

Memoir of a Warrior

By Angela Ramirez

My son, Cristian A. Ramirez, has known he wanted to be in the military for several years. It started when he was very little.

As a small boy, he would ask about the veterans at pow-wow. I would tell him which ones were his family.

He told his Great Uncle Ed Ben in May 2013. He remembers talking to his cousin, Rodney, his Uncle Ed's son, about being a military police with the Marine Corps. He was about 5 or 6 when they had that conversation. It must have been a very powerful one.

We spent his 17th birthday at the USMC recruiter's office. On June 23, 2014, Cristian left at age 18, two weeks after high school graduation, for 13 weeks of boot camp at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, Calif.

On Sept. 11, 2014, he finished his final test – 54 hours, 48 miles, 45 pounds of gear, 36 stations, 29 problem-solving exercises, less than eight hours of sleep and four Meals Ready to Eat – The Crucible. He received his Eagle, Globe and Anchor signifying he had earned the title U.S. Marine.

It was wonderful to attend his family day and graduation a week later.

While he was home on leave, he was able to attend the Field of 1,000 Flags ceremony. The most important part of the event for him was to be there during this opening ceremony of the Celebration of Honor in September.

He was able to be in the Honor Guard once again with his Great Uncle Ed and Tony Molina. Tony has been such an inspiration, mentor and supporter for Cristian for many years now.

When he was thanked by strangers for his service, he was a little surprised at first. He said he hasn't even done anything yet. I told him the thanks is not for what he has done, it is for what he is willing to do and what he will do in the future.

By the time this has been published, Cristian will have finished his 28 days of combat training and be on his way to his Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) school. Upon completion of MOS school, he will be Military Police (MP), just like he told his cousin he wanted to be more than 12 years ago.

I would like to share Cristian's last English paper (May 2014) titled Memoir of a Warrior from when he was a senior at Newport High School:

I have grown up for the majority of my life with a single mom and a sister.

My dad has been around, but has not influenced my choices in life. My maternal grandpa passed away last year; we lived with him on his horse ranch for a couple years when I was in kindergarten and first grade, but we didn't have a close relationship. I have a maternal uncle I am just now getting to know in the last year.

So growing up with mostly women; my mom, sister, grandma and my mom's female cousin – there was not a specific man for me to look up to that I wanted to grow up and be like.

I am a Siletz Indian, currently living "on the rez" as some call it. We have lived there for over 10 years now. My family, from before I was even born, has always held our culture as a part of our identity.

I have grown up a proud Native, a NDN. I was taken into the dance arena as an infant, learning the heartbeat of the drum before I could walk or talk.

My grandma has been the Tribal Whipwoman, the lead woman dancer, for several years now. My sister was part of the Royalty Court for years; we traveled to pow-wows all over the place. So even though I didn't dance much at the pow-wows, I was there ... to watch ... to learn.

A pow-wow is a social event, a time to celebrate and see family. For some, it is a time to dance competitively. A competition pow-wow brings amazing dancers and lots of people.

Grand Entry is when all of the dancers line up by category and enter the dance arena, usually in a single line. This is one of the only times during each session when you see everyone dancing that is dressed down in regalia.

*Please, if you learn nothing else from this, **do not** ever call our clothing a costume. We do not dress up to imitate something we are not, that is what a costume is. We call the clothing "regalia" and if you are wearing regalia, you are "dressed down." Dressing up is a thing children do for play or teenagers/adults do for special occasions.*

So, back to grand entry – this is the most incredible time to watch the pow-wow. If you can only go to a pow-wow for a little bit, this is the part you should not miss.

The lineup begins with the eagle staff carriers and other men dancers that are held in high esteem, the ones that wear the war bonnets and those that carry the eagle bone whistle. Behind these men are Veterans. All Veterans, Native or not, are asked to participate.

My culture puts a huge emphasis on Veterans. Veterans are always honored.



Courtesy photo

Christian A. Ramirez and Ed Ben

Veterans are our Warriors. Our culture has always placed a high value on Warriors, on Honor. My first ribbon shirt was red, white and blue with the design honoring the American flag.

At each of our summer pow-wows, Nesika Illahee, our emcee Nick Sixkiller introduces the dance categories. For many years I have listened to him talk about the Veterans. He tells the crowds each time that historically on a per capita basis, Native Americans have the highest numbers of people in the military service over any other ethnic group.

Growing up, since basically birth, this has been instilled in me: service before self. I see this in what the women in my life do; taking care of others before themselves, helping others, being leaders.

Watching the Veterans, the Warriors, line up after grand entry to introduce themselves, every branch of the military is represented. Several wars and conflicts are represented.

Hearing their stories, I carry their words in my mind, in my heart. They have pride in their service; even though many probably have nightmares about the things

they have seen and done. That is what a Warrior does, protects his people and does what is necessary to save his people.

My grandma's brother, my Great Uncle Ed Ben, has carried the eagle staff, our Nation's flag, at every pow-wow that I can remember that is hosted by our Tribe.

He is a humble man. He is a highly respected man in our Tribe. He is at the front and center of the Grand Entry line each time. This is one of the men in my life that has set an example of what a man is; has set the bar for me to meet.

He is over 80 years old now. I walked in the Honor Guard with him last year in the Loyalty Days parade. That was my first time participating in the Color Guard for our Tribe. We walked through Newport from Safeway to the end of the parade line by the Newport hospital.

Walking with him, seeing the pride he takes in his military service with the Navy during World War II, I know I made the right choice when I signed my contract to become a United States Marine.

My sense of honor, pride, loyalty and devotion is deeply seeded in my heritage, in my genetics. I am a WARRIOR!

US Treasury honors Native American Bank with Bank Enterprise Award

DENVER – Native American Bank has announced that it has received a Bank Enterprise Award (BEA) of \$355,000 in recognition of its service to economically distressed communities.

This award was part of the FY2014 BEA Program offered by the U.S. Department of Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI Fund).

Native American Bank was one of 69 other FDIC-insured depository institu-

tions selected to receive a grant from a pool of \$17.9 million in the FY2014 round of the BEA Program.

The BEA grants will be invested into eligible American Indian communities to assist with commercial loan funding and support their economic growth.

"We are pleased to have received the highest amount awarded to a number of institutions," said Tom Ogaard, president and CEO of Native American Bank. "This award will benefit a number of Native

American economic activities around the country by allowing us to leverage it and provide capital resources where it is needed."

The award will help Native American Bank move forward in its mission to provide access to financial services for Alaska Native and American Indian communities creating economic independence, development and sustainability.

Native American Bank is a \$61 million bank with its corporate headquarters

in Denver, Colo.; a retail branch in Browning, Mont.; and a loan production office in Box Elder, Mont.

Its primary market is American Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations and American Indian businesses and individuals. The bank is owned by 28 federally recognized Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations and Tribal organizations.

For more information about Native American Bank, please visit the bank's website at nabna.com.