

American Battle Monuments Commission Tribal Consultation and Coordination Plan

August 19, 2021

A. Agency Mission

1. The purpose of the American Battle Monuments Commission is to commemorate the U.S. Armed Forces by maintaining the national legacy of their service in the world's consciousness.
2. In 1923, Congress recognized the need for a federal agency with the mission to honor America's fallen armed forces abroad and to oversee the construction of military monuments and markers that celebrated the service and sacrifice of our military. That year, Congress enacted legislation to create the American Battle Monuments Commission. The Commission is an independent agency of the Executive Branch of the Federal government.
3. ABMC is responsible for commemorating the service, achievements, and sacrifice of American armed forces in the U.S. and where they have served overseas since April 6, 1917 (the date of U.S. entry into World War I), through the erection of suitable memorial shrines; for designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining permanent American military burial grounds in foreign countries; for controlling the design and construction of U.S. military monuments and markers in foreign countries by other U.S. citizens and organizations, both public and private; and for encouraging the maintenance of such monuments and markers by their sponsors.
4. In performing these functions, the Commission administers 26 permanent overseas American military cemeteries and 32 separate memorials, monuments, and markers, of which only four are located in the United States. Nearly 208,000 U.S. war dead from World War I and World War II are buried or memorialized on Walls of the Missing at ABMC sites. Additionally, more than 8,200 war dead listed as missing from the Korean War and 2,500 from the Vietnam War are memorialized at ABMC's Honolulu Memorial.
5. ABMC also administers three cemeteries not associated with the world wars: Mexico City National Cemetery, Corozal American Cemetery in Panama, and Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines. More than 15,000 veterans and others are interred in these sites. Corozal American Cemetery outside Panama City, Panama, and Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines are the only active cemeteries the Commission maintains.

6. The Commission's mission is primarily overseas: 27 of our 28 staffed sites are overseas; ABMC's headquarters is located in Arlington, Va. Of our 450 employees, 80 are Federal service; the other 370 are foreign service nationals in the 10 countries within which we operate. The majority of our procurement and contracting activity is executed in the overseas environment through our Paris overseas operations office.

B. Plan of Action

1. Our opportunity to significantly impact the Tribal Nations must be tempered by the realities of our scope of operations and the nature of our mission. We believe, however, that there are opportunities for engagement that would prove mutually beneficial. For example—
 - a. In April 2016, ABMC sponsored the participation of the President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe in the re-dedication ceremony of the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial in France, which occurred on the 100th Anniversary of the formation of the Escadrille.
 - b. Shortly after that dedication and as a result of our contacts with the Oglala Sioux, our historians engaged on the tribe's behalf with Sotheby's Auction House to end an auction of a culturally important buffalo robe and arrange the return of the robe to the tribe. After our successful effort, ABMC coordinated a return ceremony at our Arlington headquarters that included a blessing ceremony and formal transfer back to the Sioux.
 - c. Native American servicemembers are buried or memorialized at ABMC commemorative sites and several of these servicemember stories are highlighted in interpretive tours and exhibits.
2. The ABMC Director of Visitor Service and Interpretation, who is stationed in our Paris, France office, served as a Cultural Anthropologist/Tribal Liaison for the National Park Service before coming to ABMC. She worked closely with many tribes on issues relating to resource preservation and interpretation and will be ABMC's primary point of contact for our coordination and consultation with the Tribal Nations, working in close coordination with our Director of Public Affairs, who is stationed at our headquarters.
3. Native Americans represent the highest per-capita demographic percentage of service in the U.S. Armed Forces. ABMC's interpretation and public outreach programs, important elements of our commemorative mission, may resonate with many native communities if their story of service is appropriately told.

4. Looking to the future, ABMC plans to pursue the following opportunities:
 - a. We will develop a consolidated database of designated tribal contacts (education coordinators, cultural/historic preservation offices, and/or native veteran organizations) who may have an interest in ABMC's mission and goals, and in consulting on future projects.
 - b. Through historical research and outreach to families of the war dead we honor, we intend to compile more Native American stories to be incorporated into future interpretive programs, exhibits, and digital communication initiatives.
 - c. We will increase outreach to Tribal governments, student groups and veteran associations to understand better the stories of service and sacrifice that native communities would like told across ABMC in-person and digital mediums.
 - d. We will work to develop partnership opportunities with tribal schools and educators to share educational material and curricula and explore the potential of developing Tribal Nation student internship programs at the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial Cemetery or other ABMC sites.
 - e. We will develop interpretive and educational programs highlighting Native Hawaiians and Native American Code Talkers in ABMC's newest planned visitor center in Honolulu, Hawaii.
 - f. We will consult with the Tribal Nations on new memorial projects that may be relevant to their national heritage and military service experiences.

C. Principle Points of Contact

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