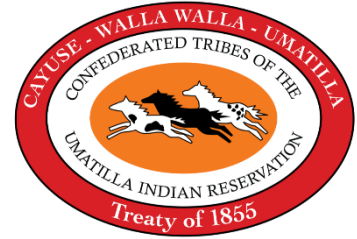


Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

PRESS RELEASE



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CTUIR, Washington State Dept. of Veterans Affairs Sign Accreditation MOA

MISSION – The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) on April 16 allowing the CTUIR's Veterans Services to seek federal accreditation under the WDVA.

Veterans Services Manager Sam Spino said once his office gains accreditation it can help CTUIR members who are military veterans living in Washington State adjudicate claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

"This MOA is needed to better assist CTUIR members who live in the State of Washington because it will allow direct communication between the CTUIR Veterans Services and the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs," he said. "This process has taken a little over a year to get done, and it will streamline our efforts to help CTUIR veterans in the pursuit of their entitled benefits."

According to the MOA, all veteran service organizations and their representatives must be accredited with the VA to assist clients with benefits claims. And with a recent change to federal law, tribal government employees can now become VA-accredited, which Spino seeks to do via the agreement.

To process VA claims under the MOA accredited Veterans Services employees must:

- Accept no fee or gratuity for service to a client,
- Submit all VA claims with WDVA power-of-attorney for VA service-connected disability compensation and/or nonservice-connected pension through the WDVA claims quality assurance program,
- Be part of a quarterly claims approval report maintained by the WDVA, and
- Allow the WDVA to represent any VA appeals for veterans or non-veteran clients such as spouses through the WDVA appeals management process at the Seattle VA Regional Office.

"We are proud to partner with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation", said Solomon Gilbert, WDVA deputy director. "Together with the Veterans Services office, we know this partnership will result in many more CTUIR members being connected with the veterans benefits they earned by serving in the military."

Veterans Services has a similar accreditation with the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs. Spino said each state veterans affairs program holds its own charter and sets its own training and testing to maintain accreditation from its member organizations.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Walla Walla and Umatilla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.

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Caption1: Aaron Ashley, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Board of Trustees vice chairman, shakes hands and exchanges gifts with Solomon Gilbert, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) executive deputy director, after signing a memorandum of agreement on April 16 between the CTUIR's Veterans Services and WDVA to allow Veterans Services to seek federal accreditation under the WDVA. With the accreditation, Veteran Services can adjudicate veterans claims through the U.S. Veterans Affairs on behalf of CTUIR members living in Washington State. CTUIR

Caption2: From left are Steven Gill, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) tribal liaison; Abel Matamorus, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Veterans Services employee and Army veteran; James Halfmoon-Fasthorse, CTUIR Department of Children and Families Services employee and Army veteran, Woodrow Star, CTUIR member and Army veteran; Aaron Ashley, CTUIR Board of Trustees vice chairman; Solomon Gilbert, WDVA executive deputy director; David Wolf, CTUIR Veterans Committee vice chairman; Ashleigh Wolf, Veterans Committee chairwoman; Sam Spino, CTUIR Veterans Services manager; and Alan Crawford, CTUIR General Council chairman and Veterans Committee member. Ashley and Gilbert each hold copies of a memorandum of agreement they signed on April 16 between the CTUIR's Veterans Services and WDVA to allow Veterans Services to seek federal accreditation under the WDVA. CTUIR