

Sequoyah National Research Center Newsletter

Fall 2017

Code Talkers Symposium a Success

On November 4th, the Center hosted a half-day symposium and companion exhibit *Untold Stories: American Indian Code Talkers of World War I*. SNRC's director Dr. Daniel Littlefield began the program with his talk "Indian Boarding Schools as Recruitment Centers" giving context to American Indian involvement in World War I and sharing how the military-style structures of boarding schools led to easy recruitment of students and former students into the military.

Judy Allen, Elizabeth Lawless, and Chantelle Standefer, members of the Choctaw Nation and representatives of the Choctaw Code Talkers Association, presented on Choctaw Code Talkers of World War I about the code that was developed and how the language was instrumental in turning the tide of war. Lanny Asepermy (Comanche) gave a well-done history of the "Comanche Code Talkers of World War I," explaining



how most were drafted into the military and served with honor and pride. John Henry Mashunkashey (Osage) presented on Osage during the war, relating his experiences as a young man visiting with the World War I veterans.

The morning's lectures were followed by lunch and a musical program "Songs of the Great War" presented by the Conway Women's Chorus. The chorus performed "Land of Sky Blue Water," a frequent selection on the program of Tsianina Redfeather, a Cherokee/Creek mezzo-soprano who performed for troops during World War I. The performance was followed by the exhibit opening and included a gallery talk by the curator Erin Fehr. The day's events were well attended and included Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Comanche, and Osage tribal members from Oklahoma.



Left to right: Erin Fehr, Judy Allen, Shelley Asepermy, and Lanny Asepermy

The event was covered by Will Chavez, a reporter with the *Cherokee Phoenix*. That story is available at <http://www.cherokeephoenix.org/Article/index/11751>. The exhibit will be on display now through February 2, 2018.

Arkansas Connection to Code Talkers

While conducting research for the *Untold Stories* exhibit, it was discovered that the original eight Choctaw men were chosen for service as Code Talkers by Captain Elijah Whitt Horner, a native of Mena, Arkansas. Horner, born May 19, 1893, grew up in Polk County, Arkansas, and joined the Oklahoma National Guard's 1st Infantry on June 21, 1916, with which he served during the Mexican Border War chasing Pancho Villa. He had served with many of the men of Company E, previously, when it was a National Guard unit, and therefore was uniquely positioned to choose the Code Talkers because of his long personal history with these Choctaw men. The gamble proved to be successful and ultimately turned the tide of war.

Horner was honorably discharged and a few days later married Maude Kathryn Board on September 4, 1919. They honeymooned in

Weiser, Idaho, where his sister was living, and loved it so much, they stayed for the next 42 years. In Idaho, he established a business in real estate, taking after his father, who had been in the same business in Mena, Arkansas. On the outbreak of World War II, he again volunteered, this time with the Idaho National Guard at the rank of Major. During the war, he was stationed at Fort Sheridan, Wyoming, but was sent to England and France after D-Day to process land claims for the next four years. He maintained contact with many of the Choctaw code talkers throughout the years through correspondence and face-to-face visits. He died January, 1984, in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and is buried in Mena.

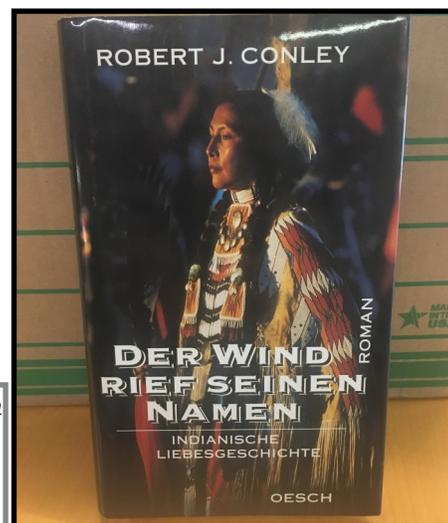


Left to right: Front: 1st Lt. Highlan Mitchell, Capt. Walter Veach, 1st Lt. Ben-Hur Chastaine, Back: 2nd Lt. Columbus E. Veach, 2nd Lt. Carl Edmonds, 1st Lt. Elijah W. Horner. Courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society.

Major Donation to Robert J. Conley Papers

Evelyn Conley visited the Center at the beginning of November to donate 12 boxes of materials related to the writing career of her late husband, Robert J. Conley (Cherokee). The materials included manuscripts of published materials, career memorabilia, and a copy of every published edition of Conley's books, providing the Center with a complete library of his works. This will complement the collection that Conley began donating in 2005, a decade before his death. We expect more donations in the future, as we are the beneficiary of his entire literary estate.

A nice surprise was the German edition of *Mountain Windsong* with the title *Der Wind Rief Seinen Namen*, which translates to "the wind calls your name."



Our mission is to acquire and preserve the writings and ideas of Native North Americans by collecting the written word, art and other forms of expression by Native Americans and creating a research atmosphere that invites indigenous peoples to make the Sequoyah National Research Center the archival home for their creative work.

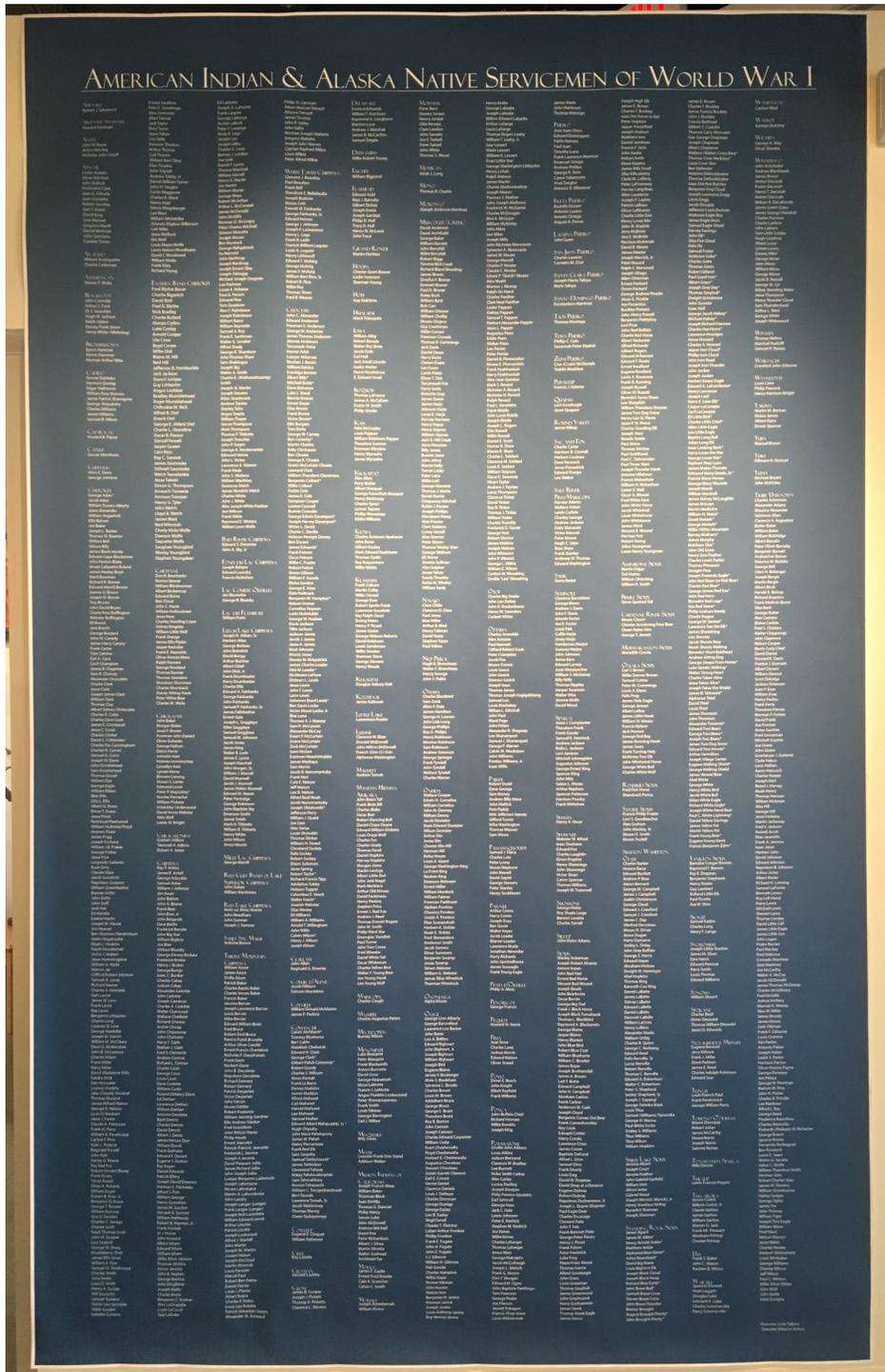
Research on WWI Veterans

When planning the exhibit on World War I code talkers, we wanted visitors to be aware of other American Indians and Alaska Natives that served in the military during the war. It is estimated that 12,000 Native men served in the Army and Navy. However, as far as we know, there has been no comprehensive list of those servicemen compiled.

With only a couple of months to work on the list, we looked at various sources and came up with almost 2,300 names for our Wall of Honor. The men on the wall (pictured to the right) represent 148 tribes.

Many of the men attended boarding schools, so the boarding school journals were invaluable in reporting the names of those who joined. However, sometimes these names were not identified by tribes, so we need additional information.

We were also able to rely on different tribes that have compiled a list of World War I servicemen to the best of their knowledge. The Osage and Chickasaw/Ojibwe tribes of Minnesota have all done this in a publicly available forum, so we added those names to this list. Lanny Asepermy, our Comanche speaker, provided research that he had compiled on Comanche World War I veterans.



Now, we are coming to you to ask for contributions to this list. If you have a relative, who was a tribal member, we would love to make sure their service is remembered. If you work for or with a tribe that has a list of World War I servicemen, we would love to make sure they are not forgotten. We hope this list will serve to remind the world that American Indians and Alaska Natives have proven their loyalty and dedication to the United States for generations.

If you have an individual or individuals that you would like to add to the list, please contact Erin Fehr (ehfehr@ualr.edu) with as much information as possible, i.e. full name, birth/death date, tribe, military unit served with, place of birth, and any other relevant information. We hope to make this information publicly available in the future.

Open House set for December 15

Join us for our Annual Holiday Open House on Friday, December 15th, 10am-2pm. Enjoy festive refreshments, visit with SNRC staff, and view our newest exhibit *Untold Stories: American Indian Code Talkers of World War I*. Additional displays include a case on Sequoyah, the only person to single-handedly develop a written language, and a case with the annual Choctaw Nation Christmas ornaments for the past several years. We hope you will join us for food and fellowship.



2011 Choctaw ornament, "Luksi (or turtle)"

As a reminder, the university will be closed December 20-January 1 for the holiday break.

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Hours of Operation:
Monday-Friday
8:00am-5:00pm

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