Purpose: Canada’s Aboriginal People have fought on the front lines of every major battle since the War of 1812 yet their stories of bravery are not always told. To honour the contributions of Canada’s Aboriginal soldiers, students will listen, retell, and respond to stories of Aboriginal war heroes.

Estimated time: 70 minutes

Resources required:
- Talking stick (optional, see Activity Step 4 below)

Resources included:
- Short stories of Aboriginal veterans

Activity:
1. Remind or introduce students to Rememberance Day: a day when we remember and honour the people who have protected Canada and stood up for freedom. Let them know that, although we don’t always hear as much about them, some of those people were Aboriginal Canadians. Aboriginal Canadians have fought for Canada in every war, and many of them have been recognized for their bravery and courage.

2. Many Aboriginal People make sure that important events and special people are remembered by telling stories about them. These stories are passed down from older people to younger people, so that no one forgets. What are some other ways that Canadians make sure important things are remembered? (E.g. writing books, making movies, building monuments)

3. Tell students that, in order to help them remember some of the courageous Aboriginal Canadians who fought for Canada during war time, they’re going to listen to stories about these people. After hearing each story, they will have an opportunity to retell parts of the story and respond to it. Read to your students the biographies below.

4. Optional: Introduce your students to the Aboriginal concept of the talking stick. In a group discussion, it helps make sure that everyone has a chance to speak, and that everyone is listened to. Only the person holding the talking stick is allowed to speak, and everyone else must listen. Once the speaker is finished, the talking stick is passed from person to person around the circle. Anyone who has something to say may hold on to the stick while they share. If they have nothing to say, they simply pass the stick to the next person. This talking stick may be used when responding to each of the stories below. Any easily-held item can be used, preferably one that would be visible to others in the group while being held.

5. After reading each story, ask a few students to retell the parts of the story they remember. Remind students that by retelling the story we can make sure that the courage of these people is remembered. Continue until the students have recounted all the main points of the story.

6. Ask students to share their own responses to the story. Some example questions are:
   a. If you could thank the main character for something, what would you thank them for?
   b. Even though none of you are in the army, can you think of a story from your life that is like this story?

7. After all three stories have been read, ask students to choose one of the people that they have heard about, and decide who – outside of the classroom – they will share the story with. Have them share why they chose the Aboriginal veteran they did (e.g. because they are brave; because they died, etc.), and who the student is going to share their story with.

8. Set a time in the next week for students to report back on sharing the story with others.
a. We remember Tom Longboat

Tom Longboat an Onondaga from the Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve, in southern Ontario. Tom loved to run, and he was very fast. In fact, he was a world champion runner! When he was only 20 years old, he won the Boston Marathon. This famous race is 40 kilometres long. That’s the same distance as running across a hockey rink 656 times - just without the ice!

When World War One began, Tom was 27 years old. He signed up to help and use his talent for running to carry messages and orders between groups of soldiers. This was an important job because during World War I, it was very hard to communicate. They didn’t have any cell phones or computers, so they had to send notes with people. Tom’s speedy running helped make sure everyone know what was happening on the battlefield.

b. We remember Henry Louis Norwest

Henry Louis Norwest was born in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. He was a Métis rodeo performer and ranch-hand. He could lasso animals and was an expert horse-rider. When World War I broke out, he joined the army. Actually, he joined the army twice! He broke a rule the first time he was in the army, so he had to leave and then join again.

The second time he joined the army, he became a sniper. Soon, he was one of the most famous Canadian snipers. The other soldiers were proud of how good Henry’s aim was and were glad to have him on their side. He was given a medal because of his good work and bravery. Sadly, Henry was killed during the war, just three weeks before it ended. He is buried in France.

c. We remember Mamie Dunlop

When World War II started, Mamie’s brother and fiancé joined the army. Mamie wanted to help too. She decided to join the army with her best friend, but at the last minute, her best friend’s mother wouldn’t let her join. So, Mamie went alone.

Even though Mamie had worked in the forest chopping wood, training for the army was really hard. She got so many blisters, her blisters had blisters! While she was training, she decided to cut her hair like a man’s because it kept getting in the way. After she finished training, she asked to be a truck driver. The army had enough truck drivers, so they gave Mamie a job cooking food. She liked it because she got to get to know everyone.

Her least favourite part of the job was guard duty. She had to walk around the camp alone at night, with just a siren. Even though she was scared.

Resource

Native Soldiers- Foreign Battlefields; information about Aboriginal veterans www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/history/other/native