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Wokini Initiative: The New Beginnings Newsletter

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The New Beginnings Newsletter

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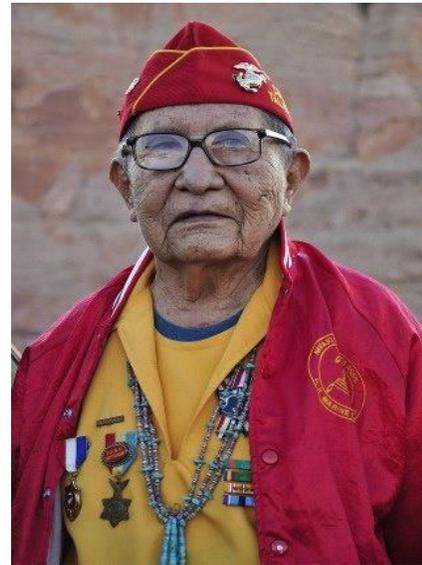


Celebrating American Indian Veterans

This November, we celebrate both Native American Heritage Month and Veteran's day. Yet, these two holidays have more in common than the simple fact that they both occur in November. American Indians and Alaskan Natives have the highest representation per capita in the military of any ethnic group.ⁱ There are currently 31,000 active American Indian/ Alaskan Native service members and a total American Indian veteran population of about 150,000 according to the US department of Veteran's Affairs.ⁱⁱ

Despite an antagonistic history with the United States government, American Indian Tribes have a long and distinguished history of military service and played an important part in every major war in the history of the US. According to a VA report, 12,000 American Indians served in the military during World War I despite being denied citizenship of the United States. During WWII, 44,000 American Indians served out of a total population of 350,000 and more than 42,000 American Indians served during the Vietnam war, 90% as volunteers.ⁱⁱⁱ

Beyond their proportionally large representation in the World Wars, American Indian soldiers also worked as code talkers. Code talkers used native languages to encrypt messages between troops and prevent the enemy from interpreting intercepted messages. In 1918, Choctaw soldiers stationed in France



Navajo Code Talker David Patterson

during World War II became the first code talkers.^{iv} While most people have heard of the Dine (Navajo) code talkers, the code talkers were so successful that other code talkers from over 30 different tribes were eventually recruited to send top secret communications during World War I and World War II. The Lakota/Dakota and Nakota languages were also used and recruits came from many of the reservations in South Dakota. In 2000, Dine code talkers received congressional gold medals for their services to the United States.^v

This Veteran's Day, the nation will honor all those who served, but we should also honor both the history of American Indians and

(celebrating American Indian Veterans continued)

Alaskan Natives who served, and continue to serve, in large numbers.

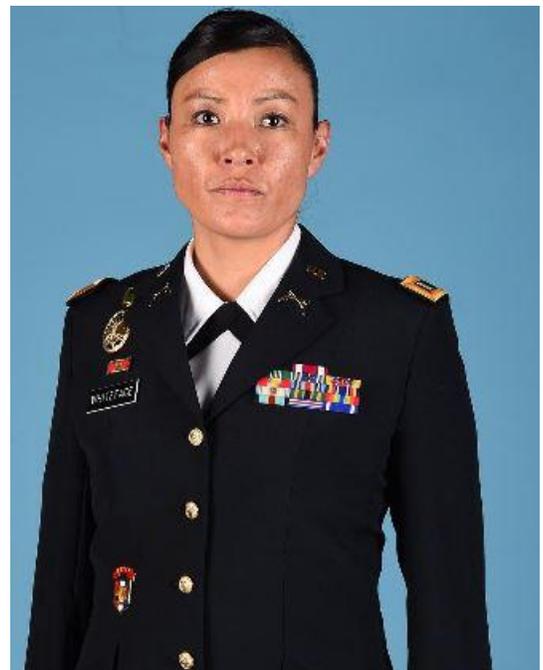


Native American Heritage Month is a month of recognition for the significant contributions that American Indians have made to the establishment and growth of the U.S.^{vi} The National Congress of American Indians defines the month as, “a time to celebrate rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and histories and to acknowledge the important contributions of Native people.”^{vii} What both of these definitions emphasize is that Native American Heritage Month is about recognizing and honoring the contributions that native people have made historically and culturally to the US. Such contributions can be seen clearly in their prominent history of military service and large representation in the armed forces, but in many other ways as well. In his proclamation of National Native American Heritage Month in 2013, Obama highlighted the little-known fact that the framers of the constitution took inspiration from the governmental structures of the Iroquois confederacy.^{viii} The influence of American Indians upon our nation goes all the way to the core of its foundational document.

While American Indians have made many important and fundamental contributions to the United States, it is only relatively recently that a day or month was declared to honor American Indians. In 1915, Red Fox James from the Blackfoot tribe of Montana, rode

across the nation on horseback trying to gain support for a day to honor American Indians. After all his travel, he succeeded in gaining twenty-four endorsements from state governments, which he presented to the White House. In the end however, the day was never accepted and never proclaimed by congress. In 1916, New York was the first state to declare a day to honor Native Americans and Indiana declared its own day in 1919. It was not until November of 1990 that President Bush declared the first Native American Heritage Month. Each year since 1994, US presidents have continued to declare November Native American Heritage Month.^{ix}

Veteran’s Day Spotlight



Captain Lisa White Face

Lisa White Face grew up in Kyle, SD, a small community on the Pine Ridge reservation, known as Pejuta Haka or Medicine Root. Lisa’s parents are Lenora Apple and Barney White Face, both enrolled members of the Oglala

(Veteran's Day Spotlight Continued)

Sioux Tribe. Her Lakota name is Tasina Tokala Win, meaning *Leads with a Shawl Woman* – a name proudly given to her by her uncle Isaac White Face. An Army Paratrooper during WWII, Isaac was a Purple Heart recipient for his brave and courageous actions.

In March 1996, Lisa enlisted with the South Dakota Army National Guard (SDARNG) and attended Basic Training and Advance Individual Training in Fort Leonard Wood, MO. She worked her way up the ranks and eventually graduated from the Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC) from Fort Lewis, WA as a Sergeant.

In September 2007, she was commissioned as an Army Officer through the U.S. Army's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. Her bachelor's degree is in Business Management and she is currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree.

She moved to Kansas City, MO where she transferred to the Kansas Army National Guard (KSARNG) and served as a Military Police (MP) Platoon Leader with the 35th MP Company. She then became the Company Executive Officer when she deployed to Djibouti, Africa in 2011. While in Djibouti, she served in three capacities; as the MP Company's Executive Officer, the Officer in Charge of the Battle Captains group, and as assistant Security Liaison Officer to the Navy. She was responsible for the security of approximately 5,800 military personnel on base.

Captain White Face's military awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, NCO Professional Development Ribbon, Army

Service Ribbon, Army Overseas Service Ribbon, Army Reserve Components Overseas Training Ribbon, United Nations Ribbon, German Army Forces for Military Proficiency Badge, Desert Survival Badge, and Army Superior Unit Award Ribbon.

The True History of Thanksgiving



Wampanoag Nation Singers and Dancers in 2011. The Wampanoag is the name for the native confederacy that the pilgrim's encountered upon arrival at Plymouth Rock.

As the US begins to recognize Indigenous people's day rather than Columbus day, people are beginning to question the narratives that surround many of our national holidays. Thanksgiving, like Columbus day, is also a holiday whose history is largely idealized and misunderstood. While there were some positive things that did happen during the first thanksgiving, our national narrative of thanksgiving ignores much of the violence that quickly became commonplace between colonists and American Indians.

The pilgrims were not actually the first Europeans to contact the native peoples of the Plymouth Rock region. In fact, English explorers had been to the area before the Mayflower arrived in 1620. The native peoples

(The True History of Thanksgiving continued)

in the area were a confederation of 69 smaller tribes collectively called Wampanoags. European explorers took native slaves back to Europe and left behind disease that wiped out about 3/4ths of the Wampanoag population. When the Mayflower arrived in December of 1620, they found the area largely abandoned and the bones of unburied natives strewn across the landscape.

The pilgrims were largely unprepared to survive in the new world. Two Wampanoags, Tisquantum and Samoset, had learned English when they were kidnapped and sent to Europe to work as slaves. They later returned to their tribes onboard ships coming back to New England for exploration. Tisquantum and Samoset acted as translators and diplomats between the remaining Wampanoag communities and the Pilgrims and helped to negotiate a peace with the Wampanoag sachem (leader) Massasoit. The Wampanoags then taught the pilgrims useful skills such as how to grow local varieties of corn, beans and squash.

Although many of the Pilgrims died in the winter of 1620, by 1621 they had their first successful harvest thanks to the techniques they had learned from the Wampanoags. In the fall of 1621, the pilgrims held a festival called the harvest hope and invited the Wampanoags, who contributed deer, turkey, lobster and other game to the feast. Giving thanks was not a foreign concept to the Wampanoags. Before the arrival of the pilgrims they held a similar harvest festival in the fall which included large feasts, giving of food and supplies to the hungry of the community and giving thanks to the earth for all it did for the Wampanoag people.^x

This initial coming together suggested a good beginning for the relationship between the Pilgrim's and Wampanoags, however relations quickly disintegrated. With the death of Tisquantum in 1622 and the growing power of the Pilgrim colony, colonists became more

aggressive and began to steal from the natives. Tension continued to grow until on May 26, 1637, near the present-day Mystic River in Connecticut, an estimated 400 to 700 Pequot women, children, and old men were massacred and burned by combined forces of the Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and Saybrook (Connecticut) colonies.^{xi} Despite this incident, Massasoit tried to hold together a strained peace until his death in 1661. In 1675, during King Phillip's war, the Wampanoag fought against the colonists and were eventually defeated, resulting in the death of 40% of their population. Many others were sold into slavery overseas or became slaves to the colonists. Some Wampanoag were able to remain free or joined other native groups and tried their best to maintain aspects of their culture despite the pressures of colonial society.

As a testimony to their incredible resilience, Wampanoag communities still survive today after 400 years of colonization. There are about 4,000-5,000 Wampanoag who live in three tribes, the Mashpee, Aquinnah and Manomet.^{xii} They are currently working on a language revitalization project and still practice many of their traditional hunting and fishing practices and ceremonies.^{xiii}

Lakota Word of the Month



November

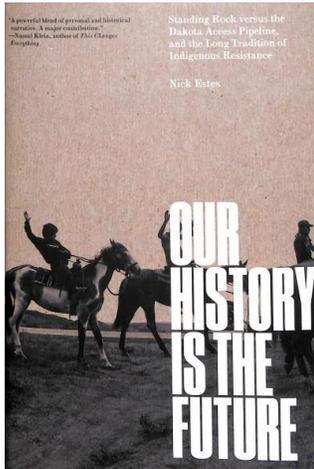
“Moon of starting winter”

Waniyatu Wi (Wah-nee-yah-too Wee)

If you are interested in learning more Lakota words and

phrases, we recommend checking out Owoksape, a Lakota language learning app.

Book of the month:



a statement about the unity of indigenous people, and to honor ancestors and indigenous people worldwide. Find out more on their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/RockYourMocs/>

Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance. By Nick Estes.

In *Our History Is the Future*, Nick Estes traces traditions of Indigenous resistance that led to the #NoDAPL movement. *Our History Is the Future* is at once a work of history, a manifesto, and an intergenerational story of resistance. Available at Briggs Library.

Other Happenings

Rock Your Mocs

Rock Your Mocs is an annual social media campaign that takes place during Native American Heritage Month on November 9th through the 16th. Participants take a photo, video or story of themselves wearing their moccasins and upload it to social media using the hashtag #RockYourMocs or #RockYourMocs2019.

The purpose of this campaign is to increase the visibility of indigenous people in national and international consciousness, make

ⁱ Hammons, Megan. "Native American Veterans: 5 Facts You May Not Know." *VeteranAid*, 5 Sept. 2017, <https://www.veteranaid.org/blog/native-american-veterans-5-facts-you-may-not-know/>

ⁱⁱ "National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics." *US Department of Veteran's Affairs*, 24 Nov. 2010, <https://www.va.gov/vetdata/Report.asp>

ⁱⁱⁱ "American Indian and Alaska Native Service Members and Veterans." *US Department of Veteran's Affairs*, Sept. 2012, https://www.va.gov/TRIBALGOVERNMENT/docs/AIAN_Report_FINAL_v2_7.pdf.

^{iv} "Code Talkers." *National Archives*, National Archives and Records Administration, 4 Oct. 2016, <https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/military/code-talkers.html>.

^v Hammons, Megan. "Native American Veterans: 5 Facts You May Not Know." *VeteranAid*, 5 Sept. 2017, <https://www.veteranaid.org/blog/native-american-veterans-5-facts-you-may-not-know/>

^{vi} "About National Native American Heritage Month." *National Native American Heritage Month*, Library of Congress, <https://nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov/about/>

^{vii} "Native American Heritage Month." *National Congress of American Indians*, <http://www.ncai.org/initiatives/native-american-heritage-month>.

^{viii} "Presidential Proclamation -- National Native American Heritage Month, 2013." *National Archives and Records Administration*, Office of the Press Secretary, 31 Oct. 2013, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/10/31/presidential-proclamation-national-native-american-heritage-month-2013>.

^{ix} "About National Native American Heritage Month." *National Native American Heritage Month*, Library of Congress, <https://nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov/about/>

^x *Harvest Ceremony Beyond the Thanksgiving Myth*. National Museum of the American Indian, https://americanindian.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/education/nmai_harvest_study_guide.pdf.

^{xi} Zotigh, Dennis. "Do American Indians Celebrate Thanksgiving?" *Do American Indians Celebrate Thanksgiving?*, The National Museum of the American Indian, 26 Nov. 2013, <https://blog.nmai.si.edu/main/2013/11/do-indians-celebrate-thanksgiving.html>.

^{xii} Eldredge, Nancy. "Who Are the Wampanoag?" *Plimoth.org*, Plimoth Plantation, <https://www.plimoth.org/learn/just-kids/homework-help/who-are-wampanoag>.

^{xiii} *Harvest Ceremony Beyond the Thanksgiving Myth*. National Museum of the American Indian, https://americanindian.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/education/nmai_harvest_study_guide.pdf.