

(Eastern Cherokee) and Boatswain Mate First Class James Williams (Eastern Cherokee) both earned the Medal of Honor for their courageous actions during the Vietnam War. In 2002, Naval aviator and test pilot Commander John Herrington (Chickasaw) served on the Space Shuttle and was the first Native American in outer space.



(Above) 1966-Boatswain's Mate First Class James Williams (Eastern Cherokee) earned the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War. He was the Navy's most decorated Sailor.

As of 2012, over 22,000 Native Americans serve in the Armed Forces, with 13,500 being Sailors. Retired Navy Chief Petty Officer Old Horn-Purdy (Crow) commented in 2014 that "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."



(Above) 1972-Lieutenant Michael Thorton (Eastern Cherokee) received the Medal of Honor while serving as a SEAL during the Vietnam War.



(Above) 2002-Nava aviator and Astronaut John Herrington (Chickasaw) served on the Space Shuttle and was the first Native American Astronaut.



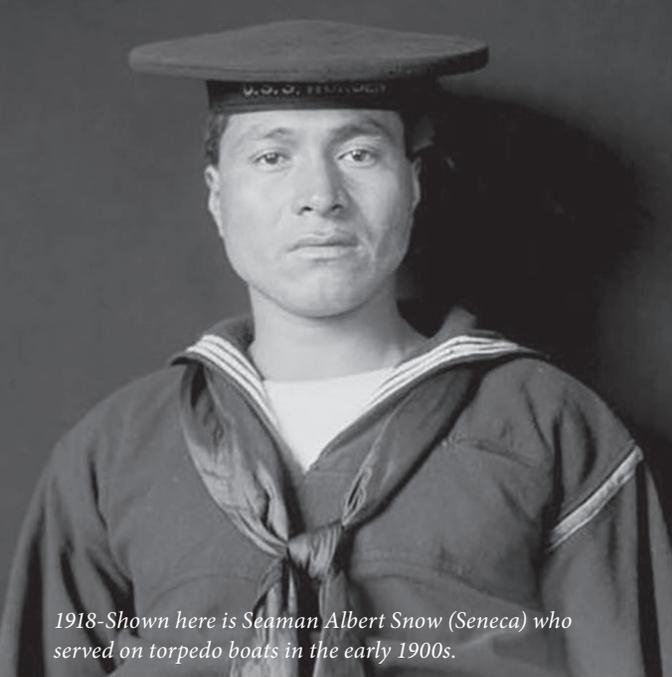
NATIONAL MUSEUM *of the*
UNITED STATES NAVY

(Cover) 1918-Fireman Second Class James Blackhawk (Oklahoma Cherokee) stands on the deck of the battleship USS North Dakota (BB-29). He volunteered for World War I service because he felt "it was my duty being a real American."

U.S. NAVY EXPERIENCE

NATIVE AMERICANS AND ALASKAN NATIVES IN THE U.S. NAVY





1918-Shown here is Seaman Albert Snow (Seneca) who served on torpedo boats in the early 1900s.

The modern United States Navy is a diverse organization that accepts America's best from all different backgrounds. This includes several thousand Native Americans and Alaskan Natives who have served in the Fleet over the last 200 years. As the Navy did not consider one's race to be a factor in enlistment, it is difficult to determine how many served during the early years of the Navy.

However, in the 20th century, it is known that thousands of Native Americans volunteered for military service. Despite being denied full American citizenship, 1,200 Native Americans enlisted in the Navy during World War I. Historian Thomas Britten noted that the Navy was particularly attractive to American Indians because many of them wanted to serve in the United States Armed Forces immediately and the Navy was the first to fight in Europe. Blacksmith



(Left) 1942-Naval aviator Lieutenant Commander John Waldron (Lakota Sioux) served as commanding officer of Torpedo Squadron Eight during the Battle of Midway. He lost his life during the squadron's attack on Japanese carriers.

Second Class Edward Nelson (Pima) commented that he "enlisted in the Navy because the Navy was ready. I did not want to wait. I wanted to fight."

Similar enthusiasm came from Fireman Second Class James Black Hawke (Oklahoma Cherokee) who stated he volunteered for naval service because he "Felt it my duty being an American. [I] enlisted to help my country. I was not going to be forced to do it." Their service in the Armed Forces helped convince Congress to pass the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, granting full American citizenship to all Native Americans.

In World War II, about 25,000 Native Americans served in the Armed Forces of the United States. Of that number, 1,910 served in the Navy with 150 of them from the Pueblo Nation. Like World War I, the Navy did not officially restrict Native Americans and fully integrated them into the Fleet. Historian Alison Bernstein noted



(Above) 1944-Lieutenant Commander Ernest Evans (Oklahoma Cherokee/Creek) served as commanding officer of the destroyer USS Johnston (DD-557) during the Battle of Samar. The Navy posthumously awarded him the Navy Cross for his leadership during the battle in which he sacrificed his ship to save others.

(Below) 1945-Storekeeper Second Class Celia C. Cook (unknown) was one of over 1,900 Native Americans who served in the Navy during World War II.



(Above) 1949-Rear Admiral Joseph "Jocko" Clark (Oklahoma Cherokee) is seen here onboard one of his aircraft carriers. A member of the Naval Academy, Class of 1917, Clark was a pioneer in carrier warfare.

that the Navy went to great lengths to ensure full integration.

Among the three most famous Native Americans to serve in the Navy during the war was John Waldron (Lakota Sioux), Joseph J. Clark (Oklahoma Cherokee), and Ernst Evans (Oklahoma Cherokee/Creek).

Lieutenant Commander John Waldron (Lakota Sioux) was a naval aviator who served as a flight instructor and piloted Devastator torpedo bombers. Assigned to Torpedo Squadron Eight (VT-8) as its commanding officer in 1941, Waldron's squadron pressed home an attack against Japanese aircraft carriers, without air cover during the Battle of Midway. Japanese fighters shot down Waldron's plane during the attack. The Navy posthumously awarded Waldron the Navy Cross.

Nicknamed "Jocko" by his classmates at the United States Naval Academy, Clark was a pioneer in naval aviation tactics and commanded two aircraft carriers during the war. During the Korean War, Admiral Clark served as commander of TF 77's aircraft carriers. The Navy awarded Clark the Navy Cross for his actions in World War II.

Evans was the commanding officer of the destroyer USS Johnston. During the 1944 Battle of Samar, Evans led Johnston and other destroyers against a far superior Japanese force in order to protect landings by American ground forces in the Philippines. While he lost his life and ship, his attack convinced the enemy to break off from the engagement.

During the Cold War, Native Americans and Alaska Natives continued to serve in the Navy, particularly when Navy leadership made diversity a top priority. Some of the notables to serve are SEAL operator Lieutenant Michael Thornton