

November 19, 2018

Dear Secretary Skorton:

By way of introduction: my name is:

Dr. George Blue Spruce.

I am a full-blood member of the Laguna and OhKay-Owingeh Tribes of New Mexico.

My claim to fame is that I am recognized as the first American Indian Dentist in the United States.

I was able to attain this accomplishment with the assistance of the U.S. Navy. I fulfilled my tour of duty and then transferred my commission into the United States Public Health Service (U.S.P.H.S.); where I provided dental care to the cadets at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings point, New York; to the underserved people in all countries of South America (Via the World Health Organization) and to my American Indian People on various Reservations across the Nation.

I spent 28 years in the U.S.P.H.S. and retired with the rank of Assistant Surgeon General (equivalent to a Navy Rear Admiral). Needless to say, I am extremely proud of my service to improve the health conditions of American Indians.

In Addition, my fellow U.S.P.H.S. Officers are deployed to assist in survival activities for populations devastated by disasters around the world, such as 9-11 and recent hurricanes.

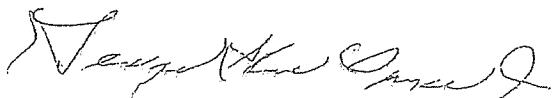
We are a "Uniformed Service." We wear uniforms similar to the U.S. Navy and provide healthcare to the U.S. Coast Guard personnel,

I am extremely proud of my tour of duty in the U.S.P.H.S.

It would be wrong for the Smithsonian to build a museum honoring American Indian Veterans of other Uniformed Services and not honor the Veterans of the U.S. P. H.S.

I urge you to reconsider the design of the proposed memorial to include the U.S. P.H.S.

Sincerely,



RADM (Retired) George Blue Spruce, D.D.S. MPH

December 10, 2018

Director Kevin Gover
Museum of the American Indian
4th Street SW and Constitution Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20560

Dear Museum Director Gover:

A few months ago, I learned that the Smithsonian's Museum of the American Indian has selected an artist to design and build a National Native American Veterans Memorial honoring all Native American Veterans. It was my privilege a few weeks ago to attend a dinner to honor that artist, Mr. Harvey Pratt. As you may know, the dinner and ceremony was hosted by Mr. Pratt's tribe, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma. It was a great event and I was able to witness the Tribe's donation of \$1,000,000 to help fund the National Native American Veterans Memorial. I was greatly impressed by Mr. Pratt's service to our country and his artistic ability. We watched a video of his life and I found it to be quite moving.

While I am truly excited about the Memorial, I was disheartened to learn that the approved design for the memorial does not include the United States Public Health Service. I have served in the US Public Health Service for some 32 years, after six years in the Oklahoma Army National Guard, in various locations across the county. I am a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation and I have been extremely proud to represent my country and my tribe as I have served in uniform these 32 somewhat years. The Chickasaw Nation, as well as other tribes, have supported me in my service and have honored me on several occasions. My tribe was extremely happy for and proud of me for achieving the rank of Rear Admiral (upper half) and have worked with me to make a "commercial" to highlight successful tribal citizens.

You may be surprised to know that American Indians/Alaska Natives are well-represented among the officers of the USPHS, with almost 800 serving in the Commissioned Corps at present. That is a higher percentage than any other uniformed service. I think that is an important fact when one considers that American Indian/Alaska Natives serve in all uniformed services in higher proportions than any other racial/ethnic group in the United States. Many PHS Commissioned Officers have also honorably served in the armed services.

I am asking you to re-think the memorial design to include the seal of the US Public Health Service in the Memorial. Upon retirement, PHS Commissioned Officers are considered to be Veterans per US Code, and are entitled to all the rights and privileges thereof. We may not be an armed service, but we are on the front lines of protecting our country against

disease and injury every day, and over 800 of us are working in Indian communities across the country to improve the health of American Indian/Alaska Natives.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read this letter and I sincerely urge you to include the seal of the Public Health Service in the design of this wonderful memorial. I am happy to visit further with you about this request should you be so inclined. My cell is 405 255 7617. Congratulations again on selecting a great artist and thank you for honoring ALL of our veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Meeks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "K" and "M".

RADM Kevin Meeks



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

U.S. Public Health Service

INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE
ROCKVILLE MD 20857

November 21, 2018

Secretary David J. Skorton
The Smithsonian Institution
600 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Dr. Secretary:

It is my understanding that the Smithsonian has approved a design for a National Native American Veterans Memorial and the design does not include the logo of the US Public Health Service (USPHS), of which I am a proud member. Perhaps you are not aware that the USPHS has the highest percentage of Native American officers in its ranks than does any other uniformed service. I am one of those officers, Secretary Skorton, and I am disheartened that the Smithsonian would build a memorial which leaves out the many Native Americans who have served this great country in the USPHS.

I ask you to please reconsider the design and add the USPHS to it. I believe such a change is both necessary and appropriate.

Highest regards,

Brandon L. Taylor, PharmD, BCPS
Captain, US Public Health Service
Enrolled member, Seneca-Cayuga Nation

Kevin Gover, Director
Museum of the American Indian
4th Street SW and Constitution avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20560

Dear Director Gover,

This inquiry is to inform you of my deep concern about the pending National Native American Veterans' Memorial that's being erected on the grounds of Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. It's my understanding the proposed memorial will include the logos of the five-military services but exclude the logo of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) which are two of the seven federal uniformed services. As a Native American Commissioned Corps Officer in the USPHS with almost 30 years of active duty service I find this very disconcerting that our logo may not be included on the memorial.

As you're probably aware, Native American officers in the USPHS and the NOAA are veterans under federal law (42 U.S. Code 213d) and are entitled to all rights and privileges thereof, including the right to burial in a Veterans Affairs cemetery. When I received my commission into the USPHS I took the same oath of office that my fellow military service personnel took that "I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and will obey the orders of the President of the United States."

There are currently over 800 of my fellow USPHS Native American officers serving our country and abroad with pride and distinction. We have a rich history of serving along side our military forces. During World War 1, when President Woodrow Wilson made the USPHS by executive order, a part of the military forces of the U.S. that were assigned to the Army, Navy and Coast Guard. During World War 2 when President Harry S. Truman issued executive order 9575 declaring the USPHS to be a military service and branch of the land and naval forces. Over 663 USPHS officers were assigned to surgical teams. During the Iraq and Afghanistan conflict, where almost 900 USPHS officers have served our US military forces. There have been USPHS officers who have been prisoners of war and sadly USPHS officers who have given the ultimate sacrifice to our nation being killed in enemy action. Most recently USPHS was recognized by President Obama with the Presidential Unit Citation for establishing the Department of Defense medical care units in Liberia to fight the Ebola outbreak.

I'm honored as a Native American veteran to know that this memorial will be a worthy effort to honor all Native Americans who have served our country in uniform. This includes my father Sergeant First Class Daniel W. Wilkins, who retired from the Army in 1968 after proudly serving our country in peace and war (the Korean Conflict). I would be equally as honored to know that I and my past and fellow Native American USPHS and NOAA officers, who have earned the status of "veteran" under federal law, will be recognized by our logos being a part of this memorial.

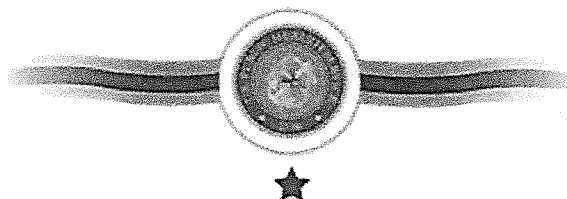
Sincerely,

CAPT Craig S. Wilkins, USPHS

cc: Earl A. Powell III

W. Richard West, Jr

Elizabeth Gordon



**DAWN WYLLIE, MD, MPH
REAR ADMIRAL, USPHS AND
ASSISTANT US SURGEON GENERAL (RET)**

P.O. Box 1555
Penn Valley, CA 95946

January 2, 2019

The Hon. David J. Skorton
Secretary, The Smithsonian Institution
600 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Secretary Skorton:

I am a proud descendent of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, a Dakota tribe in South Dakota. I am a veteran, and I earned my status as a veteran through my 27+ years of active duty as a commissioned officer in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS). I recently retired as an Assistant US Surgeon General with the rank of Rear Admiral. Throughout my career, I served in the Indian Health Service providing direct primary care and consultation to underserved Native Americans in remote locations across several regions (often under austere conditions), including on my tribe's reservation.

I am sending this letter because it has come to my attention that the Smithsonian is planning to build a National Native American Veterans Memorial on the grounds of the National Museum of the American Indian. As an American Indian, I am delighted that the Smithsonian is going to construct this memorial. As a retired USPHS officer, I was very disappointed to learn that my branch of service is not included in the current memorial's design. Of note, there are seven (7) uniformed services of the United States (5 armed, USPHS, and NOAA). USPHS officers serve in the US Coast Guard and within DOD alongside our sister service members. I am an active member of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), the Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP), and the Commissioned Officer Association of the United States Public Health Service (COA).

Secretary Skorton, I am puzzled by the fact that the Smithsonian could ever consider building what purports to be a National Native American Veterans Memorial and exclude the thousands of us who have served in the US Public Health Service. Our Corps has existed since 1889. Our members have served in all of our country's wars since that time, and many of our officers gave their lives in service to our country. I simply do not understand how you could allow us to be omitted from the recognition this memorial will confer.

I therefore ask you to re-consider the design of the memorial and assure the USPHS is included in it. I look forward to visiting the Smithsonian again.

Respectfully,

Dawn Wyllie, MD, MPH
Rear Admiral, USPHS (ret.)