



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
November 9, 2022

BCAFN Honours Important Contributions by Indigenous Veterans

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory - Prince George, BC) – The BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) is grateful and honours the many First Nations in British Columbia who made significant and important contributions to Canada's military service. Over the years, First Nations displayed incredible strength, determination, generosity, resilience and courage, and are a source of immense pride and respect for their families, communities, and all Canadians. We acknowledge the sacrifices made and remember the family and friends who lost their lives and the deep scars left on our communities with these losses.

This year, Canada Post issued a new stamp to remember the life and achievements of Sergeant Thomas George Prince, one of Canada's most decorated Indigenous war veterans and a prominent Anishinaabe activist. He was well known for his skills and bravery and was awarded 11 medals for heroism during his military service in WWII and Korean War. His warrior spirit remained with him as he returned from overseas and continued to fight for Indigenous rights and equality. After the wars he fought, Prince struggled as a civilian as he did not qualify for Canadian armed forces veteran benefits, including veterans employment programs, veterans education support, or land purchase support for military veterans, because of his status as a First Nations member.

Discrimination against Indigenous veterans continued in Canada for decades after the Korean war. The lives of many Indigenous veterans, including Sergeant Tommy Prince, ended in despair and poverty because of policies and laws that excluded them or removed their status and rights as Indigenous peoples.

In addition, it was not until 1995 that Indigenous peoples were permitted to lay Remembrance Day wreaths at the National War Memorial to remember and honour their dead.

BCAFN recognizes the efforts and determination of First Nations veterans who demanded equality and recognition of their wartime contributions and their activism as civilians to stand against injustice as they fought for their identities and rights. They ensured that their stories and histories, previously ignored, were preserved in Canadian history and the national consciousness.

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

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Background Links:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/sergeant-tommy-prince-stamp-canada-post-1.6619461>

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100038536496033>

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

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

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