

NEWS OF VETERANS

Recognizing American Indian And Alaskan Native Veterans

(NAPSA)—According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, there are more than 150,000 American Indian and Alaskan Native veterans throughout the United States. The Veterans History Project (VHP) of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress invites these men and women to share their unique stories of military experience.

Established by the U.S. Congress in 2000, VHP's mandate is to collect, preserve and make accessible the firsthand recollections of America's wartime veterans. Through a network of volunteers from across the country, the Project has collected nearly 89,000 stories, making it the largest oral history project in the country.

VHP seeks to increase the number of veteran interviews from all minority communities, including American Indian and Alaskan Native veterans. Among VHP's 250 oral histories from the American Indian and Alaskan Native veterans are the stories of Joseph Beimfohr and Marcella Ryan Le Beau, both American Indians who served in the U.S. military.

Joseph Beimfohr served in the Army during the Iraq/Afghanistan War. When he deployed to Iraq in January 2005, he was exposed to intense hostile fire. During his VHP interview, Beimfohr said, "You can't just sit there and be paralyzed with fear, because you're going to get everybody killed." What he learned from his experiences was that soldiers have to trust their training and instincts. He lost both legs to an explosion, and Beimfohr subsequently learned that the only limitations in his life were self-



Thousands of veterans are helping a national program preserve their unique stories of military experience.

imposed.

In 1943, Marcella Le Beau had just finished her nurse's training in her native South Dakota and was working at a hospital in Pontiac, Michigan, when she heard about the Army's need for nurses. A year later, she was camped out in a cow pasture in Normandy, in the wake of the D-Day invasion, on her way to Paris. "I was young and I didn't know what war was... I guess in a way that was a saving grace," Le Beau said. She never encountered discrimination because of her background; in fact, when colleagues learned that her great-grandfather was a Chief, they assumed she must be an "Indian princess."

Beimfohr's and Le Beau's stories, along with thousands more, may be accessed on VHP's website, www.loc.gov/vets. The website also provides information on how to record and collect veterans' stories using VHP's free Field Kit, a how-to-record-a-story booklet.