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**Webinar Series**  
**Coordinating Legal Services to Support**  
**American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans**

**Webinar #1:**  
**An Overview of Legal Issues & Support for Native American**  
**and Alaska Native Veterans**

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# PRESENTERS:



**Raymond Daw**  
Behavioral Health Consultant



**Regina Roanhorse Begay**  
Alamo-Tohajiilee Judicial District  
Court Administrator, Navajo Nation Judicial  
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**Andrea Seielstad**  
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NAICJA

# TRIBAL CIVIL AND CRIMINAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), through the National American Indian Court Judges Association (NAICJA) offers Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) to Tribal Civil and Criminal Legal Assistance (TCCLA) grantees and subgrantees. The TCCLA program seeks to increase and improve access to legal assistance for Native Americans and Alaska Natives by providing TTA for the development and enhancement of tribal justice systems. Further, TCCLA will assist in strengthening the capacity and the quality of indigent criminal defense services and defense strategies for tribal justice systems.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2018-AL-BX-K001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



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# **COORDINATING LEGAL SERVICES TO SUPPORT AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE VETERANS**

This project seeks to enhance and provide delivery of legal services to American Indian and Alaska Native (AI / AN) veterans.

- Webinars
- Legal Clinics
- Online Resources



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# PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBAL VETERANS' LEGAL CLINICS

- A tribal legal clinic model will focus on and address the needs of AI / AN veterans.
- A variety of models may be considered, depending on the organizational capacities of those already in a geographical area and available legal resources.
- These may include:
  - Medical-legal partnerships to address legal services issues in conjunction with treatment for health, substance abuse, and trauma.
  - Legal services programs and collaborations with Veterans Administration (VA) staff, law school clinical programs and other organizations set up to provide legal assistance.
  - Pro bono staff and attorneys to provide legal counsel and advice.
  - Community education and pro se litigation.
  - In person clinics and those utilizing remote and technology-based tools to connect with veterans in rural places (or hybrids).



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# PRESENTATION OUTLINE

This presentation will provide an introductory overview of legal issues and support available to AI / AN veterans and frame key considerations necessary in outreach and representation:

- Introductions and shared reflections from veterans' perspectives.
- Brief overview of legal needs.
- Highlight key considerations necessary in outreach and representation of AI / AN veterans (i.e., culture; gender, military experience and transition back to civilian life).
- Focused case study on working with veterans' organizations in Navajo Indian Country toward the development of Veterans Treatment Court.
- Questions and Answers



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## BRIEF HISTORY

From the American Revolution to the present, AI / AN have served in the military as well as in humanitarian and peacekeeping missions throughout the world.

Early statistics, even through Vietnam, are difficult to obtain due to changing definitions about who is “American Indian” or “Alaska Native” and the fact that AI / AN were often classified as “Black” or “White” (or other demographic categories) in different military time periods.

Persons indicating multi-racial status may also be categorized as “other” or “multi-racial.”

Nonetheless, there is evidence of robust & voluntary service over time. The lack of precise demographic records should not “obscure the bigger picture that Native Americans have demonstrated—and continue to demonstrate—an abiding devotion to military service.” Source: *Why We Serve* exhibition, Smithsonian Native American Veterans Memorial <https://americanindian.si.edu/static/why-we-serve/topics/>



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# HISTORICAL ESTIMATES

- Civil War: 3,503 AI / AN men served in the Union Army;
- WWI: 1 out of 4 adult AI / AN men served;
- WWII: 44,000 AI / AN men served; 800 AI / AN women worked in various capacities;
- Korea: 10,000 AI / AN men and women served;
- Vietnam: 42,000 AI / AN men and women served.

Source: *Why We Serve* exhibition, Smithsonian Native American Veterans Memorial  
<https://americanindian.si.edu/static/why-we-serve/topics/>



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# DEMOGRAPHICS AND PROFILE

AI / AN have continued to serve in the U.S. military.

- Gulf Wars I and II: 24,884 AI / AN men and women served;
- Peacetime only: 29,979 AI / AN men and women served.

Source: American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans: 2017, Department of Veterans Affairs.  
<https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/AIAN.pdf>

# SERVICE AND CITIZENSHIP

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American Indians were not granted U.S. citizenship (and right to vote) until 1924.  
(43 Stat. 253, enacted June 2, 1924)

HIGH RATES OF PRE-CITIZENSHIP VOLUNTARY SERVICE: Many AI / AN drafted and served in the U.S. military before they were granted citizenship.

For example, in WW I, when 1/3 of AI / AN were still not recognized as U.S. citizens, AI / AN men and women registered in military service, served as nurses in France, and contributed to war efforts through volunteer service in the Red Cross.

Source: [Topics | World War I \(si.edu\)](https://americanindian.si.edu/static/why-we-serve/topics/world-war-1/), <https://americanindian.si.edu/static/why-we-serve/topics/world-war-1/>

## SERVICE AND CITIZENSHIP CONTINUED . . .

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CONSCRIPTION: U.S. law and policy also contributed to recruitment or drafting of AI/AN men before they were citizens. For example, the Selective Service Act of 1917 required all AI / AN men between ages of 21 and 30 to register for the draft regardless of their citizenship status.

Very few applied for deferment or exemption from military service.

Net effect: 20-30 % AI/AN men served in WWI versus 15% of all adult men.

[Source: Indigenous Experiences of War \(USA\) | International Encyclopedia of the First World War \(WW1\) \(1914-1918-online.net\)](#)

# 1919 American Indian Citizenship Act

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"BE IT ENACTED . . . that every American Indian who served in the Military or Naval Establishments of the United States during the war against the Imperial German Government, and who has received or who shall hereafter receive an honorable discharge, if not now a citizen and if he so desires, shall, on proof of such discharge and after proper identification before a court of competent jurisdiction, and without other examination except as prescribed by said court, be granted full citizenship with all the privileges pertaining thereto, without in any manner impairing or otherwise affecting the property rights, individuals or tribal, of any such Indian or his interest in tribal or other Indian property."

Note: Citizenship was not automatically given. There was a judicial process required, and few completed it. This is reflective of other barriers facing A.I./A.N. veterans until today.



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## DEMOGRAPHICS AND PROFILE

150,000 veterans identified as AI / AN in 2010.

24,000 active-duty Native service members in the U.S. Military currently.

Estimate: approximately 140,000 living AI/AN veterans presently (not including those indicating multi-racial status).

Source: *Veterans*, National Congress of American Indians (NCAI).

<https://www.ncai.org/policy-issues/education-health-human-services/veterans>



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# DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS

**“After 9/11, almost 19% of Native Americans served in the Armed Forces, compared to 14% of other ethnicities.** Currently, there are more than 31,000 American Indian and Alaska Native men and women on active duty today, serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere around the world.”

*Source: <https://www.veteranaid.org/blog/native-american-veterans-5-facts-you-may-not-know/>*

**Veteran families expand the numbers of service-impacted people in need of legal outreach and assistance.**

“The proportion of Female AIAN Veterans was higher than that of Female Veterans of other races (11.3% vs. 9.0%, respectively).” *Source: American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans: 2017, Department of Veteran Affairs, 2020.*



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## HEALTH PROFILE

AI / AN experience disparities in health and healthcare, especially around issues of chronic pain, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), diabetes, hypertension, and pregnancy complications for women.

- 74.3% of AI /AN who are service-connected are utilizing VA healthcare.
- AI / AN veterans have almost double the rate of PTSD as non-Hispanic white veterans (20.5% versus 11.6%).
- A 2016 VA tribal consultation with all 567 federally recognized tribes identified treatment for PTSD and mental health as a top priority for veterans in Indian Country.

Source: *American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans Fact Sheet, 2017*,  
Veterans Health Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.  
[https://www.va.gov/HEALTHEQUITY/docs/American\\_Indian\\_Heritage\\_Month\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](https://www.va.gov/HEALTHEQUITY/docs/American_Indian_Heritage_Month_Fact_Sheet.pdf)



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# LEGAL ISSUES FACING VETERANS

AI / AN veterans may be eligible for a wide-variety of **benefits** available to all U.S. military veterans:

- Challenges to type of military discharge (i.e., dishonorable due to service-connected mental health impacts or military sexual trauma)
- Compensation (disability; dependency and indemnity; special monthly; special circumstances)
- Pension
- Education and training
- Healthcare; insurance
- Home loans and other loans
- Veterans' readiness and employment
- Burial assistance
- NOTE: Representation before the VA on veterans' benefits may only be done by benefits-certified attorneys, veterans services organization representatives. [Accredited Representatives Home \(va.gov\)](#)



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## LEGAL ISSUES FACING VETERANS

Additionally, they may face critical need for legal advice and representation in **planning, decision-making** and **document-drafting** for legal issues such as:

- Guardianship (veterans' fiduciary program for benefits; temporary and permanent court-ordered; fiduciary issues; petitions to terminate)
- Power of attorney
- Wills and estate planning
- Child custody and care



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# LEGAL ISSUES FACING VETERANS

There is a need for legal advice and assistance in other **basic civil legal** issues.

- Housing
- Domestic relations
- Consumer law
- Issues around debt and credit
- Civil rights
- Criminal history expungement, commutation, pardons, restoration of rights
- Driver's license suspensions

**Veterans and wellness courts may provide more therapeutic approaches to issues of criminal justice.**



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## AVAILABLE LEGAL ASSISTANCE

There is a need for legal advice and assistance in other **basic civil legal** issues.

- Urban & Rural general legal services programs;
- Indian Legal Services (27 service areas);
- Pro Bono Services (i.e., New Mexico Young Lawyers Division, Senior Lawyers Division and VA Health Care System's Veterans Civil Justice Clinic);
- Private representation in fee-generating cases (including veterans benefits);
- Law School Clinical Programs – focused on veterans' representation, benefits' claims; AI / AN civil legal issues;
- Pro Se materials or clinics;
- County or tribal veterans' services programs;
- **Veterans and wellness courts may provide more therapeutic approaches to issues of criminal justice.& link participants to civil legal services.**



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# PROFILE OF EXISTING SERVICES

Very few programs focused on BOTH **AI / AN** and **veterans**. **This is of high need.**

Some Indian legal services programs have tried various outreach or focused services/events for veterans; but most have not dedicated consistent resources and programmatic planning around this focus.

Others focus on veterans' issues, but not necessarily focused on AI / AN ones (i.e., New Mexico Young Lawyer's Division Pro Bono Veterans Legal Clinic; Veterans' Consortium Pro Bono Project, Law Students and Law Clinic Partners | Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program [[www.vetsprobono.org](http://www.vetsprobono.org)]).



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## OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE

In the absence of sufficient legal services, other entities have developed creative and collaborative initiatives aimed at increasing access to information, self-help and actual legal representation.

- Courts – tribal healing to wellness courts; veterans' courts; pro se forms and assistance; relief within pending cases such as domestic violence protection orders.
- Veterans Administration, Accredited Veterans' Service Representatives & Lawyers; Veterans Justice Outreach coordinators.
- Tribal and county veterans' services organizations.
- Behavioral and mental health programs and case workers.



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## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AS VETERANS

- Family experience with military service.
- How entered the armed forces (recruitment, branch, service, initial transition into military life).
- Selective experiences in armed forces.
- Transitioning out of the military into civilian life.
- Reflections on experience as a veteran within AI / AN communities and outside.



**Regina Roanhorse Begay**



**Raymond Daw**



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# **OUTREACH AND REPRESENTATION OF AI / AN VETERANS**

**Raymond Daw**

**Behavioral Health Consultant**

# MILITARY EXPERIENCE

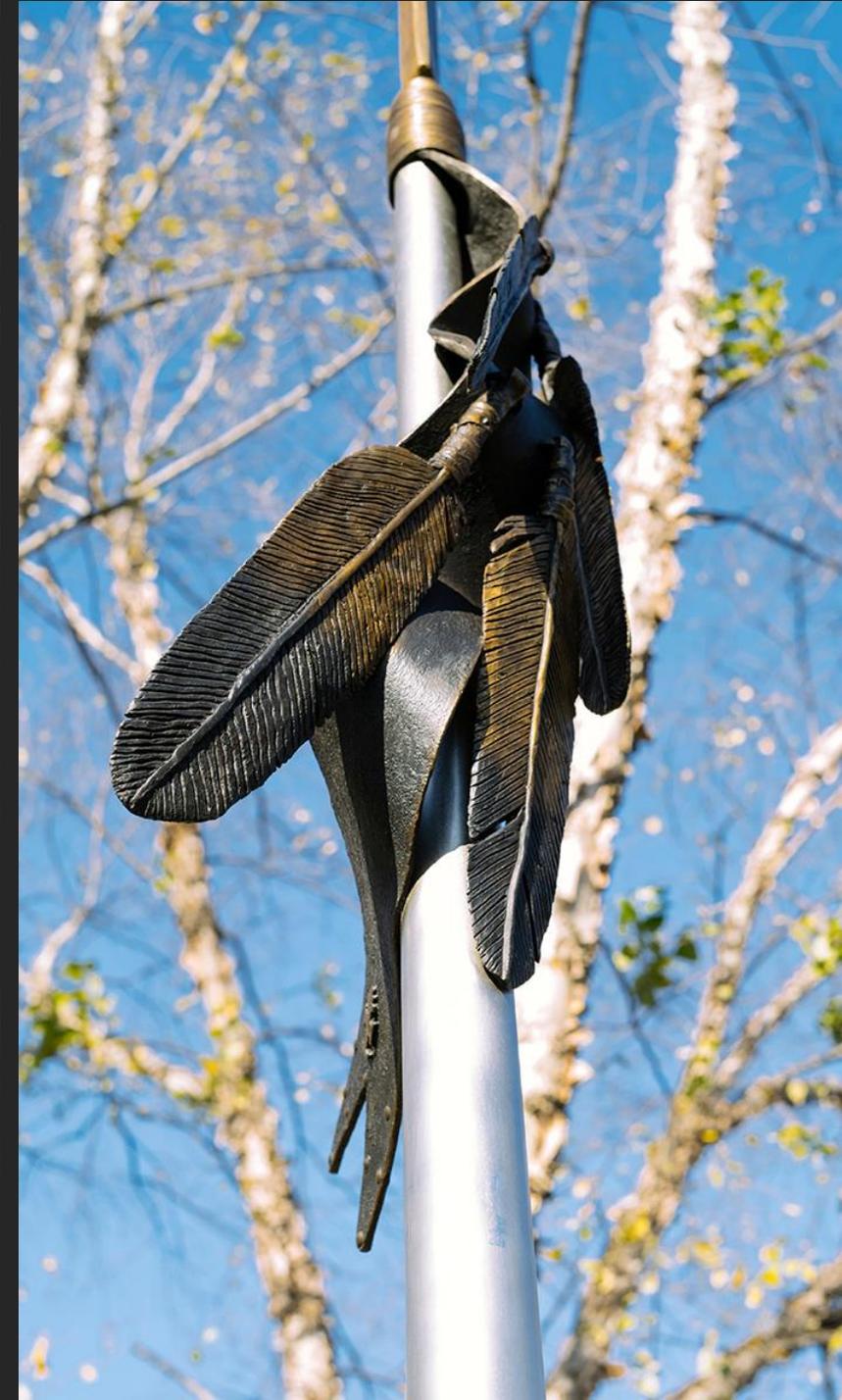
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JOINING

TRANSITION TO SERVICE

MILITARY EXPERIENCE

TRANSITION BACK TO  
CIVILIAN LIFE





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# **NATIVE VETERAN CURRICULUM: “HEALING THE RETURNING WARRIOR”**

The six Healing the Returning Warrior modules explore the challenges and strengths AI / AN veterans experience after discharge. These workshop modules will enable participants to gain a deeper understanding of Native trauma-appropriate approaches to work in tribal health prevention, intervention, and treatment services.

1. Historical Overview of Natives in Warfare, Military
2. Prevention: Preparation and Resilience
3. Trauma, Historical Trauma, and PTSD
4. Approaches to Assessment and Treatment
5. Traditional Perseverance & Healing Practices
6. Healing The Healer



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# REASONS NATIVES JOIN THE MILITARY SERVICES

- Lack of Employment Opportunities on Reservations
- Education and Training Opportunities
- Patriotism to US
- Loyalty to tribe
- Defense of country
- Defense of tribe/family
- Family warrior history
- Family history of military service
- Tribal warrior traditions, being successful
- Excelling as warrior/soldier (better than others)





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## NATIVES THE MILITARY SERVICES



**Capt. Haida StarEagle**  
Matinecock Tribe  
(Airforce)



**John Herrington**  
Chickasaw Nation  
(Navy)



**Nicole Mann**  
Round Valley Indian Tribes  
(Marine Corps)

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/04/01/meet-captain-stareagle-space-force-swears-1st-female-native-american-intel-officer.html>



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# NATIVE MILITARY EXPERIENCES



- Almost always referred to as “Chief.”
- Typically, volunteers for difficult duties.
- Often, is assigned dangerous or difficult assignments.
- Experiences vary by military assignment.



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## NATIVES IN VIETNAM

- It is estimated that approximately 42,000 – 82,000 Native men and women served during the War in Vietnam.
- 90% of Native Americans who were in Vietnam volunteered
- 1 of 4 eligible Native people served (Smithsonian)
- 226 died and 5 received the Medal of Honor
- Had to navigate difficult post-Vietnam civilian life within Native communities and outside due to personal impacts and society opinions and reactions.





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# VETERANS' SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS

(important to consider for outreach & assistance)

- Reservation volunteer organizations (the Navajo Nation has 110)
- Reservation Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) or American Legion
- Tribal government programs





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# APPROPRIATE APPROACHES FOR LEGAL SERVICES DELIVERY TO VETERANS

- What **methods of connecting** lawyers and legal services attorneys to veterans might be most appropriate?
- How could the **organizational structure of veterans** and their connection to tribal government organizations assist in legal services delivery?
- Are there any **special considerations** that attorneys and legal advocates should take into mind when doing **outreach and intake** for legal services?



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# CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTREACH

## Trust in exchanging information

- Ensuring knowledge of sources of assistance and how to reach it.
- Assessing needs and best modes of collaborating on service delivery.
- Understand experiences with government help, i.e., some veterans may be resistant in relying on U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or Indian Health Service (IHS) for assistance; others, may find these agencies a main point of contact and services.
- Negative experience with service leadership and/or hesitancy in seeking information.

## Accessibility of information

- Not knowing who to contact.
- Snail mail still relied on in many places.
- Limited internet and cell phone service.
- Limited access to benefits and benefit information; or info about legal services.



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# **WORKING WITH VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS IN NAVAJO INDIAN COUNTRY TO DEVELOP VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS**

**Regina Begay-Roanhorse, MLS- Healthcare Law  
Navajo Nation Judicial Branch Court Administrator**



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# TREATMENT COURT PILOT PROJECT (A MODEL FOR VETERANS OUTREACH)

Under a different pilot U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) - funded program (2013), justice-involved veterans could access services through the VA Veterans Justice Outreach program - License Independent Social Worker (LISW) is available for immediate evaluations inside the jails or detention facilities.

But . . . what kind of community-based treatment can support veterans on the continuum of care? Or “Long Term” care for trauma informed care.



# WELLNESS MODEL FOR HASKEEJI NAHATAH (MILITARY LEADERS) AND FAMILIES

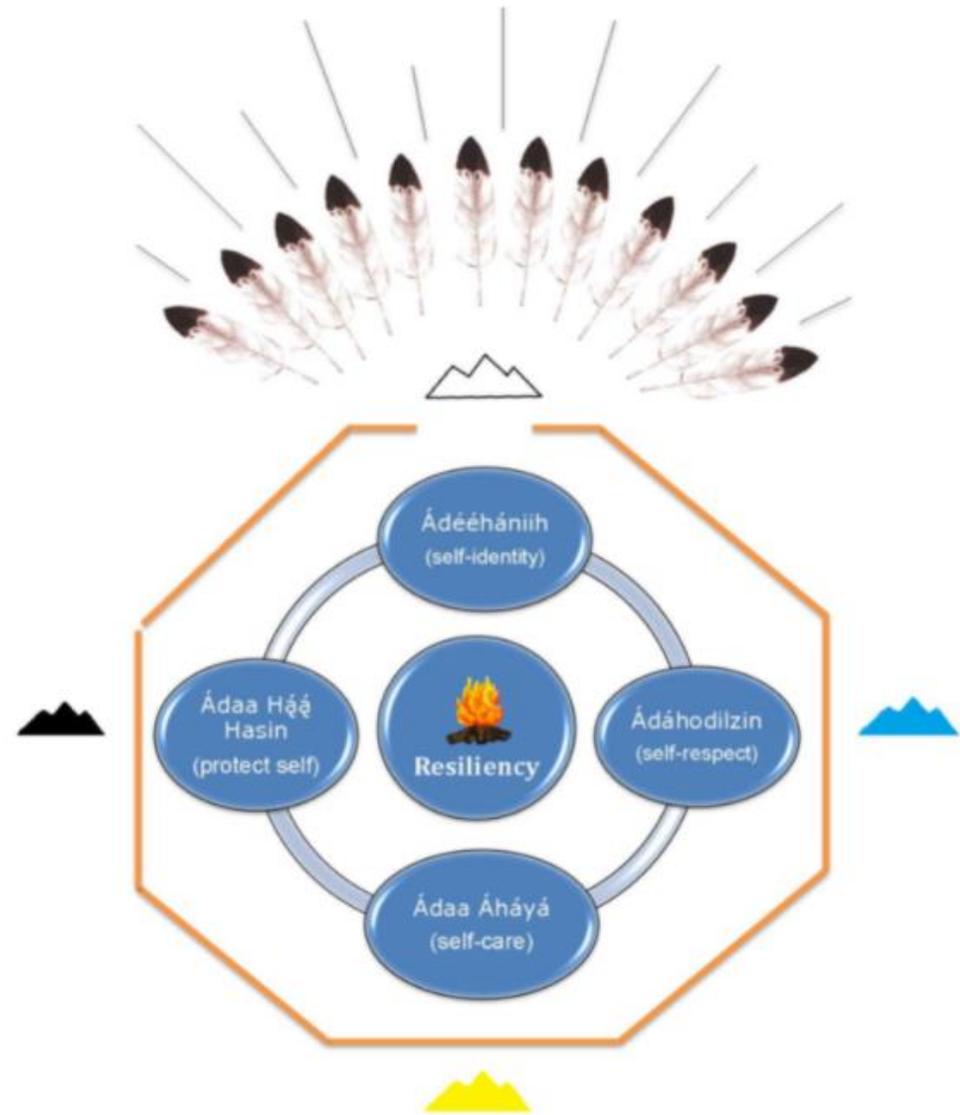
Self-Identity

Self-Respect

Self-Care

Protect Self

Developed by Office of Native  
Medicine Traditional Healers and  
from the Indian Health Service  
Website



Graphic of the Navajo Wellness Model curriculum entitled "Shá'bek'ehgo As'ah Oodáát"



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# LOGIC MODEL FOR NAVAJO VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PROJECT (USDOJ FUNDED 2013)

1. Veterans participated in defining goals.
2. Covered the Wellness Model, or “continuum of care.”
3. Included families.
4. Not just for justice involved veterans but also for all *Haaskeeji Nahatah*.
5. Helps treatment teams define goals and efforts from individual to community-based activities. (A community must have supports for those who are in a healing journey)



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### PROJECT COMPLETED A LOGIC MODEL

Need	Goals	PROGRAM	Strategies & Activities	"If-Then" Statements/Theory of Change	Outcomes
All Veterans on/off reservation	Help reintegrate veterans into a healthy sober lifestyle successfully.	1. Life Skills curriculum for veterans and families 2. Community readiness assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify veterans through benefit fairs.</li> <li>Conduct training for TBI &amp; Suicide Prevention, Mental Health First Aid.</li> <li>Incorporate PM program presentations that are culturally appropriate. Help veterans with coping skills, teach ceremonies, manage emotions, improve family relationships, communications skills, avoiding risk taking, harm reducing and etc.</li> <li>Peacemaking Talking Circles.</li> <li>Coordinate Educational sessions on families and PTSD.</li> <li>Coordinate with VA families and Psychologist.</li> <li>Group-CBT- Journaling</li> <li>Chapter – Honoring Veterans</li> <li>Community dinner – Bike Run</li> <li>Breakfasts – Meet and Greets with other veterans</li> <li>Spending more time with family</li> <li>Retreat- emotional regulation, education about traditional healing for veterans.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop self help guide for veterans.</li> <li>Connect with housing programs and shelters, -</li> <li>Educate youth at High School Level about the traditional teachings of joining the military</li> </ol> </li> <li>Strengthen the Carl D. Hayden Traditional healing program with VA for veterans – (funding stream through Navajo Nation). For VA enrolled veterans.</li> <li>Develop “orientation” materials for veterans and families – recorded virtual</li> </ol>	<p>If VJO coordinator coordinates a prevention program for veterans and families then there is participation and engagement will be identified.</p> <p>If veterans and families can be identified then life skills can be implemented.</p> <p>If life skill is implemented you will see a healthy and functioning veteran and family.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Program participation sobriety increased skills in emotional regulation and family participation.</p> <p><b>Long Term:</b> Sobriety more than 30 days Maintenance of successful relationship Regain self-respect and communication</p>

### NAVAJO NATION SAMPLE:

Services for veterans who are justice involved	Heal the person Reduce or prevent recidivism in justice involved activities Enhance family stability Help veteran reintegrate into the community		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify veterans work with probation, parole, corrections, courts, shelters, VA, NMDVS, VSO</li> <li>Conduct social and family summary/assessment for service needs</li> <li>Develop Case Management Plan</li> <li>Develop MOU with appropriate stable</li> <li>Incorporate PM program in interventions.</li> </ol>	<p>If the VJO coordinator does outreach then veterans will be located.</p> <p>If veterans are located then they will receive services.</p> <p>If the vet received services, then they will be less likely to commit offenses against self, family, and community</p>	<p><b>Short Term</b> Increase knowledge of resource and services Support and benefits Increase knowledge of K'e Increase knowledge of how to seek help Educate how to upgrade discharge</p> <p><b>Long Term</b> Increase skills in advocacy for self and regain self-respect  Change attitude and behavior for healthy living.</p>
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## WHY WORK WITH VETERANS IN DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR TREATMENT COURT OR LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM?

- Wisdom from their own experience
- Their journey inspires hope and belief that recovery is possible
- Their Stories are unique (i.e. work, family and movie careers)
- Thomas H. Begay, Navajo Code Talker, Veteran of WWII and Korean War
- Battle of Iwo Jima and Chosin Frozen Survivor.





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# VETERANS HAVE STORIES TO TELL





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# CONSUMER ORIENTATED CARE OR MILITARY CULTURE SENSITIVITY



- Provide information on what works for your veteran population in your tribal or pueblo community
- Always willing to help their fellow veterans
- 3 Generations of Military Service:
- Photo to Left: LTC Ronald C. Begay, Navajo Code Talker Thomas H. Begay, 2LT Kristopher Roanhorse and CPT Regina Begay Roanhorse; Other CPT Gerald Begay & Code Talker Thomas H. Begay



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# GRASSROOTS AND GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS

- Developing effective and coordinated legal services programs or treatment courts requires understanding of existing organizational systems for veterans.
- Navajo Nation has an active and well-organized network of 110 Veterans' organizations.
- Additionally, the Navajo Nation has enacted legislation creating a Navajo Veterans' Administration and Advisory Council.' focusing on veterans' advocacy; seeking claims under Navajo, federal, state, local laws; establishing an advisory council. Enacted by Navajo Nation Council in January, 2016. 2 N.N.C. Sec. 1031 et seq.
- It has been active in creating solutions for certain barriers, i.e., MOU on June 27, 2016 that allows Arizona Dept. of Veterans Services to accredit Navajo Veteran Service Officer to file service-connected disability benefits claims with Veterans Affairs.

Article: ADVS & Navajo Nation sign Historic Agreement.

Retrieved from: <https://dvs.az.gov/advs-navajo-nation-sign-historic-agreement>



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# HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

- Veterans Administration (VA)
- Indian Health Service (IHS)
- Navajo Division of Behavioral Health and Mental Health Services



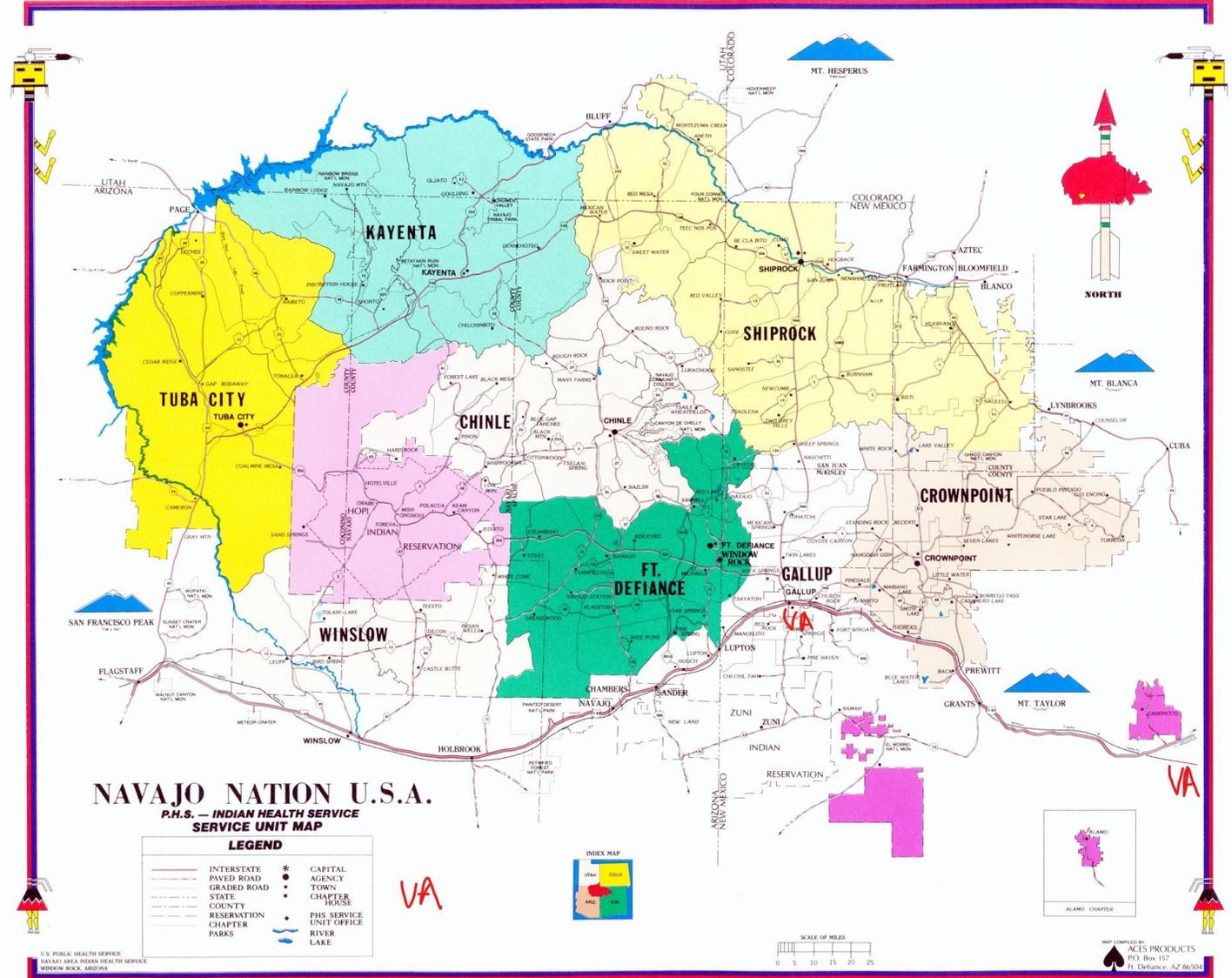
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## RURAL NAVAJO NATION

- Clinics, hospitals are located throughout Arizona, New Mexico and Utah portions of the Navajo Nation.
- Navajo Division of Behavioral & Mental Health Services (tribal programs-638) located in every agency (5 agencies).
- Access to counselors (psychologists, psychiatrists) for PTSD or suicidal ideation is very limited.
- VA services (if service-connected disable) are 200 miles away.

# ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS

1. VA / IHS MOU: reimbursement to IHS
2. Are IHS personnel culturally sensitive to Veterans Care
3. IHS personnel are culturally sensitive to traditional healing
4. Community Based treatment – since time immemorial. QPR, Mental Health First Aide





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## **REACHING OUT TO LOCAL HEALTH SYSTEMS: INDIAN HEALTH SERVICES, NAVAJO AREA**

In 2016, the Navajo Healing to Wellness Court's Veteran's Justice Outreach project reached out to the Navajo Area IHS mental health program and the Vet Center partners.

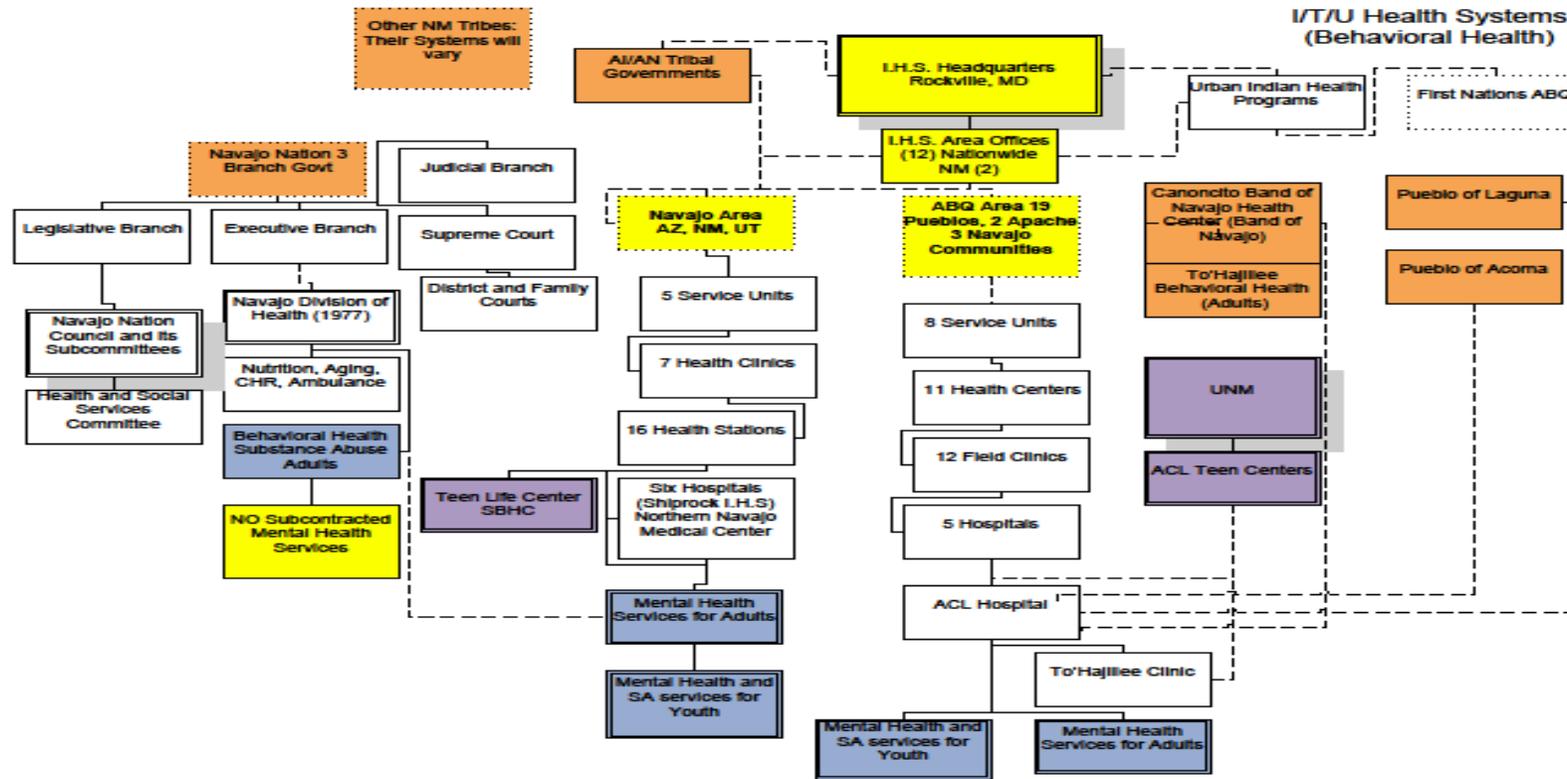
Peer support project:

- Mental Health First Aide training for Veterans who want to be mentors or helpers.
- Sustainability.
- Trauma informed care- military culture sensitivity.



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# NAVIGATING THE IHS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEMS OF CARE





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## Navajo Area Indian Health Services, or any I.H.S. and the Veterans Affairs MOU



## Veterans Administration Veterans Health Administration MOU

- Reimbursement for Direct Health Care Services to AI / AN Veterans in 77 I.H.S. facilities to 2022
- Reimbursement of \$75.5 million for 9,400 VHA enrolled AI/AN veterans.
- 2017 – VA reimbursed I.H.S. and the THPs (Tribal Health Programs) \$17 million
- In 2016, the project met with key leadership at the Navajo I.H.S. mental health program to develop better access for Navajo Veterans
- “Military” culturally appropriate care is needed
- Self care (App for PTSD)
- Training – “Peer support” use of Hogan's, etc.



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# OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Successful programs require creative outreach that fits local activities, including required and recreational activities:

- Weekend travel and shopping
- Seasonal and weekly events.
- Organized activities and campaigns.



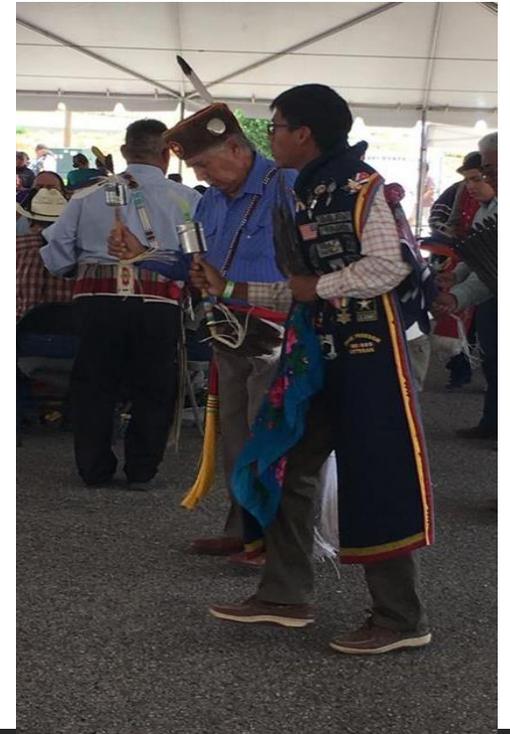
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# 2018 CTAS AWARD- NAVAJO VETERANS JUSTICE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

## BENEFITS:

- Social Support, Purpose & Meaning
- Normalization of symptoms and hope. Peer groups trauma type, Gender and Era of Service
- Therapeutic benefits when there is nothing out there on the rez

GOURD DANCE AT OVW EVENT





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# NAVAJO WELLNESS COURT DEVELOPMENT



Peer Support Enhancement to any Court off or on reservation - Mentoring

- Veterans in tribal communities are resources
- Military culture – a unique bond exists between veterans
- 110 local Chapter veteran organizations in the Navajo Nation (AZ, NM, UT)
- Peers helping peers. Knowledge of values that make them soldiers and patriots



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# MILITARY SUPPORT GROUP





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# BENEFITS, JOB & HEALTH FAIR, AND GOURD DANCE



2016 -2021

- “MSG” Military Support Group (state, tribal and federal partners)
- One Saturday each year – benefits and gourd dancing
- Increase access for returning combat veterans in an off reservation community (Gallup, NM)
- Speakers: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Former Cabinet Secretary Jack Fox, NM Veterans Administration, Other tribal officials and leaders
- Over 200 people attended each year except this year due to pandemic

2020-2021 OVW “Virtual Run”



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## 2021 OVW “VIRTUAL RUN”

The screenshot shows the Strava interface for a challenge titled "30 Day 60 Mile Challenge Virtual Run" starting in June 2021. The challenge is organized by the "Operation Veterans Wellness Running Club". The page includes a description of the challenge, a "Club Leaderboard" tab, and a "Last Week's Leaders" section with columns for Distance, Total Running Time, and Climbing. The challenge has 402 members.

**30 Day 60 Mile Challenge Virtual Run**  
June 2021

**Operation Veterans Wellness Running Club**

2021 Operation Veterans Wellness 30 Day 60 Mile Challenge Virtual Run.  
Show your support and run for our Veterans mind, body and soul. A virtual run is a wellness activity that can be run from any location you choose. You can run, jog, hike, or walk on the road, on the trail, on the treadmill, at the gym or on the track. You get to run your own race, at your own pace, and track it yourself.

This virtual run is a wellness event where you join our virtual running group. You choose the distance you will complete for the month.

Club Leaderboard Recent Activity Members Posts 51 NEW

**Last Week's Leaders**

Distance	Total Running Time	Climbing
----------	--------------------	----------

402 members Leave  
and 398 others

- Partnerships with Navajo Department of Behavioral and Mental Health Services.
- You Tube Channel: McKinley County Veterans Services Collaborative – 2<sup>nd</sup> week Video was about resources for veterans.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yq6G8KqGIsE>



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# BREAKFASTS AND GATHERING . . . TO DO WORK: STRATEGIC PLANNING AND FUNDING VETERANS PROJECTS





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# VETERANS SUMMITS: PARTNERSHIP WITH NAVAJO VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

- Chinle, AZ; Gallup, NM from 2016 – 2020.
- Military Support Group working with volunteers on the Gallup “Stand Down.”
- Benefits and claims fair.
- Traditional teaching.





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# BENEFIT EVENTS & STRATEGIC PLANNING

- Invite off-reservation Veteran organizations and VA to your event.
- Incorporate all strategic plans.



**VA** | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Your Service. Our Mission.

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

**During the event, you can:**

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

**EVENT DATE & TIME'S:**  
Wednesday, April 17, 2019  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm

**LOCATION:**  
Navajo Technical University; Crownpoint Campus; Wellness Center; Lowerpoint Road, State Hwy 371; Crownpoint, NM

**POINT OF CONTACT:**  
Paul George 505-486-5377  
Hubert Smith 505-879-8476

**PHONE NUMBER:**  
Paul George 505-486-5377  
Hubert Smith 505-879-8476

Office of Tribal Government Relations



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# 2020 VIRTUAL VETERANS SUMMIT

- Virtual Summit on Facebook live.
- Videos are available online.



**VIRTUAL FACEBOOK LIVE EVENT**  
**facebook**  
**6TH ANNUAL VETERANS CONFERENCE**  
 November 4-6, 2020

Wednesday 11/4/20	Thursday 11/5/20	Friday 11/6/20
<b>9:00 am - 10:00 am</b> MC: Karina J Watson National Anthem: Kaitlyn Toledo Prayer: DeWayne Begay Welcome: Vera John	<b>9:00 am - 10:00 am</b> <b>Suicide Prevention</b> Presenter: CJ Fletcher and Christina Camacho	<b>9:00 am - 10:00 am</b> <b>History of Navajo Veterans</b> Presenters: Nelvin Tahninnie
<b>12:00 pm - 1:00 pm</b> <b>Coping with Stress and Anxiety</b> Presenters: Didi Josea & Eukerison Tsinajinie	<b>12:00 pm - 1:00 pm</b> <b>Cultural Wellness</b> Presenters: Kenneth Begay & TJ Anderson	<b>12:00 pm - 1:00 pm</b> <b>Family support and protective factors</b> Presenter: Alberta Curley, Didi Josea and Eukerison Tsinajinie Closing Remarks: Robertson Yazzie Closing prayer: Denice Tsinajinie - Miss U of A
<b>2:00 pm -2:30 pm</b> <b>Veteran's Resource:</b> RBHA-DBMHS Readjustment Counseling Vet Center Goodwill Industries of NM Veterans Housing Assistance- Goodwill DineNaazbaa Partnership Veterans Upward Bound-UNM NN Health Education Program - Gallup Service Area	<b>2:00 pm -2:30 pm</b> <b>Veteran's Resource:</b> BCOH-DBMHS NM Department of Veteran Services Dine College Building Healthy Military Communities NM Farmers Marketing Assoc Navajo Nation Veterans Administration	

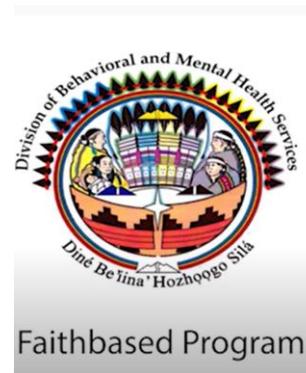
**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
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# TECHNOLOGY OUTREACH ON WELLNESS

## YOUTUBE: MCKINLEY COUNTY VETERANS SERVICES COLLABORATIVE





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## REALITIES OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE

- Many N.A./A.I. veterans have been impacted by their military experience and trauma (and traumas from other life experience) to a degree that causes them to avoid seeking even benefits.
- Effective outreach and assistance in connecting veterans to important sources of benefits relief and legal assistance is limited.
- Legal services programs cannot cover all civil issues (limited by resources, staffing, geographical scope, and priorities).
- Veterans' treatment and wellness courts, or ones focused on AI / AN are just emerging (and tend to focus more on matters connected to criminal charges).
- Legal deserts; Insufficient availability of lawyers qualified to work on veterans' benefits work.
- Methods of outreach may not effectively meet the needs of AI / AN veterans.



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# LEGAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS

Legal assistance programs may benefit from greater cultural competence and knowledge of veterans' issues AND the intersection with AI / AN identity and experience.

There is a need for better trauma-informed services and legal representation.

Coordination is critical!

- Tribal healthcare
- Tribal behavioral health services
- Tribal family services
- Tribal public safety
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Other relevant tribal entities



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## BEST PRACTICES FOR SUPPORTING VETERANS

- Trauma informed Judge and treatment team on military trauma by era, gender and tribe or pueblo.
- LISW at Tribal Court for evaluations (i.e. Veterans Justice Outreach program at VA has a LISW).
- Peer supports from Prevention to Intervention to wellness for life.
- Attending Veterans meetings – there will be food and lots of good people.
- Sustainability – plant the seed with your tribal 638 programs.



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# KEY POINTS IN DEVELOPING LEGAL SERVICES

## Tribal-Sponsored Programs

- It is important that programs be coordinated and recommended by respected tribal leadership.
- Consider collaborations and locating within community-based organizations, hospitals, health clinics, tribal organization
- Veterans and their families need access to comprehensive wrap-around health care and mental health services.

## Connecting with Veterans

- It is important to build opportunities for outreach and legal assistance that are responsive to diverse sectors of the veteran population.
- Be mindful of subsistence activities and ceremonial events, geographical context, and access to technology versus in-person offices.



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# QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION





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# THANK YOU!

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