



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

OCT 30 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: 2023 Department of Defense National American Indian Heritage Month Observance

The Department recognizes November 1-30, 2023, as National American Indian Heritage Month. During this time, we honor the contributions and sacrifices of American Indians and Alaska Natives, especially those who have served in the U.S. military.

This year's theme is *Tribal Nations Soaring to New Heights*. American Indians and Alaska Natives have a long history of military service. During World War II, the legendary contributions of American Indian Navajo Code Talkers were critical for American success. Similarly, Alaska Natives fearlessly defended American territories from Japanese raids. Many American Indians and Alaska Natives serving today cite a desire to follow in the footsteps of their family members and a deep patriotism for protecting and serving their homeland.

Former U.S. Senator of Colorado, Ben "Nighthorse" Campbell remarked on this culture of service, noting that since 9/11, "...American Indians per capita – have had the highest percentage of their people in military service, exceeding every American ethnic group." Moreover, 29 Service members of Native American ancestry have earned the Medal of Honor for their courage and devotion to our Nation.

American Indians and Alaska Natives continue to ascend. As we celebrate their past and present achievements, we commit to diversity and inclusion in the Total Force. The Department continues to increase and broaden its talent resources through military and civilian career opportunities for American Indians and Alaska Natives. For resources and help with leading and organizing observances, visit: <https://www.defenseculture.mil/Special-Observances/#national-american-indian-heritage-month>.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ashish S. Vazirani".

Ashish S. Vazirani
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