

# NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL

Honoring Native American Military Service



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of the American Indian*



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WE ARE A NATION OF PATRIOTS who believe in the United States, its democracy, and our responsibility to preserve it for future generations. We acknowledge those who have served in the armed forces as the greatest patriots of all. Though we celebrate those who dedicate themselves to defending our nation, many Americans are unaware of the exceptional service performed by American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native veterans.

Taking up the charge given by Congress, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) will establish a National Native American Veterans Memorial. The anticipated dedication of this tribute to Native heroes will be on Veterans Day 2020. When the memorial is unveiled, we will recognize for the first time on a national scale the enduring and distinguished service of Native Americans in every branch of the U.S. military.

**“We invite you to participate in this historic moment—for our country, for veterans, and for the Native American communities whose loyalty and passion have helped make America what it is today.”**

—Kevin Gover, Director, National Museum of the American Indian



**Jefferson Keel (right, shown here with Jacqueline Pata [Tlingit]), 2013**

Jefferson Keel (Chickasaw, b. 1947) received the Bronze Star for valor, two Purple Hearts, and numerous other awards for heroism. Currently the lieutenant governor of the Chickasaw Nation, he achieved the rank of army captain during 20 years of active duty, which included two tours in Vietnam as an Airborne Ranger. Photo by Mary Shinn/Cronkite News Service

**“The Vietnam experience was an important part of my life. It led to twenty years of service in the Army and countless leadership opportunities. I served as an instructor for the U.S. Army Rangers, an infantry platoon sergeant, platoon leader, and then commander of a large artillery battery.”**

— Jefferson Keel (Chickasaw), Lieutenant Governor of the Chickasaw Nation

# TODAY'S HEROES: NATIVE SOLDIERS IN OUR MIDST

## **Desert Thunder, an all-Cherokee drum group. Al Taqaddum Air Base, Iraq, 2004.**

During the Iraq War the 120th Engineer Combat Battalion of Okmulgee, Oklahoma, hosted a powwow at Al Taqaddum Air Base near Fallujah, Iraq, on September 17 and 18, 2004, to offset pangs of homesickness. "The beat of the drum is a part of the heartbeat of a Native American," said Sergeant Debra Mooney (Choctaw), who planned the event. Photo by Chuck Boers



NATIVE AMERICANS HAVE PARTICIPATED in every major U.S. military encounter from the Revolutionary War through today's conflicts in the Middle East. According to Department of Defense statistics, they serve at a higher rate in proportion to their population than any other ethnic group. Contributions by American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians have saved lives, enabled our country's victories, and exemplified the courage that defines American patriotism. They are Purple Heart recipients, Bronze Star medal honorees, and many have been recognized with the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest military award of the United States.

- **31,000:** American Indian and Alaska Native men and women are on active duty today
- **18.6 percent:** Native Americans have served in the post-9/11 period at a higher percentage than people of other ethnicities (14 percent)
- **140,000:** living Native American veterans (11.5 percent of these veterans are female, compared to 8 percent of all other ethnicities)



# THE MEMORIAL: RECOGNITION IN THE HEART OF WASHINGTON



THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN WILL HONOR Native American servicemen and women in a very visible way: a prominent memorial on the National Mall—a place that draws nearly 24 million visitors annually to Washington, DC.

The National Native American Veterans Memorial represents:

- **a monumental mission**, to “give all Americans the opportunity to learn of the proud and courageous tradition of service of Native Americans in the Armed Forces of the United States.” (Native American Veterans’ Memorial Establishment Act of 1994)

ABOVE: The National Museum of the American Indian is adjacent to the United States Capitol on the National Mall. Illustration by Lou Spirito

LEFT: Looking east towards the U.S. Capitol from the museum's croplands, 2004. © Maxwell MacKenzie

- **a permanent memorial** at the Smithsonian, planned for the grounds of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, between the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum and the U.S. Capitol.
- **a Native American effort**, driven by the National Museum of the American Indian and by Native nations and their veterans. The advisory committee for the national memorial is composed of Native veterans, tribal leaders, and family members of veterans.
- **a recognition by all Americans**, a symbol of the country’s respect for Native Americans’ sacrifice and patriotism.

Support from Native American communities and organizations, including our collaboration with the National Congress of American Indians and tribal leaders, is crucial to our success. The memorial is further strengthened with the aid of major corporations and defense contractors, American veterans and their families, and private citizens.

# TIMELINE

## 2016

- An eighteen-month consultation process gathers input from Native American communities. Museum staff and advisory committee members travel across the country and meet with tribal leaders, Native American veterans, and their family members regarding the purpose and design of the memorial. The advisory committee will provide a prospectus of their findings to the design competition jury.

## 2017

- The educational exhibition, *Patriot Nations: Native Americans in Our Nation's Armed Forces*, travels to tribal centers, museums, and libraries around the country through 2020.
- The museum selects a blue-ribbon jury of Native and non-Native artists, designers, scholars, veterans, and others to conduct a design competition for the memorial.
- In the fall, the jury launches an open, international design competition for the memorial.



Eagle-feather war bonnets adorn U.S. military uniform jackets at a Ton-Kon-Gah (Black Leggings Society) ceremonial, held annually to honor Kiowa tribal veterans. Near Anadarko, Oklahoma, 2006. National Museum of the American Indian



## 2018

- The jury recommends competition finalists to the museum.
- Final memorial design announced.

## 2019

- Final budget for the memorial is determined. A team of advisors, fundraisers, and other representatives of the project will travel around the country to share the design and plans to build the memorial.
- Construction begins on the National Mall.

## 2020

- **Veterans Day:** An extensive dedication ceremony is planned to honor the immense contributions and patriotism of Native American veterans. The museum envisions a multi-day event featuring a procession of Native American veterans on the National Mall.



The Native American Women Warriors lead the grand entry during a powwow in Pueblo, Colorado, June 14, 2014. From left: Sergeant First Class Mitchelene BigMan (Apsáalooke [Crow]/Hidatsa), Sergeant Lisa Marshall (Cheyenne River Sioux), Specialist Krissy Quinones (Apsáalooke [Crow]), and Captain Calley Cloud (Apsáalooke [Crow]), with Tia Cyrus (Apsáalooke [Crow]) behind them. The organization, founded by Mitchelene BigMan in 2012, raises awareness about Native American women veterans and provides support services in health, employment, and education. Photo by Nicole Tung



United States senators Ben Nighthorse Campbell, dressed in ceremonial Northern Cheyenne regalia, and Daniel K. Inouye, a member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, stand with members of the Vietnam Era Veterans Inter-Tribal Association during the groundbreaking ceremonies for the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. Washington, DC, September 28, 1999.

Campbell (Northern Cheyenne, b. 1933), a Korean War veteran, is one of the few American Indians to ever serve in the U.S. Congress.

For his actions during World War II, Inouye (1924–2012) received the Distinguished Service Cross (later upgraded to the Medal of Honor), Bronze Star Medal, two Purple Hearts, and 12 other medals and citations. He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. MARIO TAMA / AFP / Getty Images

# THE ROAD AHEAD

THE MUSEUM IS WORKING with Native American and Alaska Native veterans, tribal leaders, historians, and cultural experts to make the National Native American Veterans Memorial a reality. In 2015, the museum established an advisory committee of Native American veterans to lead the effort, co-chaired by the Honorable Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Northern Cheyenne) and Chickasaw Nation Lieutenant Governor Jefferson Keel.

They are joined by Dr. Herman J. Viola as senior advisor to the National Native American Veterans Memorial project, a curator emeritus of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and author of *Warriors in Uniform*.

Next, the advisory committee will prepare a prospectus for the design jury. The memorial design will then be selected through an international competition. A successful fundraising campaign will ensure the memorial's construction and dedication by Veterans Day 2020.

**“This is a tremendously important effort to recognize Native Americans’ service to this nation. We have so much to celebrate. Like so many others, I was compelled to serve to honor the warrior tradition that is inherent to most Native American societies—the pillars of strength, honor, pride, devotion, and wisdom.”**

—The Honorable Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Northern Cheyenne)



Chilocco alumnus Ernest Childers (Muscogee [Creek]) receives the Congressional Medal of Honor from Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers (left). 5th Army headquarters, April 8, 1944.

Lieutenant Childers received the honor because, working under heavy enemy fire, he wiped out two German machine gun nests near Oliveto, Italy, killing enemy snipers and capturing an artillery observer. Bettmann / Getty Images



Specialist Leslie Montemayor (Muscogee [Creek]/Seminole) dances alone in memory of a fellow warrior, September 2004.

During a powwow in Iraq, an honor ceremony was held for Private Raymond Bryan Estes III (Ponca, 1979–1998). His family sent a dance shawl to be used in the powwow. Photo by Chuck Boers

# MORE THAN A MEMORIAL: CREATING A LEGACY FOR GENERATIONS

THE EFFORT TO HONOR NATIVE PEOPLES' past and present service to our country will extend far beyond the physical memorial. In the process of creating the memorial, the museum will share Native Americans' patriotic contributions across the nation in different ways.

## **Three additional key components of our project include:**

- **a traveling exhibition:** The banner exhibition, *Patriot Nations: Native Americans in Our Nation's Armed Forces*, will tell personal stories of Native American veterans and outline plans for the memorial. Support from the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians has made this exhibition possible.
- **a vital oral history project:** The museum is collaborating with the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress to collect, preserve, and make accessible the oral histories of Native American veterans. The oral history project will record their stories in their own voices so that the public, universities, museums, and others can learn from them for generations to come.
- **an interactive website:** Those who cannot travel to the memorial can still learn about Native veterans through a website exploring the legacy of the tens of thousands of American Indian men and women who have served the United States throughout its history.

“Northrop Grumman is proud to support this landmark project to honor our country’s Native American veterans. The company has a long history of supporting the Native American community and those who have so bravely defended our nation and this project is a perfect way to honor both. We encourage others to learn more about the National Museum of the American Indian and the rich culture and history they represent.”

—Sandra Evers-Manly, Northrop Grumman Corporation Vice President of Global Corporate Responsibility and President of the Northrop Grumman Foundation



The Tlingit Code Talkers of southeast Alaska were awarded Congressional Gold Medals for their service during World War II transmitting coded messages in their Native language.

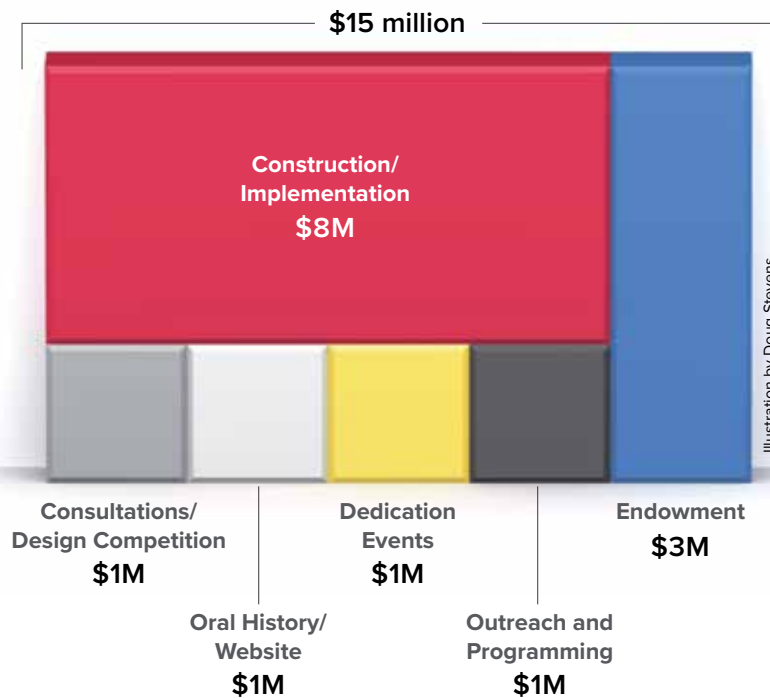
Designed by Susan Gamble, engraved by Renata Gordon and Joseph Menna, 2013; gold; diam. 3 in. United States Mint.

# SUPPORT THE MEMORIAL

A NATIONAL MEMORIAL TO HONOR American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian veterans is long overdue. Congress has determined that the memorial must be designed and constructed without the use of federal funds. With your help, we can honor some of the most dedicated defenders of our nation.

The museum is seeking donors to help us make this project a reality. An early commitment will demonstrate leadership to Native American veterans, their families, Indian Country, legislators and regulators, and other potential supporters. While all levels of commitment are welcome and needed, contributions of \$100,000 or more will be recognized on the donor plaque at the memorial site.

The estimated budget for the memorial, its long term maintenance, and associated educational programs is \$15 million:





Honor dance welcoming home Pascal Cleatus Poolaw Sr. (right, holding the American flag) after his service in the Korean War. To his right are members of the Kiowa War Mothers. Carnegie, Oklahoma, ca. 1952.

Poolaw (Kiowa, 1922–1967) remains the most decorated American Indian soldier in history, having earned 42 medals and citations during three wars: World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Photo by Horace Poolaw. Courtesy estate of Horace Poolaw



Vietnam Era Veterans Inter-Tribal Association Color Guard (VEVITA) leads the grand entry at the National Powwow. Washington, DC, 2007. National Museum of the American Indian



# GIFT OPPORTUNITIES

DURING THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, the museum is looking to its friends and supporters across the United States to revive the vision and philanthropic spirit of our founding and build this national memorial. Formal recognition and naming opportunities have been created for tribal nations, private citizens, foundations, and corporations who wish to honor our Native American patriots.

There are many needs for a project of this magnitude, including these special opportunities to make a difference:

**\$3,000,000** Endow and name the senior program leader position to provide ongoing research, support, and programming for the overall project, including the oral history and public programming components.

**\$1,000,000** Sponsor the opening ceremony and dedication that will gather many thousands of Native veterans on the National Mall in Washington, DC.

**\$350,000** Sponsor the design competition.

**\$125,000** Sponsor a year of educational and public programs about Native American veterans, between 2017 and 2020.

Pledges may be payable over five years and contributions are tax deductible except for the fair market value of benefits received.



# RECOGNITION AND BENEFITS

THE MUSEUM HAS CREATED RECOGNITION and benefits for all levels of contributions to the project. Some key benefits are illustrated below:

**Founding Donors** (\$1,000,000 or more) will be recognized for their early leadership commitment on the NMAI website, in the museum's American Indian magazine, on the memorial donor plaque at the site, and will be invited to groundbreaking and dedication events, in addition to the advantages listed below.

**Memorial Donors** (\$100,000 or more) will be recognized on the memorial donor plaque at the site, given the chance to host the banner exhibition, and receive invitations to NMAI special events, plus additional acknowledgment and benefits.

**Visionary Donors** (\$25,000 or more) will be recognized in print and social media campaigns about the memorial and on the memorial website, and will be invited to special dedication events.

The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian is depending on your support to honor and recognize Native American veterans. The National Native American Veterans Memorial will be a tribute to our past and present for future generations.

Our museum staff will work with you to arrange recognition reflective of your interests and appropriate to the gift. As part of the Smithsonian, the NMAI will ensure that your gift is acknowledged in a variety of special ways associated with the memorial. To learn more about how you can support the project, please contact the NMAI advancement office at [nmai-advancement@si.edu](mailto:nmai-advancement@si.edu).

# National Native American Veterans Memorial Advisory Committee

## CO-CHAIRS

### Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell

Northern Cheyenne  
Colorado  
AIR FORCE, KOREA

### Lt. Governor Jefferson Keel

Chickasaw Nation  
Oklahoma  
ARMY, VIETNAM

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### Tribal Council President Mark Azure

Ft. Belknap, Assiniboine  
Montana  
ARMY

### Mitchelene BigMan

Crow/Hidatsa/Gros Ventre/  
Northern Cheyenne  
Colorado  
ARMY, IRAQ, PRESIDENT AND  
FOUNDER OF NATIVE AMERICAN  
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### Chuck Boers

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### Chairman Kevin P. Brown

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Oklahoma  
MILITARY FAMILY, COAST GUARD



## Learn More:

[www.AmericanIndian.si.edu](http://www.AmericanIndian.si.edu)

### Contact us:

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COVER: Members of the Native American Women Warriors visiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, DC, 2015. Photo by Jared Thomas