

ABOUT THE TLINGIT CODE TALKERS

Alaska Natives and American Indians have served in the U.S. Armed Forces in every major 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 Alaska 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.

Navajo 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 code 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. Southeast Alaska Native Veterans Commander Ozzie Sheakley, who attended the Congressional ceremony in Washington, D.C., along with representatives from thirty-two other tribes whose members were also code talkers, received the Congressional Gold Medal on behalf of the Tlingit tribe.

Former House Speaker John Boehner reported at the ceremony that “during forty-eight hours on Iwo Jima, they say 800 Native language battle communications were received and translated. It took seconds, at a time when decoding by machines could take half an hour. The men undoubtedly saved lives.”



SEALASKA
HERITAGE



TLINGIT CODE TALKERS

Native American Heritage Month Lecture Series
November 22, 2016
Walter Soboleff Building, Juneau, Alaska

TLINGIT CODE TALKERS

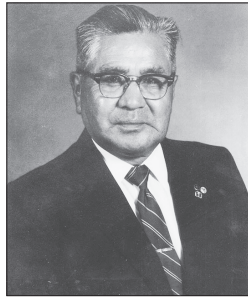


COURTESY OF VAL VELER

RICHARD BEAN SR.

Joonalaxéitl
T'aḵdeintaan Clan, Sockeye House, Hoonah
Chookaneidí dachxán
5 June 1920 – 24 December 1985

Richard Bean Sr. was a well-known commercial fisherman from Hoonah. He was a purse seiner, crabber, troller, and halibut fisherman. In addition, Richard was an elder in the Hoonah Presbyterian Church, a lifetime member of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, and a member of Sealaska, Huna Totem Corp., Juneau Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Sitka American Legion. He served in the South Pacific during World War II.



COURTESY OF SEALASKA

MARK JACOBS JR.

Saa.aat', Keet wú, Oodéishk'áduneeek, Gusht'eihéen,
Woochxkáduhaa
Daḵl'aweidí, Killer Whale House, Angoon
Deisheetaan yádi, Teikweidí dachxán
28 November 1923 – 13 January 2005

Mark Jacobs Jr. was a well-known fisherman, leader, and historian from Sitka. He had vast knowledge of Tlingit culture and held positions in many regional and national groups, such as the Alaska Native Brotherhood, the Alaska Federation of Natives, the National Congress of American Indians, Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, and Sealaska. Mark served four years in the U.S. military, nearly all of which were in sea duty and in war zones. He served on the USS New Mexico in the Aleutians and on the USS Newberry and two years in the Amphibious Forces in the South Pacific.



COURTESY OF HAROLD JACOBS

HARVEY JACOBS

Tleeyaa Kéet, Gaandawéi
Daḵl'aweidí, Killer Whale House, Angoon
Deisheetaan yádi, Teikweidí dachxán
24 November 1921 – 23 November 1979

Harvey Jacobs was a fisherman from Sitka. When he and his brother, Mark Jacobs Jr., (above) joined the Navy shortly after Pearl Harbor, they skipped basic training and were put to work immediately on picket boats in Southeast Alaska and the Aleutians, and then in the South Pacific. Harvey was a Machinist Mate 1st Class in the U.S. Navy and was stationed on the USS Morrison (DD 560), but he was taken off the ship prior to it subsequently becoming lost off Okinawa.

TLINGIT CODE TALKERS



COURTESY OF DIANE HOISINGTON

GEORGE LEWIS JR.

Saa.aat', Naagei, Xaakaayi
Daḵl'aweidí, Killer Whale House, Angoon
Kiks.ádi yádi, Chookaneidí dachxán
08 February 1913 – 09 April 1995

George Lewis Jr. was a boat builder, carpenter, and mill worker from Sitka. He was also active in fishing, boxing, silver carving, and carving totems and Tlingit helmets. In addition, George gave 45 years of service to the Salvation Army, was a lifetime member of the Alaska Native Brotherhood in Klawock and Haines, and was a fluent Tlingit speaker and storyteller. He served in the U.S. military in World War II.



COURTESY OF SEALASKA

ROBERT "JEFF" DAVID SR.

Kaasgú Suk kees
Kaagwaantaan, Bear House, Haines
T'aḵdeintaan yádi, Chookaneidí dachxán
12 April 1924 – 06 September 1986

Robert "Jeff" David Sr. was a well-known basketball legend from Haines. He was a member of the Gold Medal Hall of Fame, a top fisherman, and one of Sealaska's first board members. Jeff was described as charismatic, confident, and outspoken. However, his son, Jeff David Jr., says his father never talked much about his service in World War II, other than that he served in the Philippines for part of it and was in special services.

