

## Facts Sheets

### Facts about Young Navajos Going Away to Boarding Schools in the Past

- Reservation Navajos did not always have birth records.
- Many Navajos lived far from cities.
- Years ago, Navajo reservation children were required to go to a government boarding school at the age of 5.
- At the boarding schools, children would learn to read, to write and skills that could be used to get a job.
- At government boarding schools, speaking Navajo was not allowed. Discipline included chewing on bars of soap.
- The goal of the schools was to erase Native American culture.
- Boys had their long hair cut. All children were given standard uniforms to wear.
- They received new “white” names, including last names.
- Traditional Native American foods were abandoned, and students had to use knives, forks, spoons, napkins, and tablecloths.
- Regimentation was the order of the day, and students spent endless hours marching to and from classes, meals and dormitories. Order, discipline and self-restraint were all prized values of white society.
- In Phoenix, Navajo girls became the major source of domestic labor for white families. Boys had jobs as harvest workers or took jobs that no one else wanted.

### Facts about Young Men Going in the Marines

- Navajo males (ages 17-32) were recruited for special duty by the Marines. They had to be fluent in Navajo and English and in good physical condition.
- On the morning of May 4, 1942, twenty-nine Navajo recruits boarded the bus at Ft. Defiance, AZ, and were transported to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, to start their seven weeks of training.
- Some of these Navajos left the Four Sacred Mountains for the first time during World War II.
- The Navajo Code Talkers Program was established in September 1942 as the result of the work of Philip Johnston and Major General Clayton P. Vogel.
- Since Navajo was only a spoken language, there was not a written alphabet. This meant that the Japanese could not get a dictionary to figure out the words as they were said.
- Navajo soldiers were kept away from others while they created the secret code that enabled the victory over the Japanese in the Pacific.

- Words to create the code were chosen from nature.

### **Facts about Navajo Code Talkers' Efforts in World War II**

- The first group of Navajo Code Talkers arrived at Guadalcanal on September 18, 1942. The second group arrived on January 4, 1943.
- More than 400 code talkers fought in some of the bloodiest battles of World War II.
- Feb 23, 1945, the word "S" "U" "R" "I" "B" "A" "C" "H" "I" was sent and translated by Navajo code talkers in the Pacific theater. The code meant that the Japanese island of Iwo Jima had been captured by U.S. forces.
- On Aug. 6, 1945, a Navajo Code Talker was the first to hear that the atomic bomb was successfully exploded over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Nine days later, the Japanese Emperor surrendered Japan to U.S. forces.
- Without any special ceremony or recognition, Navajo Code Talkers were released from the Marines
- The Code Talkers were warned not to tell anyone what they did during the war.
- When the Code Talkers returned home there were no parades or recognition. They went unnoticed until many years later when a bill was written for their recognition.
- The code name used for America was "Our Mother."

## More Lesson Background for Teacher

Philip Johnston was the son of a missionary, William Johnston, who brought his family to Flagstaff, Arizona on September 16, 1896 to proselytize to Navajos residing on the western part of the Navajo Reservation. Philip's father was able to intervene and defuse a potentially violent clash between Navajos and Anglos involving livestock rustling. For resolving that incident in a peaceful manner, local Navajo leaders allowed Reverend Johnston to build a mission 12 miles north of Leupp, Arizona. After that incident, Philip's father worked to expand the boundaries of the western part of the Navajo reservation in order to resolve livestock rustling disputes.

In 1901 Philip, along with his father and local Navajo leaders, went to Washington D.C. to speak to the newly appointed President Theodore Roosevelt to persuade him to add more land to the Navajo Reservation via an Executive Order. Young Philip was the Navajo/English translator between the local Navajo leaders and President Roosevelt.

Mr. Johnston lived among the Navajos for 24 years. He believed that use by the Marine Corps of Navajo as a code language in voice (radio and wire) transmission could guarantee communication security. Philip Johnston had read of the U.S. Army using Comanches in their Louisiana field maneuvers to transmit military communications.

Mr. Johnston's rationale for this belief was that Navajo is an unwritten language and completely unintelligible to anyone except another Navajo, and that it is a rich, fluent language for which code words, in Navajo, could be devised for specialized military terms, such as the Navajo word for "turtle" representing a tank.

With cooperation of four Navajos residing in the Los Angeles area and another who was already on active naval service in San Diego, Mr. Johnston presented a demonstration of his theory to General Vogel and his staff at Camp Elliott on February 25, 1942. Marine staff officers composed pretend field messages, which were handed to a Navajo, who then translated them into tribal dialect and transmitted them to another Navajo on the other side of the line. The second Navajo then translated the messages back in perfect English. The demonstration proved entirely successful. As a result, General Vogel recommended the recruitment into the Marine Corps of at least 200 Navajos for the code talker program. Tests in the Pacific under combat conditions proved that classified messages could be translated into Navajo, transmitted and decoded employing

conventional cryptographic facilities and techniques.

It should be noted that from the outset, the entire Navajo code talker project was highly classified and there is no indication that any message in the Navajo language – while undoubtedly intercepted -- was ever deciphered.

Recruitment began in May 1942. Each Navajo underwent basic boot camp training at San Diego before assignment to the Field Signal Battalion for training at Camp Pendleton. Initially, the course at Camp Pendleton consisted of training in basic communication procedures and equipment. At the same time 29 Navajos, in the first group recruited, devised Navajo words for military terms that were not part of their language. Alternate terms were provided in the code for letters frequently repeated in the English language. To compound the difficulty, all code talkers had to memorize both the primary and alternate code terms. While much of the material was printed for use in training, security precautions restricted the use of printed materials in a combat situation.

Once the code talkers completed training in the States, they were sent to the Pacific for assignment in a Marine combat division. In May 1943, in response to a request for a report on the subject, the various division commanders reported to their commanding officers that excellent results had been achieved in the use of Navajo code talkers in training and combat situations, and they had performed in a highly commendable fashion. This high degree of praise for the Navajo's performance prevailed throughout the war from commanders at all levels.

Although recruitment of the Navajos was comparatively slow at the beginning, Marine recruiting teams were sent to the Navajo reservation and a central recruiting office was set up at Fort Wingate. By August 1943 a total of 191 Navajos had joined the Marine Corps for this specific program. Estimates have placed the total number of Navajos in the code talker program between 375 and 420 individuals. It is known that many more Navajos volunteered to become code talkers than could be accepted. Therefore, an undetermined number of Navajos became Marines in the war but only some were code talkers.

In recognition of their dedicated service to America during World War II, the Navajo code talkers were awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from the President of the United States in December 1981. Their unique achievements constitute a proud chapter in the history of the United States Marine Corps. Their patriotism, resourcefulness, and courage have earned them the gratitude of all Americans.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Writing Prompt

Look at the images below. Pick one to write on.

1. Carl Gorman,  
Navajo code  
talker on the  
island of Saipan



1944

<https://www.awesomestories.com>

2. Navajo code  
talkers transmit  
information on  
the island of  
Bougainville



December 1943

<https://www.historynet.com>

I am observing photo number \_\_\_\_\_

Identify 3 objects in the photo. What are they used for?

Who do you think took the photo? What do you think the photo going to be used for?

What is one question you have about the photo?

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Scoring Guide

Requirements	Points Possible	Points Earned
Identified 3 objects in the photo correctly	3	
Wrote what the objects could be used for	3	
Identified who could have taken the photo	3	
Wrote what the photo could be used for	3	
Wrote a good question about the photo	3	
Used correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar	5	
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>20</b>	

Comments:

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Comments: