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CODE TALKERS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

CONTRIBUTIONS OF NATIVE AMERICAN CODE TALKERS IN AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY

SEPTEMBER 22, 2004
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CODE TALKERS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2004

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS,

Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in room 562, Dirksen Senate Building, Hon. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Campbell, Inouye, Cantwell, Conrad, Dorgan, Inhofe, Johnson, Murkowski, Thomas.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will now turn to its hearing, which is the committee oversight hearing on the background, history and contributions of Native American code talkers in American military history.

Senator CONRAD. Mr. Chairman, might I just inquire, will this be the last meeting of the committee before Congress adjourns?

The CHAIRMAN. No; we have several more.

Senator CONRAD. Good.

The CHAIRMAN. One will be an investigative hearing on September 29 and I am not sure what else is on the agenda. We will have several more.

Senator CONRAD. All right.

STATEMENT OF HON. BEN NIGHTHORSE CAMPBELL, U.S. SENATOR FROM COLORADO, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

The CHAIRMAN. In the year 2000, Federal legislation was enacted to award Congressional Gold Medals to the Navajo codetalkers for their contribution to America's victory over the Japanese Empire in World War II. From the end of the war in 1945–68, the very existence of the Navajo codetalkers was a military secret. In the years since, there have been books written about the Navajo codetalkers and in 2001 a motion picture heralded their efforts.

However, many Americans do not know that members of nearly 16 other Indian tribes served as codetalkers in World War I and World War II and have never been formally recognized for their service to our country. These codetalkers include members of the Comanche, Cheyenne, Cherokee, Osage, Lakota, and Dakota Sioux, the Chippewa, the Oneida, the Sac and Fox, the Meskwaki, the Hopi, Assiniboine, Kiowa, Pawnee, Menominee, the Creek and the Seminole Tribes.

Displayed on the easels to the right and the left of the dais, there are pictures from archives, including a picture of the Choctaw

codetalkers in World War I. They were the first codetalkers that played a role in American military operations and transmitted vital communications that helped defeat German forces in Europe in World War I.

We also have a picture of a large group of Comanche codetalkers who served in World War II, as well as photos of Meskwaki codetalkers. The Meskwaki picture is a shot of a young Frank Sanache, who until his death last month was among the last living codetalkers of his tribe. We are fortunate to have one codetalker, Clarence Wolf Guts, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, who will be testifying today.

These Native American codetalkers played a key role in the success of our military activities. They have served their country honorably and contributed to the well-being and freedom of many people in the United States.

Senator Inouye could not be here today, but I would be glad to yield to Senator Inhofe from Oklahoma, if you have comments.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S. SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to make some comments. We have been concerned about this for a long time, that this gathering is long overdue. Most of you know that people, including myself, have been working for years to recognize these individuals. It was a great moment just a few weeks ago when we had the World War II Monument unveiled. It will be a great moment still when the codetalkers are specifically recognized for contributing to the fight for the freedom of our country around the world, in both World War I and World War II.

The first reported use of Indian codetalkers was on October 17, 1918. At that time, most of the Indian people in the United States, including members of the Choctaw Nation, which you did not mention in your opening statement, were not accorded the status of citizens of the United States. Without regard to this lack of citizenship, many members of the Choctaw Nation joined many members of other Indian tribes and nations and enlisted in the armed services to fight on behalf of the United States.

The members of the Choctaw Nation enlisted in the American Expeditionary Force which began hostile actions in France in the fall of 1917. One of my closest friends is Greg Pyle. He is the chief of the Choctaws who is here as one of our witnesses today, Mr. Chairman. We have been friends for a long time. We talked about this and talked about the fact that we had a number of Choctaws, and that caused me to introduce legislation to include not just the Choctaws, but two other tribes, but primarily consideration of the Choctaws.

Charles Chibitty, sometimes he comes. Is Charles Chibitty in the room? I guess he is not. He is in very poor health. He was here a couple of years ago. It was kind of funny. He used to talk about how they would discourage Choctaws or Indians from using their native language back in those days until they developed this codetalking. I have a quote here by him. He said, when we got caught talking Indian, we got punished. After the Army years

later, he told his cousin, they tried to make us quit talking Indian in school, and now they want us to talk Indian.

Well, we are all glad they did not quit talking Indian, Greg. Anyway, I want to pay special tribute to him. I am sorry that his health did not permit him to be here today. He is certainly one of our heroes in Oklahoma and we will make sure that he gets a proper recognition.

So while this hearing is not on my legislation, it is being taken up in the Banking Committee and it requires 67 cosponsors, and Greg, right now we only have 24. We have not really spent some time trying to get this done, but we are going to do it.

I appreciate very much what you are doing here today, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I tell my colleague, frankly, I do not know if I am on that bill or not, but if I am not, if you would put me on as a cosponsor, I'd be honored.

Senator INHOFE. Now I have 25.

The CHAIRMAN. Now you have 25. That is right. It is interesting that American Indians have been in every war since the Revolutionary War defending this Nation, and yet before 1924 they could not even vote for the Commander-in-Chief, for example, the President, who was the supreme commander of all military, because they were not considered citizens yet, yet they were out there putting their lives on the line.

Senator INHOFE. That is true. We had an opportunity to honor one Oklahoma Indian at Fort Sill not too long ago who was one of the real heroes. He is the one who intentionally drove his tank out into an opening and drew the German fire to save his unit. So we have a lot of heroes, and we were able to get him posthumously awarded a medal. This was probably about six or seven years ago.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, good.

If there are no further opening statements, we will go ahead and proceed to panel 1. Gordon Mansfield is the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Brigadier General John Brown is Chief of Military History and Commander of the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

Gentlemen, why don't we go in that order. Mr. Mansfield, go ahead first.

STATEMENT OF GORDON H. MANSFIELD, DEPUTY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. MANSFIELD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning. I have a full statement for the record, if I could submit it for you.

The CHAIRMAN. It will be included in the record and you may abbreviate, if you would like.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I am pleased to be here to present the department's views on the presentation of medals to Native American codetalkers. The timing is really interesting. I had the opportunity 10 days ago on September 12 to be a part of the dedication of the codetalkers monument on the Navajo Nation. They put up that statue, which is really something, right on sacred ground, right at Window Rock. I would offer a brochure from the dedication for the record also.

The VA commends you for acknowledging the distinguished service in performing invaluable communications operations through the use of unique languages that saved countless lives and hastened the end of both World War I and World War II. The Department of Veterans Affairs has long acknowledged the honorable service of our American Indian veterans. They have served with distinction in United States military actions, as you mentioned, throughout our history. Their valor and courage is well documented. It is only right that we further honor that same valor and courage with appropriate recognition.

Today, there are more than 220,000 American Indian veterans. In an effort to better address the health care needs of these veterans, the Veterans Health Care Administration and the Indian Health Service signed a memorandum of understanding in 2003 that seeks to combine the strengths and expertise of both of these organizations to deliver quality health care services to American Indian and Alaska Native veterans.

To accomplish these goals, the Indian Health Service and the Veterans Health Administration are working to establish outpatient clinics and contract care partnerships at reservation facilities. We are also planning tele-health linkages that facilitate the remote delivery of health care checkups and mental health and counseling services by appropriate specialists.

The Veterans Benefits Administration outreach coordinators participate in a variety of outreach efforts to provide VA briefings on reservations and to local American Indian groups. In 2002, the VBA developed benefits training for tribal veterans' representatives to serve as a resource for information on benefits and services and claims submissions. In the past two years, 35 tribal veterans' representatives have received training on the claims process, VA benefits and services, and health care enrollment.

The VA also administers the Native American Veterans Direct Loan Program for Indian veterans living on trust lands. This program assists American Indian veterans in financing the purchase or improvement of homes on federal trust territories. So far, the VA has made almost 400 loans to American Indian veterans, closing 120 loans in fiscal year 2003.

Recently, Secretary Principi strongly supported the enactment of H.R. 2983, the Native American Veterans Cemetery Act of 2003, to provide eligibility of Indian tribal organizations for grants to establish veterans cemeteries on trust lands in the same way that grants for state veterans cemeteries are made. Currently, the National Cemetery Administration encourages participation of tribal interests in efforts to establish state veterans cemeteries. NCA also seeks to accommodate religious practices and American Indian veterans and their families are able to perform tribal rituals in VA's national cemeteries.

The VA will continue to explore all opportunities to increase eligible American Indian veteran participation in the benefits and health care services that we provide.

Again, we acknowledge the honor and pride with which American Indians have served their country in the military, and especially salute the extraordinary contributions of the Native American codetalkers. We support the Senate's efforts to acknowledge

their contributions through these legislative efforts. We stand ready to serve them as they have so gallantly served their country.

Mr. Chairman, this completes my statement. I will be happy to respond to any questions.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Mansfield appears in appendix.]

TheCHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Mansfield. I was just reminiscing with Paul Moorehead, the head of our staff for Indian Affairs. I think that was one of the first bills I introduced years ago on the committee that authorized the VA to enter MOUs with tribes to be able to provide money for houses on Indian reservations.

Before that time, they simply could not. An Indian vet would come home and he could not get a loan from the bank to build on tribal land.

We did an oversight hearing about 2 or 3 years after that bill passed to find out how it was going. At that time, there were only three Indians in the whole country that had taken advantage of that program. I am glad to hear that at least 400 have now.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. I think part of that was our fault, that we did not network or get the word out very well through tribes, that Indian veterans could avail themselves of that program, but it sounds like it is a good program and successful.

Mr.MANSFIELD. We are attempting to make it work even better, sir.

TheCHAIRMAN. Great.

General Brown, thank you for being here. Why don't you go ahead and proceed? Your complete testimony will be included in the record if you would like to abbreviate.

STATEMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL [R] JOHN S. BROWN, CHIEF OF MILITARY HISTORY AND DIRECTOR, ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, sir, for this opportunity to comment on the contributions of Native American codetalkers in American military history. Native Americans have a long and proud tradition of military service to their several Nations and to the United States of America. Our Army archives are replete with tales of their valor and Army museums feature equipment they have used and medals they have won under trying circumstances.

Among their unique contributions has been their service as codetalkers to secure command and control on the battlefield. By the early years of the 20th century, command and control had become heavily dependent upon electrical communications. Vastly increased distances, dispersion and spans of control required the use of what were then considered modern technologies such as sound locators, buzzer phones and radios, with the land-line telephone emerging as the preferred and most reliable means of communication for ground combat during World War I.

Unfortunately, land-lines could be tapped and our German adversaries too often listened in. The 36th Division, for example, reported having circulated the coordinates of a supply dump only to find that location inundated by enemy fire within minutes. Other divisions similarly reported facilities or operations compromised and lives lost because of intercepted communications. Techniques

of encryption that did exist proved too cumbersome to accommodate fluid battlefield tactics.

That same 36th Division had within its ranks a company of American Indians who spoke a total of 26 Native languages. Only four or five of those languages had been committed to writing. Someone suggest placing an American Indian soldier in each key tactical command post so that the division could rapidly communicate sensitive information in a language that the eavesdropping Germans could not possibly understand. Choctaw was selected as that language.

The experiment worked so well that a regimental commander attributed the success of a delicate nighttime tactical withdrawal and again a major assault on the following day to the complete surprise achieved by using Choctaw language to coordinate operations. The idea caught on. By the end of World War I, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Comanche, Osage, and Yankton soldiers were also serving as codetalkers.

When World War II began, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps drew upon the service of codetalkers in a more organized manner. By then, the preferred method of communication was increasingly wireless radio. However, radio signals were even more vulnerable to interception than the telephone. In January 1941, the U.S. Army recruited Comanche codetalkers to serve in its Fourth Infantry Division. A few months later, the Marines began recruiting Navajo for the same purpose.

In the European theater, the Army's Comanche codetalkers came ashore on D-Day. On Utah Beach, a Comanche codetalker, Larry Saupitty, sent Brigadier General Roosevelt's critical message to reinforce an initial landing that had ended up 2,000 meters away from its designated beaches. Saupitty's message was classic in its simplicity: "We made a good landing. We landed at the wrong place." The follow-on reinforcements came to the right place.

As Allied troops pushed out of the beachhead, codetalkers accompanied the leading regiments and provided communication throughout the breakout across France. Scattered throughout the division in two-man teams, codetalkers relayed vital messages that utterly precluded enemy interceptions of them.

In the Pacific, the Navajo codetalkers took part in every major Marine Corps operation and served in all six Marine divisions, transmitting messages by telephone and radio in their native tongue. First used on Guadalcanal in the fall of 1942, Navajo techniques halved the time used for encoding and decoding messages. Their greatest test was in early 1945, when three Marine divisions stormed Iwo Jima. In the first 2 days of fighting, six Navajo codetalkers worked around the clock sending and receiving more than 800 messages without a single error. One Marine Corps signal officer noted, "Were it not for the Navajo, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima."

I highly recommend William C. Meadows' book, "The Comanche Code Talkers of World War II," as a discussion of the Army's codetalking contingent, and Doris A. Paul's, The Navajo Code Talkers, as a discussion of the Marines'. I point out, too, that the Navajo were the subject of the recent movie, "Windtalkers."

Perhaps less familiar to the public, but equally deserving of our praise, are the Assiniboin, Cherokee, Chippewa, Oneida, Choctaw, Hopi, Kiowa, Menominee, Muscogee, Creek, Seminole, Pawnee, Sac, Fox, Lakota, and Dakota, who also served in our armed forces as codetalkers. It is impossible to calculate how many operations were successful and how many lives were saved because of communications secured by the codetalkers. It may well be that contemporary encryption technology has carried us beyond the era in which the services of the codetalkers proved most useful. However, an underlying principle remains valid—that the diversity and richness of American culture renders it far more capable than it would otherwise be of coping with the challenges of an uncertain world.

In addition, the unique and extraordinary record of Native American service in the armed forces of the United States continues unbroken as our accumulating record of current operations attests.

Thank you, sir.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Brown appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General Brown. Let me ask a couple of questions, then I will yield the floor to my colleagues here.

Senator INHOFE. My request, Mr. Chairman, is I wanted to be here.

The CHAIRMAN. He is going to be on the third panel.

Senator INHOFE. Okay. As you know, I am chairing the Highway Conference Committee and I have to get back to that. I was kind of wanting to hear his statement, but thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Secretary Mansfield, does the Department of Veterans Administration support a formal recognition of the codetalkers, the ones who we are talking about today?

Mr. MANSFIELD. Yes, sir; we do.

The CHAIRMAN. Obtaining documentation of American Indian codetalker veterans is important, but I would imagine a very difficult process for their formal recognition. Does the VA keep certain records in regards to the Indian codetalker veterans?

Mr. MANSFIELD. Sir, I do not think we would have any indicator specifically that would indicate that a person was a codetalker, but I would promise you that we would make every effort we can to assist in making those identifications.

TheCHAIRMAN. You would be able to do that probably with some tribal input, too, I would think.

Mr.MANSFIELD. I think it would require some tribal input, plus we would have to go back to the records and do some searches.

TheCHAIRMAN. All right.

General Brown, in the Center of Military History, is the Center of Military History looking into the project to further identify codetalker veterans?

Mr. BROWN. We are promulgating a Signal Corps history that gives further attention to the codetalkers and to their contribution.

The CHAIRMAN. There is no written history about all of them now, though, is there?

Mr. BROWN. There is no consistent history that treats all of them equitably. Most of our histories speak to one of more of the tribes, and then lists the other tribes that made contributions, but there

is no coherent history that speaks to all of them equivalently, no, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. You mentioned at length the Choctaw codetalkers and citizenship. World War I, the last 4 years between 1914 and 1919, they did not have citizenship, as you know. You will have to tell me as a military history expert, was there a draft in that time? How did the codetalkers get in? Were they all volunteers or did they just go out and ask them to volunteer?

Mr. BROWN. There was a draft, but in World War I——

The CHAIRMAN. If they were not citizens, how did they draft them?

Mr. BROWN [continuing.] In World War I, the Indians who participated in the Army were volunteers.

The CHAIRMAN. As volunteers, to their credit.

Do you know the numbers? I was surprised to find out there were 16 tribes. I knew there were more than just the Navajo and the Comanche, but I did not know there were 16. Do you know the number of particular codetalkers, because so much has been secret for so many years.

Mr. BROWN. It is very difficult to reconstruct accurate figures because so many of the codetalkers served in informal rather than formal programs. So codetalking that originated at the division level and below would not have become a matter of record, and also would not have gotten on to a personal record. So only the tribes could tell you who of their soldiers served in that capacity.

I would say that from the readings that we have executed, virtually all of the American Indians who spoke both their native tongue and English were used at one time or another in this capacity, and that would come to about at least 21,000 soldiers in the U.S. Army alone.

The CHAIRMAN. 21,000, perhaps, you said?

Mr. BROWN. 21,000 in the Army, with perhaps 30,000 for the armed forces as a whole. In addition to that, when you come to formal programs, specifically the programs that have entered the record, you have contingents of 20 or more from about seven of the tribes, and then the Navajo were recruited even more heavily and they had 420 in their contingent. But the formal programs, in my view, were the tip of the iceberg and the informal programs saw a much larger participation.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. There is no question we need to give recognition where recognition is deserved. You probably will not have the answer to this, but just let me maybe get your opinion. I was talking to staff about maybe some of the small things that we can do just to start some recognition process. One of the things I personally would like to do is have a plaque cast for each of those 16 tribes from which the codetalkers came that we could send for some permanent display in their tribal council or at some location of their choice on reservation. Do you think the Department of Defense would support that effort?

Mr. BROWN. I am a bit out of my lane, but I would say that the Center of Military History certainly would support that.

The CHAIRMAN. I think we are going to introduce that at least, and try to attach that to something on the way through in these last few days. I will be talking to Senator Inouye about it, who is

a great war hero himself, as you know, and perhaps we can get at least that little thing done in these last few days.

We will go to our second panel. Senator Johnson, did you have any opening comments or statements?

STATEMENT OF HON. TIM JOHNSON, U.S. SENATOR FROM SOUTH DAKOTA

Senator JOHNSON. Yes; I do, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you and Vice Chairman Inouye for permitting the hearing to take place. I would especially like to thank Senator Daschle for his ongoing leadership and dedication to Indian issues and his request for this hearing to take place. Senator Daschle is a blessing to our tribes in South Dakota, and they truly have no better friend in Washington.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our South Dakota witnesses to the committee. We are happy to have Clarence Wolf Guts, a former Lakota codetalker, here today. I also want to welcome Don Loudner of the American Indian Veterans Association and other tribal representatives, Robin Roberts, Samson Keahna, Melvin Kerchee, and Chairman Greg Pyle. Additionally, I want to welcome again Gordon Mansfield and Brigadier General John Brown to this panel here today, as well as Dr. William Meadows, author of a very valuable work for us, "The Comanche Code Talkers of World War II."

As well from South Dakota with us today are Tom Short Bull, who is president of the Oglala-Lakota College; President John Steele of the Oglala Sioux Nation; Chairman Harold Frazier of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe; as well as Treasurer Benita Clark from Cheyenne River, and one of our veterans, Clifton Sky from South Dakota.

I was just told by Chairman Frazier that a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe was wounded seriously yesterday in Iraq, so our prayers go to the family of Garlene Tabia Fiota, as well as other members of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. It is one more example of the kind of national service that native people have for many generations provided the United States.

Two years ago, I introduced legislation that would award medals to all Native American codetalkers. I am glad to see the continued support for our effort to give all Native American codetalkers the recognition they deserve. In December 2000, the Honoring the Navajo Codetalkers Act was signed into law, authorizing the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress to each of the original 29 Navajo codetalkers, as well as a silver medal to each man who later qualified as a Navajo codetalker.

There is no doubt that the bravery and the courage of the Navajo codetalkers helped to make the United States the free and proud place it is today. While Navajos have received the most recognition, it is important to remember that members of at least 17 other tribes also served as codetalkers in World War I and World War II. This bill will express the gratitude of Congress and the entire Nation to these brave and innovative veterans for their contributions and sacrifices to the struggle for freedom and democracy.

The syntax and tonal qualities of languages as unique as their people were so complex that no message transmitted by any

codetalker was ever decoded by the enemy. However, for the codetalkers who returned home there were no parades or special recognition, as they were sworn to secrecy, an oath they kept and honored, but one that robbed them of the accolades and place in history that they rightfully deserved.

When the secrecy surrounding the code was finally lifted, only then could the country realize the importance of these brave soldiers. Military commanders credited the code with saving the lives of countless American soldiers and with the successful engagements in the battles of Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa.

The accomplishments of the codetalkers were even more heroic, given the cultural context in which they were operating. Subjected to alienation in their homeland and discouraged from speaking their native languages, they still stepped forward and developed the most significant and successful military code of their time. That spirit of military service continues today. Native Americans make up a higher percentage of servicemen and servicewomen in the armed forces than any other ethnic group in America. They have served with honor in all of America's wars, beginning with the Revolutionary War and on through our current operations in Iraq.

Sadly, this past November Sheldon Hawk Eagle, a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota and a descendant of the great Lakota leader Crazy Horse, made the ultimate sacrifice for both of his nations. He was among the 17 soldiers who lost their lives when two Blackhawk helicopters crashed in Northern Iraq. The sacrifices of PFC Hawk Eagle, the codetalkers and all Native Americans to our armed services are just an example of the great contributions Native Americans have made to strengthen our Nation.

As we recognize the heritage, strength and history and way of life of the first Americans at this week's opening of the National Museum of the American Indian, it is time to give all Native American codetalkers the long-overdue recognition that they clearly deserve. In the twilight of their lives, it is only fitting that this Nation at least pays them this honor. It is essential that we acknowledge the service of these soldiers at perhaps our country's most desperate hour, and finally give them their rightful place in history.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

We have no further questions. General Brown, Mr. Mansfield, thank you very much for appearing.

We will go on to our next panel. That will be Clarence Wolf Guts, Oglala codetalker from Wanblee, SD. He will be accompanied by Don Loudner, the National Commander of the National American Indian Veterans Association from Mitchell, SD, and John Yellow Bird Steele, the president of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council, and Robin Roberts, Meskwaki tribal member of Montour, IA.

Chief Pyle, we have you on the third panel.

When Mr. Wolf Guts testifies, President Steele, if he would prefer to read in his own language, whatever is more comfortable for him, if somebody could interpret for the record.

We will hear from Mr. Wolf Guts first.

STATEMENT OF CLARENCE WOLF GUTS, OGLALA CODETALKER ACCOMPANIED BY: DONALD LOUDNER, NATIONAL COMMANDER, NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN VETERANS ASSOCIATION; AND JOHN YELLOW BIRD STEELE, PRESIDENT, OGLALA SIOUX TRIBAL COUNCIL

Mr. WOLF GUTS. I am here today because my God helped me to be with my people and the people of the United States of America, because we love America so much that we do whatever we can to protect her from aggressors of any kind. Nobody can ever take that away from us. We love America.

I am a full-blood Indian, and we do whatever we can to protect the United States because we love America. Nobody can ever take that away from us. That is how come I will do whatever I can to protect it. With my fellow comrades overseas, I was sitting there in the foxhole with a radio, trying to give the orders that were given to us to pass on to the chief-of-staff. You do whatever you can to confuse the enemy. I know they were listening to us all the time. They were smart people and they listened to us all the time.

We used our own code and we did whatever we could to protect our country. I asked my buddy, he is dead and gone now, and I am the only one that is alive from that era. I said, we love our country, so we are going to do whatever we can to protect that.

You know, we are Indian, but we know you should do some things that are really powerful. Sure, sure, because we want America to be free. If the darkness ever took over the world, we would all be dead or we would all be slaves to them. We do not want that. We do not want it.

We want our own government to take care of us, to be what we are today. We are happy. When I see young children playing without any supervision, I realize why we were over there. I am proud to be a Lakota Indian. That is what I am, a Lakota Indian. Some of the tribe is named Sioux, but we are not Sioux. We are Lakota. There are three dialects in South Dakota: Nakota, Lakota, and Dakota. When we were talking over the radio, we used all of them. Whatever we said, we know what we are talking about. We did not want the enemy to come over here to America, because we love America.

That is about all I can say. I want to thank everybody. I hope that the good Lord up above is looking down on us to this day, and that he can give us the strength and the courage to say what we can and to think that we love America and we want it to be free.

I thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Wolf Guts appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Wolf Guts. You are a proud man from a proud people.

It has always interested me that the Lakota people who suffered their last great tragedy at the hands of the U.S. military and the Federal Government as late as 1891 at Wounded Knee, that many of the codetalkers of your age, their grandfathers must have been involved in those last free days of the Lakota people. And to be able to rise above that to help defend a nation, it must have given them some thought about what they should do, when they would remember what their grandfathers had gone through, and their

grandmothers too. So we are very proud of you and very proud that you are here, too.

We will now move on to Mr. Roberts. Go ahead. Your complete testimony, if it is written, will be included in the record. Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF ROBIN ROBERTS, MESKWAKI TRIBAL MEMBER

Mr. ROBERTS. My name is Robin Roberts, Meskwaki Nation, Tama, IA, honorably discharged from the U.S. Marine Corps.

In 1941, 27 Meskwaki joined the Iowa State Guard. Out of those 27, 8 became Meskwaki codetalkers: Frank Sanache, Willard Sanache, Michael Wayne Obanisee, Judy Wayne Obanisee, Dewey Roberts, Dewey Young Bear, Edward Benson, and Melvin Twin.

They did their training at Camp Dodge in Johnston, IA. From there, they went to more intense training in Louisiana. From there, they went to Northern Ireland briefly.

In the meantime, during World War II, Stalin had opened the first front, and then he started telling America, we need a second door. So with General Eisenhower and the 34th, in November 1942 they invaded Algeria. From there, they fought their way to Northern Africa and through the deserts. And then in 1942, they went to Southern Italy, where they used naval gunfire, aero-gunfire, ground artillery, troops. And they went from Salerno to Naples fighting, in which the Meskwaki codetalkers were used quite a bit, where they saved a lot of lives.

They themselves, they had to lead assaults carrying their backpacks and radios. There were fighting in the rain. They were braving the elements of the weather there. They fought in the mountains of Naples, where the Germans were dug in very heavily. There were a lot of casualties there. There, I believe in June 1944, the Allies had taken Rome back.

So myself personally, I have been working on this for 15 months. I agreed with a lot of people when they said there were 18 tribes that were codetalkers, besides the Navajo. I believe as I have been working on this, is that not only am I working on the Meskwaki's getting these congressional gold medals and national recognition, but I am working on all tribes, because they all fought for this country. They were not drafted. They volunteered because of patriotism. This was not only these people's land. It was our land. These are our people, and they knew that. This was our homeland. We had our adopted homeland, too, the United States.

So we necessarily did not have to go fight, but these brave people, they did. A lot of them came back, when they did come back they were scarred mentally and physically. Some never made it back. Some of the people forgot this was somebody's son, somebody's brother, somebody's husband, somebody's father. I think it is due time they are given their national recognition. In the U.S. Government, the people of this country, the people of this world should realize what these people have sacrificed not only for themselves, but for the people. So I would like to thank the panel for giving me this time to speak here.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Roberts appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for being here today.

President Steele and Mr. Roberts, you are accompanying Mr. Wolf Guts. Did you have something you would like to include in the record, too?

STATEMENT OF JOHN YELLOW BIRD STEELE, PRESIDENT, PINE RIDGE INDIAN RESERVATION

Mr. STEELE. Yes, Senator; my name is John Yellow Bird Steele. I am the elected president of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. I am a Vietnam veteran. The U.S. Government took me to the Presidio of Monterey and taught me to read, speak, and write the Vietnamese language. So I am sort of a halfway codetalker myself.

I would like to thank General Brown, the historian for the VA. For your information, we have a Lakota-Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, married into the Oglala Sioux Tribe, but he was a codetalker also and his name is not included on there, and that is Willie Iron Elk.

So I would like to have the committee to also include Willie Iron Elk as a Lakota codetalker. He was in World War I and World War II. So he is quite distinguished and we would like his name included.

I would like to thank you, especially Senator Daschle and Senator Tim Johnson, for cosponsoring this, and yourself Senator Campbell, and really thank Senator Inhofe for introducing this. It is a great honor. The Lakota and Dakota peoples, we honor our warriors and our veterans. We thank you for honoring our warriors and veterans.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Steele appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Loudner, do you have something you would like to say, too?

STATEMENT OF DONALD LOUDNER, NATIONAL COMMANDER, NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Mr. LOUDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on an issue that is very important to me. I am a Korean War veteran. On behalf of all American Indian codetalkers, I am honored to be here today.

I yield my time to Clarence, but I just would like to make a couple of statements here. The American Indians have a long and proud history of service in the military. Statistically, the American Indians volunteer to serve their country at a higher percentage during all wars or conflicts than any other ethnic group. The Department of Veterans Affairs acknowledges that American Indians have the highest rate of military service among all ethnic groups in the Nation, and the Veterans Administration's statistics also show that the American Indian veteran is the least likely veteran to apply for benefits he or she has earned.

In talking with Clarence, I accompanied him here yesterday on the plane and he brought up some interesting things that I would like to bring out that is not in my testimony that you have. We need to replace all the headstones of our other codetalkers that have passed on, with some type of an appropriate saying that they were the elite codetalkers.

And award some type of a military medal. Clarence told me he only got four ribbons for all he had done in the 6 years, 6 months

and 4 days that he served during World War II. He said he would like to try and get some type of compensation if possible because he told me in his language that he is poor and he would like to try to get some type of compensation.

Thank you for inviting me.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Loudner appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Thank you, President Steele, for mentioning that when the young warriors come home now, they are honored. It was not that way, listening to Mr. Loudner. I am also a Korean-vintage combat veteran from Korea. You look very young. You must take good care of your health. You are not getting wrinkled like us old guys from the Korean War.

Mr. LOUDNER. I am 73 years old, sir. [Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Let me maybe just say that I think it is really a good trend that tribes are going back to the way of honoring the young men who came home. Let me ask Mr. Wolf Guts, perhaps, too. When you came home, Mr. Wolf Guts, was there any kind of recognition or honoring with your own tribe? Did they know where you were or where you went?

Mr. WOLF GUTS. I went into the service when I was 18 years and 5 months old. I volunteered. They considered me a volunteer, an enlistment or a volunteer. Some of my buddies were wounded in Hawaii.

The CHAIRMAN. When you came back, were you told not to talk about where you had been or that you had been a codetalker?

Mr. WOLF GUTS. I was in high school. I was in school. That changed the next year, in 1942, I joined the Army. When the doctors passed me number one, right on through.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Loudner, why don't you ask him what I asked?

Mr. LOUDNER. Did they honor you when you came home?

Mr. WOLF GUTS. They wanted to honor us for being Lakota codetalkers, and my buddy said, I will buy the regalia and I will dance. I want you to sing that song that you sang in Hawaii. Okay, I will. And I did. And three of my buddies, two of my buddies and I, there were three of us. We had our own [INAUDIBLE]. We sang that song like in Hawaii. He danced, thank you, thank you. [INAUDIBLE] when he was in Hawaii. I heard that same song.

The CHAIRMAN. The Lakota warrior song?

Mr. WOLF GUTS. No; it was not a warrior song. It was a regular Indian song, dancing song. I learned that from my elders. They were singers and I sang with them. That is where I learned how to sing. I did it. And when we came back, I did it. We did it. I remember all that. I remember.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, if you still remember it, I used to sing Indian. I will come to South Dakota and you can teach me that song and we will sing it together, as old veterans.

Mr. WOLF GUTS. Yes; you know, we did not do it for ourselves. We did it for our people and the people of the United States of America. It was them, and for the people of the world, because if the Japanese ever took over the world, we will be dead. We did not want that. We gave all we had to do what we had to do.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Loudner.

Mr. LOUDNER. I would just like to relate one thing that Clarence told me this morning when we were coming down here on the Metro. He said that before he goes home tomorrow morning, he would like to have someone take him down to the World War II memorial to show him that, because he said he might never, ever come back here.

So he said he would like to go down here. He said he would like to see the President, but I said the President, according to the news, is in Pennsylvania or someplace. But maybe we could take him down to the memorial.

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee can take care of the first part of the request. We will be happy to make the arrangements to take him if you will talk to Paul after we adjourn. The president, I know his schedule and I just have a hunch that might be a lot more difficult on short notice.

Mr. Roberts, let me ask you just one last question. As I understand your testimony, there were eight Meskwaki codetalkers?

Mr. ROBERTS. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. And the last one was Frank Sanache?

Mr.ROBERTS.Yes; Frank Sanache.

The CHAIRMAN. And he passed away just very recently. Did you know him personally?

Mr. ROBERTS. No; I think Sam here, he probably knew him better than I did.

The CHAIRMAN. He is on the next panel. Maybe I will ask him then. But any further information that you have on him, if you could provide it to the committee, I would appreciate it.

Mr. ROBERTS. Okay. I have a packet here.

The CHAIRMAN. If you have an extra copy, leave that with the committee if you would.

We will go ahead now and move to the last panel, which will be Gregory Pyle, the chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; Melvin Kerchee, Secretary-Treasurer, Veteran, from the Comanche Nation of Lawton, OK; and Samson Keahna from the Sac and Fox Tribe of Mississippi and Iowa, from Tama, IA.

They will be accompanied by Wayne Pushetonequa, council member of the Sac and Fox; and Dr. William Meadows, Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield.

We will start with Mr. Pyle. By the way, all of you, your complete written testimony will be included in the record. If you would like to abbreviate, that will be fine.

Go ahead, Mr. Pyle. Thank you for being here.

STATEMENT OF GREGORY E. PYLE, CHIEF, CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA

Mr. PYLE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Senators and friends. I will summarize our testimony, as a matter of time.

As you know, the Choctaw Nation, of course, is out of Southeast Oklahoma. We are the third largest tribe in the Nation, and yet kind of a quiet tribe down in our area. What we have before us today is what has been talked about. I really appreciate the military coming in and explaining the situation. It is the first time we

have had knowledge that they were doing this much work in the history area, so we appreciate them.

Really, what happened is in 1914, as the war started out, the Allies had for 3 years lost hundreds of thousands of men. In 1917, the United States entered the war and in 1918, they had still only moved less than 50 miles in those 4 years.

Someone heard the Native Americans speaking in their native language, which he could not understand. And if he could not understand it, he thought maybe the Germans wouldn't either. So they experimented by trying just two or three immediately. They did not have language in the Choctaw for artillery, so they would say big gunfire. And so they started out, and in a matter of a couple of days they realized this was really something because it was at the time not in written form.

So they recruited all 18, putting them out there. Certainly, these 18 when they came back from World War I, were asked to keep this secret, which they did keep the secret, very, very effective. As you know, numerous tribes, I think some said 16 different tribes in World War II, participated in this, because they did keep the secret. But they also did not get the credit that we think they deserve.

So we appreciate your having this hearing for us today. So with that, it was kind of the ace in the hole, where you have native people volunteering at a higher rate than any other ethnic people; many, many not citizens, and only after World War I were they considered citizens. So they have always fought very valiantly for their home territory.

I will conclude with that. We really appreciate you, by the way, signing on as the 25th cosponsor today. I ask that other Senators would consider signing onto this. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. My staff tells me I was already on it.

Mr. PYLE. Okay, well, we appreciate that very much and I am open for any questions. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Pyle appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Yes; it was interesting to me, some of the words that they used, because they had no language for artillery, submarines, tanks, things like that. I understand the Navajos, in fact, I do not know if it was submarines or tanks, they referred to them as turtles. I can imagine the confusion by Germans trying to listen in. There were a number of turtles moving southeast, or something. It was great.

We will go now to Melvin Kerchee, please.

Mr. KERCHEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the record, we have a prepared statement.

The CHAIRMAN. That will be included in the record. How is Wally Coffee? Is he doing fine down there?

Mr. KERCHEE. Yes; he is.

The CHAIRMAN. Tell him hello for me.

Mr. KERCHEE. I have a prepared statement on behalf of Mr. Charles Chibitty, our last living Comanche codetalker.

The CHAIRMAN. He is still alive?

Mr. KERCHEE. Yes; he is, but his health is in a situation that he could not travel.

The CHAIRMAN. I understand. His letter will be included in the record.

Mr. KERCHEE. For the record, the Choctaws are not quiet in Oklahoma.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, no intertribal problems here. [Laughter.]

Mr. KERCHEE. But very wonderful.

To the left, Mr. Chairman, you will see the Comanche codetalkers on the panel.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes; I looked at that picture.

Mr. KERCHEE. I will read my statement.

STATEMENT OF MELVIN KERCHEE, SECRETARY-TREASURER, COMANCHE NATION

I am Melvin Kerchee, Secretary-Treasurer of the Comanche Nation. I have the honor this morning as the official representative of the government of the Comanche Nation to speak on behalf of Charles Chibitty, the last Comanche codetalker.

It is a title he carries with deep pride and a certain degree of sadness. The pride he feels arises from the opportunity to serve his country, the United States of America, up the slopes of Utah Beach at Normandy and across the battlefields of Europe during World War II. It is the pride he feels because he and 13 other Comanche warriors were able to use their own Comanche language to devise an unbreakable code.

It is a pride that all Indians feel because of the numbers of American Indians who enlisted in the military. The Saturday Evening Post editorial board suggested in 1941 that the draft would not be needed if other young men volunteered like the American Indian men. Historians say that the Indians enlisted in greater proportions to their numbers than all other people in the United States.

The sadness he feels arises from the fact that recognition of the extraordinary service of the codetalkers and the work of the codetalkers in arms comes in the twilight of his years, and that his fellow codetalkers are not here to share his recognition. Gone are Haddon Codynah, Robert Holder, Forrest Kassanavoid, Willington Mihecoby, Perry Noyebad, Clifford Otitivo, Simmons Parker, Melvin Permansu, Dick Red Elk, Elgin Red Elk, Larry Saupitty, Morris Sunrise, and Willie Yackeschi.

The story of the codetalkers are considered classified information, and it was not released until 1968. The story has leaked into history and out of our awareness, like a dripping faucet, drop by drop.

The Navajo codetalkers are, of course, the most prominent in the public at large, but there has been little recognition in the United States of other tribes' military service as codetalkers. For the Comanche, it was initially the French Government who recognized their contribution when in 1989 it awarded the Choctaw and the Comanche chiefs the Chevalier of the National Order of Merit in recognition of the codetalkers' duties for their respective service in World War I and World War II. At that time, Forrest Kassanavoid and Roderick Red Elk were still with us.

In 1995, Mr. Chibitty received the Knowlton Award created by the Military Intelligence Corps Association to recognize significant

contributions to military intelligence efforts. The award is named in honor of Revolutionary War Army Lieutenant Colonel Charles Knowlton.

Finally on November 30, 1999, Mr. Chibitty, then 78, was honored in Washington, DC at the Department of Defense as the last surviving World War II Army Comanche codetalker, during a ceremony in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes. Sadly, however, there has never been formal recognition of the Comanche codetalkers by the U.S. Government.

Two bills introduced in Congress, S. 540 and H.R. 1093, as the Code Talkers Recognition Act, focus on the contributions of American Indian soldiers during the Second World War. These bills and similar legislation, as well as this hearing, help focus attention on the critical strategic service provided by the codetalkers that is long overdue. I would urge Congress to act quickly so that these American Indian heroes, these United States soldiers can be honored properly.

I thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Kerchee appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Keahna.

Mr. KEAHNA. Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

Before I begin my statement, I would like to thank the committee for giving us the opportunity to travel to Washington. I heard your remarks on the museum yesterday, last night on the radio as I was getting ready to go to sleep. Indeed, that was very moving.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I hope it was not the remarks that put you to sleep.

Mr. KEAHNA. You got me. [Laughter.]

STATEMENT OF SAMSON KEAHNA, VIETNAM VETERAN, SAC AND FOX TRIBE OF THE MISSISSIPPI IN IOWA ACCOMPANIED BY WAYNE PUSHETONEQUA, COUNCIL MEMBER, SAC AND FOX TRIBE OF THE MISSISSIPPI IN IOWA

My name is Samson Keahna. I am also a Vietnam veteran. I served there in 1966 and 1967. I have had a great opportunity to sit down with our last surviving codetalker, Mr. Sanache. That is that gentleman there in the picture on the right side over there, in front of the dais.

When we did share some stories, he could be very comical when we were sitting there. He told a couple of stories about being in Tunisia at the time. I told him I had only made one trip to Italy in 1990. He said, well, there was no war going on there, and kind of grinned at me. But he could be a funny man when he wanted to be, but he really did not talk very much about his war experiences, as you know from other veterans. He had that post-traumatic stress and it really affects us.

But on to my statement. On behalf of the Meskwaki Nation, thank you for the opportunity to appear today. It is an honor for me to speak in support of the Meskwaki codetalkers and those from other tribes who gave generously of their time and risked their lives on behalf of this country. The story of the codetalkers and the important role they played in our military is well documented, so I will be brief in my remarks.

Until 1968, information related to the codetalkers' activities during both World War I and World War II remained classified by the Department of Defense. Bound by their honor and obligation, the codetalkers said nothing about the essential role they played on behalf of our country. Instead, they lived humbly among us as friends, brothers, uncles, fathers and grandfathers.

In 2000, Congress passed legislation to award gold medals to 29 members of the Navajo Tribe who served as codetalkers. This measure was an excellent first step in recognizing men who served their country bravely. But it was only one step, and more work remains to be done to ensure that we honor all of those worthy individuals. We must provide codetalkers from the remaining 18 tribes the same recognition the Navajo Nation deserved.

We must pass the Code Talkers Recognition Act now. The codetalkers deserve to be awarded for their bravery and for aiding their comrades to help gain in the victory over their adversaries, with countless forays against heavy odds. With their ingenuity, these brave warriors enabled our military and that of our allies to secure our Nation's freedom and security.

In turn, our tribe has used those freedoms to cultivate our culture, our history, and above all, our unique Meskwaki language. As such, we continue to contribute to the rich diversity that befits our great Nation.

Time is of the essence. Already, we have lost too many of these great warriors. Each of the men who served as a codetalker deserves to know that the nation they served honors their sacrifices. For those whom we have lost, we must demonstrate to their families that they have not been forgotten.

I would hope that your committee will grant these brave warriors the commendations that they have deserved for more than 60 years. Sir, may the Great Spirit be with you in your decision. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Keahna appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Dr. Meadows? Your complete written testimony will also be in the record if you would like to abbreviate.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM C. MEADOWS, PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY, SOUTHWEST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

Mr.MEADOWS. Thank you.

I would like to thank Senator Tom Daschle, Chairman Ben Nighthorse Campbell, our university president, John Keiser at Southwest Missouri State University, for helping me to come and testify today. I would like to also mention the late Forrest Kassanavoid, who had it not been for him, one of the Comanche codetalkers who was responsible for my research product that led into this work that I am going to talk about.

I am the author of the Comanche Code Talkers of World War II. My scope initially was to start out and focus on the Comanches, but I soon traced it back, as many of these other gentleman have explained, to the Choctaws in World War I. So my work turned also into researching and identifying not only as many tribes and as many units as I could that used the American codetalkers, but

also trying to identify individuals in those units. So my work was around that.

I was asked to talk a little bit about the sources that I used. My sources are extremely wide. For the Choctaw material, I worked extensively with Judy Allen through correspondence. Judy is the editor of the Choctaw tribal newspaper, Bishinik. She had been involved in researching the Choctaw codetalkers well before I became involved in this research, to award them by the French government and the State of Oklahoma in 1989. So with her, I worked a lot on the Choctaw information.

The Comanche data I have were from the three surviving Comanche codetalkers who saw combat, and also another individual who went through the training program, but who was discharged prior to going overseas, as well as their actual training officer, who is now retired, Major General Hugh F. Foster.

Other material as far as other groups came from various news reports, tribal newspapers, et cetera, of individuals who were helping me to identify both units and groups. Of the 18 groups, for example in World War II, I have been able to come up with some type of, if you want to say provenance for 12 of the 15 groups in terms of what division, for some individuals even their company, regiment, battalion, so forth and so on.

In World War I, we have only been able to pin down actually one of the six groups that was used, but two others we have good suspicions that they were probably in the same division, the 36th Infantry Division from Oklahoma.

One thing I would like to point out from my research, is what I found from looking at the documentation and working with actual codetalkers, is that it is important to realize there are actually two distinct types of Native American codetalking. The initial formation of it was kind of a de facto accident, per se. Captain Horner overheard a number of Choctaws speaking around a camp and realized they had a common language that the Germans did not know. In time, they formed some actual code words and formed, if you will, a body of coded words to use.

This continued in World War II with, for example, the Comanches were actively recruited in December 1940. The Meskwaki from Iowa were also actively recruited prior to World War II beginning, as were the Chippewa and Oneida from Michigan. The Navajo, of course, were recruited later, in 1942.

The other groups that I have been able to locate to the best of my knowledge at this time were formed not specifically prior to the war, but simply after a group realized they had a number of similar tribal members speaking a common language in a military unit. So they were used or put together on kind of a de facto basis. The term I heard commonly used was use them if you have them, basically is what the word in the military was.

So there are really two types of code. What I designate as type one, in other words, formally developed or specially coded vocabularies that are used within native languages. So it is a type of a double code. You have a foreign language, and then you have a code within the foreign language. Then type two, which many other groups was, was just the informal use of everyday language. To

what degree some coded words may have been added into that is really hard to determine at this time, but quite possible.

In terms of their circumstances in service, one of the things I would like to point out is that we know exactly that there were 420 Navajo codetalkers. We know that there were 17 Comanches; that there were 19 Sac and Fox, of which eight served as codetalkers, et cetera. Just on a rough estimate, I have estimated that probably around 600, and this is only an estimate at this time. There could easily be more, but probably around 600 Native Americans served as actual Native American codetalkers in World War II.

To me, one of the things that I stress in my research is to look at the willingness, the high percentage of voluntary enlistment, and to look at their willingness, because most of these men were actually young to middle to late-teenagers. They came straight out of Indian boarding schools or straight out of high schools in which they were actively inhibited and discouraged from speaking their traditional languages, and their willingness to hang onto that language, and then to turn around and use it for a system to help defend both their tribes and the United States is very gracious and everything.

The thing about their languages is that in military coding at this time it sometimes could take up to an hour and in some cases hours to send a message, in which the message had to encoded, put into a coded machine or something, transmitted, and then uncoded or decoded. This could take several hours. With groups like the Comanches, like the Choctaws, like the Navajos, et cetera, it was simply two gentlemen speaking on a phone. They could turn around and immediately translate it back in here. So you had a matter of seconds, as opposed to a matter of minutes or potential hours. So the speed and the accuracy was the key advantage here.

In my opinion, the contribution of the codetalkers in World War I and World War II should not be judged on their numbers, but by the unique historical circumstances of their bilingual and bi-cultural background and their willingness to use this in defense of their own people and the United States. We have some evidence that these were very effective.

For example, a few days after D-Day when the Comanches landed on Utah Beach, a group of the 4th Division on a probing mission found themselves surrounded by superior German force. They retreated back into a wooded area and basically remained undetected, but realized they were completely surrounded by a larger force. They knew the minute they sent a message, it would be picked up and their location would be given away.

So they needed that message to not be in English. They asked if any of the codetalkers were with them, and luckily Larry Saupitty was in that group. He was brought forward. He sent a message explaining their dire circumstances to which they were reinforced, and the entire group was saved from what would have been quickly being overrun.

I am sorry. Elgin Red Elk is the gentleman who did that. Larry Saupitty was the orderly and communications operator for Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. He is the gentleman who landed in the first wave at D-Day with Roosevelt and reported the message in Comanche, basically "safe landing, wrong beach, what

now?" So several of these gentleman were used in very active situations.

In terms of recognition, the Comanches were honored by their individual families when they came home. Forrest Kassanavoid, for example, the minute he stepped off the train, his dad asked him if he brought anything back. He produced a Nazi flag. His aunt proceeded to lay it on the concrete sidewalk and they placed him on it, and have him dance a victory dance on the spot. These were common events in Oklahoma in 1946.

The tribe did honor them in 1946 at a large pow-wow at Walters that eventually became what is now known as the Comanche Homecoming. From there, the recognition is virtually invisible until 1989, when again, the Oklahoma State government and the Government of France recognized them in a small ceremony at the Oklahoma State Capitol.

From this standpoint, we begin to look at also some of the contributions. There are some really distinguished service from these individuals who are codetalkers. In World War I, Solomon Lewis won the Coeur d'Guerre from France and was awarded the silver star by General Pershing himself. Schlicht Billy, a Choctaw from Oklahoma in World War II is reported to have been the first American to break through the Siegfried Line. He captured a machine gun nest and was seriously wounded in doing this, but his penetration of this line allowed Major Jack Treadwell and other members of his unit, Choctaw members to penetrate and actually open up part of the Siegfried Line.

In World War II, Willie Yacheschi, Robert Holder, Larry Saupitty, Forrest Kassanavoid, and Perry Noyabad, all Comanches, were all wounded in action and several of them received bronze stars. So we have a true record of quite a bit of service here.

I strongly urge the committee to seek further research on this subject and to please pass any legislation that we could to bring these men contributions and honors. Some possibilities might include similar types of medals or certificates, as were given the Navajo; some sort of a plaque that could be put at the respective tribal offices for the tribal members; and also perhaps the consideration of a small monument or plaque or something here in the Nation's Capital to recognize and commemorate their service.

Thank you very much for allowing me to testify.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Meadows appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. We are going to proceed on all fronts, you might say, as well as we can. Getting a plaque or a monument at the capitol takes years. In fact, I was involved in that as a member of Veterans Affairs when we wanted to upgrade the wall, for those of you who are of Vietnam vintage, because there were many American soldiers that died after they came back, but as a result of combat, from Agent Orange or things of that nature, all kinds of reasons. Their names were not included on the wall. So we had to get a special plaque put up right near the wall, as you probably know.

I think we worked on it for 4 years. It took a long time to do it. There is a group that really controls what goes on the Mall. It is an appointed group here in Washington. They historically have opposed everything that goes on the Mall. I think they would still like

to have it a swamp, rather than monuments to our great war heroes.

So it is not easy to do. In fact, the World War II memorial, as you know, they opposed that, if you remember. We had to pass a special bill through the House and the Senate, and President Bush signed it, where we overruled that whole commission and said we were going to do it anyway. They were not thrilled with us.

So that part might be difficult, but certainly the other things you have suggested to the committee, I know we will be very supportive of that.

I do appreciate all of you being here today. Any further comments that you or anyone in the audience would have on this issue, we will keep the record open for 2 weeks. As you know, we adjourn in just a few short weeks, so we are going to try and proceed as well as we can before that time. So if you have additional comments, get them in as soon as you can.

With that, thank you, and this committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:15 a.m. the committee was adjourned, to reconvene at the call of the chair.]

APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL [RET.] JOHN S. BROWN CHIEF OF MILITARY HISTORY, U.S. ARMY

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the contributions of Native American code talkers in American military history. Native Americans have a long and proud tradition of military service to their several nations and to the United States of America. Our Army archives are replete with tales of their valor, and Army museums feature equipment they have used and medals they have won under trying circumstances. Among their unique contributions has been their service as code talkers to secure command and control on the battlefield.

By the early years of the 20th century, command and control had become heavily dependent upon electrical communications. Vastly increased distances, dispersion, and spans of control required the use of what were then considered modern technologies, such as sound locators, buzzer-phones, and radios, with the land-line telephone emerging as the preferred and most reliable means of communication for ground combat during World War I. Unfortunately, land-lines could be tapped, and our German adversaries too often listened in. The 36th Division, for example, reported having circulated the coordinates of a supply dump, only to find that location inundated by enemy artillery fire within minutes. Other divisions similarly reported facilities or operations compromised and lives lost because of intercepted communications. Techniques of encryption that did exist proved too cumbersome to accommodate fluid tactics.

That same 36th Division had within its ranks a company of American Indians who spoke a total of 26 native languages. Only four or five of those languages had been captured in writing. Someone suggested placing an American Indian soldier in each key tactical command post so that the division could rapidly communicat6 sensitive information in a language that the eavesdropping Germans could not possibly understand. Choctaw was selected as that language. The experiment worked so well that a regimental commander attributed the success of a delicate, nighttime tactical withdrawal—and again a major assault the following day—to the complete surprise achieved by using the Choctaw language to coordinate operations. The idea caught on. By the end of World War I, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Comanche, Osage, and Yankton soldiers were also serving as code talkers.

When World War II began, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps drew upon the service of code talkers in a more organized manner. By then the preferred method of communication was increasingly the wireless radio; however, radio signals were even more vulnerable to interception than the telephone. In January 1941, the U.S. Army recruited Comanche code talkers to serve in its 4th Infantry Division, and a few months later the Marines began recruiting Navajo for the same purpose.

In the European theater, the Army's Comanche codetalkers came ashore on D-Day. On Utah Beach, a Comanche codetalker [Larry Saupitty] sent Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt Jr's critical message to reinforce an initial landing that ended up 2,000 yards away from its designated beaches. Saupitty's message was classic in its simplicity: "We made good landing. We landed at the wrong place." As the Allied

troops pushed out of the beachhead, codetalkers accompanied the leading regiments and provided communications throughout the breakout across France. Scattered throughout the division in two-man teams, codetalkers relayed vital messages that utterly precluded the enemy interceptions of them.

In the Pacific, the Navajo codetalkers took part in every major Marine Corps operation and served in all six Marine divisions, transmitting messages by telephone and radio in their native tongue. First used on Guadalcanal in the fall of 1942, Navajo techniques reduced the time used for encoding and decoding messages by one-half. Their greatest test was in early 1945, when three Marine divisions stormed Iwo Jima. In the first 2 days of fighting, 6 Navajo codetalkers worked around the clock, sending and receiving more than 800 messages without a single error. One Marine signal officer noted, "Were it not for the Navajo, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima." I highly recommend William C. Meadows' book, "The Comanche Code Talkers of World War II" as a discussion of the Army's codetalking contingent, and Doris A. Paul's, "The Navajo Code Talkers" as a discussion of the Marine's. I point out, too, that the Navajo were the subject of the recent movie "Windtalkers." Perhaps less familiar to the public, but equally deserving of our praise, are the Assiniboin, Cherokee, Chippewa, Oneida, Choctaw, Hopi, Kiowa, Menominee, Muscogee, Creek, Seminole, Pawnee, Sac, Fox, Lakota, and Dakota, who also served in our armed forces as code talkers. It is impossible to calculate how many operations were successful and how many lives were saved because of communications secured by the code talkers.

It may well be that contemporary encryption technology has carried us beyond the era in which the services of the code talkers proved most useful. However, an underlying principle remains valid: That the diversity and richness of American culture renders it far more capable than it would otherwise be of coping with the challenges of an uncertain world. Also, the unique and extraordinary record of Native American service in the Armed Forces of the United States continues unbroken, as our accumulating record of current operations attests.

Thank you.

[Responses to questions follows:]

Question 1: Is the Center for Military History looking into a project to further identify and develop the history of the American Indian codetalkers in the Army? If not, would this be a possibility?

Answer: The Center of Military History is compiling a data base identifying the codetalkers and detailing their contributions. We are exploring ways to contact the various tribes to enlist their assistance in identifying those members who served as codetalkers, both formally and informally. The information gathered will be used in the next revision of our volume, *Getting the Message Through: A Branch History of the U.S. Army Signal Corps,* to expand its discussion of the use of Native American codetalkers in both World Wars I and II. This information will also be made available to other historians and historical researchers.

Question: 2 From my understanding, the Army Signal Corps was the branch that had an American Indian Codetalkers program. What were the duties of the Army Signal Corps? Do you know of any of the other encryption technologies that were being utilized during World War I and World War II?

Answer: Since its original organization in 1860, the Signal Corps has been the Army's communications branch. In short, its mission is to get the message through. With the introduction of longer range weapons during the 19th century, a commander could no longer control his troops by voice alone. From simple signaling techniques using flags and torches, the Corps' responsibilities have grown to encompass message transmission by telegraph, telephone, radio, computers, and satellites. During the 20th century, the introduction of radio and other broadcast media greatly increased the need for communications security. Elaborate codes and ciphers were developed to prevent the enemy from listening in. The Signal Intelligence Service, established in 1929 to control Army cryptology, ultimately became today's National Security Agency. During World War II the Army employed a number of sophisticated encryption methods and machines. The SIGSALY, for instance, masked encoded messages behind a fog of white noise. The Germans used Enigma. In field situations where technical means of security were not available or appropriate, Native American codetalkers were sometimes used, and proved very effective.

Question 3: Do you know the numbers of American Indians who served in World War I and World War II? Do you know how many served as codetalkers?

Answer: Approximately 12,000 Native Americans served in the armed forces during World War I. For World War II, the number climbed to over 44,000. Dr. William C. Meadows, the author of *The Comanche Code Talkers of World War II* conducted exhaustive research to identify Native Americans who served both formally and informally as codetalkers. He successfully identified the 15 Choctaws who served as

codetalkers in the 36th Division during World War I. Due to the lack of documentation, he could not determine how many members of other tribes may also have performed such duties, either formally or informally. Seventeen Comanches participated in the Signal Corps' formal code talking program in the 4th Infantry Division during World War II, and 420 Navajo served with the Marine Corps in the Pacific. According to Meadows, however, there were many more American Indians who used their native languages informally as codetalkers. Dr. Meadows concluded that members of at least 16 tribes acted as codetalkers in some capacity. As I stated in my testimony on September 22, the total number of formal and informal codetalkers within the Army could have been as high as 21,000, assuming that all bilingual American Indians used both their native language and English to facilitate communications at one time or another. For the armed forces as a whole, the number could have been as high as 30,000.

Question 4: What do you think is a proper and appropriate recognition for these codetalkers? Do you know whether the Department of Defense supports a formal recognition for these Codetalkers?

Answer: The Center of Military History, as an agent of DOD, has been empowered to collect data regarding the codetalkers and to support their recognition. A useful precedent has been set by the Navy with the recognition of the Navajo codetalkers. The original 29 codetalkers received Congressional gold medals; those who later qualified as codetalkers received silver medals. The Center believes that similar recognition for codetalkers from other tribes would be both proper and appropriate to honor their unique and extraordinary service. Unfortunately, there are no surviving Choctaw codetalkers and only one of the original 17 Comanche codetalkers, Charles Chibitty, is still living.

Unfortunately, there was no military skill identifier for codetalkers. Therefore, I would recommend that recognition be limited to those individuals whose language skills can be reasonably documented or authenticated as having been used to ensure communications security in tactical situations. For those tribes that contributed codetalkers, Congress could present and furnish a plaque for display in tribal areas.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHARLES CHIBITTY, COMANCHE CODE TALKER

I am the last surviving Comanche Code Talker.

The Comanche Code Talkers were an elite group of young men who were fluent in the Comanche language and we used that knowledge, along with our U.S. Army Signal Corps training, to send critical messages that confused the enemy during World War II; 20 of us were originally recruited, 17 of us were trained in communications, and 14 were deployed to the European theater. We were assigned to the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Benning, Georgia and began our training in January 1941. Lieutenant Hugh Frost took charge of our Comanche unit.

Our unit landed on the Normandy shores on the first or second day after D-Day. After we hit Utah Beach, our first radio message was sent to another Code Talker on an incoming boat. Translated into English, it said: "Five miles to the right of the designated area and 5 miles inland, the fighting is fierce and we need help." We were trying to let them know where we were so they would not lob any shells on us. I was with the 22d Infantry Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division. We talked Comanche and sent messages when need be. It was quicker to use telephones and radios to send messages because Morse code had to be decoded and the Germans could decode them. We used telephones and radios to talk Comanche then wrote it in English and gave it to the commanding officer.

Two Comanches were assigned to each of the 4th Infantry Division's three regiments. We sent coded messages from the front line to division headquarters, where other Comanches decoded the messages.

An example of a message we sent to other units is this: "A turtle is coming down the hedgerow. Get that stovepipe and shoot him." A turtle was a tank and a stovepipe was a bazooka. We couldn't say tank or bazooka in Comanche, so we had to substitute something else. A turtle has a hard shell, so it was a tank.

There was no Comanche word for machine gun so we used "sewing machine," because of the noise the sewing machine made when my mother was sewing. Hitler was "posah-tai-vo," or "crazy white man."

There are no words in Comanche to say bomber aircraft. When daddy and I went fishing when I was a boy and we cut a catfish open, sometimes it would be full of eggs. Well, that bomber aircraft was just like the catfish full of eggs, too, so we called it a pregnant airplane.

We got so we could send any message, word for word, letter for letter. The Navajos did the same thing in the Pacific during World War II and the Choctaw used

their language during World War I. There were other code talkers from other tribes, but if they didn't train like the Comanche and Navajos, how could they send a message like we did? If they made a slight mistake, instead of saving lives, it could have cost a lot of lives.

I felt I was doing something that the military wanted us to do and we did to the best of our ability, not only to save lives, but to confuse the enemy by talking in the Comanche language. We felt we were doing something that could help win the war.

When I attended Indian school in the 1920's, teachers got angry when we spoke Comanche. When we talked Comanche, we got punished. I told my cousin that they were trying to make little white boys out of us. After joining the Army it was the other way around. In school they tried to make us quit talking Comanche, and in the Army they wanted us to talk Comanche.

When I talk about my Comanche comrades, I always wonder why it took so long for recognition of our service. They are not here to enjoy what I am getting after all these years. Yes, it's been a long, long time.

The only thing I regret is my fellow codetalkers are not here. But I have a feeling those boys are here somewhere listening and looking down.

My last fellow codetalker died in September 1998. All those other boys up there were welcoming him home. They were hugging and kissing him and, while they were doing that, they said, 'Wait a minute, we've still got one more down there. When Charles gets up here, we're going to welcome him just like we're welcoming you.'

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SAMSON KEAHNA, SAC AND FOX TRIBE OF THE MISSISSIPPI IN IOWA

Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the Meskwaki Nation, thank you for the opportunity to appear today. It is an honor for me to speak in support of the Meskwaki Code Talkers and those from other tribes, who gave generously of their time and risked their lives on behalf of this country. The story of the Code Talkers and the important role they played in our military is well documented so I will be brief in my remarks.

Until 1968, information related to the Code Talkers activities during both World War I and World War II remained classified by the Department of Defense. Bound by their honor and obligation, the Code Talkers said nothing about the essential role they played on behalf of our country. Instead, they lived humbly among us as friends, brothers, uncles, fathers, and grandfathers.

In 2000, Congress passed legislation to award gold medals to 29 members of the Navajo Tribe who served as Code Talkers. This measure was an excellent first step in recognizing men who served their country bravely. But it was only one step and more work remains to be done to ensure that we honor all of these worthy individuals. We must provide Code Talkers from the remaining 18 tribes the same recognition the Navajo deserved. We must pass The Code Talkers Recognition Act now.

The Code Talkers deserve to be awarded for their bravery, and for aiding their comrades to help gain in the victory over their adversaries, with countless forays against heavy odds. With their ingenuity, these Brave Warriors enabled our military and that of our allies to secure our Nation's freedom and security. In turn, our tribe has used those freedoms to cultivate our culture, our history, and above all, our unique Meskwaki Language. As such, we continue to contribute to the rich diversity that befits our great Nation.

Time is of the essence. Already we have lost too many of these great warriors. Each of the men who served as a Code Talker deserves to know that the Nation they served honors their sacrifices. For those whom we have lost, we must demonstrate to their families that they have not been forgotten.

I would hope that your committee will grant these Brave Warriors the commendations that they have deserved for more than 60+ years.

May the Great Spirit be with you in your decision. Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MELVIN KERCHEE, SECRETARY-TREASURER, COMANCHE NATION

Chairman and honorable members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am Melvin Kerchee, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer of the Comanche Nation. I have the honor this morning, as the official representative of the government of the Comanche Nation, to accompany Charles Chibitty, the last of the Comanche Code Talkers. It is a title he carries with deep pride and a

certain degree of sadness. The pride he feels arises from the opportunity to serve his country, the United States of America, up the slopes of Utah Beach at Normandy and across the battlefields of Europe, during World War II. It is a pride he feels because he and 13 other Comanche warriors were able to use their own Comanche language to devise an unbreakable code. It is a pride that all Indians feel because of the numbers of American Indians who enlisted in the military. The Saturday Evening Post editorial board suggested in 1941 that the draft would not be needed if other young man volunteered like American Indian men. Historians say that Indians enlisted in greater proportions to their numbers than all other people in the United States.

The sadness he feels arises from the fact that recognition of the extraordinary service of the Code Talkers and the work of his comrades in arms comes in the twilight of his years and that his fellow Code Talkers are not here to share this recognition. Gone are:

Haddon Codynah, Robert Holder, Forrest Kassanovoid, Willington Mihecoby, Perry Noyebad, Clifford Otitivo, Simmons Parker, Melvin Permansu, Dick Red Elk, Elgin Red Elk, Larry Saupitty, Morris Sunrise, and Willie Yackeschi.

The story of the Code Talkers was considered classified information and not released until 1968. The story has leaked into history and our awareness like a dripping faucet, drop by drop. The Navajo Code Talkers are of course the most prominent in the public at large, but there has been little recognition in the United States of other tribes' military service as Code Talkers.

For the Comanche, it was initially the French Government who recognized their contribution when, in 1989, it awarded the Choctaw and Comanche chiefs the Chevalier de L'Ordre National du Merit (Chevalier of the National Order of Merit) in recognition of the code talker duties for their respective service in World War I and World War II. At that time Forrest Kassanavoid and Roderick Red Elk were still with us.

In 1995, Mr. Chibitty received the Knowlton Award, created by the Military Intelligence Corps Association to recognize significant contributions to military intelligence efforts. The award is named in honor of Revolutionary War Army Lt. Col. Thomas Knowlton.

Finally, on Nov. 30, 1999, Mr. Chibitty, then 78, was honored in Washington, DC at the Department of Defense, as the last surviving World War II Army Comanche "Code Talker" during a ceremony in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes. Sadly, however, there has never been formal recognition of the Comanche Code Talkers by the U.S. Government.

Two bills introduced in Congress, S. 540 and H.R. 1093, as the "Code Talkers Recognition Act," focus on the contribution of American Indian soldiers during the Second World War. These bills or similar legislation, as well as this hearing, help focus attention on the critical strategic service provided by the Code Talkers that is long overdue. I would urge Congress to act quickly so that these American Indian warriors, these United States soldiers can be honored properly. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF DON LOUDNER, NATIONAL COMMANDER, AMERICAN INDIAN VETERANS

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on an issue that is very important to me—appropriate recognition for all American Indian Code Talkers. I am honored to be here.

American Indians have a long and proud history of service in the military. Statistically, American Indians volunteer to serve their country at a higher percentage during all wars or conflicts than any other ethic group.

In fact, American Indians fought for the United States of America before they were recognized as citizens of their own country.

The Department of Veterans Affairs acknowledges that American Indians have the highest rate of military service among all ethnic groups in the Nation, and the VA's statistics also show that the American Indian veteran is the least likely veteran to apply for the benefits he or she has earned.

The American Indian Veteran has been forgotten or put on the back burner for far too long.

During World War I and World War II, American Indian veterans from at least 17 Indian Nations served the armed forces of the United States in a vital and unique capacity, by using their native languages to foil enemy communications. They became known as Code Talkers from the use of their languages to transmit messages in a form the enemy could not decipher.

Many of these veterans worked 24 hours around the clock in headphones when the action was the heaviest, without rest or sleep. Their work saved the lives of countless other Americans and Allied Forces. These Code Talkers deserve their own pages in the national memory of the great world wars.

But I fear many Code Talkers could be forgotten. One tribe, the Navajo, has had its Code Talkers honored with medals from the U.S. Congress. The Comanche Code Talkers have a fine book written about them. But military records and other sources indicate that military Code Talkers came from many other tribes and spoke many other languages.

The first official use of an American Indian language—based on code by the U.S. military—was in 1918, toward the end of World War I.

Convinced that their communications lines were tapped, Captain E.W. Homer selected 14 Choctaws to transmit messages.

In his report, the commanding officer, Col. A.W. Block, said, "The enemy's complete surprise is evidence that he could not decipher the messages. The results were gratifying." Following that successful experiment, other Indians in the Expeditionary Force—Cheyenne, Comanche, Cherokee, Osage, and Sioux were called on to use their languages for field communications.

In addition, to the fine service of the Navajo, 17 other tribes are mentioned as having Code Talkers during World War II:

Choctaw, Comanche, Cheyenne, Cherokee, Chippewa, Creek, Hopi, Kiowa, Menominee, Muscogee-Seminole, Osage, Oneida, Pawnee, Pima-Papago, Sauk and Fox, Sioux-(Dakota, Lakota, Nakota-Dialects), and Winnebago

Mr. Chairman, we must act on two fronts: First, we must correct our Nation's military history, to ensure that the service and sacrifice of Code Talkers from all tribes is remembered; and second, our Nation must find an appropriate way to honor all Code Talkers.

To properly honor the Code Talkers, we should have a public monument in our Nation's capital. I want to make sure that my grandchildren—and their countrymen—can see a permanent and prominent symbol. A symbol of a time when American Indian languages became a powerful weapon in the fight for freedom. My view is that the perfect location for such a monument would be the grounds of the new National Museum of the American Indian.

I commend the Senate for honoring the Sioux Code Talkers in 1995. In the 104th Congress, the Senate approved S. Res. 116 on May 8, 1995, introduced by Senator Daschle, Senator Pressler, Senator Inouye, and Senator McCain.

The Code Talkers from South Dakota were also honored in the 77th Legislature of the State of South Dakota, House Commemoration No. 1026. The South Dakota Legislature recognized the following Sioux Code Talkers for their immeasurable contribution to their Nation in a time of great need:

Edmund St. John from the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Phillip "Stoney" LaBlanc from the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Eddie Eagle Boy from the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Guy Rondell from the Sisseton-Whapeton Sioux Tribe, John Bear King from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Walter C. John from the Santee Sioux Tribe, Iver Crow Eagle from the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Simon Broken Leg from the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Charles Whitepipe from the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Baptiste Pumpkinseed from the Oglala Sioux Tribe, and Clarence Wolf Guts from the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

STATEMENT OF

THE HONORABLE GORDON H. MANSFIELD

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES SENATE

September 22, 2004

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee.

I am pleased to be here to present the Department's views on the presentation of Gold Medals to Native American Code Talkers and to discuss the Department's outreach efforts to American Indian veterans. VA commends you for acknowledging their distinguished service in performing highly successful communications operations through the use of their unique languages that greatly assisted in saving countless lives and hastened the end of both World War I and World War II.

Contributions in Combat

VA has long acknowledged the honorable service of our American Indian veterans in the defense of this great nation. They have served with distinction in United States military actions for more than 200 years. Their valor and courage is well documented and it is only right that we further honor that same valor and courage with appropriate accolades.

American Indians have served in every war fought by the United States of America. During World War I approximately 12,000 served with the American Expeditionary Force and many distinguished themselves in the fighting in France. In World War II over 44,000 fought against the Axis forces in both European and Pacific theaters of war. These Americans compiled a

distinguished record of courage and sacrifice. Of those Indians in the Army, the Office of Indian Affairs reported in November 1945 that 71 Indians received the Air Medal, 51 the Silver Star, 47 the Bronze Star, 34 won the Distinguished Flying Cross, and two received the Medal of Honor with a total of five American Indians having received this highest award. Those in the Army Air Forces saw duty as pilots, navigators, gunners, bombardiers, and transport crews in all theaters of the war. Battle-experienced American Indian troops from World War II were joined by newly recruited American Indians to fight Communist aggression during the Korean conflict. The American Indians' strong sense of patriotism and courage emerged once again during the Vietnam era. More than 42,000 American Indians fought in Vietnam. American Indian contributions in United States military combat continued in the 1980s and 1990s as they saw duty in Grenada, Panama, Somalia, and the Persian Gulf. They continue to play a major role in the armed services with nearly 11,000 on active duty today. (Census 2000)

VHA Outreach to American Indian Veterans

Over 220,000 Native American veterans self-identified in a single race category as American Indian or Alaska Native according to Census 2000. Due to privacy issues mandated with veteran records, VA cannot determine the exact number of American Indian veterans now enrolled in the system; however the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is sensitive to the fact that these veterans currently report four times the unmet health care needs of other veterans. To begin to address this healthcare disparity, VHA and the Indian Health Service (IHS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in February 2003. The goal of this agreement is to use the strengths and expertise of both organizations to deliver quality health care services and enhance the health of American Indian and Alaska Native veterans. Five mutual goals were set forth in the MOU:

- To improve communications among agencies and Tribes;

- To promote sharing and collaborations;
- To expand access for American Indian and Alaska Native veterans;
- To ensure that appropriate organizational support and health services are available to these veterans; and
- To deliver effective health promotion and disease prevention services to them.

To accomplish these goals, IHS and VHA have instituted regular communication at the headquarters and field levels. In addition, each VHA network has developed specific implementation plans of this MOU with extensive outreach to Tribal and community representatives since January 2004. Examples of the initiatives underway include:

- Establishment of outpatient clinics for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) veterans at Tribal and IHS facilities on reservations;
- Cooperative agreements to improve the coordination of specialty referrals for AI/AN veterans from IHS, Tribal and urban clinics,
- Telehealth linkages that permit the delivery of services to remote Tribal sites, including telemental health services and readjustment counseling,
- Sharing specialty medical staff between IHS and VHA to meet the needs of patients in both services where the availability of such specialty providers is limited.

Across the nation, VHA is also working with IHS to upgrade its electronic patient record system to enable IHS to use the additional safety and quality of

care features of the VHA system. Finally, the VHA Readjustment Counseling Service has worked with Tribes and IHS to establish American Indian Vet Centers on a number of reservations across the country.

VBA Outreach to American Indian Veterans

VBA outreach coordinators participate in various events to reach American Indian veterans, such as VA benefits briefings on reservations and with local American Indian groups.

In FY 2002, working with the Center for Minority Veterans, VBA developed benefits training for Tribal Veterans Representatives (TVR). TVRs, designated by tribal officials, serve as points of contact for tribal veterans, are a resource for information and referral on benefits and services, and provide assistance in submitting claims. Through this program, 35 TVRs from Montana and Wyoming have been provided comprehensive training on VA benefits and services, on the claims process, and on health care enrollment. Training sessions continued in FY 2003 and FY 2004, at the Ft. Harrison VA Medical and Regional Office Center. We expect that this program will expand to other states in FY 2005.

Recognizing that housing on reservations is an issue for our American Indian veterans, VA administers the Native American Veterans Direct Loan Program for Indian veterans living on trust lands. This program assists American Indian veterans in financing the purchase, improvement or modification of homes on Federal trust territory. Loan Guaranty Service provides program information and materials to all interested parties and to VA personnel who assist American Indian veterans wishing to use this program. VA has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 68 participating American Indian tribes. Since its inception, VA has made almost 400 loans to Native American veterans under the program, closing 120 loans in FY 2003 alone.

NCA Outreach to American Indian Veterans

Recently, Secretary Principi strongly supported the enactment of H.R. 2983, Native American Veterans Cemetery Act of 2003 to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for eligibility of Indian tribal organizations for grants for the establishment of veterans cemeteries on trust lands. This bill would authorize the Secretary to make grants to tribal organizations to assist them in establishing, expanding, or improving veterans cemeteries in the same manner and under the same conditions as grants to states are made under 38 U.S. Code 2408. H.R. 2983 would create another means of accommodating the burial needs of American Indian veterans who wish to be buried in tribal lands. Currently, the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) encourages participation of tribal interests in state efforts to establish state veterans cemeteries. NCA has received a pre-application from the State of Arizona for the establishment of a state veterans cemetery that will be located geographically and designed with the cultural needs of local American Indian tribes in mind.

NCA continues to provide burial benefits to all veterans. When a family wishes to have a burial at a VA national cemetery, NCA attempts to accommodate any special needs, including religious customs during committal services at its cemeteries. American Indian veterans and their families are able to perform tribal rituals in VA's national cemeteries and many state veterans cemeteries.

For example, at the Nashville National Cemetery, cemetery staff works closely with the Tennessee Native Veterans Society to provide an option for families so they can incorporate tribal rituals into the committal service, if requested. American Indian performers have been participating in the cemetery's Memorial Day ceremonies since 2002, and just this April 2004, the cemetery director staffed an information booth at the Society's second annual Powwow.

The chairman of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, chairman of the Northern Ute Indian Tribe, and acting chairman of the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe participated in the July 17, 2002, dedication of the Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado in Grand Junction, built with a VA State Cemetery grant of $6 million. The tribe has been actively involved and on March 14, 2003, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Southern Ute Veterans Association dedicated a black granite memorial to American Indian veterans at the cemetery.

The new Idaho Veterans Cemetery in Boise recently conducted its first interment, an Idaho soldier killed in Iraq. American Indian veterans played a prominent role in the burial service. These examples are typical of the types of outreach and involvement of American Indian veterans at state and national veterans cemeteries.

American Indian representatives have also participated in new national cemetery dedication and consecration ceremonies. For example, a representative of the Muckleshoot Tribe was one of several honored guests at the Tahoma National Cemetery's 1997 consecration service and a member of the Comanche County Veterans Council was an honored guest at the Fort Sill National Cemetery's 2001 dedication ceremony. A chaplain from the Tohono O'odham Nation participated in the rededication ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona in 2001. In addition, NCA senior managers have visited tribal reservations and burial grounds, attended Memorial Day events and increased efforts to communicate memorial benefits to the American Indian veteran community.

NCA also provides government-furnished headstones and markers for placement in cemeteries around the world. When choosing the inscription for a headstone or marker, a family may choose an authorized Emblem of Belief, including the Native American Church of America emblem.

Conclusion

VA will continue to explore all opportunities to increase eligible American Indian veteran participation in the benefits and healthcare services we provide. Again we acknowledge the honor and pride with which American Indians have served their country in the military and especially salute the extraordinary contributions of the Native American Code Talkers. We stand ready to serve them as they have so gallantly served their country.

This completes my statement. I will be happy to respond to any questions you might have.

9/17/2004
To: The U.S. Senate Committee on Indian affairs
Oversight Hearing on The Contributions of Native American Code Talkers:
Re: Contributions of Native American Code Talkers

My name is William C. Meadows. I am an Assistant Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Sociology-Anthropology at Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri, where I teach in the Anthropology and native American Studies programs. I am the author of the book entitled The Comanche Code Talkers of World War II, published in 2002 by the University of Texas Press.

To date the majority of published works focusing on Native American Code Talkers have focused almost exclusively on the Navajo and consist of over fifty books and articles, and many more newspaper articles. Although many of these works are commendable and accurately record the Navajo Code Talker's military service, they are largely popular and not academic works. In addition theses works have not explored the contributions of other Native Americans from other tribes who also served as code talkers.

To my knowledge I am the only person who has researched and published an academic oriented work on Native American Code Talkers. The information contained in this report is taken largely from this text.

In this work I produced a chronological history of Native American Code Talking. Beginning with its initial inception with the Oklahoma Choctaw during World War I. I then trace the use of other tribes in that war, the pre-war recruitment and training of tribes for potential use in World War II, a series of debates between the branches of the United States Armed Forces concerning whether or not to expand and or use the Native American Code Talkers in World War II; the boarding school experiences, recruitment, training, and actual combat service of Native American Code Talkers in World War II; subsequent post war developments and recognitions, and a comparison of the experiences of Comanche and Navajo as code talkers. One part of this research focused on identifying as many tribes as possible, and where possible the names of individuals, who served as code talkers in both world wars.

The research for this book combined several forms: surveys of published sources, survey of relevant sources in the military archives at the National Archives, the National Security Agency, the Marine Corps Archives, and extensive first hand interviews with the surviving Comanche Code Talkers, their training officer Major General. Ret. Hugh F. Foster, and fellow Signal Corps members. For the data pertaining to the Choctaw, I collaborated extensively with Judy Allen, a Choctaw tribal member and editor of the Choctaw Tribal newspaper Bishinik. Mrs. Allen had undertaken extensive research on the Choctaw Code Talkers who served in World War I. Other tribes and members who served as code talkers during both world wars were identified through archival research and news releases.

Types of Native American Code Talking

My research determined that there were in fact two types of Native American Code Talking, which I designate as Type 1 and Type 2 Native American Code Talking (NACT). While both involve the use of Native American languages for secure transmission of military intelligence, the distinguishing factor is the presence or absence of specially formulated code words placed within the vernacular structures of these languages. These two forms of coded communications may be distinguished as:

> Type 1 – Formally developed and special coded-encoded vocabularies used within Native American languages.
>
> Type 2 – The informal use of everyday non-coded Native American languages.

Determining which form of NACT was used with which tribes is sometimes difficult. From historical records and first hand accounts I have been able to determine that Type 1 Native American Code Talkers include the Choctaws in World War I, and the Comanche, Navajo, and Hopi in World War II. Because they were recruited prior to World war II, the Mesquakie (Sac and Fox) and the Chippewa/Oneida groups may have also undertaken code training and formation and thus qualify as Type 1 groups.

Type 2 Native American Code Talkers include all other groups presently identified as having performed code talking. Because the background of how some of these small units were formed and whether or not they constructed formally designed codes within their languages or simply spoke in their everyday language, we must at present, assume that they were in fact Type 2 groups. These groups, and where possible their units, are listed below.

Other Units

While the subject of Native American Code Talkers is at an all-time high in the United States and several western European countries, the popular image is limited concerning the number of tribes, the number of individuals that served in this manner, and their distribution in the United States Armed Services. Most individuals know only of the Navajo, and while they were the largest group of Native American Code Talkers and served with exemplary distinction, members of at least 18 other tribes served as code talkers during World Wars I and II.

Identification of Native American Code Talkers By Tribe

Those are tribes I have been able to identify as having served as Native American Code Talkers include the following:

World War I

Tribe	Type of Code talking	Unit
Cherokee	2	Probably 36th Div.
Cheyenne	2	Presently unknown.
Choctaw (15)	1	Co. E, 142nd Inf. Reg., 36th Div. 143rd Inf. Reg., 36th Div.
Comanche	2	Presently Unknown
Osage	2	Probably 36th Div.
Yankton Sioux	2	Presently Unknown

World War II

Assiniboine	2	Co. B, 163rd Inf. Div.
Cherokee	2	Presently Unknown
Chippewa/Oneida (17)	2*	32nd Inf. Div.
Choctaw	2	K. Co., 180th Inf. Reg., 45th Inf. Div.
Comanche (17)	1	4th Sig. Co., 4th Inf. Div.
Hopi (11)	1	U.S. Army 223rd Batt.
Kiowa (3)	2	689th Fld. Art. Batt., XX Corps
Menominee	2	Presently Unknown
Muscogee/Creek And Seminole	2	a. 195th Fld Art. Batt. b. Aleutian Campaign
Navajo (420)	1	U.S. Marine Corps, 3rd, 4th, 5th Divs.
Pawnee	2	Presently Unknown
Sac and Fox (19)	2*	18th Iowa inf.
Sioux (Lakota and Dakota dialects)	2	a. 302nd Rec. Team, 1st Cav. Div. b. 32nd Fld. Art. Batt., 19th Reg. Combat Team

* Because the Chippewa-Oneida and the Sac and Fox (Mesquakie) were specifically recruited for communications work, some code formation may have occurred but is presently unknown.

Individual Identification of Native American Code Talkers

Those individuals I have been able to identify as having served as Native American Code talkers include the following:

World War I

Choctaw:
Solomon Bond Louis
Albert Billy
Mitchell Bobb
James Edwards
Victor Brown
Ben Carterby
Joseph Oklahombi
Walter Veach
Calvin Wilson
Robert taylor
Pete Maytubby
Benjamin W. Hampton
Jeff Nelson
Tobias Fraziewr
Benjamin Colbert

World War II

Comanche:
Forrest Kassanavoid
Roderick Red Elk
Elgin Red Elk
Charles Chibitty
Wellington Mihecoby
Simmons Parker
Larry Saupitty
Melvin Permansu
Willie Yacheschi
Morris Tabbyetchy
Perry Noyabad
Haddon Codynah
Robert Holder
Cliffort Ottiivo

Albert Nahquaddy, Anthony Tabbytite, and Ralph Wahnee also trained as code talkers, but were discharged prior to active combat.

Hopi: (3 of the 11 Hopi Code Talkers have been identified)
Franklin Shupla
Travis Yaiva,
Floyd Dann

Mesquakie: (8 of 19 Mesquakie Code Talkers have been identified).
Dewey Youngbear
Frank Sanache
Willie Sanache
Judy Wayne
Mike Wayne
Dewey Roberts
Edward Benson
Melvin Twin

Choctaw:
Schlicht Billy
Andrew Perry
Davis Pickens
Forrester T. Baker

Dakota-Lakota (Europe):
Simon Broken Leg
Jeffrey Dull Knife
Garfield T. Brown
Anthony Omaha Boy
John C. Smith

Lakota-Dakota (Pacific):
Phillip LeBlanc
Edmund St. John
Baptiste Pumpkinseed
Eddie Eagle Boy
Guy Rondell
John Bear King

Assiniboine (1 of 5 reported Assiniboine members has been identified) :
James Turning Bear

Kiowa:
John Tsatoke, James Paddlety, Leonard Cozad Sr.

Muscogee:
Edmund Harjo
Leslie Richards

Navajo: A complete list of the 420 Navajo who served as code talkers during World War II can be found in various books on the Navajo Code Talkers

*Complete listings of these individuals and, for some individuals their military units, may be found in Meadows (2002:26-27, 67-71, 82).

Unique Circumstances and Service

Native American Code Talkers provided a unique form of military service that non-Indians lacked, a language unfamiliar to the Germans, Italians, and Japanese.

They were recruited and or enlisted in their final years of high school or just thereafter. In many instances these individuals had attended schools that strictly prohibited the use of Indian languages and in some instances punished Indians for speaking their native tongue. Their willingness to serve reflects not only their pride in their own cultures, but their willingness to assist the United States Government, who until the 1934 continued to maintain numerous legal limitations on Indian rights, in the defense of the nation.

Most importantly, none of the Native American languages and or codes used in the United States Armed Forces are known to have ever been broken by enemy forces. Thus their contributions provided a much faster means of communication than traditional cryptographic systems using systems of encoding and decoding.

Although smaller than the Navajo counterparts, the other Native American tribes that served as code talkers in World Wars I and II should not be judged by their numbers, but by the unique historical circumstances of their bilingual and bicultural background and how they were willing to use this in defense of their own people and the United States.

Recognition

With the exception of the Navajo, to date little recognition has been given to these men and their tribes. Other than local tribal recognition, I know of only one major recognition. In 1989, the Oklahoma state Government and the Government of France recognized the Choctaw and Comanche tribes by presenting them with the Knights of the National order of Merit for their service as Code talkers in France during World both World Wars.

Based on the known number of Navajo Code Talkers (420) and those of other smaller groups, I would estimate that around a total of 600 Native American men served in this role during the Second World War. This is of course only a rough estimate based on the information at hand. Many of the small groups appear to have been informally developed strategies when a commander realized that he had several member of the same tribe within a relatively small unit. It should also be realized that code talkers also performed the wide array of other signal company

or other communications operators, including the transmission of some messages in English.

Beyond admirable military service records, several Native American Code talkers made significant combat contributions. Solomon Louis (Choctaw) won the Croix de Guerre from France and the Silver Star from General Pershing In World War I, Schlicht Billy is reported to have been the first American to break through the Siegfried Line, capturing a machine gun nest and receiving serious wounds in doing so. Followed by the effort of Major Jack Treadwell and other members of the unit, this allowed for a major opening in the Siegfried Line to be exploited. Comanche Code Talkers Willie Yacheschi, Robert Holder, Larry Saupitty, Forrest Kassanavoid, and Perry Noyabad were all wounded in action and several of the Comanche received Bronze Stars. The contributions of members of the Comanche and Navajo Code talkers to tribal cultural retention, tribal government, language classes, veteran's affairs, and other activities are well documented in published sources.

Additional research may be able to identify other individual code talkers, especially with the Hopi, Sac and Fox, and Chippewa-Oneida groups.

In sum, I urge the Committee to seek to pass legislation aimed at obtaining a form of national recognition for these gentlemen, many of who have already passed on. Ideally this award should identify as many tribes, and where possible, those individuals involved in this unique form of military service. Possible awards might include; individual certificates and medals for the individuals, plaques of recognition for their respective tribal governments to display in their tribal complexes, and perhaps even a small monument in the nation's capital explaining and commemorating their service.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to these hearings. If I may be of future assistance in these proceedings please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. William C. Meadows

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From: William Meadows [wcm656f@smsu.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, October 05, 2004 11:34 AM
To: Indian-Affairs, Testimony (Indian Affairs)
Subject: Native American Code Talkers.

To the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs:
Re: Native American Code Talkers:

Following the resent testimony on Native American Code Talkers I have been able to identify one of the previously unidentified units in W W I in which code talking was used, as well as identification of several of the Hopi Code talkers in WW II.

Cherokee - Although Hale (1982:41) reports that, [3]There was also the group of Cherokee soldiers in the telephone service who disconcerted Germans by transmitting orders in their native language[2] their unit and location was not divulged.

Because the 36th Infantry Division, a National guard Division from Oklahoma, contained the majority of Oklahoma Indians who served in the war, including 89 Choctaw of which eighteen served as code talkers, I had long suspected that the Cherokees who had served as code talkers in World War I were also from the 36th. However I was unable to obtain any solid leads until I was directed to information on George Adair. Adair enlisted for service on September 19, 1917 and was assigned to the 36th Division. According to Starr (1921:517), while in combat in France, Adair, [3]was taken from the firing line in France, and placed with other full blood Cherokees in the telephone service, where they foiled the German "listeners in" by repeating, receiving, and transmitting the military orders in the Cherokee language.[2] Starr[1]s data includes a picture of Adair in his WW I Army uniform. A total of 68 Cherokees served in Company E of the 142nd Infantry of the 36th Division in World War I.

This reference and the inclusion of Adair among the 68 Cherokee in E Company (see meadows 2002:215) suggests that the Cherokee Code Talkers in World War I were, like their Choctaw counterparts, from Company E, 142 Infantry, 36th Division. (DO 1917)

Cherokee Code talkers are also reported to have been used in World War II. Stephen Ambrose (1999:58) references the use of 40 Cherokee code talkers in World War II, in his book, The Victors or Eisenhower and his boys: The men of World War II.

"There were many other special units, including underwater demolition teams, midget-submarine crews to guide the incoming landing craft, tiny one-man airplanes with folded wings that could be brought in on rhino ferries (42-by-176-foot flat-bottomed pontoon barges with a capacity of forty vehicles, towed across the Channel by LSTs--landing ship, tanks--powered for the run into the beach by large

outboard motors), put into operation on the beach, and used for naval gunfire spotting. The 743rd Tank Battalion, like other DD tankers,* spent months learning how to manuever their tanks in the Channel. The 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion (Colored) practiced setting up their balloons on the beach. The Cherokee code talkers (forty in all, twenty for Utah, twenty for Omaha) worked on their radios--they could speak in their own language, confident the Germans would never be able to translate."

Hopi - Mr. Tim Jones of the National Museum of the American Indian is working on a traveling exhibit on native American Code Talkers. Although estimates of the number of Hopi Code talkers varies between 8 and 11, Mr. Jones he has been able to confirm the following individuals though interviews with two of the last three Hopi code talkers.

Hopi Code Talkers (WWII)
U.S. Army, 323rd Infantry Regiment,
81st Division, "Wildcat Division."

Deceased:
-Frank Chapella;
-Floyd Dan Sr.;
-Perry Honani Sr.;
-Warren Koiyaquaptewa;
-Charles Lomakema;
-Persaval Navenma;

Surviving:
-Franklin Shupla
-Travis Yaiva

In addition, here are some people whom you may wish to contact to follow up more on the Hopi Code Talkers. Hopi Veterans Affairs Office/Outreach Programs
-Michael Pavatea: (928) 737-2685 ext. 257
-Lennadine Toney: (928) 737-2696 ext. 256
-Sharon Batala: (928) 738-5166

Bibliography

Ambrose, Stephen E.
1999 The Victors or Eisenhower and His Boys: The Men of World War II. Simon & Schuster. Hale, Duane K. 1982 Forgotten heroes: American Indians in World War I. Four Winds 3(2):39-41. Meadows, William C.
2002 The Comanche Code talkers of World War II. University of Texas

Press, Austin.
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1921 History of the Cherokee Indians and Their Legends and Folklore. Claremore, Ok.
DO - Daily Oklahoman 1917 [3]Fifteen Tribes Represented in Indian Company.[2]
November 18. DesMoines Register 2004 Advocates: Honor all Œcode talkers[1].
September 23.

If there are any questions please feel free to contact me. Sincerely,

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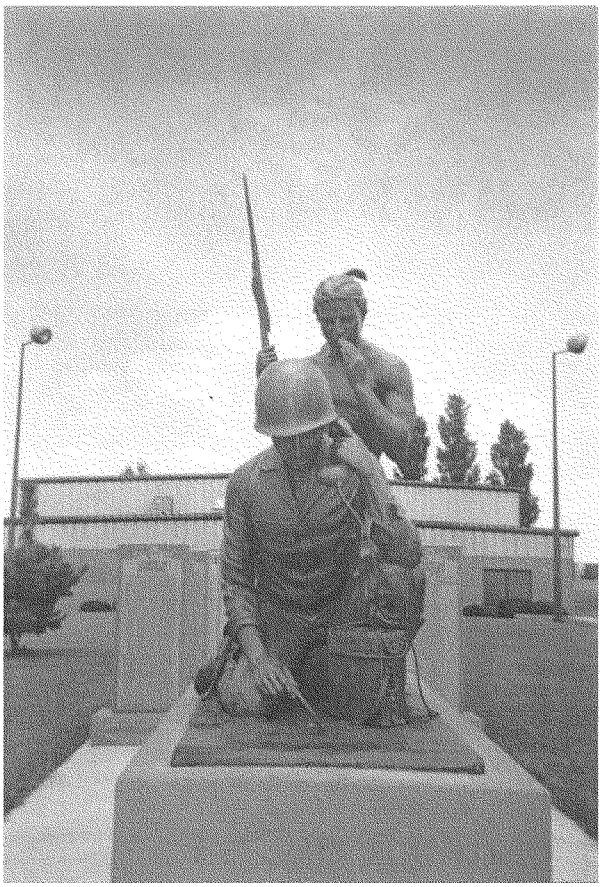

11/3/2004

Dear Senator Nighthorse Campbell,

I am writing to respond to the follow-up questions you asked on October 6, 2004 concerning Native American Code Talkers.

Most of these questions are answered in great detail and at length in my book, the Comanche Code Talkers of World War II. University of Texas Press, 2002. I left a copy of this work for you at your office this past September. I will briefly answer these questions and where appropriate, reference you to a specific range of pages in my book that will give more detailed explanations for each question.

1) Recognition by the French Government - The French had begun a program to honor Allied Soldiers from both world wars. To recognize the 70th anniversary of the U.S, entry into WW I they wanted to honor 50 American with the French National Order of Merit for there service in both wars. Inquiry[1]s with the Oklahoma Consul to France led to the identification of remaining Comanche Code talkers of WW II and the Choctaw of WW I. Please refer to pages 181-186 in my book and the sources cited therein.

2) Impact of Choctaw Code Talkers - The documentation identifying the Choctaw Code Talkers Service in World War I is contained in a report to the commanding general of the 36th Division, General Smith, dated January 23, 1919, and entitled [3]Transmitting messages in Choctaw. Refer to pages 19-21 and sources cited therein in my book.

3) Identification - In cases where we have a unit identified as containing code talkers of a particular tribe, but do not know who the individuals are; will involved a process of identification and elimination. Specifically, this would be getting the membership or rosters of those units, identifying which members of that tribe were in that unit, then attempting to determine which were code talkers. In cases were only a few members of tribe are involved this could be fairly easy as in the small number of Chippewa-Oneida in WW II who were all recruited as code talkers. In larger numbers of individuals (for example the over 60 Cherokees in the 36th Division in WW I some of whom were used only after the idea was discovered in combat,, this will be difficult if not nearly impossible, unless there are specific records in those unit files. Some time in records research of each unit will be needed and will have to be correlated and perhaps led by collaboration with tribal offices who can supply a list of their veterans for each respective war (WW I and II).

4) Army Signal Corps - There were a series of secret meeting between the Army, Navy and marines in the early 1940s specifically focused on discussing whether the idea of recruiting and or expanding the use of code talkers should be undertaken. Some of these discussion involved, skepticism, questions of trust, and down right innuendos of racism, despite the excellent record of Indian soldiers in WW I and knowledge of the Choctaws use as Code Talkers. In sum, the Army and Marines both attempted to keep knowledge of their programs from the other. The Army already had several small groups (Comanche, Hopi, Meskwaki, Chippewa-Oneida) and were reticent to expand these or form others. The Navy had tested a few Indians as radio-operators and were skeptical to use them further. The Marine didn't start a program until early 1942 and embraced it strongly, but only with the Navajo. Please refer to pages 40-50 in my text and the sources cited therein.

5) Indian Citizenship and Military Service – Indian Citizenship in the early 1900s is a difficult subject. Those groups who were allotted received citizenship. Those who did not, remained non-citizens. This created inconsistency as well as confusion about who was a citizen and who remained a ward of the government. Most Indians in WW I were voluntary enlistments (some citizens, others not), others were draftees (again some citizens, others not). This created an issue that arose after the war, as non-citizens were not supposed to be drafted or allowed to voluntary enlist. In 1919 U.S. Citizenship was granted to all WW I veterans. Finally it was granted to all Indians henceforth in 1924 with the Indian Citizenship Act. Please refer to pages 7-9 in my book and the legislative Acts and sources cited therein.

6) Proper Recognition – My personal thoughts on this matter would be a three part process: a) the presentation of some sort of certificate and medal to each individual that can be concretely identified as having served as a code talkers (whether serving as a Type 1 or 2); b) the presentation of some sort of plaque to the tribal office of each group that can be included in their tribal office-museum or cultural center where by the tribe can benefit and enjoy from their recognition, and c) serious consideration for a small but tasteful monument recognizing all Code Talkers, that would contain a small plaque describing their role and listing the tribes involved for both World War I and II. When I think of this, something similar to that for the Korean War Veterans Monument comes to mind.

**An excellent model for this would be to examine the Code Talker Monument now at the Comanche Tribal Complex in Lawton, Ok. (I have attached two pictures of this for illustrative purposes).

I hope my answers have been helpful for you Sir. I am pleased to continue to help with the recognition of the Native American Code talkers. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,
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TESTIMONY OF
CHIEF GREGORY PYLE
GIVEN ON BEHALF OF
THE CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA
BEFORE
THE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
OF
THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES
SEPTEMBER 22, 2004

Vice Chairman, Campbell, Vice Chairman Inouye, Senators, and friends, My name is Greg Pyle, and I am Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

I want to thank you for inviting me to testify before the Committee today on the issue of recognition for Members of our Tribe, who, during their service in the United States Armed Forces, used their Native languages as codes to transmit combat information.

For years, the actions of these servicemen were the stuff of legends, but only legends handed down from Father to Son, from Family Member to Family Member and from Tribal Member to Tribal Member. Their actions were an official military secret, and their service went unacknowledged. But what a secret!! During the darkest hours of our Nations history, they had tricked the Country's enemies through the use of their most basic tool, the language of their forefathers. Early in this Century, Choctaw Members proved that secure communications is a weapon that can make or break an enemy.

As we know, there are hundreds of Native American languages spoken throughout our Country. What was only realized under the stress of War is that such languages were useful as codes. Since the language of Native Americans is based on a different linguistic root and syntax than Teutonic/European or Romance languages, it was not susceptible to being broken through common code-breaking means, such as repetition or substitution of characters. Also, since these languages were only spoken by a relatively small number of tribal members, and since there were few, if any, written orthographies (dictionaries or textbooks) for such languages, they were essentially a mystery for any non-Indian code breaker. You couldn't go anywhere to learn about them, since they were oral languages. In fact, they were the perfect languages for transmission of secrets.

After being declassified information for decades, the first recognition was given for the tremendous service of the Navajo Code-talkers of the Pacific. They used their oral language to transmit messages, under general and actual combat conditions, and the Japanese never had any success in understanding their transmissions, saving thousands of allied lives. Their service has been celebrated in official recognition through the Defense Department and the Congress, and they have received public recognition in written books, TV shows, and movies. A medal, struck under the authority of the

Congress of the United States, has been struck and given to the Survivors and to the families of the Navajo Code-Talkers, and we join in recognizing and celebrating their service.

While we recognize their service, we now desire recognition for the service of other Native Americans in similar actions in both the First and the Second World Wars. With respect to Members of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, I would like to bring to the attention of the Committee the action of the Choctaw Code Talkers of World War I. They seem to be the first recorded use of a Native language as a code. In 1918, conditions on the Western Front had been in stalemate for three years. Hundreds of thousands of lives on the German and Allies sides had been lost, with the result that the trenches had moved less than 50 miles in either direction since 1914. However, there was a new factor in the War – the Americans were coming. America entered the War in 1917. Immediately, the Allies began planning major offensives for the new reinforcements. Men and material were massed at the front.

However, communications between forward observers and the Command/Generals at the rear were a problem. There were no radios in this war – communications involved laying land lines between trenches and communicating by voice. Such telephone lines were subject to being intercepted by advance forces, who could, and did, tap in on the telephone lines at many points. In our case, the Germans had "cracked" all codes used by the Allied Forces, and thus would take these intercepted messages and react to them. Additionally, the use of code was a problem, because it meant that communications were delayed, while messages were coded and then decoded. Substantial loss in men and material had been experienced due to such interception or delay.

There was, however, an uniquely American "ace in the hole". Among the first enlistments in the fledgling U.S. Army were a number of Choctaw Indian men. They had volunteered, even though such service pre-dated the eligibility of most American Indians for citizenship. One of their officers heard them talking together in Choctaw and got a bright idea – why not set them up as a separate unit in the front lines, use them as forward observers, and have them transmit messages in Choctaw? This at a time when specific Federal policy was to abolish Native American languages at home. 18 Choctaw tribal members were recruited for the special communications outfit and they were distributed along the forward positions of the Front. They were especially useful in moving men and material between forward positions, protection of supplies and gun emplacements form German shelling and preparation of troops for the final assault on German lines in 1918. As with the later use of other tribal languages, the service of the Choctaw Code Talkers left the Germans baffled, and provided secure transmission. According to the official record, it served during the remainder of the War, and dispatches credit it with saving many Allied lives.

While I am aware that the bill introduced by Senator Inhofe, S 540, recognizing the service of Choctaw, Sioux, Comanche and other Code Talkers is not within this Committee's jurisdiction, I would like to cite it today. We thank Senator Inhofe, and the

22 co-sponsors of the bill, for their support, and we would like to ask of the Members of this Committee to co-sponsor this bill. I look forward to working with all of you to recognize the tremendous service of all American Indian Code-Talkers. Particularly at this time of support for our men and women in uniform, such recognition is overdue and welcome.

I want to recognize today the fact that we have several members of the audience who are descendants of the Choctaw Code Talkers of WW 1. I am ready to answer any questions from the Committee, and am sure they would be willing to answer any questions as well.

From: Judy Allen [judyallen@choctawnation.com]
Sent: Wednesday, November 10, 2004 4:20 PM
To: Indian-Affairs, Testimony (Indian Affairs)
Subject: Comments per request of Chairman Campbell
The following is submitted to the United Sates Senate Committee on Indian Affairs as follow up to September 22, 2004 oversight hearing.

Contributions of
Native American Code Talkers
in American Military History

Comments submitted by
Gregory E. Pyle, Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma,
at the request of Chairman Ben Nighthorse Campbell

Many Choctaw men volunteered in WWI to fight for our great country. Eighteen of these veterans have been documented as the first to use a Native American language as a "code" to transmit military messages. These men have been honored by their tribe, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, but were never recognized by the United States Government for their efforts as Code Talkers. Even though Native Americans did not receive nationwide citizenship until 1924, the Choctaws were both patriotic and valiant, with a desire to volunteer in the war effort. They were proud to offer their services to the United States, and were also proud that their native language was found valuable in transmitting wartime messages that were never interpreted by the enemy.
Stories passed down through families and newspapers share bits and pieces of the private lives of some of these Choctaw Code Talkers.
Victor Brown received a citation from President Wilson after being wounded and poisoned with mustard gas (Yperite). He was proud of "fooling the Germans" with the Choctaw language, and was pleased to have served in France. According to his daughter, Napanee Brown Coffman, Victor Brown was one-fourth French and three-quarters Choctaw.
After the First World War, Brown became an auditor in the IRS and during WWII he was a Deputy State Examiner and Inspector for the State of Oklahoma.
James Edwards was a member of the Choctaw language "relay team" for messages, and also helped work out the code words to use in the transmissions. "Twice big group" in Choctaw was used for battalion, "eight group" was a

squad, "scalps" were casualties, "fast shooting gun" meant machine gun and "big gun" was field artillery.

Otis Leader is one of the most notable heroes of WWI. He was 34 when he joined the Army. He and his Swiss employer from his job on a ranch near Allen, Oklahoma, went on a cattle buying trip to Fort Worth. The Swiss accent of Leader's employer, combined with the with the tall, dark looks of the 34 year old resulted in the false pegging of them as a German spy and his Spaniard companion. This mistaken identity infuriated Leader so much he immediately went to the nearest recruiting office and signed up.

Solomon Louis was actually underage when he entered the armed services. This young Bryan County Choctaw attended Armstrong Academy and when his older friends enlisted, Louis pretended to be 18 so that he, too, could join.

Walter Veach was given the charge to put together an all-Indian Company in the 36th division during World War I. Prior to the war, Veach served in the National Guard on the border between the United States and Mexico. His company had a major hand in stopping the Pancho Villa invasion of Texas.

Tobias Frazier was among the Choctaw men who helped break the Hindenberg line in 1918.

Other WWI Choctaw Code Talkers were **Robert Taylor, Jeff Nelson, Calvin Wilson, Mitchell Bobb, Pete Maytubby, Ben Carterby, Albert Billy, Ben Hampton, Joseph Oklahombi, Joe Davenport, George Davenport** and **Noel Johnson**.

Although I never had the good fortune of meeting any of the Choctaw Code Talkers of the First World War, I was honored to know one of the tribe's WWII Code Talkers, Schlicht Billy. Schlicht was in the 180th, and participated in the landing of Anzio, liberation of Rome and invasion of southern France.

Schlicht Billy and I participated in an event held November 3, 1989 at the Oklahoma State Capitol when the government of France presented the Choctaw Nation the "Chevalier de l'Order National du Merite" in recognition of the important role of the WWI Code Talkers. The tribe has also honored these 18 men, and has a beautiful granite monument inscribed with their names at the entrance to the Tribal Capitol Grounds at Tushka Homma. The Choctaw Nation presented medals to the families of Code Talkers in 1986, and continues to give the Code Talkers special recognition during the annual Veterans Day Memorial Service.

These soldiers received praise in the field from their commanding officers, yet never received United States medals for their contributions as Code Talkers. The Choctaw Nation feels each of the Choctaw Code Talkers should be the recipient

of a specially minted medal that expresses the appreciation of the United States Government to these brave men who dedicated their skills, their language and their lives.

I petition that the families of each of the Choctaw Code Talkers, both from WWI and WWII, be presented with medals to honor and recognize the unique service provided.

I appreciate the special interest shown by the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. It is an honor to be included in the historic testimony to give information on the contributions of Native American Code Talkers. Thank you for the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Chief Gregory E. Pyle
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Prepared Testimony of Mr. Robin Roberts, U.S.M.C. Retired
To the Senate Indian Affairs Committee
Wednesday, September 22, 2004

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Robin Lee Roberts. I am a member of the Sac Fox tribe of Tama, Iowa and a former member of the United States Marine Corps. For more than a decade, my wife Diana Marie and I have been urging Congress to recognize a group of dedicated Americans – the Native American code talkers – heroes one and all. We have written letters, placed phone calls, and met with members of the Iowa delegation. With this hearing today I believe we are making progress.

I am pleased to state we have significant support from the state of Iowa, our Congressional delegation, and leading veterans and Native American groups. Last Spring, both the Iowa state Senate and the Iowa state House passed a resolution urging Congress to award the Code Talkers the Congressional Gold medal. Senators Grassley and Harkin have been actively engaged in this effort – co-sponsoring the legislation to award these medals and working to get their colleagues to support this legislation.

Enemy soldiers managed to break every code used by American forces and our allies, except the codes devised by Native Americans. As a result, the Native American heroes were the eyes and ears of every unit they served, as forward observers, scouts and radio operators. These courageous Code Talkers endured the extreme conditions of battle in some of the most dangerous terrain of the war. They did their duties without questions and without regard to the safety of their own lives.

More than 18 tribes sent men to serve as Code Talkers – from the Choctaw, Comanche, Cheyenne, Cherokee, Osage and Yankton Sioux in WWI to the Chippewa, Oneida, Commanche, Meskwaki, Hopi and others in subsequent conflicts.

Bound by commitment and honor, the Code Talkers returned from the war and kept the secret of their activities. With humility, they ignored the important role they have played in these wars and resumed their normal daily lives. Too many of the Code Talkers have taken these secrets to their graves. In 1968, the United States military de-classified the use of Native American Code Talkers. For the first time, family members, fellow tribal members, and the entire world understood the vital role these men had played on behalf of their country. That is not enough.

It is important to remember, these people were sons, fathers, brothers, uncles, grandfathers and friends. It is critical that the families know that we honor the sacrifices made on behalf of our country and we salute their bravery and ingenuity. These warriors saved tens of thousands of lives and stymied enemy initiatives and attacks. They were the most wanted men among all units as the enemy hoped a capture would allow them to break the code. Though some were eventually captured, they kept their honor and still held to their sworn secrecy.

So let us honor these brave men and show their families that we value their service and commitment to our country by awarding them the Congressional Gold medal. They went above and beyond the call of duty on behalf of the United States and now I ask the Congress to do the same for them. Thank you for the chance to speak on behalf of these brave soldiers. Semper Fidelis.

Under the pressure from Stalin the United States were asked to open a second front.

In November 1942 the Americans made its first appearance under the command of General Eisenhower in North Africa.

Advancing on the beaches of Algeria were the 34th Division. Among them, several Meskwaki code talkers. Using their native language saved many lives as well as sending and recieving important military messages.

These courages warriors did their duties under extreme weather conditions, such as the deserts of North Africa or the treacheous terrain in the mountains north of Italy.

These unique soldiers were not only radio operators but scouts in lead assaults which they had carried not only their own combat gear but their radio's on their backs. The Meskwaki code talkers where also used as forward observers.

They had set up observation and communication posts in the flat land deserts of North Africa and in the regions of Italy.

The Allies regained control of North Africa reaching Tunisia in 1943 with with the help of American navel fleet, air support and ground troops.

In September 1943, the Meskwaki codetalkers with the 34th Division and the Allies attacked the beachs of Italy.

The Italian campaign moved slowly from Salerno to Naples. Taking many troops killed in action, wounded and captured.

There was heavy fighting north of Naples because of the German defense in the mountains. But the Allies had overcame this mountain warfare with the Germans and on June 4th 1944 Rome was liberated by the Allies.

There are many questions that need to be answered. When the u.s. of Native American Indians was declassifed in 1968 why weren't the honored then? Since this was a government project, why didn't the Pentagon contact tribes, surviving codetalker and families of the declassifiction.

Why is it taking so long to get recognition for these unknown war heroes. It's good should they ever get a peace time medal the Congressional Gold Medal for being codetalkers during World War I and World War II. But they did their heroic deeds during World Wars. They've saved thousands of American lives, thousand of Allies lives and thousands of civilian lives. They did this when people were trying to take over the World. Taking our freedom and our way of life. Other races of people were in danger of genocide by these people.

I believe as well as others that these unknown war heroes deserve a wartime medal. They followed orders without question and regards of their own lives.

Because of their heroic deeds they did above and beyond the call of duty, they deserve the Medal of Honor.

The people of this land, and people they fought for in other countries accross the oceans must remember that these heroes fought for their democracy and freedom.

These war heroes were someones son, someones brother, someones husband, someones father, someones relitive and someones friend.

Here are the elite eight Meskwaki Code talkers: Frank Sanache, Willard Sanache, Judie Wayne Wabaunsee Mike Wayne Wabaunsee, Dewey Youngbear, Dewey Roberts Edward Benson and Melvin Twin.

These heroes must remembered.
Their stories must be heard.
Thats why their stories must
be told.

Semper Fidelis
Robin L. Roberts
U.S.M.C.
Meskwaki Nation

In January 1941, twenty-seven young Meskwaki men had ~~joined~~ enlisted in the Iowa National Guard.

Assigned company H, 168th Iowa Infantry, eight Meskwaki were chosen for training and experimentation for special instruction in the use of walkie-talkie radio and machine gunning.

They began their training at Camp Dodge, Johnston, Iowa and then they were sent to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana for more intense training.

They improved their field communications in using the Meskwaki language to send messages about enemy troop positions, battlefield tactics and directions for artillery fire.

Mike and Judee Wayne Wabamasee as well as the others were assigned to Northern Ireland with the 168th Infantry, 34th Red Bull Division,

Mr. Robin Roberts
Meskwaki Tribal Member
Montour, Iowa

1. Meskwaki code. From my understanding, there were 8 Meskwaki codetalkers.

Q. Is that correct?

2. Frank Sanache. Frank Sanache was the last remaining Meskwaki code talker until his passing a month ago.

Q. Did you know Frank Sanache or any other codetalkers? If so, did they tell you stories about their service? Can you share that with us?

3. Any other information. Do you have any other information regarding the Meskwaki codetalkers? Any information you can provide would be helpful.

4. Proper Recognition. What do you think is a proper and appropriate recognition for these codetalkers?

1. Yes They are Frank Sanache
Willard Sanache, Mike Wayne
Wabaunasee, Judie Wayne Wabaunasee
Dewey Youngbear, Dewey Roberts
Edward Benson and Melvin Twin.

2 I've met Frank Sanache on several
occasions I was brought up never
to ask a combat vetern about their
experiences during the wars they've
been through. I have the highest
respect for all veterns Mr. Frank
Sanache was a quiete and humble
man
Dewey Roberts was my uncle. He
never talked about the war. My
cousin Robert John Roberts, son of
Dewey Roberts told me. "Dad never
told me, Ina Rae or mom he
was a codetalker. He had taken
the secert to the grave with him.
Like the rest.

Dewey Youngbear was a relitive
but had passed away before I
was born.

3 I have 16 picture I'll be sending. As time goes along and more research, I'll send as soon as possible

4. 1 monument built for the codetalkes with a design of them relaying a message. A memorial surrounding this monument with the names of the tribes, codetalkers names, units the served with and campaigns.

A Fund raiser for this should be started by asking donations and selling of shirts, jackets, caps with the logo put on these items of the monument.

Plaques with the names of the codetalkers names put on them given to each tribe to put at their own discretion. Plus individual plaques to each surving codetalker or surviving Family. Letter of Recogntion.

Finally medals given to surviving codetalker or surviving families present by the

Indian Affairs Committee
at their own discretion. Designs
should be picked out by Committee

Photographs from the Oversight Hearing, on the Contributions of Native American Codetalkers in American Military History

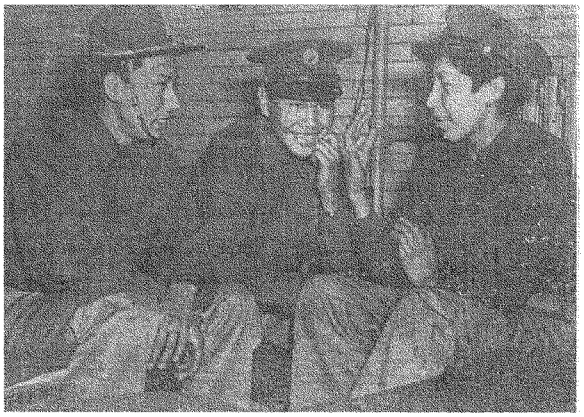
September 22, 2004

Photo of Dewey Roberts.

Photo of Dewey Roberts.

Dewey Youngbear holding his daughter Marguerite Youngbear.

Dewey Youngbear with an instructor.



Dewey Youngbear, Mike Wayne Wabaunasee, and Frank Sanache.

Photo of Edward Benson.

Photo of Frank Sanache.

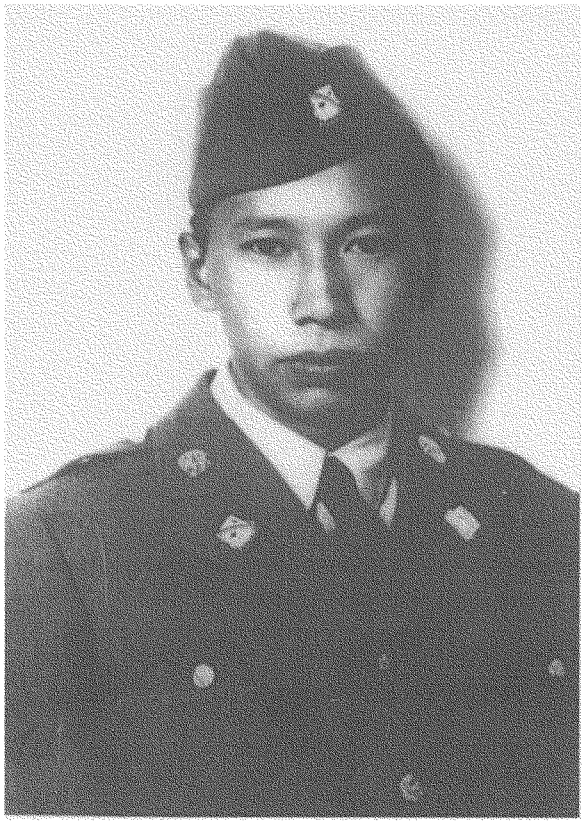
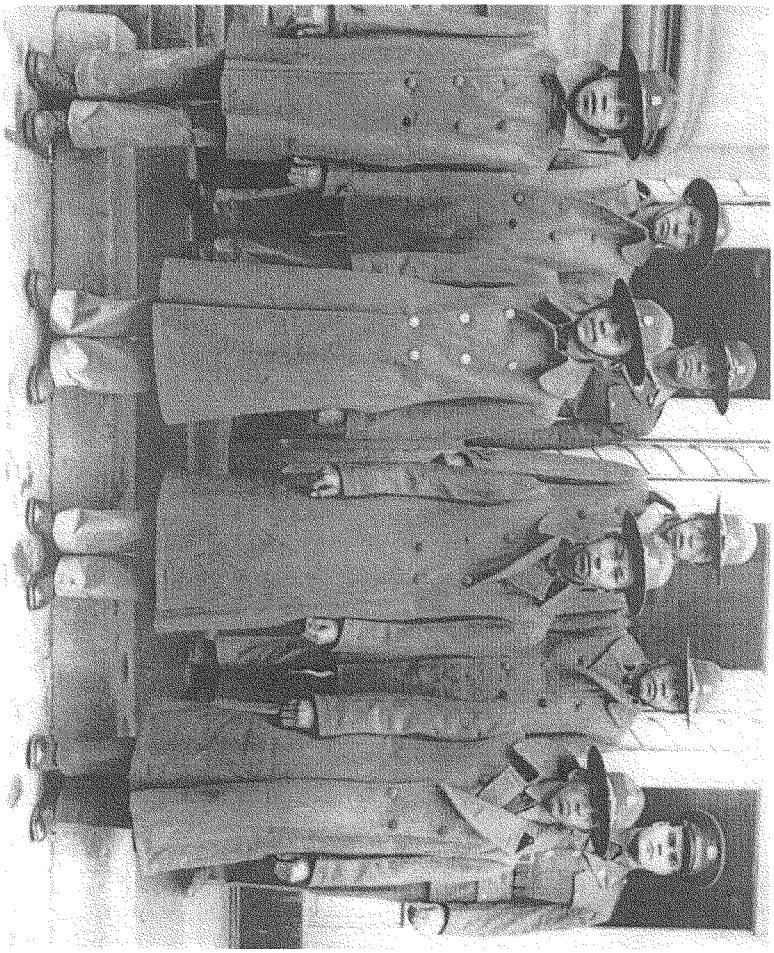
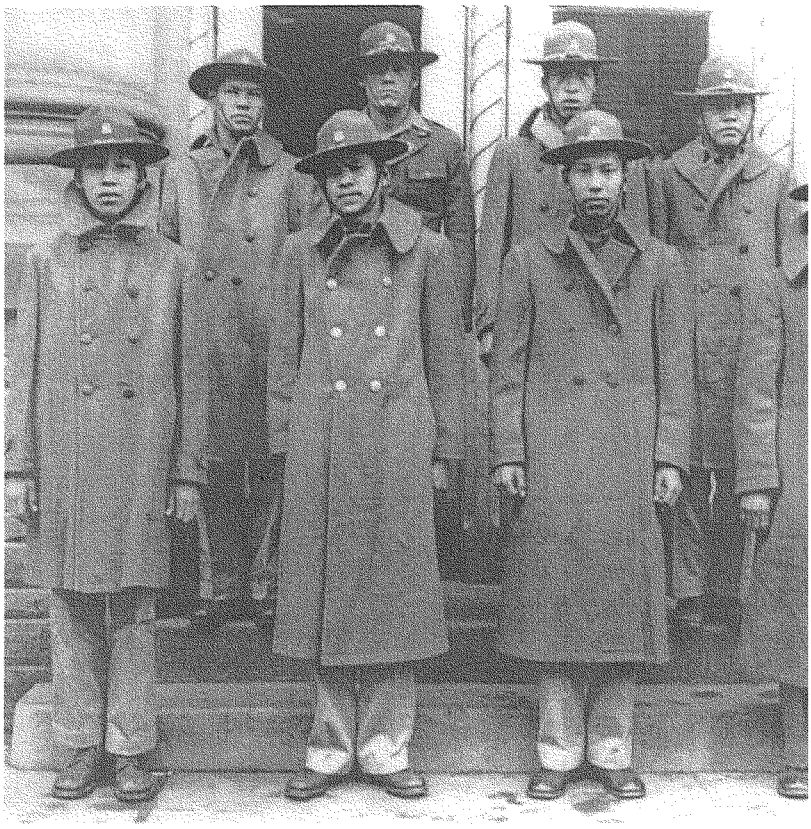


Photo of Frank Sanache.

Photo of Judie Wayne Wabaunasee.





Top row from left: Judie Wayne Wabaunasee, Dewey Roberts Sr., Melvin Twin, Mike Wayne Wabaunasee.
Bottom row from left: Dewey Youngbear, Willard Sanache, Frank Sanache Sr., Edward Benson.

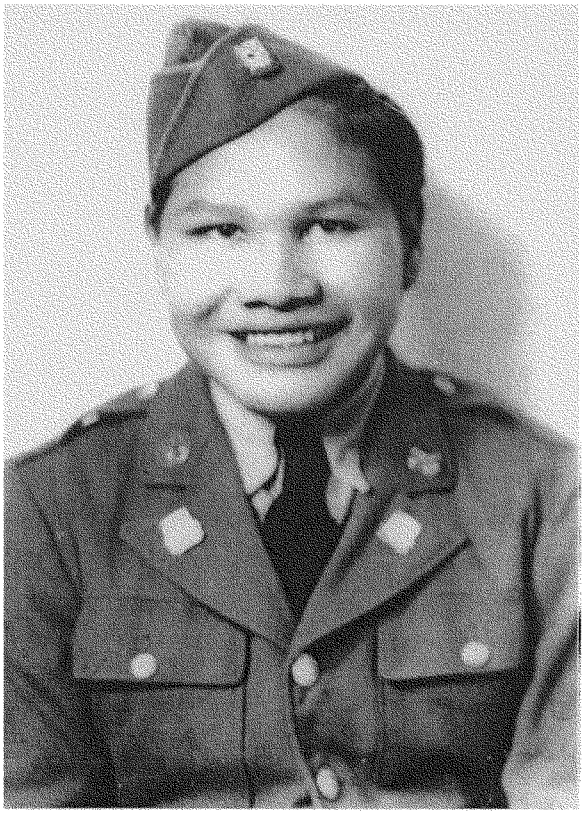


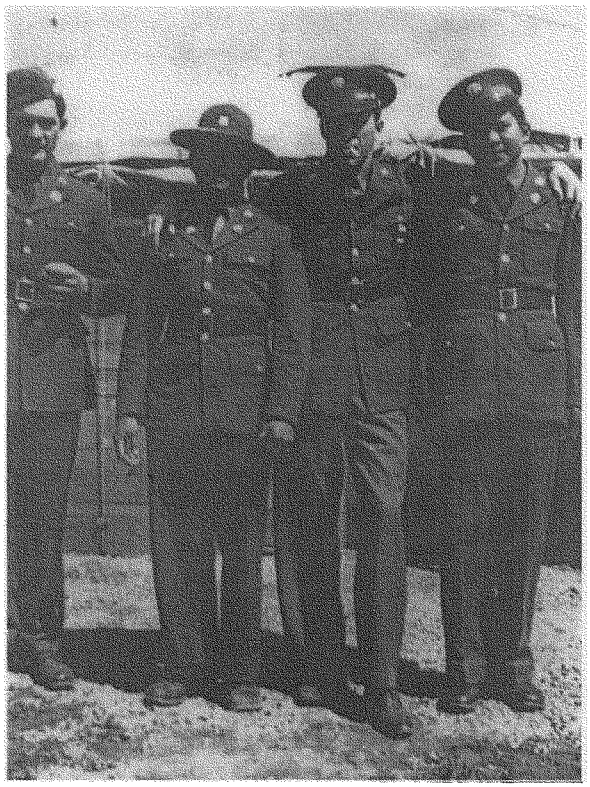
Photo of Mike Wayne Wabaunasee.

ORIGINAL AMERICANS—Company H boasts eight Indian enlisted men, all from the
tion, who are being trained to operate "walkie-talkie" radio units in Indian language to conf
if the messages are intercepted. Resting in quarters are, left to right: Mike Wayne, Ed
Dewey Roberts, Frank Sanache, Judie Wayne (reclining) and Malvin Twain (rear, sitting
the rear are Willard Sanache and Dewey Youngbear.

ORINGAL AMERICANS - Company H boasts eight Indian enlisted men, all from the Tama reservation, who are being trained to operate "walkie-talkie" radio units in Indian Language to confuse the enemy if the message is intercepted. Resting in quarters are, left to right Mike Wayne, Edward Benson, Dewey Roberts, Frank Sanache, Judie Wayne (reclining) and Melvin Twain (rear, sitting). Standing at the rear are Willard Sanache and Dewey Youngbear.

Willard Sanache and Dewey Roberts with an instructor.

Willard Sanache straps on radio to Dewey Youngbear.



From left: name unknown, Edward Benson, name unknown, Willard Sanache.

Meskwaki Code Talkers

by Mary Bennett

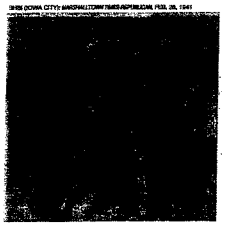
Armchair military historians know all about the critical strategic importance of the Mediterranean campaign during World War II. The British fought the Italians for control of North Africa, only to lose ground when German field marshal Rommel's Afrika Korps secretly invaded North Africa in April 1941. Even with the formal entry of the United States into the war at the end of 1941, it took nearly a year before troops and home front forces could be mobilized and outfitted.

Ready for action, but with no easy way to invade German-occupied Europe, and under pressure from Stalin to open a second front, the Americans made their first large-scale appearance as Allies—landing in North Africa in November 1942 under the leadership of General Eisenhower. Among the soldiers in the 34th Division making the initial advances on the beaches of Algeria were several Meskwaki code talkers, who would save many lives using their unique language to communicate vital military messages.

Twenty-seven young Meskwaki men had enlisted in the Iowa National Guard in January 1941, probably motivated by economic circumstances as much as by patriotism or a chance to learn new skills. No doubt Americans could sense the tension of war on the horizon, even though the cataclysmic effect of Pearl Harbor was almost a year away. As new recruits of the 168th Iowa Infantry, eight Meskwaki were selected for special instruction in elements of walkie-talkie radio and machine gunning. This training and experimentation—using a code derived from Native American languages for secret communications—predate American entry into the war and even the use of Native speakers of the Navajo language, who are more commonly celebrated as World War II code talkers.

The Comanche and the Meskwaki were probably among the first to be trained as code talkers, although more than a dozen tribes were involved. As a February 1941 newspaper explains, they "were trained to translate messages from English to their own language and relay them by radio or phone to an Indian who in turn will turn the message back into English for officers." The headline proclaims "Army Indians to Foil Enemy Listeners," while the accompanying photo depicts the Meskwaki wearing stereotypical feather headdresses more representative of western Plains Indians than the Meskwaki's traditional regalia.

The eight Meskwaki—brothers Frank and Willard Sanache, Dewey Roberts, Edward Benson, Melvin Twin, Dewey Youngbear, and brothers Judy Wayne Wabaunasee and Mike Wayne Wabaunasee—joined Company H, the heavy weapons company of the 168th Infantry, just three weeks before the unit was mobilized. According to the press, the young men, who ranged in age from 18 to 22, were "induced to join up only when they realized that they were to play a strategic part helping the 168th maintain a valiant tradition in battle." Their initial training was at Camp Dodge in Johnston, Iowa, but they were soon sent to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, for more intensive training in the use of the walkie-talkies. As the newspaper reported, the



Willard Sanache straps a radio unit on Dewey Youngbear. The February 1941 caption read: "Man-nwe-net-da-mon! It's an Indian way of saying, 'We don't like it' in his native Mesquakie and what he really means is that he doesn't like to have people ask too many questions about his language, now that he knows it will play a strategic part in regimental communications of the 168th infantry."

Resting here in their quarters in February 1941 are the eight Meskwaki trained as code talkers. From left, front row: Mike Wayne Wabaunasee, Edward Benson, Dewey Roberts, Frank Sanache, Judy Wayne Wabaunasee (reclining), and Melvin Twin. Standing in the rear are Willard Sanache and Dewey Youngbear.

shortwave radios "are carried in a pack strapped to a soldier's back, have a collapsible antenna and a three mile range." Besides mastering gunnery school, radio operators had to learn to use the code and understand electronics, mechanics, and the inner workings of a radio, such as vacuum tubes, amplifiers, transformers, and transmitters. Field communications were vastly improved using the Indian code language to send messages about enemy troop movements, battlefield tactics, and directions for artillery fire.

Acting as scouts, those in the lead assaults had to move quickly with heavy equipment across any terrain to establish observation and communication posts, whether in open, flat country, in the desert, or in mountainous regions like Italy. The Meskwaki code talkers, with their special language skills, were assigned to the 168th Infantry, 34th Red Bull Division. By October 1942, it was reported that Judy and Mike Wayne Wabaunasee (and probably the others) had been assigned to Northern Ireland, but they were soon dispatched to the deserts of North Africa, a place Frank Sanache described as "the worst place this side of hell." Landing in Algiers and moving eastward towards Tunisia, the green recruits were decimated by the veteran Afrika Korps. Frank Sanache was captured by Italian soldiers in Tunisia in 1943, while Dewey Youngbear and Judy Wayne Wabaunasee were captured by the Germans.

With the support of the vast American fleet, airpower, and ground troops, the Allies regained territory in North Africa before launching attacks on the coast of Italy in September 1943. Dewey Roberts remembered how the troops would advance, put up a defense line, dig foxholes, and stop for a short time before moving forward—all the while getting shelled by artillery. "The 34th Division got chewed up," he recalled. "From Salerno to the Naples area we lost a lot of men. They were killed, wounded, and captured." While near Naples in March 1944, Roberts had the opportunity to meet up with his younger brother, Ernie, who had joined the service a year earlier. The Italian campaign moved forward slowly, with heavy fighting because of the mountains north of Naples and mighty German defenses, but the Allies finally liberated Rome on June 4, 1944.

Besides suffering harsh treatment, beatings, and near starvation, American Indians, rarely seen on the European continent, faced racial prejudice in Italian and German POW camps. The Meskwaki, like other POWs, had to learn the German language quickly; if they didn't respond to a command, they would be beaten. Donald Wanatee, adopted son of Frank Sanache, said, "They didn't treat them well. They worked them to death."

The sense of desperation felt by these men is reflected in the multiple escapes made by Dewey Youngbear, who no doubt paid a heavy price each time he was recaptured. On his third attempt, he managed to find an Italian soldier's uniform to wear as a disguise. Driven by hunger, Youngbear risked eating and drinking at a local restaurant, only to be discovered when he could not understand or speak to the German and Italian soldiers who approached him. Judy Wayne Wabaunasee also escaped his captors in Italy, but later, when he arrived at the same prison camp in Germany, guards noticed that Youngbear and Wabaunasee knew each other. Youngbear received "rough treatment from the Germans" for refusing to give information about the other Meskwaki code talker.

Annie [Waseskuk] Wabaunasee displays a service flag in her home on the Meskwaki Settlement. Each star represented a son in the Armed Forces: two were code talkers, and the third, Walter, was stationed on the West Coast (October 1942).

Like many POWs, they required hospitalization after their release, and their ravaged bodies suffered lingering effects. Dewey Youngbear died in 1948 of tuberculosis, Wanatee recalled, a disease he contracted in Germany as a POW. Other Meskwaki veterans also had war-related health problems.

Back home in Iowa, life on the Meskwaki Settlement in Tama County had remained essentially the same for many generations, with relatively few encroachments from white civilization. The tribe had purchased the settlement land in the 19th century rather than live on a government reservation. Though economically impoverished in the 1940s, the tribe had retained a rich cultural heritage by preserving their language, customs, and ceremonies over the years. Approximately 420 Meskwaki lived in frame houses without modern amenities like telephones, electricity, or indoor plumbing. Most of the women had a traditional wickiup near their homes because they liked to cook over an open fire. Younger members of the tribe scattered during the war, joining the military or moving to large cities to work in war industries. Others worked on railroads and at local factories in communities like Marshalltown, while some like Nell G. Ward pursued educational opportunities. Ward became the first formally trained Meskwaki nurse after enlisting in the Cadet Nurse Corps and attending the University of Iowa.

The Meskwaki participated in scrap drives, canned vegetables, and contributed to the war effort in the noblest manner by sending warriors off to fight and die. Because of the war overseas, the swastika—an American Indian symbol long before Hitler was born—was replaced by a thunderbird on powwow advertisements, especially after the swastika caused an uproar in nearby Tama about whether the Indians were joining Hitler. Attendance at the annual powwow celebration was down in 1942, and no powwows were held in 1943 and 1944 because of the war.

After the war, people moved more freely in and out of the life on the Meskwaki Settlement, and new ideas competed with old. More than fifty Meskwaki had served in the military during World War II, and the returning veterans established their own American Legion post in tribute to young Robert Morgan, the first Meskwaki casualty of the war. Ironically, these men were the first generation of Meskwaki to enjoy the full rights of U.S. citizenship, granted to Native Americans only as recently as 1924. Yet they honorably defended this country, fighting as warriors for both their homeland and adopted nation. ❖

Mary Bennett is Special Collections Coordinator at the State Historical Society of Iowa.

A wealth of historical information is available about the Meskwaki, and the State Historical Society of Iowa, continuing its active role in documenting the cultural heritage of the tribe, has produced an interactive program full of photographs, documents, and cultural history. The Meskwaki History CD-ROM will be available for distribution in the fall of 2004. Contact Mary Bennett, 319-335-3916, for more information.

NOTE ON SOURCES

The author wishes to thank Meskwaki historian Johnathan L. Buffalo, who conducted oral histories with Frank Sanache and Dewey Roberts in 1978 and shared useful newspaper articles and photos. Donald Wanatee also graciously shared his insights. Also useful were articles in the *Marshalltown Times-Republican* (2/21/1941, p. 11; 2/26/1941, p. 11); *Des Moines Register* (10/11/42, section 4, p. 1); a February 18, 1941, clipping (newspaper not known); and several clippings rescued by the volunteers working on the World War II Clippings Project (SHSI-Iowa City). Timothy Jones and staff from the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., have been researching the lives of the code talkers, conducting oral history interviews with Frank Sanache and others from a dozen different tribes. Upcoming traveling exhibitions developed by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition (SITES) will showcase photographs, text, and artifacts such as radios and uniforms. Untranscribed oral histories with the code talkers and other Iowans in the 34th Infantry, held at the Gold Star Museum at Camp Dodge, may yield more information. Robin Roberts (Dewey Roberts's nephew) and others have been working with Iowa's U.S. senators to obtain the Congressional Medal of Honor for the Meskwaki code talkers.

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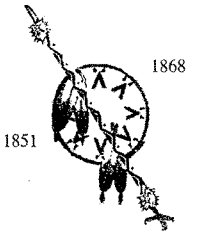

John Yellow Bird Steele

STATEMENT OF
JOHN YELLOW BIRD STEELE
PRESIDENT, OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE
BEFORE THE UNITED STATE SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF
NATIVE AMERICAN CODE TALKERS IN AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY

SEPTEMBER 22, 2004

Chairman Nighthorse Campbell and members of the Committee on Indian Affairs, my name is John Yellow Bird Steele. I serve as President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. I want to thank you and the members of the Committee on Indian Affairs for conducting this oversight hearing on the recognition of the invaluable contributions of Native American Code Talkers in American military history.

During WWI, WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Somalia, both Persian Gulf Wars, Kosovo, and other conflicts around the world, Native American men and women have fought and died for this great Nation as members of the Armed Forces of the United States.

I am here today to inform the committee of the heroic contributions of the Sioux Code Talkers during WWI and WWII.

I would first like to acknowledge and salute all WWI and WWII code talkers from the Cherokee, Choctaw, Comanche, Hopi, Kiowa, Meskwaki, Navajo, Osage, Pawnee, Seminole, Sioux Nations, and other Indian nations. These heroes contributed greatly to the Allied victories in both wars.

I would like to point out two important events that are pertinent to my presentations today:

First, many of our tribal members were placed in boarding schools and parochial schools in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They were punished for speaking the Lakota language. Yet, ironically, the Lakota language was important resource in the Allied victories in both WWI and WWII.

Second, members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe were not citizens of the United States during WWI. Yet, although some of our tribal members voluntarily enlisted in the

Armed Forces of the United States, many tribal members were drafted in to the Armed Forces. To rectify the Federal Government's illegality in drafting Native Americans in WWI, and to reward Native Americans for their service to the country, Congress passed the WWI Veteran's Citizenship Act of November 6, 1919 (41 Stat. 350). Three years later, Congress passed the Act of June 2, 1924 (43 Stat. 253) that conferred United States citizenship on all non-citizen Indians.

Despite this treatment by the Federal Government, Native Americans have served, and continue to serve, with distinction and honor in the Armed Forces of the United States.

The contributions of the Choctaw and Navajo Code talkers in WWI and WWII are well known. Not so well known are the contributions of other Indian Nations, including the contributions of Sioux code talkers in both WWI and WWII. The WWI and WWII Sioux Code Talkers include the following:

- Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe: Eddie Eagle Boy and Phillip "Stoney" LaBlanc
- Crow Creek Sioux Tribe: Edmund St. John
- Lower Brule Sioux Tribe: Willie Iron Elk Plucks Porcupine A/K/A Willie Iron Elk
- Oglala Sioux Tribe: Baptiste Pumpkinseed and Clarence Wolfguts
- Rosebud Sioux Tribe: Simon Broken Leg, Iver Crow Eagle, Sr., and Charlie Whitepipe
- Santee Sioux Tribe: Walter C. John
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Tribe: Guy Rondell
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe: John Bear King

Mr. Wolfguts, who grew up at Wanblee, S.D. on the northeast portion of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, is the only Oglala Sioux Code Talker that has not passed on to the Spirit World. He is one of our most dignified and respected WWII veterans. The Oglala Sioux Tribe is very proud of him and his accomplishments.

I would like to point out that Willie Iron Elk served as a Code Talker in both WWI and WWII. Willie was an enrolled member of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe. He married Elizabeth Milk, and Oglala Sioux tribal member, and resided at Wanblee, S.D. most of his life. He had two children, Willie Iron Elk Plucks the Porcupine, Jr. A/K/A Buzzy Milk (now deceased), and Gladys Iron Elk Plucks The Porcupine-Bettelyoun A/K/A Gladys Bettelyoun, who presently resides at Wanblee, S.D.

During WWII, the United States Armed Forces sought a code that allowed undecipherable and secure communications by telephone and radio. The military enlisted the support of various Indian nations including the Sioux Nation. The Lakota language, along with the language of other Indian Nations, developed into a system of undecipherable code. Lakota code talkers transmitted information about troop movements, tactics, orders, and other crucial intelligence, to help win the war. Sioux code talkers participated in some of the heaviest combat, and can be credited with saving the lives of countless members of the United States Armed Forces during the war.

Senator Nighthorse Campbell, the Oglala Sioux Tribe strongly supports S. 540, a bi-partisan bill introduced by Senator Inhofe of Oklahoma in the first session of the 108th Congress, "to authorize the presentation of gold medals on behalf of the Congress to Native Americans who served as Code Talkers during foreign conflicts in which the United States was involved during the 20th century in recognition of the service of those Native Americans to the United States." This bill is co-sponsored by Senators Tom Daschle and Tim Johnson of South Dakota.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe supports the passage of S. 540 by Congress. I would recommend, however, that S. 540 be amended to add Willie Iron Elk's name to the list of Sioux Code Talkers that will receive Congressional gold medals for their military service to this great Nation.

In conclusion, I want to thank this honorable committee for allowing me to testify at this very important oversight hearing on the contributions of the Sioux Code Talkers in American military history.

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1868
1851

John Yellow Bird Steele

STATEMENT OF CLARENCE WOLF GUTS
OGLALA SIOUX TRIBAL MEMBER AND WORLD WAR II VETERAN
BEFORE THE UNITED STATE SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF
NATIVE AMERICAN CODE TALKERS IN AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY

SEPTEMBER 22, 2004

Chairman Nighthorse Campbell and honorable members of the Committee on Indian Affairs, my name is Clarence Wolf Guts. I am an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and a World War II Sioux Code Talker.

I first want to thank the Committee on Indian Affairs for holding this oversight hearing on the recognition of the invaluable contributions of Native American Code Talkers in American military history.

I grew up on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation at Wanblee, South Dakota. I attended Catholic school and spoke Lakota as a first language at home.

When I was 18 years old, my cousin Iver Crow Eagle, Sr., a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, and I enlisted in the United States Army. This was a few months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. I thought I would not pass my physical exam because I had a perforated eardrum, but I was wrong and Iver and I found ourselves in Ranger Training in Alabama.

During Ranger Training, an officer asked Iver and I if we spoke Indian. When he found out that both of us could speak, read and write the Lakota language, he said "oh boy, I hit the jackpot."

I was eventually assigned to travel with a General in the Pacific Theater, and my cousin Iver Crow Eagle was assigned as a radio operator for a Colonel.

For the next three years, Iver and I jumped from one Pacific Island to the next, pushing the Japanese back. During this time, we helped in the development of a phonetic alphabet based on the Lakota language, that was later used to develop a Lakota Code.

Our own families would not have been able to understand the code; only we code talkers could understand the code.

The Lakota Code was used to transmit strategic military messages that helped win World War II. It was a code that the Japanese could not break.

The war against the Japanese was hell. When I was in a foxhole, I prayed for all I was worth. With bullets flying all over, I wanted to come home to the United States and be with my family and the people, the people of America. I did all I could to possibly shorten the war. I was a Pfc. when I got my honorable discharge from the Army on January 13,1946.

I am thankful that the Federal Government and public in general are finally recognizing the valuable contributions of the Native American Code Talkers during WWI and WWII. I want to personally thank all the Native American Code Talkers for the contributions to winning WWI and WWII.

I also want to personally thank and recognize the following Sioux Code Talkers from WWI and WWII for their contributions in WWI and WWII:

Eddie Eagle Boy and Phillip "Stoney" LaBlanc of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe;

Edmund St. John of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe;

Willie Iron Elk Plucks Porcupine A/K/A Willie Iron Elk of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe;

Baptiste Pumpkinseed of the Oglala Sioux Tribe;

Simon Broken Leg, Iver Crow Eagle, Sr., and Charlie Whitepipe of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe;

Walter C. John of the Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska;

Guy Rondell of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe; and

John Bear King of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

Thank you and may the Great Spirit bless all of you.

I understand that there are two Yankton Sioux WWI Code Talkers. I do not know their names, but I also want to recognize them for the contributions to the Allied victory in WWI.

In conclusion, I would like to state that I join with President John Steele in supporting S. 540, a bill "to authorize the presentation of gold medals on behalf of the Congress to Native Americans who served as Code Talkers during foreign conflicts in which the United States was involved during the 20th century in recognition of the service of those Native Americans to the United States." This bill was introduced by Senator Inhofe of Oklahoma, and is co-sponsored by Senators Tom Daschle and Tim Johnson of South Dakota.

I want to thank this honorable committee for allowing me to testify at this very important oversight hearing on the contributions of the Sioux Code Talkers in American military history.

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