



**US Army Corps
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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District honors Native American heritage

By Lacey Justinger, Honolulu District Public Affairs

(FORT SHAFTER, HI NR 28-09) The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District, celebrated National Native American Heritage Month on Oct. 23, with a drum and dance ceremony honoring the cultures of the 564 Native American nations.

The District's Special Emphasis Program Committee coordinated the "Living in Many Worlds" program that included a sampling of Native American food, performances by Intertribal Drum, 808NDNZ and Oahu Native Circle Dancers.

"We are a beautiful tossed salad, full of color," said Sgt. Phillip Cornejo from the Warrior Transition Battalion at Tripler Army Medical Center and Native American diversity manager for the Hawaii Army National Guard, during his guest speaker lecture here entitled *See What I See*. "Each individual person represents a piece, a portion of that. We are not a melting pot; we are not trying to be one people because a diverse nation allows each person to shine."

For an hour and a half, more than 40 members of the District watched a visually dynamic performance that showcased artistry and athleticism of 13 dancers in full regalia, five drummers, several singers and a flutist. Several of the performers are military veterans.

"The goal of this event is to promote and celebrate cultural diversity," said Lisa Lyon, Special Emphasis Program Committee event coordinator for the Honolulu District. "We thought it would be great for District staff to be able experience Native American culture through lecture, music, dance and food sampling."

Drumbeats, sung chants and haunting songs played on a wooden pipe-flute echoed throughout the building as men, women and children performed several variations of the Men's Traditional and Straight, the Women's Traditional and Shawl, the Grass, the Sneak-Up and the Tribal dances.

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According to the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, the celebration originated with the Boy Scouts of America in New York, who dedicated one day each year to honor the “First Americans.” President George H. W. Bush designated November 1990 as the National American Indian Heritage Month although the name has changed throughout the last 19 years to include American Indian Day, Native American Heritage Month, National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month and National Native American Heritage Month.

“I really enjoyed the passion and the celebration of spirit that is interconnected with all of us,” said Lt. Col. Jon J Chytka, commander and district engineer of the Honolulu District. He explained that as 564 Native American Tribes are recognized as nations within a nation, he represents the President of the United States during these ceremonies and thanked the performers with commander’s coins.

The Honolulu District Special Emphasis Program Committee hosts various activities, celebrations and events throughout the year to highlight the significant contributions of women, minorities and persons with disabilities.

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Cutlines:

Native American regalia:

Oahu Native Circle Dancers in full regalia (left to right) Donald Provance, Guywood Delacruz and David Long perform for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District, during a National Native American Heritage Month celebration.

Native American dancer:

Catcher Cutstherope from Oahu Native Circle Dancers participates in a National Native American Heritage Month celebration hosted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District.

Native American dancer 2:

Oahu Native Circle Dancer Amber dances and creates music with bells made of tobacco lids attached to her regalia during the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District’s National Native American Heritage Month celebration.

Native American dancer 3:

David Bevett, a Tripler Army Medical Center clinical psychologist, participates in a men’s traditional dance during a National Native American Heritage Month celebration at the Honolulu District.

Native American instruments:

Guywood Delacruz plays a wooden flute as David Bevett, clinical psychologist at Tripler Army Medical Center, accompanies him on the drum during a National Native American Heritage Month celebration at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District.

