



# **NHHC Command Brief**

***NHHC: Leading the Navy's History and Heritage Enterprise***



## **NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND**



*Lest we forget their sacrifice*



## Centuries of Service

- William Terrill Bradby, served on “water duty” aboard several United States Navy ships and as a torpedo boat pilot during the Civil War.
- 2,000 Native Americans, including William Leon Wolfe, served in the Navy during World War I.



“My people were proud of my determination to fight.”

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### Talking Points

- Native Americans have served in the Navy for centuries.
- During the Civil War, William Terrill Brady, a member of the Pamunkey Nation (*left*) served as a torpedo boat pilot for the United States Navy. See link to more information on Bradby below.
- More than 2,000 Native Americans served in the U.S. Navy during World War I, including William Leon Wolfe (*right*) who served as a baker aboard the USS *Texas* and trained as a gunner aboard the USS *Utah*. More info about Wolfe can be found below.
- Native Americans also worked at shipyards during WWI. Photo of Carlisle Indian Industrial School students.  
<https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/diversity/american-indians/native-americans-in-navy-wwi.html#1>

For more information on Bradby from NHHC: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/dam/nhhc/browse-by-topic/diversity/native-americans-in-the-navy/pdfs/NativeAmericansInUSN.pdf>

For additional background on Bradby: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2015-07-08/html/2015-16711.htm>

Note: The Navy court-martialed Bradby for killing his brother in 1864

For more information on Native Americans serving in World War I and William Leon Wolfe: [history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/diversity/american-indians/native-americans-in-navy-wwi.html](https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/diversity/american-indians/native-americans-in-navy-wwi.html).

Quote credit: William Leon Wolfe.



## Medal of Honor Recipient Commander Ernest Evans



*"In no engagement in its entire history has the United States Navy shown more gallantry, guts, and gumption than in the two morning hours between 0730 and 0930 off Samar."*

### Talking Points

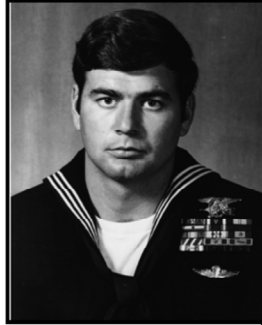
- Ernest Evans' white paternal grandfather married a Creek Indian woman to gain control of her land allotment. He soon divorced her and disowned their child. That child grew up to be his father; his mother was a full-blooded Cherokee.
- Evans graduated from a nearly all-white high school, joined the National Guard, transferred to the Navy's enlisted service, won an appointment to the Naval Academy without political pull, and graduated with the class of 1931.
- Medal of Honor recipient.

For more information:

<https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-profiles/evans-of-johnston-dd-557-.html>



## **Medal of Honor Recipient** **SEAL Engineman Second Class Michael E. Thornton**



"As for the Medal, we wear it for those who served with us who are no longer with us, or whose sacrifice and service went unnoticed. We wear it for all Americans who served with honor. And at times, it can be a burden, but that's the nature of receiving this distinguished award. None of us like being held up as an example for others. I sure don't, but it comes with the medal. You not only have to live up to it, you have to grow into it."

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### **Talking Points**

- Member of the Cherokee Nation
- Medal of Honor Recipient. On 31 October 1972, Thornton was one of two Navy SEALs on a reconnaissance patrol with three South Vietnamese special forces members in Vietnam's demilitarized zone. The small patrol came under heavy fire from a numerically superior force of roughly 150 North Vietnamese. Patrol was led by Lieutenant Thomas Norris who was shot by the North Vietnamese. One of the Vietnamese special forces on patrol with Thornton was also shot. Thornton rescued both men, swimming both of them out to sea until they were rescued by the South Vietnamese Navy. More information about the action can be found here: <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/2406896/>



## Medal of Honor Recipient

Chief Petty Officer James E. Williams



*"I was just doing a job to the best of my ability. I wasn't out there trying to win medals."* 5

### Talking Points

- Member of the Cherokee Nation. Served in both the Korean and Vietnam wars.
- Medal of Honor Recipient for actions taken on 31 October 1966: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. PO1c. Williams was serving as boat captain and patrol officer aboard River Patrol Boat (PBR) 105 accompanied by another patrol boat when the patrol was suddenly taken under fire by two enemy sampans. PO1c. Williams immediately ordered the fire returned, killing the crew of one enemy boat and causing the other sampan to take refuge in a nearby river inlet. Pursuing the fleeing sampan, the U.S. patrol encountered a heavy volume of small-arms fire from enemy forces, at close-range, occupying well-concealed positions along the river bank. Maneuvering through this fire, the patrol confronted a numerically superior enemy force aboard two enemy junks and eight sampans augmented by heavy automatic-weapons fire from ashore. In the savage battle that ensued, PO1c. Williams, with utter disregard for his safety, exposed himself to the withering hail of enemy fire to direct counterfire and inspire the actions of his patrol. Recognizing the overwhelming strength of the enemy force, PO1c. Williams deployed his patrol to await the arrival of armed helicopters. In the course of his movement he discovered an even larger concentration of enemy boats. Not waiting for the arrival of the armed helicopters, he displayed great initiative and boldly led the patrol through the intense enemy fire and damaged or destroyed 50 enemy sampans and seven junks. This phase of the action completed, and with the arrival of the armed helicopters, PO1c. Williams directed the attack on the remaining enemy force. Now virtually dark, and although PO1c. Williams was aware that his boats would become even better targets, he ordered the patrol boats' search lights turned on to better illuminate the area and moved the patrol perilously close to shore to press the attack. Despite a waning supply of ammunition, the patrol successfully engaged the enemy ashore and completed the rout of the enemy force. Under the leadership of PO1c. Williams who demonstrated unusual professional skill and indomitable courage throughout the three-hour battle, the patrol accounted for the destruction or loss of 65 enemy boats and inflicted numerous casualties on the enemy personnel. His extraordinary heroism and exemplary fighting spirit in the face of grave risks inspired the efforts of his

men to defeat a larger enemy force and are in keeping with the finest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.”

- Quote Credit: <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/392463/murky-waters-crystal-clear-legacy-enduring-legacy-bm1-james-e-Williams>.



## ***Ships Named for Native Americans***

- **Billy Frank, Jr** (T-ATS 11) (Towing, Salvage, and Rescue Ship) – is named in honor of Nisqually environmentalist William “Billy” Frank, Jr. (Keel scheduled to be laid in November 2023).
- **Catawba** (T-ATF-168) (Fleet Ocean Tug) – named in honor of the Catawba Nation, a federally recognized Native American tribe in South Carolina (Three other USN ships have been so named).
- **Cherokee Nation** (T-ATS-7) (Towing, Salvage, and Rescue Ship) - is named in honor of the Cherokee Nation, a federally recognized tribe now located in Oklahoma. (Keel scheduled to be laid in November 2023).
- **James E Williams** (DDG -95) (Guided Missile Destroyer) – named in honor of Boatswain's mate First Class James E. Williams (Medal of Honor recipient, Vietnam).
- **Lenni Lenape** (T-ATS-9) (Towing, Salvage, and Rescue Ship) – is named in honor of the Lenni Lenape, a Delaware people from the northeastern U.S. and Canada. (Keel scheduled to be laid in November/December 2023).
- **Muscogee Creek Nation** (T-ATS-10) (Towing, Salvage, and Rescue Ship) – is named in honor of the Muscogee Creek Nation, a self-governed Native American tribe located in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. (Keel scheduled to be laid in 2024).

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### **Talking Point**

- Current list of Navy ships named for Native Americans.



## ***Ships Named for Native Americans***

- ***Navajo*** (T-ATS-6) (Towing, Salvage, and Rescue Ship) – named in honor of the Navajo Nation.
- ***Red Cloud*** (T-AKR-313) (Vehicle Cargo Ship) – named in honor of Corporal Mitchell Red Cloud, Jr (Medal of Honor recipient, Korea; killed in action).
- ***Sacagawea*** (T-AKE-2) (Dry Cargo/Ammunition Ship) – named in honor of Sacagawea of the Shoshone Nation, who served as a guide to Lewis and Clark (One other USN ship has been so named).
- ***Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek*** (T-ATS-8) (Towing, Salvage, and Rescue Ship) – is named in honor of the Saginaw Chippewa people of Michigan.
- ***Solomon Atkinson*** (T-ATS 12) (Towing, Salvage, and Rescue Ship) – is named in honor of UDT frogman and plank owner of SEAL Team 1, CWO4 Solomon Atkinson of the Metlakatla Indian Community of Alaska. (Keel scheduled to be laid in April 2024).

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### Talking Point

- Current list of Navy ships named for Native Americans.





## Distinguished Native Americans

Rear Admiral Joseph James Clark



*"During the day and night of December 4, when the Yorktown was under severe enemy attack, almost continuously for one five-hour period at night, he (Clark) maneuvered his*

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### Talking Points

- Member of the Cherokee Nation.
- Member of the USNA class of 1918, Clark graduated in June 1917. He was the first Native American graduate of U.S. Naval Academy. See NHHHC information about Clark below.
- Clark served aboard the cruiser North Carolina during World War I. He commanded the carrier Yorktown (fourth vessel of that name) from her commissioning, 4 April 1943 to February 1944, in operations against Marcus, Wake, Mille, Jaluit, Makin, Kwajalein and Wotje, and for conspicuous gallantry was awarded the Silver Star Medal. In the rank of Rear Admiral, he was a Task Group Commander of carriers and screening vessels operating alternately with the FIRST and SECOND Carrier Task Groups of the Pacific Fleet, and for distinguished service (including Okinawa, Ryukyus and the Tokyo area), was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (two awards), the Navy Cross, and Legion of Merit with Combat "V".

### Note:

<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/research-guides/modern-biographical-files-ndl/modern-bios-c/clark-joseph-j.html>

Photo Credit (*right*): Then Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Information Warfare, Vice Admiral Jeffrey Trussler (member of the Cherokee Nation) presents a cruise book owned by the late Adm. Joseph Clark, to Kimberly Teehee, the Cherokee Nation delegate-designate to Congress, during a donation event at the Army and Navy Club (ANC) Washington, D.C., 12 November 2021. Several items cataloging Clark's

accomplishments were recovered and donated to the family, the Cherokee Nation, and ANC, recognizing Clark's many contributions to Naval Aviation throughout his career.


U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Torrey W. Lee

<https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/news-and-events/news/2021/Sailor-donates-Adm-Clark-Memorabilia-Cherokee-Nation.html>



## *Distinguished Native Americans*

*Lieutenant Commander John C. Waldron*





“Grimly aware of the hazardous consequences of flying without fighter protection, and with insufficient fuel to return to his carrier, Lieutenant Commander Waldron resolutely, and with no thought of his own life, led his squadron in an effective torpedo attack against violent assaults of enemy Japanese aircraft fire.”

### Talking Points

- Member of the Lakota Sioux Nation.
- Graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1924, he became a naval aviator in 1927. During the years prior to World War II, he served in several air units, was an instructor at the Naval Academy and at Pensacola, Florida, and performed other duties connected with aviation. In 1941, Lieutenant Commander Waldron became the commanding officer of Torpedo Squadron Eight (VT-8), which was to serve on the new aircraft carrier *Hornet* (CV-8). He led that unit during the Battle of Midway, when all fifteen of its planes were lost to overwhelming enemy fighter opposition while making an unsupported attack on the Japanese aircraft carrier force. Lieutenant Commander John C. Waldron was killed during that action.
- USS *Waldron* (DD-699) was named in his honor.

Quote <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/21606>

Photo Credit (left): “Torpedo Squadron Eight (VT-8) Pilots,” NH 93595, accessed 11 December 2023. <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/us-people/w/waldron-john-charles/nh-93595.html>.



## Distinguished Native Americans

Commander John B. Herrington



*"The idea is that, the folks who learn math and science, we're going to be the ones who change the world we live in. There are a lot of kids out there who may not have had a role model and the reality is that they can achieve that [becoming an astronaut] if they so choose."*

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### Talking Points

- Member of the Chickasaw Nation.
- First Native American astronaut. Selected to be an astronaut in 1996.
- Herrington was a member of Space Shuttle Endeavour's STS-113 mission (2002) and he carried several Chickasaw items with him on the trip including the traditional flute and pottery in the pictures above.

<https://allhands.navy.mil/Stories/Display-Story/Article/1840273/native-american-history-month-serving-our-nations-john-bennett-herrington/>

[https://americanindian.si.edu/collections-search/objects/NMAI\\_276772](https://americanindian.si.edu/collections-search/objects/NMAI_276772)

<https://www.nasa.gov/image-article/astronaut-john-herrington-carried-piece-of-native-american-history-space/>



## **Distinguished Native Americans**

**Chief Warrant Officer Solomon Atkinson**



*"Sol, [as he was often called], did what he thought was best for his family, community, and country."*

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### **Talking Points**

- Secretary Del Toro named the future *Navajo*-class Towing, Salvage, and Rescue (T-ATS) in honor of Atkinson on August 7, 2023.
- Enlisting in the Navy in 1952, Atkinson was the first Alaska Native to join the underwater demolition teams, the precursor to the renowned Sea-Air-Land Teams. As the SEAL Teams emerged in 1962, Atkinson's commitment led him to become one of the inaugural Navy SEALs and a plank owner, a foundational member, of SEAL Team 1.
- Atkinson deployed to Korea and served three tours in Vietnam, where he earned the Bronze Star and Purple Heart for his courage and sacrifice.
- Atkinson trained 48 astronauts, including Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Jim Lovell, in underwater weightless simulations.

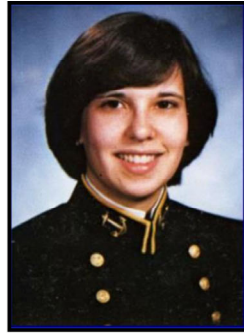
<https://ak.ng.mil/Media/News-Article-View/Article/3490466/navy-celebrates-sol-atkinson-for-legacy-of-service-to-country-alaskan-veterans/>

<https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/2851791/alaskan-native-solomon-atkinson-family-man-patriot-and-countryman/>



## ***Distinguished Native Americans***

*Lieutenant Colonel Sandra L. Hinds Fontaine*



First female Native American graduate of the US Naval Academy. Class of 1981.

*The past informs the present and leads us to the future*

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### **Talking Points**

- First female Native American graduate of U.S. Naval Academy.
- Graduated in 1981 and served in the Marine Corps, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel.
- Per the USNA Alumni Association, Fontaine is an Alaska Native.



## Distinguished Native Americans

Chief Petty Officer Linda Old-Horn-Purdy



*"Native Americans weren't given medals or accolades that we get now for defending America. But we still have to protect America, no matter what. It's in our blood."*

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### Talking Points.

- Chief Petty Officer Linda Old-Horn-Purdy is a member of the Crow tribe. She was one of the first women in the Navy to serve on a combatant ship.
- Per Old-Horn-Purdy: "It was hard but we had to adapt if we wanted to continue and learn and do our job."
- She was in engineering but wasn't allowed to call herself a machinist at that time. She said at the three-year mark, the career field opened up to women. "I ended up becoming a machinist, one of the first women in there," she said. "I ended up advancing quickly through that because not too many people wanted to be in there. I don't know if it was because I was naive or young, but I used to think, 'I'm going to be tough. I'm Indian. I'm going to make it.' It was hard to learn the theories and engineering principles. I'm thankful for the co-workers who helped me through it. It was hard, but I got through it."

<https://allhands.navy.mil/Stories/Display-Story/Article/1839843/native-american-navy-veteran-paved-way-for-career-field-honors-heritage/>



## Distinguished Native Americans

Chief Petty Officer Dianna Good Sky



*"I believe that we all contribute to breaking the glass ceiling."*

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### Talking Points

- Chief Petty Officer Dianna Good Sky is a member of the Ojibwe Nation. She was the first female Native American Navy Chief Petty Officer.
- The Navy is sharing Good Sky's story as part of its recruitment campaign.

<https://news.va.gov/95651/va-woman-veteran-author-navy-veteran-dianna-good-sky/>





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### Talking Point

- In advance of this presentation, the NHHC Library team compiled this bibliography on NHHC assets related to Native Americans serving in the U.S. military.



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## Questions

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### NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

