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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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VA Announces First Time Inter-Tribal Veteran Stand Down

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK, June 7, 2013 – VA announces first-time partnership between the State and Tribes to host an inter-tribal Veteran Stand Down focused on Native American Veterans who are homeless or living in overcrowded conditions. The Stand Down will be held at the Gordon Cooper Technology Center in Shawnee, Oklahoma on June 27, 2013 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Breakfast will be served at 7 a.m. and lunch at 11:30 a.m. Multiple tribes will be represented and provide transportation at area pick-up points for the Stand Down: Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes, Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, Sac & Fox Nation, Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, and Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma. No Veteran will be turned away.

“Many state, tribal, local, and national organizations will come together to provide a safe and welcoming environment for Veterans living in tribal communities and surrounding areas who are homeless or living in overcrowded situations,” said Mary Culley, specialist with the VA’s Office of Tribal Government Relations in the Southern Plains and Eastern Regions.

The Stand Down will offer a variety of resources and services including: legal aid assistance, vocational rehabilitation service information, housing options, Veteran benefits information and employment assistance services. Representatives will be onsite from Social Security Administration, Oklahoma State Department of Human Services, the United States Department of Interior, Office of Special Trustee for American Indians, and other key federal, state and tribal partner organizations. All Veterans will have access to a wide range of health care screening services, including health assessments, dental screenings and eye exams to name just a few.

“Leaving the military can be difficult,” said Lenny Vile, homeless Veteran coordinator for the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center. “A lot of Native Americans Veterans isolate themselves and return to their tribes – some go years without knowing the benefits that are owed to them – our goal is to change that during the Stand Down.”

Native Americans have served with distinction in the Armed Forces for more than 200 years. Currently, there is an estimated 21,000 Native American Veterans in Oklahoma, and only 3,153 are enrolled to receive VA services.

For more media information on the Stand Down, please contact the Office of Public Affairs, Oklahoma City VAMC at 405-456-3614. For event information please contact Mary Culley, Tribal Government Relations Specialist at 405-626-3426.

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