



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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STATEMENT

For Immediate Release

November 8, 2020

BCAFN CELEBRATES 2020 ABORIGINAL VETERANS DAY

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC – Nov. 8, 2020) – On Sunday November 8th, the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) remembers and honours the proud Aboriginal men and women who served in Canadian military efforts. We hold up our hands in gratitude for their significant service during, and after, times of conflict as they contributed to and preserved some of the shared ideals that shaped the Canadian nation. The history of Aboriginal peoples fighting for their homelands is long, and includes the War of 1812 when warriors helped the British to push back against American expansionism. For hundreds of years Indigenous peoples have stood beside settlers and helped to hold and build Canada. But much of this history has been suppressed and lost over time.

On this day of remembrance all Canadians are encouraged to turn their gaze, listen to, and acknowledge Canada's diverse military history and rich heritage. Indigenous people participated in every 20th century conflict Canada was involved at a higher per-capita rate than any other group. It is estimated that as many as 12,000 Indigenous peoples served in Canada's military service with at least 500 losing their lives. Many overcame substantial challenges to serve, including being forced to learn new languages, cultural differences and traveling far distances.

Outside of the military service, First Nations contributed to various war funds despite being deeply impoverished by oppressive government policies and the absence of their able-bodied men. Some communities, such as the Okanagan Indian Band (formerly Head of Lake Band), saw every man between 20 and 35 years of age enlist. A significant amount of funds (almost \$70,000) was raised and donated during the First and Second World Wars.

Today more than 1200 Indigenous people are currently enrolled in the Canadian Armed Forces and fill other military roles such as the Canadian Rangers, army reservists active predominantly in the North, as well as on remote stretches of our east and west coasts.

Background Links:

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/people-and-stories/indigenous-peoples>

<https://sway.office.com/0aE3S3TF9WjhnyRL?ref=Link>

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