

NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ALL RESOURCES

Partnership of IllumiNative and the National Indian Education Association



ILLUMINATIVE



Grade Level

3-5

Subject

Social Studies

Lesson Title

Honoring Warrior Spirit: The National Native American Veteran's Memorial

Activity Description: Native Americans serve and have served in the US armed services at a greater percentage than any other people group. To honor those who have served, the National Museum of the American Indian was commissioned to build a National Native American Veterans Memorial that will be unveiled in Washington, DC in November 2020. This activity defines the “warrior spirit” and explains the history of Native service in the military. The activity also features an interview and closer look at the memorial with its designer Vietnam veteran and artist Harvey Pratt. This activity is rich with information for the families and communities to learn together.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- WiFi (required)**
- [“What does it Mean to be a Warrior”](#) by the Public Broadcasting Station
- [The Warrior Tradition](#) film from Arizona PBS
- [Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian interview with Harvey Pratt](#) on YouTube

**Recommendation: This activity is most effective when done as a family, community, or class

STEPS

Many times Native Americans are seen as warriors of the past and shown in pictures with bows and arrows and feather headdresses. However, the warrior is instead a spirit of courage, honor, and duty that lives inside each Native person especially the men and women who have served and still serve in the US military. To honor this warrior spirit, the US Congress gave the National Museum of the American Indian the important role of designing a national monument to be built in Washington, D.C. Vietnam veteran and Native artist, Harvey Pratt was not sure he wanted to enter the competition, but after a dream, he created his design, submitted it, and won against 100 other entries. In November 2020, this memorial will be dedicated to the Native warriors who have gone before us and live among us. Follow the links below to learn more about the memorial and the warriors that it honors. Then, watch an interview with Harvey Pratt as he explains his design and shows what the monument will look like.

Activity Steps:

1. To better understand the term “warrior spirit” and how it applies to more than military service, read this article [“What does it Mean to be a Warrior”](#) by the Public Broadcasting Station
 - a. What does this article teach about how Native people can be warriors in today's society?
2. Next, read the short [introduction to The Warrior Tradition](#) from Arizona PBS.
3. Then, watch the [The Warrior Tradition film](#) to learn the history of Native American warriors in the United States military.
4. Finally, listen to this [interview with Harvey Pratt from the National Museum of the American Indian](#). Pratt, the designer of the Verteran’s Memorial, explains the symbolism of the design intentionally made to represent the ceremonies and traditions of all federally recognized tribes.
 - a. How does Pratt’s design show the cultural values and relationships of Native people?
5. With your family, discuss why this monument is so important for all Americans. Why is it important that we recognize Native Americans who served in the military?

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HELPFUL TIPS

Parents and caregivers: While it is an honor for Native American warriors to be recognized by this memorial, this topic can also lead to feelings of hurt and anger because of the tense historical relationship between tribes and the US government. It is important to help your child understand that having a "warrior spirit" means being resilient and honoring their sacred duty to protect their land and their people. This is why many Native Americans chose to serve their country despite the past historical trauma.

For more information on the memorial, visit the [official site of the National Native Americans Veteran Memorial](#) by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Families and educators: To teach about the memorial or honoring Native Americans in the military, educators cannot avoid addressing the unjust treatment of Native American tribes by the US government. This requires being sensitive to the ages and background of your students but also a willingness to share the value of recognizing Native American veterans in light of the historical trauma that has occurred. For support in addressing historical trauma in the classroom access this resource "[Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom](#)" by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network

More examples of Native American service are the World War II Code Talkers from various tribes across the nation. To learn more about the code talkers, access the [lesson plans that can accompany the activity film *The Warrior Tradition*](#) from PBS Learning Media

For lesson support on teaching about American Indians in the military and the memorial, download this resource "[American Indians in the Military – A Warrior Spirit](#)" from the Montana Office of of Public Instruction.

Activity Resources:

- "What does it Mean to be a Warrior" by the Public Broadcasting Station <https://www.pbs.org/wned/warrior-tradition/features/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-warrior/>
- "The Warrior Tradition tells the Story of Native American in the US Military" by Arizona PBS <https://azpbs.org/2019/10/the-warrior-tradition-tells-story-of-native-americans-in-u-s-military/>
- "A Conversation with Harvey Pratt, Designer of the National Native American Veterans Memorial" posted on YouTube by Smithsonian NMAI https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvLbwvJV9B8&feature=emb_logo

Additional Resources:

- *National Native Americans Veteran Memorial* by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian <https://americanindian.si.edu/nnavm/>
- "Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom" by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/PDFs/FINAL-Race-and-Trauma-in-the-Classroom-Factsheet.pdf>
- "Secrets of the Code Talkers" lesson materials by PBS Learning Media <https://www.pbs.org/wned/warrior-tradition/classroom/secrets-of-the-code-talkers/>
- "American Indians in the Military – A Warrior Spirit" from the Montana Office of of Public Instruction <http://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Indian%20Education/Social%20Studies/9-12/WarriorSpirit.pdf?ver=2020-05-22-150858-777>