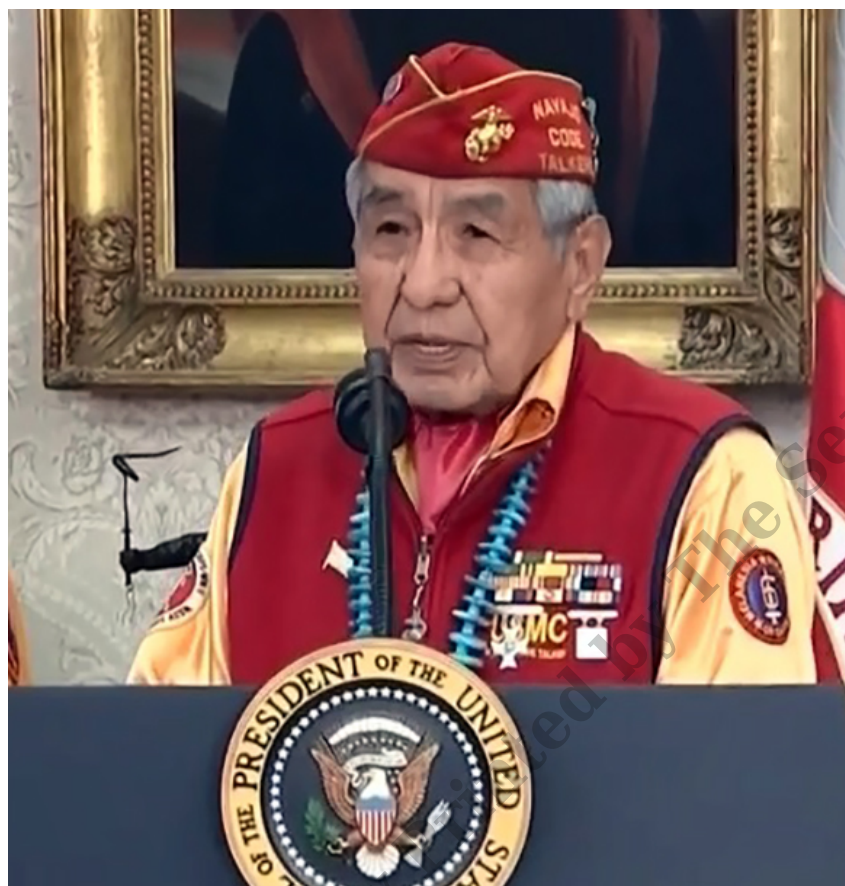


**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer were joined by Navajo veterans, youth, elders, dignitaries, and many others on Aug. 14 to commemorate Navajo Code Talkers Day during an honorary event held at the Navajo Nation Veterans Memorial Park in Window Rock — the capital of the Navajo Nation.

During his keynote address, President Nez delivered a heartfelt message of appreciation to the Navajo Code Talkers, as well as their families, several of which were honored guests at the event.

President Nez also highlighted the historic proclamation signed by former U.S. President Ronald Reagan that designated August 14 as the National Navajo Code Talkers Day.



Navajo Code Talker Peter MacDonald speaks at a White House ceremony in November 2017. (CSPAN)

President Reagan's proclamation finally allowed the Navajo Code Talkers to be recognized appropriately decades after their brave service.

"Today is a remarkable day for the Navajo Nation as we recognize and honor our great, selfless, and brave Navajo warriors and their families and communities. Many of our Code Talkers have gone on, but we are blessed to have several with us today. Our Navajo Code Talkers deserve a salute for their bravery and courage to defend and protect our country using our sacred Diné language," said President Nez.

Five surviving Navajo Code Talkers including Thomas H. Begay, John Kinsel, Peter MacDonald, and Joe Vandever were present at the event and each was provided the opportunity to address the audience and share their personal experiences and recollections.

Navajo Code Talker Samuel Sandoval was unable to attend.

In 1942, the Navajo Nation answered the call of the United States of America during World War II

and sent brave men and boys, known at the Navajo Code Talkers, to defend the Navajo people, Navajo Nation, and the country.

The young Navajo Marines helped to devise an impenetrable code based on Diné Bizaad, the Navajo language, that is widely acknowledged as the deciding factor in the Pacific Theatre of the war effort.

“We ask our people to take time during the week to remember those who have passed on and their families who continue to honor them.



Navajo Code Talkers are honored during a ceremony with the Navajo Nation government Aug. 14 in Window Rock, Arizona. (Navajo Nation)

Most of us will never experience what the Navajo Code Talkers and their families went through, but we can thank them by honoring their service and our sacred Navajo language,” added Vice President Lizer.

The event included a parade, Post of Colors by the Ira H. Hayes Legion Post 84, 21-gun salute by the U.S. Marine Corps, laying of a wreath at the Veterans Memorial Park, and an address by U.S. Sen. Martha McSally (R-AZ).

Many of the families of the late Navajo Code Talkers were also present, and shared photos and stories of their loved ones with the public.

On Aug. 12, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, 24th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Seth Damon, and Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne signed a proclamation recognizing Aug. 12 to 16, 2019 as “Navajo Nation Code Talkers Week.”

U.S. Sen Tom Udall (D-N.M.) issued this statement on Aug. 14:

“In May of 1942, in the midst of World War II, 29 young Navajo recruits arrived at Camp Pendleton, where they embarked on a secret mission: To develop a code so strong it couldn’t be cracked. Without using any modern technology, they developed a secret code based on the Navajo language that helped save the lives of countless Allied troops and played a pivotal role in securing victory in the Pacific — even as they faced discrimination at home. The complex code they crafted remains one of the only unbroken codes in the history of modern warfare. And the story of the Navajo Code Talkers, whose numbers swelled to over 400 as the war progressed, still stands as one of the most compelling in American military history.

“But for too long, their story went untold, and their heroic achievements went unrecognized for decades. On National Navajo Code Talkers Day, we remember these great Americans and commemorate their strength and their sacrifice. We best honor their service by pledging to serve Native veterans as well as they have served us and upholding the federal government’s trust and treaty responsibilities to Indian Country. We owe the Code Talkers a deep debt of gratitude for their extraordinary courage and commitment - both forever unbreakable, just like their code.”

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