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Navajo Nation Council members participate in U.S. Marine Corps event to honor Navajo Code Talkers



PHOTO: (From left to right) Council Delegates Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Norman Begay, Seth Damon, Code Talkers Roy Hawthorne and Samuel Holiday, Speaker LoRenzo Bates, Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie, and Major General Daniel J. O'Donohue who serves as the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton on September 28, 2015.

CAMP PENDLETON – Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) along with four other members of the Navajo Nation Council were on hand for a historic ceremonial event hosted by the U.S. Marine Corps on Monday, to recognize and honor the Navajo Code Talkers.

The event was held at Camp Pendleton—the Marine Corps base where the original 29 Navajo Code Talkers developed military codes using the Navajo language that helped the United States to win World War II.

Code Talkers Samuel Holiday, Roy Hawthorne and Ramona Silversmith, the wife of the late Code Talker Joe A. Silversmith, were in attendance as Major General Daniel J. O'Donohue who serves as the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division, spoke of the many contributions and

sacrifices of the Navajo Code Talkers in World War II and presented them with honorary coins signifying their valuable contributions to the U.S. Marine Corps and the country.

“When this Nation was in the most need and in a desperate circumstance, the Navajo Nation came forward to provide a duty that no one else could at that time,” stated Major General O’Donohue.

Council Delegates Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Norman Begay, Seth Damon, and Edmund Yazzie also participated in the Monday’s ceremonial event on behalf of the Council.

Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) recalled the humility with which his late father-in-law Joe A. Silversmith served as a Code Talker and his reluctance in accepting recognition for his brave service.

Prior to Silversmith’s passing in 2011, Delegate Yazzie said he told his loved ones that it was the power of prayer that gave him the strength and the endurance to survive the war and return home to his family.

“He told us to pray for the Nation and for our country and that’s what we must continue to do,” stated Delegate Yazzie.

Code Talkers Holiday and Hawthorne said the event marked the first time they had returned to Camp Pendleton since enlisting in the Marine Corps as young men. Each recalled the difficulty they had in gaining approval from their loved ones to enlist and to leave their homelands.

“We were instrumental as Code Talkers in preserving liberty for the United States,” said Hawthorne. “The longer we live the more we realize the importance of what we did, but we’re still not heroes—not in my mind.”

Hawthorne and Holiday both received the Purple Heart for their valor and service in World War II.

Speaker Bates also presented the Navajo Nation Flag to the U.S. Marine Corps and expressed his appreciation to the Code Talkers and their families for their sacrifices and longstanding bravery.

Following the ceremony, the officials and Code Talkers took a tour of Camp Pendleton including an in-depth tour of a state of the art military microgrid named the FractalGrid—a network of multiple cyber secure microgrids that are integrated and simultaneously work together to secure and control Camp Pendleton’s renewable energy generation.

The tour was led by Indian Energy LLC and Big Navajo Energy LLC, two Native American-owned energy development companies that provide advanced energy solutions such as the FractalGrid at Camp Pendleton.

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