

# South Dakota National Guard

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October 15, 2012

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **SD Guard explores partnership opportunities with tribes**

By Maj. Anthony Deiss  
State Public Affairs Officer

OACOMA, S.D. – Leaders from the South Dakota National Guard met with representatives from several Native American tribes in Oacoma Thursday, Oct. 11, to discuss partnership opportunities for community service projects on their reservations.

Representatives from the Yankton, Oglala, Rosebud, and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribes listened to briefings on the role and capabilities of the Guard, and how they are able to support communities with engineer construction, material transportation and medical support services.

Both Guard leaders and tribal members saw the meeting as an opportunity to generate awareness of Guard services, what some of the needs are on the reservations, and how they can work together.

“We wanted to engage the tribes to enter into a partnership with the South Dakota National Guard,” said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. “The partnership would involve the National Guard conducting training on the reservations that would result in improvements to the infrastructure, such as road development, construction services, providing medical care and other types of support that are consistent with the missions of the Guard.”

“I appreciate General Reisch setting up this meeting with the different tribes to discuss some of the common goals we can achieve together,” said Richard Leasure, environmental director and emergency manager for the Yankton Sioux Tribe.

“The presentations we received and the talks we had were very pretty positive,” said Donna Salomon, public relations coordinator for Oglala Sioux Tribe President John Yellow Bird Steele. “I see our partnership building as viable. Working with the Guard would create something beneficial for our tribes and the communities.”

Some of the potential projects discussed included medical screenings and examinations, veterinarian services, firewood transportation, and road construction and maintenance.

“Most of the reservations, especially in the last couple years, experienced different types of disasters – flooding, heavy snow fall, loss of power, freezing rains. To have a Guard unit come in to assist with firewood delivery or assist our Indian Health Services with medical assistance, dental care or optical services would be a benefit to both of us,” said Leasure.

“I’d like to see some help with road development and our infrastructure,” said Salomon. “Sometimes we do not have the funds for needed projects and are reliant on other federal agencies to come in and help. I think the Guard has the right capacity to help us bridge that gap.”

The National Guard provides community services through its Innovative Readiness Training program, or IRT. The IRT program partners with local organizations to provide a benefit to communities while providing hands-on, readiness-training opportunities for the Guard and other U.S. military units throughout the country. The program is built upon the long-standing tradition of the National Guard, acting as good neighbors at the local level in applying military personnel to assist worthy civic and community needs.

“The National Guard is a community-based organization,” said Reisch. “We want to go out and continue to partner with our communities so we can continue to have membership from a broad range of communities, as well as provide services to them.”

During the meeting, Guard leaders and tribal representatives also discussed enlistment opportunities and the benefits of joining the National Guard.

“We want to enhance the diversity of the Guard and increase the number of Native Americans that we have serving in our organization,” said Reisch. “Native Americans make excellent service members. One part of this partnership we seek to develop is to increase recruitment from the reservations.”

“I would love to be able to see more Native Americans enlist into the National Guard. It gave me discipline, education opportunities and financial support and made a big, big difference in my life,” said Leasure, a 22-year veteran of the Guard. “The Guard has so many of the beliefs, values and ethics that individuals need to strengthen themselves. Our success will be measured by their success, and that is through recruitment and seeing more of our children join the National Guard.”

Since its inception during the President Clinton Administration, the IRT program has been active in South Dakota. During that time, the SDNG has participated in numerous community based projects ranging from construction and repair of Little League baseball field kiosks to road maintenance and land reclamation in Custer State Park.

Over the years, the National Guard has provided some public service projects for Native American communities to include delivering firewood and Indian Health Services missions to the Pine Ridge, Crow Creek, Rosebud and Lower Brule reservations.

Reisch wants to expand relationships with more tribes.

“What we’ve done previously with some of the tribes is said ‘here’s what we’ve got to offer – can you use it?’” he said. “However going forward, we want the tribes to develop a list of needs or projects that would be a good fit for us. Nobody knows better than the tribes themselves what kinds of needs they have.”

The program also focuses on providing service member training within their military occupational skill set, which includes carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical, engineering, transportation, and all aspects of medical care.

“The partnership is a benefit to our organization because it allows our Soldiers and Airmen perfect their skills and to do their missions in a new environment, which allows us to get better at our jobs while simultaneously providing a product to the Native American tribes,” said Reisch.

Resource support for a project is a shared responsibility between the military and community – the Guard provides the manpower while the community provides the materials and supplies. The Guard also ensures a project will not compete with local contractors or businesses.

The IRT program has provided assistance to the Black Hills National Forest, Custer State Park, the South Dakota Veterans Home and numerous other non-profit organizations throughout the state.

“My vision with the tribes across the state is to replicate what we’ve done in the Black Hills during the Golden Coyote exercise for the past 28 years,” said Reisch. “Every year, Black Hills National Forest and Custer State Park officials know they are going to get a lot of support and work completed with the assistance of the Guard. I want to do the same thing with the reservations.

“The South Dakota National Guard has gone around the world for the last 150 years making life better for other countries,” said Reisch. “We have nine sovereign nations within our state borders, and I think we need to help these nations that we have right here at home.”

Leasure and Salomon also expressed Reisch’s optimism.

“It’s great to see the Guard willing to come down and work with the reservations,” said Leasure. “We’d like to facilitate the set up of some meaningful training opportunities, where students can visit the sites and get some recruiters there to layout how the Guard can assist those individuals in their endeavors in college and life.”

“I saw a true spirit of cooperation in the Guard – wanting to work with the tribal communities, especially after this meeting,” said Salomon. “I have hopes this partnership will build into something positive for our tribes. We are one nation, and we live in this nation together. We are collaborating together to build our nation into a country we can be proud to be from.”

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Please contact Maj. Anthony Deiss at (605) 737-6721 or cell (605) 431-8753, or e-mail [ngsd-pao@ng.army.mil](mailto:ngsd-pao@ng.army.mil).

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**121003-A-AB123-001:** Representatives from the Yankton, Oglala, Rosebud and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribes listen to Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard, speak about partnership opportunities for community service projects on Native American reservations in South Dakota during a meeting Oct. 11, 2012, in Oacoma, S.D. (SDNG photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)(RELEASED)



**121003-A-AB123-002:** Justin Pourier, right, of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, discusses partnership opportunities for community service projects between Native American tribes and the South Dakota National Guard during a meeting Oct. 11, 2012, in Oacoma, S.D. (SDNG photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)(RELEASED)



**121003-A-AB123-003:** Capt. Mitch Nachtigall, of the South Dakota National Guard, visits with Bryce In The Woods, of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, about how the SDNG’s Innovative Readiness Training program provides a benefit to communities through service projects while providing hands-on, readiness-training opportunities for the Guard, during a meeting Oct. 11, 2012, in Oacoma, S.D. (SDNG photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)(RELEASED)



**121003-A-AB123-004:** Richard Leasure, environmental director and emergency manager for the Yankton Sioux Tribe, visits with Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard, to discuss partnership opportunities for community service projects during a meeting Oct. 11, 2012, in Oacoma, S.D. (SDNG photo by Maj. Anthony Deiss)(RELEASED)