

About the Exhibition

For Canada, the Second World War was a global conflict. For individual Canadians, it was personal. Developed to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, **Forever Changed** weaves together a diverse range of stories and compelling artifacts, exploring the human experience of war across Canada and around the world.

The exhibition takes a story-driven approach, organized in four thematic zones. Six anchor stories, supported by dozens of others, reflect a range of important Canadian wartime activities, at home and abroad, as Canadians supported the war effort, both in and out of uniform.

The experience begins with an introduction to the six anchor stories. A map guides visitors through the four thematic zones, while also indicating activities and immersive spaces within the exhibition.

The Six Anchor Stories

- “Bomb girl” Edith Vollrath
- Able Seaman George Boyer of the Royal Canadian Navy
- Battlefield hero Major Alex Campbell
- Combat cameraman Hugh McCaughey
- Nursing Sister Winnie Burwash
- Flying Officer Will Kyle of the Royal Canadian Air Force

Zone 1: Supporting and Defending

On the home front, Canadians supported the Allied war effort. In the North Atlantic, they protected supply lines to Britain, while merchant seamen transported crucial war material across the sea. The stories of “bomb girl” Edith Vollrath, George Boyer and others explore Canadian involvement in the defence of Canada and Britain, along with the country’s wartime industrial production.

Edith repaired airplanes and built bombs during the war. A photograph of her at work and a wood carving of a “munitions girl” speak to the crucial labour women provided to produce military equipment, repair aircraft, and more.

A medal set and a heartfelt letter to his mother describing the loss of a close friend introduce the story of George Boyer, who survived a U-boat attack on the HMS *Nabob*. Visitors can place themselves in George’s shoes during the torpedo strike on the ship. The sound-and-light production, which is based on accounts of the event, evokes the terrifying moments after the attack.

Additional highlights:

- A rare issue of *True Comics* featuring **aeronautical engineer Elsie MacGill**, nicknamed “Queen of the Hurricanes” for innovations that improved the Hawker Hurricane fighter plane.
- A George Medal, awarded to **Valleyfield, Quebec truck driver Albert Socqué**, for his courageous rescue of a co-worker caught in a chemical fire. He was one of only three Canadians in the war to earn the George Medal for civilian courage.
- The charred map and change purse belonging to **Grant Campbell, a navigator with the Royal Canadian Air Force**. These objects were returned to his parents when they visited his grave after he was shot down in 1944, one month before his twin brother Roy was killed.
- A pink suit worn by **war bride Gwendoline Green**, who fell in love with a Canadian airman she met by chance in the English countryside.
- A ceramic ear that hung on a wall to remind passersby not to discuss military secrets — because you never knew when the enemy might be listening.



George Medal
awarded to Albert
Socqué
CWM 20100138-001

Zone 2: The War Against Germany

Canadians fought a war of liberation against Germany, contributing significantly to the final victory against fascism. The stories of Alex Campbell, Hugh McCaughey, Winnie Burwash, and other Canadians featured in this zone attest to the struggles and sacrifices of the war.

Excerpts from Alex’s diary detail his first combat experiences in Tunisia, and the lessons he learned. Dramatic footage shows how Hugh filmed on the frontlines as Canadian troops advanced through Europe following D-Day on June 6, 1944. Winnie’s letters to her friends back home reveal both the trauma she encountered while caring for the wounded, sick and starving, and the exhilaration she felt during Europe’s liberation.



Signal Corps Teletypists on
Night Duty Apeldoorn
Painted by Molly Lamb
Bobak in 1945
CWM 19710261-1632

Additional highlights:

- Weapons and equipment from both sides include the only surviving example of a powerful rocket launcher used by the Canadians.
- Paintings created by **Molly Lamb Bobak**, who served in uniform and was an official war artist.
- A Victoria Cross awarded to **Lieutenant-Colonel John Keefer Mahony** for his leadership and “absolute fearlessness and disregard for his own safety” during the Battle of the Melfa River in May 1944.
- A letter penned by parachutist **Private Leslie Neufeld** to his family before he was dropped into danger on D-Day. Leslie was one of the 359 Canadians in the army killed that day.
- Recordings of radio reports from the front lines by **CBC and Radio-Canada war correspondent Marcel Ouimet**.

Zone 3: The War Against Japan

As Japanese forces overran many British colonies in Asia, Canadian civilians and military personnel were captured and held under brutal conditions. Family back in Canada often knew nothing of the fate of a loved one for months or even years. This uncertainty and sacrifice can be seen in the stories of Will Kyle, Bill Chong, and others featured in this zone.



Portion of Fuselage,
Dakota C-47
CWM 20010125-032

Will, a popular young RCAF pilot who went missing on a supply run over Burma (today's Myanmar), is the central figure in this zone's exploration of universal experiences of service and grief. A letter telling Will's mother of her son's disappearance marked the beginning of a half-century of terrible anguish and uncertainty, until his remains were finally recovered. The exhibition includes photos of Will and his five crew members, personal items recovered from the crash site, and many pieces of their Dakota C-47.

Bill Chong, who was from Vancouver, British Columbia, was in Hong Kong tending to his father's estate when the Japanese invaded. He escaped to China and became an undercover agent for the Allies. Known as Agent 50, he travelled through Japanese-occupied territories to smuggle in medical supplies, guide stranded aviators out, and gather military information. He was captured twice by the Japanese, and once by bandits, but always managed to escape.

Additional highlights:

- A bible carried by **Ethel Mulvany** during her time in Singapore's Changi Prison. While its words provided spiritual support, Ethel once turned to it for a more literal form of nourishment. She ate the spine off the book, reasoning that the glue, made of horses' hooves, would contain desperately needed protein.
- An example of a blood chit, an official note carried by Allied aircrew in Burma in case they were shot down. It identified the holder as an ally in many local languages and promised a reward for assistance.
- The secret diary kept by **Will Allister**, a survivor of the Battle of Hong Kong who painted scenes from his life as a prisoner of war. He documented the hunger, illness, filth, physical abuse and mental anguish he endured in captivity.
- A *yosegaki Hinomaru* (good-luck flag) carried by a Japanese serviceman, inscribed with more than 150 different names and messages from loved ones, including "praying for lasting fortune in warfare," and "the power of 1,000 people."



Ethel Mulvany's Bible
Lent by Marion King
and Suzanne Evans

Zone 4: A Country Shaped by War

Following the Allied victory in 1945, more than one million veterans joined their fellow Canadians, alongside new arrivals, to build a stronger country. Seventy-five years later, the Second World War continues to affect Canadians. The stories of Michiko Ishii, Hubert Brooks and Regina (Rosenbaum) Gertner offer glimpses into the lasting impact of the war.

Michiko Ishii was 12 years old when the Canadian government stripped thousands of Japanese Canadians of their homes and businesses, relocating them to isolated camps. Her album of snapshots with occasionally cheeky captions reveals the perspective of a girl “young enough to think that everything was an adventure.” It was not, and most Japanese Canadians suffered the indignity of losing most of their personal possessions, while being labelled a security threat. Michiko later became a historian specializing in Japanese-Canadian immigration.

A blue-and-red hockey jersey tells the story of **Wing Commander Hubert Brooks**, who was shot down over Germany in 1942. He was taken prisoner, but escaped and spent the rest of the war serving with the Polish resistance. After the war, he continued to serve his country on the ice — his RCAF Flyers hockey team won gold at the 1948 Olympic Games. He also continued to serve in the military: one of thousands of Canadians contributing to the country’s ongoing defence and security.



*RCAF Flyers Olympic Hockey
Jersey belonging to Hubert
Brooks
CWM 19840238-001*

An old photograph and immigration documents introduce **Regina (Rosenbaum) Gertner** and her family. Regina was 16 when she was imprisoned in Auschwitz. She was later transferred to Gross-Rosen concentration camp as a slave labourer. Regina survived the Holocaust and, with her husband and two young sons, was among the 35,000 Holocaust survivors and their dependants who settled in Canada after the war. She died in 2009, survived by three children, seven grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren.

The exhibition concludes by encouraging visitors to share their own stories about how the Second World War changed them, their families, or their communities.