



Notes from the Chief

What I'm working on for You

Osiyo -

Cherokee Nation recently hosted a gathering for a public and open discussion on a project that is important to me and all of Indian Country: the future Native American Warrior Memorial in Washington, D.C. The forthcoming memorial will be housed on the campus of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.

Our good friend Kevin Gover, director of the NMAI, led the discussion along with other members of the advisory committee for the memorial, including Deputy Chief S. Joe Crittenden, a U.S. Navy veteran. The advisory board is comprised of tribal leaders and veterans from across Indian Country and represents every branch of the Armed Forces.

The Native American Veterans Memorial is important because Indian people serve at a higher rate than any other racial group in this country, and our Native warriors have fought in every American battle since the Revolutionary War. Sadly, outside of Indian Country most Americans do not know these facts.

I am proud of all the contributions Cherokees and American Indians have made to America and to the U.S. military. Throughout centuries, many fine, young Native men and women have served. To all of them, through the generations, we owe a debt of gratitude. They are true American heroes and deserve to be included when Americans come to the U.S. capital to remember their veterans. These men and women represent every tribe in America, more than 565 unique sovereign governments, and each one has its own culture and customs.

Of all the monuments that are in Washington, none of them recognize Native veterans. All of our tribes have always honored and revered our warriors, and it's time we change this disservice. Honoring and taking care of the very people who keep us free is our way, the Native American way, of showing appreciation. It's the right thing to do.

A nod of gratitude goes to Cherokee Nation citizen and U.S. representative from the second district, Markwayne Mullin, for pushing through a bill in Congress that would set aside space on the National Mall in D.C. as a sacred place to honor the sacrifices and service of so many Native American warriors.

The estimated date of unveiling the monument will be sometime in 2020, which allows ample time for consultation, fundraising and design discussion. The NMAI was dutiful in coming to Oklahoma to seek input for our local Indian veterans about what the memorial should include and how it should look and feel for visitors and families of those who have served.

I look forward to seeing what it will look like one day. It will represent in perpetuity our respect and admiration of Native veterans in a meaningful way. Our heritage as soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and coast guard is something we should all take pride in.

If you have ideas or input on the memorial, there is still time to comment. Please visit <http://www.nmai.si.edu/support/national-native-american-veterans-memorial/> or send an email with your input to nmai-nativeveteransmemorial@si.edu.

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