



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Veterans' Affairs

700 Summer St NE

Salem, OR 97301

800-828-8801 | 503-373-2085

[www.oregon.gov/odva](http://www.oregon.gov/odva)

November 30, 2020

TO: Honorable Governor Kate Brown  
Danny Santos, Interim Director of Legislative Commission on Indian Services

FROM: Kelly Fitzpatrick, Director of Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

RE: 2020 Government-to-Government Report

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) is pleased to submit this report to Governor Kate Brown and the Legislative Commission on Indian Services in accordance with ORS 182.162-182.168 (SB 770).

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) greatly values its Government-to-Government relationship with Oregon's federally-recognized Tribal Governments, and seeks to promote and enhance the partnership it has with Oregon's Tribes in the development and implementation of agency programs that serve tribal veterans.

Native Americans have served with distinction in the United States military for more than 200 years. In WWI alone, more than 44,000 Native Americans, out of a total population of less than 350,000 served honorably between 1941 and 1945 in both European and Pacific theaters of war. Currently, there are over 150,000 Native American military veterans. And it is well recognized that, historically, Native Americans have the highest record of service per capita when compared to other ethnic groups.

### **ODVA's Government-to-Government Policy**

Attached to this letter is ODVA's Government to Government policy adopted pursuant to ORS 182.164. ODVA is currently undergoing an effort to establish a new five-year strategic plan that will identify the agency's goals and objectives. As part of that effort, ODVA intends to update its Government to Government policy to ensure these two important strategic documents are consistent with each other and to establish processes that will better enable ODVA to identify programs that affect tribes and their members, continue to promote the excellent communication ODVA has with the tribes, and to continue our positive government-to-government relations.

### **ODVA's Government-to-Government Leadership Team**

ODVA honors the role that Oregon's tribes have in assisting the agency in developing and implementing programs that affect tribal veterans. The principle officials at ODVA who are responsible for developing and implementing such plans are:

- Kelly Fitzpatrick, Director
- Sean O'Day, Deputy Director
- Sheronne Blasi, Statewide Veterans Services Director
- Ana Potter, Aging Veteran Service Director
- Jenny Donovan, Legislative Director

## **ODVA's Government-to-Government Process and Efforts**

ODVA has actively worked to establish and maintain our valued partnerships with the nine federally recognized Native American Tribes across Oregon in the delivery of state and federal services for our tribal veterans. In 2020, ODVA continued this work to build and strengthen relations between tribal governments and key federal, state, county and other partner organizations to better serve Native American veterans across Oregon.

ODVA's continued efforts across the veteran services system have focused on three important outcome areas for Oregon's Native American veterans:

- Promote and participate in good government-to-government relationships to help shape veteran services available to Native American veterans
- Target advocacy and access to veteran services
- Increase access to health care and social services

To identify agency programs that affect tribes and their members and to promote communication between ODVA and the Tribes, ODVA provides regular updates on existing and proposed programs and services to its Veteran's Advisory Committee, which includes a Native American veteran. ODVA has consulted with the Tribes on funding opportunities and program support in the development of Tribal Veteran Service Officers. In addition, ODVA provides regular updates and listens to feedback, at the quarterly SB 770 meetings.

## **2020 Government-to-Government Achievements**

### Funding and Support of Tribal Veteran Service Offices Focused on Tribal Veteran's Needs

In March, 2020, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and ODVA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that enabled the tribal government to establish a Tribal Veteran Services Office. This is ODVA's third such MOU with Oregon's federally recognized tribes. Other existing MOUs include the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

In 2020, ODVA passed through new funding to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, in support of their Tribal Veteran Services Offices. These funds are to help support and enhance Tribal Veteran Services, including the Tribal Veteran Services Officer (TVSO), who work directly with tribal veterans and their families.

- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) - ODVA's training department worked closely with the CTUIR TVSO this year, focusing mainly on accreditation through ODVA representation and the USDVA Office of General Counsel. The TVSO successfully passed his ODVA's accreditation requirements and exam, and received his USDVA accreditation. This accreditation allows him to complete and file VA claims for veterans and their eligible dependents. He continues to participate in ongoing training, keeping him up-to-date on USDVA laws and rules for veterans' earned benefits.
- Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde - The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde hired its first ever Tribal Veteran Service Officer in July 2020. She has already completed several training courses, and works directly with ODVA staff on a regular basis, in assisting veterans. She has already completed several training courses, including ODVA's veteran service officer introductory course. She has worked directly with ODVA training staff on a regular basis in assisting veterans with benefits inquiries and outreach to tribal veterans who may not yet have applied for benefits.

### Statewide Training Focused on Tribal Veteran's Needs

In early 2020, ODVA's Statewide Veteran Services training team partnered with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Office of Tribal Government Relations to co-host the annual Tribal Veteran Representative conference. The conference location, agenda, and invitations were all complete when COVID restrictions were put in place, resulting in the postponement of the conference. Current discussions and planning are underway for a 2021 virtual conference.

Also, in partnership with the USVA Office of Tribal Government Relations, the training team gave a national presentation to participants who assist or work with tribal veterans. The presentation focus was on presumptive pathways to service connection disabilities, and Blue Water Navy Act updates.

ODVA regularly participated in the SB 770 Health and Human Services Cluster meetings, providing updates on the newly established Tribal Veteran Services Officer program and funding, as well as learning more about some of the challenges facing the tribes and the efforts to overcome those challenges.

### Tribal Veteran Advocacy and Increased Access to Veteran Services

In 2020, ODVA held a recruitment for our new Tribal Veterans Coordinator. ODVA was honored to have tribal members participate in the recruitment and interview process, in order to help ensure the tribal veteran perspective was captured in a culturally accurate manner. Unfortunately, a candidate was not identified that the panel felt would best represent the cultural needs of Oregon's tribal veterans. We look forward to hiring someone to fill this important role in 2021, and expand our partnerships with the tribes and tribal veterans.

### Improving Access to Healthcare and Social Services

In 2020, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde continued to implement a previous ODVA Veteran Services grant to expand funding for two annual Veteran Summits as well as Native American wellness activities. The grant also partially funded a portable x-ray machine for the Summits.

Additionally, the Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest (NARA), continued to provide salary and benefits for a position dedicated to identifying veterans and connecting them to services. NARA also utilized grant funds for client outreach and financial assistance for housing deposits, identification document fees, etc.

In November 2020, two additional tribes were awarded new ODVA Veteran Services grants. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation received a grant to further assist veterans by providing transportation to and from appointments, assistance in applying for benefits, and providing outreach.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde received a grant to help provide information and referrals for veteran services through tribal programs. Funding will also be used to support the annual Veteran Summit and pow wow.

Additionally, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation received a Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation grant, that will provide rides, free of charge, to tribal veterans to health and behavioral healthcare appointments and services.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, ODVA is proud to honor the service of Oregon's tribal veterans. We will continue to strive to build strong partnerships with the tribes in order to assist tribal veterans and their families in improving the quality of their lives – economically, socially and health-wise – by ensuring access to the veteran resources and benefits they have earned.

We look forward to continued collaboration across governments, agencies and other essential partners who serve all veterans in the delivery of state and federal veteran services and benefits.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelly Fitzpatrick". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kelly Fitzpatrick  
Director

CC: Dustin Buehler, Tribal Affairs Policy Advisor

Enclosures (1)

MANUAL	NUMBER
MANAGEMENT	3.6.17
SUBJECT	EFFECTIVE DATE
Tribal Relations	December 17, 2007

**POLICY**

It is ODVA's policy to promote positive and cooperative government-to-government relations with the nine federally recognized tribes of Oregon. ODVA continues these efforts and will continue to build and strengthen our working relationships with the Oregon tribes (*as defined in ORS 182.162*), their governments, and their members.

**GUIDELINES & PROCEDURE**

ODVA shall continue to promote communication between ODVA and the tribes and establish a process to identify the programs of ODVA that affect the tribes.

- Invite members of Oregon’s nine federally recognized tribes to attend the quarterly Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee meetings.
- List the nine federally recognized tribes and tribal Veterans' Service Officers in the Veterans' Service Officers Directory.
- Promote and report on tribal veteran issues online at [www.Oregon.gov/ODVA](http://www.Oregon.gov/ODVA) and in the bi-monthly VETS NEWS publication.
- Distribute tribal news and event information.
- Invite Tribal Veterans’ Service Officers to the annual CVSO training.
- Attend meetings and events held by tribes or pertaining to tribal veterans issues.
- Attend the Governor's yearly meeting at which agencies and tribes shall work together to achieve mutual goals.
- Submit a yearly report to the Governor and the Commission of Indian Services on ODVA's activities under the guidelines of "Relationships of State Agencies with Indian Tribes" (ORS 182.162 to 186.168).

**Notifying Employees of the Policy**

Upon adoption, ODVA will distribute this policy and the underlying statutes to employees who work with the tribes. We will also incorporate the policy into the department’s policy manual and post it on the department’s internal website for all employees.

**Tribal Key Contacts**

ODVA's Director, Deputy Director, Administrator of the Veterans' Services Division, and Public Information Manager.

**REFERENCES**

**ORS 182.162 to 182.168**