



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GRAND CHIEF, MILITARY OFFICIALS HONOUR ABORIGINAL VETERANS WITH UNVEILING OF NAN VETERANS FLAG

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy, together with Chapleau Cree First Nation Chief Keith Corston, NAN Chiefs and delegates, representative of Veterans Affairs Canada Andre Paquette, Col. Stephan Cadden, the Canadian Forces and the Canadian Rangers, honoured the wartime contributions of Aboriginal veterans with the official unveiling of the NAN Veterans Flag during a special ceremony at the opening of the XXVIII Keewaywin NAN Chiefs Assembly (Aug. 11-13) in Chapleau today.

“Today we pause to honour the service and sacrifice that NAN veterans have made while defending the freedom and democracy that all Canadians enjoy today,” said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy. “Through the years hundreds of NAN men and women have stepped forward in defence of Canada and its interests during the First, Second and Korean Wars, and is fitting that NAN First Nations now have an official flag with which to honour our veterans.”

The ceremony was held to honour and thank the Aboriginal men and women who fought in major wars. The NAN Veterans Flag will help ensure that the significant wartime contributions of its Aboriginal veterans are remembered and recognized, and will be flown in all NAN First Nations.

According to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada:

- Aboriginal participation in Canada’s war efforts has been proportionately higher than that of any group of Canadians.
- Many Aboriginal soldiers used their traditional hunting skills to serve as snipers and scouts. “Code Talkers” used the Cree language to communicate sensitive military plans in a language the enemy could not understand.
- Aboriginal women also volunteered valuable skills, mainly as nurses.
- Today, the tradition of service continues among thousands of Aboriginals members of the Canadian Forces who are serving across Canada and in peacekeeping missions overseas.
- More than 400 Canadian Rangers – mostly Aboriginal – are part-time reserve members of the Canadian Forces providing search and rescue and other services in northern Ontario.

Also participating in the unveiling was NAN Elder Jack Wynne, a Second World War veteran from Moose Cree First Nation and the last surviving veteran from Moose Factory. Wynne enlisted at the age of 18 in 1944 and was honorably discharged as a corporal in 1946 having served in England, the Netherlands and Germany. Wynne served as a bombardier in the Royal Canadian Artillery 1st Canadian Corps before transferring into the infantry with the Royal Montreal Regiment and then the Irish Regiment of Canada. He spoke about the significance of NAN veterans' contributions to Canada and of the significance of having an official Veterans Flag to represent the war veterans of Nishnawbe Aski.

The NAN flag was designed by Aboriginal artist Patrick Cheechoo. It features an Elder veteran holding an eagle staff along with a goose, bear, the rising sun and seven eagle feathers representing honour for veterans, unity and sovereignty of NAN First Nations and the seven sacred teachings.

“I am honoured to have designed this image. It was an exercise that has reminded me of something that I should never forget – we must always remember and be thankful for the Nishnawbe Aski Nation women and men who fought for our freedoms,” said Cheechoo, who was raised in Constance Lake First Nation and currently resides in Thunder Bay. “We have an obligation to our Veterans. It is because of these NAN women and men that we are blessed with daily sunrises in a land where we, the First Peoples, have sovereignty to protect and treasure our culture, our tradition, our birthright.”

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty 5 – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario.

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