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Post celebrates Native American Heritage Month

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Lt. Col. Brian Goings, a strategic plans officer in the Combined Arms Center G5, was guest speaker for Fort Leavenworth's National Native American Heritage Month luncheon on Nov. 16.

Goings, a member of the Choctaw tribe, hails from the state of Oklahoma where he grew up in Smithville, a small town within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation.

Goings credited his own family's cross-generational history of military service as a primary factor that made him consider participating in the Army ROTC during college.

"It meant a lot for me to be asked to speak at this luncheon," Goings said. "While considering the content of my remarks for this occasion, I kept coming back to the parallels within my own personal family history and that of the Choctaw Nation as well. I also wanted to draw upon everything I thought would be of interest to attendees — from my grandfather's experiences as a prisoner of war during his service in World War II and my mother's service in Bosnia and Iraq, to my own motivations to engage a career in the Army."

Goings, a 1997 graduate of Oklahoma State University, spoke of several notable Choctaw who volunteered for military service. He shared photographs that showed veterans and described the current geographic location of Choctaw Nation, which is a sovereign government.

"Native Americans have participated in every U.S. war — on one side or the other," Goings said. "Native Americans used their native languages to prevent priority communications from being compromised by the enemy. Choctaw served during World War I as code-talkers and Navajo Tribe members served as wind talkers during World War II."

Col. Edward Bohnemann, CAC chief of staff, said that the nation is grateful for the patriotic service throughout history of the Choctaw Nation and other Native Americans. He also presented Goings with a framed certificate to commemorate the occasion.

Native American heritage has been recognized nationally in modern times by presidential proclamation since 1990 when former U.S. President George H. W. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November 1990 "National American Indian Heritage Month." Subsequent variations of the commemorative name — including "Native American Heritage Month" and "National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month" — have been issued each year since 1994.

"In recognition of the immeasurable contributions that Native Americans have made to our nation, we continue to advocate for expanding opportunity across Indian Country," President Barack Obama stated in his 2016 proclamation. "Indian Country still faces many challenges, but we have made significant progress together since I took office, and we must never give up on our pursuit of the ever brighter future that lies ahead."

The Law Library of Congress has compiled guides to commemorative observations, including a comprehensive inventory of the Public Laws, along with all of the Presidential Proclamations and congressional resolutions related to Native American Heritage Month. More information can be found online at <http://nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov/>.



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Native American Heritage Month luncheon guest speaker Lt. Col. Brian Goings, strategic plans officer, G5, Combined Arms Center, tells luncheon attendees about the 1968 heroics of Medal of Honor recipient Special Forces Master Sgt. Roy Perez Benavidez during his remarks Nov. 16 at the Frontier Conference Center. Goings highlighted a few Native American Medal of Honor recipients, World War I code talkers and Civil War generals and then spoke about his family and what it was like to grow up in the Choctaw Nation in Oklahoma. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp