

# HONOURING FIRST NATIONS VETERANS

and the First World War, 1914-1918

## Canada and World War I

November 11, 2018 marked one hundred years since the armistice that ended the First World War. The world's first modern war - remembered now for ghastly trench warfare, artillery assaults, infantry charges, and poison gas - resulted in then unheard-of casualties and set the international stage for the Second World War.

When Britain declared war on Germany in 1914, as a dominion within the British Empire, Canada was automatically at war. 'For King and Country' became a rallying cry across the nation.

The first Canadian contingent of troops entered the battle in the spring of 1915 outside of the Belgian city of Ypres. The Canadians gained a reputation as a fierce and effective military force, fighting in battles that included Vimy, Passchendaele, Amiens, Arras, and Mons.

By war's end 630,000 Canadians had enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force for service overseas. 60,000 were killed and 170,000 were wounded.



Aboriginal War Memorial, Ottawa  
Source: [www.canada.ca](http://www.canada.ca)







The Pas/Opaskwayak Cree Nation, MB  
WWI Veterans, 1919. Sam Waller Museum

## From Treaty Table to European Battlefield

Treaty No. 1 was made between the Crown and First Nation leaders in 1871. First Nations in Manitoba went on to engage in further Treaty-making with the Crown; Treaties No. 2 through No. 5 ensued (as did adhesions to Treaty No. 6 and No. 10). Government officials at the time of Treaty-making guaranteed First Nations that they would not be forced to fight for Canada in times of war. There was no official government policy concerning volunteer enlistment.

Those First Nations who voluntarily enlisted in World War I were the sons and grandsons of the signatories to the Manitoba Numbered Treaties. The relationship with the Crown was enduring. First Nations saw the Treaty arrangement as a partnership in which the two parties live together as brothers, side by side. They emphasized that the Treaties were made in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and that the parties made solemn commitments to live in peace and to help one another. Participation in WWI was a means to honour and strengthen the sovereign bond between First Nations and the Crown and to uphold the sacred promises made at the time of Treaty-making.



Treaty medals were and remain symbols of the Treaty relationship