

SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

National Native American Veterans Memorial



CONSULTATION REPORT

35 Regional and Community Consultations
October 2015 to June 2017



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Northern Cheyenne Colorado
Air Force, Korea

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Native Hawaiian – Hawai i
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SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN



REPORT ON REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) has been commissioned by Congress to build a National Native American Veterans Memorial, giving "all Americans the opportunity to learn of the proud and courageous tradition of service of Native Americans in the Armed Forces of the United States." Between October 2015 and June 2017, NMAI director Kevin Gover and museum staff traveled across the country, meeting with Native American veterans, tribal leaders, and community members. During thirty-five consultations held in sixteen states and the District of Columbia, the museum sought feedback and support while sharing plans for the National Native American Veterans Memorial.



NMAI director Kevin Gover (left) and Jesse Edward Oxendine met in Pembroke, North Carolina in May 2016.

Photo by James Locklear (Lumbee Tribe)

“This is a tremendously important effort to recognize Native Americans’ service to this nation. We have so much to celebrate.”

—The Honorable Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Northern Cheyenne)



Gila River Indian Community veterans at the memorial consultation in Chandler, Arizona, October 5, 2016.

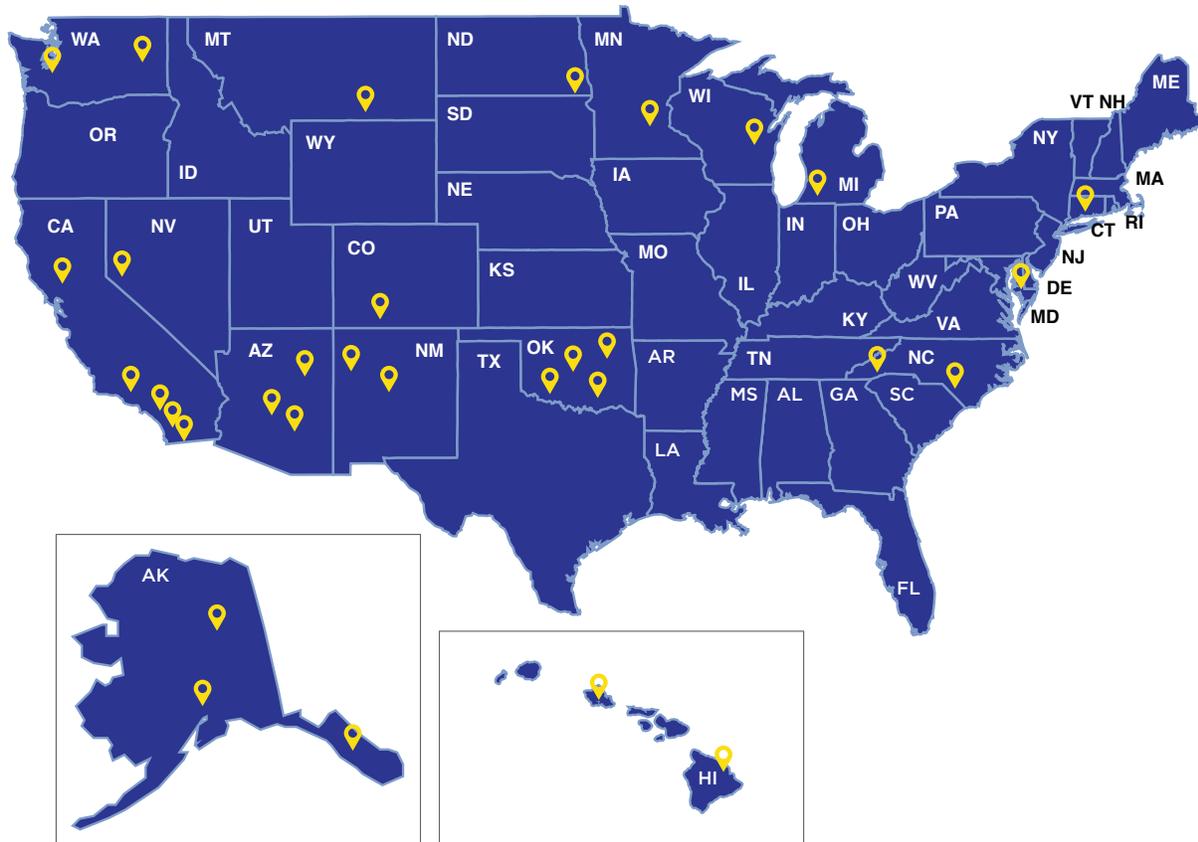
“What we need to recognize and celebrate is this is our land and this is our culture, and we all have a spirit of defending our homeland. In the end . . . we do this . . . because we love our homeland.”

—Allen K. Hoe (Native Hawaiian), NNAVM Advisory Committee

The consultations, attended by approximately 1,200 people, comprised the first phase of preparations for the congressionally mandated memorial. The findings of these meetings shaped the call for proposals for the memorial design; the final design will be announced in the summer of 2018.

When completed, the memorial on the National Mall will honor the extraordinary tradition of military service of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, while educating the public about this often overlooked history of patriotism and sacrifice. The memorial will be dedicated on the grounds of the museum in Washington, DC, on Veterans Day 2020.

One of the primary goals set by the NMAI was to conduct at least one consultation in each of the twelve regions of the country identified by the National Congress of American Indians and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Museum staff visited several regions multiple times, striving to connect with as many communities, Native veterans, and tribal leaders as possible. NMAI staff was met with warmth and appreciation by veterans, as many learned for the first time that the United States was finally recognizing their patriotism and bravery.



National Native American Veterans Memorial Project Consultations 2015–17 Memorial Host Communities and Locations

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| <p>AK Alaska Federation of Natives
Annual Convention, Fairbanks
Alaska Native Heritage Center,
Anchorage
Sealaska Heritage Institute, Juneau</p> <p>AZ Gila River Indian Community
Hopi Tribe
National Indian Gaming Association
Convention, Phoenix</p> <p>CA Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
Colusa Indian Community and California
Nations Indian Gaming Association
National Congress of American Indians
Annual Convention, San Diego
San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
Southern California American Indian
Veterans Association</p> | <p>CO Southern Ute Indian Tribe</p> <p>CT Mohegan Tribe</p> <p>DC Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes
National Museum of the American Indian
United Southern and Eastern Tribes
Veterans Affairs Committee
VA Office of Tribal Government Relations</p> <p>HI Hilo
Honolulu</p> <p>MI Pokagon Band of Potawatomi</p> <p>MN Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux
Community</p> <p>MT Crow Nation</p> <p>NC Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina</p> | <p>ND Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe</p> <p>NM Navajo Nation
Pueblo of Laguna and Pueblo
of Tesuque</p> <p>NV Reno-Sparks Indian Colony</p> <p>OK Cherokee Nation
Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes
Choctaw Nation
Comanche Nation</p> <p>WA National Congress of American Indians
Mid-Year Conference, Spokane
Suquamish Tribe</p> <p>WI Oneida Nation</p> |
|--|--|--|

“This is about the warrior, not the war.”

—Chairman Kevin Brown (Mohegan Tribe)
NNAVM Advisory Committee

Color Guards and drum groups opened many of the consultations; tribal leaders welcomed attendees and offered remarks about their communities’ histories of service and sacrifice. Traditional songs and blessings took place alongside prayers for healing and guidance in the creation of the memorial.

Participants told stories of their family and community members’ outstanding military service: stories of Code Talkers from multiple tribes who had used their Native languages to transmit coded messages during both world wars; remembrances of valiant recipients of the Medal of Honor; mentions of young people recruited to service from their boarding schools; and accounts of the Battle for the Aleutians and the service of Alaska Natives in the Alaska Territorial Guard.

As they traveled across the country, museum staff members were inspired to see the ways in which Native veterans are recognized and honored in their home communities. Many have compiled extensive records of tribal members who served, and their stories are told in tribal veterans’ memorials and exhibitions in museums and community centers.

The time has come for this extraordinary tradition of patriotism, service, and sacrifice to be acknowledged and honored on a national scale.



Buddy Bond Color Guard presenting the colors for the opening of the Veterans Memorial consultation hosted by the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes in Oklahoma City, OK, July 19, 2016.



INPUT FROM NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS

Led by the Honorable Ben Nighthorse Campbell and Chickasaw Nation Lieutenant Governor Jefferson Keel, an advisory committee of distinguished Native American veterans, tribal leaders, and family members assisted the museum with the consultations and outreach, while providing continued advice on the project. The consultations with Native American veterans and their families ensure the feedback, advice, and stories of these communities are at the core of the memorial's development and design process.

Museum staff wanted to better understand the experiences of Native veterans and their reasons for serving, and to ask for their support of and recommendations for the memorial. Their input clarifies the story the memorial will convey to the public about Native peoples' distinct legacy of military service.



Chickasaw Nation Lt. Governor and Vietnam veteran Jefferson Keel delivering remarks at the Navajo Nation Veterans Memorial consultation in Mentmore, New Mexico, March 15, 2017.

“Our Native Americans and Alaska Native men and women have served in the United States armed forces with honor and distinction, defending the security of our nation and state of Alaska with their lives, whenever called upon.”

—Norma Jean Dunne (Tsimshian)

Many people are surprised to learn that American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians choose to serve in great numbers a country that has not only betrayed its promises to them but has also historically treated their people poorly. Repeatedly in the consultations emerged a feeling of responsibility—a sacred responsibility—to protect one’s homeland, family, community, and cultural traditions. In Ignacio, Colorado, one veteran spoke movingly about Native peoples’ commitment to protecting and defending the land where their great-great-grandparents rest.

“Our great-great-grandparents’ bones are in this land that we live on, so we still think of it as our own. We’re willing to put forth our lives to keep enemies away.”

—Rod Grove (Southern Ute)



From left: Verné Boerner (Iñupiaq), president and CEO of the Alaska Native Health Board, and Lester Secatero (Navajo), chairman of the Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board, attending consultations between the NMAI and the Veterans Affairs Office of Tribal Government Relations. Washington, DC, September 28, 2016.

Attendees communicated clearly a number of universal themes:

- The memorial must be inclusive, honoring all Native American veterans, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, both men and women, and from all eras and branches of service.
- The memorial should recognize the great sacrifices made and support given by the families of those who serve.
- A preference was expressed for locating the memorial on the quieter, north side of the museum grounds to allow for a peaceful and contemplative experience, as well as proximity to the museum's flowing water feature.
- The memorial should convey a sense of Native spirituality, including a space for reflection and cleansing.
- The memorial should be a place of healing for veterans and their families and for the service members returning home. Many veterans expressed pain and sorrow that they still feel about their experiences, and the need for healing to be a part of memorializing their service.

“In our heart, this is still our land, so we’re fighting still for our land.”

—Mitchelene BigMan (Crow/Hidatsa), NNAVM Advisory Committee

These recommendations shaped the criteria by which submissions were evaluated in an open, juried, international design competition. Artists, designers, architects, and others submitted their initial ideas for the memorial by accessing a custom website designed specifically for this competition. Five semi-finalists were invited by the jurors to present their designs to the jury and the public in February 2018. Final design presentations will occur throughout the spring with an announcement of the winner anticipated in the summer of 2018.



QUOTES FROM CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

“The idea of Native Americans being warriors is something that is ingrained in each and every one of us.”

—Debra Kay Mooney (Choctaw), NNAVM Advisory Committee

“I am American and I am Indian and I am a vet. I believe I was compelled to serve to honor the warrior tradition, which is inherent to most Native American societies—the pillars of strength, honor, pride, devotion, and wisdom.”

—Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Northern Cheyenne)

“The memorial must reflect life. . . . We were taught to love life, even to the point of risking our lives to save the life of another person.”

—Nelson N. Angapak, Sr. (Yup'ik)

“This is why this memorial is so important. You are educating other cultures, other people around the globe that will come to this memorial.”

—Colonel Rhonda Williams (Comanche/Kiowa/Apache/Delaware)

“This memorial will represent all Native people, Native soldiers—men and women. But let's not forget the families of those Native people that went off to war. . . . Let's . . . not forget the role that the families, mainly the women, the grandmas played, in this great history of ours.”

—Commander Howard Richards (Southern Ute), Southern Ute Veterans Association

“I have always been proud of my service in Vietnam. However, a greater pride is found in our children's service, their gift of freedom to the world. They are brave, these young men and women who sacrifice daily for the cause of freedom.”

—Allen K. Hoe (Native Hawaiian), NNAVM Advisory Committee



**SMITHSONIAN
NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL
COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS**

- October 20, 2015** National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Annual Convention, San Diego, CA
- January 21, 2016** Choctaw Nation, Durant, OK
- March 14, 2016** National Indian Gaming Association Convention, Phoenix, AZ
- May 18, 2016** Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, Pembroke, NC
- June 1, 2016** Mohegan Tribe, Uncasville, CT
- June 27, 2016** NCAI Mid-Year Conference, Spokane, WA
- June 29, 2016** Crow Nation, Crow Agency, MT
- July 19, 2016** Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Oklahoma City, OK
- July 20, 2016** Comanche Nation, Lawton, OK
- July 21, 2016** Cherokee Nation, Tulsa, OK
- September 28, 2016** VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations, Washington, DC
- October 5, 2016** Gila River Indian Community, Chandler, AZ
- October 21, 2016** Alaska Federation of Natives Convention, Fairbanks, AK
- October 28, 2016** Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Cherokee, NC
- November 10, 2016** San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, Highland, CA
- November 14, 2016** Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Rancho Mirage, CA
- February 8, 2017** United Southern and Eastern Tribes Veterans Affairs Committee, Washington, DC
- February 21, 2017** Neal S. Blaisdell Center, Honolulu, HI
- February 23, 2017** Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani, College of Hawaiian Language of the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Hilo, HI
- March 6, 2017** Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, Dowagiac, MI
- March 10, 2017** Oneida Nation, Green Bay, WI
- March 14, 2017** Hopi Tribe, Kykotsmovi Village, AZ
- March 15, 2017** Navajo Nation, Mentmore, NM
- March 22, 2017** Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes, Washington, DC
- March 27, 2017** Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Prior Lake, MN
- March 28, 2017** Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Hankinson, ND
- April 7, 2017** Southern California American Indian Veterans Association, Valley Center, CA
- April 28, 2017** Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Ignacio, CO
- May 1, 2017** Reno–Sparks Indian Colony, Reno, NV
- May 2, 2017** Colusa Indian Community and California Nations Indian Gaming Association, Colusa, CA
- May 22, 2017** Pueblo of Laguna and Pueblo of Tesuque, Albuquerque, NM
- May 25, 2017** National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC
- June 9, 2017** Suquamish Tribe, Suquamish, WA
- June 12, 2017** Sealaska Heritage Institute, Juneau, AK
- June 14, 2017** Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage, AK

Learn more:

www.AmericanIndian.si.edu

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COVER: LEFT | Haskell Osife, Antone American Legion Post 51 Color Guard posting the colors to open the memorial consultation hosted by the Gila River Indian Community in Chandler, Arizona, October 5, 2016. **MIDDLE, TOP** | From left: NMAI director Kevin Gover (Pawnee), National Native American Veterans Memorial Advisory Committee member Marshall Gover (Pawnee), and Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez, attending consultations between the NMAI and the Veterans Affairs Office of Tribal Government Relations, Washington, DC, September 28, 2016. **MIDDLE, BOTTOM** | Juanita Mullen (Seneca), American Indian veterans liaison at the VA's Centers for Minority Veterans and Women Veterans, attending consultations between the NMAI and the Veterans Affairs Office of Tribal Government Relations, Washington, DC, September 28, 2016. **RIGHT** | War bonnets adorn uniform jackets at a Ton Kon Gah (Kiowa Black Leggings Society) ceremonial near Anadarko, Oklahoma, 2006. NMAI