

## Recollection of their Legacies...

Mike Mountainhorse, a Canadian First World War Veteran, said, "The war proved that the fighting spirit of my tribe was not squelched through reservation life... our people showed all the bravery of our warriors of old." This bravery still shines through despite the hardships and forgotten efforts of Indigenous people in Canada. Remembrance Day is a time to remember all war heroes, although some have been buried away. One such woman, who stands to be remembered, is Mary Greyeyes. She was a significant yet often overlooked contributor to the Canadian Armed Forces during World War II. Her story begins on a small reservation in Saskatchewan.

Mary Greyeyes was a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, but most importantly, she was a soldier who fought to protect her country despite the discrimination and racism she had to face. She was born on November 14, 1920, in Saskatchewan, Canada. Her Heritage is Cree. Her favourite of the 4 brothers was David Greyeyes Steele, who went to serve in the Canadian Army during World War II, and helped to support the family financially. Mary had to work at a school run by nuns so she could learn to read and write. She was an exceptional person, as she wanted to study and to go further in life and follow her brother as he made it into the military.

Mary enlisted in June 1924, but her sergeant falsely claimed she couldn't speak English, sending her to England to cook and clean. She was later moved to London to cook for the soldiers. After the women's service was disbanded, 2 RCMP sergeants came to take a photo meant to promote the women's enlistment across Canada and the British Empire, which is where she met Princess Elizabeth II, the Queen Mother, and King George VI, appearing with them in photos. Still, the contributions of Indigenous people like Mary often went unrecognized due to racism and discrimination.

Mary's contributions during World War 2 were significant in terms of her role as the first Indigenous woman to join the Canadian Armed Forces. Her enlistment in the Canadian Women's Army Corps was a pivotal moment in promoting Indigenous representation in the military. Greyeyes' image in the famous army photograph became a symbol of Indigenous pride and a call to action for women to enlist. Despite facing discrimination and limited opportunities, she remained dedicated to her service and the advancement of Indigenous rights. Her legacy continues to inspire future generations to recognize and celebrate the contributions of Indigenous individuals in the military.

After WW2, Indigenous people were inspired to fight for their rights and freedoms as war heroes, such as Mary, paved the way toward a more peaceful future. Mary deserves to be remembered for her contributions, and the struggles to move women forward and honouring her helps us work towards reconciliation with Indigenous Canadians. Remembering her story is an important step in recollecting those who have historically been thought of as insignificant.