

Sample Interview Questions for Native American Veterans

It is the interviewer's job to make the interviewee feel comfortable and to be a good listener. Each interview session will be unique. The following is an outline (not a script) to help the interviewer guide the veteran through the conversation. Tailor the questions as you and the veteran see fit, and focus on asking thoughtful follow-up questions on topics of conversation that might be of interest to historians and researchers. These questions were created as part of VHP's collaborative effort with the [National Museum of the American Indian Native Veterans Memorial](#).



If you are planning to interview a Gold Star parent, spouse or sibling, use the list of [sample interview questions designed for Gold Star Families](#) (PDF, 143KB).

Introduction

The interviewer must begin the recording by stating his or her name and organization affiliation (if any), the veteran's full name and tribal affiliations, the date and general location in which the interview is being conducted and the names of any other people present, such as a note taker or recording equipment operator. Please do not disclose private information such as home addresses, military serial numbers or Social Security numbers. State that the interview is being conducted for the Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

Biographical Details

- Where were you born, did you grow up there?
- What did your parents, or those who raised you, do for a living?
- How much exposure to your Native language and culture did you receive?
- What primary, secondary schools or colleges did you attend?

Early Days of Service

- Can you tell us about when you went into the military? Were you drafted, or did you volunteer?
- (If volunteered) Why did you join?
- Were there family members or community elders whose military service influenced your decision?
- How did your family react?
- What or who did you leave behind (family, child, pet) when you left to serve?
- In which branch did you enter?
(If volunteered) Why did you choose that branch?
- How did you get to your initial point of entry?
- What type of training or schooling did you have? (Advance Course Warrant Officer Basic, Warrant Officer Advance, Warrant Officer Senior Course, "Boot-strap" Command and General Staff College or equivalent, War College or equivalent (getting a degree- either Bachelors, Masters or PhD).
- Did you train with any other Native/American Indians?

- What was the feeling like among your group? How was morale?
- What is your most vivid memory of your time training or in school? What was the best part? What was the worst part?
- Does any particular instructor stand out in your mind? If yes, why?
- What was your first assignment after basic training?
- Did you serve alongside other Native/American Indians? How did that inform your experience?
- Did you receive any specialized training? If so, what?
- Do you recall your instructors? If so, what were they like?
- Did you qualify with equipment (vehicles, aircraft, radios, weapons, etc.)? (If Yes) What was training with that equipment like?
- What was the hardest part of training?
- Did you receive any promotions? Could you tell me about them?
- Were there any community experiences or cultural values that prepared you for a military lifestyle?

General Service

- Where did you serve?
- Did you serve alongside other Native/American Indians? How did that inform your experience?
- What did you think about the chow?
- What's an experience, moment, or memory that stands out?
- How did people in your unit entertain themselves?
- Can you share about any entertainers or acts that visited your unit, ship, or duty station?
- Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual event?
- Did you or others in your unit pull any "pranks?" Could you share an example?
- What did you do for recreation or when you were off duty?

Wartime Service

- Where did you serve?
- What are your recollections of that experience?
- Were you in a combat, combat support, or combat service support role? Or did the war zone make that designation irrelevant?
- (If combat/ wartime) How did your combat (wartime) experience change you?
- What kinds of friendships and camaraderie did you form while serving, and with whom?
- How did you stay in touch with family and friends?
- What did you do for recreation or when you were off duty?
- Did you do anything special for good luck?
- What did you think of your officers? How about colleagues and peers?

End of Service

- Do you recall the day service ended? Where were you when your service ended?
- Did you return home? Where were you?

- How were you received by your family and community?
- How did you readjust to civilian life?
- Did the G.I. Bill support your education?
- How did service change you?
- Are you a member of any Native veterans groups? Which ones?
- Are you a member of any non-Indian veterans groups?
- Do you still stay in contact with any veterans with whom you served?
- Are there any reunions that are important to you? Why?
- From your experience, can you talk a bit about the role veterans play in Indian country?

Reflections

- How did your military service experiences affect your life?
- How has your military service impacted your feelings about war and the military in general?
- Are there lessons to be learned from the way Native communities treat their veterans?
- What message would you like to leave for future generations?

Conclusion

Thank the veteran for sharing their recollections of military service, and let them know you have a few more questions before ending the recording.

- Is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?
- Is there anything you've always wanted to share about your service or veteran experience that you never have?
- What would you like people to know or remember from your story?
- Is there anything else we should talk about that we haven't covered?
- What do you wish more people knew about veterans? About Native American veterans?

Congress created the Veterans History Project (VHP) in 2000 to collect, preserve and make accessible the firsthand recollections of U.S. military veterans who served from World War I through more recent conflicts and peacekeeping missions, so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand what they saw, did and felt during their service.

Visit our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for answers to the most common questions about the Veterans History Project.

For more information visit loc.gov/vets, call (202) 707-4916, or email vohp@loc.gov

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