



*Suggested Remarks for Colonel Richard B. Jenkins,  
Deputy Commander, Mississippi Valley Division, at the  
Kickoff Ceremony for the Native American / Alaskan  
Native Heritage Month, Vicksburg District, 5 Nov 02*

Colonel Clapp -- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on this occasion celebrating Native Americans and Alaskan Natives.

During the month of November we celebrate the important contributions of Native Americans who have served and continue to serve in the armed forces.

Throughout our history, Native Americans have been an integral part of the American fabric.

Tribal traditions have brought values and ideas that have become ingrained in the American spirit – such as, the knowledge that humans can thrive and prosper without destroying the environment; the understanding that people from different backgrounds, cultures, religions, and traditions can come together to build a great country; and the awareness that diversity can be a source of strength rather than division.

Ours is a nation inextricably linked to the histories of the many peoples who first inhabited this great land. Everywhere around us are reminders of the legacy of America's first inhabitants.

Their history speaks to us through the names of our cities, lakes, and rivers; the food on our tables; the magnificent ruins of ancient communities; and, most important, the lives of the people who retain the cultural, spiritual, linguistic, and kinship bonds that have existed for centuries.

As for the future, the United States military can be expected to provide continuing opportunity for Native American men and women. For their part, Native Americans can be expected to carry on their centuries-old tradition – serving with pride, courage, and distinction.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I look forward to hearing the other speakers today and encourage you to participate in the other events throughout the month celebrating Native American and Alaskan Native Heritage.