

The Navajo Code Talkers

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Senior Division

Group Exhibit

Process Paper: 277

Exhibit Word Count: 358

Process Paper:

We chose the topic, Navajo Code Talkers, because one of us is part Native American and felt quite strongly about this subject. The rest of us thought it would be an important topic to cover as it wasn't something we had heard of. The Navajo Code Talkers relate to the theme, communication in history, as the code talkers proved to be a crucial part of communication for the U.S. Marines in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Their story and experiences themselves also serve as instances of communication, and a lack of, in a historical context. We conducted our research by first looking through government websites, such as the CIA, and by then looking through databases to find more sources. For more context and background, we also found a few sources involving the history of the Navajo Nation, particularly in regards to the effects of colonialism, and subsequent discrimination, upon it. We chose to present our information through an exhibit as pictures are often times more powerful than words, and the story of the Navajo Code Talkers is one in which words were temporarily lost to time. The Navajo Code Talkers are a part of history that perfectly demonstrates the importance and impact of communication. Although their story was hidden until 1968, the code they provided served as the basis of communication for U.S. Marines in the Pacific Theater. The Navajo Code Talkers don't just serve as an important example of communication however, as they directly contributed to the U.S. victory in World War II. Without their help, the war could have easily ended differently which would have changed the course of history.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Archives, National. "Code Talkers." *Archives.gov*,

www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/military/code-talkers.html. Accessed 19 Feb. 2021.

It talks about how the code talkers were useful and who generally served.

Bonney, P. A. "Post-War Program, 1946-1976." CONTENTdm, Northern Arizona University,

1946, archive.library.nau.edu/digital/collection/cpa/id/45100.

This is a document from 1946-1976 that was preserved and re-uploaded by the Northern Arizona University for public use. The photocopies are correspondence and memorandums concerning "the feasibility and practicability of the use of American Indians as communication linguists and 'code talkers'" in the military.

Code, Navajo. "NavajoCode." *Navajocodetalkers.org*, 4 Apr. 2014,

navajocodetalkers.org/category/interviews/. Accessed 19 Feb. 2021.

It has a lot of different interviews with different real life Navajo Code talkers in order to get a more rounded view on what it was like for them.

Corps, Us Marine. "Program Status near War's End, 1943-1944." *Archive.library.nau.edu*, 1943,

archive.library.nau.edu/digital/collection/cpa/id/44925/rec/3. Accessed 13 Dec. 2020.

This is a document that has the cost of hiring the Navajo and how well the program is going.

Enlistment of Navajo Indians.

www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/code-talkers/images/letter-01.jpg

<https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/code-talkers/images/letter-02.jpg>.

Accessed 13 Dec. 2020.

This is a letter from Clayton B. Vogel about enlisting Navajo Indians in order to help them keep their communication private.

HistoryNet. "Unbreakable: The Navajo Code." *HistoryNet*, February 2012,

<https://www.historynet.com/unbreakable-navajo-code.htm>

This depicts Navajo Code Talkers during the war and gives more insight into how they communicated. It also shows that these men were armed and prepared to fight, rather than being away from the front lines.

Intelligence Government. "1942: Navajo Code Talkers." *Intel.gov*,

<https://www.intelligence.gov/index.php/people/barrier-breakers-in-history/453-navajo-code-talkers>

A photo of Navajo Code Talkers armed with guns, and wearing helmets. This illustrates that the code talkers were likely on the front lines, and used to, or prepared for, combat.

Johnston, Philip. CONTENTdm, Northern Arizona University, 1942,

archive.library.nau.edu/digital/collection/cpa/id/44760.

This is a document from 1942 that was preserved and re-uploaded by the Northern Arizona University for public use. These photocopies are declassified correspondence and memos documenting the initial stages of the Navajo Code Talkers Program. Documents include a letter from Camp Elliott discussing a demonstration by Navajo Indians using their dialect as a code to transmit rapid, secure messages; memo describing that the Navajo language had not been studied by German students during the preceding 20 years; notes on messages transmitted and received using tribal dialect; discussion and recommended actions

regarding the enlistment of Navajo Indians; memo from director of recruiting expressing concern that plan has little practical value; and conditions and terms for recruitment of Indians, including requiring that they complete basic training before being reassigned to special code talker training. Correspondents include Philip Johnston, J.E. Jones, Clayton B. Vogel, Frank Halford, Wethered Woodworth, and Fred H. Daiker.

Johnston, Philip. CONTENTdm, Northern Arizona University, 1942,

archive.library.nau.edu/digital/collection/cpa/id/44758.

This is a document from 1942 that was preserved and re-uploaded by the Northern Arizona University for public use. This photocopy is an enlistment paper for the Navajo Code talkers, on Aug 25, 1942.

Johnston, Philip. "Proposed Plan for Recruiting Indian Signal Corps Personnel."

Archive.library.nau.edu, 1942, archive.library.nau.edu/digital/collection/cpa/id/44705/rec/1.

Accessed 13 Dec. 2020.

This is a document about how Philip Johnston thought the army should hire Navajo indians to help them send encoded messages.

KNAU. "The Last of the Navajo Code Talkers." *KNAU*,

<https://www.knau.org/post/last-navajo-code-talkers>

A photo of Chester Nez, a Navajo Code Talker, holding a gun. This not only portrays a code talker, but illustrates the fact that they were exposed to conflict whilst serving as communication.

Levenson, Eric. "The Incredible Story of the Navajo Code Talkers that got Lost in All the

Politics.” *CNN*, 29 November, 2017,

<https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/28/us/navajo-code-talkers-trump-who/index.html>

A photograph of two Navajo Code talkers in the process of transmitting a message. This helps illustrate the process the code talkers went through to send and receive messages.

Library of Congress. 27 May 2004, www.loc.gov/item/webcast-8185. Accessed 13 Dec. 2020.

This is a video document with a summary and it is a first hand account of a Navajo indian training and what all he went through.

Northern Arizona University Colorado Plateau Digital Collections. “[Navajo Code Talkers: information at Camp Elliott, California].” *Northern Arizona University*,

<https://archive.library.nau.edu/digital/collection/cpa/id/6319>

A photograph of the training of some Navajo Code Talkers, which helps show the preparation that went into place.

Parkinson, Hilary. “Unbreakable: Remembering the Code Talkers.” *U.S. National Archives*, 5 January, 2012,

<https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2012/01/05/unbreakable-remembering-the-code-talkers/>

A photograph of two code talkers in the midst of either sending or receiving a message. This photo allows viewers to see what the process of sending and receiving messages looked like.

Sylvester, John. "Oral History Interview with Philip Johnston." *Archive.library.nau.edu*, 7 Nov. 1970, archive.library.nau.edu/digital/collection/cpa/id/124971/rec/2. Accessed 13 Dec. 2020.

This is another document about a Navajo indian and what we went through, his background, and his life in the military.

Station Hypo. “75 Years Ago Today the First 29 Navajo Code Talkers Recruits Attended USMC Boot Camp.” *StationHypo.com*, <https://stationhypo.com/2017/05/04/5045/>

A photograph depicted a code talker in a hole whilst sending or receiving a message. This illustrates the difficult conditions the code talkers faced, as well as the dangers.

United States. Marine Corps. CONTENTdm, Northern Arizona University , 1945, archive.library.nau.edu/digital/collection/cpa/id/44879.

This is a document from 1945 that was preserved and re-uploaded by the Northern Arizona University for public use. This photocopy is of declassified documents including a Navajo-English dictionary and vocabulary list with an additional 200 terms, also recommended alternatives to the most frequent letters in the English language; master schedule of Navajo code talkers course, lesson plans, reading lists, and approved teaching methodology; reports on the recommended deployment of code talkers per Marine division; re-training program and new distribution lists for incorporating new terms and standardized voice communication. Code talker training included voice procedures, call signs, phrases, microphone techniques, message transmission, and technical aspects of radio operation. Finally, a letter sent by the command center describes the difficulty acknowledging the valuable contributions of the Navajo since a complete list of Navajo code talkers serving in the war is non-existent.

Secondary Sources:

Abor. "Indigenous Voices of the Colorado Plateau- Navajo Code Talkers." *Library.nau.edu*, library.nau.edu/speccoll/exhibits/indigenous_voices/navajo/codetalkers.html. Accessed 19 Feb. 2021.

It is a brief summary of how the Navajo Code talkers got started and how many were first recruited to help the US fight the Japanese.

Angel Blog. "Remembering the National Navajo Code Talkers." *Soldiers' Angels*, 12 August 2016, <https://soldiersangels.org/remembering-the-national-navajo-code-talkers/>

This is a photograph depicting the Navajo Code, and gives insight into how words were spelled out using it. It explains the correlation between the Navajo words and English letters.

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Code talker". Encyclopedia Britannica, 9 Apr. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/code-talker>. Accessed 18 February 2021.

A website primarily discussing the Navajo Code talkers but also touching on other native code talkers as well.

Cheetham, Jonathan. "Navajo Nation: The people battling America's worst coronavirus outbreak." *BBC*, 15 June 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52941984>

A photo depicting the Navajo Nation on the map. This is used to give context on the location of the Navajo reservation, as well as to help explain how colonialism impacted them.

CIA. "Navajo Code Talkers and the Unbreakable Code." *Central Intelligence Agency*, Central

Intelligence Agency, 16 Nov. 2016,

www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2008-featured-story-archive/navajo-code-talkers/.

A detailed account of how and why the Navajo code was created. The article also describes the use of the code in the war and its recognition afterwards. This also provided two photos of Navajo code words for planes and battleships, and helps explain how the Navajo code worked.

Dave W. "American Indian Code Talkers: The National WWII Museum: New Orleans." The

National WWII Museum | New Orleans, The National World War II Museum, 14 Aug. 2017, www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/american-indian-code-talkers.

A shorter website with an article about the Navajo Code talkers and the history throughout the ages and how the nature of their work negatively affected the praise they received because the information was classified.

Fordham, Evie. "One of the Last Navajo Code Talkers Just Passed Away at 94." *Daily Caller*, 12 June 2018,

<https://dailycaller.com/2018/06/12/one-of-the-last-navajo-code-talkers-just-passed-away-at-94/>

A more recent photo of Navajo Code talker veterans. It gives insight into how they were rewarded, and have still been recognized for their efforts in modern times.

Fox, Margalit. "Chester Nez, 93, Dies; Navajo Words Washed From Mouth Helped Win War."

The New York Times, The New York Times, 6 June 2014,
www.nytimes.com/2014/06/06/us/chester-nez-dies-at-93-his-native-tongue-helped-to-win-a-war-of-words.html.

The article focuses on Chester Nez, one of the original 29 Navajo Code Talkers, and his experiences. It further details the experiences of the Navajo Code Talkers in both war and daily life and illustrates their experiences through quotes, pictures, and information from historians. This also provided a photograph of Chester Nez, a code talker veteran.

Holm, Tom. *Code Talkers and Warriors: Native Americans and World War II*. Chelsea House, 2007.

Another easy to read book but a bit more mature, with Tom Holm touching on things such as the fighting they experienced in Europe, maps of where they fought, and a chronological timeline of events that happened.

Hudson, Myles. "Battle of Iwo Jima." *Britannica.com*, 12 February, 2021,
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Battle-of-Iwo-Jima>

This is a map illustration of the island of Iwo Jima, where a battle took place during WWII in which the Navajo Code Talkers were present. This picture gives more insight into what was happening and where.

Jevenc, Adam, and Lee Ann Potter. "The Navajo Code Talkers." *Social Education*, vol. 65, no. 5, 2001, p. 262. *Gale In Context: High School*,
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A78916689/GPS?u=linc56206&sid=GPS&xid=65bae178>.
Accessed 13 Dec. 2020.

Adam and Potter describe the planning behind the Navajo code and where the initial idea for it arised. They also showcase how it works, and describe its effectiveness in World War Two.

Levenson, Eric. "The Incredible Story of the Navajo Code Talkers That Got Lost in All the

Politics." CNN, Cable News Network, 29 Nov. 2017,
www.cnn.com/2017/11/28/us/navajo-code-talkers-trump-who/index.html.

A CNN article addressing many different aspects of the Navajo Code talkers, a little about who they were and more about the actions being taken today with recognition and possibly a museum.

"Navajo Code Talkers." Interviews, Videos & More, NavajoCode, 2019, navajocodetalkers.org/.

A website holding many different articles and interviews of actual first hand experiences, such with a documentary filmed and produced about Peter McDonald who served as a Navajo Code Talker as he talks about his life from Tuba City, Arizona to the United States Marine Corps.

Navajo Nation. *History*, 2011, www.navajo-nsn.gov/history.htm.

Gives important background information on the Navajo Nation, including the Navajo Code Talkers.

Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and

Jessica Paris. "1942: Navajo Code Talkers." Home, 2021,
www.intelligence.gov/index.php/people/barrier-breakers-in-history/453-navajo-code-talkers
.

A website by the CIA about the Navajo Code talkers and their importance to the war.

Paul, Doris Atkinson. *The Navajo Code Talkers*. Dorrance Publishing Co., 2003.

An in-depth book written by Doris A. Paul goes into detail about many parts of the war, including several different interviews, plenty of primary sources, and a chapter dedicated to honoring all that served.

Purdum, Todd S. "Code Talkers' Story Pops Up Everywhere." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 11 Oct. 1999,
www.nytimes.com/1999/10/11/us/code-talkers-story-pops-up-everywhere.html.

The article focuses on the Navajo code, whilst paying special attention to the attention around Navajo Code Talkers after their actions were recognized by the public.

Tsosie-Paddock, Aresta. "Second-Generation Navajo Relocates: Coping with Land Loss, Cultural Dispossession, and Displacement." *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2018, p. 87+. *Gale In Context: U.S. History*,
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A587973383/GPS?u=linc56206&sid=GPS&xid=7e35978e>.
Accessed 13 Dec. 2020.

Tsosie-Paddock gives an in-depth view of the Navajo Nation by portraying the issues it has faced in both the past and present. Tsosie-Paddock also details how the U.S. government has harmed the Navajo.

TripAdvisor. "Code Talker Monument." *TripAdvisor*,
https://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g31409-d10192347-i202701729-Window_Rock_Navajo_Tribal_Park-Window_Rock_Apache_County_Arizona.html

A photograph of the Navajo Code talker monument in Window Rock, Arizona. It displays an important memorial for the code talkers' service, and shows that they have been recognized and are still honored for their work today.

Santella, Andrew. *Navajo Code Talkers*. Hampton-Brown, 2004.

A quaint children's book with easy to read facts and pictures explaining very simply the overview of who the Navajo Code Talkers were and what they did.

Santora, Andrew. "Talking Code, Honoring Service: Remembering the Navajo Code Talkers."

United States Navy Memorial, United States Navy Memorial, 14 Aug. 2020, www.navymemorial.org/tales-from-the-navy-log/2020/8/14/talking-code-honoring-service-remembering-the-navajo-code-talkers.

A website that covers the history of the Navajo Code talkers but also touches on another subject of specifically being created for the August 14th advent of Navajo Code Talkers Day.

Staff, HistoryNet. "Codemakers: History of the Navajo Code Talkers." HistoryNet, HistoryNet, 2021, www.historynet.com/world-war-ii-navajo-code-talkers.htm.

A website going through the history of the Navajo Code talkers and how helpful their efforts were for the war.

Stracqualursi, Veronica. "Who are the Native American code talkers?." *ABC News*, 28 November 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/native-american-code-talkers/story?id=51406325>

This photo depicts President Bush awarding Navajo Code Talkers, which shows that they were finally recognized and rewarded for their efforts.

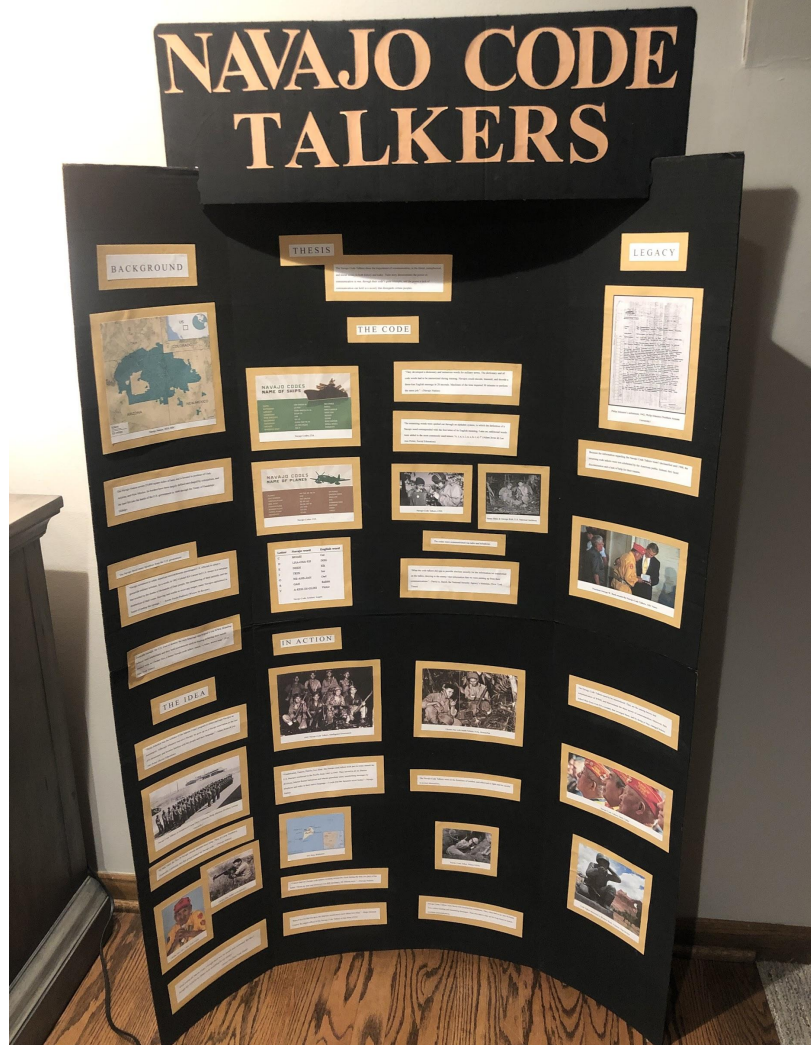
The Navy Department Library. "Navajo Code Talkers: World War II Fact Sheet." Naval History

and Heritage Command,

www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabeticall/n/code-talkers.html.

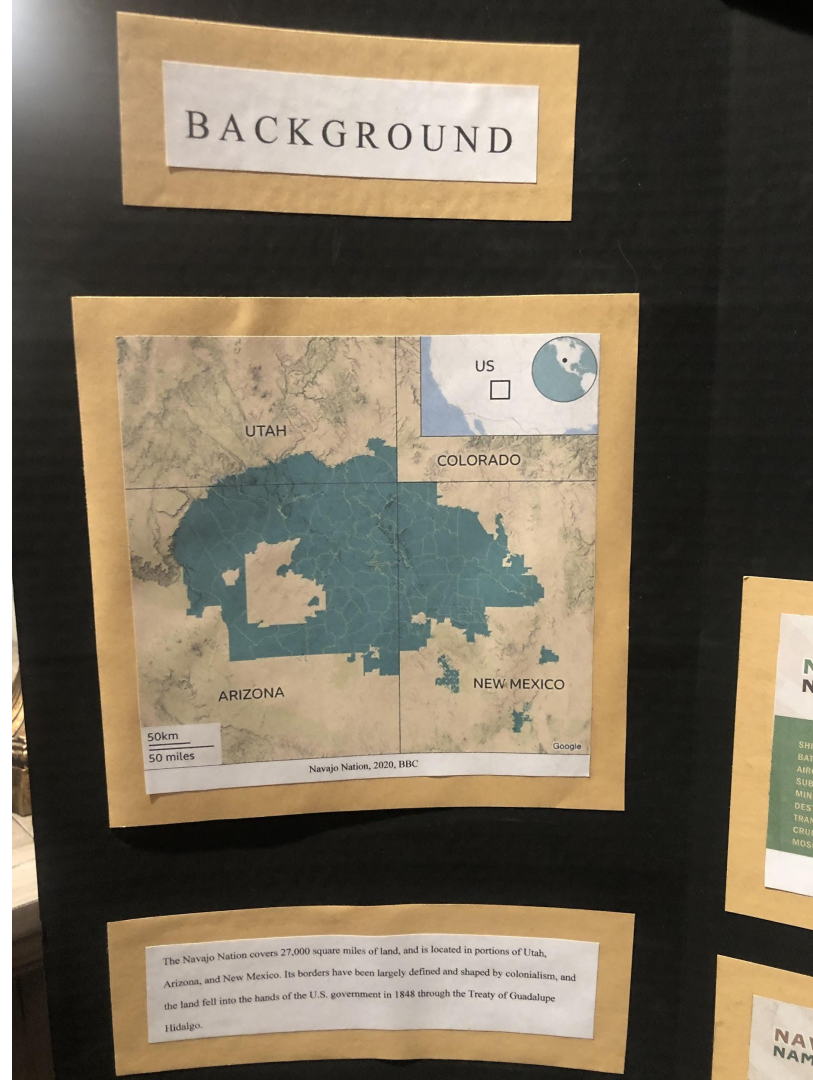
An official U.S. Navy website covering the military importance and facts about the Navajo Code talkers.

Full Exhibit



Left Top Panel Photo

Source Credit Text: Navajo Nation, 2020, BBC

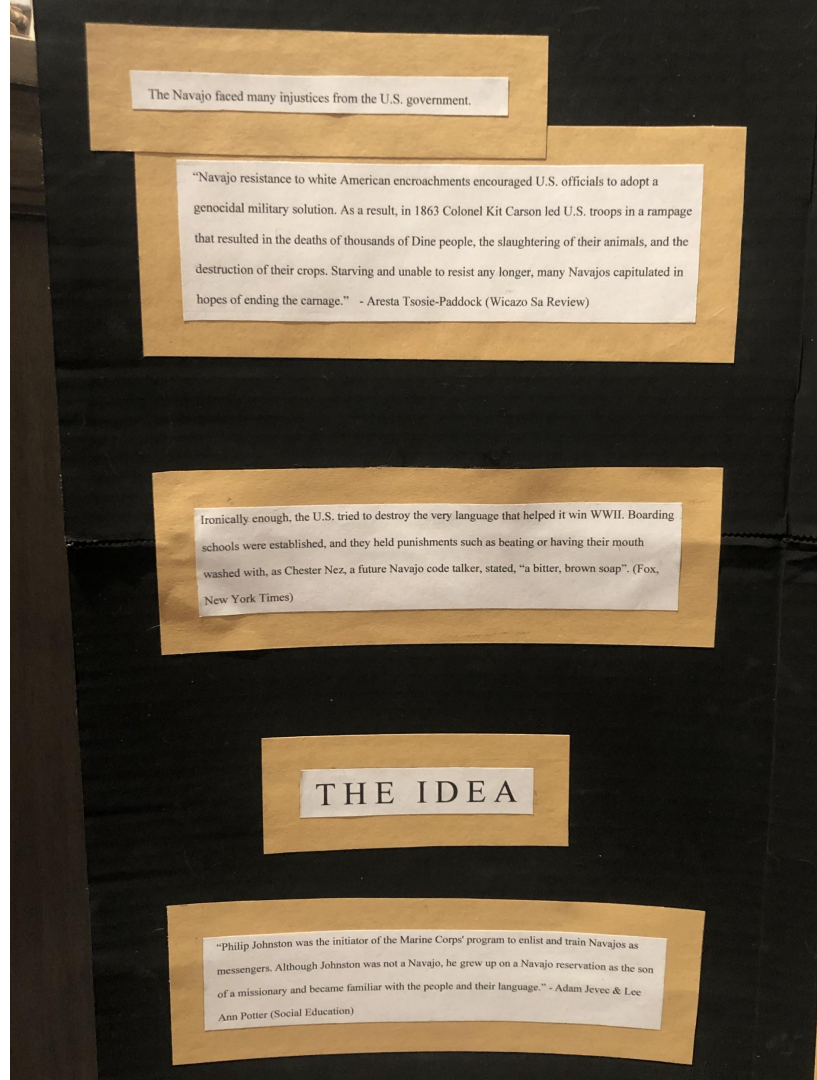


Left Top Panel Text

The Navajo Nation covers 27,000 square miles of land, and is located in portions of Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico. Its borders have been largely defined and shaped by colonialism, and the land fell into the hands of the U.S. government in 1848 through the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Left Center Panel Photo

Source Credit Text: Aresta Tsosie-Paddock (Wicazo Sa Review); (Fox, New York Times); Adam Jevic & Lee Ann Potter (Social Education)



Left Center Panel Text

The Navajo faced many injustices from the U.S. government.

“Navajo resistance to white American encroachments encouraged U.S officials to adopt a genocidal military solution. As a result, in 1863 Colonel Kit Carson led U.S. troops in a rampage that resulted in the deaths of thousands of Dine people, the slaughtering of their animals, and the destruction of their crops. Starving and unable to resist any longer, many Navajo capitulated in hopes of ending the carnage.”

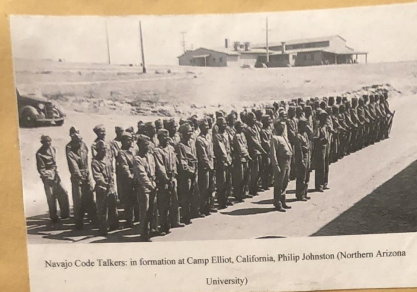
Ironically enough, the U.S. tried to destroy the very language that helped it win WWII. Boarding schools were established, and they held punishments such as beating or having their mouths washed with, as Chester Nez, a future Navajo code talker, stated, “a bitter brown soap”.

THE IDEA

“Philip Johnston was the initiator of the Marine Corps’ program to enlist and train Navajos as messengers. Although Johnston was not a Navajo, he grew up on a Navajo reservation as the son of a missionary and became familiar with the people and their language.”

Left Bottom Panel Photo

Source Credit Text: Navajo Code Talkers: in formation at Camp Elliot, California, Philip Johnston (Northern Arizona University); (Navajo Nation); Chester Nez, 2011, New York Times; Chester Nez, Judith Avila (KNAU); Chester Nez (New York Times)



Navajo Code Talkers: in formation at Camp Elliot, California, Philip Johnston (Northern Arizona University)

"In May 1942, the first 29 Navajo recruits attended boot camp. Then, at Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California, this first group created the Navajo code." - (Navajo Nation)



Chester Nez, 2011, New York Times



Chester Nez, Judith Avila (KNAU)

"When joining the Marine Corps, I thought about how my people were mistreated. But then I thought this would be my chance to do something for my country."
- Chester Nez (New York Times)

"Guadalupe
U.S. Marine
divisions,
telephone
Nation

"Connor had a
battle. Those si

"Were it not for
Connor, the signal

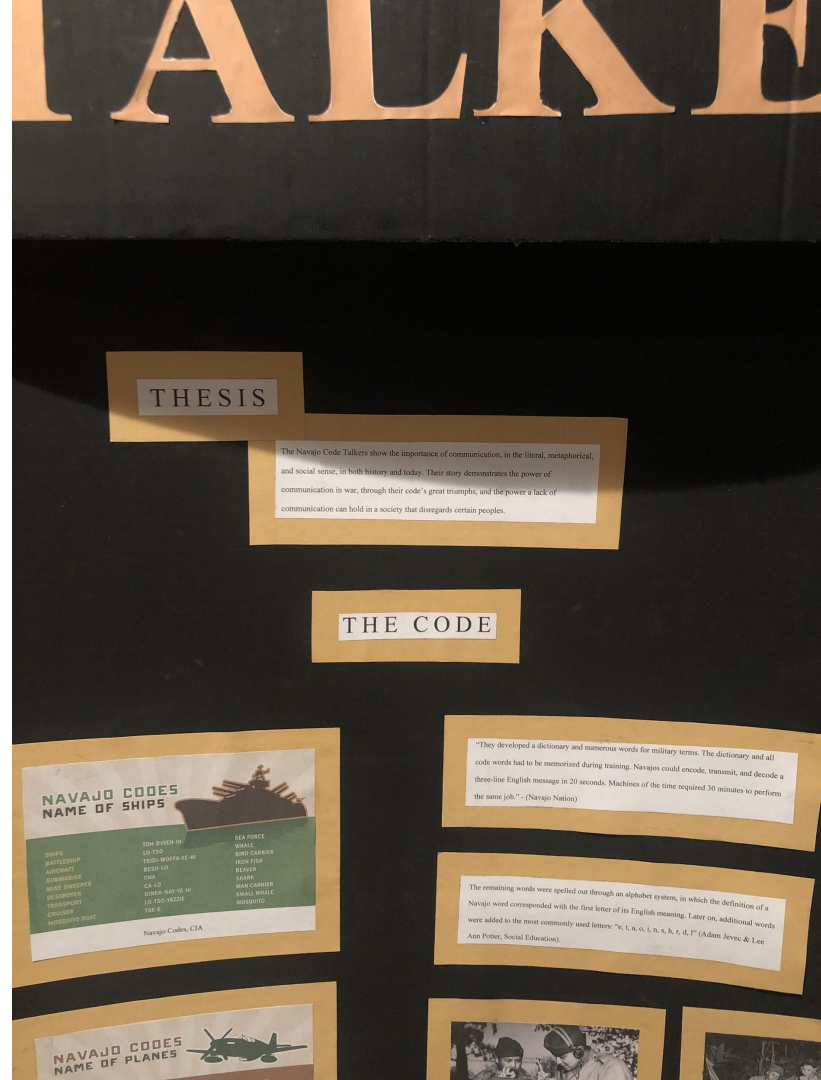
Left Bottom Panel Text

“In May 1942, the first 29 Navajo recruits attended boot camp. Then, at Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California, this first group created the Navajo Code.”

“When joining the Marine Corps, I thought about how my people were mistreated. But then I thought this would be my chance to do something for my country.”

Center Top Panel Photo

Source Credit Text: Navajo Codes, CIA; (Navajo Nation); (Adam Jevic & Lee Ann Potter, Social Education).



Center Top Panel Text

THESIS

The Navajo Code Talkers show the importance of communication, in the literal metaphorical, and social sense, in both history and today. Their story demonstrates the power of communication in war, through their code's great triumphs, and the power a lack of communication can hold in a society that disregards certain peoples.

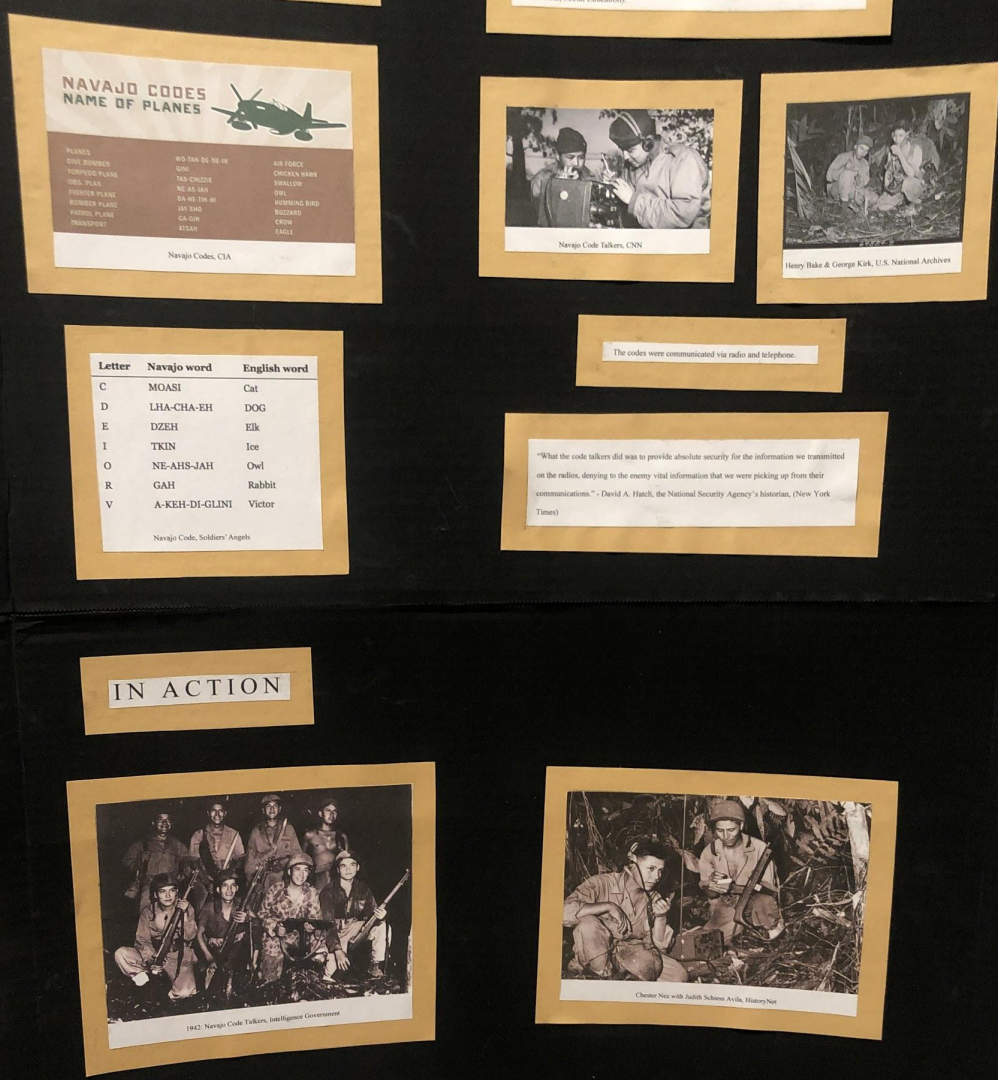
THE CODE

“They developed a dictionary and numerous words for military terms. The dictionary and all code words had to be memorized during training. Navajos could encode, transmit, and decode a three-line English message in 20 seconds. Machines of the time required 30 minutes to perform the same job.”

The remaining words were spelled out through an alphabet system, in which the definition of a Navajo word corresponded with the first letter of its English meaning. Later on, additional words were added to the most commonly used letters: “e, t, a, o, i, n, s, h, r, d, l”.

Center Center Panel Photo

Source Credit Text: Navajo Codes, CIA; Navajo Code Talkers, CNN; Henry Bake & George Kirk, U.S. National Archives; Navajo Code, Soldiers' Angels; David A. Hatch, the National Security Agency's historian, (New York Times); 1942: Navajo Code Talkers, Intelligence Government; Chester Nez with Judith Schiess Avila, HistoryNet



Center Center Panel Text

The codes were communicated via radio and telephone.

“What the code talkers did was provide absolute security for the information we transmitted on the radios, denying to the enemy vital information that we were picking up from their communications.”

IN ACTION

Center Bottom Panel Photo

Source Credit Text: Navajo Nation; Iwo Jima, Britannica; Navajo Code Talker, Station HYPO; (Navajo Nation); Major Howard Connor, the signal officer of the Navajo Code Talkers at Iwo Jima, (CIA)

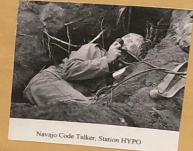
"Gadagadlani, Tarawa, Peleliu, Iwo Jima: the Navajo code talkers took part in every assault the U.S. Marines conducted in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945. They served in all six Marine divisions, Marine Raider battalions and Marine parachute units, transmitting messages by telephone and radio in their native language -- a code that the Japanese never broke." - Navajo Nation

The Navajo Code Talkers were on the frontlines of combat, and often had to fight and be careful to protect themselves.



"Connor had six Navajo code talkers working around the clock during the first two days of the battle. Those six sent and received over 800 messages, all without error." - (Navajo Nation)

"Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima." - Major Howard Connor, the signal officer of the Navajo Code Talkers at Iwo Jima, (CIA)



Navajo Code Talkers were faced with treacherous conditions. They often had to go into foxholes even while sending and translating messages. They also had to stay up for long times to ensure constant communication.

Center Bottom Panel Text

“Guadalcanal, Taraw, Peleliu, Iwo Jima: the Navajo code talkers took part in every assault the U.S. Marines conducted in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945. They served in all six Marine divisions, Marine Raider battalions and Marine parachute units, transmitting messages by telephone and radio in their native language - a code that the Japanese never broke.”

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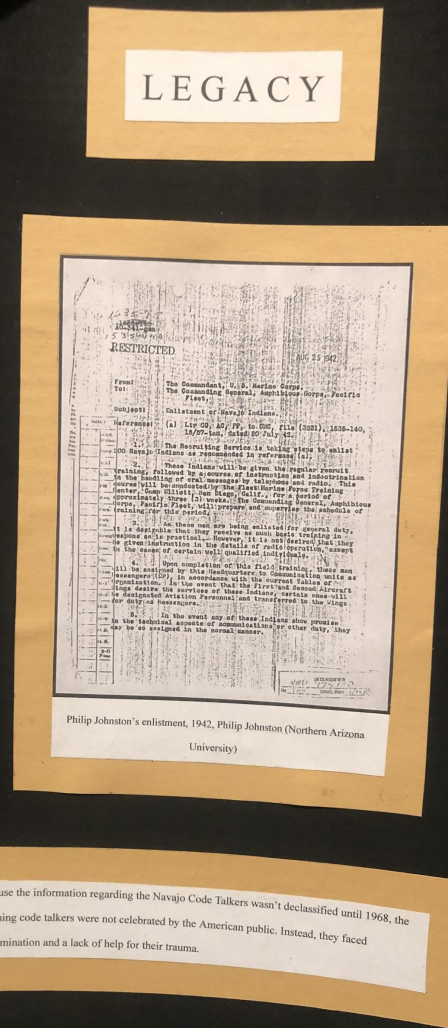
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Navajo Code Talkers faced treacherous conditions. They often had to go into foxholes even whilst sending and translating messages. They also had to stay up for long times to ensure constant communication.

Right Top Panel Photo

Source Credit Text: Philip Johnston's Enlistment, 1942, Philip Johnston (Northern Arizona University)



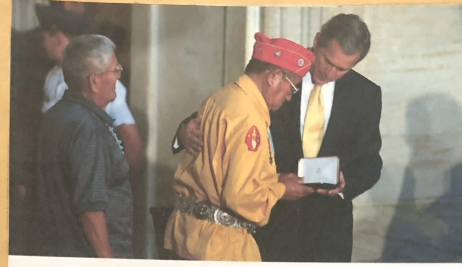
Because the information regarding the Navajo Code Talkers wasn't declassified until 1968, the returning code talkers were not celebrated by the American public. Instead, they faced discrimination and a lack of help for their trauma.

Right Top Panel Text

Because the information regarding the Navajo Code Talkers wasn't declassified until 1968, the returning code talkers were not celebrated by the American public. Instead, they faced discrimination and a lack of help for their trauma.

Right Center Panel Photo

Source Credit Text: President George W. Bush awards the Navajo Code Talkers, ABC News



President George W. Bush awards the Navajo Code Talkers, ABC News

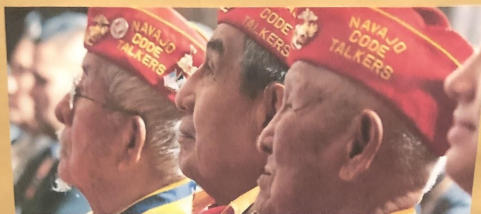
The Navajo Code Talkers need to be remembered. They are the unsung heroes and communicators of WWII, and demonstrate the sheer power of communication. Moreover, they risked their lives even for a country that wronged them, and by doing so they changed history.

Right Center Panel Text

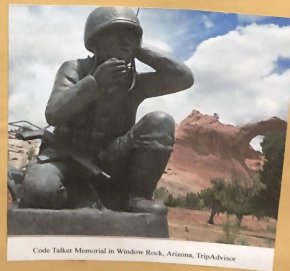
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Right Bottom Panel Photo

Source Credit Text: Navajo Code Talkers, Daily
Caller; Code Talker Memorial in Window
Rock, Arizona, TripAdvisor



Navajo Code Talkers, Daily Caller



Code Talker Memorial in Window Rock, Arizona, TripAdvisor

Right Bottom Panel Text