



**Royal Canadian Legion
Liberation of the Netherlands
Branch 005**



FEBRUARY 2023, Edition 2023-02

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THE STORY

Commando raids against the ,Atlantic Wall'

In this edition a fairly unknown action, but with a large Canadian share

Operation Gauntlet

**Read more?
Click start!**





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Board page.

Although the Meteorological Spring already started on March 1, the Astronomical Spring held in the Netherlands will start on March 20.



For our members of the Colour Party it will make little difference. They will also be our representatives in the spring, together with delegation members, regardless of the weather conditions. In 2022 there were almost forty invitations for the entire year. In 2023 there will certainly be more.

In the meantime, we are making preparations for the General Members Meeting on April 16, but also for other activities such as a ceremony for the Indigenous Legacy Project.

This project was created to honour the Canadian soldiers with Indian roots. These soldiers, also referred to as "First Nation Soldiers", "served with thousands in the Canadian army, navy and air force".

In connection with this project, we have started a study to identify which soldiers with this background are buried in the Netherlands or are mentioned on the memorial walls.

We have now received invitations for, among other things, a visit with the Colour Party and/or a Delegation to Groesbeek, Etten, Apeldoorn, Wageningen, Rucphen, Gilze, Wilnis, Veenendaal, Holten, Kapelsche Veer and, last but not least, Vimy. We hope to be able to meet this requirements with a delegation that is as complete as possible.

In February, a delegation from the board met with representatives of the Royal British Legion and the American Legion.

The aim of this meeting was to investigate whether there are possibilities for a form of cooperation. We will keep you informed of any developments. We will keep you informed of any developments.

On behalf of the Board,



mr. Jan C.K. van Loo, Secretary and Legal Officer



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Kapelsche Veer, February 4, 2023.

Commemoration of the pointless prestige struggle between two generals for 10 square kilometers of land, which had no strategic importance.

See also the background story in our 2019-12 edition.

The commemoration was a dignified, stylish, commemoration. Among those present, the daughter of a Polish lieutenant who had taken part in the battle here. It were the, already weakened, Polish units which attacked first. In the end it were Canadian units which made the final push. She spoke briefly, as did a Polish priest.

Also read (again) the background story of our edition 2022-11.
The story of **Donald Douglas MacKeracher**, killed here on 30-01-1945.



In the photo on the left, the willow tree in the back ground on the right, here coloured green. (hs)

Also present was a representation of the Maczek Memorial and the Royal Canadian Legion, Liberation of the Netherlands' Branch 005.

The latter represented by 1st Vice-President Gerrit Bruggink.



In the background the willow tree, which „saw everything 'and survived



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Many flowers were laid, our national anthem ,het Wilhelmus' and ,The Last Post' were played, after which a minute of silence was observed.



Photos on this one
page:

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**Groesbeek,
February 7, 2023.**

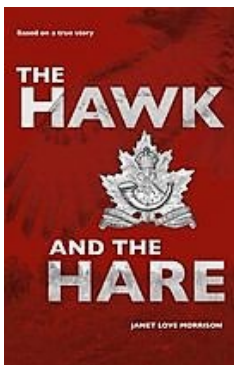
On February 7, 2023, an unusual group was present in the library of Groesbeek.

They visited the opening ceremony of an exhibition about the North Americans, often referred to as 'the natives' or 'Indians'. ('First Nations' is the most correct term)

The organization was set up by the Groesbeek Airborne Friends Foundation.

The opening was performed by Warrant Officer Joel Pederson and Mrs. Janet Love Morrison.

Joel Pederson is a First Nation himself.



Janet Love Morrison gave a brief presentation of her book, "The Hawk and the Hare" and read some passages.

It is about her father's friendship during WW2 with the First Nation soldier Reggie Johnson.

Together they served with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Regiment (the Riley's).

The book is based on her father's stories and data from the war diaries of the regiments.



Comrades Berry and Yvonne Swarthoff (who else?) did also contribute to the design of the exhibition.

Among those present were more members of RCL Branch 005, namely Danny and Lies Murphy, Henk van de Boom, Alice van Bekkum and Richard Hendriks.

This exhibition will last until the end of March and is definitely worth seeing.





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**Groesbeek,
February 8, 2023.**

The day after the opening of the exhibition in the library, Warrant Officer Joel Pedersen had a completely different task.

He fulfilled the ceremonial cleaning (smudging) around a plaque at hotel-restaurant De Wolfsberg in Groesbeek. Joel Pedersen, himself of native descent, performed the cleansing with the fragrant smoke of smoldering herbs.



The plaque at the Wolfsberg commemorates the native (First Nations) soldiers who were part of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry.

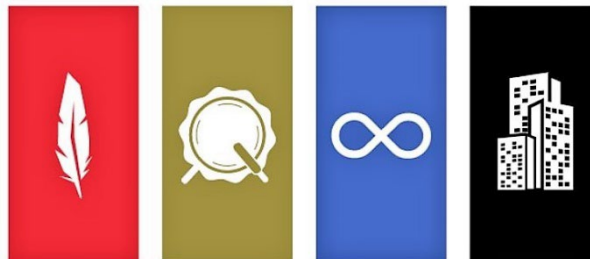
The regiment that took part in the operation launched from the Groesbeek surroundings in February 1945. (**Operation Veritable**)



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The spot near the restaurant was deliberately chosen: many of the soldiers celebrated their last Christmas here.
As far as is known, the plaque is the first on European territory to refer to the sacrifices First Nations made during WW2.





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**Groesbeek
February 8, 2023.**

Commemoration Operation Veritable.
In addition to the unveiling of the plaque, the Groesbeek Airborne Friends Foundation also organized the annual commemoration of 'Operation Veritable.



Commemoration Ceremony

Canadian War Cemetery
Zevenheuvelenweg 38, Groesbeek

Program

13.45 Hrs Arrival guests
14:00 Hrs Start ceremony
14:35 Hrs End

Unveiling Ceremony

De Wolfsberg
Mooksebaan 12, Groesbeek

Program

15.00 Hrs Arrival guests
15.30 Hrs Start ceremony
16.00 Hrs End

The programming of the commemoration largely followed the usual lines.

However, there were two special adjustments:

The first: a number of children from the primary school Adelbrecht-Windekind had made memorial stones (inushuks*) themselves, which were laid prior to the laying of the wreaths.

Two of them also read an English poem.

The second: A speech of Mathilde Roza, an Associate Professor at Radboud University Nijmegen and working in the North American Studies.

Wreaths were laid by, among others, Mr. Wijers, deputy mayor of the municipality of Berg en Dal, the ambassador of Canada, HE Ms. Lisa Helfand, the mayors of the German towns of Kleve and Kranenburg.

Mrs. Janet Love-Morrison and many, many others.

There was cooperation from: Batavorum Pipes and Drums and Theo Jetten (bugler) and the Heijens choir Nèj Hèjs.

RCL, Liberation of the Netherlands' Branch 005 was also present with the Colour Party. Comrade Danny Murphy laid a wreath on behalf of RCL Branch 005

- * The word "inukshuk" means "in the likeness of a human." For generations, Inuit have been creating these impressive stone markers on the vast Arctic landscape. Inukshuks serve several functions, including guiding travellers, warning of danger, assisting hunters and marking places of reverence.



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Speech of Mrs. Roza.

Good afternoon. My name is Mathilde Roza. I'm an Associate Professor at Radboud University Nijmegen and work in the North American Studies Department.

It is a great honour to be present here today and to briefly speak to you on the topic of Canadian Indigenous people in the Second World War.

In the Canadian context, the term Indigenous Peoples is used as an umbrella term to refer to three large — and culturally diverse — groups: First Nations, Métis (the Canadian word to refer to "mixed" people of both white and indigenous descent) and Inuit. Another umbrella term that is used in the Canadian context is Aboriginal Peoples

It is very difficult to establish the exact number of Canadian indigenous soldiers who fought in WWII: only those whose native identity had been registered by the Canadian government were counted. These were the so-called "Status Indians." The official number in the Canadian records is around 3.000, but numerous non-status Indians, Métis and Inuit were not recorded as such. Some scholars believe that the actual number may have been as large as 8.000.

Of those officially listed as Indigenous, the vast majority served in the Army Branch: the Royal Canadian Navy maintained a colour line until 1943, requiring that personnel be—and I quote—"Of Pure European Descent and of the White Race." While a handful of indigenous people did manage to get into the Navy, the numbers were very small, and remained low after 1943. The Royal Canadian Airforce had the same racial restriction but changed its policy early on in the conflict. Still, few Indigenous people joined. Most indigenous soldiers, then, served in the Army.

Today, more and more research is being conducted on Indigenous participation in the war. Nevertheless, our understanding of their experiences in the army and on the battle fields is still limited.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the soldiers were well-respected by their comrades and encountered little racism. What they did encounter, however, were stereotypical views of them as "Indians". From the start of Confederation in 1867 and the creation of the so-called "Indian Act," which defined interactions between the Canadian government and the hundreds of First Nation Bands, Canada's indigenous peoples were viewed and treated as second-rate people. They were thought of as unintelligent, stuck in the past, unable to live independent lives, and as belonging to low and inferior cultures.

They were confined to reservations or reserves, which they were prohibited to leave without permission, were forced to attend government schools, and were forbidden to speak their languages, and practice their culture.





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On the other side of the same coin, curiously enough, there were the so-called “positive” stereotypes such as the noble savage, the spiritually wise man or woman of nature, and that of the fierce and skillful warrior who could sneak up on the enemy without being seen, who could smell the enemy from miles away or have the courage of a lion.

Although indigenous peoples did have certain cultural skills, they were not, as people thought during the 1940s, innately, biologically, equipped to perform well on the battlefield. Sadly, because of this romantic belief in the Indian as belonging to a race of great warriors, many indigenous men ended up in the most dangerous of positions. Or they felt forced to live up to this idealized view of them, took greater risks and paid with their lives.

What we do know for sure is that the position of WWII indigenous soldiers in the army was generally better than the situation outside of the army, either before the war or in the decades thereafter. Returning home after the war, racism, discrimination and marginalization deeply impacted the veterans’ lives and, in many cases, robbed them of their veteran’s privileges and excluded them from the compensations that white veterans did receive. On a more positive note, veterans also contributed to the formation of new political organizations and helped further the cause of indigenous peoples through protests and petitions. By recognizing indigenous soldiers and by honoring them today, we provide greater visibility to them as individuals, and to the issues that continue to negatively influence indigenous lives in Canada today.

In this military cemetery, we can visit the graves of at least 24 First Nations and Métis soldiers. They hail from very different areas in Canada, many from Ontario but also from Manitoba, British Columbia and other provinces. It is important to remember that they all belong to greatly diverse cultures. We should honor them as human beings who gave their lives for freedom, and we should honor the identities that they had and the cultures they belong to.

Hopefully, it will only be a matter of time before these graves too, will be marked by the symbols that were recently (June 2022) instituted by the Canadian Armed Forces. The symbols will serve to visually identify the graves of Indigenous Peoples by adding the Medicine Wheel for First Nations and the Infinity Symbol for Métis people. In another step, traditional indigenous names will be added. This is very important work. After all, it is essential that people be remembered for who they were, especially in death.

Thank you.

Mathilde Roza



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Miscellaneous. (Martin Reelick's tip)

Page from the Newsletter of Lethbridge Branch 4 General Stewart.

Soldiers honoured each Christmas in The Netherlands

Candlelight ceremonies began in the Netherlands to show thanks and to honour those who liberated the country and its people from German occupation during the Second World War. It is a way to ensure these soldiers are remembered at Christmas and not forgotten.

In 1995, the people of the Netherlands held a special ceremony to commemorate their liberation by Canadian forces fifty years earlier.

Dutch children placed lit candles on the graves of Canadian soldiers and the candles remained lit overnight in silent tribute. Residents were drawn to the cemeteries by the soft red glow of the candles burning in the dark.

As a result, commemorative can-

dlelight tributes have now become annual ceremonies in the Netherlands and other European countries.

This year post COVID has made it more agreeable to have the many of the community come together again.

Similar tributes take place across Canada in both public and private cemeteries. Encouraging youth, their families, Veterans and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members to interact with one another.

Inspired by the candles place in the Netherlands, the Field of Crosses in Calgary recently introduced this tradition during Veteran's week.

It also engages local public as well as youth in placing candles. It has become an important element for the community during Veteran's week.



Photo by Yvonne Swarthoff
-Klein Beekman
Youth pause to pay respects after candles were placed at the graves.



A coin produced by Richard Hendriks in 2022 to reflect the placing of candles as a symbol to never forget at the graves in the Canadian War Cemeteries in the Netherlands on Christmas Evening.



Photo by Yvonne Swarthoff-Klein Beekman
Citizens and dignitaries assemble before placing candles at the graves in the Canadian Holten War Cemetery in The Netherlands.



Photo by Motivated by Nature
Modelled after the ceremony in the Netherlands on Christmas evening, the practice was adopted by the Field of Crosses in Calgary. Seen here are a portion of 3500 crosses lit up in November 2022.



Photo by Yvonne Swarthoff
-Klein Beekman
Lt Edmond O'Meara served in the Regina Regiment and is buried in Groesbeek Cemetery. Son of George and Florence O'Meara, of Lethbridge, Alberta.



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Now something quite different.

Not about war, not about commemorations or monuments.
This is about NOW and, hopefully, a good FUTURE.

Reclaiming body sovereignty.

A Haíłzaqv woman is planning the 1st birth in her home territory in 21 years.



Steven Smith (Tłatla'lonam), left, and 'Qátuw'as are excited about being the first couple to give birth in Bella Bella, B.C., in 21 years. They hope to set an example for other Indigenous people around decolonizing birthing. (Rhon Wilson)

By Angela Sterritt
CBC News
Feb. 18, 2023

Read their story and see more pictures by activating this link:

<https://www.cbc.ca/newsinteractives/features/reclaiming-body-sovereignty>



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In the "pipeline" for a future edition.

Dutch man buys WWII-era vehicle and tracks down family of New Brunswick-Canada soldier who drove it.





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Upcoming.

The best way to stay informed: [see our agenda.](#)

To end with a smile:

