



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

Department of Veterans' Affairs

700 Summer St NE
Salem, OR 97301-1285

SERVING
OREGON VETERANS
SINCE 1945

December 11, 2013

TO: Karen Quigley, Director to Legislative Commission on Indian Services
FROM: Cameron Smith, Director
RE: 2013 Government-to-Government Report

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

2013 Government-to-Government Efforts and Goals

ODVA has established regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with the nine federally recognized Oregon Native American Tribes in the delivery of state and federal veteran services and benefits.

In 2013, we worked hard to strengthen and build closer relations between the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), tribal governments and other key federal, state, private and non-profit partners in an effort to effectively and respectfully serve Native American veterans across Oregon. This work was done in the spirit of government-to-government relations and with respect to the special partnership that exists between the State of Oregon and tribal governments.

Our recent efforts focused on two important goals: facilitating increased access to health care and promoting access to the full range of services and benefits veterans are entitled to through peer to peer advocacy and veteran service training.

Tribal Veterans Representative (TVR) Training

Linking VA decision makers and stake holders to tribal leadership, ODVA teamed up with the VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations to conduct Tribal Veterans Representative (TVR) training for tribes within the Western Region (Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California and Nevada). The event was hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians at the Chinook Winds Casino Resort in Lincoln City, Oregon.

Approximately 14 TVRs and veteran advocates participated in the event. Training covered a wide range of topics including VA benefits, VA social services access on the reservations, and training on Native



American Direct Loans (NADL). The NADL is an underused VA benefit that assists veterans with housing needs within Native American lands. One of the highlights of the training was a round table discussion on best practices to serve Native American veterans. This training resulted in the formation of a service provider network to help one another in direct advocacy issues within Native American communities.

Reimbursement Agreements

Through the VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations, the VA's Chief Business Office, and Indian Health Service and Tribal Health Partners, reimbursement agreements to further cover tribal veterans' health needs have been implemented in Oregon. The purpose of this agreement is to reimburse facilities for direct care services provided to eligible Native American veterans. As of August, 36 Oregon veteran claims have been received and reimbursements in the amount of \$11,310 have been paid for care through this agreement.

Government-to-Government Relations and Support

The Oregon Native American communities have a long and rich history of honoring and supporting all veterans. According to the VA's *2012 American Indian and Alaska Servicemembers and Veterans Report* it is estimated that 3,403 Native American veterans reside in Oregon, representing 2.2 percent of Oregon's total veteran population. Tribal veterans have one of the highest records of military service per capita of any ethnic group. Throughout the nine tribes, ODVA continues to see strong partners eager to assist tribal veterans and their families in improving the quality of their lives – economically, socially and health wise – through insuring access to VA health care systems and all state and federal benefits.

ODVA has supported efforts to build memorials honoring tribal veterans, worked with Native American Honor Guards to pay tribute to all veterans, and witnessed the generosity of Oregon tribes in support of all veterans through their giving from community foundations.

Below are highlights of 2013 events that ODVA participated in to support positive and ongoing government-to-government relations:

- **March 2013** –ODVA's veteran newspaper (Vets News) highlighted the All Nations Native American Veteran Memorial. This publication is received by more than 13,000 veterans across the state.
- **May 2013** –Tribal Government Day event to kick-off Oregon's 2013 American Indian Week.
- **July 2013** - Annual Independence Day dinner hosted by the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe at the Seven Feathers Convention Center honoring more than 750 veterans.

- **July 2013** - Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde Veterans' Pow-wow in Grand Ronde.
- **December 2013** – The annual Government-to-Government Summit.

While ODVA is proud of our federal, state and tribal government efforts to serve tribal veterans, we also recognize no single agency or organization can wholly address the diverse needs across native lands. We look forward to continued partnerships and collaboration across governments, agencies and the other essential partners who serve all veterans in the delivery of state and federal veteran services and benefits.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cameron Smith
Director