
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Design Selected for Smithsonian’s National Native American Veterans Memorial

Here's an article from the Smithsonian, published on June 26, 2018. More information on the competition, artist biography, juror bios, etc. can be found HERE.

The memorial will sit on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and Pratt envisions a clear view of the U.S. Capitol’s dome from there. As Smithsonian.com has reported, Pratt’s use of circles suggests “the cycle of life and death, and the continuity of all things.” The stone drum, it adds, symbolizes an invitation for people to "harmonize their experiences" with one another to the "silent rhythms" of the drumbeat. Pratt was born in Guthrie, Okla., and is a citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho nations. He’s a veteran of the Marine Corps and served in Vietnam from 1962 to 1965. He also worked as a forensic artist for years, creating witness description drawings for law enforcement.

The jury for the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian National Native American Veterans Memorial has unanimously selected the design concept submitted by Harvey Pratt (Cheyenne/Arapaho) titled "Warriors’ Circle of Honor.” Groundbreaking for the memorial is slated for September 21, 2019. It is slated to open late 2020.

“Through meeting thousands of Native American veterans, I learned most of all about the commitment these veterans have to the well-being of the United States,” said Kevin Gover (Pawnee), director of the museum. “These veterans are perfectly aware that they are serving a country that had not kept its commitments to Native people, and yet they chose—and are still choosing—to serve. This reflects a very deep kind of patriotism. I can think of no finer example of service to the United States and the promise it holds.”

Native Americans serve at a higher rate per capita than any other population group. Few outside the military and American Indian Nations know that Native people have served in the U.S. armed forces since the American Revolution and continue to serve today. The nation’s capital is known for its grand monuments and solemn memorials, including many honoring the nation’s veterans. Yet no national landmark in Washington, D.C., focuses on the contributions of American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians who have served in the military since colonial times.

Pratt is a multimedia artist and recently retired forensic artist, as well as a Marine Corps Vietnam veteran. His design concept is a multisensory memorial. An elevated stainless steel circle rests on an intricately carved stone drum. Listen to Pratt describe his design concept in detail. The selected design will undergo further development in partnership with the museum.

Congress commissioned the museum to build a National Native American Veterans Memorial that gives “all Americans the opportunity to learn of the proud and courageous tradition of service of Native Americans in the Armed Forces of the United States.”
The museum worked with the National Congress of American Indians and other Native organizations to create an advisory committee composed of tribal leaders, Native veterans and their family members from across the country who assisted with outreach to Native American communities and veterans. The advisory committee and the museum conducted 35 community consultations across the nation to seek input and support for the memorial. These events resulted in a shared vision and set of design principles for the National Native American Veterans Memorial.

The National Museum of the American Indian conducted an international competition to select design concepts for the National Native American Veterans Memorial. Don Stastny, an architect and urban designer, oversaw the competition. The design was selected through a juried, two-stage process. The jury members are:

- Larry Ulaaq Ahvakana (Inupiaq), artist, Ahvakana Fine Art
- Stephanie Birdwell (Cherokee), director, Veterans Affairs, Office of Tribal Government Relations
- Johnnetta Betsch Cole, director emerita, Smithsonian’s National Museum of African Art
- Edwin Fountain, general counsel, American Battle Monuments Commission
- Mark Kawika McKeague (Native Hawaiian), director of Cultural Planning, Group 70 International Inc.
- Brian McCormack (Nez Perce) Principal Landscape Architect, McCormack Landscape Architecture
- Lillian Pitt (Wasco/Yakima/Warm Springs), artist
- Herman Viola, curator emeritus, Smithsonian
- Kevin Gover (Pawnee), alternate juror, director of the National Museum of the American Indian

More information on the competition regulations and process is available in the Design Competition Manual: https://nmai.us.fluidreview.com/res/p/regulations/. For more information about the memorial, visit AmericanIndian.si.edu/NNAVM.

This project is made possible by the generous support of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; Bank of America; Northrop Grumman; the Citizen Potawatomi Nation; the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians; Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Walker LLP; General Motors; Lee Ann and Marshall Hunt; the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community; and the Sullivan Insurance Agency of Oklahoma.

About the National Museum of the American Indian
The National Museum of the American Indian is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere—past, present and future—through partnership with Native people and others. Located on the National Mall at Fourth Street and Independence Avenue S.W., the museum is open each day from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). It is accessible from L’Enfant Plaza Metrorail station via the Maryland Avenue/Smithsonian Museums exit.
The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian has announced the winning concept for the National Native American Veterans Memorial. Multimedia artist Harvey Pratt's Warriors' Circle of Honor will incorporate a large, upright stainless steel circle set above a stone drum in the center of a circular walkway with intricate carvings of the five military seals.

The memorial will sit on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and Pratt envisions a clear view of the U.S. Capitol's dome from there. As Smithsonian.com has reported, Pratt's use of circles suggests "the cycle of life and death, and the continuity of all things." The stone drum, it adds, symbolizes an invitation for people to "harmonize their experiences" with one another to the "silent rhythms" of the drumbeat. Pratt was born in Guthrie, Okla., and is a citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho nations. He's a veteran of the Marine Corps and served in Vietnam from 1962 to 1965. He also worked as a forensic artist for years, creating witness description drawings for law enforcement.

Pratt tells NPR's Mary Louise Kelly that he hopes his design will function as an architectural piece rather than just a work of sculpture — something that people can become a part of.

He says he can picture people taking a seat on the benches tucked into the drum fountain and reflecting on their own experiences with the military. He also hopes that it might be a cathartic place for some veterans.
"Most nations have veterans tell stories about what they did," Pratt says. "People can come in there and do that and be comforted, and get rid of some things that are on their minds that bother them." More than 150,000 veterans identified as American Indian and Alaska Native in the 2010 census. And according to the U.S. Department of Defense, there are more than 20,000 active duty service members in the military who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native.

The memorial was selected unanimously by an eight-person jury of Native and non-Native artists, designers, museum directors and veterans. It acknowledges the history and service of American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian veterans, according to the museum's director, Kevin Gover, who is a citizen of the Pawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. Gover says that throughout the process of helping plan the memorial, he has met thousands of Native American veterans who have demonstrated over and over their commitment to the U.S.

"These veterans are perfectly aware that they are serving a country that had not kept its commitments to Native people, and yet they chose — and are still choosing — to serve," Gover says. "This reflects a very deep kind of patriotism. I can think of no finer example of service to the United States and the promise it holds."

The memorial will break ground on Sept. 21, 2019, and be unveiled in late 2020. "I want it to be a place of healing and comfort, and a place that's hopefully going to be built on love," Pratt says.
American Indian Veterans get VAs ear

Here’s an article from ConnectingVets.com which was written by Matt Saintsing and published on July 25.

American Indians who served in the military are finally getting a seat at the table. Three senators are introducing a bill to create an American Indian advisory board to the VA, addressing the unique struggles they endure. American Indians have higher rates of being uninsured, and are significantly more likely to delay health care due to untimely VA appointments. And yet Native American Indians serve at a much higher rate per capita than any other ethnic group in the U.S. In fact, 27 have been awarded the Medal of Honor, our nation’s highest military medal.

The bipartisan VA Tribal Advisory Committee Act would create a 15 member advisory committee—representing each of the 12 regions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs—on Tribal and American Indian issues. It would include at least four veterans. “Veterans hold a place of honor in Native communities,” said Jefferson Keel, President of the National Congress of American Indians. “Too often our Native veterans do not benefit from the programs and resources they earned through their service to this country.”

“Native Americans have signed up to serve our country at a historically high rate and the VA must do more to make sure they have access to the health care and benefits they earned,” said Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.), ranking member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee. “Our bipartisan bill will make sure that Native American veterans have a seat at the table as the VA comes up with important solutions to connect Indian Country with VA services.”

The committee would serve as a communication line between VA and tribal entities, and would include face-to-face meetings with the VA secretary to provide much-needed leadership on affairs impacting American Indian communities. “Alaska has more veterans per capita than any state in the country, and Alaska Native veterans serve at higher rates in the U.S. military than any other ethnic group,” added Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska). “This special kind of patriotism is unique, as are the health care and access challenges impacting these veterans across Alaska and the United States.”

Congress would receive recommendations on how to improve VA access and care to American Indian veterans, in an effort to expand VA outreach and benefits, if this bill becomes law. “Too many of these courageous men and women aren’t able to access the services they have earned,” added Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.), vice chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee,” also adding that the advisory committee, “will improve the department’s government-government relationship with tribes.”
American Indian Veterans Honored in D-Day Memorial Events in France for Service

Here’s an article from Native News Online.net which was published on June 10.

OMAHA BEACH, France — In the first week of June this year, there were seven memorial events within France which marked the first anniversary of “Charles Shay Indian Memorial Park” on the shore of Omaha beach.

France welcomed with respect and honored our Native American Veterans and community members from around the United States, as they gathered to support 93-year-old Charles Norman Shay, a Penobscot Tribal elder and hero, who landed with the Big Red One Army 1st Division. Shay, who was a medic, was on the first wave to land on Omaha Beach, June 6th, 1944. He then went on to serve in Korea, was a POW, and then finished his service to our country.

One ceremony, which fell on June 5, 2018, remembered all the contributions of Native soldiers who gave their all on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Over 500 American Indian served during the World War II campaign.

These ceremonies marked history in another way, as CEO of Trickster Art Gallery Joseph Podlasek organized for the first time Native Veterans and the Native community to be a part of multiple ceremonies around France, with the eagle staffs from the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi of Michigan, Millis Lac Tribe of Minnesota, and Williams Family Staff represented. Tribal flags were also presented from the Oklahoma Seminoles, the Penobscot Tribe of Maine, and each of the tribes that honored us with their Eagles Staffs.

Representative from the Penobscot Tribe Jennifer Francis performed a ceremony on Omaha beach at the Park, and Trickster Art Gallery Native youths from Illinois Steven and Tristan Podlasek joined in to help carry the tribal flags. Native veteran of 28 years of service, Julia Kelly, gifted a jingle dress to Agina Podlasek, to share a special healing and water ceremony. Christina Pike, a Native youth from MN, also helped share tobacco and join in the ceremonies. Cherokee flute music was presented by Mark Cleveland, to honor and soothe the souls of those who never made it home.

The delegation visited 58 grave sites, performing a small ceremony at each grave. The veterans smudged the crosses, gifted tobacco, and placed a beautiful picture, name plate, and a rose tied with a ribbon of the United States colors. Emily Farr, Multimedia Specialist of Trickster, and Corporal Kevin Payne, with the Department
of Defense and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Office of Tribal Government Relations, will create photo slide shows and a documentary, which will be available soon at www.trickstergallery.com.

There will be a full exhibit covering the inaugural opening ceremony of the park dedicated in his honor, "D-Day Omaha Beach – Scarlett Waters, Charles Shay Indian Memorial Park” at Trickster Gallery, opening July 22nd, 2018, at 2 pm. This will be accompanied by the Smithsonian “Patriot Nations” exhibit to conclude the 4th Annual National Gathering. This all began with the National Gathering of American Indian Veterans, held the 3rd weekend each July at Cantigny Park, where 43 tribes were represented by their veterans in 2017. Native Veterans across the country began to meet and discuss the untold stories of Native peoples’ contributions as the highest percentage of any race of people per capita to serve in the military, discussing topics such as health, wellness, employment, and policy change.

The group partnered with the McCormick Foundation, Cantigny Park, 1st Division Museum, and the France D-Day organizer Marie LeGrande. Marie’s niece Alice made the name plates with the soldier’s pictures for each of the Native grave sites. The sage was gifted for the trip by the Pala Band of Mission Indians in California. They worked with their youth group to pick and send sage and tobacco to Joe Podlasek, to be used throughout the week.

More Native Veterans and eagle staffs are invited to join the group next year from June 1 – June 7 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of D-Day. Since it is the 75th anniversary, rooms need to be booked by February, 2019. We also have a research team from Trickster, the Smithsonian NMAI, and of tribal historians gathering to verify names from the tribes who landed on D-Day, June 6th, 1944, to be read on the beach during future ceremonies.

For more information: joep@trickstergallery.com or www.trickstergallery.com 847.301.2090.
Rogue Valley Powwow Honors Veterans

Here's an article from KOBI (NBC-6) which was written by Miles Furuichi and published on June 3. The article and video [2:12] can be found HERE.

A ceremony steeped in Native American tradition, the Rogue Valley Veterans Powwow was held over the weekend at the VA in White City. Veterans and the public were welcomed to join in the ceremonies to honor all those who have served the country. With an array of vendors and ceremonial tributes, the event set out to ensure those that served were shown the respect and tribute they deserve for laying down their lives.

“We need this to heal ourselves,” said Blanket, a Native American veteran who came for the opening ceremonies. “But it’s not just for natives, its for all races.” For 21 years, this powwow has been held at the VA Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and Clinic’s baseball field to honor not just Native American veterans but all veterans. While the public was welcomed to watch, the event was mostly meant for the “warriors” who have fought for this country. “When you’re in combat, bullets and bombs don’t know the color of the skin, they don’t care. They have no compassion and they are meant for destruction,” said David West, the master of ceremonies. “This is meant for life. To bring people back from that destruction.”

West, a representative of the Southern Oregon Indian Coalition, the Rogue Valley Veterans Powwow is one of a kind event. It was the first gathering in the nation to be held on veterans administration grounds and developed into a program meant to help veterans. “Use of the sweat lodge, talking circles and other treatment modalities from Native American people for the treatment of PTSD, alcoholism and drug abuse,” said West. “Also the issues that’s really very much at the forefront these days, suicide prevention.”

According to VA officials, Native Americans have the highest per capita enlistment of any ethnicity. From the Revolutionary War to the present-day U.S. military, Native Americans have served in all branches of the military. In a data report collected in 2012 by the VA on American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans, Oregon had over 3,000 veterans.

Officials from the VA say being able to hold a powwow at a VA location has special meaning for both sides. “The high regard that they have for the warriors, for those that go and serve, I think sets a great example,” said Larry Johnson, manager of the American Indian and Alaska Native program. “In that regard, having the powwow here is a powerful representation.” With people from various tribes coming into the valley for this event, it’s a powerful moment in time. “You have to be pure at heart,” said Blanket.

Blanket described being able to take part in the Gourd Dance, a sacred ceremony for warriors that have served in combat. As a member of the service and one who received treatment from the White City VA, being a part of the dance is special. In respect for this tradition, NBC5 News followed the wishes of the coalition to not show any footage of the gourd dancing.
On Sunday, during later portions of the ceremonies, veterans shared where they served, those who didn’t come home were honored and those that did come home were given a chance to find solace where they may not have had it before. “You can’t give more than your life that’s all you have to give, the deepest you have to give,” said West. “So when they come home and need to begin reliving that life in a different way, that’s what this is all about. Its helping them to find that way and helping to support them and sustain them in that journey.”

### Veterans Share Stories to Heal During Sixth Annual Summit

Here’s an article from Smoke Signals which was written by Dean Rhodes and which ran on July 13.

During the second day of the sixth annual “Veterans Summit: Gathering of Warriors” held at Uuyxat Powwow Grounds on Thursday and Friday, July 5-6, a “Managing Trauma” panel discussion reflected the year’s theme – sharing stories to heal. Moderated by Veterans Affairs Portland Healthcare System Clinical Psychologist Dr. Sarah Suniga, a panel featuring four veterans shared stories of trauma experienced while serving in the military.

Army veteran John Courtney talked about being an infantry officer who served one tour of duty in a combat zone. “Once in combat, but once was enough,” he said. Army veteran and Willamina resident Roberta Davis discussed being a victim of military sexual assault and the long time it took before she mustered the courage to file a claim with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Davis’ harrowing story was featured in last year’s Smoke Signals coverage of the Veterans Summit.

Air Force veteran Raylene Thomas (Warm Springs) also discussed being a victim of sexual assault while serving and the aid her friends provided to help her deal with the trauma. Marine Corps veteran and Yakama Tribal member Victor Ganuelas empathized with the stories and discussed his work at Camp Chaparral, a week-long cultural immersion experience held on restricted grounds of the Yakama Indian Nation to help veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and drug and alcohol abuse. The panel’s consensus advice for those who want to help suffering veterans: Be available to listen without judging or trying to make it better.

The panel followed a 35-minute presentation from Suniga, who discussed trauma and PTSD. Suniga said the military works well in conditioning its members to have only one response to the deeply engrained fight-or-flight response in human beings, and that response is fight. “This set of responses is hard-wired into your brain,” Suniga said. “You do not need any dress rehearsal to activate this part of your brain. It’s one of the oldest parts of your nervous system. Some say that your brain is the ‘Do not die’ organ. ...
"When it comes to PTSD, because of trauma, the stress response system turns it up to a real high volume and it becomes disordered, meaning that response ceases to be helpful. ... Our nervous system makes these changes which create these long-term impacts on your neurochemistry. "The military works hard to make sure that your stress response system chooses only one option ... fight. The military also drives home that everything is about the person to the left or the right of you. Take care of your battle buddy. Never accept defeat. The military does everything it can to override this engrained response and they do an amazing job, for the most part."

However, Suniga said, it is important for veterans to understand that they should not blame themselves for their automatic fight response, or automatic flight responses or if they freeze during a crucial moment. "Recovery lies within you and it lies all around you," Suniga said. "Recovery is possible. ... At its core, PTSD means you're having a reaction to trauma, and that's about as human as human gets."

The sixth annual Veterans Summit started at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, July 5, with an invocation from Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George. Nick Sixkiller, a Navy veteran from the Cherokee Tribe in Oklahoma, once again served as master of ceremonies. The Grand Ronde Color Guard of Steve Bobb Sr., Alton Butler, Richard VanAtta, Raymond Petite and Al Miller brought in the U.S., Oregon, Grand Ronde and POW/MIA flags and eagle staff.

Welcoming remarks were delivered by Mitch Sparks, acting director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs; Terry Bentley (Karuk), Veterans Affairs Western Region Tribal Government Relations specialist; and Michael Fisher, director of the Portland Veterans Affairs Healthcare System. "We are a proud nation who serves in our military at a higher rate than anybody else," said Sparks, who is descended from the Oglala Lakota on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

"It's really an honor and a privilege to travel through Indian Country trying to help veterans," Bentley said. "I want to thank the Grand Ronde Tribe for hosting this event now for six years. It really speaks well of the leadership in Grand Ronde and their commitment to their veterans and community."

Fisher said the reason he was attending the Veterans Summit was because of his commitment to outreach and being a better partner in helping veterans heal. Vietnam War-era Navy veteran Charlie Tailfeathers (Cree/Blackfeet) discussed the POW ceremony, which in previous years was acted out with Air Force veteran Linda Woods, who did not attend this year's summit.

Courtney, who sat on the Friday "Managing Trauma" panel as well, read three poems and discussed healing from trauma. "Fighting pain is like doing a long-distance run," he said. "You can't sprint through it."

Martin Earring (Cheyenne River Sioux/Oglala Indian) and Zandra Wilson (Dine) from the National Museum of the American Indian, a Smithsonian Institution museum, discussed its
oral history project in which interviews with Native American veterans are being recorded as an adjunct to the Library of Congress’ Veterans History Project.

Earring and Wilson were at the Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center on Friday, July 6, to record interviews with any Native American veteran interested in sharing their story. Thursday’s events also included a session called “Honoring the Stories” moderated by Tailfeathers, as well as a cultural sharing event held in the nearby Tribal plankhouse, achamaha, which featured singing by the Grand Ronde Canoe Family.

The summit reconvened at 9:46 a.m. Friday with Bobb, chairman of the Tribe’s Veterans Special Event Board, giving the invocation followed by Suniga’s presentation on trauma. Other Friday events included Liz Estabrooks, Women Veterans coordinator with the state Department of Veterans’ Affairs, returning for her third Veterans Summit to discuss intentional inclusion of women when discussing veterans’ issues, which are usually skewed toward white males. “I don’t want to replace that, but just want them to add us in,” she said, adding that there are approximately 28,000 female veterans who live in Oregon.

In the afternoon, veterans had several activity choices that included male and female sharing circles hosted by Tailfeathers and Estabrooks, respectively; a “Managing Trauma” discussion hosted by Courtney, who also is a suicide prevention instructor; an “Employment Services” presentation moderated by Richard Sanchez, a Disabled Veterans Outreach representative with Worksource Yamhill; or a trip to Lebanon to view an All Nations Native American Veterans Memorial. A closing ceremony was held before the summit segued into the Marcellus Norwest Memorial Veterans Powwow.

As with other Veterans Summits, many organizations surrounded the powwow arbor and staffed resource tables, offering help and services to veterans. Among those organizations were the Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Center, Veterans Affairs’ mobile Vet Center, the Portland-Vancouver chapter of the Northwest Indian Veteran Association, Native American Cultural Association of Oregon, Worksource Yamhill, Military Helpline, Oregon Health & Science University’s Casey Eye Institute and Willamina Post 4211 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Tribal Dental Hygienist Sheila Blacketeer and Dental Assistant Shelby Hoyt were on hand to give dental examinations and Community Health Events Coordinator Kandee Little transported those in need of medical attention from the powwow grounds to the clinic. In addition to George, Tribal Council members Lisa Leno and Brenda Tuomi, an Army veteran, attended parts of the summit, as did former Tribal Council chairman and Marine Corps veteran Reyn Leno, who started the Veterans Summit in 2013 after attending a planning meeting held in San Diego.

The summit was sponsored by the Native Wellness Institute of Gresham, Office of Tribal Government Relations with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Grand Ronde Tribe. Social Services Department Manager Dana Ainam was the lead Tribal employee in organizing this year’s event. She said approximately 100 people attended. All attendees received a gift bag that included a T-shirt designed by Bobb.
Tribal HUD-VASH Directive

VA recently published its Tribal HUD-VASH Directive. It is 46 pages long so it can’t be placed in its entirety here. However, if you’re interested in reading it, you can find it at the following link or by clicking on the cover page below:
https://vaww.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=6432

TRIBAL HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT - VETERANS AFFAIRS
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAM

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive establishes authority, policy, and procedures for the Tribal Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-VA Supportive Housing (VASH) Program.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENT: This is a new directive which sets forth VHA’s policy and procedures for implementation of the Tribal HUD-VASH demonstration project. It specifies responsibilities for implementing this program, in which VHA provides clinical case management and supportive services to homeless and at risk homeless American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans living on or near Tribal HUD-VASH grantees’ trust land.


4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N) is responsible for the contents of this directive. Questions may be directed to the Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office, at 202-461-1635.

5. REVISIONS: None.

6. RECERTIFICATION: This VHA directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of June 30, 2023. This VHA directive will continue to serve as national VHA policy until it is recertified or rescinded.

Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D.
Executive in Charge

NOTE: All references herein to VA and VHA documents incorporate by reference subsequent VA and VHA documents on the same or similar subject matter.

DISTRIBUTION: Emailed to the VHA Publications Distribution List on June 8, 2018.
The 2018 National Tribal Health Conference will take place in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, September 17-20, 2018. The National Tribal Health Conference (NTHC) is the largest American Indian and Alaska Native specific gathering each year focused specifically on health. The conference focuses on exploring health policy and its impact on Tribes, advancing Tribal capacity to expand own policy work, and policy and political work in the arenas of health care, public, behavioral, and environmental health. The conference features multiple tracks of concurrent breakout sessions, as well as general plenary sessions that feature nationally recognized guest speakers and elected and appointed governmental officials. A very important component of the National Tribal Health Conference are the government consultation and listening sessions that are held in conjunction with the conference, but are offered on pre- or post-conference days.

The conference is hosted and planned annually by the National Indian Health Board, as well as local member organizations or Tribes. The 2018 National Tribal Health Conference (NTHC) is being hosted locally by the Southern Plains Tribal Health Board.

Details
- **When**
  Monday, September 17, 2018 - Thursday, September 20, 2018
  7:00 AM - 5:00 PM
  Eastern Time

- **Where**
  Oklahoma City Cox Convention Center
  1 Myriad Gardens
  Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73102
  (405) 602-8500
May 17, 2016

Greetings,

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

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

1. Location of Tribe so we can find the closest Ford dealership.
2. Closest Veterans Affairs Office, i.e distance (mileage) from the Reservation.
3. Number of Native American Veterans in tribe.
4. Number of Veterans that the tribe transports at one time to their appointments, this will give us an idea on the size of the vehicle.
5. What type of vehicle will meet your requirements (i.e. 4x4 or 4x2).
6. Tribe W-9 (Tribe Identification Number and Certification).
7. Tribe's major challenges assisting Veterans.

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

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

Sincerely,

Martin Duarte
Assistant Program Director / Outreach

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

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

During the event, you can:

- Speak with a VA representative
- Get answers to VA claim and benefits questions
- File your claim
- Get same-day decisions when you share complete information

EVENT DATE & TIME:
Wednesday, August 1: 8:00-4:00

LOCATION:
Armella B. Parker Elder Center
12485 W. Lakeshore Dr. Brimley, MI

POINT OF CONTACT:
Sara L. Tadgerson: sitadgerson@baymills.org
Peter Vicaire: Peter.Vicaire@va.gov

PHONE NUMBER:
Peter Vicaire: 612-558-7744
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
- Get same-day decisions when you share complete information

EVENT DATE & TIME/S:
White Earth Veterans Claims Event
Thursday, September 20, 2018: 8:00-4:00

LOCATION:
White Earth Veterans Association
2219 College Road, Mahnomen, MN

POINT OF CONTACT:
Tom Spry: tom.spry@state.mn.us
Peter Vicaire: Peter.Vicaire@va.gov

PHONE NUMBER:
Tom Spry: 218-983-3285, ext. 5904.
Peter Vicaire: 612-558-7744
OTGR Southern Plains Region  
(KS; OK; TX)

Veteran Caregivers  
R & R Retreat  
Respite and Renewal

A Weekend of Peace  
at the  
Forest of Peace

To provide caregivers of military veterans from any conflict, an opportunity to enjoy respite and renewal in a rural and peaceful setting. This retreat allows caregivers the chance to develop their attendance based on their unique caregiving circumstances.

DATE: Friday, September 21, 2018 to  
Sunday, September 23, 2018

PLACE: Osage Forest of Peace  
Sand Springs, Oklahoma  
www.ForestofPeace.org

WHO SHOULD ATTEND: Caregivers of Military Veterans who are adult family members/loved ones of veterans from any conflict (parents, siblings, wives, etc.)

COST: NONE – This retreat is a gift to our wonderful veteran caregivers from the donations to Veterans’ Families United.

Agenda:  
Friday: 5:30 pm to 10:00 pm: Group sharing, guided imagery  
Saturday: 9:00 am - 7:00 pm: Healing Touch, Yoga, info on PTSD/TBI, Essential Oils, Labyrinth Walk, the “Mother Cave”  
Sunday: 9:00 am - 1:00 pm: Art project and intentions  
All activities are optional. There are inter-spiritual meditations offered 3 times daily that are also optional. Meals are served community style in the main building

Attendees may participate in Friday, Saturday or Sunday activities independently or attend all of them. Those wishing to attend them all are invited to stay at the Forest of Peace. The Forest was formerly a monastery and the cabins are basic, with twin beds, tile flooring and showers. Participants wishing to stay may request single or double occupancy.

For further information, please contact Cynde at clarkcounsel@cox.net or 405.474.3467

SPONSORS ARE NEEDED. In order for us to provide this opportunity at no charge to adult family members of veterans, any donation is welcome.

Please go to http://veteransfamiliesunited.org/donate/ to support this effort!

www.VeteransFamiliesUnited.org
OKC CHOCTAW/INTER-TRIBAL VETERANS ASSOCIATION POST 319 & CVA MONTHLY MEETING

WHEN: 1ST Saturday of each month
WHERE: Choctaw Alliance Center
       5320 S Young’s Blvd, OKC OK 73119
TIME: 1000 am – 1200 pm
WHO: All Native Veterans in the surrounding OKC area
OUR MISSION: To foster camaraderie among native veterans who served honorably. To serve our veterans and our communities in any which way we can. To advocate for all native veterans.
VISION: Ensure that native veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country.
POC: POST COMMANDER-Harold Marris
PHONE: 405-326-2621 or 405-456-4845
EMAIL: chatachafla@live.com
SAVE THE DATE

LET’S SAVE LIVES TOGETHER

SEPTEMBER 4TH-6TH 2018

EXPECTING 400 ATTENDEES

2nd annual hope Conference
Silver Spirit Casino Resort

TULSA, OK

This conference will be free of charge. It will contain invaluable training and education regarding mental health.

EVERYONE IS INVITED

Provided by Behavioral Health Prevention Programs
918-758-1930

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation
www.muscogee.org
918.722.7600 | 1.800.482.1979
Otoe-Missouria Intertribal Veterans Stand Down

Friday, October 5, 2018
Time: 0900-1500
7 Clans Paradise Casino Event Center
7500 HWY 177, Red Rock, OK

Apply for VA benefits, Housing Assistance, Legal Assistance, free clothing/shoes/personal care items and MORE
Transportation Available

General Info 580-723-4466 ext 217
www.omtribe.org

ALL VETERANS & SURVIVING SPOUSES WELCOME!
Bring your DD-214 and any documents needed for your claim
**FIRST RESPONDER**

**POLICE - EMS - FIRE - ACTIVE MILITARY - VETS**

BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 10th
First Responder Days Will Be EVERY MONDAY!!!

Any Monday, Any Time – Honor Roll Members

**PLAY FOR FREE**
First Responder Mondays

YOU SERVE FOR US.
LET US SERVE YOU.

*Must have or sign up for Honor Roll Membership with valid ID to receive free play time. Limit 2 hours FREE play per day per member per day. Excludes National Holidays & Special Events.*

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**SAVE THE DATE**

VA Health Care System's 5th Annual Mental Health Summit

Friday, August 25th, 2017
8:30 am to 4:00 pm

Oklahoma Regional National Guard Training Center
6500 N. Kelly
Oklahoma City, OK

Invitation's will be sent in Early July
2018 Sooner STAND DOWN
1724 NW 4th Street
Oklahoma City, OK

September 7, 2018
6:30am Breakfast and Registration
8:00am - 3pm Agencies Present

Housing and Services for Veterans

For More Information:
Christine Cleary
(405) 456-1710
PLEASE JOIN CHAPTER 902
(FORGOT TO DUCK CLUB)
IN CELEBRATION OF
NATIONAL
PURPLE HEART DAY
AUGUST 7, 2018 • 1000 AM TO 1600 PM
OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
2132 NE 36TH ST • (ACROSS FROM 45 MUSEUM)

COME AND ENJOY SOME BBQ

SMOKIN’ OKIES CATERING
& Mobile Smokehouse

www.thesokinokies.com
SAVE THE DATE!
VAHCS Annual Mental Health Summit
Friday, August 10, 2018
8:30 am – 4:00 pm
OK National Guard Training Center

2018 MH Summit Planning Committee
Amy Barnett (Red Rock)  Sara Berry (Integris)
Selonda Moseley (VA)    Jay Birdwell (North Core)
Kerry Munch II (VA)     Jamee Boucher (VA)
Wendy Nix (NAMI)        Cynde Collins-Clark (VFU)
Michelle Rayburn (VA)   Esteban Garcia (WWP)
Heather Joseph (Cedar Ridge)  Byron Rich (VA)
Catherine Lewis (VA – Chair)  Courtney Rogers-Meintzer (VA)
Jeff Mardotle (VA)       Kelly White (VA)
Paul Merchant (OK Nat’l Guard)  John Wilton (CDVA/DMHSAS)
Mireille Merilice – (Cedar Ridge)  Tammy Woolver (VA)
OTGR Southwest Region
(AZ; CO; NM; UT)

VETERANS STAND DOWN

SAVE THE DATE

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

October 6, 2018
08:00 TO 13:00
Guadalupe, Arizona 85283

JOIN US FOR A “YOORI TAEWAI”
DAY OF HEALING)

MUST SHOW PROOF OF MILITARY SERVICE

All Veterans and their Families,
Veterans Widows and Widowers
are Welcome
Continental Breakfast & Hot Noon Meal

THANKS AUXILIARY 124 AND PASCUA YAQUI TRIBE
FOR SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS
A Drug and Alcohol Free Event

Funded in Part by Arizona Department of Veterans Services

5/09
O’ODHAM VETERANS CELEBRATION
GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY
6070 WEST PARK STREET, SACATON, A
DISTRICT TWO, HASHAN KEHK

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: DOUGLAS JUAN, 602 327-5973

SAVE THE DATE

SEPTEMBER 15, 2018

TRADITIONAL BLESSING
GUEST SPEAKERS

ENTERTAINMENT LUNCH
SERVICE PROVIDERS

DISBURSEMENTS OF D.O.D. ITEMS TO VETERANS
2ND ANNUAL VETERAN & FAMILY CONFERENCE

AUGUST 11, 2018

COME GET INFORMATION ON:

- Enrolling in VA Health Care
- Applying for Veteran Benefits
- Local Resources for Veterans and Military Families
- Cultural Practices Related to Veterans
- Meet other Veterans and hear their experiences

GET A FREE LUNCH!

8AM – 4PM
SHERATON GRAND AT
WILD HORSE PASS
5594 WEST WILD HORSE PASS BLVD
CHANDLER, ARIZONA 85226
EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
IN THE FACE OF ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

14th Annual Conference on Alzheimer’s disease in Native Americans

This full-day conference is designed to incorporate the basics of dementia as well as elevate focus on the emotional impact of the disease on both the person with dementia as well as family caregivers. Participants will learn strategies to use daily to promote well-being in elders and their families.

Call 602.839.5858 with any questions or visit www.bannerhc.org/nativeamerican to learn more or register.

14TH ANNUAL CAREGIVER CONFERENCE!

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25

KEYNOTE: JORDAN P. LEWIS, PHD
NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR ALASKA NATIVE ELDERS

EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

FACT OR FICTION: RESOURCE PANEL DISCUSSION

WE KO PA RESORT & CONFERENCE CENTER AT FORT MCDOWELL
19438 N FORT MCDOWELL RD, FORT MCDOWELL