Introduction

The outbreak of the First World War shattered almost a hundred years of relative peace in Europe. Its nations had circumvented large-scale conflict since the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 through treaties, alliances and an aspiration to maintain a balance of power in Europe and empire. In place of war, European armies were deployed to the fringes of empire to gain territorial acquisitions within the imperial scramble, or to quell indigenous rebellions in existing colonies.[1] By 1914, the pan-European empire covered 84% of the globe, compared with 35% in 1800. The British empire encompassed one-fourth of the world and 445 million people lived under some form of British rule.[2] Within the social norms of this Victorian era, and the prevailing ethnocentric ideologies of Social Darwinism, indigenous peoples were seen as an unfortunate component of the 'white man's burden'.

At the onset of war, no imperialist European state, save for France, regarded its colonial indigenous populations as a source of military manpower for a European war.[3] Contemporary science, social biases and public opinion accepted that certain identifiable ethnic groups lacked the intelligence and integrity to fight modern war. It was also believed that since these groups were the subjects of vast European empires, prudence warned against allowing them to fight in a European war, thus forfeiting white racial supremacy. However, by late 1915, with mounting casualties and an increasing demand for manpower, Britain specifically requested the military inclusion of indigenous populations from the five Dominions.

[1] See: C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (Reprint. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).
[2] Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1914–1916* (Toronto: Penguin Group Canada, 2007), vol. I, p. 10. Relative in the sense the Crimean War (1853–6), the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1) and the Balkan Wars (1912–13) never became general European wars.
[3] Hew Strachan, *The First World War, Volume I: To Arms* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 497.

The term Dominion was first used during the 1660s, to identify specific regions of Virginia and New England. British North America was officially designated the Dominion of Canada, with confederation in 1867. The first collective use occurred at the Colonial Conference (April to May 1907) when the title was conferred upon Canada and Australia. New Zealand and Newfoundland were afforded the designation in September of that same year, followed by South Africa in 1910. These were the only British possessions recognized as Dominions at the outbreak of war. In 1922, the Irish Free State was given Dominion status, followed by the short-lived inclusion of India and Pakistan in 1947 (although India was officially recognized as the Union of India). The Union of India became the Republic of India in 1950, while the Dominion of Pakistan became the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1956.

While India certainly has a place in other comparative investigations, these associations are beyond the compass of this analysis. Colonization in India, and its corresponding legislative and administrative structures, differed from that in the Dominions. They viewed India as an unequal and inferior imperial possession and actively restricted Indian immigration, creating a rift in British hegemony and British–Dominion relations.[4] In the five Dominions concerned, settlers, primarily British, sought to claim and secure enduring control of the land. Although regional exploitation of resources, such as fish, furs and flax (and the prospect of mineral riches), occurred, export development, after initial expeditionary commercial ventures, was a windfall to protracted settlement. In contrast, India was a colony based on the utilization of vast resources with indigenous and imported labour employed to extract the value of exportable trade commodities. The British demographic profile of exploitative or sojourner colonies was primarily adult males, who, after a period of administrative, military or economic service, returned home. Settler colonies, such as the Dominions, included women and children in a population intending to make a new home and country for future generations, under British sponsorship. More notably, the Indian Army of the British Raj, which mobilized 1.27 million *sepoys*, including 827,000 combatants, during the First World War, was vastly different in both construct and application from the national forces of the Dominions prior to, and during, the war.[5]

[4] For a detailed account see: Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

[5] David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers' Letters, 1914–1918* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 4. The pinnacle strength of the (combatant) Indian Army was 573,000. At the armistice, 943,344 Indian troops, both combatant and non-combatant,

Conversely, the United States of America shares extensive colonial commonalities with the Dominions. After the American Revolution (1775–83), however, Native Indian policy became inherently American. The United States, therefore, will generally be excluded from this investigation. Yet, the policies of the United States in relation to the military service of its Indian populations paralleled many of those of Canada, and will be used to highlight certain elements of the First World War experience common to all North American Indians. The traditional lands and contemporary reserves of many Indian nations straddled the US–Canadian border, a factor not germane to the island nations of Australia, New Zealand and, to some extent, Newfoundland. Most Indians did not recognize what, to them, seemed to be an arbitrary demarcation, nor were they obliged to do so under Articles II and III of the 1794 Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation (Jay Treaty) negotiated between Britain and the United States in the aftermath of the Revolution.[6] Although the focal point of this study is founded on the five British Dominions, when pertinent, comparisons will be made with the indigenous peoples of India, the United States and with other British and European imperial possessions.

In the years approaching the First World War, national Dominion identities began to emerge and were solidified by the war itself, ushering in a more ambivalent stance towards imperial associations and British collectivism. Increased Dominion participation in the war effort was accompanied by demands for greater inclusion in the arenas of strategic council. As a result, Dominion prime ministers were included in David Lloyd-George's Imperial War Cabinet, convened in the spring of 1917. Its ratification of Resolution IX ensured full recognition of the Dominions as 'autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth [with a] right … to an adequate voice in foreign policy and foreign relations'. This assertion was evidenced by individual Dominion representation at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and in the League of Nations.

The First World War spawned national consciousness within the Dominions. Historians, especially those from the former Dominions, often use clichés to ally war participation with the creation of national identities. Although often overstated, they rest on truth, and are

were active in six theatres of war, although only 14.1 per cent of these were on the Western Front. The Indian Army suffered 64,000 dead and 69,000 wounded.

[6] Specifically, Articles II and III recognized the right of free movement over the border and the nullification of import duties. Article III states that, 'the Indians dwelling on either side of the said Boundary Line [should be able] freely to pass and repass by Land, or Inland Navigation, into the respective Territories and Countries of the Two Parties, on the Continent of America … and to navigate all the Lakes, Rivers, and waters thereof, and freely to carry on trade and commerce with each other'.

represented in the contemporary societies of all former Dominions. Canada has its imposing memorial at the 250-acre Canadian National Park at Vimy and boasts of the definitive war poem, *In Flanders Fields*, penned by its own (Lieutenant-Colonel) Dr John McCrae. Australia and New Zealand have their Anzac Day on 25 April; their young nationals take to the Gallipoli Peninsula in annual pilgrimage. Newfoundland-Labrador has its yearly, 1 July, Beaumont-Hamel provincial holiday and its towering bronze caribou rising above that battlefield at the Newfoundland Memorial Park. South Africa finds its war identity through the battle and memorial at Delville Wood, France. The individual war memorials throughout the former Dominions are evidence to the impact of the Great War on all communities of these young nations. Memorials are also scattered across indigenous territories, illustrating the shared responsibility taken by indigenes in all facets of 'The Great War for Civilization'.

The indigenous peoples of the Dominions willingly participated in all aspects of the First World War. Their calculated inclusion in Dominion forces was not a departure from, rather a continuation of, the pragmatic tradition of imperial and Dominion governments, which used them in a military capacity only when it suited British–Dominion interests and helped fulfil specific desiderata. This premise is exemplified by a catalogue of occurrences throughout the colonial warfare of all Dominions. During the First World War, the abilities of indigenes as soldiers, and the perception of their martial prowess, were measured against colonial experiences, including frontier warfare, and contemporary racial theories. Racial estimations were manifested in the differing policies of the Dominions and in the function, role and theatres of deployment of indigenes within their military forces. According to R. Scott Sheffield, 'This was clearly differentiation in practice, meaning that Aboriginal individuals were specifically recruited for, and their service was defined by, culturally and/or racially defined skills and characteristics.'[7] The evolution of indigenous participation during the First World War was an extension of this practice.

With Britain's declaration of war on 4 August 1914, indigenous communities and political leaders openly declared their loyalty and sought avenues to exemplify their allegiance and worth to both their Dominions and the Crown. Previous treaties and military alliances were fostered

[7] R. Scott Sheffield, 'Indifference, Difference and Assimilation: Aboriginal People in Canadian Military Practice, 1900–1945' in P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Craig Leslie Mantle (eds.), *Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian Military: Historical Perspectives* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), p. 58.

with Britain, not the Dominions. Many offered support of men and money directly to the King or 'the Great White Father'. Indigenous leaders acted as 'bridge people' between their cultures and Dominion political and social systems. Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts that: 'Their elite status came about through the alignment of their cultural and economic interests with the colonizing group rather than with those of their own society.'[8] This interpretation, however, removes the dynamic and conscious participation of indigenous peoples within the colonial experience and the First World War.

Many believed that excelling, and showing themselves as capable as Europeans, in so-called European civilized pursuits, was a means to prove their worth as indigenous peoples both individually and collectively – in other words, selective assimilation for the aims of equality and autonomy. This is not to say, however, that these indigenes viewed themselves as assimilated, nor did it mean that they had rejected their indigenous culture. While certain commentators have criticized these people for abandoning, or becoming estranged from, their traditional roots, given contemporary racial attitudes, and socio-economic and political realities, this is unwarranted. The majority believed that by entering and engaging in Dominion society as indigenes, they could participate on equal terms and win the respect of the dominant European society in order to gain rights for their own peoples. Accordingly, many viewed the First World War as an extension of this approach. As such, what follows is, by necessity, as much a socio-political and cultural investigation as it is a documentation of strictly military history.

In effect, just as the war stimulated, and was used to promote, nationalist attitudes and demands in the Dominions in relation to the imperial government, the same can be said for indigenous nations in relation to their Dominions. As a microcosm, indigenous peoples sought the same recognition from their respective Dominion (and to a certain extent the Crown) as the Dominions sought from the mother country – equality and autonomy. For both parties, significant participation in the war represented one avenue to achieve these ambitions. In this sense, the patriotic reactions of many indigenous leaders in 1914, and their subsequent actions throughout the war, were no different from those of Dominion prime ministers and politicians. In an often overlooked premise, the Dominions did not cease to be evolving settler societies because of the Great War.

[8] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 'Colonizing Knowledges' in Roger C. A. Maaka and Chris Andersen (eds.), *The Indigenous Experience: Global Perspectives* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2006), p. 97.

The First World War experiences of Dominion indigenes were analogous in most facets, despite their varied socio-economic condition and association with the dominant British-based settler societies. As A. G. Hopkins accurately explains:

> Historians of India know little of Africa and vice versa; historians of Australia and New Zealand rarely make cross-references; historians of Canada have ceased, typically, to look beyond North America. In a world that is visibly shrinking, this is paradoxical to say the least … Consequently, Maoris, Aborigines, Indians and others remain subordinated to a historical tradition that purports to emancipate them. An understanding of the imperial context would remove this false sense of isolation, open new possibilities for comparative studies of both settler communities and Indigenous peoples, and underline the widespread and growing significance of non-national affiliations.[9]

Similarly, Ken Coates argues that, 'historians are not well versed in the comparative dimensions of what has emerged as a major issue in national histories: the treatment of, and relationships with, Indigenous peoples'.[10] Indigenous participation during the First World War has been relegated to the peripheries of national histories, which in turn, generally represent Dominion and indigenous contributions as if detached from the governing political and military structures of the imperial government.

This thematic comparison of the participation of indigenous peoples of the Dominions during the war will place their involvement in a trans-national context, coupled to the British centre of influence, while identifying patterns of action and reaction by Dominion governments and indigenous peoples. As expounded by George Fredrickson: 'Cross-national history, by acquainting one with what goes on elsewhere, may inspire a critical awareness of what is taken for granted in one's own country.'[11] The historiography is void of any comparison between the Dominions and their indigenous peoples during the First World War. Most of the literature dedicated to the wartime experiences of indigenes falls within a dominant thematic tradition which P. Whitney Lackenbauer and R. Scott Sheffield label the 'forgotten warrior' genre.[12]

[9] A. G. Hopkins, 'Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History', *Past and Present* 164 (1999), 216–17.

[10] Ken Coates, 'Learning from Others: Comparative History and the Study of Indigenous–Newcomer Relations', *Native Studies Review* 16/1 (2005), 5.

[11] George M. Fredrickson, 'From Exceptionalism to Variability: Recent Developments in Cross-National Comparative History', *Journal of American History* 82/2 (1995), 587–604.

[12] See: P. Whitney Lackenbauer and R. Scott Sheffield, 'Moving Beyond "Forgotten": The Historiography on Canadian Native Peoples and the World Wars' in P. Whitney

Within this construct, Dominion historians have recently resurrected the exploits of indigenous servicemen and women, to promote an agenda of recognition and commemoration akin to that bestowed on their white comrades.

Before the 1980s, the participation of indigenes in the First World War was virtually ignored by scholars, except for those from New Zealand, where narrative unit histories celebrated the racially homogenous Maori battalions of both world wars. This stagnation has seen considerable reversal over the last twenty years; however, most works are driven by narrative. The goal of these studies, which succumb to an interpretive orthodoxy based on recycled generalizations and anecdotal corroboration, is to ensure that indigenous veterans receive public recognition in the increasingly reconciliatory and apologetic western democracies.

In Canada, the literary tradition of the 'forgotten warrior' has its origins in the 1919 report of the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, Duncan Campbell Scott. Believing in the widely accepted vanishing race theory and promulgating an assimilationist policy, Scott had political motives for promoting the battlefield prowess and high enlistment rates of his Indian subjects:

> In daring and intrepidity they were second to none and their performance is a ringing rebuttal to the familiar assertion that the red man has deteriorated … These men who have been broadened by contact with the outside world and its affairs, who have mingled with the men of other races, and who have witnessed the many wonders and advantages of civilization, will not be content to return to their old Indian mode of life … thus the war will have hastened that day, the millennium of those en-gaged [sic] in Indian work, when all the quaint old customs, the weird and picaresque ceremonies, the sun dance and the potlatch and even the musical and poetic native languages shall be as obsolete as the buffalo and the tomahawk, and the last tepee of the Northern wilds give place to a model farmhouse. In other words, the Indian shall become one with his neighbour in his speech, life and habits, thus conforming to that world-wide tendency towards universal standardization which would appear to be the essential underlying purport of all modern social evolution.[13]

Lackenbauer and Craig Leslie Mantle (eds.), *Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian Military: Historical Perspectives* (Kingston: CDA Press, 2007), pp. 209–32.

[13] Duncan Campbell Scott, 'The Canadian Indians and the Great War', in *Canada in the Great War, Vol. III: Guarding the Channel Ports* (Toronto: United Publishers, 1919), pp. 327–8. Scott joined Indian Affairs in 1879 and worked as a clerk of various ranks and positions until 1896. He then served as the Chief Secretary until 1905, after which time he was posted as the Chief Clerk and Accountant until 1909. From 1909 until his promotion to Deputy Superintendent General in 1913, he was Superintendent of Indian Education. Scott was also an accomplished poet and wrote extensively on the Indian condition. His poetry is wrought with his belief of the fatal impact theory and

Two recycled narratives, Fred Gaffen's *Forgotten Soldiers* (1985) and Janice Summerby's *Native Soldiers, Foreign Battlefields* (2005), lend credence to the 'forgotten warrior' convention that has plagued accounts of Indian participation during the Great War.[14] In recent years, however, academics have begun to deviate from this motif by engaging in more scholarly appraisals of the overall Indian contribution as represented by L. James Dempsey's *Warriors of the King: Prairie Indians in World War I* (1999).[15] Detailed explorations of regional contributions and community-specific anomalies have also recently appeared. Nevertheless, the majority of accounts remain lodged in a national framework permeated by the 'forgotten warrior' approach.

In Australia, the service of Aborigines in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was wholly neglected until the late 1970s, aside from four brief articles on 'Aborigine Diggers' in the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia's 1931 and 1932 newsletters.[16] Aboriginal contributions were summarily, if not conveniently, ignored until Christopher Clark published two brief articles in 1973 and 1977 respectively.[17] Following Robert Hall's seminal work, *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War* (1989), a little more attention was given to Aboriginal involvement in the First World War.[18] David Huggonson produced a succession of anecdotal articles for obscure publications in support of his exhibition, 'Too Dark for the Light Horse', which toured Australia in 2000.[19] In 1990,

the assimilation of the remaining Indian population. For example, his 'The Half-Breed Girl' and 'The Onondaga Madonna' deconstruct the process of colonialism and the concept of Indians living in the cultural conflict of the convergence of two distinct societies.

[14] Fred Gaffen, *Forgotten Soldiers* (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1985); Janice Summerby, *Native Soldiers, Foreign Battlefields* (Ottawa: Department of Veterans Affairs, 2005).

[15] L. James Dempsey, *Warriors of the King: Prairie Indians in World War I* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1999).

[16] Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), 'Aborigine Diggers: List Grows', *Reveille* (31 October 1931), 15; 'Many Served: A.I.F. Aborigines', *Reveille* (30 November 1931), 22; 'Lever on Britain: Prisoners Suffer', *Reveille* (31 December 1931), 10; 'A.I.F. Aborigines: N.S.W.', *Reveille* (31 January 1932), 20.

[17] C. D. Clark, 'Aborigines in the First AIF', *Australian Army Journal* 286 (1973), 21–6; C. D. Coulthard-Clark, 'Aborigine Medal Winners', *Sabretache* 18/4 (1977), 244–8.

[18] Robert A. Hall, *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989).

[19] David Huggonson, 'Aborigines and the Aftermath of the Great War', *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1 (1993), 2–9; 'Aboriginal Roughriders of World War 1', *Rodeo: Hoofs and Horns* (1990), 70; 'A Dark Past', *Army Magazine* 13 (1992), 26–7; 'Aboriginal Diggers of the 9th Brigade, First AIF', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 79/3–4 (1993), 214–23; 'Aboriginal POW's of World War One', *Newsletter: The Historical Society of Southern Australia* 105 (1993), 9–12; 106 (1993),

Rod Pratt published four articles in *Sabretache*, entitled 'Queensland's Aborigines in the First AIF'. These articles remain the benchmark on Aboriginal participation during the First World War, highlighting the existing dearth of analysis in the Australian literary record.[20] Similarly, the contribution of Newfoundland-Labrador's indigenous soldiers has received no attention, aside from short biographies of Eskimo sniper John Shiwak.

Given that Maori were the only indigenous collective to have a homogenous combat unit during the war, a Maori Battalion history quickly followed. In 1926, the Department of Internal Affairs published James Cowan's *The Maoris in the Great War*. Cowan's assertion that, 'Not merely were the native New Zealanders superior to all the coloured troops … but they proved superior to many of the white troops in directions which suited the genius of the race' is indicative of this panegyric narrative.[21] In 1995, Christopher Pugsley published the epigrammatic narrative, *Te Hokowhitu A Tu: The Maori Pioneer Battalion in the First World War*, which is heavily reliant upon the reproduction of nominal rolls and casualty and award registers.[22] P. S. O'Connor's enduring 1967 article, 'The Recruitment of Maori Soldiers, 1914–1918', remains the most analytical work.[23]

The involvement of the South African Native Labour Contingent (SANLC) on the Western Front, and of South African blacks in Africa campaigns, has garnered more academic interest in the past three decades than any other Dominion indigenous collective. This was the necessary by-product of the intense scrutiny afforded to the campaigns in East and West Africa, previously thought to be the forgotten fronts of the First World War.[24] Melvin Page, David Killingray, Hew Strachan, Geoffrey Hodges and Edward Paice have formed the vanguard for

8–11; 'Aboriginal Trackers and the Boer War', *Bourke Historical Society: The History of Bourke* 12 (1992), 20; 'The Dark Diggers of the AIF', *The Australian Quarterly* 61/3 (1989), 352–7; 'Too Dark for the Light Horse: An Australian in Germany', *Education* (1987), 24; 'Villers-Bretonneux: A Strange Name for an Aboriginal Burial Ground', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 14/7 (1991), 285–8.

[20] These articles were reprinted, complete, in the 2007 edited volume by P. Whitney Lackenbauer et al., *Aboriginal Peoples and Military Participation: Canadian and International Perspectives* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007).

[21] James Cowan, *The Maoris in the Great War* (Auckland: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1926), p. 2.

[22] Christopher Pugsley, *Te Hokowhitu A Tu: The Maori Pioneer Battalion in the First World War* (Auckland: Reed Publishing, 2006).

[23] P. S. O'Connor, 'The Recruitment of Maori Soldiers, 1914–1918', *Political Science* 19/2 (1967), 48–83.

[24] Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 185.

more acute research into Africa and the First World War.[25] As a result, the position of indigenous Africans has undergone a much needed reinterpretation.

The first publication detailing the SANLC was written while it was still active in France. Herbert C. Sloley, former Resident Commissioner of Basutoland and active member of the British Aborigines' Protection Society, ran a piece, 'The African Native Labour Contingent and the Welfare Committee', in April 1918, outlining the success of the 'experiment' of using natives as war labour outside of Africa. In a narrative enriched with praise for the efforts of his organization, Sloley concludes that, 'there is no reason to doubt that they [SANLC] will return with an increased idea of respect for the governing race'.[26] Scholarship, not to mention actual events, proved Sloley wrong and the wartime experiences of the SANLC in fostering black nationalism were seriously reassessed in the late 1970s. Albert Grundlingh took a leading role in re-evaluating the repercussions of the exposure of the SANLC to the more racially tolerant societies of France and Britain, and their interaction with soldiers from the vast conglomeration of Allied armies. In his own words, Grundlingh's systematic work, *Fighting Their Own War: South African Blacks and the First World War* (1987), 'analyzes their responses to and participation in the war, and also evaluates the wider ramifications of the war as these affected black people in South Africa'.[27]

Aside from secondary source material, the larger Dominion historiography shares a commonality in that the limited primary accounts were written by elite, literate indigenes, distorting the consensus of opinions on motivations, war service and soldiering by active participants. According to Smith, 'What is problematic is that this group of men have been named by the dominant non-indigenous population as individuals who represent the "real" leadership … idealized as the "saviours of the people."'[28] Indigenous leaders, or those in their counsel, often had veiled motivations for espousing indigenous contributions to the war effort. Only a select catalogue of works written by average (albeit

[25] See: Melvin E. Page (ed.), *Africa and the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1987); Geoffrey Hodges, *The Carrier Corps: Military Labour in the East African Campaign 1914–1918* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986); Edward Paice, *Tip & Run: The Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007).

[26] Herbert C. Sloley, 'The African Native Labour Contingent and the Welfare Committee', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 17/67 (1918), 210.

[27] Albert Grundlingh, *Fighting Their Own War: South African Blacks and the First World War* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), p. ix.

[28] Smith, 'Colonizing Knowledges', 102.