

---

## VA ~ Office of Tribal Government Relations Newsletter ~ June/July/August 2017

### Note from the Director

Greetings and welcome to this *super combined* summer/almost fall edition of the VA Office of Tribal Government Relations newsletter. The summer months seem to have flown by this year. I'll start off by sharing information about events coming up on the horizon. Over in the Northwest, the Suquamish Tribe, with sponsorship from the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, will be hosting a Native Veterans Summit September 26-27, 2017 at the Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort. You may register for this no-cost training by clicking on: [https://2017\\_native\\_american\\_veterans\\_summit.eventbrite.com](https://2017_native_american_veterans_summit.eventbrite.com). On-site registration will also be available and if you have questions or need additional information, don't hesitate to reach out to [Terry.Bentley@va.gov](mailto:Terry.Bentley@va.gov). Also happening in Washington State during this same time frame will be the National Indian Health Board's (NIHB) 34<sup>th</sup> Annual National Tribal Health Conference in Bellevue, WA. For more information or to register for this event, click on: <http://www.cvent.com/events/2017-national-tribal-health-conference/event-summary-be08625cbe0048709be75768565b43b9.aspx>. The NIHB conferences always provide a wealth of important information pertaining to Indian Health.

Looking towards the Southwest, on September 13-14, 2017, the White Mountain Apache Tribe will be hosting a Veterans Training Summit at the Hon-Dah Resort Conference Center. About a week later, on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, the San Carlos Apache Tribe will be hosting a Veterans Summit. For information on both Arizona events, please email [LoRae.Pawiki@va.gov](mailto:LoRae.Pawiki@va.gov). October is shaping up to be a particularly busy month and we're looking forward to supporting many events nationwide. On October 10, 2017, the Arizona Area Agency on Aging along with the Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. will be hosting two Veterans Benefits sessions; one from 9:15 to 10:30 and the second one from 10:45 to noon. Ms. Pawiki can be contacted for more details.

In the southern plains, on October 5-6, 2017, the Otoe-Missouria Inter-Tribal Veterans Stand Down will be held in Red Rock, Oklahoma. This is the fourth annual Inter-Tribal Veterans Stand Down held in Oklahoma. Different tribal leaders have initiated support for this collaborative event which includes service providers from Tribal Services Programs, the Indian Health Service, the VA, Department of Defense, State of Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Services Organizations and many others. Our new boss, VA Deputy Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs, Thayer Verschoor, (who hails from Arizona) is looking forward to attending and welcoming participants and volunteers. For more information about the Stand Down, reach out to Mary Culley at: [Mary.Culley@va.gov](mailto:Mary.Culley@va.gov).

Looking further eastward, on October 10-11, two of our OTGR team members, Mary Culley and Peter Vicaire, will be attending the United and Southeastern Tribes (USET) Annual Conference in Cherokee, North Carolina where they are scheduled to provide updates to the Veterans Committee. They are also currently working on an OTGR Veterans Training Summit to take place on October 12 in Cherokee, NC, right after USET. For more information, don't hesitate to reach out to either Mary or [Peter.Vicaire@va.gov](mailto:Peter.Vicaire@va.gov). A "Save the Date" flyer for the event can be found below in the newsletter.

As for highlights of the summer: Our OTGR team was involved in organizing and supporting four Veterans Training and/or Benefits outreach events (Gathering of Warriors hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Grand Ronde, OR; Veterans Training Summit hosted by the Nez Perce Tribe, Lewiston, ID; Native Veterans Summit hosted by the Reno Sparks Indian Colony, Reno, NV; and a Veterans Benefits Event, Omaha Tribe, Walthill, NE). Our team

---

also served as panelists presenting information on the VA Native American Direct and providing updates on Tribal HUD-VASH (Veterans Assisted Supportive Housing) program (along with HUD Officials) during the Annual Native American Indian Housing Conference held in Nashville, TN; coordinating presentations during the Society for American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) meeting held in Phoenix, AZ; supporting Veterans Camp Chaparral in Yakama, WA; attending and interviewing a Navajo Code Talker and his family during Navajo Code Talker Day (Window Rock, AZ); providing VA information during the IHS Partnership Conference (Denver CO), then following up with IHS to schedule a series of webinars focused on VA benefits; coordinating VA information for presentation to the HHS/CMS/ITU training held in Nashville, TN, and Danvers, MA; attending and supporting the National Gathering of American Indian Veterans (Cantigny Park, IL); touring and engaging in a briefing session between VHA officials, the gracious leadership and dedicated staff from the IHS Phoenix Indian Medical Center (this session provided insightful information about best practices as well as improving communication and coordination efforts between VHA and IHS Veteran patients in the Phoenix area).

Last but not least and certainly something ***important for tribal officials and Indian health leadership to keep on the radar is the outcome of the Veterans Health Administration Roundtable discussion(s) led by VA Deputy Undersecretary for Health – Community Care, Dr. Baligh Yehia.*** The session(s) will continue to engage tribes in discussions focused on next steps for the Reimbursement Agreements between VA and Tribal Health Programs. The first of these roundtables was held at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, AZ on July 12. If any of our readers have questions or recommendations about these roundtable sessions, please feel free to email me directly at [Stephanie.Birdwell@va.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Birdwell@va.gov).

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

Happy Reading,



**Stephanie Birdwell**



## Navajo Council supports Congressional bill to name U.S. Navy ship “USNS Navajo”



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL  
OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 28, 2017

### MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253  
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174  
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918  
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

### Council supports Congressional bill to name U.S. Navy ship “USNS Navajo”

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Wednesday, U.S. Sen. John McCain (R – AZ), chairman for the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Forces, and ranking committee member Jack Reed (D – RI), announced the completion of the committee’s markup of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, according to a release from Sen. McCain’s office.

The NDAA contains report language that would support the naming of a new class of Navy tug ships, beginning with the “USNS Navajo.” The U.S. Navy has had a longstanding tradition of naming Navy tug and salvage ships after Native American tribes.

In Nov. 2014, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council’s Naabik’iyáti’ Committee unanimously passed resolution NABIN-63-14, which urged the U.S. Navy to name a T-ATS Class Tug and Rescue-Salvage ship the “USNS Navajo.”

Speaker for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Navajo Nation Council LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) stated that the efforts of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council was vital in the ship-naming initiative, and that the current Council remains in full support for the proposed “USNS Navajo.”

“The Office of the Speaker issued letters requesting Congressional members to support the name designation through the Navajo Nation’s supporting resolution, and Council is very thankful that our voices were heard by our nation’s leaders,” said Speaker Bates.

The U.S. Navy will be decommissioning eight ships, four remaining T-ATF Powhatan Class fleet ocean tugs, and four Rescue-Salvage T-ARS Safeguard Class ships. The eight existing ships will be replaced with a single class of about eight or nine vessels to be designated as “T-ATS Tug and Rescue-Salvage” ships.

Speaker Bates expressed gratitude to Sen. McCain for advocating on behalf of the Navajo Nation and Acting Secretary of the Navy Sean Stackley for providing the name recommendation for consideration within the bill.





"With the diligent advocacy of Sen. McCain and Sec. Stackley, the Navajo Nation thanks them for their continued support. Without their efforts this initiative would not have been possible, and we are sincerely grateful for their assistance," stated Speaker Bates.

The Senate Committee voted unanimously today to pass the bill, which authorizes \$700 billion in funding for the U.S. Department of Defense and the national security programs of the U.S. Department of Energy. During the markup, 277 amendments were considered and adopted, and the legislation moves forward to the full senate for consideration.

###

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit [www.navajonationcouncil.org](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org) or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council



**Save The Date!**  
**11/11/2017**

The design competition for the National Native American Veterans Memorial opens Veterans Day 2017.

This will be an open, juried, two-phase design competition. Applicants will find more information and design guidelines [here](https://nmai.si.edu/nnavm/) [https://nmai.si.edu/nnavm/] on 11/11/2017. In the interest of fair and equal access, no phone calls or email inquiries regarding the application process will be responded to at this time.



May 17, 2016

Greetings,

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

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

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

**Administrative Note:**

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

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

Sincerely,

*Martin Duarte*

Martin Duarte  
Assistant Program Director/ Outreach

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



## Alaska Natives honored for protecting territory during WWII

Here's an [article](#) by Rachel D'Oro that ran in the Washington Post on May 25, 2017

Officials on Friday posthumously honored more than a dozen members of a largely Alaska Native citizen militia who protected the U.S. territory from the threat of Japanese invasion during World War II, bringing closure to their families for a service that went unrecognized for decades. Gov. Bill Walker and state veterans affairs officials presented Army discharge papers to the relatives of 16 deceased members of the Alaska Territorial Guard during a ceremony ahead of Memorial Day weekend. The event was an emotional time for Rebecca Czyz, the niece of militia member and Inupiat Eskimo sharpshooter Laura Beltz Wright, who was among just 23 women in the 6,400-member unit.

Czyz grew up with her aunt, who died in 1996. She said Wright was an adventurous woman who could outshoot most. She once ran mail by dog sled between villages and later owned a parka shop in Anchorage. She once told her niece that she would be fine with just a tent and a frying pan. Czyz knew her aunt had served in the Territorial Guard but never paid much attention to that part of her life. She became more interested as she got older, and seeing the discharge papers gave her closure, Czyz said.

"I just felt very proud," she said. "It would have been an honor for her to be here, but at least her family can accept this award for her." Also recognized was Jay B. Mallott, father of Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott, who could not make the event after his flight was canceled. The lieutenant governor's son, Ben Mallott, received his grandfather's papers. "It feels pretty good to have his service honored and recognized," he said.

Alaska was still 17 years away from statehood when the militia formed in 1942 after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and points along Alaska's Aleutian Islands. Nicknamed Uncle Sam's Men and Eskimo Scouts, the volunteer members stepped in to watch over the 586,000-square-mile territory, which was vulnerable to further attack with the National Guard pressed into federal service. And they did it without pay.

The militia disbanded with little fanfare in 1947, almost two years after the war ended. But members were not formally recognized by the Army as military veterans until 2004. Nearly 2,600 discharge papers have been issued since then by the Army, which has worked with the state Department of Veterans and Military Affairs to obtain the documents. Officials at Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage plan to make the ceremony a yearly event as more papers are issued. Mercedes Angerman, deputy director of the state military agency, said obtaining the discharge papers is a lengthy and sometimes challenging process. Surviving relatives can have different last names than the Territorial Guard members. Sometimes families don't realize their relative served in the unit or they don't know the member's date of birth, which is required. "Sometimes it's like catching the wind," Angerman said. She said the goal is to ultimately obtain a discharge for every member. Once families receive the documents, they qualify for a free headstone for the militia members from the National Cemetery Administration.



## Oregon Senate Bill 80 Passes ~ Aid and Assistance to Native American Veterans



Here's [some info](#) on a recent (June 22, 2017) bill that passed in the Oregon Senate. It directs ODVA to provide aid and assistance to federally recognized tribes in Oregon regarding programs/service for Native American veterans and accreditation of tribal veteran representatives. It also calls for tribal consultation.

79th OREGON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY--2017 Regular Session

### A-Engrossed Senate Bill 80

Ordered by the House May 15  
Including House Amendments dated May 15

Printed pursuant to Senate Interim Rule 213.28 by order of the President of the Senate in conformance with pre-session filing rules, indicating neither advocacy nor opposition on the part of the President (at the request of Governor Kate Brown for Department of Veterans' Affairs)

#### SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure.

Directs Director of Veterans' Affairs to provide aid and assistance to federally recognized Indian tribes in Oregon with regard to programs of service for Native American veterans and accreditation of federal tribal veterans representatives. **Requires consultation with appropriate tribal officials and members.**

#### A BILL FOR AN ACT

Relating to assistance to veterans who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Whereas the nine federally recognized Indian tribes in Oregon are the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Burns-Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians, Confederated Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Tribes, Klamath Tribe and Coquille Tribe; and

Whereas throughout America's history to the present day, Native Americans have served and continue to serve in the United States armed services at a higher rate than any other ethnic group; and

Whereas during World War II, the entire population of Native Americans in the United States was less than 350,000, of which 44,000 served in the armed services; and

Whereas more than 22,000 Native Americans have served since September 11, 2001, or are currently serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq) or Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan); and

Whereas Native Americans have a higher concentration of active female service members than any other ethnic group, and female service members account for 20 percent of active Native American service members, compared to 15 percent for all other ethnic groups; and

Whereas according to the 2010 federal decennial census, the estimated population of Native Americans in Oregon is 109,223, the population of Native American veterans in Oregon as of 2014 is 3,856 and veterans constitute approximately 3.5 percent of all Native Americans in Oregon; and

Whereas the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the federally recognized Indian tribes in Oregon have forged a partnership to assist Native American veterans; and

Whereas the State of Oregon and the Department of Veterans' Affairs recognize and honor the service and sacrifice of Native American veterans; now, therefore,

**Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:**

**SECTION 1.** (1) In recognition and honor of the service and sacrifice of Oregon veterans

**NOTE:** Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter [*italic and bracketed*] is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

LC 500

A-Eng. SB 80



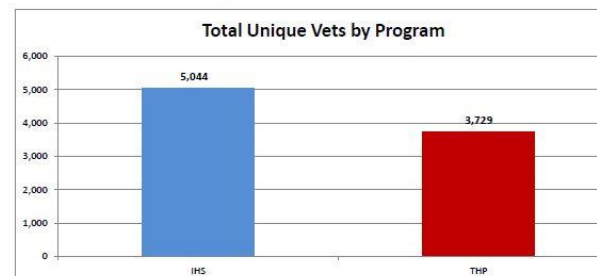
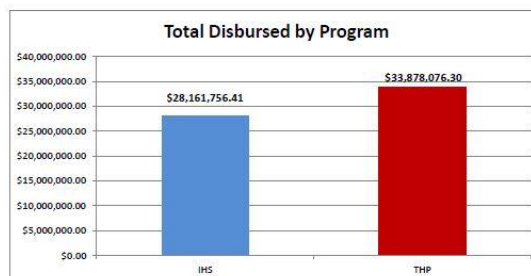
1 who are Native Americans, the Director of Veterans' Affairs shall provide aid and assistance  
2 to federally recognized Indian tribes in Oregon with regard to:  
3 (a) Programs of service for Native American veterans overseen by the tribes; and  
4 (b) Accreditation of tribal veterans representatives by the Office of General Counsel in  
5 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.  
6 (2) Prior to providing aid and assistance under subsection (1) of this section, the director  
7 shall ensure that employees, agents and representatives of the Department of Veterans' Af-  
8 fairs who provide aid and assistance to a tribe consult with appropriate officials and mem-  
9 bers of the tribe as to the needs of Native American veterans within the tribe, and approach  
10 the provision of aid and assistance to the tribe with an understanding of cultural values and  
11 practices regarding Native American veterans who are members of the tribe.  
12



## VA Reimburses over \$62 Million to IHS and Tribal Health Programs

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

National Data				
Total Disbursement for entire IHS/THP Program - Agmt Date to FYTD	Total Disbursement by Program - Agmt Date to FYTD			Total Unique Veterans for entire IHS/THP to FYTD
\$62,043,909.71	Program	Total Disbursed	Total Unique Vets	8,590
	IHS	\$28,161,756.41	5,044	
	THP	\$33,878,076.30	3,729	
Total Disbursement - Out of System Ret repayments (only)	Total Disbursement of Out of System Ret repayments (only) - <i>payments</i> <i>are included in above totals</i>			Total Unique Veterans - Out of System R
\$19,565.23	Program	Total Disbursed	Total Unique Vets	721
	IHS	\$15,488.23	638	
	THP	\$0.00	0	







## Solar Homecoming at Pine Ridge Reservation ~ Veteran Receives Solar Panels

Here's an [article](#) from Grid Alternatives which ran on July 27, 2017.

When most high school students picture their perfect homecoming, it usually involves limousines, corsages, and the like. But for Lina Krueck, “homecoming” had a different, more impactful connotation. Born on the Pine Ridge reservation, the high school student recently returned to work with GRID’s Tribal program to install a grid-tied solar system for a veteran homeowner. Lina, who has not visited Pine Ridge since infancy, was welcomed warmly by the tribal elders upon her return.

“The people I met were incredible.” said Lina. “I felt so at home, and I felt a real connection with people I had never even met before. It was a very special trip for me. I’ve never felt like a part of a community the same way I did while I was there on Pine Ridge. I’m so happy that I had this opportunity!”

The project was made possible through a partnership with Oglala Sioux Lakota Housing (OSLH) and Ecological Action, a high school club from Denver, CO that focuses on sustainability and renewable energy. The high school students held fundraisers to help offset the cost of the system and visited the GRID Colorado office to participate in special solar photovoltaic workshops from the tribal team leading up to the installation. For many of the students, it was their first time to the Great Plains and visiting one of the seven sub-tribes that make up the Great Sioux Nation. The students worked hard alongside community members to bring the solar array to life. According to Jeff Boyce, the faculty leader of Ecological Action, it was a life changing experience for many of the students. Homeowner Loran Conquering Bear was grateful to receive the system. He raved about GRID’s work and the impact energy efficiency could have on the families at Pine Ridge, many of whom struggle to pay their bills.

“I think this project is awesome with the cost savings because the majority of everyone’s income here is spent on propane and electricity, and in winter time it’s harder because they have to pay sometimes half their income. I’m on dialysis and I have to travel 400 miles a week to get treatment, and paying for gas is a lot. Our money is really budgeted, and getting this help on our electricity bills will really help.”

Mr. Conquering Bear is part of the largest population of veterans on a reservation, and sees the struggles that many of his neighbors have finding employment. But he was encouraged by the job training component of GRID’s work. “I think it’s awesome you guys are training people to do [solar], there aren’t many prospects here, and there’s a lot of people that want jobs.”



## Senator Udall Introduces Bill to Combat Native American Veteran Homelessness

Here's a [press release](#) from Senator Tom Udall's website from June 14, 2017.

Bipartisan legislation would authorize critical tribal housing initiative

**WASHINGTON** — U.S. Senator Tom Udall joined Senators Jon Tester (D-Mont.), John Hoeven (R-N.D.), and Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) in introducing bipartisan legislation to combat homelessness and improve direct support services for Native American veterans. Hoeven and Udall are the chairman and vice-chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. Tester and Isakson are the ranking member and chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

The legislation, the Tribal HUD-VASH Act would formally authorize a joint Tribal housing initiative between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program, which provides rental and housing assistance to homeless and at-risk homeless veterans in Indian Country.

Only 26 of the 567 federally recognized Native American Tribes received HUD-VASH vouchers under the current Tribal HUD-VASH demonstration, yet Native Americans serve in the military at a higher percentage than any ethnic demographic in the United States.

"Tribal members in New Mexico and throughout the nation have a proud history of military service, and they have served our nation with honor and distinction. Unfortunately, research from HUD and the VA shows that Native veterans are disproportionately affected by homelessness," Udall said. "It is our solemn duty to ensure Native veterans have the services they have earned when they return home, including safe and quality housing. That's why our bill tackles this unacceptable reality head-on by authorizing the Tribal HUD-VASH Program to ensure that critical housing and support services are available to homeless veterans living on or near Tribal lands. I am proud to join my colleagues on both the Senate Indian Affairs Committee and the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to introduce this bipartisan bill, and I look forward to working with them to get it passed by the full Senate." "Every day that Native American veterans struggle with homelessness is a day that we have failed to uphold this country's promise to our veterans," Tester said. "It is critical that these resources are available for every person who bravely served our nation, and that includes the veterans in Indian Country."

"No veteran, including Tribal veterans, should face homelessness," said Hoeven.



“This legislation will help ensure that Native Americans who courageously served our country have access to safe and quality housing. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate to quickly pass this bipartisan bill.”

“No veteran should be without a home,” said Isakson. “This bipartisan legislation will help continue efforts to provide housing and supportive services to Native American veterans.”

HUD-VASH has supported homeless veterans since 2008 but prior to 2015, Native American tribes and tribal housing authorities were unable to access HUD-VASH funds. Udall joined Tester to help pass legislation that required HUD and the VA to set up a pilot program to provide Native American tribes entry into the HUD-VASH program — that pilot expired last year. The Tribal HUD-VASH Act would authorize the program and ensure that at least 5 percent of all HUD-VASH vouchers are set aside for Native American Tribes and Tribal housing authorities to address veteran homelessness. The bill would also ensure that HUD and the VA modify the initiative through Tribal consultation to better guide available resources to homeless Native American veterans.

In addition, the bill directs the Indian Health Service to provide any assistance requested by HUD or the VA to implement the initiative, and directs HUD, the VA, and the Indian Health Service to conduct a review of the initiative every five years. The Senate Indian Affairs Committee heard testimony on the Tribal HUD-VASH Act yesterday.

## Homeless veterans now have a place they can call home through HUD-VASH program

This article ran in the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribal Tribune on August 18, 2017



During the 2015 annual convention of the National Congress of American Indians, then HUD Secretary Julian Castro announced a new demonstration program for Native American Veterans. The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program combines Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless Veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes were one 26 tribes selected to be a part of the HUD-VASH program, and though the process has been long and sometimes unbearable, three Cheyenne & Arapaho tribal veterans now have a place to call home ... and more are in the process of being approved.

Murray “Sue” Whiteshield, Robert Blackwolf and John Decker know when the rains,





snow and ice come, they will be safe, warm and protected in their own homes. Whiteshield now resides in El Reno, Okla., and Blackwolf and Decker both live at the Clinton Independent Living Center ... all through the HUD-VASH program. "For me, we were just hoping to get into a decent place with a roof over our heads where we could take care of each other and not have to live in a roach infested hotel, on the streets, or continue living in our truck," Whiteshield said.

Whiteshield first heard of the HUD-VASH program after becoming homeless in Oklahoma City and transitioning to El Reno. "It was 2016 and I started going to the meetings because I had heard Russell was in charge of the new tribal VA program. I came out here to meet Russell and he invited me to come to the next regular meeting and that's where I found out about the details of the program," she said.

At that meeting Whiteshield met Carissa Dobrinski from the Tribal HUD-VASH program. "During the meeting Russell kept pointing to this lady, I didn't know what he was pointing at, then after the meeting he said, 'this is the lady I wanted you to meet because she's the lady in charge of the new program called HUD-VASH, helping homeless and near homeless veterans.' And I believe that was in November 2016," Whiteshield said.

Whiteshield immediately applied, and within a couple of weeks was approved after meeting all the criteria set forth in the program. Though a fast approval, the wait for a home would prove to be a lot longer. "My VA check is only \$486 a month and because of my identity theft case a few years back and never being able to get that straightened out, I got a ruling that I was well below the poverty level from HUD-VASH like the third week in November 2016, but I almost gave up on them because I didn't get a home until March 2017," Whiteshield said. But the wait, though long, was certainly worth it for Whiteshield. After meeting all the criteria, doing a walk through in the home to approve it for the HUD-VASH, Whiteshield and her partner moved into their new home and off the streets.

"We used to take turns sleeping in the back of the truck. I would lay back there and get some rest, then we would switch places. We would find parks with grills to cook our food, it was no way to live, but what else could we do? We are both elderly. I didn't know it would take so long, sometimes it seemed like forever and I was about to give up," Whiteshield said. "But now we are in a home where I can relax and work on my bead work and when the weather is bad it's nice to be in a place that is dry and warm. I want to thank Carissa with HUD-VASH, Bill Tall Bear at Housing and the governor of the C&A tribes for going ahead and signing my approval money for my rent through the HUD-VASH program."

## Veterans questions get answered at Veterans Training Summit

Here's an article by Kaila Lafferty from KLEW (CBS-3)



Local veterans, getting their questions answered and their voices heard. Thursday was day-two in a three-day summit for local veterans. The veterans training summit's goal is to bring together the three branches of veterans' affairs and other agencies to provide information to local veterans about their benefits and other VA services. The summit is open to all veterans and links them to experts from various fields.



Terry Bentley works with the Office of Tribal Government Relations, and said native veterans have unique challenges when it comes to care under the VA. Bentley said, "Native veterans serve in higher numbers than other ethnicities per capita. So while Native veterans may be smaller numbers in general in the United States, they serve in higher numbers in every war to this date. And yet they seek VA services the least"



Bentley said their partnership with the Nez Perce Tribe here in our area helps them reach a greater number of those native veterans. The summit includes a mobile health unit so participants can get a check-up on the spot.



Kelly Golden is a blind rehabilitation specialist who knows what it's like for veterans with vision problems. "There's a lot of elderly people in the rural areas and when you have a vision impairment you may lose your ability to drive, so with my program I go into their homes and teach them in their homes, in their environment and also out in the community where they're actually functioning," said Golden.

## Summit marks fifth year of helping veterans obtain benefits



Here's an [article](#) by Dean Rhodes that ran on July 10, 2017 in "Smoke Signals," a news source for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

Willamina resident Roberta Davis is living proof that Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno's oft-stated contention -- "If it helps one veteran, then it's worth it" -- regarding the annual Veterans Summit is true. If it wasn't for the 2016 Veterans Summit, Davis, an Army veteran, probably would never have summoned the courage to apply for military sexual trauma benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

While attending her second Veterans Summit last year, Davis sat in on a female Healing Circle that was facilitated by Elizabeth Estabrooks, Women Veterans coordinator with the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs, and Air Force veteran Linda Woods, who is a summit regular.

After listening to the other female veterans share stories of sexual harassment while serving in the military, Davis shared her story of being sexually abused by her commanding officer and executive commanding officer while serving in the Army from 1977 through '80. "I wouldn't apply for my MST benefits until last year," Davis said on Friday, July 7, the second day of the fifth annual Veterans Summit held at Uyxat Powwow Grounds. "It was very hard to come to terms with it after decades and the system that they use ... they interview you, but it's like an interrogation. "I put this off for years and years knowing that I had a right to do it, but I wasn't going to go through the emotional part. But being here, with the Healing Circle, I could actually do it."

Estabrooks accompanied Davis when she went to Veterans Affairs and endured the pension and compensation interview. The result? She was ruled 70 percent disabled for military sexual trauma and now receives a monthly \$1,300 check from Veterans Affairs. But the money is nowhere near as important as the principle to Davis.





"I have managed to survive through something that most men would never have survived through, spending two years of being abused like that," Davis said. "I come here and it just charges me and fires me up. ... I'm 60 years old. This happened in my 20s. I thought I got it under control and I never did. It was my personal shot back at those guys who did it."

Davis now handles military sexual trauma claims as the Veterans Service Officer for the Yamhill County Disabled American Veterans chapter. An estimated two-thirds of women who have served in the Army have endured some degree of sexual trauma, she said.

"I know that if it wasn't for Linda (Woods) and this last year, I never would have filed," Davis said. "I never would have healed or started healing. It changed my life."

Leno, a Vietnam War-era Marine Corps veteran, gave a welcoming speech when the Veterans Summit opened for the fifth time at 1:15 p.m. Thursday, July 6. "You can't wait until a veteran becomes a statistic," Leno said. "You got to help them now, not later."

Other welcoming speeches were delivered by Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Director Cameron Smith, Veterans Affairs Office of Tribal Government Relations Specialist Terry Bentley and Portland Veterans Affairs Health Care System Director Michael Fisher.

"The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde are truly committed to helping veterans and their family members," Bentley said. "My hat's off to the council, Chairman Leno ... thank you for allowing us to be here at this wonderful place of honor to take care of veterans and their families."

Fisher said David Shulkin, incoming director of Veterans Affairs under the Trump administration, has five priorities – greater health care choices for veterans, modernization of systems, focusing resources, suicide prevention and improved timeliness. "Twenty veterans a day commit suicide," Fisher said. "Six of those are in our VA system and 14 of those are not. We have to locate those people and provide services and connect them to some people who can help them."

Other Tribal Council members who attended the two-day summit included Secretary Jon A. George, Jack Giffen Jr., Chris Mercier, Tonya Gleason-Shepek, Denise Harvey and Brenda Tuomi. Navy veteran Nick Sixkiller (Oklahoma Cherokee) performed the master of ceremonies duties and the colors were posted by the Grand Ronde Honor Guard – Raymond Petite, Al Miller, Richard VanAtta, Dennis Kleffner and Daniel Helfrich. Helfrich also gave the blessing to open the Thursday afternoon session.

Charlie Tailfeathers (Cree/Blackfeet), Woods (Odawa) and Iraqi War veteran John Courtney (Warm Springs) performed the solemn prisoner-of-war ceremony before Crystal Purdy, a funeral director from Lincoln Memorial Park & Funeral Home in Happy Valley, spoke about helping veterans reconnect with civilian life. "There is no way to erase experience," Purdy said. "Returning veterans need to find a sense of purpose again. ... Be kind, give a crap and be selfless."

Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Veterans Services Director Mitch Sparks and Training Coordinator Joe Glover delved into the intricacies of applying to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for disability payments and pension eligibility. Glover distributed a 46-page packet that detailed how to apply to Veterans Affairs for benefits and

---

discussed presumptive conditions – medical problems Veterans Affairs will automatically cover for military personnel who served in combat areas within specified dates.



Portland Veterans Affairs Benefits Office Assistant Director Michael Rohrbach said that events like the Grand Ronde Veterans Summit are helping get the word out regarding veterans benefits and that they are seeing an increase in applications.



As in previous summits, the outer edge of the Uyxat Powwow Grounds' arbor was occupied by information tables that included the Department of Veterans Affairs Crisis Line, Department of Justice's Bureau of Prisons, Military Helpline, Social Security Administration, National Association for Black Veterans and the Veterans Center mobile unit.

The Tribal Mobile Clinic and Diabetes Education recreational vehicle also was present. Health & Wellness Clinic Dental Assistant Tammy Baird and Dental Hygienist Sheila Blacketer signed veterans up for dental and blood pressure checks.

Tribal Nutrition Program Manager Kristy Criss-Lawson and her staff served continental breakfasts, lunches and dinners in the meal tent and a cultural sharing night was held in achaf-hammi, the Tribal plankhouse, on Thursday. Cultural Resources employees Bobby Mercier, Jordan Mercier and Brian Krehbiel performed the blessing song to open the Friday session and Veterans Special Event Board Chair Steve Bobb Sr. gave a welcoming speech.

Estabrooks, an Army veteran, discussed the "I Am Not Invisible" campaign she created in association with Portland State University. Twenty-two posters of female veterans from Oregon were created as an awareness raising campaign that not all veterans are men. The posters and the women's stories can be viewed on the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs website at [www.iani.oregondva.com](http://www.iani.oregondva.com). "We don't talk about women veterans enough," Estabrooks said about the white male-dominated culture of the military.

Courtney, who served a year in Iraq from 2005-06 as an Army Ranger, also discussed post-traumatic stress disorder that occurred after he returned to Colorado following a 12-hour firefight in Baqubah. Undiagnosed PTSD led to a drinking problem and eventual dissolution of his marriage before he returned to the Warm Springs Reservation and received counseling. Woods also discussed her experiences as a woman warrior who enlisted in the Air Force in the 1960s as she has done at previous summits. Friday afternoon workshops and activities included a healing and self-care village, mental health first aid, crafts and traditional jewelry making, and continued staffing of the many information and resource booths.

The summit concluded with separate sharing circles for male and female veterans and a forgiveness ceremony led by Native Wellness Institute Executive Director Jillene Joseph. Social Services Director Dana Ainam, who helped check in summit attendees, said 55 veterans registered and 83 people attended, including presenters and people who staffed the information tables and booths. The Veterans Summit was sponsored by the Gresham-based Native Wellness Institute, the Grand Ronde Tribe and Veterans Affairs' Office of Tribal Government Relations.



## Disabled and Low-Income Veterans Housing Rehabilitation and Modification Pilot Program: Solicitation of Comments on Program Design

**Agency:** Office of the Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development, HUD.

**Action:** Advance notice and request for comments.

**Summary:** This notice announces HUD's intention to develop a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the Disabled and Low-Income Veterans Housing Rehabilitation and Modification Pilot Program, which was authorized by the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 and funded by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016. The NOFA will announce the availability of up to \$5.7 million to be competitively awarded through grants of up to \$1 million each. The NOFA will also establish the applicable program requirements and selection criteria. HUD is seeking input from interested parties and stakeholders to inform its development of the Program so that the funds are used efficiently and fulfill the statutory purpose of addressing the housing needs of veterans who have disabilities and/or are low-income. This notice is not a solicitation of applications for the Program.

**Comments Due Date:** September 11, 2017.

**Addresses:** Electronic responses are preferred and should be addressed to: [rhed@hud.gov](mailto:rhed@hud.gov). Written comments may also be submitted to the Office of Rural Housing and Economic Development, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh St. SW., Room 7240, Washington, DC 20410.

**For Further Information Contact:**

Sylvia Y. Purvis

Senior Community Planning and Development Specialist

Office of Rural Housing and Economic Development

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

451 Seventh Street SW., Room 7240

Washington, DC 20410-7000

Telephone 1-877-787-2526 (this is a toll-free number) or

1-202-708-2290 (this is not a toll-free number).

Persons with speech or hearing impairments may access this number via TTY by calling the toll-free Federal Information Service at 1-800-877-8339

[View the Federal register notice announcing the solicitation of comments](#)



# VA DIRECT HOME LOANS FOR NATIVE AMERICANS LIVING ON TRUST LAND

Helping You Use the Benefits You've Earned



## How to Apply for a Loan

- Check whether your tribal organization has a Memorandum of Understanding with VA to participate in the program.
- Log on to [www.eBenefits.va.gov](http://www.eBenefits.va.gov) to apply for a Certificate of Eligibility or submit a paper application (VA Form 26-1880) to the Atlanta Eligibility Center.
- Contact your local VA Regional Loan Center to learn more.
- Find a home and sign a purchase agreement or contract with a homebuilder.

## NADL Program Benefits

- No downpayment
- No private mortgage insurance
- Low fixed interest rate
- Low closing costs
- Up to \$417,000 in most areas, more in high-cost areas such as Alaska and Hawaii
- Reusable benefit



For more information, visit  
[www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/nadl.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/nadl.asp)  
or call 1-877-827-3702.



## OTGR Eastern Region

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



Office of  
Tribal Government  
Relations



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
TRIBAL VETERANS TRAINING SUMMIT

# SAVE THE DATE

**OCTOBER 12, 2017**

CHEROKEE, NC



For more information, contact:  
Mary.Culley@va.gov or Peter.Vicaire@va.gov

## OTGR Southern Plains Region

(KS; OK; TX)

Oklahoma City Vet Center *(new groups starting)*  
6804 N. Robinson Avenue, Oklahoma City OK 73116  
Office: (405) 456-5184

### Putting It All Together Group

**Starts:** May 8<sup>th</sup>

**Meets:**  
1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Friday, 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Purpose:** These groups will provide a venue for Veteran to practice, participate and identify in a safe and diverse (male/female) environment skills /techniques to Symptom Management, effective Communication, and re-enforcement of behaviors essential to increasing Social skills.

**Contact:** J.B. Hall Sr., MA, LADC, DBAE, Vet Center Director



### Native American Combat Veterans Group

**Starts:** May 15<sup>th</sup>

**Meets:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of every month  
**Time:** 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

**Purpose:** This group provides the opportunity for Native American combat veterans to transform the way PTSD impacts their life.

**Contact:** Billy Grimes, Readjustment Counselor



### Supportive Care Group

**Starts:** May 17<sup>th</sup>

**Meets:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month  
**Time:** 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**Purpose:** This group focuses on helping new veterans and their families navigate the systems of care for veterans and their families.

**Contact:** Erica Seyfert, Readjustment and Family Therapist, Billy Grimes, Readjustment Counselor or Bill Brown, Veterans Outreach Specialist



### Anger Group (12 week session)

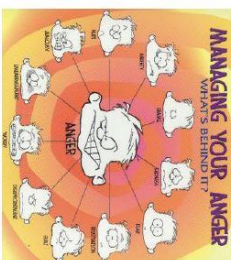
**Starts:** Soon

**Meets:** 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month (unless otherwise noted)

**Time:** 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

**Purpose:** To help veterans with PTSD deal with the high levels of anger they may feel.

**Contact:** Valerie Tucker, LCSW, BCD, Readjustment Therapist



**Eligibility:** The veteran must be an active client at the Vet Center in order to participate

If you have any questions, please contact the counselor listed at (405) 456-5184

In addition, groups may be canceled during inclement weather. Please call ahead of time.



615 E CORPORATION ST.  
HENRYETTA, OK 74437  
Ph.: 918.549.2620  
[MuscogeeNation-nsn.gov](http://MuscogeeNation-nsn.gov)

The Reintegration Program  
is here to help you start a  
new life and optimize your  
ability to live independently  
with pride and dignity.

For more info and to apply  
contact:

Deana Votra, Coordinator  
[dvotra@mcn-nsn.gov](mailto:dvotra@mcn-nsn.gov)  
Tacia Berryhill  
[tberryhill@mcn-nsn.gov](mailto:tberryhill@mcn-nsn.gov)



Muscogee (Creek) Nation Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is looking for any Native American Veterans whom are eligible for services. Being a program through the Department of Labor; interested participants would need to be able, willing and capable of entering the Workforce. The recipient must be a Veteran with any discharge other than Dis-honorable and be homeless or at risk of homelessness.

If you yourself or you know of someone who would benefit from  
our services please contact us at 918-549-2620. MVTO

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:**  
**HOMELESS OR AT-RISK OF HOMELESSNESS**  
**ENROLLED MEMBER OF THE MUSCOGEE**  
**(CREEK) NATION OR ANOTHER**  
**FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBE**  
**MUST RESIDE IN THE MUSCOGEE (CREEK)**  
**JURISDICTION**

- Behavioral Health Counseling
- Medical Health Referrals
- Job Skills Training
- Vocational Training
- Essential needs
- Housing Referrals
- Veterans benefits Referrals
- Tribal Benefits Referrals
- Creation of Reintegration service plan and an Employment Service Plan created by a team of case workers, behavioral health experts, job coaches, veteran affair specialists, teachers, and job-site training supervisors.





# **Tulsa Vet Center Open House Benefit Day**

The Tulsa Vet Center recognizes the need to bring a one-stop shop to all Veterans and their families to help alleviate the need to run from one resource to the other. Come out and meet with Federal, State, and Community Veteran Resources!



**September 9, 2017 10 AM-3PM**  
**14002 E 21st St, Tulsa, OK 74134**  
**Eastland Mall (South East Entrance)**

Event Sponsored by the AVMC Tulsa Chapter

**\*Bring a COPY DD214/WD 5355\***

# FREE for Homeless Veterans 2017 SOONER STAND DOWN

Friday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017

6:30 AM – 3:00 PM

Services and Agencies available to  
Veterans beginning at 8:00 AM

1729 NW 3rd, Oklahoma City, OK  
(Corner of NW 3rd and Virginia)

If you are a homeless Veteran in need, consider attending this program.

*Immediate housing options are available the day of the Stand Down.  
Please contact Christine Cleary for more information.*

Other opportunities and assistance are being offered by Veterans Organizations, Federal,  
State and Local Agencies, Churches, and Volunteers.

#### Services Offered:

- Emergency Shelter Assistance
- Employment Assistance
- Haircuts/Styling
- Medical Screening & Referrals
- Drug & Alcohol Treatment Information
- Help Accessing VA Benefits and Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Legal Assistance
- Dental Screening
- Native American-Specific Services
- Women Veteran-Specific Services

#### Items Offered:

- Breakfast and Lunch Will Be Served
- Non-Perishable Food Items
- Personal Care Items
- Duffel Bags, Boots

For more information call 405-456-1710 or email [christine.cleary@va.gov](mailto:christine.cleary@va.gov)



# Military Resource Fair

Saturday,  
September 16  
10 am to 2 pm

A variety of veterans' service organizations will be on hand to help veterans, both current and past, and their families connect to the resources they want, need, and deserve.



**Moore Public Library**

225 South Howard | Moore, Oklahoma 73160 | 405-793-5100 | [pioneerlibrarysystem.org/calendar](https://pioneerlibrarysystem.org/calendar)



# Otoe-Missouria Intertribal Veterans Stand Down



Friday, October 6, 2017  
Time: 0900-1500  
7 Clans Paradise Casino  
7500 HWY 177, Red Rock, OK



## FREE SERVICES AVAILABLE

Veteran Benefits  
VA Healthcare  
Clothing  
Meal  
Haircuts

Employment Assistance  
State Services  
Housing  
Substance Abuse Services  
Legal Services

*Served in the Military in ANY Capacity?  
Please attend*

Bring your DD-214 and any documents needed for your claim

*Widows and Spouses*  
please bring copy of marriage license, death certificate and DD-214

Transportation Available throughout Oklahoma  
Call 580-304-3185

405-456-3876 - For Veteran Service Info  
580-723-4466 ext 217 - For General Event Info



## OTGR Southwest Region

(AZ; CO; NM; UT)








### VETERANS TRAINING SUMMIT

#### Hon-Dah Conference Center

#### Pinetop, AZ



**Office of  
Tribal Government  
Relations**



**WOUNDED WARRIORS  
FAMILY SUPPORT**  
WOUNDEDWARRIORSFAMILYUPPORT.ORG



**NATIONAL  
NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
VETERANS  
MEMORIAL**

**WELCOME ALL VETERANS and FAMILY**

**FREE REGISTRATION** on site or at

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/veterans-summit-hon-dah-tickets-37390004510>

- VHA Health Care Benefits
- AZ Dept of Veterans Services
- VBA Survivor Benefits
- VHA Caregiver Support
- USDA Rural Development
- Veterans Services Officers Claims Agents
- Military Surplus
- Veterans Cemetery Benefits

- VHA Women Veterans Health
- US SBA Veteran & Native Owned Small Business
- VHA PTSD
- Wounded Warriors Family Support
- NMAI Veterans Memorial
- OVC - O'odham Veterans
- VBA Special Adapted Housing & VHA Special Home Adaptation

SEPT 13, 2017, Wednesday, 7:30 - 5:00; SEPT 14, 2017, Thursday 7:30 - 4:00

Hon-Dah Resort | 777 Hwy 260 | Pinetop, AZ 85035 | Phone 800-929-8744

(Summit room rate: \$69 + tax) use "Summit" for rate

Contact Dennis Faden 928.594.0273 or Lorae Pawiki 928.776.5306

[d.faden@Hotmail.com](mailto:d.faden@Hotmail.com) or [lorae9.Pawiki@va.gov](mailto:lorae9.Pawiki@va.gov)



<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/veterans-summit-hon-dah-tickets-37390004510>







REGISTER

## OTGR Western Region

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

### *"It's All About Us"* **2017 Women Veterans Summit**

**September 16, 2017**  
**Lynnwood Convention Center**  
**3711 196th St. SW, Lynnwood, WA**



*"It's All About Us"*  
.... Our self awareness  
..... Our self love  
.... Our self confidence  
*It's time to be good to ourselves!*

**REGISTER:** [www.eventbrite.com/e/2017-women-veterans-summit-tickets-33634142626](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/2017-women-veterans-summit-tickets-33634142626)

**POC:** [LizaN@dva.wa.gov](mailto:LizaN@dva.wa.gov)





WASHINGTON STATE  
NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS SUMMIT AGENDA  
Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort  
15347 Suquamish Way NE, Suquamish, Washington  
Salmon Hall  
September 26-27, 2017

DAY 1—TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2017

7:30 a.m.

**Registration on-site**

Advance registration available at

[https://2017\\_native\\_american\\_veterans\\_summit.eventbrite.com](https://2017_native_american_veterans_summit.eventbrite.com)

8:30 a.m.-9:15 a.m.

**Administrative Remarks:** Steve Gill, Veteran Services Administrator, WA DVA

**Welcome Address:** Chairman Leonard Forsman, Suquamish Tribe

**Post Colors:** Suquamish Color Guard

**Invocation:** TBD-Tribal Elder

**Greetings Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs Director:** Alfie Alvarado-Ramos

9:15 a.m.-9:30 a.m.

**Discuss Day 1 Goals:** Steve Gill, Veteran Services Administrator, WA DVA

**VA Office of Tribal Government Relations Update:** Terry Bentley, Tribal Government Relations Specialist, Pacific District

9:30 a.m.-9:45 a.m.

**Update/Welcome from the Seattle Regional Office Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA):**

Pritz Navaratnasingam, Director

10:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m. BREAK

10:15 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

**Update/Welcome from the VA Puget Sound Healthcare System (VHA):** Michael Tadych, FACHE, Director

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**VA 101 –Overview- Understanding VA Eligibility & Health Care Benefits**

Sean Price, Chief Eligibility & Enrollment, VA Puget Sound Health Care System

11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

**VA Service Officer Basics – Understanding Benefits**

Rob Hard, VBA Seattle Regional Office

- Who is a Veteran?
- Basic qualifications and types of discharges
- Fully developed claim vs. Standard claim
- Developing medical evidence in support of claim (Nexus)



WASHINGTON STATE  
NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS SUMMIT AGENDA  
Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort  
15347 Suquamish Way NE, Suquamish, Washington  
Salmon Hall  
September 26-27, 2017

DAY 1— CONTINUED

12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m. LUNCH provided by Washington State Department of Veterans Services  
Luncheon Program: Internships for Veterans in National Resources and Agriculture  
Jason Alves/Jeremy Grisham, Veterans Conservation Corps, WA DVA

1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.

**Survivor Claims and Benefits**

Rob Hard, VBA Seattle Regional Office

- What is Dependency Indemnity Compensation?
- What is death pension?
- What are burial benefits?
- What are accrued benefits?

2:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

**Special Claims- Presumptive Conditions**

Jacob Liddell, VBA Seattle Regional Office

- Agent Orange
- Gulf War
- Camp Lejeune
- Atomic Veterans

3:30 p.m.-3:45 p.m. BREAK

3:45 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

**Non-Service Connected Pensions & Aid and Attendance**

Rob Hard, VBA Seattle Regional Office

4:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

**Role of Tribal Veteran Representative/Tribal Veteran Service Officer**

Steve Gill, Lavada Anderson and Terry Bentley

- New rule 38.CFR 14.628(b)(2)
- How does it impact Tribes?

5:00pm – ADJOURN

6:00PM – CULTURAL NIGHT – DANCING & CLAM BAKE



WASHINGTON STATE  
NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS SUMMIT AGENDA  
Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort  
15347 Suquamish Way NE, Suquamish, Washington  
Salmon Hall  
September 26-27, 2017

DAY 2—WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2017

8:00 a.m. Registration on-site

8:45 a.m.-9:00 a.m.

**Administrative Remarks:** Steve Gill, Veteran Services Administrator, WA DVA

**Invocation:** Tribal Elder-TBD

9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.

**Veteran Apprenticeship Programs**

Rachael Roberts, Program Specialist, WA DVA

10:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m. BREAK

10:15 a.m.-11:15 a.m.

**Introduction of Federal and State Education Benefits**

Rafael Lozano, Olympia Service Center Manager, WA DVA

**Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation**

Monica McNeal

11:15 a.m.-11:45 a.m.

**Washington Veterans Memorial Cemetery Program**

Thomas Yokes, Director, Tahoma National Cemetery

- Burial Eligibility
- Process to get headstones delivered
- Native American Headstone Symbols

11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m. LUNCH provided by Washington Department of Veterans Affairs

**Luncheon Program: State of Washington Veterans Benefits**

Caesar Plasencia, Program Specialists, WA DVA

1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.

**Traumatic Brain Injury**

Dan Overton, TBI Program Coordinator, WA DVA

2:00 p.m.-2:15 p.m. BREAK

WASHINGTON STATE  
NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS SUMMIT AGENDA  
Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort  
15347 Suquamish Way NE, Suquamish, Washington  
Salmon Hall  
September 26-27, 2017

DAY 2— CONTINUED

2:15 p.m.-3:15 p.m.

**Treatment for PTSD and Mental Health**

Michelle Borsz, MSSA, LISW-S, Director, Suicide Prevention Program, VA Puget Sound Health Care

- Signs of PTSD
- Suicide Prevention – Crisis Hotline
- Accessing same-day Mental Health Program

3:15 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

**Round Table Discussion:** Steve Gill, Veteran Service Administrator, WA DVA – Moderator

- TBD - Senator Patty Murray Office
- TBD - Senator Maria Cantwell Office
- TBD - Representative Derek Kilmer Office
- Pritz Navaratnasingam, Director – VBA Seattle Regional Office
- Michael Tadych, Director – VHA Puget Sound Healthcare System
- Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, Director - Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs
- Thomas Yokes, Director, Tahoma National Cemetery
- Terry Bentley, VA Office of Tribal Government Relations

4:30 p.m. Closing Prayer: Tribal Elder

**Safe Travels Home**

**This Summit was made possible by the coordinated efforts of:**

**Summit Host:**  
Suquamish Tribe

**Summit Sponsor:**  
Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs

**Summit Supporter:**  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Tribal Government Relations



RESOURCE TEAMS:

- VA Portland Medical Center
- VA Portland Regional Ofc
- Native Wellness Institute
- Oregon State Department of Veterans Affairs
- Native Procurement Technical Assistance Center
- Oregon Veteran Home Lebanon/The Dalles
- V.E.T.S. Employment & Training Services
- Elizabeth Estabrooks ODVA- Oregon Women Veterans COORD.
- CHAMPVA
- Bend Vet Center
- DOL / SAMSHA / SSA / CMS
- Domestic & Sexual Violence Prevention Program



Staff will be available to assist Veterans and family members with Paperwork, Questions & Information.

Please Bring:

DD214

Service Medical Records

Personal Medical Records

LODGING AVAILABLE @  
KAH-NEE-TA RESORT & SPA

RESERVATIONS CALL-  
1-(800) 554-4786



MEAL PROVIDED BY:  
Commissioned Corps Officers of  
U.S. Public Health Service Warm  
Springs Health & Wellnesds Center



Contact: Mitchell DeVaney at [mitchell.devaney@ihs.gov](mailto:mitchell.devaney@ihs.gov); (541)553-1196 Ext.2120