

November is Native American Heritage Month

The Warrior Tradition Continues

Historically, Native Americans have the highest record of military service, per capita, when compared with other ethnic groups. Native Americans have distinctive cultural values which drive them to serve their country. One such value is their proud warrior tradition.



"Ozuye Wicasa" - A Warrior Man on horseback near the backwaters of the river bottoms near Yankton or Greenwood, S.D., between 1886 and 1900.

The warrior tradition is best exemplified by the following qualities inherent to most, if not all, Native American societies:

Strength - wowasake* (WO-wa-shak-ay): To be an American Indian warrior is to have physical, mental, and spiritual toughness. Many traditional cultures recognize that war disrupts the natural order of life and causes spiritual disharmony. Military service is a unique way to develop an inner strength that is valued in Native American communities.

Honor - woyuonihan* (WO-you-o-nee-han): Before going into service and after their return, warriors are recognized by family and community. Recognition takes place through private family gatherings, or through public ceremonies, such as tribal dances or intertribal events.

Pride - wowitan* (WO-wee-tan): Being a warrior in traditional Native American society gives one a sense of pride and a sense of accomplishment at a time in life when self-esteem is just developing. Becoming a warrior brings status to young men and women in the Native American culture.



Charnel Petersen
Captain - U.S. Army, 1978-1995
Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate

Devotion; also to believe in - wowicala* (WO-wee-cha-la): Native American warriors are devoted to the survival of their people and their homeland. If necessary, warriors will die to preserve their culture, for death to the Native American warrior is another step in the advancement of life. It is understood that the warrior's spirit lives on eternally.

Wisdom - woksape* (WOK-sa-pay): In times of war, Native Americans seeing heavy combat had to learn how to survive, often using skills that many unit commanders thought were inherent to the Native American's cultural background. Military service offers excellent educational and job skill opportunities for Native American men and women who often come from educationally disadvantaged communities.

As we celebrate Veterans Day and Native American Heritage Month in November, the United States military can be expected to provide continuing opportunities for Native American men and women. For their part, Native Americans can be expected to carry on their centuries-old warrior tradition – serving with strength, honor, pride, courage, and distinction.



James King*
Sgt. - U.S. Army,
1871-1886
Sisseton-Wahpeton
Oyate



Felix Renville, Sr.*
U.S. Army, 1914-1918
Sisseton-Wahpeton
Oyate



Thomas Brant*
Staff Sgt. - U.S. Army,
1939-1945
U.S. Air Force,
1950-1953
Sisseton-Wahpeton
Oyate



Woodrow Keeble*
Master Sgt. - U.S.
Army, 1939-1945
Sisseton-Wahpeton
Oyate



Arden Keith
"Jacky" Renville*
Medic - U.S. Army,
1966-1968
Sisseton-Wahpeton
Oyate



M. Jay Renville
U.S. Army, 1987-1991
Sisseton-Wahpeton
Oyate



Justin Chanku
Medic - U.S. Army,
2001-2004
Sisseton-Wahpeton
Oyate