

Metis Veterans War and Conflicts Part 2 (Korea, Afghanistan, NATO, United Nations)

Background- Slide 2

As we move into more modern-day conflicts, the sources we rely on to tell these stories change for a few reasons:

Veterans are still living and can recall their experiences for us. The nature of war has changed where unlike past conflicts (like the Great War which had a total of 600,000 enlistees), our Canadian Armed Forces are equipped with more professional military personnel and deploys service members at a smaller rate. Thus, we still have few members that have served in armed combat than in previous conflicts.

Records are becoming readily available for past conflicts and accessible to the public. However, the Privacy Act protects military personnel and families and top secret information from being released, making details on conflicts tricky to find. That is where we rely on our veterans.

In World War 1 & 2, soldiers could not identify as Metis in their records which makes it very difficult to determine how many Metis served. In more recent times, military personnel could identify as Metis but the records are sealed. We rely on testimony and oral history to provide that experience.

We also have the benefit of many ways of recording stories- photo, video, the internet, books, magazines, radio and we also have access to information provided by the countries we have served in.

We are now moving into an era of International diplomacy to prevent and minimize the chance and effects of war. Canada became known as a "Peacekeeping" Nation after its successful defusal of the Suez Crisis in 1956. Other organizations are created, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD- And also tracks Santa Clause), the United Nations (UN) and the Geneva Convention, which work to secure international peace and security. Canadian Armed Forces are known to be small but mighty. We have been often seen as the clinching force in pivotal military events in the eyes of our Allies. Canadian taxpayers have a relatively small appetite for military spending during peacetime.

Korean War - Slide 3

Korean War began on June 25, 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea. This war would continue until July 27th, 1953, when an armistice was signed. The last Canadian Troops left in 1957, and since then, a "Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) has been enforced between the two nations by the United States. While the area has not seen the same level of conflict since the 1950s, the war technically is not over, as no peace treaty has been signed. Canada fought in a United Nations mission, sending more than 27,000 soldiers to fight, of which 516 died.

Canadian Conflicts:

Battle of Kapyong April 22-25- The Battle of Kapyong was an important episode in

the Korean War. The soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, persevered in the face of great adversity to help prevent a potentially costly defeat for the South Korean and UN forces. Their heroic efforts did not go unnoticed, with the Americans awarding them the United States Presidential Unit Citation—a very rare honour for a Canadian unit, 10 killed and 23 injured.

Hill 355- 18 killed, 35 wounded and 14 taken Prisoner

HMCS Iroquois- 2 killed, 10 wounded

United Nations - Slide 4

The United Nations was created on April 25th, 1945, between 50 nations. The goal was to maintain international peace, security and human rights after World War Two. Today it consists of 193 members. Shortly after its creation, Canada earned its title as a Peacekeeping country after its successful defusal of the Suez Crisis in 1956. Our military involvement in the United Nations has waned and fluxed over the decades, but our international reputation remains. It can be noted that while the intentions of the United Nations are admirable, its effectiveness at the political and diplomatic level has been questioned throughout its history. It has been able to minimize some conflicts, but it has not been able to prevent all atrocities from happening.

The United Nations is unique because all members contribute financially based on their GDP. Members can “loan” their armed forces to whichever cause needs support, and the United Nations provides pay for those service members. It is common to have members of many nations serving together as “blue berets” but will still bear their country’s flag on their uniform.

There are many Metis veterans spotlighted in this book who served in many different capacities with the United Nations. They have been involved in Peacekeeping, Policing, Police Training and Security missions. Two veterans highlighted in the veteran’s book are:

Christopher Plummer- Bosnia Herzegovina, Royal Canadian Dragoons on Operation Cavaliers in the United Nations Protection Force

Shelly Claus-Golan Heights

NATO- Slide 5

NATO was created on April 1949 in the aftermath of World War Two. This organization was created to serve the interests specifically of those allied countries in the North Atlantic. Today, it consists of 30 member states. Most recently, NATO membership has been a contested issue in the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Canada has contributed to every NATO operation since its creation. Similar to the United Nations, NATO is a multilateral force where units from different countries work together to support a common cause. The number of Métis veterans who have supported NATO missions cannot be listed on a PowerPoint slide. Ontario Métis have enlisted in combat in support roles and have received numerous commendations for their work.

Korea
West Germany
Cuban Missile Crisis
Balkans
Libya
Cyprus
Kuwait
Golan Heights
Bay of Pigs
Iraq Training Mission- Canadian led
Kosovo

Our veterans have been involved in all Canadian armed conflicts internationally and have also been involved in some unique duties:

FLQ Crisis
Arctic Sovereignty exercises at the Alert Air Base on Ellesmere Island
Falkland Islands
Guard of Honour for various high profile dignitaries
Training of other nations' police and military forces
Intelligence
British Military

Afghanistan - Slide 6

Canadian Armed Forces were pivotal in keeping some of the most volatile areas safe and accessible for both people and trade while being a relatively small force. The mission operated from October 2001 to March 2014. The American Forces remained until August 2021. More than 40,000 soldiers fought in Afghanistan. 158 died during the mission. Initially assigned through NATA as a reconstruction team, but eventually were expanded to be a battle group and were mainly focused in Kabul and Kandahar Province. From 2011 to 2014, the Canadian Forces were no longer engaged in combat roles but were tasked with training and supporting the Afghan national security forces. Sadly, with the withdrawal of the American Forces in 2021, the Taliban have resumed control of most of the area.

Veterans:
Lee Rivet
Derek Anderson

There is sometimes confusion around Canada's participation in Iraq as it coincided with the War in Afghanistan. This was the 1st conflict in Canadian history where we did not support our British allies in an armed conflict. However, Canada is currently leading a Training mission in Iraq to help the Iraqi military maintain peace and stability as they rebuild.

Today - Slide 7

For many of those who served, the CAF was the 1st environment where being Indigenous didn't divide them from the rest of the group. A place of brother/sisterhood with the common bond of service and sacrifice, it did not reflect Canadian society in general. When veterans returned to civil life, it was difficult to adjust to normal life and to the prejudices that still existed, even though the sacrifice of Indigenous veterans had been the same. Because of this, Indigenous veterans were not given proper recognition, accolades, or offered the same support and services when they returned. After decades of advocacy, Indigenous veterans organizations are pushing for all of these. With respect to Metis veterans, the Metis were not recognized by the Canadian government until 1982. As more information and family histories are shared, there is the task of "repatriating" Metis veterans who were identified as Indian or European and were never given the opportunity to serve, fight and die with who they truly were on record. The MNO Veterans Council works to promote the contributions of Metis veterans in Ontario as well as advocate for the expansion of support and services both within the Canadian Armed Forces and in retirement.

Other Points:

Many of our Veterans have not only been involved in Veterans committees and associations but have also represented veterans (Metis and non Metis) within Veterans affairs committees at the Federal level, advocating for mental health and family supports.

House of Commons Standing Committee- Indigenous Veterans: From Memories of Injustice to Lasting Reconciliation- February 2019

National Aboriginal Veterans Monument- Unveiled in 2001 in bronze, Ottawa ON
Show Heritage Monuments On
Sculpture-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptHASp4Do6A>

National Indigenous Veterans Day. Why do we have an Indigenous Veterans Day? Remembrance Day recognizes all veterans who served in the Canadian military and the signing of the armistice that started the peace treaty negotiations of the First World War. It is also celebrated throughout the British Commonwealth and the Allied countries as a whole. Indigenous Veterans were never afforded the opportunity to be recognized. Metis could not identify as their own culture, and First Nations still were not able to vote, hold office or even leave the reservation without the permission of an Indian Agent. They had made the greatest sacrifice for a nation that wished they would disappear. Thus, today we celebrate Indigenous veterans of the past and present, providing the opportunity to be recognized for who they are and the contributions their communities have made to Canada and the world.

Workplace Culture- While the Canadian Armed Forces is unique, it is also a workplace, and there is a greater conversation about how to ensure that ALL workplaces are inclusive and supportive. Our world is connected at a much more intricate level, which demands more transparency and acceptance of all people.

Resources - Slide 8

There are very few resources on Indigenous people in modern conflict and even fewer that illustrate the Metis experience. It is our mission to support and promote the messaging of our Veterans to teachers and in schools so that a greater understanding can be cultivated. It is vital that we preserve the stories so that we will never forget the contribution and sacrifice of our veterans.

Korean War

Korean War Backgrounder (generic, not Metis Specific)

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/pdf/remembrance/history/koreanwar/kapyong.pdf>

NATO

Governor General Mary Simon Brings New Representation to Indigenous Peoples' Centuries-Old History with Canada's Armed Forces

<https://natoassociation.ca/governor-general-mary-simon-brings-new-representation-to-indigenous-peoples-centuries-old-history-with-canadas-armed-forces/>

United Nations

UN Blue Book

Afghanistan

Afghanistan War Backgrounder (generic not Metis Specific)

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/pdf/cr/pi-sheets/afghanistan-eng.pdf>

Metis Specific Resources

The Metis Nation of Ontario Veterans Council

<https://www.metisnation.org/governance/governing-structure/mno-veterans/>

Veterans Affairs Canada, Sierra Noble,

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/who-we-are/departement-officials/minister/commendation/bio/466>

Warriors Lament by Sierra Nobel at the Vimy Re-Dedication, France, April 9, 2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYLv5wasaHc>

Vimy Ridge- John Arcand & Tahnic Cunningham

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRucLzrO22A>

General Resources related to FNMI veterans:

The Creation of the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument- Decoding Art- Heritage Monuments- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptHASp4Do6A>

National Aboriginal Veterans Monument Activities- Colouring Sheet-

https://www.veterans.gc.ca/pdf/history/aboriginal/colour_e.pdf

Veterans Affairs Canada, Indigenous Veterans

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