



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
November 8, 2021

BCAFN Honours Indigenous Veterans Today - November 8, 2021

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC) – Today, the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) recognizes National Aboriginal Veterans Day by expressing gratitude and honouring the many First Nations members who served in all of Canada's military operations. Their strength, tenacity, sacrifice and courage are a source of immense pride and accomplishment for their families, communities, and all Canadians.

National initiatives to remember the many contributions of First Nations in Canada to the war efforts are slowly working to create greater awareness and understanding of the unique and extensive personal sacrifices made by them and their communities and the many barriers they overcame in their efforts to serve and defend their homelands and the nation. Tragically, many of these veterans who served in the last century found themselves disenfranchised as Indigenous people since Canadian colonial laws imposed this sacrifice in exchange for their service.

Once known as the "forgotten warriors/soldiers," First Nations veterans faced discrimination, racism and hostility upon their return to Canada. Their struggle continued as they fought and campaigned the government for recognition of their services and proper benefits, which finally lead to a federal government apology and compensation package in 2003. An important gesture and action... but too late for so many.

BCAFN hold up our hands in gratitude for First Nations veterans' significant service and efforts during, and after, times of conflict. We recognize that their trauma and struggle continued as they returned to civilian life in Canada, as the veterans worked to find their place in their communities and Canadian society. Facing discrimination and injustice First Nations veterans fought for equality and recognition and they took back their identities and rights and ensured that their stories are preserved in Canadian history and the national consciousness.

BCAFN also recognizes and honours the many sacrifices and efforts made at home as First Nations families and communities contributed to various war funds despite oppressive government policies that limited their movements and activities. Many families also struggled to cope with the absence of so many of their able-bodied men.

Currently there are approximately 2,800 Indigenous members enrolled in the Canadian Armed Forces. Some also fill other military roles such as the Canadian Rangers, army reservists who are active predominantly in the North, as well as on remote stretches of our east and west coasts.

Background Links:

<http://www.aboriginalveteranlist.ca/?fbclid=IwAR1oH8QVYutKwiAzDd-re5T3BXrfAsetvbJlOGXdOTwmOih5S5xzhCYDPPrw>

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/historical-sheets/indigenous-veterans>

https://www.nfb.ca/film/forgotten_warriors/

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