

FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM

Canadians served on land, in the air and on the water in the Second World War.

CANADA DECLARED WAR ON GERMANY ON SEPTEMBER 10, 1939, ON ITALY ON JUNE 10, 1940 AND ON JAPAN ON DECEMBER 8, 1941.

TALKING CODE

Soldiers who spoke Cree, like Alberta's Charles "Checker" Tomkins, were known as code talkers. They radioed battle instructions in Cree to the front lines where another code talker translated them back into English. The Germans were never able to crack the "code."



DEFENDING THE COASTS

Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) planes patrolled Canada's east coast to watch for U-boats and protect merchant ships. On the west coast, they guarded against attacks from Japan.

TRAINING FLYERS

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was one of Canada's most important contributions to the war. In more than 200 locations across the country, more than 131,000 Allied flight crew members were trained for service and battle.



ABOUT 1,159,000 CANADIANS AND NEWFOUNDLANDERS SERVED IN THE WAR. MORE THAN 45,000 DIED, AND MORE THAN 55,000 CAME HOME WOUNDED.



VALUABLE BONES

Early in 2020, the Canadian government honoured Qapik Attagutsiak for her work during the war. She and other Inuit collected untold thousands of bones from dead animals. It was part of a huge recycling plan to make ammunition, airplane glue and more war supplies.



Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (shown above left with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill) first thought Canada might play a limited role in the war. Over time, and especially after the fall of France in June 1940, Canada's commitment to the war was increasingly an unlimited one. He worried French and English Canadians could turn against each other, as had happened in the First World War, but he guided the country forward through difficult times.

CAUTIOUS AND CAREFUL



BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Ships sailing back and forth between Canada and Great Britain carrying supplies, known as the Merchant Navy, had to be on the lookout for prowling packs of German warships, especially U-boats (submarines, from the German word *Unterseeboot*). The Royal Canadian Navy protected the Merchant Navy ships, which were the targets for the U-boats. Their main base was Halifax.



THE NAZIS WERE THE RULING PARTY IN GERMANY. THEIR LEADER, ADOLF HITLER, WAS CRUEL AND BRUTAL. HE PLANNED TO TAKE OVER AS MUCH OF THE WORLD AS HE COULD, AND TO KILL THOSE HE HATED. HE AND HIS NAZI COMMANDERS ROUNDED UP JEWISH PEOPLE AS WELL AS OTHERS HE WANTED TO GET RID OF. THE NAZIS KILLED MORE THAN SIX MILLION JEWS AND MILLIONS OF OTHERS.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

From July to October 1940, Canadians serving in both the British Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) fought back German planes to defend the island kingdom. Although Britain suffered from the mass bombings of the Blitz, the Allies stopped the planned enemy invasion.

D-DAY AND NORMANDY

On June 6, 1944, the Allies invaded German-occupied France. About 14,000 Canadian troops landed on what was code-named Juno Beach. The navy provided 110 ships and the RCAF had 15 squadrons in the air. For the next three months, Canadians and Allied forces fought ferociously to free large parts of France from Nazi control.

DIEPPE

The Canadian army, navy and air force all took part in the Allied raid on Dieppe, France on August 19, 1942. Thousands of troops landed on the beach, but the enemy was ready for them. The raid gave Allied commanders information that would help them plan the D-Day invasions, but at a terrible cost. Of the 5,000 Canadian soldiers involved, 906 died, 2,460 were wounded and nearly 2,000 were taken prisoner.





Flying at night in their bulky seven-person Lancaster or Halifax bombers, members of the No. 6 (RCAF) Bomber Command struck German factories, docks, railways and other enemy targets. Sometimes their bombs hit ordinary people, but their dangerous missions damaged the German war machine.

BOMBING GERMANY

THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN

From 1943 to 1945, Canadian troops fought fiercely on the Italian island of Sicily, and then on the mainland. Crucial battles took place at Ortona, where the Canadians defeated the Germans in brutal house-to-house fighting.

HONG KONG

The first battle for Canadian soldiers was a terrible one. Sent to the British colony of Hong Kong, two Canadian battalions fought bravely against an unexpected Japanese attack in December 1941, before surrendering on Christmas Day. Survivors were taken prisoner for years. Many died from beatings, hard labour and starvation.

FINISHING THE FIGHT

Canadians were at the centre of the Allied push to remove German forces from the Netherlands, whose people were weary and starving. From September 1944 to April 1945, the First Canadian Army fought through a muddy winter, first defeating the Germans in the Scheldt and then in the Rhineland. The Canadians were greeted by the Dutch with joy and thanks.

THE WAR IN EUROPE ENDED WHEN GERMANY SURRENDERED ON MAY 8, 1945. JAPAN SURRENDERED ON AUGUST 15.