# AWESOME stories

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By the time Pearl Harbor was attacked on 7 December 1941, most Navajos had never left their 25,000 square mile <u>reservation</u>. They were one of few tribes allowed to keep their homelands in Arizona, New Mexico and southern Utah. Americans moving west did not want to settle on the rocky, inhospitable and arid Navajo land.

Educated in government schools, Navajo children were forbidden to speak their native language and were taught English. Their native language was unwritten at the time, so the experience of learning a second language was unique for them.

English-speaking teachers discouraged the children from ever speaking their own tongue. Parents, fortunately, ignored such suggestions. Had they heeded that advice, who can say whether the Allies would have won the war in the Pacific?

U.S. public records contain a rich pictorial record of Navajo life in the decade before World War II. A virtual "trip" to the national archives reveals what America's future Code Talkers experienced before they volunteered for duty.

• At the time of WWII, and to this day, the Navajo nation governs itself through a tribal council.

- Many people lived in shacks or hogans on the reservation.
- Government relief, in the early 1930s, helped some Navajo families build new homes.

• Navajo families usually had several ponies and traveled to fall fairs in horse-drawn carriages, cars, trucks or trailers.

• Although the Navajo homeland stretches for thousands of miles, getting to the interior (just before World War

## THE NAVAJO NATION



Il erupted) was difficult due to wide creeks and <u>washes</u>. Vehicles were often stuck due to <u>lack</u> of proper roads and bridges.

- Building roads through canyons, like <u>Tohatchi</u>, required back-breaking work.
- Crudely built bridges could not survive significant storms.
- Navajo "day schools" ranged from one-room rural cabins to more modern facilities.
- <u>Children learned English</u> with picture cards and notebooks. They also practiced their skills by <u>working with</u> <u>puppets</u>.
- <u>Santa Claus</u> must have been a foreign concept for Navajo children.

The <u>Navajo way of life</u> had prepared future Code Talkers to endure the hardships of war. A young man used to deprivation, and <u>the desert's harshness</u>, would be able to deal with life on a desolate Pacific Island. On the other hand, a young man free to roam wide-open spaces would have to <u>adjust to Marine Corps</u> <u>discipline</u>.

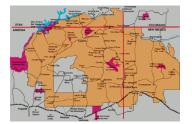
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-NAVAJO-NATION-Wind-Talkers-Navajo-Code-Talke rs-in-WWII

#### See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-NAVAJO-NATION-Wind-Talkers-Navajo-Code-Talker s-in-WWII

### Media Stream







<u>Navajo Children Learning English at Their Day School</u> Image - with ARC identifier 295158 - from the Bureau of Indiana Affairs. Online via the U.S. National Archives (NARA). View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Navajo-Children-Learning-English-at-Their-Day-School0</u>

<u>Navajo Reservation - Map</u> Image online, courtesy <u>Northern Arizona University</u>. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Navajo-Reservation-Map</u>

Washes on the Navajo Reservation Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. PD

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### UNSUNG HEROES OF WORLD WAR II



DEANNE DURRETT

#### <u>Tohatchi Canyon - Navajo Reservation</u> Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

PD View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tohatchi-Canyon-Navajo-Reservation

<u>Navajo Reservation - Poor Roads Caused Wash-outs</u> Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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<u>Unsung Heros of World War II - by Deanne Durrett</u> Book-cover image online, courtesy University of Nebraska Press and Google Books. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Unsung-Heros-of-World-War-II-by-Deanne-Durrett