

First nations men in ww1 essay examples

[Countries](#), [Canada](#)



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Introduction

Despite their small numbers and their hesitant relationship with the Canadian government, the Nation's people contributed to the war. For many reasons, the exact numbers of the people who volunteered in the war cannot be ascertained. Nevertheless, the First Nation's people volunteered during the war. Their number could be estimated at around four thousand members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. These First Nation's people were accorded limited civil rights during the time before the war. The British government declared war on Germany in 1914. Since Canada was a member of the British Empire, it was automatically at war. All the Canadian citizens from across all its borders responded swiftly. A month after the war broke; about 32, 000 volunteers arrived at the new camp at Valcartier, Quebec aboard 100 special trains.

The war proved that the First Nation's people had a fighting spirit that was not suppressed through the reservation life. It proved that whenever duty called upon them, they were there to lend a helping hand. When they saw a call to fight for civilization, they showed the bravery of their warriors. During the reign of Robert Borden as the Canadian Prime Minister, the government did not expect the First Nation's people to volunteer as they did in the war. In the first instance, the government hoped to discourage the aboriginal people through the adoption of a policy that barred them to serve overseas. This policy stemmed from a belief that the enemy regarded the aboriginal First Nation's people as cruel. They also feared that this stereotyped view would give rise to the inhumane treatment of the First Nation's people if they were taken as prisoners. Nevertheless, with the rising need for more troops in the battlefields, the government abolished this policy in the second year of the war (1915). There were also a large number of enlistment applications from the First Nation's people.

During World War 1, the First Nation people's troops were faced with double cultural barrier in the military. There was a racial prejudice that marked the contemporary non-aboriginal world, and a military hierarchy that worked almost exclusively in English. Most of the First Nation's volunteers in the war could not speak the English language. The First Nations soldiers left remarkable accomplishments during the war. During the war, some of them were commissioned as officers and others served as combat instructors, and battle-hardened platoon leaders. Because of their pre war wilderness experience and hunting experiences with weapons, they excelled in the battlefields as snipers and scouts. In this paper, I will provide an analysis of

the reasons that made the aboriginal/First Nation's people to volunteer to become soldiers in World War 1 and their treatment as soldiers and veterans.

Discussion

During the World War 1, which lasted for four years between 1914 and 1918, Many First Nation's people were voluntarily enlisted in the Canadian armed forces. These people served in units and the theaters that the Canadians took part in them. It is estimate that almost 500 of the First Nation's people (servicemen) lost their life in the foreign battlefields. The First Nation's men and women serving in Saskatchewan during the World War 1 were also estimated at about 800.

Additional Troops Required in the Battlefield

During the commencement of the war, the Canadian officials contemplated the role of the First Nation's people in the war. In Ottawa, the initial response was hesitation. During these times, early literature record that the First Nation's people were associated with cruelty, torture and scalping. These practices were prohibited (unacceptable) under the rule and regulations of the war that were laid out in the 1906 Geneva Convention. During these discussions, several dedicated and enthusiastic First Nation's people had successfully reached the recruitment stations. They had even started training for the overseas service. It is believed that either the militia units were unaware of the prohibition against the First Nation's people, or they could have intentionally decided to ignore the prohibition because they accepted them into their military camps.

In the late 1915 and early 1916, the government of Prime Minister Robert Borden realized that the number of front line units were increasingly reducing and needed replacement. The recruitment efforts adopted by the recruitment teams did not yield desirable results to counter the reducing number of the front line units. This led to the move by the government to permit the First Nation's people to volunteer in the military. The First Nation's people were also aware of the fact that the war was cruel and that it posed a threat to their homes, families, districts and countries. Therefore, they felt the need to provide protection to their borders through engaging in the war.

During the fur trade, the First Nation's people majorly engaged in the hunting of the fur bearing animals and trapping the pelts. Through these activities, which majorly took place in the wilderness, the aboriginal people were conversant with the wilderness and their hunting skills led to the sharpness in shooting. This encouraged the government to use them as snipers and guides through the wilderness. The First Nation's people had been willing to participate in the war, and when they were called upon by the government lend a helping hand, they voluntarily joined the military where they served the same roles as the Canadian forces.

Excitement and Unemployment

It is also assumed that most of the First Nation's people wanted to be involved in the war for the same reasons that most of the British-Australian troops did. Most of these volunteers were carried away with the excitement of the war. Additionally, they believed that the war presented them with the opportunity to tour, see the world, and are paid for it. Considering the fact

that the First Nation's people had frequent violent encounters in the wilderness, the art of the war did not pose a challenge to them. These First Nations people were loyal to their country that they felt the need to support it in the war. In addition to this, others also hated the British for their cruelty; they took the war to be an opportunity to rebel against the later. In addition to these factors, the First Nation's people were hunters and gatherers, they were sure that after the war, they would return with better weapons such as guns that they could use in their hunting activities.

During the War

Once the volunteers and the other soldiers were abroad in the battlefields, most of the Métis and the Inuit recruits were assigned special roles that matched their wilderness experience. However, the positions that they were given such as snipers and scouts were very risky that most of the Canadian soldiers feared to undertake. They also required great skills and surreptitiousness. The scouts were responsible for slipping behind the enemy lines in a bid to gather information about the numbers and positioning of their enemies. Due to their sharpness, snipers shot the enemies from distant and concealed positions. The snipers always walked in duos; a spotter charged with the responsibility of observing and locating a target, and a shooter.

Since the First Nation's people were new to the war compared to their counterparts, and considering that they had the excitement of joining the war, most of them died in the early encounters of their presence in the foreign battlefields. The Canadian and Australian soldiers also came behind them to take cover. There are no specific data of the number of aboriginal

volunteers who died in the war, but it is assumed that they were the main reason for survival of the Canadian soldiers, who later received recognition for the efforts of the First Nation's people. When the war ended, both troops returned home.

After the War

The war finally ended after four years. The beginning year of the war blocked the First Nation's people from participating in the war. However, they were actively involved in the later years of the war. When the hostilities of the war ended, the surviving members of the military, including the volunteers returned home to their friends and families. Most of the volunteers returned to their pre war activities. Unfortunately, some of them were wounded and adversely injured in the war that they could not resume their traditional ways of life. Since their villages were remote, some of their troops were delayed in their return journeys. On their arrival, they learned that their families and friends had not heard about the war for quite some time. This was due to the fact there poor communication networks to deliver the families at home messages from the battlefields.

Even though the war was cruel, the most tragic moments for the First Nations people came when they returned to their homes. The nation they had served in the war failed to recognize their efforts. Upon their return, they were shunned and their efforts and sacrifices in the battlefields ignored. Their families were also oppressed even more with their respective federal and state governments with cruel incentives. For instance, the soldier settlement schemes appropriated land not available to them. The First Nation's surviving soldiers were also prohibited from having a drink with

their mates at their local pubs. Even worse still, the wounded and mentally scarred First Nation's veterans did not receive government support compared to their counterparts. These unappreciated efforts led to the Aboriginal Rights Movement in the 1930's. They argued out that the Australian nation, which they had willingly served in the war, had neglected them and failed to support them in getting on with life. They were bitter because of the fact that many of their family members died in the battlefields supporting the nation that had failed in the latter days to recognize their efforts. After the war, the commonwealth government was in support of the public opinion and went further to insist on legislations that made sure that the First Nation's surviving soldiers did not get the same entitlements as the British-Australian soldiers.

Conclusion

During the period that World War 1 broke out, Canada, being one of the colonies was automatically involved in the war. Early in the 1900's, legislations had been enacted that ensured that the First Nation's people were undermined by the Canadian society. During this time, the Canadian whites considered themselves superior over their aboriginal counterparts. These legislations later proved unnecessary during the World War 1. For instance, the policy prohibited any person to work in foreign countries unless they were of white origin. When soldiers were dying and more recruitment was required in the foreign battlefields, the Prime Minister's administration had to bend the policies to suit the enlistment of the First Nation's people into the military.

The First Nation's people had an option to deny the invitation. However, they

felt patriotic enough to go and fight in the war that they knew could interfere with their homes, districts and country. There are several reasons that have been attributed to the First Nation's people volunteering in the World War 1. There is no single reason that can be attributed to their willingness to serve their nation. For instance, the First Nation's people were filled with the excitement and anxiety to visit foreign countries in which the battles were fought. Additionally, it could be argued that due to their native and cultural practices of gathering, hunting and trapping during the fur trade, made them interested in the war. Other information also reveal that the First Nation's people were tricked by the authorities to engage in the war since they had vast experience in the wilderness, they were sharp shooters and could be used as snipers and scouts.

Their hunting and trapping cultures could have also led to their voluntary enlistment into the military since they intended to return home with the weapons such as guns to use in the wilderness to hunt down fur bearing animals. The other reason that can be attributed to their voluntary military involvement could be that they were angry with the British and wanted a platform to repay the injustices they had faced in the hands of the former. The most remarkable thing about the involvement of the volunteering soldiers is not the efforts they put in the battlefields. However, it is notable that after the war ended and they returned to their homes, the government ensured that it enacted policies that barred the surviving volunteer soldier from enjoying the same entitlements as their white counterpart. The policies such as the settlement scheme ignored the former and even those who were

wounded from the foreign battlefields while fighting for their country were not compensated nor cared for by the government.

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