



# THE NJ DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERAN AFFAIRS



## OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING



28 AUGUST 2024 NEWSLETTER:

PG 1 NATIONAL NAVAJO CODE TALKERS

PG 2 WELLNESS MONTH

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:



<https://www.nj.gov/military/admin/departments/deib/>





# THE NAVAJO CODE TALKERS

August 14th is Navajo Code Talkers Day!

"WHEREAS, THE NAVAJO TRIBAL COUNCIL AND THE 50,000 PEOPLE WE REPRESENT, CANNOT FAIL TO RECOGNIZE THE CRISIS NOW FACING THE WORLD IN THE THREAT OF FOREIGN INVASION AND DESTRUCTION OF THE GREAT LIBERTIES AND BENEFITS WHICH WE ENJOY ON THE RESERVATION, AND

WHEREAS, THERE EXISTS NO PURER CONCENTRATION OF AMERICANISM THAN AMONG THE FIRST AMERICANS, AND

WHEREAS, IT HAS BECOME COMMON PRACTICE TO ATTEMPT NATIONAL DESTRUCTION THROUGH SOWING THE SEEDS OF TREACHERY AMONG MINORITY GROUPS SUCH AS OURS, AND

WHEREAS, WE HEREBY SERVE NOTICE THAT ANY UN-AMERICAN MOVEMENT AMONG OUR PEOPLE WILL BE RESENTED AND DEALT WITH SEVERELY, AND

NOW, THEREFORE, WE RESOLVE THAT THE NAVAJO INDIANS STAND READY AS THEY DID IN 1918, TO AID AND DEFEND OUR GOVERNMENT, AND ITS INSTITUTIONS AGAINST ALL SUBVERSION AND ARMED CONFLICT AND PLEDGE OUR LOYALTY TO THE SYSTEM WHICH RECOGNIZES MINORITY RIGHTS AND A WAY OF LIFE THAT HAS PLACED US AMONG THE GREATEST PEOPLE OF OUR RACE.

IF OUR HELP WAS NEEDED, WE NAVAJOS WOULD BE READY."

PROCLAMATION BY THE NAVAJO TRIBAL COUNCIL, JUNE, 1940

## An Unbreakable Code

The Navajo Language is one of the most complex languages in the world in terms of grammar, structure, syntax, and vowels. Even when compared to relative languages from its place of origin (Arizona) it is almost completely unintelligible. By the start of WWII less than thirty non-Navajo people in the world could speak the language with any proficiency. Another interesting element of the Navajo language was that it was not written down, there was no print version of it. Philip Johnston, a Los Angeles civil engineer was raised on a Navajo reservation, being the child of missionaries. Many indigenous children at the time being educated faced repercussions or even punishment for speaking in their native language. However it was still the primary spoken language of choice on these reservations. Johnston would develop a knack for 'Trader's Navajo', which was a grammatically simplified and less complex version of the language for the purposes of more functional communication with outside peoples. It was Johnston who first proposed to use the Navajo language as the code base the Marines desperately needed.

In early 1942 Johnston set up a series of combat simulations to demonstrate the capability and utility of Navajo recruits for Major General Clayton B. Vogel of the Marine Corps. Navajo men could transmit and decode three-line messages in twenty seconds compared to decoding machines which would take upwards to thirty MINUTES. Half an hour is an eon in the theater of war. The proposal was immediately accepted. The original idea was to recruit 200 Navajo officers, but the plan was scaled back to just under thirty to ensure feasibility of the code before over committing resources. The twenty-nine men were sworn in at Fort Wingate and were organized as Platoon 382 before being sent off to bootcamp.



The insignia of the Navajo Code Talkers, created by member of Platoon 382 Carl N. Gorman

The first proper code developed by Platoon 382 was in California's Camp Pendleton by what would in history be referred to as the 'First Twenty-Nine'. This code would be modeled after the Joint Army/Navy Phonetic Alphabet, which uses English words to represent letters. Military terms were going to be a challenge to translate during combat when time was a valuable currency so certain terms, concepts, or tactics were substituted out for descriptive nomenclatures in their native Navajo. For example, 'Submarine' would become 'Iron Fish'. A naval destroyer would be referred to as 'shark'. 'Silver Oak Leaf' would be a signifier of a lieutenant colonel. The first model of the code used twenty-six Navajo terms. The second evolution of it, Type 2, expanded to over 411 unique phrases. Subsequent recruits would learn the codebook in a classroom and be mandated to have the book memorized as the codebooks were not permitted in combat zones due to security concerns. They would practice translating code in high stakes and stressful simulations to cultivate a sense of calm and functionality while under fire in the field.

In the heat of World War II, the irony was not lost on Native Americans when the US Military requested from them a vital service that would prove instrumental in the fight against powerful adversaries. This request came from the same institution that historically has played a significant role in the displacement and hardships faced by Indigenous peoples. Despite the challenging history, the indigenous peoples of North America selflessly answered the call of patriotism by contributing their unique skills to the war effort. In May of 1942 there were twenty-nine Navajo men waiting to swear into the Marine Corps. These men were selected for a top-secret duty, and their contributions would end up changing the trajectory of the war with Japan.

When deployed, most code talkers functioned in pairs. The first man would operate a portable radio during live combat while the second man would receive the messages in the Navajo language for translation. These men were prime targets for the Japanese, who prioritized killing officers, medics, and radio operators. The code talkers had to keep moving to stay alive. The Japanese intercepted the code often but could in no way make heads or tails of what was being said. Breaking the code was a high priority for them and the US was all too aware of it. Standing orders were that if one of the code talkers' pair was at risk of being captured then the other would have to shoot his partner in order to protect the secrecy of the code. Fortunately, there is no record of this eventuality occurring. The Navajo Code Talkers were deployed in both theaters of war, from Utah Beach at Normandy to the far-off Pacific Islands bordering Japanese territory. Of significant note is their contributions to the siege of Iwo Jima Island. Major Howard Connor employed the use of six Code Talkers during the battle. In two days these six men sent and received over 800 messages without any error. 'Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would have never taken Iwo Jima', Major Connor would say later. The Navajo code remained unbroken for the duration of the war, the only spoken military code to never be cracked. It still remained classified until 1968. It wouldn't be until 2001 that the Navajo Code Talkers would be awarded Congressional Gold Medals for their service.

## A Navajo - American Hero



Harry Tsostie was a Navajo Code Talker and Purple Heart recipient who gave his life for his country. He was one of eleven to do so. Learn more about him and the Navajo Code Talkers [here!](#)





# National Wellness Month



August is known as National Wellness Month! Prioritizing your self-care, reducing stress, and creating healthier habits can help you feel like your best self in and out of the office!

The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined wellness as, “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

## WELLNESS IS WELL-KNOWN

As the month comes to a close and another is soon to begin, reflect on how you have been handling your overall well-being. National Wellness Month focuses on areas of life people tend to often forget about due to routine-living such as spirituality or intellectuality. Though it may seem that self-care has only grown in importance in today's society, it has existed as a concept throughout human history. Many ancient philosophers as well as religious figures promoted wellness, often proving so through writings and beliefs still practiced today. For example, did you know yoga was developed by a civilization in India nearly 5,000 years ago? Simple hobbies to prioritize oneself have been successful in creating a healthy mind and body for many generations and will likely continue to do so as ideas of health and wellness continue to evolve.

## RESOURCES

### Upcoming Local Events:

- RWJ Wellness Programs
- Sept. 14th: 'Black Love Healing Circle'
- Sept. 15th: 'Wellness Fest'
- Sept. 18th: 'Full Moon Yoga'
- Sept. 28th: 'Puppy Noses & Yoga Poses'
- Sept. 29th: 'Renew & Reset: Autumn Self Care Retreat'
- YMCA Veterans Wellness Pathway Program

### Online Tools:

- VA Nutrition & Food Services
- Quitting Smoking & Tobacco
- VA's 'MOVE!' Wellness Program
- Mobile Apps and Health Tools
- Printable Personal Health Inventory
- 'Circle of Health' Video
- VA 'Money Challenges' Resource

*\*Please be advised, DMAVA is not affiliated, associated, authorized, endorsed by, or in any way officially connected with these businesses, organizations, publications, productions, and/or brands, or any of its subsidiaries or its affiliates. This information is solely for your exploration at your own discretion.\**

## BASIC HABITS FOR A HEALTHIER YOU

Taking care of your physical body and the world around you is good for your mental health. The mind and body intertwine with one another in many ways. Below are a few basic habits that can help continue or begin to build a healthier you!

- Drink Water: Water is essential for your brain to function as well as makes up a majority of your body weight. It is also involved in many other important functions such as regulating your body temperature and removing waste from your body.
- Prioritize Your Rest: Consistency in the timing of when you go to sleep and when you wake up can have an obvious impact on your energy, memory, and emotional well-being. An Adult must sleep at least 7-9 hours a night for proper body and brain function.
- Stay Active: Often, inactivity is more to blame than age when aging individuals lose the ability to do things on their own.
- Whole Foods: 'Whole foods' diet simply means choosing foods that are minimally processed. Think fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds, oils, and whole grains.
- Cut Back on Social Media: If your time on social media has become an emotional roller coaster of comparison, perfectionism and unwelcome opinions, it might be time to take a break.
- Cut Yourself Some Slack: Perfection is a goal that will always be just out of our grasp, and that's totally cool. Give yourself a break and realize that you are awesome just as you are.

### EMOTIONAL

Wellness that allows for awareness, understanding, and acknowledgement of your emotions, and your capability to manage appropriately through challenges and change.

[Learn More](#)

### OCCUPATIONAL

Wellness that allows for a balance of commitment to your job, you feel your work has a positive influence on the success of your organization, and you feel motivated when working independently as well as when working with others.

[Learn More](#)

### INTELLECTUAL

Wellness that motivates learning and a desire to think critically. Working on your intellectuality is vital to expanding your current mental skillset, becoming more creative, and working on your problem-solving skills.

[Learn More](#)

### ENVIRONMENTAL

Wellness that helps us understand the impact of our environment on our well-being and making it our responsibility to make certain that we are living in harmony with the natural world around us.

[Learn More](#)

### FINANCIAL

Wellness that pushes for better money management, how one thinks about money, and better perspective on one's current financial situation.

[Learn More](#)

### PHYSICAL

Wellness that allows for the motivation to obtain or sustain maximal health in our physical body. When you have good physical health, you're able to complete day-to-day activities more easily.

[Learn More](#)

### SOCIAL

Wellness that prioritizes the role of relationships in our overall well-being. It's important to build genuine connections with friends, family, colleagues, and more. You never know what doors are waiting to open!

[Learn More](#)

### SPIRITUAL

Wellness that encourages an understanding and embracing your connection to the world and your place in it. It deepens our connection to ourselves, others, and the universe, leading to a more interconnected life.

[Learn More](#)