



# Indigenous Veterans

By L. Jules



## Indigenous Veteran or Aboriginal Veterans

- In the two World Wars, First Nations people were exempt from conscription, were not considered “citizens” of Canada and did not have the right to vote.
- *conscription* means basically writing someone's name on a list—a list that, unfortunately, a lot of people usually don't want to be on.(Merriam-Wester def.)

# Camaraderie

Despite this:

- 4,000 First Nations men volunteered for service in WWI and over 300 died.
- 20,000 First Nations volunteered for service in WWII and over 200 died.
- These numbers represent about 30% of First Nations men eligible to serve



# World War II

- “because we lacked European education, most of our men served in the infantry. We were amongst the first to see the action and the last to come home.” –George Manuel
- Many lost their Indian Status by volunteering to fight for Canada.
- "We're proud of the word volunteer. Nobody forced us. We were good Canadians—patriots—we fought for our country." – Syd Moore, Second World War Veteran



# Why enlist?

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- Equality, when fighting alongside other soldiers during the war Aboriginal men and women were treated equally.
- New outlook on the world and the possibilities of their role in it.
- When they returned home many of these people became leaders in their communities and in a larger political arenas






...not for long

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- Equality faded away as soon as they returned home

A man in a white parka and red hat is kneeling on a frozen lake, holding a rifle. In the background, several snowmobiles are parked on the ice. The scene is set in a cold, snowy environment.

## Veteran's Land Act (VLA)

- Gave most veteran a low-interest loan of \$6000 to purchase agriculture property, to invest in the fishing industry. \$2320 was forgivable
- Not for Indigenous veterans. The most they could apply for was \$2320 through a lengthy paperwork process.
- Many unknown benefits that weren't accessible to them

# 1994

- Finally allowed to participate in Remembrance Day ceremonies as a group
- Permitted to lay a wreath symbolizing the Aboriginal Veterans at the War Memorial in Ottawa







Thomas George (Tommy)  
Prince,

Ojibwa from Manitoba, is Canada's most decorated Aboriginal war veteran. After spectacular acts of bravery and cleverness, in full view of German soldiers, and critical reconnaissance missions he received the American Silver Star and six service medals. He was awarded the Military Medal for Gallantry by King George VI in 1945. When he came back to Canada he was refused the same rights as other returning veterans and couldn't find work so he reenlisted and served in Korea.

# Corporal Francis Pegahmagabow

Ojibwa from Parry Island, Ontario, was the most decorated First People's soldier in WWI. He was a skilled sniper and trench raider and received the Military Medal 3 times. He returned to become Chief of the Parry Island Band.



Thank you to...

- BC First Nations Studies 12 textbook 130-132
- Ha-shilth-sa Newspaper
- Veterans Affairs Canada

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/indigenoustveterans>



# National Aboriginal Veterans Monument

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- Photo of the monument composed of four figures representing the various Aboriginal groups in Canada. Two of the figures hold weapons, and two hold spiritual objects.
- National Aboriginal Veterans Monument
- The National Aboriginal Veterans Monument stands in Confederation Park, in Ottawa.
- This richly symbolic monument is a tribute to the many Aboriginal men and women who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces over the years. It reflects traditional beliefs about honour, duty and harmony with the environment.
- Four figures represent the various Aboriginal groups in Canada. Two of the figures hold weapons, and two hold spiritual objects. They convey a sense of balance, implying that often a desire for peace lies at the root of war. An eagle occupies the highest point of the sculpture. It symbolizes the Creator (known as the Thunderbird), and embodies the spirit of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. The four animals — wolf, grizzly, buffalo and caribou — represent spiritual guides.
- The monument was created by Noel Lloyd Pinay in 2001.

Add Indigenous War Veterans you know here