

Tlingit Code Talkers

It's my pleasure as an Army Veteran

To have been asked to speak about the Tlingit Code Talkers

Alaska Natives and American Indians have served in the US Armed forces

In every conflict since the Revolutionary War

And in greater numbers per capita than any other ethnic group

During World War II

More than 44,000 Native Americans and Alaskan Natives

Served in the U.S. military

More than 42,000 served during the Vietnam War as well

Today, an estimated 24,000 Native American and Alaska Native

Men and women are on active duty

And more than 150,000 veterans self-identify

As American Indian or Alaska Native

Navaho code talkers have long been recognized for the crucial part

They played in World War II

But until very recently

No one knew that Tlingit code talkers also used

The Tlingit language as a code that the enemy

Was never able to crack

Even the families of the Tlingit Coded Talkers did not know

Of their secret service

Because they maintained confidentiality

There may be other Tlingit code talkers who have

Not yet been identified

In November 2013, Congress awarded silver medals posthumously

To Tlingit Code Talkers: Robert Jeff David Sr,

Richard Bean Sr., George Lewis Jr

And brothers Harvey Jacobs and

Mark Jacobs Jr

Southwest Alaska Native Veterans Commander

Ozzie Sheakley attended the Congressional Ceremony

In Washington, DC

Along with representatives from 32 other tribes

Whose members were also code talkers

There they received the Congressional Gold Medal

On behalf of the Tlingit Tribe

Former House Speaker John Bayner (Boehner) reported at the ceremony

That “during 48 hours on Iwo Jima, 800 Native language

Battle communications were received and translated

It took seconds, at a time when decoding by machine

Could take half an hour

The men undoubtedly saved lives

I am very proud to have been asked to present this information to you

From a longtime friend and fellow soldier

Former Representative BILL THOMAS