Protecting their Nation:
The Navajo Code Talkers in World War II

By Joanie Schwarz-Wetter | MCRD Command Museum | phone: (619) 524-6038
Created 2009 | 1600 Henderson Ave, Ste. 212 | email: info@corpshistory.org
Rev. 02/09/2010 | San Diego, CA 92140 | web: www.usmchistory.org

OVERVIEW

The Navajo Indians rose up in support of our country during World War II by developing and utilizing a secret, unbreakable code of communications. Despite a history of shaky relations with Anglo governments, the Navajo served in the Marine Corps because they believed in protecting their nation, which they understood to be both the Navajo tribal nation, and the United States of America. This lesson describes the history of the Marine Corps' Navajo Code Talker program, emphasizing how the Navajos' unique history and culture made the program successful.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES (TLO's)
Students will know who the Navajo Code Talkers were and understand their unique contributions to the war effort during World War II.

ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVES (ELO's)

1. Students will describe how and why the Navajo Code Talker program was developed.
2. Students will list the unique qualifications the Navajo tribe had to be selected for the program.
3. Students will describe the impact the Code Talker program had on World War II.

CORRELATIONS TO HISTORY-SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
11.7 Students analyze America's participation in World War II.

3. Identify the roles and sacrifices of individual American soldiers, as well as the unique contributions of the special fighting forces (e.g., the Tuskegee Airmen, the 442 Regimental Combat Team, the Navajo Code Talkers).

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES THEMATIC STRANDS
Culture; People, Places, and Environment; Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

ACTIVITIES/PROCESSES

LECTURE
Students will listen to the lecture and watch the accompanying PowerPoint. The instructor will ask questions designed to help students develop historical empathy. Students are instructed to take notes when the instructor mentions TLO's and ELO's. (45 min)

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS
Midway through the lecture, the instructor will pass out primary sources for students to analyze. The students will then answer a document based question corresponding to ELO's #1 and #2. The instructor will ask students to share their answers and will continue the lecture by explaining ELO's #1 and #2 in detail. (15 min - incorporated into lecture)

CREATING & USING CODE (optional enrichment activity)
Activity Goals

1. Students practice and understand the importance of teamwork and communication
2. Students practice and understand the importance of memorization
3. Students relate the challenges of the activity to the challenges the Code Talkers faced in developing and using their code.

Protecting their Nation:
The Navajo Code Talkers in World War II

By Joanie Schwarz-Wetter | MCRD Command Museum | phone: (619) 524-6038
Created 2009 | 1600 Henderson Ave, Ste. 212 | email: info@corpshistory.org
Rev. 02/09/2010 | San Diego, CA 92140 | web: www.usmchistory.org

The instructor splits the class into groups, with a minimum of 4 students per group. Each group is tasked with creating code words for a list of military terms (on 'Creating Code' handout), groups then try to memorize the code words. (15 minutes). Each group is split in half. The instructor has one half of the students in each group encode a simple message and then text message it to the other members of the group. The students receiving the message decode it. (15 minutes). After the activity, each group will report on the viability of their attempt to develop and use their code. The instructor will facilitate a class discussion, reviewing the goals of the activity and relating the challenges of the activity to the challenges the Navajo Code Talkers faced in developing and using their code. (15 minutes). NOTE: Keep this activity as simple as possible, ensure there are at least 2 cell phones per group and that senders have the receiver in their address book. Only allow students to take out their phones when you are ready to have them transmit the code. For each class period, change the 'message' the students send. (45 min.)

WORKSHEET
Students take home a worksheet for completion that reinforces information from the lecture. (20 min.)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT
Students take an assessment that measures knowledge of the ELO's and TLO's. (20-25 min.)

MATERIALS

Instructor Lesson Plan
Lecture
PowerPoint
Student Worksheet
Student Worksheet Answer Key
Student Assessment
Student Assessment Answer Key
Creating Code Worksheet (Enrichment)
Sample Messages (Instructor Enrichment Sheet)
Primary Source Document: Letter from MajGen. Vogel to the Commandant of the Marine Corps
Primary Source Audio Clip: Code Talkers speaking Navajo .wav file

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARCHIVAL SOURCES
Clippings Files. *Navajo Code Talkers*. MCRD Command Museum Reference Center, San Diego, CA.

Navajo Code Talkers Collection. Cline Library Digital Archives, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.

Navajo Code Talker Collection. History Division, United States Marine Corps, Quantico, VA.

Philip Johnston Collection. Cline Library Digital Archives, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.

Wilson, William Dean and Smith, Albert. "Navajo Code Talkers: 19 Feb 1988 Interview." Marine Corps Oral History Program. MCRD Command Museum Reference Center, San Diego, CA.

BOOKS
Aaseng, Nathan. *Navajo Code Talkers: America's Secret Weapon in World War II*. New York: Walker Publishing Company, Inc., 1992.

Bixler, Margaret T. *Winds of Freedom: The Story of the Navajo Code Talkers*. Darien, Connecticut: Two

By Joanie Schwarz-Wetter | MCRD Command Museum | phone: (619) 524-6038
Created 2009 | 1600 Henderson Ave, Ste. 212 | email: info@corpshistory.org
Rev. 02/09/2010 | San Diego, CA 92140 | web: www.usmchistory.org

Bytes Publishing Company, LTD, 1995.

Durrett, Deanne. *Unsung Heroes of World War II: The Story of the Navajo Code Talkers.* New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1998.

Jones, Catherine. *Navajo Code Talkers: Native American Heroes.* Greensboro, North Carolina: Tudor Publishers, Inc., 1997.

Link, Martin. *We Talked Navajo: The story of the Navajo Code Talkers U.S. Marine Corps World War II, Pacific Theater.* Gallup, NM: The Indian Trader Newspaper, 1986.

McClain, Sally. *Navajo Weapon: The Navajo Code Talkers.* Tucson, Arizona: Rio Nuevo Publishers, 2001.

Underhill, Ruth. *Here Come the Navajo!* Tucson, Arizona: Treasure Chest Publications, Inc., 1953.

MAGAZINES

Langille, Vernon. "Indian War Call." *Leatherneck Magazine,* March 1948.

Walker, J.B. "Where Credit Is Due: Code Talkers Rewarded with Medal, Movie." *Leatherneck Magazine*, June 2002.

N EWSPAPERS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Cordero, John. "WWII Navajo Code talkers net Congressional Silver Medals." *The Scout*, December 6, 2001.

"Navajos Ace Warriors." *The San Diego Union,* January 27, 1943, second section.

"Navajos to celebrate Code Talkers Day." *Marine Corps Times,* August 13, 2007.

Taipahe, Loren. "Code Talkers to receive Congressional Gold Medals." *Arizona Native Scene*, July 23, 2001.

VIDEO

The Code Talkers Project: Keeping the Code Alive. Directed by Theo Bremer-Bennett, Gallup, NM: Glyph Engine Creative Services 2008. DVD.

WEBSITES

Museum of the American Indian. "Native Words Native Warriors." Smithsonian Institution. http://americanindian.si.edu/education/codetalkers/html/index.html (accessed August 1, 2009).

Official Site of the Navajo Code Talkers. "The Official Website of the Navajo Code Talkers." The Navajo Code Talker Association. http://www.navajocodetalkers.org/ (accessed 1 November, 2009).

The Navajo Nation. "The Navajo Nation." The Navajo Nation. http://www.navajo.org/ (accessed 1 September, 2009).

Senator Jeff Bingaman. "New Mexico Features: Navajo Code Talkers." Senator Jeff Bingaman. http://bingaman.senate.gov/features/codetalkers/ (accessed 15 December, 2009).