

Maria Campbell, *Eagle Feather News*, September 2006

This article is copyrighted by the author Maria Campbell and can only be used for reference purposes.

Wars bring same pain and sorrow as Second World War

I don't remember how old I was but I do remember clearly the times my parents, kokoms, and aunties sat quietly around the kitchen table and listened to war news on the radio.

And I remember, too, the day my dad walked home from the store with a letter informing my aunty that her husband was "missing in action."

This was World War Two, a time filled with great anxiety and fear for my family. We had four uncles and a great uncle somewhere on the frontlines in a country we knew nothing about.

We spoke Cree and Michif in our community but we all learned to say "overseas" in English and still today I feel I should say that word in the hushed tone we used in those days.

News, unlike today, was slow in reaching our small community. The newspaper that dad would bring home and Mom would read was weeks old and tattered, read already by dozens of other families who passed it on.

The old radio we purchased so we could keep track of what was happening "over there" had short wave, long wave, meaning we could get not only Canadian and American news channels but the BBC in England as well.

However, it was battery operated and it seemed the battery was always dying at crucial moments leaving everyone at the table not wanting to shut it off for fear we would miss something in the silence.

My uncle, Lawrence Klyne, was never found. My aunty was left a widowed mom with a baby. My dad's brother, Frank Campbell, and our great uncle, Gabriel Vandal, came home and so did my mom's two brothers, Ambrose and John Dubuque.

They came home safely but none of them were ever the same again and war was not something any of them ever talked about. There were many other relatives who did not come home and are buried "overseas."

There are so many memories of those times. The black armbands people wore to indicate their loss. Songs like Blue Velvet Band and Lily Marlene. My mom trading ration stamps with someone for sugar.

And I remember the day my youngest uncle came home in a Princess Patricia uniform and my kokom, tears in her eyes, grabbing a berry pail when she saw him and picking berries all day. I remember the fear, incredible pain and sorrow that filled our home every day of that war and today as I read the headlines in the paper and look at the photographs of those young men and women who have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, I am filled with the same pain and sorrow for their families and for all of us.

For each time a young soldier falls, it doesn't matter what country, we as Canadians and as human beings in a world family lose part of ourselves.

Today my family has a young man who is waiting to be shipped out and I pray not to a male god, as I was taught, but rather to a feminine creator, to protect him, keep him safe and bring him home alive.

And I pray also for the sons and daughters who are already there and those who are waiting to go. Hii hii.