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John Herrington First American Indian to Walk in Space

First tribally registered astronaut is member of Chickasaw Nation



Astronaut John Herrington arrives aboard a T-38 jet trainer at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida in 2002. (© AP Images)

Washington -- The first tribally registered American Indian astronaut launched into space aboard the space shuttle *Endeavour* from NASA's Kennedy Space Center November 23, 2002, for the 16th American assembly flight to the International Space Station.

During the mission, astronaut John Bennett Herrington (U.S. Navy commander), a member of the Chickasaw Nation, will become the first American Indian to walk in space.

To honor his American Indian heritage, Herrington is carrying eagle feathers, arrowheads, a handful of sacred ground and a flag of the Chickasaw Nation

with him into space. Herrington's maternal great-grandmother was of Chickasaw descent. Members of the Chickasaw Nation and elders from other tribes will be on hand to witness this historic launch.

Serving as *Endeavour's* flight engineer for launch and landing, Herrington will be one of two astronauts conducting three spacewalks to install a 13.7-meter, 14-ton girder-like structure, called the Port 1 on the station. Once the remainder of the truss is complete, the structure will span more than 91 meters to carry power, data and temperature controls to the electronic outpost of the space station.

Herrington along with the other crew members -- Commander Jim Wetherbee, pilot Paul Lockhart, and mission specialist Michael Lopez-Alegria, will deliver the Expedition Six crew to the station and return the Expedition Five crew to the Earth. That crew transfer is the primary objective of the mission. The Expedition Five crew will be returning home after five months in orbit.

Lopez-Alegria, a native of Spain, will accompany Herrington during the spacewalks and will wear a spacesuit bearing red stripes. Herrington will wear a spacesuit bearing no markings.

Selected by NASA in April 1996, Herrington has logged more than 3,300 flight hours in more than 30 different types of aircraft. He is an experienced naval aviator and naval test pilot. Following his tour as a test pilot, Herrington attended the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School where he earned a master's degree in aeronautical engineering. He is also a Sequoyah fellow with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society.

See "[American Indians Seek Greater Understanding, Recognition](#)" and [Diversity-At Work](#).

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