

Thursday, May 21, 2026

Albuquerque Area Tribal Health Policy

Newsletter

Tribal Advisory Committee Delegates Edition



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Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board (AAIHB) Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC) Delegate Edition. This new publication is available on our policy resources website. The newsletter is designed to keep communities, partners, and stakeholders informed about health tribal advisory committees at the local, state, and national level. AAIHB is committed to supporting our members who serve on these TACs.

At AAIHB, we understand that health policy is more than just legislation and regulations - policy work is about ensuring tribal voices are heard, respected, and centered in decisions that affect our people.

Whether you are a tribal leader, health advocate, service provider, or community member, we hope this resource supports your efforts to support Native and tribal sovereignty. Together, we can elevate the Albuquerque Area-wide perspectives and continue building healthier futures for all our communities.

Getting to know Albuquerque Area Delegates

Representation matters - especially when it comes to ensuring that Tribal communities and Native Veterans are heard at the national level. AAIHB is proud to highlight the work and leadership of Adam Archuleta, who serves as the primary delegate for the Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs (VA/ACTIA).

As a representative for the Albuquerque Area, Delegate Archuleta plays a vital role in bringing forward the perspectives, concerns, and priorities of Native Veterans across the Albuquerque Area. His work reflects the broader mission of the VA-ACTIA: to create meaningful pathways for Tribal voices to help shape policies, programs, and services that directly impact Native communities.

This inaugural newsletter delegate edition also recognizes the important work of all IHS and HHS (15) Tribal Advisory Committees supported and followed by the Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board (AAIHB). Together, with all delegates, we hope to strengthen Tribal representation, encourage intergovernmental

collaboration, and ensure that Tribal Nations remain active participants in decisions affecting the health and well-being of their people.

Through stories of leadership, advocacy, and service, this newsletter aims to spotlight the individuals and committees working to advance Tribal priorities while honoring the voices of Native families and communities throughout the Albuquerque Area and beyond.

Who is Adam Archuleta?



Hopi/Tewa

Badger Health & Associates, LLC
Owner & CEO

www.badgerhealth.net

My name is Adam Archuleta, I am Hopi/Tewa. I live in the Pueblo of Tesuque in Northern New Mexico. My mother is Hopi, and is from the Colorado River Indian Tribes in Arizona, while my father is an enrolled member from Ohkay Owingeh in Northern New Mexico.

I've been in healthcare for about 35 years, working with the Indian Health Services. Once I retired from federal services, I started my own healthcare consulting company. Badger Health & Associates is a Native and disabled veteran owned company located in Sante Fe, NM. We offer primarily health services for health centers and hospitals, but can pretty much provide other services as well, e.g., tribal consultation, training, accreditation readiness, medical supplies and personal protective equipment, etc.

How did you become the VA-ACTIA delegate?

Being part of VA-ACTIA was not on my radar. I was approached by HoMana Pawiki, the VA Southwest Regional Tribal Government Relations Specialist, who thought I would be a good representative for our region. HoMana, familiar with my work with tribal communities and my presentations at several veteran symposiums, she felt I could represent the Albuquerque Area for this inaugural committee

I am an Air Force veteran. From 1987 to 1991, I was stationed at Williams Air Force Base, Arizona and Aviano Air Base in Italy. I served as a personnel and mobility

specialist and was discharged after Desert Storm. Soon after, I started working for the Indian Health Service later in 1991.

Being a Native veteran, I was really excited to be part of the VA-ACTIA. In 2021, I was the Chairman of the Laguna Healthcare Corporation and received a nomination from former Governor of Laguna Pueblo, Wilfred Herrera. From there, I was appointed by VA Secretary, Denis McDonough in October 2021.

History of VA/ACTIA

The Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs (ACTIA) is a statutory committee established as required by the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (38 U.S.C. § 547) to provide advice and guidance to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on all matters relating to Indian Tribes, Tribal Organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and Native American Veterans. [The VA-ACTIA website found here.](#)

Since this is an inaugural committee that was created in 2021, I am the first member representing the Albuquerque Area. I want to thank former Governor Wilfred Herrera for giving me the opportunity to serve in this capacity and writing to nominate me for this role. Each member serves a 2-year term. I finished my 2nd term in October 2025 and just started my 3rd term until a new replacement is found. It has been an incredible journey during my 4 years on this committee, and I am excited for our Native Veterans and their families for the future. My goal in this third term is to become more active and visible in the Albuquerque Area-wide tribal communities

I want to add that the personal benefits for me while serving on this committee have been outstanding! Even though I am familiar with VA issues and services, I have also learned so much about all the different programs and services VA has to offer. My personal goal has always been to share and present this knowledge to those tribal communities who are not aware and may be eligible for such services.

One other area that I want to share with our tribal veteran communities is [the PACT Act legislation](#). The PACT Act expands eligibility for transportation benefits for Native Vets traveling from rural areas to their local VA Healthcare facility. Which is huge! It will cover the travel costs for medical appointments, allows reimbursement for mileage and other travel expenses, and can facilitate transportation services through partnerships with local organizations among a few updated benefits.

What are some topics VA-ACTIA cover? Is there a topic that is most important to you?

Over the past four years, the ACTIA has discussed many important topics that cover a vast array of issues that impact Native veterans and their families. To give you an idea, I want to share highlights from 2025 that was submitted to VA Secretary, Doug Collins, from our 2nd Annual Report.

This and other reports seek to formulate and present recommendations to the VA and how they can improve their programs and services to better serve our Native Vets.

The ACTIA has internally organized into three (3) separate subcommittees to better focus on different areas under the jurisdiction of the VA. The Administrative Subcommittee assists the tribal and federal co-chairs with meeting planning and logistics, document preparation, and making formal recommendations to the Secretary as appropriate. As their names suggest, the Veterans Health Administration and the Veterans Benefits Administration/National Cemetery Administration Subcommittees focus their efforts on those functional areas, respectively.

In the 2025 annual report, we provided four recommendations. In this update, I will only highlight two (2) of the four (4) recommendations.

Recommendation:

Extend the VA Native American Direct Loan 2.5% interest rate reduction for an additional 24 months (or make it permanent).

Rationale:

On March 13th, 2023, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reduced the NADL rate from 6% to 2.5%, a change effective through March 2025. This rate reduction was intended to gauge how improved affordability would impact NADL utilization.

We have seen an increase in interest among Native Veterans, both for new loans and refinancing. However, more time is required to conduct broader outreach about this opportunity.

Therefore, we recommend the following actions:

- Continue increasing NADL outreach efforts to raise awareness about the reduced 2.5% rate among Native Veterans.
- Expand partnerships with local organizations working with Native Veterans to promote home ownership on trust land.
- Extend the 2.5% interest rate reduction for at least an additional 24-month period or make the reduction permanent.

Status: As of March 2025, the rate was extended with no termination date.

Recommendation:

Increase staffing levels at the Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR).

Rationale:

The current OTGR staffing is stretched thin, with specialists covering multiple states and vast geographic areas. For example, one staff member is responsible for 14 states, and another is responsible for 10 states, each state having multiple tribal governments and communities within them. This makes it virtually impossible for any single staff member to provide the necessary outreach, conduct consistent and meaningful engagement with tribal governments, and Veteran leaders or adequately raise awareness about VA benefits in their regions.

Moreover, OTGR is tasked with addressing diverse and complex issues that vary significantly by region. Each tribe has its unique cultural traditions, social determinants of health, and access challenges, requiring tailored approaches in every area. Without proper staffing, the office cannot adequately address these needs. By increasing OTGR's capacity, the VA will be better equipped to fulfill its commitment to Native Veterans, ensuring they receive the benefits they deserve through culturally competent and accessible means.

The rationale for this proposed recommendation included the following proposed SMART goal parameters.

Specific:

The OTGR should receive additional staffing to more effectively cover the vast territories it serves, including the 575 federally recognized tribes, state-recognized tribes, and over 100 Native Hawaiian organizations. Current staffing levels are insufficient to perform the necessary outreach, engagement, and awareness-raising across such an expansive area.

Measurable:

We recommend increasing the number of program specialist within OTGR. Increase at least 1 FTE in each Indian Health Service Area to ensure more appropriate attention to American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Veterans throughout the nation. Progress could be tracked by the number of regions with dedicated OTGR staff and increased participation in VA programs.

Achievable:

The increase is realistic, considering the current unmet need for outreach, education, and technical assistance in tribal communities. By adding more specialist, the OTGR can expand its reach and provide better services to Native Veterans, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the VA's programs.

Relevant:

There has been a 51.8% increase in Native American Veteran Suicides since 2021. With over 200,000 Native American Veterans served by OTGR, the need for culturally competent outreach is critical. Many Native Veterans live in remote areas where access to VA services is limited, and a stronger OTGR presence would help bridge these gaps. This recommendation is aligned with VA's strategic priorities of increasing access to benefits for underserved populations.

Time-Bound:

The additional staffing should be phased in by the end of the 2026 fiscal year, with hiring benchmarks set for each quarter. This timeline will ensure that all regions are adequately staffed by the end of FY 2026.

Status:

The ACTIA reiterates its recommendation that OTGR be adequately staffed for effective outreach and collaboration with tribes, Urban Indian Organizations, and

Native Hawaiian groups to enable the VA to meet its responsibilities to address Native Veteran issues.

It is our hope to have the VA response to these recommendation sometime in FY 2026. But currently we have not received a formal response. I will keep all stakeholders posted when developments occur.

From your years of serving on VA-ACTIA, How can AAIHB better provide support?

AAIHB can assist and support the ACTIA by letting all 27 Tribes and Pueblos they serve know about these recommendations and write letters of support to the VA Secretary. Having a unified effort to advocate for tribal communities would reinforce the government-to-government relationship by having many of these recommendations become reality.

Having additional forums and outreach events would bring VA issues impacting Native Vets and their families to the forefront. Having AAIHB support with higher visibility would, I believe, push the VA to have more frequent dialogue with the ACTIA, as well as tribal governments.

Lastly, the most important question: Do you prefer red or green chile? How do you prefer to eat it?

I love both red and green chile! So, it's Christmas for me when I order.

When I am at home, I love to grill and roast chile with my steak.

Announcements

Any questions or more updates regarding the VA-ACTIA TAC, please reach

out to AAIHB Health Policy Team.

[Email AAIHB Health Policy Team Here](#)

Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board | 7001 Prospect Place NE | Albuquerque, NM 87110 US

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