

Executive Department

State of California

PROCLAMATION

Native Americans have served in our armed forces since the Revolutionary War. They have been extraordinarily courageous and loyal in service to our nation even as it excluded them from the rights of citizenship and adopted brutal policies of removal, forced assimilation and outright extermination.

This month marks the anniversary of one of the most celebrated examples of Native American military service. In October, 1918 the American Expeditionary Force was engaged in the last great battle of the First World War, the Meuse-Argonne offensive that opened on September 26th of that year and ended with the Armistice on November 11, now celebrated as Veterans Day. In this terrible battle that would cost over 26,000 American lives, our military first made use of Native American languages as a way to foil enemies listening in on modern telecommunications equipment. A group of Choctaw soldiers in the 142nd Infantry Regiment, 36th Division, who came to be known as "code talkers," were the first to serve in this capacity under U.S. command on October 26, using their language on tapped telephone lines to plan a surprise attack. Their even more famous counterparts in the Second World War, from a diversity of Native American backgrounds including Navajo, Comanche, Cherokee and Seminole as well as Choctaw, played an essential role in the defeat of Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany. The threat of code talkers to enemy intelligence was so great that, between the world wars, Germany and Japan sent spies to the United States to study Native American languages—an effort at which they failed.

The code talkers represent perhaps the most famous contribution of Native Americans in our military history, and the role of native languages in our great victories of the 20th century stands as a reminder of the many ways we have benefited from the gifts of our indigenous cultures. But the code talkers were only a small piece of the history of Native American service in the United States Armed Forces. Native Americans have the highest rates of military service of any ethnic group. Our California Tribes, among the last to be contacted by immigrants of European descent and the most devastated by disease and mistreatment, have their own roll of American heroes dating back to the First World War. It is fitting that a monument to the distinguished and honorable record of Native Americans in military service be placed in the Riverside National Cemetery, and I urge my fellow Californians to join me in supporting this ongoing effort.

NOW THEREFORE I, EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim October, 2015, as "Native American Veterans Month."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 1st day of October 2015.




EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
Governor of California

ATTEST:


ALEX PADILLA
Secretary of State