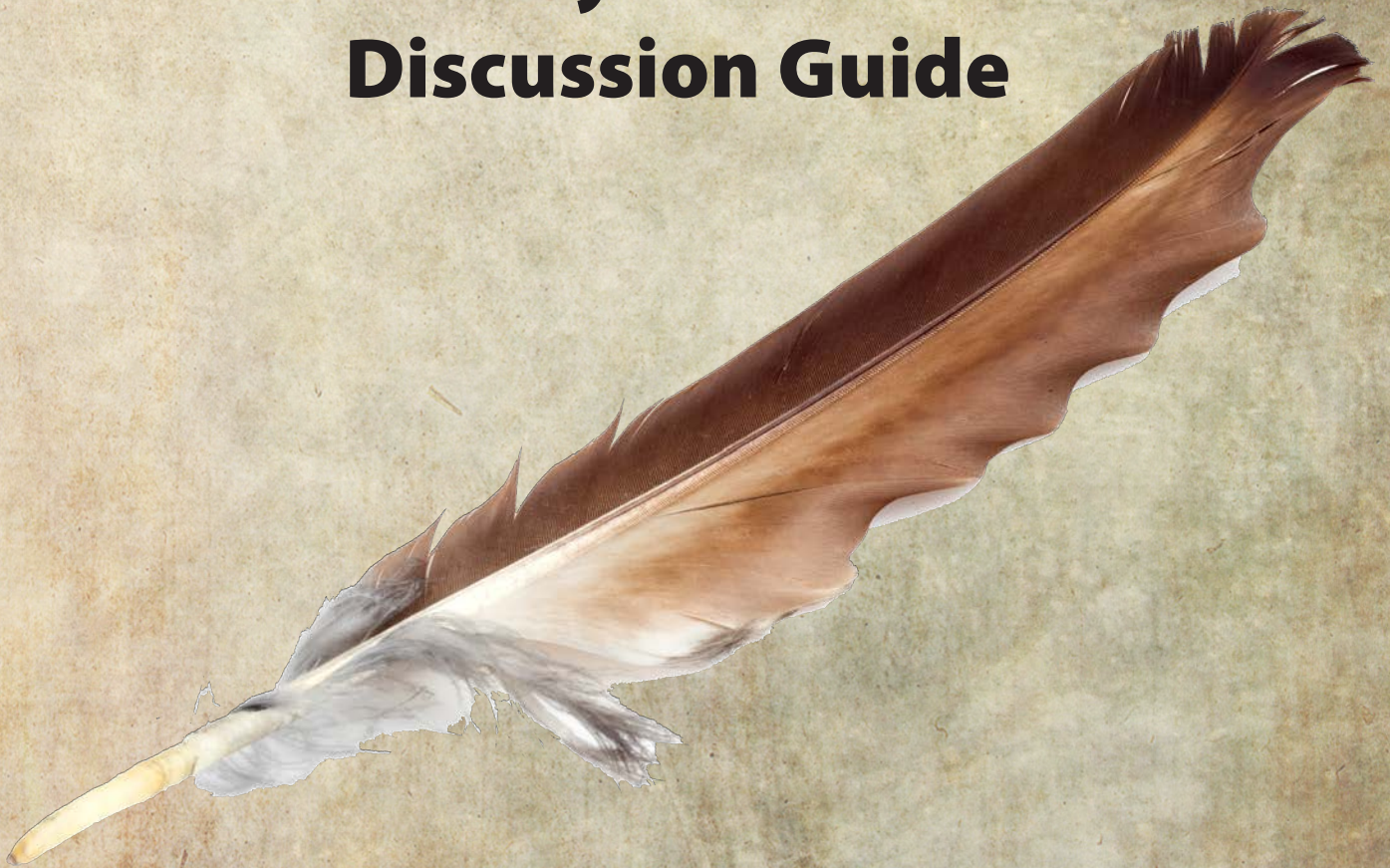


# THE WARRIOR TRADITION

## Community and Educators Discussion Guide



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[pbs.org/warriortradition](http://pbs.org/warriortradition)

## The Warrior Tradition Discussion Guide

*The warrior, for us, is one who sacrifices himself for the good of others. His task is to take care of the elderly, the defenseless, those who cannot provide for themselves, and above all, the children - the future of humanity.*

– Sitting Bull, Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux

It's part of an ancient tradition, and more - for some Native American tribes, a vital expression of their spirit. They have fought in every war the United States has waged since the nation began.

*The Warrior Tradition* is a one-hour, national documentary telling the astonishing, heartbreaking, inspiring, and largely-untold story of Native Americans in the United States military.

Even the numbers tell a story. Native Americans enlist and serve in the military at rates that proportionally far exceed every other ethnic group – as they have for many decades, and in many wars.

They do it because they want to. During World War I, not all Native Americans were even citizens of the United States and couldn't be drafted; yet 12,000 Native American men volunteered. Even in an unpopular war in Vietnam, 90 percent of the 42,000 Native Americans who served were volunteers.

*The Warrior Tradition* describes the complex Native American situation in our society. While there is much diversity among the over 500 tribes in the United States, a common thread of service distinguishes the contributions of Native nations to the country. It will help all Americans understand the actions and motives of Native Americans who have fought for the United States for centuries.

*Being a warrior's not necessarily about going out and killing people. It's about keeping the peace as well and making sure that our traditions and cultures are staying in line with our values -- protecting our land, our family, our community. And that's part of the warrior tradition.*

– Chuck Boers, Lipan Apache War Chief, U.S. Army





## Introduction

*Different tribal traditions, different histories, they have different languages. So the motivations for why a Native American man or woman would enlist in the military are also diverse.*

*– Patty Loew, Bad River Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe*

Most Native Americans have a warrior tradition, which varies from tribe to tribe. The one constant is that being a warrior is more than about fighting, it is about service to the community and protection of their homeland. These are key points that are explored in the PBS program *The Warrior Tradition*.

The program and this discussion guide can be valuable tools to educate the community as well as students about the long-time representation of and dedication by Native American soldiers in U.S. conflicts throughout history.

In addition to this discussion guide, accompanying lesson plans for elementary, middle and high school students can be found on PBS LearningMedia and the project website at [pbs.org/warriortradition](http://pbs.org/warriortradition). On the program website you can find the program in its entirety, bonus videos, commissioned short films by Native American filmmakers, classroom materials, essays, and other related resources.

Discussion questions and video play a supporting role in understanding what motivates Native Americans, or anyone, to join the U.S. military. The concept of a warrior and what makes a warrior can be examined by using *The Warrior Tradition* program and follow up discussions. The program may be shown in its entirety or in segments.

There are many themes featured in *The Warrior Tradition* that can be used to initiate meaningful discussions about this important aspect of U.S. history. One of the major themes is “What it means to be a warrior” and with that comes the themes of honor, strength, tradition, pride, legacy, devotion, unity, service, storytelling, and wisdom.

## Community Screenings and Discussions

Viewing *The Warrior Tradition* can be a great tool to raise awareness and get people, young and old, to recognize the dedication that Native Americans have shown to the United States throughout history. Native American soldiers have shown loyalty and service to a country that does not always support them the same way.

Whatever the setting or audience, using any of the following suggestions can lead to an engaging and powerful event.

- Find a location where *The Warrior Tradition* can be screened – access to the internet if the video on the website will be used, access to a DVD player if playing from a DVD.
- When planning a community discussion around *The Warrior Tradition*, inviting local or national Native American and/or veteran organization representatives to be a part of it is encouraged.
- Follow the screening of *The Warrior Tradition* with a discussion.

Guest speakers or a panel of experts can be very useful for discussions. Some guests to consider are Native American historians, Native American veterans, a knowledgeable representative of a Native American community, veterans who may have served with Native Americans, or other U.S. military representatives.

There are many local and national organizations that can be used as a resource for partnering with or securing guest speakers. Visit [pbs.org/warriortradition](https://pbs.org/warriortradition) to get started with a list of some organizations. Reach out to members of your own community who may be able to help out locally.

*The Warrior Tradition* may be shown in its entirety or if time is limited, a selected chapter or two may be screened. Below is the list of chapters with approximate run time.

- Introduction (approximately 3 minutes)
- What Does it Mean to Be a Warrior? (approximately 3 ½ minutes)
- Comanche Indian Veterans Association Celebration and Powwow (approximately 6 minutes)
- Image of Native Americans and Stereotypes (approximately 18 ½ minutes)
- Returning Home (approximately 8 minutes)
- Native American Woman in the Military (approximately 10 minutes)
- Conclusion (approximately 6 ½ minutes)



After watching *The Warrior Tradition*, invite your guests to speak about their experiences and allow time for questions and answers from participants. If there are no guest speakers or panel present and the discussion is more informal, just follow up with any of these suggestions that could be used.

### **Suggested discussion questions:**

What made you decide to serve in the U.S. military?

Do you have other family members who served?

How do you define a warrior?

Should Native Americans serve in the U.S. military knowing the history of this country?

Should Native American women serve in the U.S. military? Why or why not?

Has your definition of a warrior changed over time?

How do you feel your culture has influenced the decisions you've made throughout your life?

What would you like people to know or better understand about your culture?

What celebrations and/or traditions are specific to your culture and how do they impact you?

How important is symbolism to a soldier?

What role does tradition play in a Native American soldier's decision to serve? What role does tradition play in anyone's decision to serve?  
How should we recognize and honor our Native American soldiers and veterans?

*As a Native American woman and also growing up in a military family, it was just natural for me to want to join the military. I always saw myself as a warrior. I was told I was. I was told I was strong, I can do anything, and I believed it. Still do.*

*- Elizabeth Perez, North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, U.S. Navy*

### In-School Screenings and Discussions

*The Warrior Tradition* is much needed and essential for our youth. A study done by Pennsylvania State University Associate Professor of Social Studies Education, Sarah Shear showed that 87 percent of references to American Indians in the 50 states' educational standards mention them only in a pre-1900 context. Classroom learning that provides meaningful content about current Native events or challenges exists in only a handful of states. Students are completing elementary, middle, and high school without even the most basic knowledge of contemporary Native Americans.

- Find a location in the school where *The Warrior Tradition* can be screened – access to the internet if the video on the website will be used, access to a DVD player if playing from a DVD.
- When planning an in-school discussion around *The Warrior Tradition*, inviting local or national Native American and/or veteran organization representatives to be a part of it is encouraged.
- Follow the screening of *The Warrior Tradition* with a discussion.

Guest speakers or a panel of experts can be very useful for discussions, especially to allow student exposure to a population that they may not have much contact with. Some guests to consider are Native American historians, Native American veterans, a knowledgeable representative of a Native American community, veterans who may have served with Native Americans, or other U.S. military representatives.

There are many local and national organizations that can be used as a resource for partnering with or securing guest speakers. Visit [pbs.org/warriortradition](http://pbs.org/warriortradition) to get started with a list of some organizations. Reach out to members of your own community who may be able to help out locally.

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- Returning Home (approximately 8 minutes)
- Native American Women in the Military (approximately 10 minutes)
- Conclusion (approximately 6 ½ minutes)

After watching *The Warrior Tradition*, invite your guests to speak about their experiences and allow time for questions and answers from students. Allow students an open forum to begin a discussion with their guest speakers. If there are no guest speakers or panel present and the discussion is more informal, just follow up with any of these suggestions that could be used. Any of the community discussion questions listed above may be used for a panel discussion in-school:



### **Suggested discussion questions:**

- What made you decide to serve in the U.S. military?
- Do you have other family members who served?
- How do you define a warrior?
- What tribes are Native American Veterans and soldiers from?
- Should Native Americans serve in the U.S. military knowing the history of this country?
- Should Native American women serve in the U.S. military? Why or why not?
- Has your definition of a warrior changed over time?
- How do you feel your culture has influenced the decisions you've made throughout your life?
- What would you like people to know or better understand about your culture?
- What celebrations and/or traditions are specific to your culture and how do they impact you?
- How important is symbolism to a soldier?
- What role does tradition play in a Native American soldier's decision to serve? What role does tradition play in anyone's decision to serve?

In addition to the panel discussion questions, students can be asked questions to allow them to be a part of the larger conversation.

### **Suggested STUDENT discussion questions:**

- What characteristics make a person a warrior?
- Can a woman be a warrior?
- Can a child be a warrior?

Can only Native American people be warriors?  
Does being a warrior always have to include battles or violence?  
Do you know any warriors? Explain.  
What ways are you a warrior?

*It is about defending what we love. It is about being humble. It is about being respectful of all life and then also it is about courage. And courage is not muscle and strength; it is about standing up for what is right. And that is the warrior way.*

*- Jamescita Peshlakai, Diné, Navajo Nation, U.S. Army*

**Books to add to your school library to continue the conversation:**

The People Shall Continue by Simon J Ortiz, Sharol Graves  
Lee and Low Press, 2017

Young Water Protectors: A Story about Standing Rock by Aslan Tudor & Kelly Tudor  
CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018

Bowwow Powwow by Brenda J. Child, Jonathan Thunder, Gordon Jourdain  
Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2018

Tales of the Mighty Code Talkers Vol. 1, Edited by Arigon Starr and featuring the work of:  
Theo Tso, Jonathan Nelson, Kristina Bad Hand, Roy Boney Jr., Lee Francis IV, Johnnie Diacon,  
Weshoyot Alvitre, Renee Nejo, & Michael Sheyahshe  
Native Realities Press, 2016

Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction (Updated May 2019 Edition)  
Download the PDF at <http://www.ncai.org/about-tribes>

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People (ReVisions American  
History for Young People #2) by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Jean Mendoza (Adapted by), Debbie  
Reese (Adapted by),  
Beacon Press, 2019

Classroom curriculum, to be used with the television program *The Warrior Tradition*, has been developed. The lesson plans were created to be used with elementary, middle and high school students. Lesson content is based on the documentary as well as its important themes. Lessons are aligned to National Social Studies Education Standards.

The full accompanying lesson plans can be found on the project website at **pbs.org/warriortradition** as well as on PBS LearningMedia. PBS LearningMedia is a free, premium PreK-12 digital learning solution at **pbslearningmedia.org**.



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