

South Dakota State University

Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange

Wokini Initiative: The New Beginnings Newsletter

11-2020

The New Beginnings Newsletter, November 2020

Shana Harming

Follow this and additional works at: https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/wokini_news



Part of the Indigenous Studies Commons

THE NEW BEGINNINGS NEWSLETTER



SOUTH DAKOTA
STATE UNIVERSITY

**WOKINI
INITIATIVE**
A NEW BEGINNING
South Dakota State University®



Picture courtesy of <https://www.history.com/news/world-war-is-native-american-code-talkers>

Native American Heritage Month Code Talkers

It is a little-known fact that American Indians have the highest rate of military participation per capita of any ethnic group. Throughout history, they have made important and unique contributions to U.S. war efforts. 44,000 American Indians served during World War II, about ten percent of the native population of the time. Another 150,000 served in agricultural, industrial and non-military aspects of the war (Däwes 2015). During both World War I and World War II, American Indians also used their tribal languages as a way of encoding army communications. The American Indian soldiers who did this special form of communication came to be known as code talkers. Enemy forces never decrypted the code talker's communication and utilizing native languages to make codes proved to be a vital military resource (Meadows 2016).

Code talkers were first used in World War I. In October of 1918, the American Expeditionary Forces were in the middle of the Meuse-Argonne campaign, an attempt to break through a twenty mile stretch of the Hindenburg line. The German army was regularly tapping American phone lines and one in four runners carrying written messages were either shot or captured. Company E of the 142nd infantry regiment had 208 American Indian soldiers from Oklahoma representing fourteen tribes, 89 of these soldiers were Choctaw. A captain of the regiment overheard two Choctaw soldiers conversing in their native language and decided to see if a message could be sent between two Choctaw soldiers that would remain undecipherable to the Germans. On October 26th, 1918, a test message indicating the withdrawal and movement of two companies was sent successfully (Meadows 2007). From this point on, native soldiers were used to encode communications until the end of the war in 1919 (Meadows 2007).

During World War II, the military expanded the use of code talkers and more tribes were recruited for the program. The tribes used in World War II included the Oneida, Chippewa, Comanche, Sac and Fox, Navajo, Hopi, Lakota and Dakota (Meadows 2007). The Lakota and Dakota soldiers, known as “MacArthur’s boys”, performed reconnaissance and used their languages to communicate information on the size and location of enemy troops. A group of Yanktonai Dakota also served as code talkers in the Pacific. The military and code talkers developed two types of encoded vocabularies. Type 1 used specially encoded vocabularies inserted into Native American languages, while Type 2 used the everyday vernacular of a language that was unknown to the enemy (Meadows 2016).

In 1968, the code talkers and their codes were officially declassified. In 1982, Ronald Reagan awarded the code talkers with a certificate of recognition and declared August 14th National Code Talker’s day. In 2000, Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico initiated the “Honoring Navajo Code Talkers Act” which called for congressional gold medals to be awarded to the 29 original code talkers. However, congressional gold medals were not awarded until 2008 when the Code Talkers Recognition Act passed (Däwes 2015).

While the code talkers have been recognized for their service, the history of the code talkers makes clear some of the ironies that exist in the United States’ treatment of

American Indians. While the code talkers were using their languages to help the U.S. win World War I, at home their languages, ceremonies and cultures were outlawed and repressed. Shortly after World War II, the U.S. government began its "termination" policy era, in which tribal sovereignty, federal recognition and protections for tribes was to be terminated. While native people contributed in numerous ways to the nation which colonizes them, the U.S. continued to deny their civil and human rights.

References

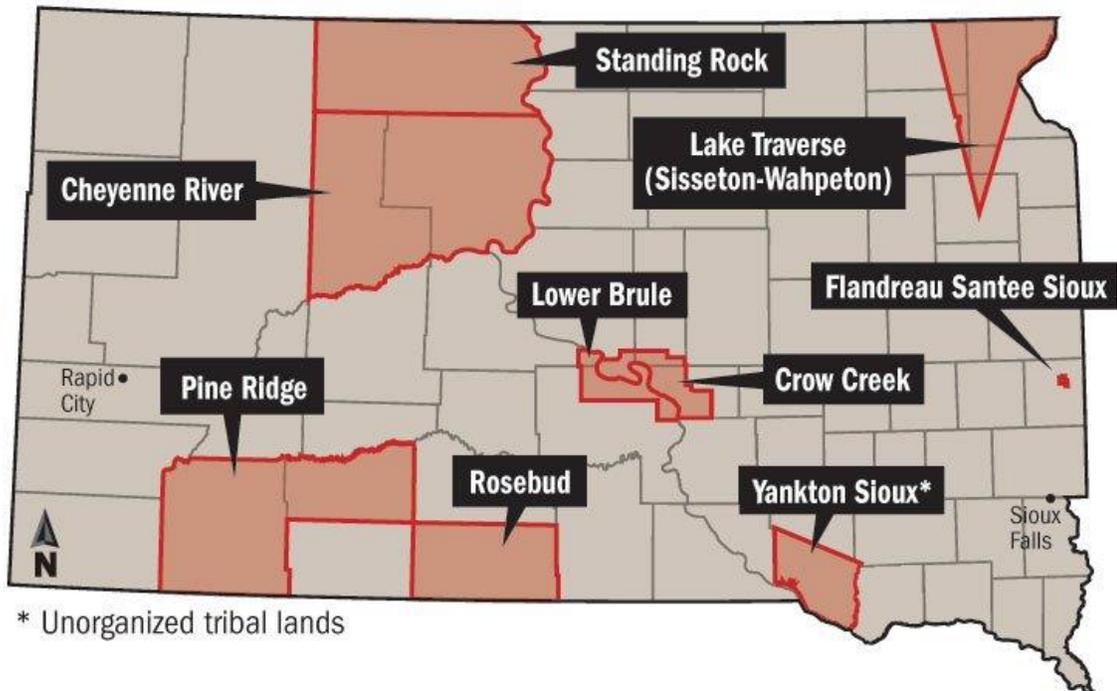
Meadows, William C. "North American Indian code talkers: Current developments and research." *Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian Military: Historical perspectives* (2007): 161-214.

Bennett, Mary. "Meskwaki Code Talkers." *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* 84.4 (2003): 154-161.

Däwes, Birgit. "Transnational Debts: The Cultural Memory of Navajo Code Talkers in World War II." *ASJ*, 2015.

Meadows, William C. "An Honor Long Overdue: The 2013 Congressional Gold and Silver Medal Ceremonies in Honor of Native American Code Talkers." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 40.2 (2016): 91-121.

South Dakota's Indian Reservations



Assessment and Grant Specialist Position Available

South Dakota State University is currently seeking an Assessment and Grant Specialist to lead and coordinate grant writing and the collection, analysis and interpretation of data connected with the Wokini Initiative. The Specialist will develop assessment and program evaluation tools, collect and analyze data, and prepare reports for programs and activities related to the Wokini Initiative. The position will also develop statistical models to measure the impact of Wokini programming on American Indian student recruitment, retention, and graduation rates. Grant duties include researching grant opportunities that align with Wokini Initiative goals and collaborate with both internal and external departments to develop competitive grant proposals consistent with the vision of the Wokini Initiative. This is a 12 month, full-time, benefit-eligible position. This position is supervised by the Wokini and Tribal Relations Director.

For more information on this position and to apply, click [here](#).

American Indian Student Center

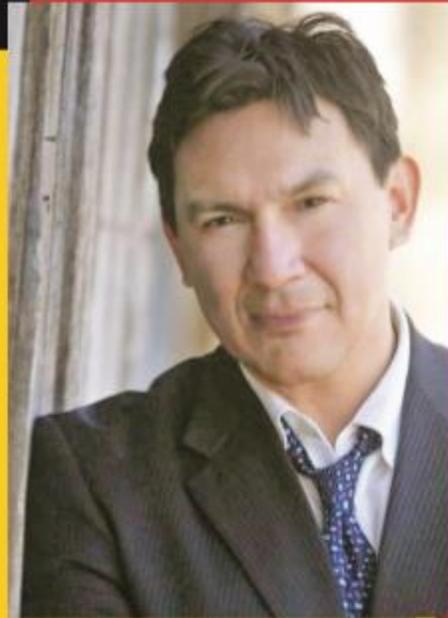
Program Coordinator

South Dakota State University American Indian Student Center is offering an exciting career opportunity as an American Indian Program Coordinator. We are looking for a creative and innovative professional to join us. This is a 12 month, full-time, benefit-eligible position. This position is supervised by the Director of the American Indian Student Center.

For more information on this position and to apply, click [here](#).

Featured Events

TRAUMA AND HEALING IN THE NATIVE COMMUNITY



Dr. Darryl Tonemah

**November 16, 2020
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.**

**Dr. Tonemah will speak on
historical and generational
trauma in the Native
American community.**

This event will be presented via Zoom.
sdstate.zoom.us/j/91545002463



Darryl Tonemah (Kiowa/Comanche/Tuscarora) is the owner of the Tonemah Consulting Group, an organization dedicated to increasing wellness in Native communities. He also owns First Nations Telehealth Solutions, a company dedicated to increasing access to psychological and psychiatric care to Native communities via telemedicine. He has done extensive work providing training in hospitals, clinics, universities, corporations and schools throughout the U.S. and Canada on trauma and its relationship to behavior and health.

Tonemah has a Ph.D. in counseling psychology and cultural studies, a master's degree in community counseling and three bachelor's degrees. He has served on numerous state and national boards addressing disparities in education and health care among the Native community.

Tonemah appeared in the film "The Cherokee Word for Water," has appeared on the ABC television series "Nashville" and played the lead in two New York City stage productions "Manhatta" and "Sliver of a Full Moon." A musician, he has recorded 10 award-winning CDs. He is the founder of the Native American Children's Benefit Concert Series. He has written a book on leadership, "Spray your Swamp Cooler," and is currently working on a 12-part documentary series telling stories of empowered Native people across the U.S. and Canada. He lives outside of Lewiston, New York, with his wife and three children.

Sponsored by:



SOUTH DAKOTA
STATE UNIVERSITY

American Indian Student Center Events

The Peoples Protectors - Film Screening

Tuesday, November 10th @ 6:00 pm

Join the AISC in honoring our Vietnam veterans in the viewing of The Peoples Protectors.

<https://sdstate.zoom.us/j/98935605405>

Human Trafficking: Know the signs

Thursday, November 12th from 4:00 - 6:00 pm

A seminar on spotting the signs of human trafficking so that we can keep ourselves and our community safe.

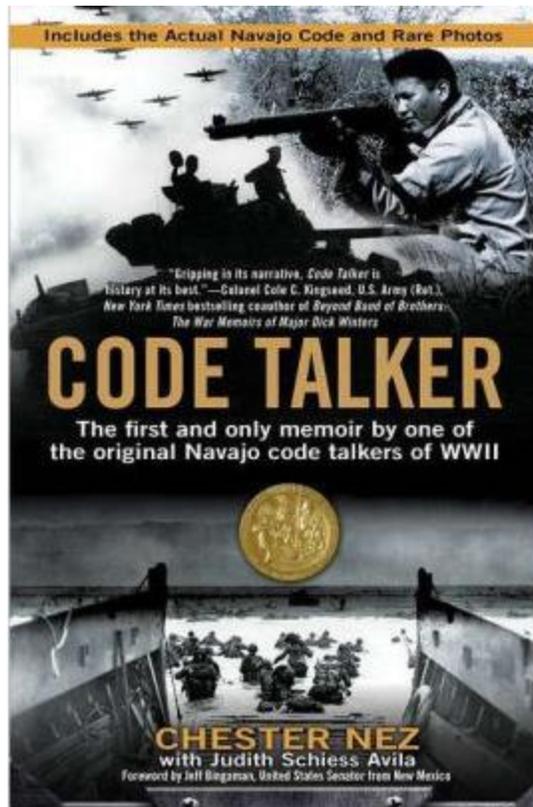
<https://sdstate.zoom.us/j/96330961980>

Griffith Honor Forum Lecture: Tommy Orange

Tuesday, November 17th from 7:00 - 8:30 pm

Larson Memorial Concert Hall

Book of the Month



Code Talker

His name wasn't Chester Nez. That was the English name he was assigned in kindergarten. And in boarding school at Fort Defiance, he was punished for speaking his native language, as the teachers sought to rid him of his culture and traditions. But discrimination didn't stop Chester from answering the call to defend his country after Pearl Harbor, for the Navajo have always been warriors, and his upbringing on a New Mexico reservation gave him the strength—both physical and mental—to excel as a marine.

During World War II, the Japanese had managed to crack every code the United States used. But when the Marines turned to its Navajo recruits to develop and implement a secret military language, they created the only unbroken code in modern warfare—and helped assure victory for the United States over Japan in the South Pacific.

Lakota Words of the Month

Days of the Week

Aḡpétu Wakǵán (Day of power – Sunday)

Aḡpétu Tǵokáheya (Monday)

Aḡpétu Núḡpa (Tuesday)

Aḡpétu Yámni (Wednesday)

Aḡpétu Tópa (Thursday)

Aḡpétu Záptaḡ (Friday)

Owánkayužazapi (Day to wash the Floor – Saturday)

[Listen here](#)



Wokini Initiative, South Dakota State University, Morrill Hall 119, Brookings, SD 57007, 605-688-4030

[Unsubscribe](#) [Manage preferences](#)