



# American Indian Involvement in WWI





# Reservation Life

- Forced Assimilation Policies
- BIA rules and regulations
  - CFR Courts: No Native dancing, singing, praying, or healing.
- Indian issues aren't on the National radar
  - Rural isolation
- Boarding schools are in full force
- Allotment Act of 1887 is in full force

# Extreme poverty in 1917 – 1918



**POVERTY**

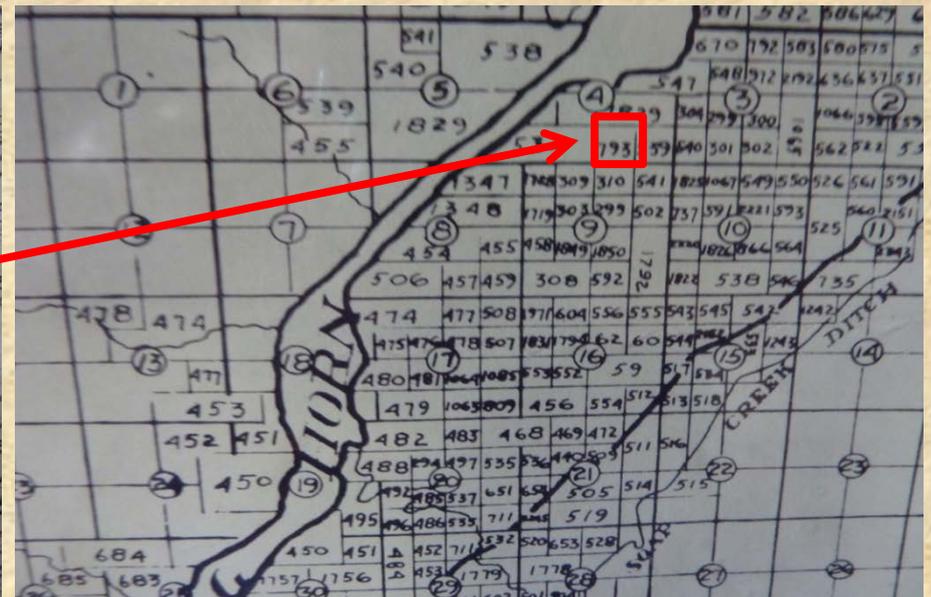
*A less romantic view. An old (and apparently poor) Cheyenne woman holds her grandchild, 1908.*



**WEALTH**

# Allotment (Dawes) Act

776 RIDES THE MEDICINE HORSE.	2.F. 1095 SINGS IN THE SW
777 RACE PLENTY BUFFALO	1.F. 1096 YOUNG BEAVER
778 KNOWS WHERE TO FIND THINGS	1.F. 1097 HOOP WOMAN
779 BETWEEN	40.M. 1098 TAKES A CROOK
780 GOT MANY ENEMIES	35.F. 1099 BUFFALO NECK
781 YOUNG OTTER	42.M. 1100 YEARLY GONE
782 SITS WITH THE COYOTE.	51.F. 1101 BIRD IN THE C
783 SUN GOES SLOW.	1.M. 1102 LOOKS AT THE ON
784 ANTELOPE.	39.M. 1103 RUN TOWARD TH
785 GOES AMONG THE TRAPS	19.F. 1104 GRACE
786 SITS ANY PLACE.	2.M. 1105 LEADS A WOLF
787 THE OTHER MEDICINE	1.M. 1106 STRIKES FIRS
788 WALKS TO THE HOLE	32.M. 1107 OTTER CHI
789 HANNAH OTHER MEDICINE.	26.F. 1108 DOES LOTS
790 BIRD EVERYWAY	8.F. 1109 WELL TOWN R
791 PLAIN BEL	3.M. 1110 MEDICINE HO
792	4.M. 1111 BUSY WOLF
793 ELSIE OTHER MEDICINE	2.F. 1112 SWAMP FLAG
794 CHARLES STRONG	100.F. 1113 FLAT BOY
795 KILLS IN THE TRACK	60.M. 1114 BEAVER THAT S
796 MARY CHARGE STRONG	57.F. 1115 TWIN WOMAN
797 CHARLES	14.F. 1116 THE GREEN
798 IRON NECKLACE	16.M. 1117 OTTER WOMAN
799 THOMAS JEFFERSON.	75.F. 1118 ENEMY HUNTE
800 BIRD CHILD	31.M. 1119 SHAKES.
801 LILLIAN JEFFERSON	24.F. 1120 TAKES A HO
802 LESTER	6.F. 1121 HUNTS TO SLL
803 JOSEPH STEWART	3.M. 1122 MEDICINE WOM
804 FRANCIS STEWART.	31.M. 1123 HOPI ON HER
805 ROBERT	8.M. 1124 JESSIE HOR
806 DONT RUN	1.M. 1125 YELLOW FRING
	37.M. 1126 HILLS BY THE W



Allotment number correlates to a land tract and illustrates how the Crow Reservation was divided for individual land use intended for farming.

# Pre-War Conditions





# WWI: First Time on the Same Side

- All Indians were not yet citizens
  - Burke Act 1906
  - Required to Register for the Draft
  - Indian men were registered as being White
- Indian men could volunteer for service
- Participation varied by tribe
- U.S. anticipates they wouldn't have to pay veterans benefits to American Indians

# Dough Boys, but not Citizens



<http://vimeo.com/19305917>

[http://s3.amazonaws.com/choctaw-msldigital/assets/512/codetalkerhandout\\_original.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/choctaw-msldigital/assets/512/codetalkerhandout_original.pdf)

William Hollowbreast, Northern Cheyenne, June 1919.

# Using WWI to Call for Citizenship



Carlos Montezuma



Robert Yellowtail



Zitkala Sa, Gertrude Bonnin



# Recruitment of Native Warriors

- Joining the military was an opportunity to get away from the boarding school
  - Seeking adventure
- Patriotic indoctrination from boarding school
  - 90% of the Carlisle male student population volunteered for military service.
  - Mass exodus from boarding schools caused some to close.



# 1917 Declaration of War by Indian Nations

- The Onondaga Nation, part of the Iroquois Confederacy, declared war on Germany.
  - Citing ill-treatment of tribal members who were stranded in Berlin at the beginning of the hostilities.
- The Oneida Nation, also part of the Iroquois Confederacy, declared war on Germany.



# Native Warrior View of Service

- Their homeland and responsibility to protect
- Traditional Warrior Role:
  - to protect and provide for those who couldn't do it for themselves, or weren't expected to. It's about being a man and a leader.
- Opportunity to maintain warrior traditions by counting coup for war honors.
- Opportunity to see the world
  - Escape from reservation poverty

# American Indian Nurses



Charlotte Edith (Anderson) Monture

14 American Indian women served as members of the Army Nurse Corps during WWI. Two of them served overseas.

- Mrs. Cora Sinnard – Oneida
- Charlotte (Anderson) Monture – Iroquois (1890 – 1996)

# Entertaining the Troops: Princess Redfeather





# In War

- Heros
  - Pvt. Joseph Oklahombi, Choctaw.
    - Silver Star from U.S.
    - Croix de Guerre from France
  - Sgt. John Northrup, Chippewa.
    - Retells a war story from the Battle of Ourcq
  - Chief Plenty Coups, Crow.
    - Selected by the President and upper echelons of military command.
    - Represented all American Indians who served in WWI at the unveiling of Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington Cemetery
- Indians served in every major battle during WWI



# Impact on Indian Country

- The loss of Indian reservation land increased
- Indian Health Services medical personnel diverted to the war effort
- Impact on Indian policy
  - New tier of Indian leaders, less intimidated by BIA
    - Robert Yellowtail
    - Gertrude Bonnin
    - James Red Cloud, grandson of the famous Red Cloud
  - Beginning of the Progressive Era in Indian Affairs in U.S. history



# Impact on the Perception of Indians

- Role of the media –
  - Journalists re-established the savage stereotypes of Indian warriors as characteristics desired for the WWI battlefields.
  - Journalists eagerly sought out information about the activity of Indian servicemen for their publications.
    - Such as, the 1<sup>st</sup> Indian to ride in an airplane, be killed in action, wounded in battle, etc. . .
- U.S. General Pershing issued press releases on his Indian scouts.
- American Indians were increasingly becoming noticed at the national level.



# High Risk in Battle

- Notions about the Indians plays out in the military by the types of tasks the Native men were ordered to do.
  - Trench warfare scouts, snipers and messengers
    - High fatality rate
    - William Blindwoman, Northern Cheyenne. A dependable runner.
  - 62% served in the Infantry
  - 16% served in Field Artillery
- 5% of all Indian men died in action compared to 1% of all others.
  - They volunteered for greater risk assignments
  - They died from influenza at a higher rate than other servicemen.



# Challenges of Serving

- Many Native soldiers couldn't speak English
  - Difficult for them to get through training
  - Difficult to communicate in active duty
  - They preferred to be with other Indians when possible – intertribal experience.
- The negative stereotypes became positive attributes during the war
  - Intimidated the Germans – hero status of Indians from novels, especially those written by Karl May.



# Native Military Contributions

- 1<sup>st</sup> time Native language is used for transmitting military intelligence.
- Code Talking originated.
  - At the same time as children in boarding schools were being severely punished for speaking their language – the Native language is helping save the U.S. in war.



# Choctaw Code Talkers

- Accidental discovery
  - Within 24 hours, 8 Choctaw were talking at 8 different company field headquarters.
  - 72 hours later the Germans were retreating.
- Type 1 & 2 Code
  - Choctaw started the Type 1 Code Talk
    - The Choctaw developed a code within a code = Type 1
    - A total of 19 Choctaw Code Talkers.
    - Later other tribal speakers including Oklahoma Cherokee, Comanche, Cheyenne, Osage, and (Sioux) Yankton served as Code Talkers.



# Review of Available Data

- The number that registered: 17,303
- The number that served: approximately 12,000 which is 20% of the adult male population at that time
- The number that gave their life: approximately 600 gave their lives
- The number from Montana: Currently, there are 66 American Indian WWI veterans listed on the Montana Native Warriors database.



# Natives on the Homefront

- \$25 million dollars raised from Indian Reservations in Liberty Bonds, approx \$100.00 per capita.
- 30,000 Indian students and 5,000 Indian adults enrolled in Red Cross
- Reservation Women's Clubs: Knitting socks and sweaters
- Indian children assembled comfort kits for soldiers.
- Chief Don White Eagle, Windriver Reservation in Wyoming. Danced daily on the front steps of the New York Public Library to sell war savings stamps.



# Post War

- Indian Citizenship Act
- Abandonment of the Indian Veteran
- Reservation based cultural revitalization



# Citizenship

- In recognition of their service in WWI American Indian serviceman could apply for citizenship.
  - Many Native veterans didn't bother to apply
  - Still unclear if they could be dual citizens of the U.S. and members of their tribes.
  - Citizenship did not guarantee voting rights
- Some estimates say that  $2/3^{\text{rd's}}$  of the American Indian population were citizens prior to 1924 via selling their allotments under the the Burke Act.
- **ALL** American Indians became citizens in 1924.

# 1924 Calvin Coolidge – Signing day of the Indian Citizenship Act





# Abandonment of the Indian Veteran

- No federal legislation to curb Indian unemployment, aid to farmers and ranchers or to halt the erosion of the Indian land base.
- Indian veterans expected a greater voice, but instead returned to government indifference, disenfranchisement, and poverty very similar to the Black veterans.
- Few if any temporary manual labor jobs
- Some veterans left the reservation to seek employment or they reenlisted.

# July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration for WWI returning Sioux Veterans





# WWI as a means of revitalization

## Cultural Warrior Practices

- Time of rebirth for the Native Warrior
  - Generation fully on the reservation, only 30 years after the end of the Indian Wars.
- Warrior Return Ceremonies
- Strengthening Warrior Societies
- Women – expressions of support for Warriors
- Songs were created to Honor Warriors

# Plenty Coups Lays a Wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier





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