

Spiritual Pathways

By; Skypilot

I was reading an article by Ken Olsen printed in the American Legion magazine the other day while I was waiting to see my Head Shrink about my PTSD. After thinking about it later it was like the magazine and the article picked me.

For the past few years I've been learning as much as possible about my Native American roots, being part Cherokee I thought I should at least know that part of my heritage.



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The article talked about Steven Reuben a member of the 25th Mechanized Infantry unit, when they were ambushed while working its way up a Vietnamese mountain. Ruben was hit by an RPG (rocket propelled grenade), his body went one way and his weapon another. He laid there bleeding from his wounds, undetected by the enemy and unable to fight. All he could do is listen in horror as his comrades were being slaughtered by North Vietnamese regulars.

Ruben returned to the Nez Perce Reservation in northern Idaho with shattered knees, shattered eardrums and the worst of all things a shattered soul. As many veterans did who fought in Vietnam, a shattered soul, which lead to another battle that would last like Ruben the rest of their lives.

I don't really think a lot of people realizes the amount of Native Americans and Alaska Natives serving our country at the present time and served in the past.

There are 181,000 living Native Americans Veterans of U.S. wars. As of October 2007 there are 21,947 Native Americans and Alaska natives who are on active duty in the various branches of the Armed Forces, 3,868 currently deployed and 47 who have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan since the WAR ON TERROR began.

Dave "Coyote" Mann (a Vietnam Vet his self and a VA veterans service counselor) and some counselors trained in PTSD treatment for Vets of the NAM opened a camp creating a program that blends modern psychology with ancient spiritual healing. "CAMP CHAPARRAL" is the nations most well-regarded program for treating American Indian veterans with PTSD and showing VA health-care providers the power of ancient spiritual healing. In the words of Reuben "This is the only place I've ever found honor, and it's the only place I've ever found healing."

Located on a Sacred section of the Yakama Indian Reservation in central Washington that is traditionally closed to non-tribal members. Here, amid the towering ponderosa pines, veterans and VA health care workers sweat together, share their thoughts in group sessions and conduct traditional Indian ceremonies and dances. Despite 15 years of unmatched success and need to serve nearly 200,000 Indian veterans, VA (the government again) reduced its support for Camp Chaparral soon after the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq began funds were cut in half.

This again shows you how our Government tosses aside the men and women who offered up their lives for their country. If the VA would go back and reevaluate programs like this and reopen them fully the rate of suicide would reduce itself.

Since studying the native ways, I myself find I can deal with the lost of my buddies and team members better than I could in my earlier years of dealing with PTSD.


Well until we talk again may The Great Spirit be with you. Ride Safe and Ride Free. " Keep On Triken " God bless our Troops and pray for a quick and safe return. My youngest son was Commissioned to serve in the Special Forces on May 17th, another one to add to our pray list. Also remember our POW~MIA and their families. GOD BLESS THE USA. Skypilot



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