

Zygmunt Marian Misiak (Zig Misiak) is a well known award winning Canadian author always identifying himself as a person of Polish descent arriving in Canada in 1951, as a WW2 Polish Displaced Person, with his mother and father. Zig Misiak refers to his Polish ancestry in all of his books, all of his articles, all of his presentations, all his interviews. He clearly reminds people of the plight of Poland prior to WW1, post WW1 and into and post WW2. Zig is a patriot.



Testimonial

I, Susan Waters, am a retired teacher and I have known Zig Misiak since 1964. For many decades Zig has been a person of deep commitment to Community, with significant accomplishments regarding our collective cultural heritage.

In 2019 he was:

1. Inducted into the Ancaster High School Hall of Fame.
2. Was the Ancaster Heritage Parade Marshall with his long-time friend, Walter Gretzky.
3. He, through the SPK Brantford, submitted Walter Gretzky as a candidate for the SPK "Gold Cross Medal".

In 2021, Zig was named "Ancaster's Hero" in a prestigious, local magazine. Zig is a highly renowned historical re-enactor having travelled with his family, across Ontario, Quebec, and into the United States. He has built a strong partnerships, and a deep understanding of our cultural heritage. He is a thorough, in depth researcher, committed to sharing information with others, with authenticity and integrity.

Growing up in Brantford was not easy for Zig and his family; they were underprivileged and subject to physical and verbal abuse as a result of being WW2 Displaced Persons. From the age of 3 years old until 12 years old, Zig lived five blocks from the Mohawk Institute, which was a residential school. He had no knowledge of the history of this site at the time but had the opportunity to engage with several of the young Indigenous attendees. As the years passed, most of Zig's friends ended up being from the Six Nations. This is how he acquired a unique insight into their history and culture.

As his son, Tyler says, "Dad has endured much in his life. He knows what it is like to be forced out of his home country, never to have known his aunts, uncles, or grandparents. He lost his wife, our mother, in a car accident and spent the last 20 years raising his four children as a single parent. He understands that he had to remain a strong, grounded, and responsible father for us. Yet here he is, through all that he has been through, choosing a life in which he values all First Nations people, and their beautiful history and culture. He is fiercely protective of the trust/faith that they have in him."

Supported by his Six Nations friends, Zig shares his understanding. "Fear creates unpredictable results", Zigs says, "and it is through education that we eliminate fear and allow beautiful bridges to be built that will connect different cultures". Collaborating with his friend, Raymond R. Skye, Tuscarora Seneca, they developed the very first Indigenous studies guide in Canada and with no funding, Zig and Raymond launched their *Six Nations Iroquois Program Teachers Resource Guide* in 2009. After hundreds of hours and thousands of miles traveled to introduce teaching institutions about the importance of incorporating a guide like this into their Curriculum. The guide was accepted in 723 different educational institutions, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

It became Zig's mission to find ways to bridge his home-town communities, Brantford, Ancaster, and beyond, with the Six Nations and Mississauga Nation. Not only did he fulfill his mission and continues to do so, but he also found bridges between Canada, Poland, First Nations, England and the United States, that date back to the War of 1812.

Zig is the perfect bridge builder inspiring others to do the same:

Between Canada, First Nations and the United States through his writing and activism as a historic re-enactor over the last 40 years.

He has bridged between Canada, Poland, Holland, France, Germany and New Zealand, through his media resources, interviews, documentaries, and books and between age groups through his involvement with WW2 veterans and Canadian, First Nations and Metis, veterans and survivors.

He has reached out to our youngest students with his beautiful books, teaching about our First Nations.

He has bridged between Newcomers to Canada by educating them about the history of our great country and ensuring that they understand the First Nations people.

He has bridged between today's students and families, and our Polish Veterans and Survivors during innumerable, highly valued Remembrance Day events.

It is my honour to nominate Zig Misiak, on behalf of his family, his friends, and his growing supporters, as a well-deserved candidate for any and all awards and recognitions he may be qualified to receive.



Grandson Asher with Grandpa Misiak
Why poppies grandpa?



Zigmund M. Misiak
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Ph. 519 757 0910 zigmisiak44@gmail.com
www.canadianauthorededucation.com



Awards & Recognitions:

1995-Mohawk Nation, Grand River Six Nations Territory, adopted & given a Mohawk name; Ko'khó:wa Awè:ri (big grey owl heart).
2000-Pine Tree Native Center Life Time Achievement Award. For contemporary cross-community contributions to the Six Nations contributing to their history & culture.
2010-YMCA Peace Medal Nominee. Contributing to 'Peace' locally, nationally, or globally.
2012-200 Years of Peace Through Literacy Authors Conference Recognition.
2012-Honourary Eagle Award, St. John's College. For outstanding support of education.
2012-Shining Star Award. Demonstrating outstanding community leadership in business.
2013-Six Nations Elders, Talking Earth gift for being a 'Truth-Finder'.
2013-Six Nations Veterans Eagle Feather, for sharing their history/culture around the world.
2013-Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. For lifetime volunteer achievements.
2014-Governor Generals Caring Canadian Medal. For extraordinary service to community.
2014-George Seibel Award. For devotion in support of Canadian/First Nations history.
2019-Ancaster High School Wall of Distinction, Inductee. For excelling in education.
2019-Canadian Aboriginal Veterans Medallion. For sharing the truth about of First Nations.
2019-Polish Ambassador, National Veterans Conference. For international contributions.
2019-Polish Veterans Combatants, SPK, Bronze Cross Medal. Decades supporting veterans.
2022-Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement
2022-Polish Army Gold Medal - 1st Degree. Service to the Polish Army.
2022-Canadian Polish Congress Award of Merit. Service to Polish/Canadian history/culture.
2022-YMCA Peace Medal Nominee. For being a global humanitarian influencer.
2022-Queen Elizabeth Platinum Jubilee Award. Contributions to community & country.

Community Involvement:

To the Present

Thank a Veteran, Brantford, committee member, 2021-present historic site D'Aubigny Creek, Brantford, War of 1812, chairman, 2019-present.
Canada's The Memory Project, volunteer Guest Speaker, 2014 - present
Ancaster Heritage Society, member, 2010 - present
Canadian Military Heritage Museum, member, 2009 – present
St. John's College Remembrance Day Committee, 2009 - present
Museum of Military History & British Brigade, U.S.A. Member, 1990 – present

Community Involvement:

In chronological order of date – current to oldest

Butler's Rangers Historical Reenactment Society, Director, 1990 – present
Polish Kombatants Association of Canada, Vice President, 2015 – present
Historical Re-enactor, French & Indian War, Butlers Rangers; American Revolution and Caldwell's Rangers; War of 1812, 1985 – present
Brantford Historic Society, Board Member, 2014 – 2018
Hamilton Area Heritage Events Committee, 2012 – 2014
Ontario Tourism Route 1812 Map Committee, 2011 – 2012
Peace Garden, Brantford, Brant County, Six Nations Committee, 2012 – 2014
Sir Isaac Brock's Regiment in England, Six Nations Eagle Feather, 2012
Western Corridor Alliance, Route 1812 sub-committee, 2011
PBS/WNED TV, Bi-National Advisory Group, War of 1812 200th, 2011 – 2013
Brant Haldimand Norfolk CDSB, Special Ed. Advisory Committee, 2010 – 2011
Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy Advisory Committee, 2010 – 2011
Brantford/Brant County/Six Nations War of 1812 Map Committee, 2010 – 2013
For Your Freedom and Ours WW2 Veterans DVD, Director, 2010 – 2011
Historic Niagara District Education Committee, CDSB and DSB, War of 1812
Polish WW2 War Veterans Monument Committee, 2009 – 2011
War of 1812 Bicentennial Commemoration Steering Committee Chairman, 2009 – 2014
United Empire Loyalists of Canada, honorary vice-president, 2009 – 2015
Co-author of the Six Nations Iroquois Program Teacher's Resource Guide, 2009
Kanata Village Interpretive Centre, Six Nations Territory, board member, 2000
Pine Tree Native Center, Board Member then President, 1998 – 2001
Brantford Ontario Sesquicentennial Celebrations Committee, 1997
Polish Mutual Benefit Society, Board Member, 1995 – 2000
Brantford Jaycees, Board Member and Vice-president, 1980 – 1985
Wayne Gretzky Celebrity Sports Classic, Chairman, 1980 – 1982
Wayne Gretzky Classic – alignment with Six Nations trophy, 1980
Wayne Gretzky Sports Center Committee, 1981- 1982
Eyesight Universal, Sir Ralph Frederick Bevan K.G.B. Bullen, Committee, 1981
Canadian Army Reserves, Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, 1964 – 1969



Stanislaus Misiak, corporal in the Polish Army.

Zig's father, Stanislaus Misiak, is a survivor of World War One. He was born in Poland in 1916 in the middle of the war. Zig's mother was born in Europe in 1923.

Stanislaus Misiak was in the Polish army before the war. In 1939 he was captured quickly due to the speed of the German army's Blitzkrieg in northern Poland. He was a 'black-smith' and because of this trade he spent the entire war as a laborer for the Nazi regime building bridges and repairing railway lines.

Zig's father, like many other Polish refugees, was working wherever he could. He ended up in Bamberg where he met Zig's mother. Zig was born June 18, 1947.

Zig's father was accepted by Australia but chose Canada as a Displaced Person and left Zig and his mother, part of the resettlement agreement, to establish and secure their place in Canada.

In 1950, one year after Zig's father made roots in Canada, Zig and his mother followed. After a grueling and dangerous ship voyage, during a hurricane, they landed in Pier 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, in December for processing.

The Misia family settled on a farm outside of Brantford living in the attic for 1 year before moving into the city of Brantford, a very rough and tough neighborhood. Life over the next 10 years was difficult for them all. Zig attended the Polish Hall, was an altar boy at the Polish Church and has been a loyal member of the Polish community for 70 years.



Zig, age 3, in front of a wall of the 'refugee processing camp'.



Stanislaus Misiak, corporal in the Polish Army.

Urząd Miejski
al. Powstańców Wielkopolskich 18
63-400 Ostrów Wielkopolski
tel.: 62 582 24 00
www.umostrow.pl

Mr Kevin Davis
Mayor of the City of Brantford

Dear Mr Mayor,

I am very pleased to address you this letter – Mr Mayor - as our cities, Brantford and Ostrów Wielkopolski, since 2009 have been twin cities. Therefore, it was with great joy that I received - through Mr Zig Misiak – an e – mail with the information that in July 2023 you will be visiting Poland and you would like to visit Ostrów Wielkopolski. I cordially invite you to our city!

I believe that this meeting will be a great opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience, to show you Ostrów Wielkopolski and, as I am convinced, to refresh relations between our cities. Ostrów Wielkopolski is a city that looks boldly into the future, for which international cooperation is a very important element of its activities. Especially today, in a time of global crises, international solidarity makes sense and is extremely important. At the same time, in this place - I want to express my appreciation for the Polish community in Brantford, which proudly cultivates Polish history and culture and disseminates this knowledge in Canada.

The person responsible for international contacts at the Town Hall of Ostrów Wielkopolski is Mrs Karolina Pająk, to whom you can direct any questions regarding organizational issues - (kpajak@umostrow.pl; +48600870933)

I look forward to your visit!

Yours sincerely,

Beata Klimek

Beata Klimek
Mayor of Ostrów Wielkopolski

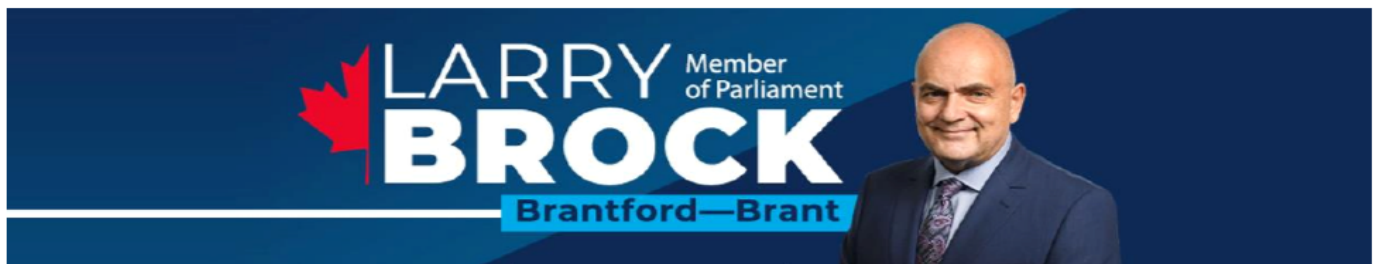
Zig Misiak re-established relations with Brantford's twin Polish city resulting in the Mayor of Brantford and the Mayor of Ostrów Wielkopolski agreeing to meet in Poland in 2023.



Zig Misiak presenting Mayor K. Davis with a formal invitation sent from Ostrów Wielkopolski's Mayor Beata Klimek to visit Brantford's twin city in Poland in 2023.



#1 Newest Project—Establish a National Polish Monument. Zig Misiak's mission is to find and identify the remains of 22 Polish soldiers that died at Fort Erie in defense of Canada in 1814. Our Canadian Member of Parliament and the Polish Ambassador to Canada both support this ventures. Zig has the blessing or Parks Canada in the Niagara Region who will assist him. Polish and Canadian history is over 200 years old. Zig has made this very clear.



November 19, 2021

Mr. Zig Misiak
66 Maich Cres
Brantford, ON
N3T 6S9

Dear Mr. Misiak,

I am pleased to write this letter in support of your project to commemorate Polish soldiers who fought during the battles of the War of 1812 and lie buried on Canadian soil at a mass grave in Fort Erie, Ontario.

For centuries, Canada and Poland have shared a strong and special bond. Polish combatants undoubtedly helped shape the free, peaceful and prosperous Canada we know today.

As the Member of Parliament for Brantford-Brant, I fully support your worthy venture to recognize this essential chapter in our nation's history. This monument will serve as a physical memorial for the public to pay tribute to our heroic men and women in uniform for generations to come.

I welcome updates on your progress and am happy to provide any federal assistance you may need to realize your noble endeavour.

Thank you, again, for your unwavering dedication and efforts to honour Polish veterans for their selfless and courageous sacrifices.

Sincerely,

Larry Brock
Member of Parliament, Brantford-Brant



Embassy
of the Republic of
Poland in London

Mr. Zygi Misiak
Vice-President

November 5, 2020

Dear Mr. Misiak

I am grateful for your outstanding initiatives to commemorate Polish and Canadian heroes. Poland and Canada are a beacon of hope, freedom, and opportunity to people around the world.

The Polish and Canadian soldiers, the Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen who fight against the Nazi/Germans to defend our liberty embody courage, patriotism, and loyalty. These patriots safeguard the values that keep our two nations strong and ready today to defend our countries and our NATO partners as well. In November during Polish Independence Day and Canada Remembrance Day we honor and express our deep appreciation for these brave men and women and their families.

Throughout our Nation's history, our military men and women have boldly answered the call of duty to defend our independence and precious liberties, risking life for our freedom in Poland and in Europe.

Please accept my thanks for your commitment and dedication to the Polish and Canadian veteran communities.

Sincerely,

Andrzej Kurnicki

Ambassador RP

Ambasada RP w Ottawie

#2 Remembrance Day Project: Zig Misiak is writing a 'new' book about Remembrance Day to be available in 2022. It will be a "not for profit" venture as I want it to go across Canada to encourage students, at every level, to continue to remember Remembrance Day. I will, as always, include Polish Veterans and Survivors as well as First Nations, Canadian and other allied countries.

100% of the profits are to be retained by each school to support Remembrance Day in terms of a "student grant", each and every year.

Over the years I have been the author of dozens of Remembrance Day articles always including the relationship between Poland and Canada for over 200 years as well as Poland's relationship with the First Nations People.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Article written by Zig Misiak

We Will Remember Them - We Must Remember



I have written many articles about Remembrance Day in a myriad of ways. My reasoning is to stimulate and fuel the interest and understanding of what this particular day means, or should mean to us all. Unfortunately, as our WW2 veterans and survivors leave us to be with their comrades and family once again, I see us, as a whole, not understanding, or at the very least misunderstanding what this day means.

Here's how WW1 (World War One) and WW2 (World War Two) statistics are commonly reported:

WW1 - Estimated: 10 million military dead, 7 million civilian deaths, 21 million wounded.

WW2 - Estimated: Deaths range from 50-80 million. 38 to 55 million civilians were killed.

Taking 17 million deaths from WW1 adding them to the average of 60 million from WW2 we get a total of 77 million. That is more than twice the population of Canada.

If we spent one (1) second remembering all 77 million it would take us close to 2 1/2 years, without pausing, to count to 77 million. This statistic gives another numeric perspective to the horrific losses during those two wars. WW1 was to have been the war to "End All Wars".

All we are asked to do, on 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month is pause for 120 seconds and "Remember Them".

What does "Lest We Forget" mean?

"Lest We Forget" is a plea and a reminder, that we should remember all those that offered to fight for our freedom. To remember all those that died and were wounded for our collective freedom. To remember all those civilians, like my family in Poland, that were in the countries that were darkened by the ravages and consequence of wars. To remember all those that were not in the countries that were devastated but felt the impact, such as family in Canada, knowing that a loved one will never return or dealing with the physical and emotional scars of those that did.

"Lest We Forget" was, and is, a plea to never repeat the mistakes that led to WW1. It was predicted that we would be doomed to repeat that part of history if we forgot.

WE FAILED TO LEARN.

Just 21 years after WW1 ended a more devastating war, on every level erupted, WW2. This war wasn't even over when the 'Cold War' started with Russia.

Just 5 years later, 1950, another significant war, Korea, and then the list just kept getting longer followed by Vietnam, Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and currently about 40 smaller conflicts.

So what have we learned?

*To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high,*

These two lines are taken from a poem written, during WW1, titled "In Flanders Fields", by Col. John McCrea. The dead were pleading with the living to continue to fight, and not give up or else their deaths were in vain. I added my modern post war interpretation. "Continue to rally for peace or else our deaths were in vain".

As a student at Ancaster High, during the 60's, many veterans, including vice-principal, Colonel J.K. Rumball, were only in their 50's. They were young men and women who were always predictably with us. In fact there were still lots of WW1 veterans around. At that time WW1 veterans were only in their 70's, just like I am now.

When WW1 and WW2 veterans we still among us in great numbers we could turn to our right, or left, and shake hands with them and say, "thank you for your service". Now, with most of them gone, all we can do is look at the names inscribed on monuments, or remember our own family 'warriors' and whisper a prayer saying, "thank you for your sacrifice".

In 2008, at St. John's College, Brantford, 1500 students were present at a very special and fitting assembly honouring veterans and survivors. There were ten rows of fifteen seats in each row occupied by veterans and survivors. In 2019 all but one row remained with only two veterans seated.

For several decades I have been committed to veterans and survivors. In this photo from 2019, only I and Mrs. Dubicki are alive. Walter Gretzky's, father was in WW1 and the other five, Polish and Canadian, veterans, are once again reunited with their comrades, having died in the last 18 months.

The spirit of Remembrance Day should be 365 days a year. In this photo, Sept. 2021, Slawek Dobrowolski and I are paying tribute to a Polish veteran who died at the age of 96. We will always remember him, and them.

Our modern 'warriors', who saw action, put their lives on the line 'willing' to die for our way of life, our democracy, our freedoms. Others, like myself, who did not see 'action', as were several others in Ancaster in the 60's, were also willing to give up our lives for the same reasons. I remained in the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry for six years.



I encourage you to look into your own family's history and breathe new life into those among them that went through the dark times of war.

I am writing a rather unique Remembrance Day book to be available in 2022. My wish is that every school across Canada uses it. All the profits will go to each school in support of a Remembrance Day program. "Lest We Forget". For more information, please visit www.canadianauthoreducation.com

By Zig Misiak



Testimonial letter from the Mayor Designate of Brantford on behalf of
Zig Misiak



Ambassador Adrej Kurnicki
443 Daly Avenue
Ottawa, Canada K1N 6H3
November 11, 2021

Regarding Mr. Zigmund M. Misiak

Dear Ambassador Kurnicki

I hope you and your family are all well and overcoming the challenges of the Covid19 pandemic.

We had the great pleasure of meeting 2-3 years ago here in Brantford where my dear friend Walter Gretzky was honoured with the Polish Gold Cross medal. Walter's passing this year was a huge loss to our City and to the Polish community.

I write to you in support of my friend Mr. Misiak who I have known since approximately 1980.

At that time, we were both involved in the Wayne Gretzky Sports Classic which raised funds for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Mr. Misiak was the Chair and founding member of this hugely successful event in 1980 and 1981. The Sports Classic continued until 1991 when Walter Gretzky suffered an aneurism which prevented his participation. Wayne decided to end the Sports Classic event due to his father's condition.

Since the end of the Sports Classic our paths have crossed many times mostly through our community involvement and at events with the City's strong and active Polish community.

Some of the events Mr. Misiak has been involved in and which I am familiar with have included his knowledge and passion for military history including the Polish Combatants, Butler's Rangers re-enactments, Canadian Military Heritage Museum, Brantford Historical Society Board member, Peace Garden, War of 1812 Bi-Centennial, and Author of numerous books.

One key strength is his ability and personality to work with different ethnic groups including a strong relationship he has nurtured with our Six Nations of the Grand River neighbours.

On a personal note, we have remained friends for many years. Mr. Misiak is a kind, honest and sincere man who is proud of his Polish heritage and the continuation of Polish culture in the City of Brantford.

I respectfully submit my support for your consideration.

Sincerely

John K. Utley

John K. Utley, City of Brantford Councillor and Mayor Designate
60 Woodlawn Avenue, Brantford, Ontario N3V 1B3
johnutley@brantford.ca

Testimonial letter from the Mayor Designate of Brantford on behalf of
Zig Misiak



Captain (N) Krzysztof Ksiazek
Defence, Military, Naval and Air Attache
Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Ottawa, Canada

November 11, 2021

Regarding Mr. Zigmund M. Misiak

Dear Captain Ksiazek

I write to you in support of my friend Mr. Misiak who I have known since approximately 1980. At that time, we were both involved in the Wayne Gretzky Sports Classic which raised funds for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Mr. Misiak was the Chair and founding member of this hugely successful event in 1980 and 1981. The Sports Classic continued until 1991 when Walter Gretzky suffered an aneurism which prevented his participation. Wayne decided to end the Sports Classic event due to his father's condition.

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John K. Utley

John K. Utley, City of Brantford Councillor and Mayor Designate
60 Woodlawn Avenue, Brantford, Ontario N3V 1B3
johnutley@brantford.ca

Polish Soldiers - War of 1812 - Six Nations

Most people when they hear of the War of 1812 automatically think of it being between the United States and the British Canada's. Well you're partially right and that's what most people would say. The biggest part of the war was fought in Europe between Britain and France and respective allies. The war in our part of the world was only an extension of the one in Europe and much smaller in scale when comparing thousands of soldiers and warriors here to millions over there.

Poland's army was aligned with France's not because they were against Britain but

to find an ally that would restore Poland getting it out of the grasps of Russia. Polish soldiers were captured and one of the choices given was to fight for Britain or else. As a result two mercenary Swiss regiments, bought by Britain, the De Meuron regiment and that of De Watteville, had Polish soldiers within their ranks. Both regiments came to the Canada's and saw action along the St. Lawrence and Fort Erie, and yes, fought along side Six Nations warriors. Well there you have it. Poles connected to the War of 1812 and Six Nations.

Poles have actually been

on this side of the ocean for quite some time. In 1609 there are records of Poles settling in Jamestown, Virginia. Poles were a minority amongst the Dutch, Germans, French and British that made up most of the population but never the less they were here and have been here for centuries.

During the American Revolution two Polish Generals fought for George Washington, Casimir Pulaski and Tadeusz Kosciuszko. They are American heroes and have statues dedicated to them in several cities in the United States including Washington. To the fact that

they were Polish and fought against the British and First Nations allies I do apologize.

And my final connection between Poles and Six Nations was given to me by Ron Dale via Rick Hill. I was sent a photograph of Captain Smith who was on staff in Niagara on the Lake in 1917 training soldiers of the Polish Army to fight as allies against the Germans in WW1. Butler's Barracks became Camp Kosciuszko. Captain Smith was awarded "Officer of the Order of the Black Star", a Polish order, for his distinguished service at the camp. He became one

of only five Canadians to receive this honour.

Captain George Smith was a Mohawk from the Six Nations of the Grand River.

I always knew there were deeper reasons that I couldn't quite explain, for my affinity to Six Nations history and culture. As I continue my work on the 200th Anniversary of the War of 1812 I'm sure more information will surface. Even though my personal roots are only 63 years in Canada it gives me great pleasure to know that my Polish ethnic family roots go back 402 years. www.warof1812rph.com

TEKA/SIX NATIONS NEWS
SEPT 21 2011



BRANT NEWS AUG. 10 2017

LIFE

Misiak honoured for work

Work in First Nations education earns Sovereign's Medal



JESSE FERGUSON
lostprophet_04@hotmail.com

BRANT NEWS

Brantford's own Zig Misiak has added the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers to his ongoing list of recognitions. The national honour recognizes exceptional volunteers' achievements from Canadian citizens. Misiak was presented with the award in Kitchener via Governor General David Johnston. Misiak's list of volunteering in the community is long enough, but in particular, he says, the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers is primarily for his contributions related to education and his focus on representing the First Nations population. The Brantford resident's native studies guide is used in 714 schools across Canada, mainly in Ontario. The government describes the Sovereign's Medal as



Brantford's Zig Misiak has added the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers to his list of honours.

FILE PHOTO

“the efforts of great volunteers who contribute to the growth of our society.”

“I'm elated of course,” Misiak said of the honour. Misiak is president of Real People's History, which advances knowledge in support of the First Nations. Misiak's resume of volunteering starts with the Wayne Gretzky Celebrity Tennis Classic in the 1980s, and he's a board member of Brant Historical Society and on the advisory board for PBS. A passion of Misiak's is

establishing a connection between First Nations and people of Polish descent, his birth heritage.

He wrote the first biography of Six Nations' Jay Silverheels, which earned the Shining Star award. He has also previously received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal and the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award.

“I want to help create public awareness and educational material for all of Ontario,” Misiak said.



First National SPK Conference, Brantford, Ontario, Canada.
 Zig Misiak, VP, was a key member of the organizing committee.
 This event was extremely successful.



Polish Combatants' Association of Canada, August 4, 2019

Hosted by SPK Brantford, Ontario, Br#4

Polish Monument at St. Joseph's Cemetery

H.E. Andrzej Kurnicki Ph.D. Ambassador of The Republic of Poland in Canada

Group photo of SPK members



Polish Combatant's Association of Canada, August 3, 2019

Hosted by SPK Brantford, Ontario, Br#4

SPK Br4 President Adam Sikora, Komandor Krzysztof Książek Polish Defence, Military, Naval & Air Attaché, Richard Blackwolf, President Canadian Aboriginal Veterans & Serving Members Association, H.E. Andrzej Kurnicki Ph.D. Ambassador of The Republic of Poland in Canada, WW2 veteran Lloyd Bentley, M.P. Brant/Brant County Phil McColeman, Walter Gretzky (recipient of the 'Golden Polish Combatant's Cross', SPK Brantford Slawek Dobrowolski, SPK Brantford Zig Misiak, Andrzej Ruta; National President Polish Combatant's Association.



Zig Misiak, VP SPK Br#4, was a key committee organizing member for the 100th Anniversary of Polish Independence Day
Sept. 1, 1939 was 80 years since that brutal attack on Poland occurred.
Zigs public relations with the media has given the Polish community a very high profile.



Polish Independence Day
100th Anniversary
November 11, 2018
1918-2018

1752
 Dominik Barcz was the first Pole recorded arriving in Montreal as a fur trader.

1795: Poland
 Poland was occupied and partitioned by Russia, Prussia and Austria. Poland ceased to exist as a sovereign nation for the next 123 years.

War of 1812
 Poles died, fighting Americans, along-side British troops. Six Nations allies and militia at the 1814 Battle of Fort Erie. Twenty identified Poles lie buried on Canadian soil.

1864; Kashubian's
 Immigrants from northern Poland founded a tiny community of 300 called Wilno near Barry's Bay Ontario. Twenty eight of their young men trained at Camp Kosciuszko in Niagara on the Lake and then sent to Europe to fight in General Haller's Blue Army.

1914: World War One
 When war was declared on August 4, 1914 Canada immediately answered the call and thousands of Canadians of Polish ancestry joined the Canadian Expeditionary Forces.

Russia was no longer an ally of Prussia and Austria, the group of 3 that divided

Poland. Polish patriots from around the world saw an opportunity to regain Polish sovereignty.

1917; United States
 The United States did not join the war effort until mid-1917 but loyalist Poles in the U.S.A. were anxious to fight. Leaders of the Polish-American community persuaded Britain to train a Polish Army in Canada, which was to be armed, equipped, and paid for by France. From 1917 to 1919, over 21,000 soldiers of Polish descent were trained at Niagara on the Lake and sent to Europe.

Niagara-on-the-Lake
 Colonel Arthur D'Orr LePan was the Commandant of Camp Kosciuszko where men and women received basic and special training. Twenty six identified and named Poles are buried on Canadian soil at St. Mark's cemetery having died of influenza.

Haller's Blue Army
 General Jozef Haller led this army from Niagara-on-the-Lake into battle during World War One on the western front. There, under the direction of the French army, they joined forces with more Poles forming a larger Polish army of nearly 100,000. On November 11, 1918 fighting stopped and World War One was over.

1919 - 1920; Polish Soviet War
 Sadly the fighting was not over for the Poles. Determined to defend their regained freedom the Polish army from the western front moved to the eastern front. The Russian Red Army, seeing a weakened Europe, moved into Polish territory. The Polish defeated them. Polish sovereignty was secure for now.

Canada: We stand on guard for Thee
 Had it not been for Canadian openness and support of the Polish military training camp at Niagara-on-the-Lake, during WW1, this very significant fighting force, Haller's Blue Army, would not have been created.

This army, joined by tens of thousands of other loyalist Poles in France, was key in regaining the independence of Poland after 123 years of occupation. Thank you Canada.

1939: World War Two
 The Canadian and Polish connection, as close allies and friends, continued into and throughout World War Two. Canada, once again, entered this war when Poland was attacked by two invading armies on September 1, 1939.

Polish pilots fought in the Battle of Britain. Polish armies were key in the

allied invasions of Italy and the D-Day landings that hastened the end of World War Two.

Poles in the thousands fought in underground home army in Poland, Monte Casino, Siege of Tobruk, Falaise and many more battles in the east, west and south.

Our blood mixed with that of Canadian soldiers on many battlefields.

NATO: the present
 Canadian soldiers are once again watching over Poland, as members states of NATO, in order to make sure that the sovereignty of Poland is not threatened.

Polish World War Two veterans and all other survivors
 They, as well as their children and the next generations of Canadians of Polish descent did, do and will cherish and hold steadfast to these words strongly pledging that we are always there for Canada as Canada had and will be for us.

We fought for 'Your freedom and Ours'
 The Polish Combatant's Association of Canada, Brantford, Br. No. 4
 Stowarzyszenie Polaków Kombatantów w Kanadzie, Brantford, Br. No. 4

On behalf of the Province of Ontario
 I wish to extend
 my warmest congratulations to

The Polish Community of Brantford

on the occasion of
Poland's 100th Year of National Independence

Please accept my sincere congratulations on the 100th anniversary of Poland's national independence. May you continue to represent and celebrate the country of your heritage in this joyous time.

Presented by:

Will Bouma

Will Bouma, MPP
 Brantford-Brant
 November 3, 2018

100-lecie
niepodległości Polski

100th Anniversary of Poland's Regained Independence

1918-2018

Always looking after our valued Veterans and Survivors.

Slawek Dobrowolski was “key” in having me reconnect with our Veterans, especially our Polish Veterans and Survivors. We did many things with them and for them that was not known to many people. We cherished and honoured our Polish Veterans and Survivors.



Never Forgetting

Placing engraved photo on the headstone.

Polish WW2 Veteran, Boleslaw Wilbik & wife Kazimiera.

Polish Combatants of Brantford: Slawomir Dobrowolski & Zig Misiak
Sept. 19, 2021



Helping 94 year old Monte Cassio Veteran, Boleslaw Wilbik, being helped to dress.



Visiting Monte Cassio Veteran, Paul Lojko, in the hospital.



Slawek Dobrowolski & children & Zig Misiak saluting WW2 veterans & survivors at St. Josephs' Church today commemorating the 80th year since Poland was attacked Sept. 1, 1939



Birthday parties for our Veterans.
All these wonderful Veterans are now gone.

Walter Gretzky getting the SPK Gold Cross Medal repined by his friend of 40 years, Zig after the banquet during which Walter Gretzky received this honour. Behind Wally is his father in a WW1 uniform. Zig Misiak did research for Walter locating the last place that his father fought during WW1. Walter's fathers medals are seen on Walter's right side. Now Walter has a military medal of his own.

Zig also researched Walters mother who was born in Poland and even though Walter's father, Antony, was born in Belarus it is quite possible that he is also Polish. Zig has been clear in all media of Walter's Polish lineage.



Zig Misiak presented with a valued gift from the Six Nations People.

The Polish Eagle and the Six Nations Eagle are both represented on the piece. Zig is known for his “bridging” between cultures and well known among First Nations People as a person of Polish descent. Zig continues to link Canadian, Polish and First Nations history in every possible way.

Talking Earth Pottery, 2019, Steven T. Smith, Mohawk Grand River Six Nations Territory.

Steve presented me with a one of a kind pottery he made in recognition of my contributions and relationship with the Grand River Six Nations People. He had wrote a 2 page letter giving details. The note remains inside the piece of pottery.



Page 1 of 2

SN-400
Talking Earth Pottery

This is an original and contemporary piece of handmade Iroquois pottery. It has been personally designed and made especially for Zig Misiak. It is inscribed as:

Zig Misiak

“A most amazing and interesting person. A proud honorable Canadian. A proud and honorable Canadian with roots formed in his Polish heritage. Zig is a historian, writer, educator and great humanitarian. A true friend to the Native People”

*Steven T. Smith
S.T.S.*

It has been made for Zig in recognition, honour, appreciation and admiration of his invaluable dedication, research and interest in the history of Native People; especially the Six Nations. One definition of invaluable in Webster’s Dictionary is “value beyond measure.”

He has acquired a lot of knowledge on the relationships between Poland, Canada and the Six Nations People. He has shared this knowledge in his books on the War of 1812, the First World War and Tonto, Jay Silverheels.

Page 2 of 2

“Zig Misiak”

The Guardian Eagle symbolizes strength, vision, and courage. Many civilizations of the world have used the eagle as a symbol defending freedom and democracy. The strength and keen vision of the eagle symbolizes vigilance and guardian ship or protection.

The White Eagle of Poland and the Gold Eagle of North America stand together as Allies. There are abstract figures of two men symbolizing the friendship toward the cause of peace and harmony.

The woodland floral design symbolizes life, health, growth and fertility which was to flourish for all humanity. There were only two military medals called the Black Star of Poland. This was given to allies who dedicated continued contribution in the rebuilding of Poland.

One of the recipients of this medal was Capt. A.G.E. Smith (Steve’s grandfather) who was sent to Poland after WW1 to train Polish Troops.

This has been a great honour for me to create this pottery commemorating our ancestors.

*Steven T. Smith
S.T.S.*



AUTHOR RECALLS INDIGENOUS FRIENDS, WALTER GRETZKY

RHLI VETERAN, HISTORIAN, RESTAURATEUR AND AUTHOR SPEAKS TO HAMILTON RETIREES

MIKE PEARSON
mpearson@hamiltonnews.com

Growing up in Brantford, near the Six Nations of the Grand River, Zig Misiak spent a lot of time playing with Indigenous children down at the Mush Hole, the nickname for the Mohawk Institute Residential School.

Originally a boarding school for Indigenous children from 1829 to 1970, the building is now the Woodland Cultural Centre.

Misiak didn't realize it at the time, but he was interacting with Indian residential school survivors and learning about Indigenous history and culture.

Misiak, who is of Polish descent, came to Canada as a refugee following the Second World War in 1950.

In a Sept. 16 presentation to a Hamilton Service Canada retirees group, Misiak, a Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (RHLI) veteran, historian, restaurateur and author of 16 books, spoke about his writing career and his 40-year friendship with the late Walter

Gretzky.

Misiak has authored an educational children's book series detailing the nine clans of the Haudenosaunee people. He is also known for his books "Tonto, the Man in Front of the Mask," which chronicles the life of Jay Silverheels, who portrayed Tonto in the American Western TV series "The Lone Ranger," and "War of 1812: Highlighting Native Nations."

As a young boy back in 1950, Misiak had few friends when his family moved to Brantford.

"When I was younger, I was fortunate to spend time in libraries," he recalled.

During that time, he met Indigenous elders and clan mothers.

"I had the opportunity to talk to some people and gain oral history," Misiak said. "I wrote it down and mixed it with reading books."

In his educational guides for children, Misiak said his aim is to blend oral and written history, respecting both sources and presenting the information the way he understands it.

His guides are used in schools, including those in Six Nations. "It's really validating," said Misiak. "I try to make it simple."

After moving to Ancaster in 1961, Misiak joined



Mike Pearson/Metroland

Walter Gretzky, left, and Zig Misiak were parade marshals for the Ancaster Heritage Days parade in 2019.

the RHLI in a non-combat role. His marks in high school were horrendous, so Misiak was surprised to receive a letter from his alma mater in 2019, letting him know he would be inducted into the Ancaster High School Hall of Distinction.

That same year, Misiak got a call from Ancaster

Heritage Days organizers, asking him to serve as the parade marshal. He was visiting his longtime friend, Walter Gretzky, at the time.

"When they asked me to be the parade marshal, I called back and I asked them, 'Is it OK if I bring a friend?'" Misiak recalled.

When the request was turned down, Misiak replied, "OK, I'll tell Walter Gretzky that he's not invited."

Misiak thinks he heard the phone drop at the other end.

That's how the parade ended up with two marshals in 2019.

Misiak, an avid War of 1812 and American Revolution re-enactor, came to the parade in a Butler's Rangers uniform while Gretzky donned a War of 1812 uniform. Gretzky had a sword, which he used to poke Misiak in the butt a couple of times on the way.

The two were still laughing about it as they waved to spectators.

Before Gretzky passed away on March 4, Misiak assisted with an application for a Polish Gold Combatants' Cross, to honour his father, Antoni, and his Polish family in Europe during the First and Second World Wars.

In October of that year, Walter accepted the Gold Combatants' Cross, with the Polish ambassador present.

"Wally was a tremendous history buff and I think a lot of that came about when his father left Chicago in 1917 and came to Canada, to Toronto, and joined the Canadian Expeditionary Forces and went over and fought," said Misiak.

Misiak had about 40 speaking engagements lined up for 2020, all of which were cancelled or held remotely due to the pandemic. His appearance at the Service Canada retirees event was his first in-person speaking engagement in nearly two years.

Zig Misiak www.canadianauthoreducation.com



Presenting Glen Gretzky with the 'Honorary White Eagle Award' in memory of Walter Gretzky's passing in 2021. From the Polish Combatants' Br4 Brantford Ontario Canada

Walter Gretzky 'Honorary White Eagle Award' presented to his son, Glen Gretzky by Zig Misiak, Polish Combatants' Br4, Brantford, Ontario, Canada. Jan. 5, 2023

Zig Misiak, a veteran of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, visits, in his Polish Combatants uniform, members of the 56th Artillery Field Regiment.



Zig Misiak, Walter Gretzky, Argyle soldier, Defense Minister of Canada—Peter McKay, WW2 Veteran Lloyd Bentley, Slawek Dobrowolski. St. John's Remembrance Day 2008.



In 2021 Zig was written about in a prestigious magazine.

It clearly highlighted Zig's Polish heritage and the fact that every book he has written, every article he has written and all speeches he has given he refers to his Polish ancestry.





Zig Misiak has been the subject of many interviews and documentaries and always refers to his Polish Heritage. **Discovery Channel, Polish NTV24, Canadian Residential Documentary 2021.—Polish Credit Union TV Toronto, Ontario, Canada: interviews and video recordings.—CBC's A Peoples' History.—CBC's Hockey, A Peoples' History.—War of 1812: by the McKenna Brothers.—History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment: documentary.—The History of Brant County: and an Ontario Visual Heritage Project.**



Rogers Cable TV as a regular commenting on First Nations, Remembrance Day, history of Poland and connection to Canada, American Revolution, War of 1812 and contemporary issues. Here being interviewed along with his friend, Walter Gretzky.




"Oh the memories"
**A younger and fitter
 Butlers Ranger at
 Kanata Village Longhouse,
 Six Nations Grand River Territory.**
www.canadianauthorededucation.com



*Once a Butlers Ranger
 Always a Butlers Ranger*

Zig Misiak, in his War of 1812 uniform, lays a wreath along side and with a councilman, Bob Johnson, of the Grand River Six Nations Territory.

This idea of laying a wreath with a Six Nations representative was Zigs idea.

1812 Veterans honoured during remembrance ceremonies

By Stephanie Dearing
BRANTFORD

It was a brief moment during the 2012 Remembrance observance ceremonies, but it was significant.

"Wasn't it beautiful," said the near-to-bursting with pride Zig Misiak, who was dressed in period costume for the occasion. He, along with Six Nations Elected Councillor Bob Johnson had laid a wreath in memory of veterans of the War of 1812 during the Remembrance ceremonies hosted by Brantford on Sunday.

Those 1812 veterans include the hundreds of Six Nations warriors who volunteered to fight beside the British during the conflict.

Thousands of people had attended the ceremonies on Sunday at the cenotaph in downtown Brantford, including Brantford Mayor Chris Friel, Brant County Mayor Ron Eddy, MLA

and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Dave Levac, and Member of Parliament Phil McColeman.

"It was a very nice addition," said Mayor Eddy after the ceremonies had concluded, referring to the wreath laid in memory of the War of 1812. "It was very meaningful. It should be there on an ongoing basis. It's extremely important."

Saying the War of 1812 is "our history," Eddy said those who sacrificed their lives 200 years ago should have been acknowledged all along. "The important thing is, it's now acknowledging" that time, he said. "We're catching up."

As cadets marched in formation back to the armory, the enthusiastic Misiak exclaimed, "It's the first time, history." He said the idea to include the War of 1812 in the remembrance ceremonies had originated with the Remembrance Day Commit-

tee, who contacted Misiak and asked if he would participate.

"I asked if we could have Bob from Six Nations. They said absolutely. This is phenomenal. The first time ever," said Misiak, who confessed, "I'm so happy."

While Misiak was happy the War of 1812 was acknowledged, the ceremonies reminded those who came to pay their respects that "Canada has been purchased at a great cost of precious blood." That reminder came from Ian Moran, a student at the French languages school Sainte-Marguerite-Bourgeoys. He was one of four students who presented their thoughts about Remembrance Day to the crowd ringing the cenotaph.

Reverend Jim Sutton, well known to Six Nations members through his involvement at the Mohawk Chapel, also provided some food for thought during the ceremo-



Six Nations Elected Councillor Bob Johnson (far left) joined Brantford historian Zig Misiak (middle) to lay a wreath in honour of veterans of the War of 1812 during Sunday's Remembrance Day observances in Brantford. It was the first time the ceremonies acknowledged war veterans prior to the South African War (the Second Boer War), which took place between 1899 and 1902. (Photograph by Stephanie Dearing).

ny. "We're here today to remember so we don't make the same mistakes again," he said. "In that remembering,

we learn how to make a better world."

The ceremonies were attended by an estimated

3,000 to 5,000 people and marked by a fly-over of aircraft and the firing of the 105mm Howitzer.

"Thank a Vets," Assumption Colleges.

Left to Right front row: Unknown legionnaire, Polish WW2 Veterans Boleslaw Wilbik,

Left to Right: Polish Combatant member Zig Misiak, Mayor Chris Friel, Six Nations councilman Bob Johnson.



Zig Misiak is seen here marching between the Kings Colours and the Butlers Rangers Regimental Colours. Zig has been a historic reenactor for over 40 years and a liaison to the Six Nations. He re-enacts the American Revolution and the War of 1812.



It's a double celebration

Brantford Expositor, Vincent Ball, Published on: October 24, 2018

Zig Misiak, of the Polish Combatants, Branch 4, in Brantford, visits a memorial in Tom Thumb Park that was erected to commemorate those Polish War Veterans and Survivors of WW2.

Members of the local Polish community will be celebrating two historic occasions next month. Nov. 11 marks the 100th anniversary of the armistice ending the hostilities of the First World War and the 100th anniversary of the liberation of Poland.

“Following the declaration of the First World War, thousands of Canadians of Polish ancestry joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force overseas,” said Zig Misiak of the Polish Combatants of Canada, Branch 4, speaking on behalf of branch president Adam Sikora. “They fought and died at Vimy Ridge, Ypres and the Somme.

“Poles in the United States were also eager to join the war effort and persuaded Britain to train a Polish army in Canada.” Their efforts led to the creation of Camp Kosciuszko at Niagara-On-The-Lake, Ont., where about 21,000 men and women received basic and special training. When they got overseas, they fought on the Western Front led by Jozef Haller, Misiak said. The soldiers joined other Poles to form an army of about 100,000 combatants, he added. “Hostilities ended on Nov. 11, 1918, but, for the Poles, the fighting wasn’t over.” Misiak said the Poles saw an opportunity to regain Polish territory that had been lost to the Russians. “Had it not been for Canadian openness and support of the Polish military training camp at Niagara-On-The-Lake, this significant fighting force — known as Haller’s Blue Army — would not have been created.”

The fighting force, combined with other loyalist Poles in France, was key in regaining the independence of Poland after 123 years of occupation by Russia, Prussia and Austria, he added.

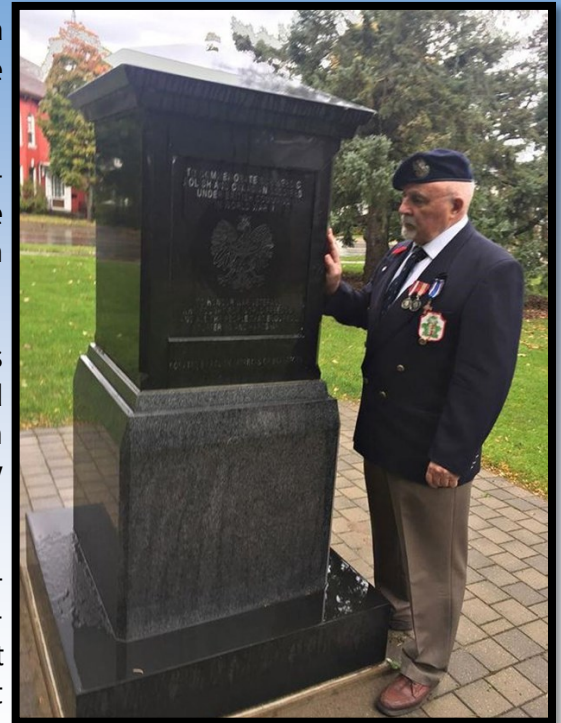
The contributions of Poles fighting for Canada and Britain dates back to the War of 1812 when many people of Polish descent died fighting with British troops and Six Nations allies at the Battle of Fort Erie. Twenty Poles died in 1814 when the American were being pushed back across the border after invading Upper Canada two years earlier, Misiak said.



In the Second World War, Polish combatants were part of the invasion of Italy and the D-Day landings that hastened the end of the war, Misiak added. Locally, the Polish Combatants Association of Canada, Branch 4, unveiled a monument in Tom Thumb Park in 2011 commemorating the contributions of Polish fighters and Canadian soldiers during the Second World War.

“Brantford has been home to Polish immigrants even before the First World War,” Misiak said.

“We have a large population of Poles, like me, and we have two halls that were built in the 1930s. Both halls have been active and continue to participate in the International Villages.”





We Stand on Guard for Thee

By: Zig Misiak

'We Stand on Guard for Thee', also speaks to the pledge between two countries, two peoples. For nearly 225 years Canada/Britain and Poland have had the very best of relations. The Polish community in Brantford and Poles all over the world will be commemorating the liberation of Poland 100 years ago; November 11, 1918. Poles from around the world will also be bowing their heads on the 11th hour on that same day in 'Remembrance.'

In 1752 Dominik Barcz, was the first Pole recorded arriving in Montreal as a fur trader and ever since then our two cultures started to interweave over the following centuries into a beautiful tapestry of friendship. In 1795 Poland was occupied and partitioned by Russia, Prussia and Austria. Poland ceased to exist as a sovereign nation. Poles migrated to all parts of the world to escape oppression, including Canada.

During the War of 1812, in 1814, Poles died standing shoulder to shoulder with British troops, Six Nations allies and Militia at the battle of Fort Erie pushing back the American invaders. Twenty identified Poles lie buried on Canadian soil at Fort Erie.

World War One was declared on August 4, 1914 and Canada immediately answered the call and over 400,000 Canadians of many cultural backgrounds including Canadians of Polish descent volunteered and were sent to Europe immediately.

The United States did not join the war until mid-1917 but loyalist Poles in the U.S.A. were anxious to fight. Leaders of the Polish-American community persuaded Britain to train a Polish Army in Canada, which was armed, equipped, and paid for by France. From 1917 to 1919, thousands of soldiers of Polish descent from the U.S.A. and from Canada were trained in Niagara on the Lake at Camp Kościuszko, and sent overseas. Known as Haller's Blue Army, because of the blue uniforms provided by the French, they filled a critical role on the western front. Twenty eight identified Poles are buried on Canadian soil at St. Mark's cemetery having died of influenza during training.

When hostilities ceased on November 11, 1918 Polish soldiers, including Haller's Blue Army, from the western frontier moved to the east in order to fend off the invading Russian Red army. The Poles fought until 1920 after which Polish independence seemed secure.

The dream of an independent and free Poland was shattered on September 1, 1939. Germany invaded Poland and a few weeks later Russia did the same from the east. Poland was ripped in two.



Poles were massacred (over 5.8 million died) and many fled to all parts of Europe. Tens of thousands of Poles joined the British army and Polish divisions fought alongside Canadian and British soldiers during the Battle of Britain, Africa, Italy's Monte Cassino, and D-Day landings.

In May of 1945, WW2 ended but Poland remained occupied by Russian troops until 1993. So you see; Poland's independence, though officially regained in November 1918 was very much fractured and fragmented. Even in 2018 Poland deals with anxiety with old foes along their borders. Canadian soldiers under NATO are in Poland today. For 'Your freedom and Ours'



Polish WW2 veterans, and all other survivors, as well as their children and the next generations of Canadians of Polish descent did, do, and will cherish and hold steadfast to these words, strongly pledging that we are always there for Canada as Canada had and will be there for us. I am a Polish WW2 baby refugee born in 1947 and arriving in Canada in 1950. I, and my parents were among thousands of Poles accepted and embraced by this wonderful and exceptional country. We have not and will not forget.

On November 3, the Polish Combatants Assoc. of Brantford under the leadership of President Adam Sikora and the entire Polish community host a gala (Polish Hall on Pearl St.) in commemoration of 100 years of independence. Please call 519-757-0910 for tickets. VIP guests include WW2 veterans and survivors, Polish Ambassadors to Canada, Phil McColeman, Dave Levac, Walter Gretzky, and members of legions and SPK from all around.

Article by Zig Misiak regarding the 'new' Polish Monument erected downtown, in Tom Thumb Park, Brantford adjacent to the large Brantford, Brand County and Six Nations War Memorial.

■ LETTERS TO THE EDITOR BRANT NEWS SEPT 2011

Monument honours sacrifice of Polish vets

To take Winston Churchill's famous quote and change it slightly to reflect the official placement and unveiling of the Polish war monument in Brantford's Tom Thumb Park on Sunday, I hope, will be understood.

"So few have done so much for so many."

I speak for my family, of Polish descent and my parents, who were in Europe during the Second World War, when I say that I am overwhelmed by the support of our collective government officials, service clubs and military organizations.

Brant MP Phil McColeman went beyond his mandate, in my opinion, giving much of his personal self in support of this project. His speech on Sunday was very low key and I for one know how much more he could have said. He is a man of compassion, duty and humility. For that and other things, I respect what he did for "my people."

Brant MPP Dave Levac also did special things to support this historic unveiling based on his connection to the sacrifices of our veterans and other survivors.

Chris Friel has a close relationship with the Polish community and his words were sincere and unscripted.

The Polish Combatants organization and the Polish community as a whole once again put personal issues aside and worked collectively in honour of Polish families that suffered so much more than 60 years ago.

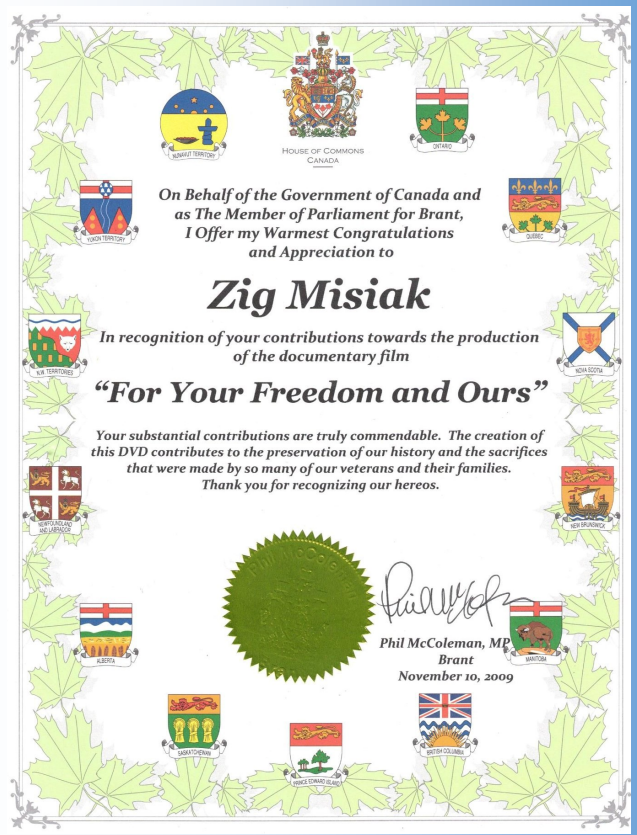
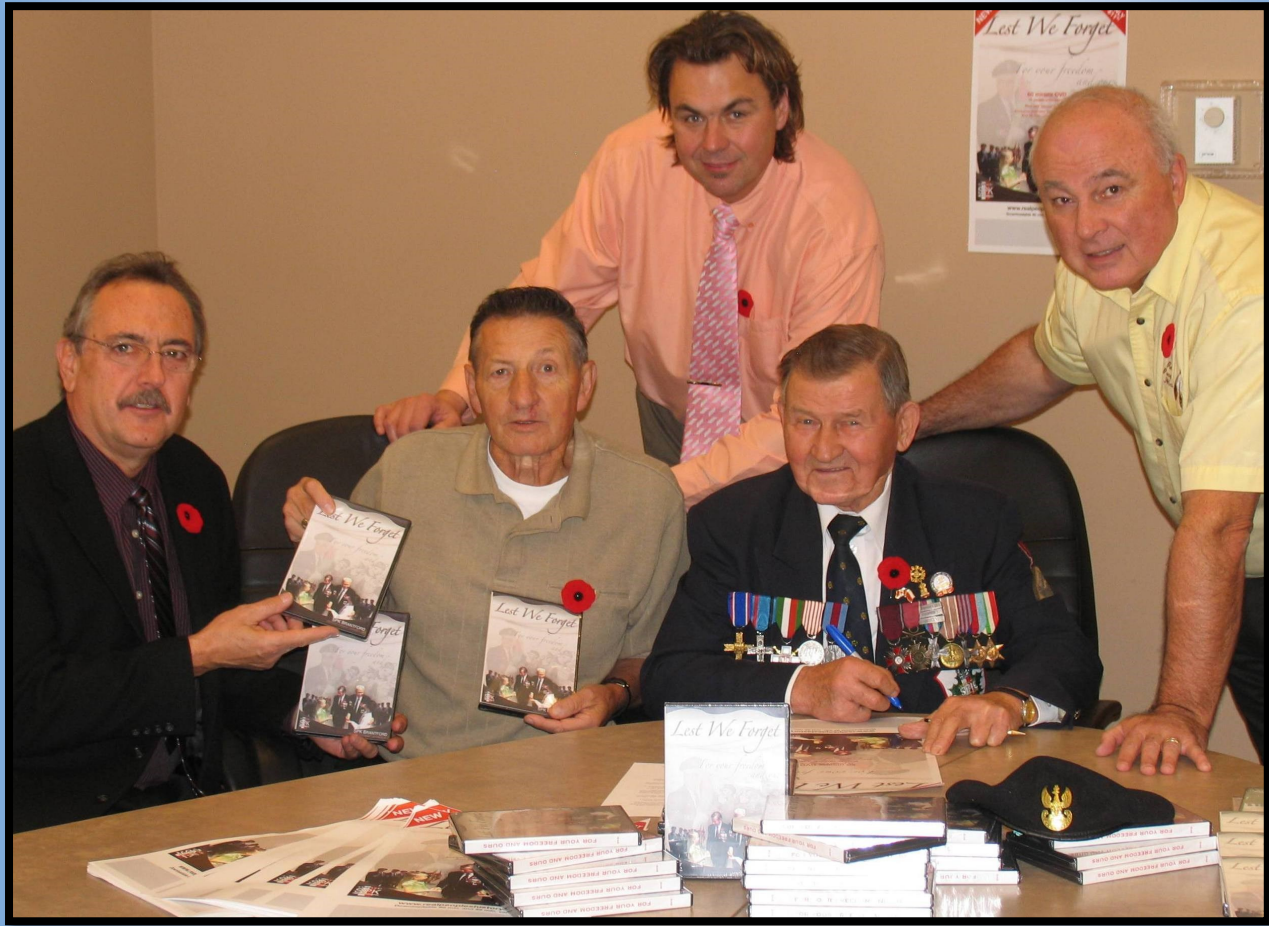
The "healing circle" is now stronger and more complete, not only for our Polish war veterans, but for all the Canadian, British and First Nations veterans who fought alongside our soldiers.

The healing circle is now stronger and more complete for the wives of the veterans and the children who are now adults, but for many years carried and still carry the scars of that horrible time.

I came to Canada as a result of the war. Canada gave us a new life. I am very proud to be a Canadian. To me, this war monument also means a healing in my own personal life. I wish my parents were here to see it.

*Zig Misiak
Brantford*

The DVD, "For Your Freedom and Ours" was distributed FREE to 140 schools, including First Nations schools, and assorted Veterans organizations as well as in Europe: Poland, Holland, United States and England. Zig, Slawek Dobrowolski, then a teacher at St. John's College, invited Zig Misiak to be the producer. In all 19 Veterans and survivors were interviewed; Polish, Canadian, First Nations, and British.



Six Nations News as well as some far reaching cities such as Toronto and Vancouver gave us coverage regarding the "For Your Freedom and Ours" project.

HERITAGE

DVD project puts spotlight on Polish war veterans

SAL BOMMARITO
Expositor Staff

Local history buff Zig Misiak has been involved in a lot of community projects but his latest endeavour, a documentary about local Polish war veterans, hits very close to home for him.

Entitled For Your Freedom and Ours and shot with the help of St. John's College media arts students, the DVD will be shown for the first time on Aug. 30 at the Polish Polonaise Hall on Pearl Street.

"This is an opportunity for the Polish community to tell its story," said the 62-year-old Misiak, whose father, Stan, served with the Polish army during the Second World War.

"Vets didn't talk about things back then," said Misiak of his dad, who died 12 years ago.

"It's almost like owing it to my father. Now I can make it up to him."

With the 70th anniversary approaching in September of the invasion of Poland by the Nazis and the start of the Second World War, Misiak said the time is right for the documentary.



Expositor File Photo

History buff Zig Misiak is proud of a documentary about local Polish war veterans that will be shown for the first time Aug. 30.

Also providing momentum for the project were the recent twinning of Brantford with Polish city Ostrow Wielkopolski and the imminent creation of a monument to Polish war vets at Tom Thumb Park at Brant Avenue and Dalhousie Street.

"It all fit," said Misiak. "We're losing a lot of our war veterans. I met (St. John's College teacher) Slawomir (Dobrowolski) at a Polish Combatants meeting and we said, 'Why don't we take this to the next step and do a documentary?'"

Misiak said the film's primary goal is to highlight the contributions of the approximately 25,000 Polish soldiers who came to Canada after the Second World War.

Only about a dozen local Polish war veterans are still alive, he said.

"We buried (a Polish vet) in January," he said.

One of the more emotional interviews in the film is with Walter Gretzky, whose mother was Polish and father was Belarusian.

His father, Anthony, was a veteran of the Second World War with the Canadian army.

"Walter took us out to the cemetery in Paris where his father was buried. We took with us a photo of his dad in uniform that Wayne had done for him. It was very emotional."

Misiak said Gretzky "was thrilled" to be part of the project. "He thought it was great that we were doing this. It's the first-ever visual record of our Polish vets. It's archival and it belongs to the city," he said.

So far, 50 hours of footage has been compiled during the first six months of the project. Although the focus is primar-

"Much of what they said is being said for the first time. I carry that trust with the veterans. They know we would handle this with the utmost respect. They had confidence in us that it would be done right."

Zig Misiak

ily on Polish veterans, Misiak said an effort has been made to include contributions from other local vets, including those from Six Nations.

He acknowledged that at times the process was a painful one for the veterans involved in telling their stories.

"Much of what they said is being said for the first time. I carry that trust with the veterans. They know we would handle this with the utmost respect. They had confidence in us that it would be done right."

Brantford Polish Second World War veteran Richard Wdowczyk, 85, said he agreed

to be in the documentary even though reliving the memories was heartbreaking.

"I did it so we have something left behind ... so people would know what it was like. People don't talk too much about it."

Richard said he and his twin brother, Felix, who died 12 years ago in England, were recruited to serve in the British military after their family was taken to Siberia following the invasion of Poland.

He and his brother wanted to serve in the same company but later found out that their father, Stephan, who had served in the Polish army during the First World War, made sure that didn't happen.

"When he was a sergeant-major with the Polish army he had twins in his platoon and they both were killed. He didn't want that to happen to us."

Felix joined the army first, at the age of 16, while Richard was sick in the hospital. It was the first of many times that the brothers would be separated.

"I was in the paratroopers and he was in the artillery."

Near the end of the war, Richard parachuted into Arnhem, Holland, and was later captured

by the Nazis. He would return to England after the war.

Dubbed Operation Market Garden, the events were dramatized in the movie A Bridge Too Far.

Felix would later become part of the British occupation army in Germany. In 1945, the brothers were reunited.

"He came to England on a pass to see me," said Richard.

Misiak said local dignitaries members of the legion and Six Nations representatives have been invited to the film's screening later this month. Plans also are in the works to broadcast it via satellite to viewers in Ostrow Wielkopolski.

Misiak said the project is "self-funded," although it has garnered the support of the local Polish community. It will be made available to residents through the local war museum, library and legions.

He also said copies will be available for a donation of \$5 or more.

Rogers TV also has been approached to broadcast the film.

"Other communities may want to use it as a template for their stories," he said.

"For Your Freedom and Ours" project leader Slawek Dobrowolski and Producer Zig Misiak hold autographed poster of all the Veterans and Survivors that were interviewed.



Kingdom of the Netherlands acknowledge receipt of the DVD, For Your Freedom and Ours, sent to them. We know that Polish soldiers were key liberators of the Netherlands, Holland, therefore we reached out letting them know we referred to them in our DVD and in fact interviewed Dutch Survivors.



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Mr. Zig Misiak
66 Maich Crescent
Brantford, ON N3T 6S9

Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Public Diplomacy, Press and Cultural Affairs

350 Albert St., Suite 2020
Ottawa, ON
K1R 1A4
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Contact
Rosemieke van de Meerendonk
T 613 237 5031 ext. 225
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rosemieke-
vande.meerendonk@minbuza.nl

Date 30 May, 2011
Re Lest We Forget

Dear Mr. Misiak,

Dutch Remembrance and Liberation Day 2011 has come and gone and it was a pleasure to meet you in Hamilton at the celebration of liberation day there.

I would like to thank you for sending me the dvd 'Lest We Forget'. I understand it was meant to be a 15 minute recording, but became much more inclusive and is now a 60 minute documentary, not only highlighting Polish Veterans but many others, including those who helped liberate my country.

Last November, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands organized a conference, entitled "The Future of Remembrance" in which we talked about the ways in which we remember, both here and in the Netherlands, how to pass the torch of remembrance to the younger generation and what will remembrance look like in the future. We had a number of well-known speakers including Peter Mansbridge.

The Dutch will never forget and will always be deeply grateful to the people of Canada and to the Canadian veterans who played such a pivotal role in the liberation of the Netherlands, 66 years ago this May.

Thank you very much for sending me this video. I look forward to watching it.

Sincerely yours,

[Handwritten signature]
Wim Geerts
Ambassador



For Your Freedom and Ours DVD, spearheaded by Slawek Dobrowolski and produced by Zig Misiak officially announced and viewed at a large gala at the Polish Hall.

Featured were Polish Veterans and Survivors and included Six Nations and Canadian Veterans.

localnews

■ POLISH WAR VETS HONOURED

Film highlights their contributions

MICHELLE RUBY
Expositor Staff

It was standing-room-only at the Polish Hall on Pearl Street Sunday at the premier of a locally made documentary about Polish war veterans and their families.

Zig Misiak, who produced the film, called For Your Freedom and Ours, said he was overwhelmed by the turnout.

"These are the people that this is all about," he said as his documentary played nearby.

"I want them to feel like someone has recognized them."

Misiak said the film's primary goal is to highlight the contributions of the 25,000 Polish soldiers who came to Canada after the Second World War.

The original plan was to produce a short documentary, but Misiak said he found it impos-



ANNALECIA MOLENAAR
For The Expositor

Zig Misiak announces the release of a documentary on Polish war veterans at the Polish Hall on Pearl Street on Sunday in Brantford.

sible to edit the riveting, and often heart-breaking, stories of

the 19 people he interviewed. The film, still not quite finished, runs about 90 minutes.

He, along with editorial consultant Slawomir Dobrowolski and assistant director Mark Baluk, a St. John's College student, worked into the small hours of Sunday morning doing some last-minute editing for the viewing.

The front rows of the hall were reserved for veterans. Only about a dozen local Polish war veterans are still alive, said Misiak.

"We buried two this year," he said.

"It's important to tell the story," said Rick Shaver, chairman of the Canadian Military Heritage Museum, one of the sponsors of the documentary project.

On Sept. 1, 1939, Nazi Ger-

many attacked Poland, marking the beginning of the Second World War. On Sept. 17, 1939, the Soviet Union joined in this attack. Poland was defeated within six weeks by the overwhelming strength of the German and Soviet armies.

The defeat was followed by five years of brutal occupation, which resulted in the deaths of millions of Polish citizens.

Thousands of Poles joined various allied armies. They fought to the end, said Misiak, only to be left without a country for decades, with the migration of millions all over the world. Many Poles, he said, never saw their homeland again.

"These men, women and their families have made a genuine impact on their new homeland, Canada, and their stories must be archived," said

the filmmaker.

Along with the interviews with veterans - Canadian, Six Nations, Dutch and British - the film includes civilians who share their stories of how they suffered for freedom.

Among the interviewees is Walter Gretzky, whose mother was Polish and father was Belarusian. His father Anthony fought for the Canadian army.

He said research for the documentary turned up new information for many of the veterans' family members, including Gretzky.

"In some cases, we found

such graphic images," said Misiak. "I cried with some of these people."

The film will be made available to local schools. There has also been interest from schools in Poland and the Netherlands, and there are plans to screen it for the city of Ostrow Wielkopolski, which was recently twinned with Brantford.

Copies of the DVD will be available for purchase within the next few weeks. Misiak said people can pay "whatever they think it's worth" for a copy. Anyone interested in ordering a DVD can go to www.realpeoplehistory.com

■ BRIDGE

Famous Hand

Six Nations newspaper, The Tekawennake, interviewed Zig Misiak and did an article regarding Polish Veterans and First Nations Veterans.

In the photo; Slawek Dobrowolski, President SPK, Br#4 Paul Lojko and Zig Misiak.

LOCAL

Polish and Onkwehonen war vets share similar history

By Jim Windle
BRANTFORD

A new DVD dedicated to honouring Polish War veterans will also include a good amount of history about Six Nations allied efforts during the Seven Years War, American War of Independence, War of 1812, Boer War, WW1, WW2, Korea, Vietnam and now Afghanistan.

Where's the connection? According to DVD producer, Zig Misiak, Polish by descent himself, and a historical reenactor of the American Revolution and War of 1812, there are many parallels in this story.

"Six Nations participation and the efforts and sacrifices of its vets is a common denominator in all of this," he says. "The people and the veterans of Poland seem to resonate with the past history of Six Nations and the theft of their lands."

In his hour long documentary, Misiak is attempting to draw together the stories of war vets from Brant County, Poland and Six Nations as they fought together as allies on several fronts.

"With the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812 coming up, I just thought it would be appropriate to honour Six Nations and New Credit's contributions in all

wars as allies together, then and now," says Misiak.

Copies of the DVD will be given to every school at Six Nations and New Credit for their libraries. In fact, Misiak intends to send copies to many schools across Canada and to Poland, Australia, and Holland.

The project includes interviews of Six Nations war vets, and family members of Don Montour, John Bradley, and others as well as an exclusive interview with Walter Gretzky, whose father fought in the Polish army during WW1.

Rare black and white battle scene footage also brings the horrors of war and the

sacrifices made into vivid focus.

Along with the video, Misiak is working on a teacher's guide to accompany it which will also contain information regarding Six Nations' significant contributions during times of war, something mainstream educators tend to leave out.

"We all share a mutual history and that is what I want to bring out," says Misiak.

Misiak will be joining Six Nations veterans to distribute copies of the DVD, entitled, "Lest We Forget - For Your Freedom and Ours," as they travel from school to school here next week for Remembrance Day activities.



Polish war vet Slawek Dobrowolski, is flanked by Paul Lojko and DVD producer, Zig Misiak.

Letter from the Ontario Speaker of the House. Congratulating Slawek and Zig Misiak for interviewing 19 Veterans and Survivors, and producing as well as distributing free, the DVD.



Dave Levac, MPP
Brant

August 30, 2009

Good Afternoon

To the Polish Combatants' Association in Canada,

Thank you for the invitation to attend the premier of the documentary "For Your Freedom and Ours". As you know, I try to attend as many events in the community as possible. It is at these events that I see the real riding of Brant come alive as we come together to celebrate our achievements, diversity, and people.

Unfortunately, I could not attend today and must instead send on my congratulations for having a film produced commemorating those soldiers who fought for the freedoms we have today. It is an honour that we have veterans who can pass on their stories to all of us. I hope you know that I am celebrating with you in spirit.

Thank you again for the invitation and I look forward to seeing the film at a later date.

Yours in community spirit. *Dziękuję bardzo!*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dave Levac".

Dave Levac, MPP
Brant

/sb



In 2014, Zig Misiak reunited with two sisters in Poland.

Their father did not return to Poland after the war but ended up in Canada.

Even though their dad visited them they had never met Zig until now.

» COLUMN

BRANT NEWS OCT. 9, 2014 ONTARIO CANADA



Brant News columnist Zig Misiak pictured with his two half-sisters during a recent visit to Poland.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

A family reunion to remember

Decades after arriving in Canada, Zig Misiak reunites with siblings



ZIG MISIAK
FOR BRANT NEWS

I am a Second World War refugee.

My parents migrated from Eastern Europe to escape Russian occupation of Poland after the war. Families throughout Poland were either completely eliminated or dramatically fragmented by both the German and Russian armies.

Some of those that survived – and were able to – spread themselves around the world in order to find sanctuary. Yet many stayed behind the “iron curtain.”

I was born in 1947. My

father’s application to Canada was accepted and he journeyed here in early 1950 on his own in order to establish a “home-base” in Brant County.

My mother and I followed, sailing across the Atlantic in December of that same year and were processed through Pier 21.

It was just the three of us. That was the extent of my family. We moved to Brantford and that is where I entered kindergarten.

I soon realized that I had no grandparents, no uncles or aunts and no cousins – unlike everyone else. I was lonely. I was different. I longed for a larger family.

As time went on my younger twin brothers, Stanley and Lucien, were born. Thirty five years later one of

my cousins came to Canada but has since died.

I did see one of my uncles who visited from Poland but he too has since died.

I married and have four children – Ryan, Tyler, Daryl and Shaylyn. At least my children had uncles, aunts and cousins, but not me.

In August of 2014, after a series of communications from Poland, my brother and I made a pilgrimage to that country.

There we met for the first time two half-sisters and a half-brother, as well as many cousins, an aunt, nieces and nephews.

It was wonderful. It is so nice to be a younger brother.

It took 67 years to come full circle – to see the Misiak clan in Poland. And it sure feels good.

I do belong. I do have a family. I now feel complete. My regret is that my parents are not alive to have witnessed this fantastic reunion.



Annual pilgrimage to Niagara on the Lake commemorating WW1 Polish soldiers.



Don Montures mother being there as a nurse, Walter Gretzky's father fighting on the front lines and Steve Smiths father having trained Polish troops at Niagara on the Lake under Kosciusko's Brigade.

» HISTORY

BRANT NEWS AUGUST 7 2014

First World War creates a common bond

ZIG MISIAK
FOR BRANT NEWS

Don Monture, Walter Gretzky and Steve Smith; I've known these three wonderful individuals for many years.

In fact, all four of us are over 67 years old. I'll let you guess as to who is the youngest and who is the oldest. Please, be kind.

There is a common thread between us – and that common thread is the First World War.

Edith Anderson, mom to twins Don and Ron, was born in 1890. As a First Nations person, she was not allowed to become a nurse in Canada, so she went to the United States. There, she became a nurse and in 1917 ended up in France near the frontline trenches. She administered medical care to both the allied forces and the enemy.

Tony Gretzki – or Gretzky – Walter's father, was born in 1892. After immigrating to Chicago from Belarus, he travelled north to Toronto and joined the Canadian army. He fought his way to Mons, Belgium, when the war ended in 1918.

Steve's grandfather, A.G.E. Smith, the father of Jay Silverheels, was born in 1875. He was an officer in the Canadian army and trained Polish troops at Niagara-on-the-Lake. He fought in Europe and was wounded.

My father was born in 1916, two and a half hours from where Walter's father was born. He was only two years old when Edith, Tony and A.G.E. suffered through horrible trench warfare during the First World War. My family and the Gretzky family were caught between Germany's trench warfare on the western front and the Russian Revolution on the eastern front.

My research indicated



Don Monture, Walter Gretzky, Steve Smith and Zig Misiak share a common bond through First World War history.

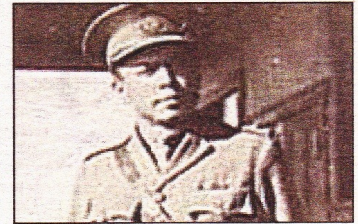
SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Edith Monture



Tony Gretzky



A.G.E. Smith

that Edith, Tony and A.G.E. were mainly within a few hundred kilometres of each other along the meandering, muddy and death-filled trenches of the war. I often wondered if the six degrees of separation applied here and whether or not, during erratic troop movement, they walked by one another. Did their eyes ever meet?

After the "war to end all wars," Edith Anderson returned to Six Nations, where she would marry, become a Montour, and continue nursing. Walter's dad remained in Canada, got married to Mary and eventually bought a farm property along the Nith River. Steve's grandfather, who was already married, returned to his farm along the Grand River on Six Nations.

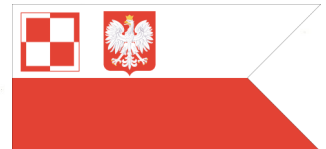
It was only 21 years later, September 1939, when the Second World War broke

out. Poland was smashed in the west and in the east by the overwhelming, merciless and powerful armies of Germany and Russia. Once again, Canadian and First Nations men and women volunteered and were shipped to Europe.

More than 60 million people lost their lives during the Second World War and over 37 million died or were wounded during the First World War. Many of my European family were killed or sent to Siberia, as was the case with the Gretzky family. Many from our surrounding communities died in both wars.

The 100th anniversary commemoration of the First World War is this year, 2014. Wherever our ancestors were during that conflict and no matter what they were doing to stave off the evil acts of others, we can all say

from our perspectives that "we fought for your freedom and ours."



Zig Misiak, a well know and respected historic reenactor of the Butlers Rangers, stands beside a bronze but of John Butler. Located at Niagara on the Lake. The parts of the uniform were provided by Zig Misiak.



Polish Soldiers - War of 1812

By: Zig Misiak



The United States and the British Canada's became a platform for war but do you think that only Americans and British citizens fought in it? Well you're partly right and that's what most people would say. In Europe the war between Britain and France included many other countries aligned with each and that war simply extended to our part of the world. Our battles were on a much smaller in scale. They had armies numbering into the hundreds of thousands and ours into the low thousands but other nationalities were involved here also, including the French.

Poland's army was aligned with France's not because they were against Britain but to find an ally that would restore old Polish territory out of the grasps of Russia. Polish soldiers were captured and one of the choices given was to fight for Britain, go to prison or some form of hard labour. As a result Polish captives joined one of two mercenary Swiss regiments, bought by Britain, the De Meuron regiment and that of De Watteville. Both regiments ended up in the Canada's and saw action along the St. Lawrence River area and at Fort Erie in 1814. Polish soldiers did in fact fight along side British soldiers, local militia and First Nations warriors in the siege of Fort Erie then occupied by the Americans.

In 1609 there are records of Poles settling in Jamestown, Virginia, U.S.A., requested due to their high skill trades as masons and potters. Though they were a minority among the Dutch, Germans, French and British that made up most of the population during that period in history they were here and have been here for centuries.

During the American Revolution two Polish Generals, Casimir Pulaski and Tadeusz Kosciuszko, fought along side George Washington. They have been American heroes for over two centuries with many statues dedicated to them all over the United States including Washington. I do apologize that my Polish country men fought against the British, loyalist and First Nations allies. As an honorary vice president of the United Empire Loyalist I'm trying to make up for that now.

I was sent a photograph of Captain Smith who was on staff in Niagara on the Lake in 1917 training soldiers of the Polish Army to fight as allies against the Germans in WW1. Butler's Barracks became Camp Kosciuszko (an American hero). Captain Smith was awarded "Officer of the Order of the Black Star", a Polish order, for his distinguished service at the camp. He became one of only five Canadians to receive this honour. Captain Smith was a Mohawk from the Six Nations. The Polish Six Nations connection keeps expanding.

I couldn't quite explain my affinity to Six Nations history and culture over these many years and having recently come across information such as in this article I might be led to think that it's in my DNA. As I continue my work on the 200th Anniversary of the War of 1812 I'm sure more information will surface. Even though my personal roots of only 63 years in Canada are relatively recent it gives me great pleasure to know that my Polish ethnic family goes back 402 years.

I have the names of 21 Polish soldiers that died in the siege against Fort Erie in 1814. They are buried on Canadian soil and gave their lives, as many others did, helping to form the country and territories that we live in and around today.

Zig Misiak, with 3 friends from the Grand River Six Nations Territory, speaking to a congregation of "Historica" about the importance of wampum belts and historic treaties.



Zig Misiak with two veterans from the Grand River Six Nations Territory.

Walter, my friend of over 40 years, gone but will "never" be forgotten.



Zig Misiak has been a major contributor to his local community highlighting Polish interests. Zig Misiak has used every connection he has be it with Six Nations, school system, historical contacts on both sides of the border as well as overseas, along with all his book writing contacts to enhance, promote and educate people about the Polish connections with Canada as well as a Polish history lesson.



Brantford's Br#4 Polish Combatant's along side Canadian friends/allies

At the WW2 Polish monument, 11/11/19

At the Cenotaph in Brantford 11/11/19



Sept. 24, 2019. Mayor K. Davis & Cheryl Antoski (councillor) recognized Brantford's SPK#4 & the National SPK association, with a special certificate. (SPK; President Adam & Maria Sikora, Zig Misiak, Slawomir Dobrowolski)



75th anniversary of the victory at the Monte Cassino.