

**May 19, 2016**

Dear Tribal Leader:

How the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) delivers benefits and services for Veterans is growing and changing rapidly. In this environment of change, VA is more committed than ever to fulfilling its tribal consultation policy, which includes strengthening VA's relationship with tribes and consulting with tribal governments on all VA policies and actions that may impact tribes and Veterans across Indian Country.

VA wants to ensure that the needs of American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans and the priorities of tribal governments are part of these changes, now and in the future. To that end, VA is seeking input from tribal leaders **on the top 3 to 5 priorities that tribes have for serving Veterans in Indian Country**. Once identified, these priorities may be used to assist with the collaborative development of **an Indian Country Veterans Affairs policy agenda**, which will inform tribal governments, VA, members of Congress, and other Veteran-serving partners in coming years.

To gather this input, VA plans to hold two tribal consultation sessions in 2016.

The first consultation will take place **Wednesday, June 29, 2016, at 5:15 p.m.** at the Spokane Convention Center, at 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., Spokane, WA 99201. This session is held **in conjunction with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Mid-Year Conference**, taking place June 27–30, 2016, in Spokane, WA.

The second consultation will be scheduled later this year. VA will send a second letter to confirm this session when the date and time are finalized.

VA also invites written comments on the consultation topics, particularly for tribal leaders and representatives who may be unable to attend the consultation meetings in person. Written comments may be submitted as follows:

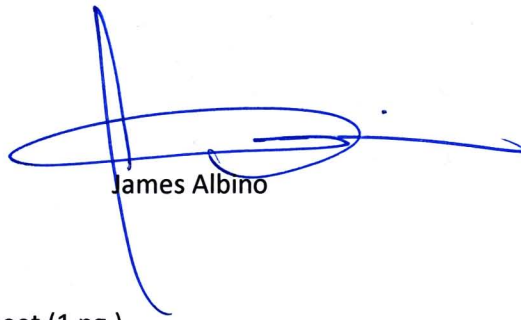
Email: [tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov](mailto:tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov)

Mail: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (075F)  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 915G  
Washington, DC 20420

Written comments should be submitted **no later than October 7, 2016**. For questions, please contact VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations at 202-461-7400 or at the email address above.

VA will compile all 2016 testimony received into a tribal consultation report to be disseminated in 2017. VA wishes to thank tribal leaders for their continued support, input, and engagement as we continue our work to honor and serve American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop that crosses itself, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right and a vertical stroke extending downwards from the bottom of the loop.

James Albino

Enclosures: Priorities for Veterans fact sheet (1 pg.)

# What are your priorities for Veterans across Indian Country?

May 2016

**VA wants to know the top 3–5 priorities that tribes have for serving and engaging Veterans.** We are gathering input on your priorities for Veterans to help create an **Indian Country Veterans Affairs policy agenda**, which will inform tribal governments, VA, members of Congress, and other Veteran-serving partners in coming years.

This list shows the issues and priorities VA has worked to address in recent years.

What are your priorities for serving Veterans in your community? Use the list below to identify your top 3–5 priorities, or add new issues of your own.



## Access to medical care

In Indian Country and for other rural areas, VA is using telehealth to expand access to care: <http://www.telehealth.va.gov/>



## Suicide prevention

VA and IHS are continuing outreach to share resources and information about preventing suicide among Native Veterans.



## VA and tribal or IHS facilities working together

The 2010 VA-IHS memorandum of understanding defined many ways VA and IHS can cooperate. VA has reimbursed almost \$40 million to IHS and tribal health facilities for direct care to Veterans.



## VA supporting traditional providers and treatments

Some VA medical centers have added traditional treatments, like sweat lodges, for Veterans.



## Treatment for PTSD and mental health

VA is using telemental health care to reach Native Veterans with PTSD and other mental health care needs:

<http://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/native/programs/telemental-services.asp>



## Transportation

VA's Beneficiary Travel program reimburses mileage for travel to VA health care:

[http://www.va.gov/HealthBenefits/vtp/highly\\_rural\\_transportation\\_grants.asp](http://www.va.gov/HealthBenefits/vtp/highly_rural_transportation_grants.asp)



## Housing

VA's Native American Direct Loan program helps Native Veterans get low-cost home loans: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/nadl.asp>



## Understanding benefits

VA holds training summits, benefit fairs, and other events in Indian Country to help spread the word about benefits for Native Veterans.



## Homelessness

VA implemented HUD-VASH, a housing voucher program, on tribal lands: <http://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp>



## Benefits for families

Some benefits are available for spouses, children, and survivors of Veterans: <http://explore.va.gov/spouses-dependents-survivors>.



## Employment/vocational rehab

Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program grants are available to tribes: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp>



## Tribal consultation, listening sessions, town hall meetings

VA consults with tribes before any action that significantly affects tribal resources, rights, or lands. VA uses listening sessions and other meetings to supplement formal consultations



## Tribal Veterans Representatives

Tribal Veterans Representatives (TVRs) help connect Native Veterans with VA and other community organizations: <http://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/native/programs/tribal-veterans.asp>

**VA wants to hear from you. What do you think are the most important issues for Veterans living in Indian Country? Choose from the issues above, or add new priorities of your own.**

## My Priorities for Veterans

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Complete this form and email it back to [tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov](mailto:tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov) or send it to:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (075F)  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 915G, Washington, DC 20420

At a consultation, you can give it directly to any VA representatives.

## Learn More About VA

Learn more about any of these programs at [va.gov/tribalgovernment](http://va.gov/tribalgovernment) or [www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/)

Email the VA Office of Tribal Government Relations at [tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov](mailto:tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov)

Find the Office of Tribal Government Relations regional specialist for your state at [va.gov/tribalgovernment/locations.asp](http://va.gov/tribalgovernment/locations.asp)