



NCR Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Cultural Observances, Awareness Information and Events

National American Indian Heritage Month

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Did You Know?

In 1942 Navajo men transmitted and decoded a three-line messages in 20 seconds, compared to 30 minutes it took on the machine at the time.

One platoon pilot project was developed and tested to the feasibility of a code. On May 4, 1942 twenty-nine Navajo recruits were organized as Platoon 382 or The First Twenty-Nine. Marine Corps recruited the first “all-Indian, all Navajo” platoon.

In 1982, the Code Talkers were given a Certificate of Recognition by US President Ronald Reagan, who also named August 14, 1982 as Navajo Code Talkers Day.

On December 21, 2000, President Bill Clinton signed Public Law 106-554, 114 Statue 2763, which awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to the original 29 World War II Navajo Code Talkers and Silver Medals to each person who qualified as a Navajo Code Talker.

July 2001, President George W. Bush honored the Code Talkers by presenting the medals to four surviving original Code Talkers (the fifth living original Code Talker was unable to attend) at a ceremony held in the Capitol Rotunda. In Washington, DC. Gold medals were presented to the families of the deceased 24 original Code Talkers.

For more information on Code Talkers, go to:
<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/n/code-talkers.html>

Code Talker

A Code Talker was a person employed by the military during wartime to use a little-known language as a means of secret communication. The term is most often used for United States service members during the World Wars who used their knowledge of Native American Languages as a basis to transmit coded messages. Code Talkers transmitted messages over military telephone or radio communication nets using formally or informally developed codes built upon their Indigenous languages. Code Talkers improved the speed of encryption of communications in front line operations during World War II and are credited with a number of decisive victories.

During World War I, company commander Captain Lawrence of the US Army overheard Solomon Louis and Mitchell Bobb having a conversation in Choctaw. They discovered eight Choctaw men who served in the battalion. The Choctaw men in the Army’s 36th Infantry Division were trained to use their language in code and helped the American Expeditionary Forces. On October 26, 1918, Code Talkers changed the tide of the battle.

There were two code types used during World War II. Type one was formally developed based on the languages of the Comanche, Hopi, Meskwaki, and Navajo peoples. Type two code was informal and directly translated from English into the Indigenous language. Early pioneers of Native American based communications used by the US Military include the Cherokee, Choctaw and Lakota peoples during World War I. Today the term Code Talker includes military personnel from all Native American communities who have contributed their language skills in service to the United States.

14 Code Talkers using the Comanche language took part in the Invasion of Normandy and served in the 4th Infantry Division in Europe. Comanche soldiers of the 4th Signal Company compiled a vocabulary of 250 code terms using words and phrases in their own language. This code was never broken.

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