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## **Stories of American Indian Code Talkers Revealed in Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition on view at Seminole Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum**

*“My language was my weapon.”*  
—David Patterson (Navajo), 4th Div., U.S. Marine Corps.

CLEWISTON, FL. (March 16, 2009) When the United States issued the call to arms in World Wars I and II, American Indians answered as warriors. Some men discovered that words—in their Native languages—would be their most valued weapons. These unsung American heroes share their stories of strength and courage in a Smithsonian traveling exhibition, opening at **the Seminole Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on April 25, 2009.**

*Native Words, Native Warriors*, developed by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), tells the remarkable story of soldiers from more than a dozen tribes who used their Native languages while in service in the U.S. military. This inspiring exhibition is made possible thanks to the generous support of donor Elizabeth Hunter Solomon. Additional support has been provided by the Smithsonian Women’s Committee and the AMB Foundation.

Through oral histories taken from the veterans themselves, *Native Words* celebrates and honors this important but little-reported aspect of American history. In addition to 15 large-scale banners, the exhibition includes videos examining the development of the code, battlefield experiences and the sharp turnaround many of them experienced as they transitioned from Indian boarding schools where they were punished for speaking their Native language to using it as their call to duty for their country.

Seminole Tribal Chairman and veteran Mitchell Cypress said “We are very happy to host this significant exhibition honoring the brave and dedicated Native warriors who have served and protected this Country to the fullest extent. Their stories deserve to be heard.”

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian is an institution of living cultures dedicated to advancing knowledge and understanding of the life, languages, literature, history

and arts of the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere. The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum serves to collect, preserve, protect and interpret Seminole history and culture-inspiring an appreciation and understanding of the Seminole people. Both of these fine institutions were recently awarded national accreditation by the American Association of Museums (AAM) and together warmly welcome the public to view *Native Words Native Warriors*, on view April 25 through July 6 at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation.

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