

INDIGENOUS INVOLVEMENT IN BOMBER COMMAND AND THE BCATP

During the Second World War, young Indigenous men and women joined the RCAF and served with Bomber Command. As well, the presence of the BCATP across Canada affected the First Nations.

F/O WILLARD BOLDOC DFC

A member of the Ojibway First Nation, Williard John Bolduc of enlisted into the RCAF at North Bay, Ontario on June 9 1941. After training at 9 Bombing and Gunnery School in Mont-Joli Quebec, he was promoted to Sergeant and posted overseas, arriving in the UK during October 1942.

During his service with ??? Squadron flying in Stirling bombers, P/O Bolduc was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC). The citation reads:

“Pilot Officer Bolduc has taken part in many operational sorties including attacks on such important and strongly defended targets as Berlin, Hamburg and Essen. In June 1943, while over Cologne, his aircraft was attacked by an enemy fighter. This officer's accurate fire damaged the enemy aircraft which broke off the attack and was probably destroyed. Another time during a sortie against Nuremburg his aircraft was attacked by a Junkers 88. While making the bombing run Pilot Officer Bolduc opened fire and the enemy fighter fell to the ground in flames. At all times this air gunner has set an inspiring example by his keenness and devotion to duty.”

An RCAF press release dated August 28 1943 reads,

A Canadian gunner with an RAF Stirling squadron got credit for an enemy Ju88 fighter brought down as the Stirling approached the Nuremberg target. He was Sergeant Willard John Bolduc, 3171 Cote Street, Antoine Road, Westmount, Quebec, a rear-gunner who was on his 17th operational trip.

“The pilot had successfully evaded three fighters,” said Bolduc. “We were just approaching the target when a Ju88 roared out to meet us. The skipper warned me over the intercom, but the Ju88 went right past us. I thought maybe he would keep on going, but he didn't. He turned in a big sweep about 1,000 yards away and came right for us.

“When he was about 500 yards away, I opened up. He never got a burst in but I kept giving it to him. I must have let him have about 500 rounds. He started to falter and then went straight down. We watched him go and he hit the deck with a terrific bang.”

Bolduc got credit for a second Ju88 during a raid on Dusseldorf.



8 BOMBING AND GUNNERY SCHOOL'S BOMBING RANGE

In addition to the facilities at Lethbridge Alberta, 8 B&G entered into an agreement with the nearby Indigenous people to lease one hundred square miles on the Blood Indian Reserve to use for bombing and gunnery practice. A good relationship was established and the school's commanding officer, G/C W.A. Jones, was made an honorary chief with the name of Chief Heavy Shields.

The School's Daily Diary entry of July 2 1042, records a visit by their Indigenous neighbours,

"Chiefs of the Blood Indian tribe were guests for a few hours, and had dinner in the Officers' Mess. Chief Shot-in-both-sides, Chief Cross-child and Chief Owns-different-horses, were flown over the Air Firing and Bombing Ranges and over their own reserves by Group Captain Jones.

"Other chiefs who visited the Station were Fred Tailfeathers, honorary "Chief Mountain" Rev. Canon S.H. Middleton, the principal of St. Paul's Indian School, and honorary "Chief Brave Rock", and A. McMillan, Indian Agent from Cardston.

"Following the air flights the chiefs and their guests were entertained at dinner at the Officers' Mess. Prior to dinner and in a very surprise feature, Group Captain Jones was honored by the visiting chiefs with feathered headdress and full regalia, and in a befitting ceremony they named this School's Commanding Officer to be known as "Chief Heavy Shields". Chief Shot-in-both-sides presided at the ceremony, with Chief Percy Creighton acting as interpreter.

"The honorary title given to Group Captain Jones is particularly fitting as the original Chief Heavy Shields, who died several years ago, was a great warrior in the early days and took part in many raids. He was an outstanding Medicine Man of authority, and was the owner of several ritualistic charms which have been handed down from the past. He was a kindly chief of good judgement, and was the last of the surviving chiefs to sign the original Indian Treaty. The chief was a great friend of St. Paul's School and of the white man."



G/C Jones (centre) during the ceremony



Blood Chiefs and others in the Indigenous delegation



Honourary Chief Heavy Shields and the Chiefs from the Blood Reserve