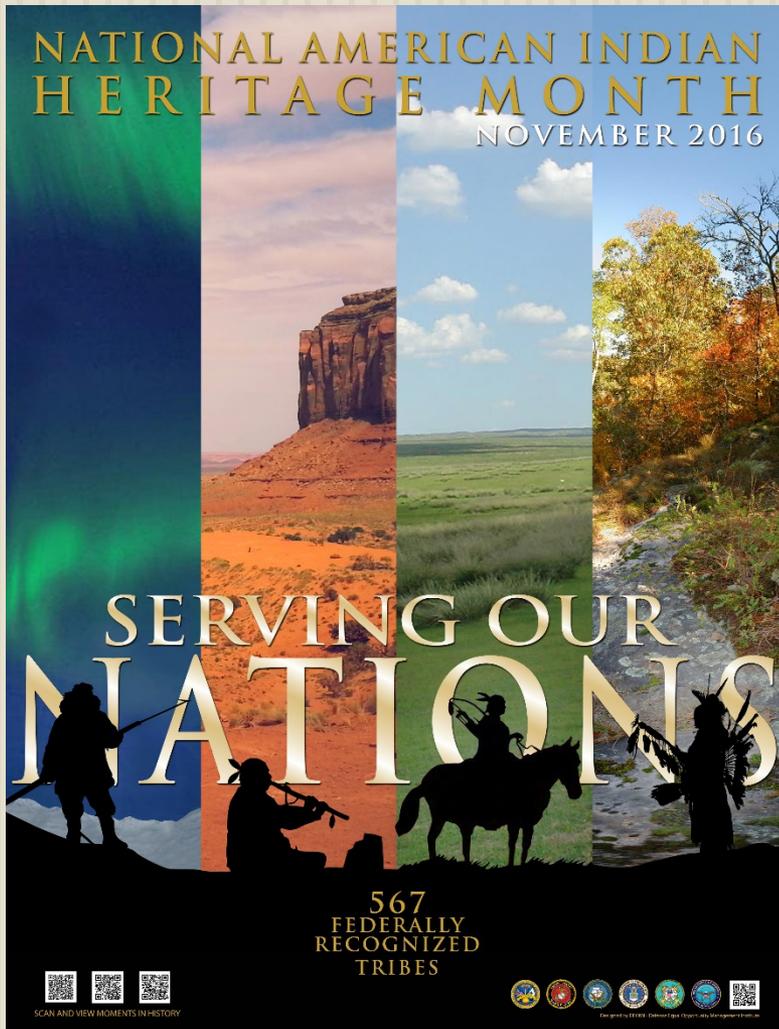


# Serving Our Nations

NATIONAL AMERICAN  
INDIAN HERITAGE  
MONTH 2016

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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November is National American Indian Heritage Month, honoring American Indians and Alaska Natives.

This year, the Society of American Indian Government Employees has selected the theme “Serving Our Nations.”

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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This presentation reviews the historical milestones that led to the establishment of National American Indian Heritage Month.

It also describes American Indian and Alaska Native population, tribes, and national sovereignty.

Finally, we include the stories of the Code Talkers who served during both World Wars, and four distinguished individuals: Joe Medicine Crow, Nathan Jackson, Molly Hootch, and Michael Thornton.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Here are the stories of the Code Talkers who served during both World Wars, and four distinguished individuals: Joe Medicine Crow, Nathan Jackson, Molly Hootch, and Michael Thornton.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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At the turn of the century, efforts began to implement a day of recognition for Native Americans' contributions to America.



# National American Indian Heritage Month

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One of the early proponents of an American Indian Day was Dr. Arthur C. Parker, a Seneca Indian.

In the early 1900s, he persuaded the Boy Scouts of America to set aside a day to honor the first Americans.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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In 1914, Red Fox James, a Blackfeet Indian, rode on horseback from state to state, seeking backing for a day to honor American Indians.



In 1915, James presented the endorsements of 24 state governments to the White House. However, there is no record of a national day being proclaimed, despite his efforts.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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In 1915, the Congress of the American Indian Association approved a formal plan to celebrate American Indian Day. Reverend Sherman Coolidge, an Arapaho tribal member, asked the country to formally set aside a day of recognition.



# National American Indian Heritage Month

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In 1924, Congress enacted the Indian Citizenship Act, but took no action to establish a national American Indian Day.



President Calvin Coolidge with four Osage Indians after signing the bill granting Indians full citizenship.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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It wasn't until 1986 that Congress passed—and President Ronald Reagan signed—a proclamation authorizing American Indian Week.



In 1990, President George H. W. Bush designated November as National American Indian Heritage Month.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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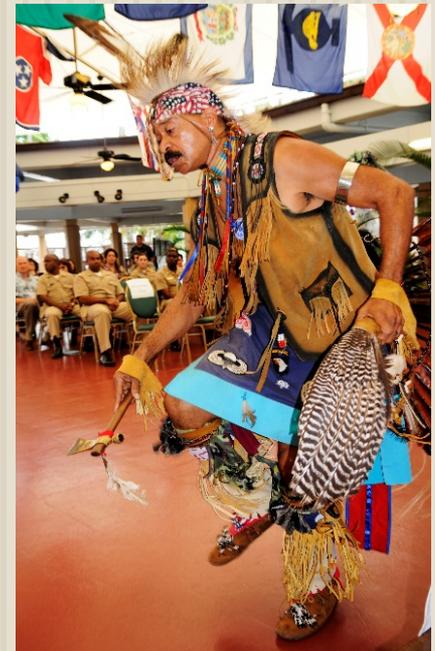
After 100 years of efforts to establish it, National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month is celebrated to recognize native cultures and educate the public about the heritage, history, art, and traditions of the American Indians and Alaskan Natives.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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The nation's population of American Indians and Alaska Natives, including those of more than one race, was 5.4 million in 2014, making up about two percent of the total population.

By the year 2060, the population of American Indians and Alaska Natives is expected to be 10.2 million.



# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Today, 26,995 American Indians serve in the Armed Forces, making up 1.2 percent of the military population.

Additionally, according to the DoD, there were 140,556 American Indian veterans as of March 2014.

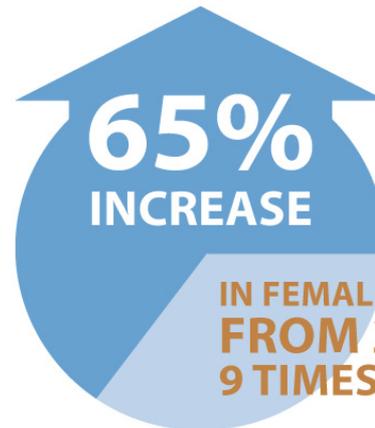
## American Indians & Alaska Natives:



**3,772**  
CIVILIANS  
IN THE DoD



**MEDAL OF HONOR**  
RECIPIENTS



**INCREASE**  
IN OFFICERS  
FROM 2006 TO 2015  
(9 TIMES DOD AVERAGE)

[http://www.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/1115\\_native-american](http://www.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/1115_native-american)

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Currently, there are 567 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and more than 100 state-recognized tribes across the United States.



Each have their own unique history, beliefs, governance structure and culture.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Federally recognized tribes retain certain inherent rights of self government (i.e., tribal sovereignty) and are entitled to receive certain federal benefits, services, and protections because of their relationship with the United States.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Sovereignty is the right of a nation or group of people to be self-governing and is the most fundamental concept that defines the relationship between the government of the United States and governments of American Indian tribes.

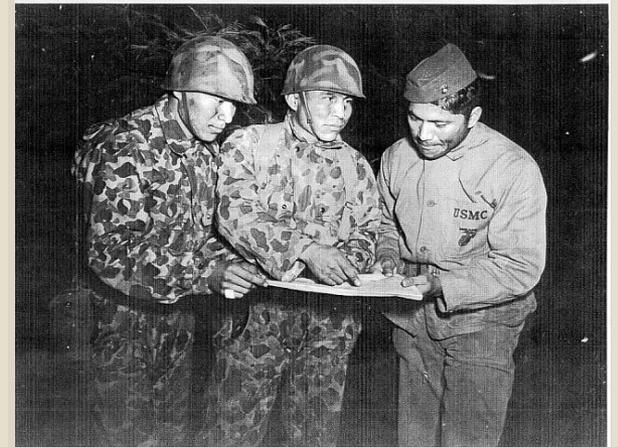
American Indians and Alaska Natives are U.S. citizens and citizens of their tribes. They are subject to federal laws, but they are not always subject to state laws.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Code Talkers



# National American Indian Heritage Month

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During World War I and World War II, hundreds of American Indians joined the United States Armed Forces and used words from their traditional tribal languages as weapons.

The United States military asked them to develop secret battle communications based on their languages—that America's enemies never deciphered the coded messages they sent.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

“Code Talkers,” as they came to be known after World War II, were communications specialists. Their job was to send coded messages about troop movements, enemy positions, and other critical information on the battlefield. Some Code Talkers translated messages into their Native languages and relayed them to another tribal member. Others developed a special code within their languages that they used in combat to send important messages.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Here are the American Indian Code Talkers' languages and the numbers of tribal members who served, if known.

Assiniboine, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Chippewa/Oneida (17), Choctaw (15), Comanche (17), Fox/Meskwaki (19), Hopi (11), Kiowa, Menominee, Muscogee/Creek, Navajo (about 420), Osage, Pawnee Sac, Seminole, Sioux—Lakota and Dakota—and Yankton Sioux.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Joe Medicine Crow

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Joe Medicine Crow was born in 1913 on the Crow Indian reservation in Montana. Raised by his elders in the tribe's warrior tradition, Medicine Crow was taught to master his fears, ride bareback, track game, and withstand extreme cold. He was also schooled in the stories of those who had previously distinguished themselves in battle.



# National American Indian Heritage Month

Medicine Crow was the first member of his tribe to go to college, and he was attending graduate school in California when America entered World War II.

He joined the U.S. Army and became a scout in the 103rd Infantry Division. He drew on the teachings of his grandfathers, which he credits for giving him the strength to be a warrior.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

Before heading into battle, he would paint red stripes on his arms, and he carried a sacred eagle feather from a Sun Dance medicine man to shield him from harm.

In 1948, he was awarded the Bronze Star and was given the prestigious French Legion of Honor for his services. During his time in service, he also completed the tasks required of a Crow war chief. Medicine Crow was the last Crow Indian to become a war chief.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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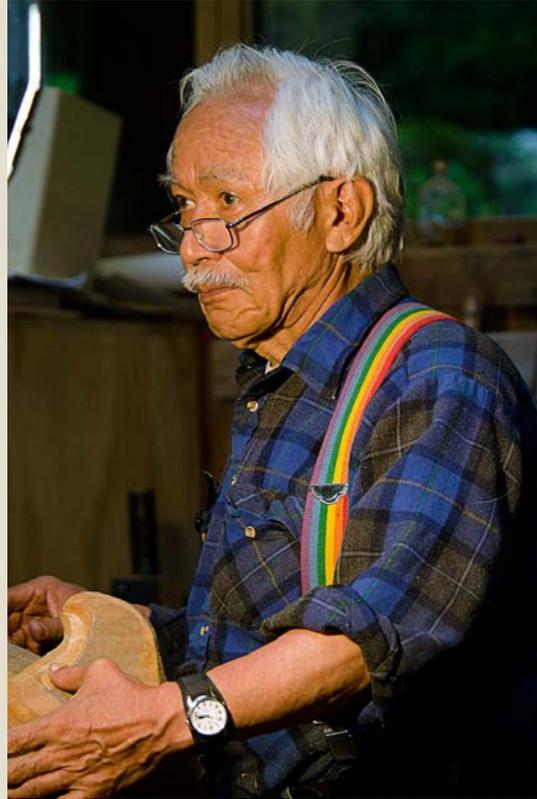


He served as the Crow tribal historian for more than 50 years. He wrote extensively about Indian history, culture, and gathered numerous oral histories from older generations, preserving a large section of Crow history and stories that otherwise would have been lost.

In 2009, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Nathan Jackson

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Nathan Jackson is among the most famous living Tlingit artists. He was born in Alaska to the Sockeye Clan on the Raven side of the Chilkoot. He learned tribal ways from his clan uncle and grandfather.

Art is a vital part of the Tlingit social system. The design motifs of Tlingit art are from clan crests such as the raven, eagle, killer whale, and beaver, and they reflect traditional stories.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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A traditional artist must know the meanings of these symbols and stories, and know the protocol involved in commissioning, carving, and raising a totem pole.



# National American Indian Heritage Month

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After completing his military service in 1959, Jackson started creating miniature totem poles and discovered that he had a talent for carving and painting.

He attended the Institute of American Indian Arts to further hone his skills. He learned to use the adze, an ancient edging tool dating back to the stone age.

His work has included large totem poles, wood panel clan crests, masks, canoes, and carved doors.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Jackson has created more than 50 totem poles. His artwork is on display in every major museum throughout North America, Europe, and Japan—as well as many public and private buildings in Alaska.

In recognition of his work, the University of Alaska, Southeast, awarded him an honorary doctorate of humanities.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Molly Hootch

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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In 1975, Molly Hootch, a 16-year-old Alaska Native, was one of 27 plaintiffs in a class action lawsuit against the state of Alaska. The suit was filed on behalf of all Alaska Native children in villages without high schools.

Students who finished 8th grade had to attend state-provided boarding schools hundreds of miles away from their homes in order to earn a high school diploma.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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The plaintiffs stated that not providing local high schools violated the constitution of Alaska, which contained a clause obligating the state to establish and maintain a system of public schools.

They argued it was not beneficial for students to be away from their home, family, and culture for nine months out of the year.



# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Additionally, they asserted that by not providing local high schools to Alaska Native children, the state was perpetuating a pattern and practice of racial discrimination—a direct violation of the U.S. Constitution, federal discrimination laws, and the Alaska constitution.

Records were examined and confirmed the pattern: 95 percent of children coming from the villages without high schools were indeed Alaska Natives.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Eventually, a settlement that constituted the largest settlement in the history of American education litigation was agreed upon.

Hootch's name has become synonymous with equality in education for the state of Alaska. Many of these schools became known as Molly Hootch schools, in honor of her being the first name on the plaintiff list.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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**Michael E. Thornton**  
**Lieutenant, USN, Retired**

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Michael Thornton enlisted in the Navy in 1967 after graduating from high school. Upon completion of Basic Underwater Demolition training, he was assigned to Sea, Air, Land (SEAL) Team ONE and served several tours in Vietnam and Thailand.

In the spring of 1972, Petty Officer Thornton was assigned to a mission under the command of LT Thomas Norris.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

On his last tour to Vietnam, at the age of 23, Thornton saved the life of his senior officer while on an intelligence gathering and prisoner capture operation.

The small team of two Navy SEALs and three South Vietnamese commandos were discovered by a larger North Vietnamese Army force, and a fierce firefight ensued. Norris finally ordered his outnumbered team to retreat to the sea.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Norris, who had earned the Medal of Honor just months earlier, was shot in the face. A South Vietnamese commando told Thornton that Norris was dead.

Thornton refused to leave without his lieutenant, upholding the pledge that no SEAL would ever be left behind by a brother. Although, the wound was grievous and Norris was unconscious, he was still alive.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

Thornton carried his lieutenant into the water and inflated his lifejacket, swam with him until they were out of the range of fire, and continued to swim for two hours until they were rescued.

Thornton was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1973. He was the first person in more than a century to receive that honor for saving the life of another Medal of Honor recipient.

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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*“I feel honored, but I’m not a hero, this medal belongs to every man and woman who died serving their country. I feel honored to represent them.” —Michael E. Thornton*

# National American Indian Heritage Month

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Since the arrival of European settlers in America, American Indians and Alaska Natives have preserved their culture and heritage.



A new generation has assumed this charge from their elders, and they continue to serve not only their nations but the United States with dignity and honor.

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# Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, Patrick Air Force Base, Florida November 2016

Dawn W. Smith

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