

## Title Sponsors



**U.S. Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

## Partner Sponsor





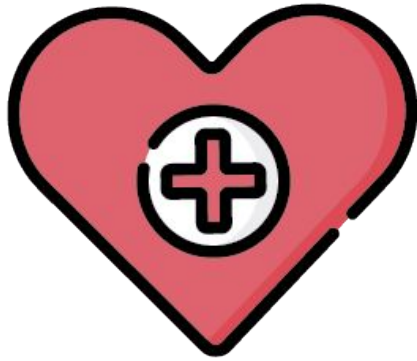
# 2024

## Statewide Symposium in Support of Service Members, Veterans & Their Families

April 17-18 | Phoenix, Arizona

arizona coalition  
for military families





# Challenges & Barriers

Session 1

Healthcare Barriers for Rural  
Native American Veterans



# Facilitators



**Shawn Heistand**

CONNECTION COACH

Arizona Coalition for Military Families



**Joe Acevedo**

COORDINATED ENTRY SOCIAL WORKER

Northern Arizona VA Healthcare System

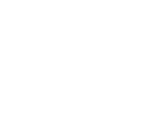




# Agenda

**1** Barriers in Housing and  
Healthcare

**2** Panel Discussion



# Healthcare Barriers for Rural and Native American Veterans

Joshua Wear and Andrew Taylor

Northern Arizona VA Healthcare System



# NAVAHCS Team: Coordinating Team: Joshua Wear and Andrew Taylor



## Daily Motivation



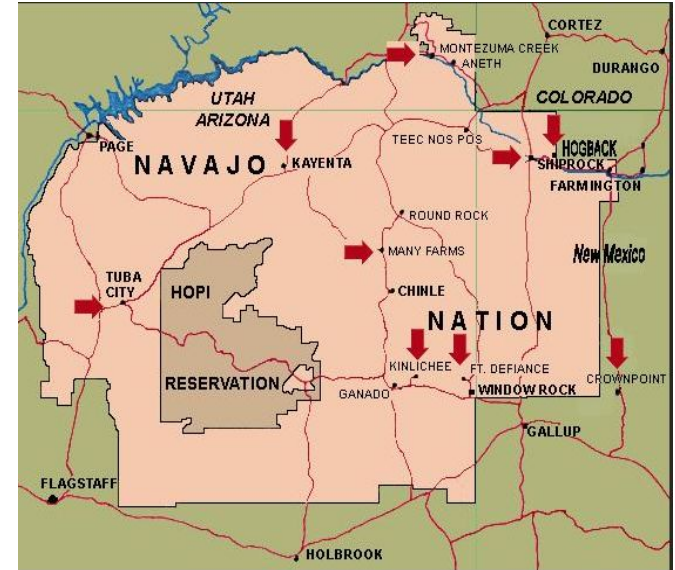
Patients now have access to primary care five days a week at Navajo Nation's Chinle rural health clinic. To celebrate the expansion of services, Northern Arizona VA hosted a grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony.

"This is a huge step in making good on our obligation to serve our Native Veterans as well as they've served us and our country," said Steve Sample, medical center director (2<sup>nd</sup> from right).

Internal VA Use Only

# NAVAHCS Rural Health Coordinators

- Engaged in multiple trips with Hopi and Navajo Nations to “build Trust” and learn how we can better serve the native Veterans.
- Engagement with the leadership at our 4 rural “clinic in a Clinic” sites on the reservation.
- Collaborated with IHS Navajo Nation Area Leadership and shared VA goals to better serve the native Veterans.
- This led to establishing Native Veteran focus groups – voice of the customer.
  - Two biggest issues – **face-to-face care and transportation.**
- These efforts lead NAVAHCS to identify native Veteran access as the topic health care disparity
- These efforts identified Gaps and helped focus our efforts:
  - VA Providers. Establish current IAA/office permit.
  - Currently working to add VTS coverage to Chinle area.





# NAVAHCS Rural Health Coordinators

- Native Veteran PACT Act Outreach Efforts:
  - 16 Claims/Enrollment/PACT Act TES NADL and various VA programs event.
  - Enrolled/update/Transfer 161 native Veterans and travel reimbursement process.
  - 506 claims, 152 PACT Act screening, 72 Native American Direct-Home Loan.
  - 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit at Twin Arrows and outreach to Chapter Houses
  - Also focusing on larger community events: Navajo Nation Fairs at Chinle and Tuba City.
- Office of Rural Health partnered with NAVAHCS to rollout a pilot program Rural Native Veteran Health Care Navigator Program (RNV-HCNP)
  - Out of the 4-pilot program NAVAHCS hired the first Navigator Coordinator.
  - Navigator Coordinator will facilitate the use of VA care that is tailored to the native veteran's care living in rural areas.
  - Help the native veterans self-manage their care, locate healthcare resources, provide education to the native veterans and their families, support outreach and any other additional support.
  - Looking at adding a second navigator position due to geographical distances of Hopi and Navajo Nations



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

Health  
Choice



# Panel Discussion

Gabriella Mehl

Navajo Nation Western Agency Chapter  
House Veterans Organization

Holly Figueroa

Blue Cross Blue Shield | Health Choice





# Healthcare Barriers for Rural and Native American Veterans

2024 Statewide Symposium In Support of Service Members, Veterans & Their Families  
April 17, 2024



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

Health  
Choice

# Loloma



Holly Figueroa

Hopi/Ohkay Owingeh

Sipaulovi Village

Sun Clan

Pronouns She/Her

Tribal Liaison, BCBSAZ Health Choice

# Tribal Veterans & Code Talkers

BCBSAZ Health Choice honors those who have served and are serving. There are many stories to be shared about contributions and unbroken codes by our Tribal Service Members and Veterans. We honor all service members and Veterans Thank You for your Service.

Thank you for fighting and protecting the land and privileges that we all have today, for you are the true hero.



# Native American Code Talkers

- Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Tribes
- Cherokee Nation
- Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes
- Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe
- Choctaw Nation
- Comanche Nation

- Cow Creek Sioux Tribe
- Crow Tribe
- Fond du Lac Band of Lake
- Superior Chippewa
- Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribe
- Ho-Chunk Nation (Wisconsin)
- **Hopi Tribe**

- Kiowa Tribe
- Laguna Pueblo
- Lower Brule Sioux Tribe
- **Navajo Nation**
- Menominee Nation
- St. Regis Mohawk Tribe





# Native American Code Talkers (Cont.)

- Mescogee Nation
- Oglala Sioux Tribe
- Oneida Nation (Wisconsin)
- Osage Nation
- Pawnee Nation
- Ponca Tribe (Oklahoma)
- Pueblo of Acoma
- Rosebud Sioux Tribe
- Sac and Fox Tribe (Iowa)
- Santee Sioux Tribe
- Seminole Nation (Oklahoma)
- Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
- **Tonto Apache Tribe**
- **White Mountain Apache Tribe**
- Yankton Sioux Tribe

# How Does Culture Impact Care/Service?

Health is a *cultural construct* based on cultural issues and beliefs about the nature of disease/illness and the human body. Therefore, should be considered in the delivery of services.



# Tribal Sovereignty

My recommendation would be ensuring you or your agency honors and respects the sovereignty of all the Tribal Nations and their diverse cultures in your respective service areas



# Barriers

---

Impact of Federal Policy

---

Impact of Historical Trauma

---

Impact of European Contact

---

Complex Access to Care



# Barriers to Services

Economic barriers

Lack of awareness about tribal community issues

Communication styles

Stigma associated with mental illness/services

Mistrust

Transportation

Phone/Internet Accessibility

Discrimination

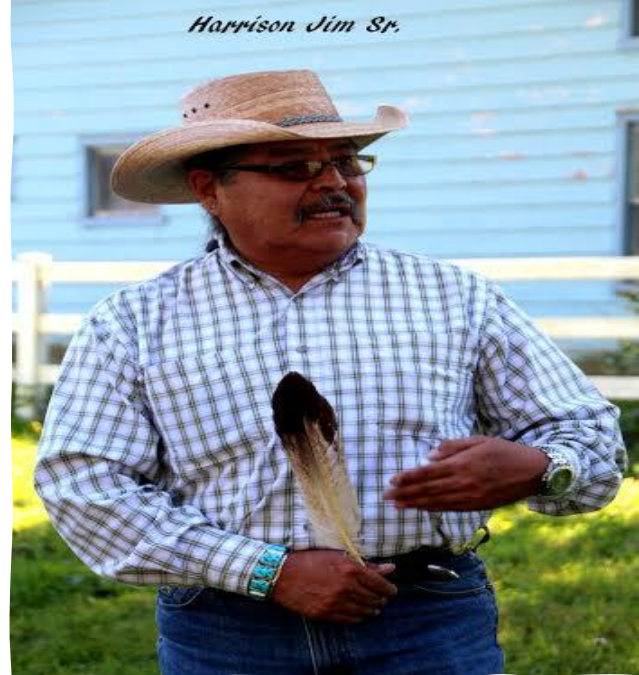
Lack of awareness and knowledge of tribal communities in the service area

Lack of understanding of tribal structures

- Justice System
- Health Care

# Philosophies

- Cultural Competence emphasizes the need for health care systems and providers to be aware of and responsive to patients' cultural perspectives and backgrounds. Ensuring that family preferences, values, cultural traditions, language and socioeconomic conditions are respected.
  - Cultural Competence is a skill that can be taught, trained, and achieved and is often described as a necessary and sufficient condition of working effectively with diverse patients.
- Cultural Humility involves entering a relationship with another person with the intention of honoring their beliefs, customs and values. It entails an ongoing process of self-exploration and self-critique combined with a willingness to learn from others.
  - The concept of Cultural Humility, de-emphasizes cultural knowledge and competency and places greater emphasis on lifelong nurturing and self-evaluation and critique.

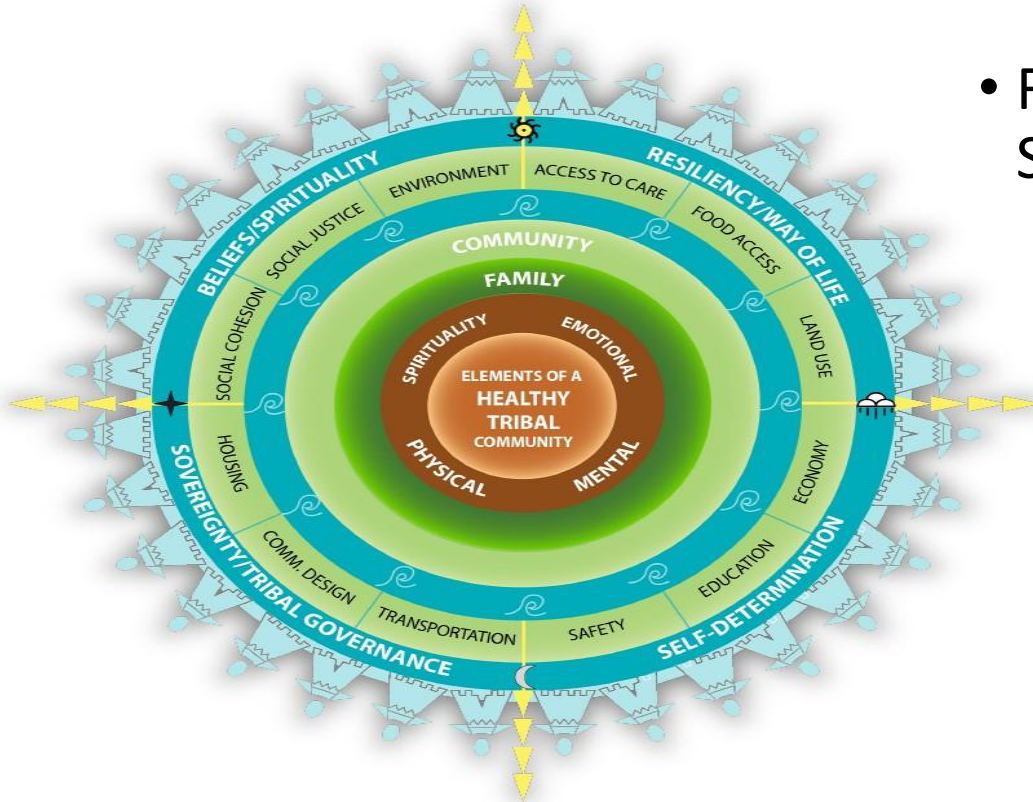


## Tribal Veteran Considerations

- Have an understanding of Moral Injury related to AIAN Veterans, Military Service Members and Families
- Not all AIAN Veterans like to look back at their Veteran Service
- Ceremonies and Rituals related to AIAN Veterans



# Elements of A Healthy Tribal Community



- Four Tribal Principles of Sustaining Health
  - Beliefs & Spirituality
  - Resiliency/Way of Life
  - Self-Determination
  - Sovereignty/Tribal Governance

# Building Relationships

Native American cultures are highly diverse and each community will have its own set of expectations, beliefs, and practices

- Have a good contact person
- Present/Talk with Tribal Leadership
- Consistency
- Meet Regularly
- Meet IN PERSON
- Be flexible



# The Native American Veteran, What should you know?

## The service to this country by Tribal Veterans

- AIAN served even though they were not citizens of this country or could vote
- They were given White/English names instead of using their given names
- Code Talkers - Over 30 Tribes and Nations used their native language during combat operations and ended both wars in the European and Pacific Theater of operations.
- Cultural beliefs and values
  - What does Honor mean?



# Strengthening What We Do



*Proprietary and Confidential*

- Culture
- Respect
- Tribal Sovereignty
- Language
- Build Trust
- Conduct stigma awareness training
- Educate providers and stakeholders on cultural norms
- Utilize Trauma Informed Approaches
- Increase your awareness of Tribal Issues & Topics
  - Tribal justice system
  - Tribal infrastructure
  - Mental health
  - Physical health



# Asquali Thank You

Holly Figueroa  
(928) 214-2169

[Holly.Figueroa@azblue.com](mailto:Holly.Figueroa@azblue.com)

<https://www.healthchoiceaz.com/providers/tribal-program/>



# Questions?





# Session Evaluation

We want to hear from you!

