



SGT. TOMMY PRINCE AND THE FIRST SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE (FSSF)

On September 1, 1944 Sgt. Tommy Prince of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation carried out one of his most daring actions.

A year after the 1943 Kiska landings, Prince and the joint US-Canadian First Special Service Force (FSSF, aka the Devil's Brigade) were now on the other side of the globe, having landed in southern France as part of Operation Dragoon.

That day, Prince and his reconnaissance partner trekked 24 kilometres behind enemy lines with the aim of scoping out German outposts, gun emplacements, and camps. On their way back through the mountainous terrain, they came across a squad of Free French Partisans (FFP) that were being surrounded by a German platoon.

The math certainly did not favour the Partisans, who were probably outnumbered three or four to one. It is difficult to see how a mere two men could change these odds.

But that did not stop Prince and his private. Taking up sniping positions, the two men started firing at the Germans, with Prince killing six and injuring more. Shocked by the sudden and

high casualties all around him, the German commander called for his troops to retreat, leaving behind the FFP.

After greeting the Partisan leader, Prince was asked where the rest of his troops were. He replied, "Here," pointing to his partner. The French officer was shocked: "Mon Dieu! I thought there were at least fifty of you!"

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Two days later, Prince and the group returned to the US-Canadian lines and successfully delivered the gathered intelligence to their command. Walking some 80 kilometres over the last five days, he was credited with ensuring the smooth advance of the Devil's Brigade on September 5. For this deed, Prince was awarded the US Silver Star. Combined with his reception of the Military Medal, this put him in the elite company of only two other Canadians.



Sergeant Tommy Prince and company receiving direction from their commander, 21Mar1951 (Credit: OttawaCitizen.com).

Prince's post-war veteran's benefits were far from the same standard that other soldiers received in Canada, which highlighted the disparity between Aboriginal Peoples and non-Aboriginal peoples. Much like Corporal Pegahmagabow of the previous generation, Prince encountered significant difficulties in trying to carve out a role for himself in civilian life. Although he ran a successful cleaning company for a short time, he realized this was a poor position from which to advocate for greater Aboriginal Canadian respect in the country.

But before much could be done in that regard, the Korean War began and the call to arms once again attracted Prince, who immediately joined the newly raised 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (2 PPCLI). Although he performed and led magnificently – including at the Battle of Kap'young – a severe case of arthritis in his knee caused him to be sent home to carry out training duties. Hardly content with this role, he loudly and frequently complained about wanting to go straight back into battle. He soon got his wish, joining the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (3 PPCLI) in October 1952. But battle exhaustion accumulated since the Second World War and put him out of action once more. He was discharged back to Canada.

Though never formally diagnosed with it, he exhibited signs of PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder). In the 1950s there were very few attempts at addressing this issue.

The rest of his life was split between the mean streets of Winnipeg and the Brokenhead Reserve. Regardless of his service to Canada, he faced constant discrimination from non-Aboriginals at the workplace. Alcoholism and his psychological demons took their toll. The former he succeeded in beating, but the latter persisted until his death in 1977 at the Deer Lodge Hospital for Veterans.

May his service and sacrifice never be forgotten.

For more articles like this - please visit our [online military history library](#).

TOMMY PRINCE



Tommy Prince (Credit: Canadian Military History/Bruce Forsyth)

In January 2020, the Bank of Canada asked for nominations of monumental Canadians to be featured on the redesigned \$5 bill.

According to the Bank of Canada website, nearly 45 000 people contributed to the list of over 600 nominees. One of these nominees, Tommy Prince, has received notable coverage in the media over the last few months as a front runner to be on the next Canadian \$5 bill. Prince, of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, was a member of the elite First Special Service Force (FSSF) during the Second

World War. The FSSF was a joint Canadian-American special forces unit that was trained in a variety of specialized tasks like commando-style reconnaissance and scouting techniques, as well as parachuting, weapons handling, hand-to-hand combat, skiing, and sniping. The FSSF was involved in operations in the Aleutian Islands, Italy, and Southern France from 1942 to its dissolution in December 1944. Tommy Prince was an integral member of the FSSF and for his service, he received the Military Medal and the U.S Silver Star.



Tommy Prince display (Credit: militarybruce.com)

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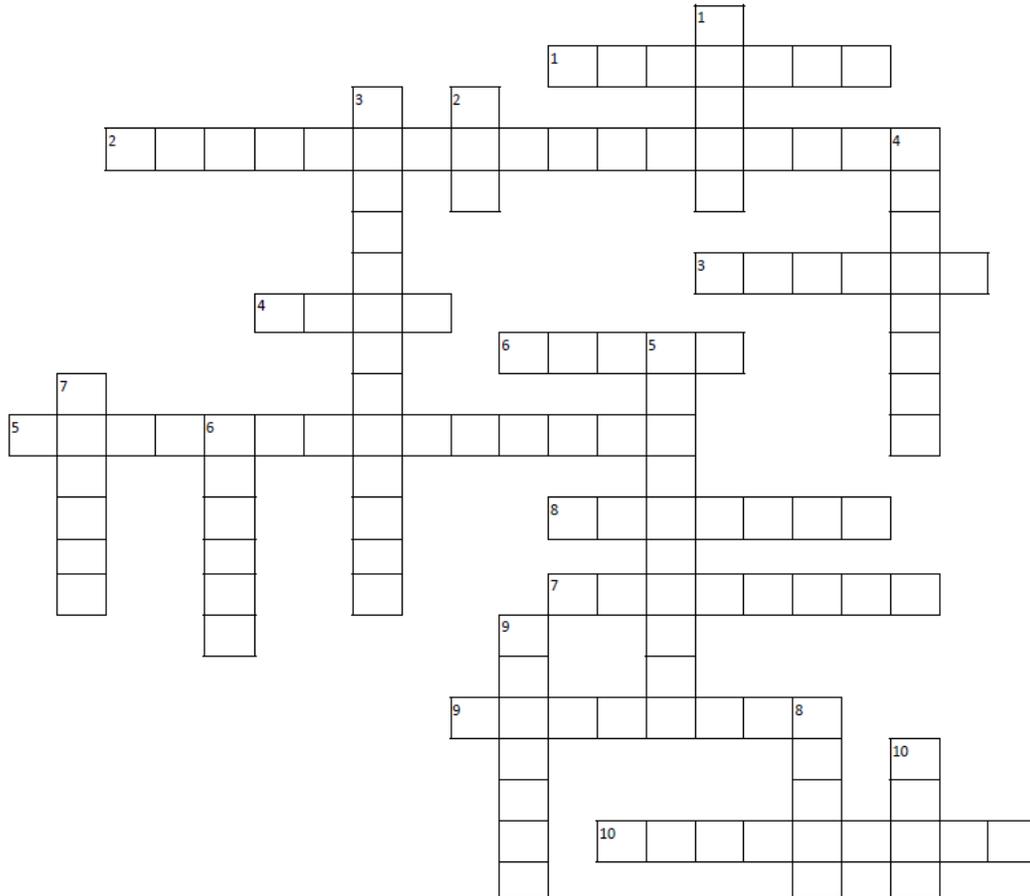


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CROSSWORD CLUES:

ACROSS:

- 1) The First Special Service Force initially trained in which American state?
- 2) In 2015, members of the FSSF were awarded the _____ Medal by the US Congress.
- 3) Before joining the FSSF, Tommy Prince was a _____ in the Canadian Army.
- 4) Although not formally diagnosed, Prince exhibited signs of _____.
- 5) While in the SSF, Tommy Prince worked in _____.
- 6) The FSSF would leave cards for Germans that read "the _____ is yet to come."
- 7) The force carried out commando-style _____.
- 8) By having their own _____ Battalion, the force was able to sustain a itself.
- 9) Tommy Prince was born in which Canadian province?
- 10) On 1 September 1944, Prince and his reconnaissance partner helped a group of Free French _____ who were encircled by a German platoon.

DOWN:

- 1) The FSSF fought in the Aleutian Islands, _____, and France during the Second World War.
- 2) Soldiers from Canada and the _____ comprised the FSSF.
- 3) The FSSF was nicknamed the _____.
- 4) The FSSF was disbanded in what month of 1944?
- 5) The _____ is seen on the FSSF shoulder patch.
- 6) The first planned mission for the FSSF was scheduled to take place in _____, although the plan was ultimately dropped.
- 7) The German's referred to the FSSF as the Black _____.
- 8) The Italian town where the FSSF where deployed to defend the beachhead in February 1944.
- 9) Operation _____ was the codename of the landing operation in Southern France in August 1944.
- 10) Tommy Prince was awarded the Military Medal and the US Silver _____ for his efforts during the Second World War.



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UPCOMING EVENTS



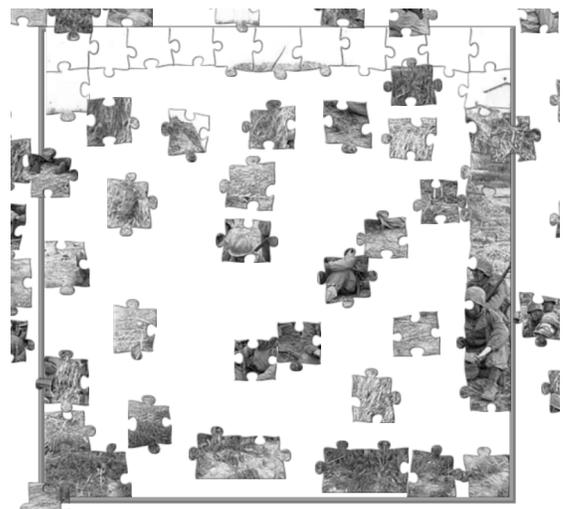
IN-MUSEUM PROGRAM. With the recent Government of Alberta announcement that students will be returning to school in September, but with social distancing and masking controls, we have discussed all potential options for continuing our museum program, the Character of Canadian Military History (CCMH). Ultimately, given the fact that our youth-focused program involves repeated group work by the students and the risk of COVID-19 spreading under those conditions, we have decided to cancel this autumn's CCMH programming. In response, we will be reallocating our efforts to more quickly create high-quality educational materials for students and educators nationwide.

VALOUR CANADA EVENTS. All events have been postponed due to the current pandemic. Stay tuned for more information in the coming months.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. Due to the current pandemic, Valour Canada will be delaying their Annual General Meeting until the fall. We will contact the membership when a new date/location has been confirmed.

JULY 2020 ANSWER KEY

D	E	M	O	R	R	E	V	I	R	U	L	A	Y	S	G	D	P
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To try the August puzzle - [please click here.](#)

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