



**NCAI Policy Research Center: *A
Summary of Findings from the 2005
Tribal Veteran's Survey***

Presented to the NCAI Veteran's Committee

**Mid-Year Session
Green Bay, Wisconsin
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NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

Background

- At the 2004 NCAI Mid-Year Session, the NCAI Veteran's Committee asked NCAI's newly launched Policy Research Committee to gather some information about the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native veterans.
- A brief, 7 question survey was developed by the staff based on the data that the Committee requested. It was approved by the Committee Chairs.

Background

- In December 2004, the survey was mailed to all federally-recognized tribes.
- The survey was accompanied by a short cover letter that explained the purpose of the survey and encouraged tribes to participate so that the NCAI Veteran's Committee could take into account the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native veterans nationally as they developed their policy priorities and resolutions.

Sample

- Total of 553 survey were mailed out to tribes
- NCAI sent out two broadcast fax “reminders”
- Ninety-three surveys were completed and returned (17% response rate)
- Responses were received from every region of Indian Country

Overview of Findings:

Tribal Veteran's Committees

- 77% of responding tribes stated that they did not have a Veteran's Committee
- Many, however, expressed the need for a Veteran's Committee
- 23% said they have established a Veteran's Committee; many of the responses indicated that the Committee was only a few years old

Overview of Findings: Tribal Veteran's Services Offices

- 78% of responding tribes stated that they did not have a Veteran's Services Office
- More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of responding tribes are not providing specific services to veterans through Veteran's Services Offices

Overview of Findings:

Tribal Veteran's Services Offices

- Although it is not clear where veterans are receiving services from, they may be receiving services from local IHS agencies, tribal social services departments, local VA hospitals, or private agencies

Overview of Findings:

Members Currently Serving

- 50% of responding tribes stated that one or more members of their tribe were currently serving in the armed forces
- 27% said they did not know if (and how many) members were currently serving in the armed forces
- 23% said they did not currently have any members serving in the armed forces

Overview of Findings: Members Currently Serving Overseas

- 27% of responding tribes said they did not know if members were currently serving overseas
- 33% said they knew they had members currently serving overseas; these tribes (n=30) reported a total of 336 members overseas
- 40% of respondents reported 0 members currently serving overseas

Overview of Findings: Location of Members Currently Serving Overseas

- 27% of responding tribes reported tribal members currently serving in Iraq and/or Afghanistan
- These tribes (n=25) reported a total of 484 members in Iraq and/or Afghanistan

Overview of Findings: Location of Members Currently Serving Overseas

- 2% of responding tribes reported tribal members currently serving in Korea

Overview of Findings: Location of Members Currently Serving Overseas

- 7% of responding tribes reported tribal members currently serving overseas in places other than Iraq, Afghanistan, and Korea
- Tribes reported 11 members serving in Italy, 2 serving in Japan, and 1 serving in Germany

Overview of Findings:

Tribal Records of Members Serving in the Armed Forces

- 41% of responding tribes reported that they kept records of all tribal members who have ever served in the armed forces
- The 38 tribes that kept records reported a total of 8,128 members having ever served in the armed forces

Overview of Findings: Tribal Surveys of Veteran's Needs

- 11% of responding tribes (n= 10) reported that they had conducted a Veteran's Needs survey
- In assessing the greatest social and economic needs of Native Veterans, 4 primary needs were cited: (a) assistance with determining eligibility for benefits; (b) access to and quality of medical assistance; (c) housing; and (d) unemployment

Overview of Findings: Veteran's Need for Benefit Assistance

- 11% of responding tribes reported that their veterans' greatest need was for benefits counseling
- One tribe said, "There is an extensive need for veteran's pension and income guidelines"

Overview of Findings: Veteran's Need for Medical Assistance

- 11% of responding tribes reported that their veterans' greatest need was access to quality medical assistance
- One tribe said, "Our veterans spend too much time at medical appointments, which becomes extremely exhausting to them"
- Other tribes expressed concern that the services their veterans were receiving were poor because medical were not culturally competent

Overview of Findings: Veteran's Need for Medical Assistance

- Tribes also expressed concern that the services their veterans were receiving were located too far from tribal lands to be accessible
- Responding tribes reported that veterans had to travel an average of 165.4 miles to a medical facility where they could receive services; this distance varied by region

Overview of Findings: Veteran's Need for Medical Assistance

Responding tribes reported that veterans had to travel an average of:

- 439.5 miles in the Alaska Region
- 175.8 miles in the Eastern Oklahoma Region
- 297.5 miles in the Great Plains Region
- 122.1 miles in the Midwest Region

to get to a facility where they could receive VA medical services

Overview of Findings: Veteran's Need for Medical Assistance

Responding tribes reported that veterans had to travel an average of:

- 300 miles in the Navajo Region
- 56.5 miles in the Northeast Region
- 81.63 miles in the Pacific Region
- 202.5 miles in the Rocky Mountain Region

to get to a facility where they could receive VA medical services

Overview of Findings: Veteran's Need for Medical Assistance

Responding tribes reported that veterans had to travel an average of:

- 82.5 miles in the Southeast Region
- 91.5 miles in the Southern Plains Region
- 122 miles in the Southwest Region
- 132.9 miles in the Western Region

to get to a facility where they could receive VA medical services

Overview of Findings: Veteran's Need for Housing

- 7% of responding tribes reported that their veterans' greatest need was housing
- One tribe said, "It is seen in our tribe that many of our veterans are becoming homeless. There is a definite need for housing"

Overview of Findings: Veteran's Need for Employment and Training Services

- 7% of responding tribes reported that their veterans' greatest need was for employment and training services
- One tribe said, "Job training and employment are a great need for our veterans. Many of them do not have the up-to-date skills they need to work in today's society."

Conclusion

- Tribes have little information about tribal members who are serving in the armed forces and little information about their veteran's needs
- Much more information is needed about the socioeconomic status and needs of American Indian/Alaska Native veterans

Conclusion

- Moreover, with long distances to travel to reach VA facilities and few Veteran's Services Offices or Tribal Veteran's Committees in existence, it is unclear to what extent veterans are receiving the services they need and where they are receiving those services