



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON DC 20420

NOV - 7 2012

**MEMORANDUM FOR UNDER SECRETARIES, ASSISTANT SECRETARIES,
OTHER KEY OFFICIALS, AND FIELD FACILITY DIRECTORS**

SUBJECT: National Native American Heritage Month, 2012

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is pleased to observe the history and culture of National Native American Heritage Month during the month of November. This year's theme is "Serving with Honor, Pride and Devotion."

From generation to generation, American Indians handed down invaluable cultural knowledge and rich traditions in art, folk tales, literature, religion, language and American history, which continue to thrive in Native American communities and across our country today. Native Americans also have served in the U.S. Armed Forces with honor and distinction, defending the security of our Nation with their lives. Historically, Native Americans have the highest record of service per capita compared to other ethnic groups.

According to the U.S. Department of Interior, the United States has 566 federally recognized tribes and more than 100 tribes recognized by states. As of 2011, an estimated 5.1 million people identified as American Indian or Alaska Native alone or American Indian and Alaska Native in combination with one or more other races, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

As we commemorate the contributions and heritage of Native Americans, we also recommit to supporting tribal self-determination, security and prosperity for all American Indians and Alaska Natives. VA also salutes and honors all American Indian and Alaska Native employees who help care for our Nation's Veterans and their family members through their commitment and dedicated service. As of September 2012, VA employees who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native represented 1.4 percent of VA's total permanent workforce.

I strongly encourage each of you to participate in the observance by sponsoring appropriate activities and programs at your facilities and offices. For more information on VA's American Indian and Alaska Native Program, please contact Aurelia Waters, Equal Employment Specialist, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, at Aurelia.Waters@va.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rafael A. Torres", is positioned above the printed name.

Rafael A. Torres, Acting