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R. Scott Sheffield

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Veterans' Benefits and Indigenous Veterans of the Second World War in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States

R. Scott Sheffield

“**O**ne day a notice came out of the first sergeant’s office with my name on it. It was my pass to go back to the states! After thirty-four months, five campaigns, and many battles, I was going home! I had made it, but my brother had not.”¹ With these words, Hollis D. Stabler began his journey home and his transition from an Omaha soldier into a Native American veteran. It is difficult to imagine the immensity or complexity of the feelings that Second World War Indigenous service personnel experienced, after months or even years away in military services, in anticipating and living through their homecoming, “most filled with jubilant anticipation, some plagued by weariness, and a few haunted by the dark memories of battlefield carnage.”² For many, the warmth of welcome, the kinship of family, and the familiarity of home deeply comforted them. “I didn’t believe that I was home until I got to see my folks,” one Canadian Cree veteran recalled. “I said to myself, ‘I’m on home ground now. I’m safe.’”³ Such commentaries highlight the shared humanity and commonalities in experiences between Indigenous service personnel and their non-Indigenous comrades in arms. At the most basic and personal level, the war’s end was about a young man or woman returning home to families and lives left behind, each story unique though replicated countless times across Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States.

Yet arriving home was only the beginning of a war veteran’s experience. Subsequently, the legislative and administrative architecture

prepared to aid returned service personnel transition back to civilian life figured prominently. The relative success of reestablishment measures for the bulk of American, Australian, New Zealander, and Canadian ex-service personnel has contributed hugely to the popular view of the Second World War as the “good war.” The degree to which Native American, Māori, Aboriginal, and Torres Strait Islander Australian and First Nations veterans participated in this rosy postwar story is uncertain. This study addresses this gap in our understanding through a transnational examination of the administration of veterans’ benefits for Indigenous military personnel in four victorious settler societies that all mobilized significant recruits from their Indigenous minority populations. The value in this approach is in helping to distinguish peculiar conditions within any individual Indigenous community or country from broader shared patterns of settler colonialism. This broader lens works dialectically with more localized studies, challenging assumptions and drawing in concepts and patterns from other experiences in comparable societies.

To date, the postwar experiences of Indigenous Second World War veterans have garnered little scholarly attention in these four settler societies.⁴ Canada is a partial exception to this pattern due to a high-profile lobbying campaign over Indigenous veterans’ grievances from the 1970s to the 2000s.⁵ Central in transitioning to civilian life was the support available to returning servicemen and servicewomen from their governments. All four of these victorious states developed elaborate and generous packages for all veterans. Though the precise mechanics differed, each government tended to craft a similar blend of financial reward, transitional funds, training/educational provisions, employment support/advantages, access to loans for land or business development, disability pensions, and other miscellaneous measures.⁶ Governments had learned from the inadequacies of programs for veterans after the First World War and sought to construct a more flexible, compassionate, and comprehensive system the second time around.⁷ In each country, veterans’ programs were early and massive experiments in state social welfare development.⁸ The integration of Indigenous minorities into broader welfare structures was a complex process of converting Indigenous people from segregated services supposedly designed for distinct groups to inclusion in state programs designed for all citizens. The relationship between Indigenous service personnel and the benefits available to veterans was a microcosm of the broader integration of Indigenous populations into settler state welfare.

For Indigenous peoples and settler societies alike, access to military service and status as army, navy, or air force members had been an important and symbolic yardstick of inclusion throughout the Second World War. Access to benefits and quality support for Indigenous veterans, at the very intersection of their indigeneity and their “veteran-

ness," remained a measurement of acceptance in the conflict's wake. But did one take precedence over the other for administrators managing veterans' programs? Strikingly, the patterns across the four settler states examined are remarkably similar. This transnational examination of postwar veterans' benefits for returned Indigenous service personnel reveals that the war had made a difference and that veterans' status mattered in how they were treated by the state.

However, the mechanics of administering the benefits likewise demonstrates the continuing limitations of acceptance and the circumscribed inclusion of Indigenous peoples in national social citizenship. The lingering legislative and administrative structures for Indigenous populations in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States captured to some degree the benefits and subsumed them within existing paternalistic colonial systems resistant to change. Thus, while the Second World War and resulting veterans' benefits had the possibility to provoke change in the socioeconomic position of Indigenous veterans and populations, the overall impact was muted.

In the announcements and legislation establishing programs for veterans' postwar reestablishment, the rhetoric across the four settler societies spoke strongly to the equality of access for all veterans. For example, the rehabilitation guidebook used by administrators in New Zealand contained a special note regarding Māori veterans, proclaiming that "the aim of the Rehabilitation Board has been to regard Maoris and pakehas [non-Māori New Zealanders] alike and to extend equal facilities for re-establishment."⁹ A. O. Neville, deputy commissioner of Native Affairs for Western Australia, in a 1947 report from a conference on reconstruction and Aboriginal veterans, similarly wrote that the "coloured ex-serviceman has exactly the same rights under the Re-establishment Act as the white ex-serviceman and it is desired that he should be informed of this."¹⁰ Such was also the case for Indigenous veterans in North America, where the provisions of the 1944 Serviceman's Readjustment Act (the GI Bill) and Canada's Veterans Charter were, "at least in theory . . . available equally to all returning service personnel: men and women, conscripts and volunteers, regardless of religion or race."¹¹ Usually Indigenous veterans could apply through normal processes and agencies, set up for returning servicemen and service-women. The records, both archival and oral testimonies, suggest that the rhetoric of equal access and lack of distinctions setting Indigenous veterans apart contained some genuine substance.

The relative lack of high-profile grievances in the political discourse around Indigenous veterans in New Zealand, the United States, and to a lesser extent Australia also supports the notion that many Indigenous veterans had some, perhaps sufficient, access to reestablishment programs and support.¹² This should in no way be interpreted as saying that Indigenous veterans' experiences were free of challenges or

disadvantages. Rather, given the era, it suggests that a vestige of the acceptance and equality Indigenous service personnel experienced in wartime lingered after the war, at least in connection to their veteran status.

Sometimes, circumstances peculiar to Indigenous peoples required special legislation or programs, particularly in relation to the complex legal status and administration of Indigenous lands. For example, the New Zealand rehabilitation guide advised that the "need for special Maori rehabilitation measures beyond those already available within the general rehabilitation plan is, however, realised." In particular, "provision for the further development of Native lands, including tribal lands offered to the Board for Maori settlement, will have to be made" in order to "provide agricultural rehabilitation of Native ex-servicemen, within the rehabilitation framework."¹³ The complexities of Māori land title and the economically nonviable blocks established through the Māori Land Court system created extensive delays for Māori ex-servicemen seeking reestablishment on the land. Even as late as 1949, 214 Māori veterans, some 4.3 percent of all Māori veterans who had been graded "A" for land settlement, were stuck in limbo awaiting farms. Understandably, "trained farmers got sick of waiting for farms and took up unskilled work, even though this sometimes cost them their 'A' grade qualification."¹⁴

In Canada, too, the legal standing of Indian reserve lands, which the Crown held in trust for an Indian band's collective use, complicated agricultural reestablishment. Individuals could not own a plot in fee simple on reserve, nor could banks seize lands or chattels in forfeiture of an unpaid debt from a reserve. In practice this meant that financial institutions refused credit to residents of Indian reserves. The Veterans Land Act (VLA), furthermore, required veterans to have clear title to a plot of land and be suitable for credit, which made the VLA untenable on reserves.

While veterans might opt to apply for a standard VLA settlement outside their reserve, the director of Indian Affairs acknowledged they would face serious impediments due to pervasive societal prejudice, particularly stereotypes of First Nations' improvidence: "The average Indian veteran may be confronted with a practical difficulty in seeking qualification papers from the responsible committees set up for the purpose, who may be expected to feel some diffidence about qualifying an Indian for establishment on the land on a debt basis. In other words it is feared that few Indians could qualify under the conditions set by the Act."¹⁵ Subsequent research has confirmed that almost no First Nations veterans successfully qualified for a regular off-reserve VLA loan.¹⁶ To make VLA support available on reserves, the Canadian government passed an amendment, inserting Section 35A, which gave First Nations veterans access to grants up to \$2,320, equivalent to the grant portion of the \$6,000 loan/grant under a standard VLA settlement. Though this was a much lower sum, Indian Affairs argued that

the difference was balanced "by the 'more favourable conditions' that existed on reserve."¹⁷ First Nations veterans rarely found reserve conditions favorable and struggled to translate VLA support into a successful agricultural reestablishment.

Native American veterans in the United States faced similar disadvantages accessing loan provisions under the terms of the GI Bill because reservations were likewise held in trust. Under the Dawes Act, veterans could sometimes obtain patents in fee for an allotment of reserve land, which they could then put up as security for a loan. The fact that requests for patents in fee quadrupled between 1946 and 1950 suggests that many Native American veterans sought to do so. However, they found themselves working against Indian Affairs Commissioner John Collier's Indian New Deal agenda. Under the Indian New Deal, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) had sought to end alienation of tribal lands and even to augment land in some places as part of Collier's efforts to revitalize tribal governance, economies, and cultural systems.¹⁸

Thus BIA officials initially resisted veterans' requests for patents, fearing they might later sell the lands and permanently reduce tribal territories. The BIA was nevertheless forced to respond, and it revised some of its internal restrictions against individuals accessing monetary value of trust lands for collateral and against creditors entering reservations to repossess stock or equipment. The BIA even redirected tribal credit funds toward individual veterans unable to access commercial credit.¹⁹ These ad hoc measures never fully leveled the playing field for Native American veterans seeking GI loans.

Some indications of special reestablishment programs being developed for Aboriginal veterans in Australia can be gleaned in Western Australia (WA) state records, where ideas were proposed in 1947 and again in 1950.²⁰ However, not all administrators saw special provisions as necessary. The acting commissioner of Native Affairs in WA was skeptical about the reported numbers of Aboriginal servicemen: "I am extremely doubtful of the correctness of this figure [three hundred] and am of the opinion that no more than two hundred at the very outside were properly enlisted and attested." Because of this doubt and the fact that the "scheme which provides for white soldiers is quite capable of dealing with any native cases," the official dismissed any utility of special programs for Aboriginal ex-service personnel. He went on to say that Aboriginal soldiers were "fully informed of the benefits to which they were entitled, but very few displayed any great interest as they preferred to return to their home districts and resume the occupations they followed prior to enlistment."²¹ This suggests that regular veterans' support may have been available, but it leaves unsettling questions regarding veterans' access to such programs.

However, this individual's language reveals a profoundly negative view of Aboriginal people's capabilities. He believed many Aboriginal

servicemen "were discharged because of their unsuitability for the services" and went on to broaden his comments: "It is my considered opinion that the majority of the adult natives in this State are not capable of any form of advanced training. . . . I feel that these people, because of their nomadic tendencies and disregard to responsibility are not suitable for inclusion in a scheme which might envisage [sic] their total absorption into the Community as equal citizens and a portion of the pattern of our economic life, but should be given the benefit of protection and supervision and other advantages when in indigent circumstances."²² Views of this sort, common among Indigenous administrators in all of these settler states, bred a fatalism that undermined willingness to work or advocate on behalf of Indigenous peoples. In the wake of the Second World War, this was problematic for returning Indigenous veterans who would find such officials increasingly involved in the veterans' reestablishment.

In a striking parallel, all four countries developed separate policy structures and administrative processes to handle the cases of Indigenous veterans. The principal reason appears to be the preexisting Indigenous administrative agencies and legal architecture surrounding Indigenous populations that each state had developed through the colonizing era. Veterans' reestablishment officials often sought advice and logistical support from the Canadian Indian Affairs Branch, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Department of Māori Affairs, or the Australian Commonwealth and state Aboriginal agencies, or these agencies insinuated themselves and their agendas into the administration of Indigenous veterans' cases. As a result, Indigenous veterans often fell into a hazy jurisdictional overlap between Indigenous and veterans' administrations, as the following circular letter from Canada's Indian Affairs to its field staff reveals: "The Indian Affairs Branch is not responsible for veteran legislation or administration excepting administration of grants made under Section 35A of the Veterans' Land Act. The Branch, however, has everything to do with Indians."²³

In New Zealand, Māori could opt for regular Pākehā reestablishment options or separate Māori alternatives. For those accessing the latter, Māori Affairs and the Rehabilitation Board established a joint Māori Rehabilitation Finance Committee, which "controls the Rehabilitation of Maoris," with all the powers of the Board of Native Affairs and of the Rehabilitation Board "in expending money made available by the Treasury for loans other than the expenditure on land."²⁴ The office manual of the Rehabilitation Department laid out the nature of the relationship:

The Native Department acts as the agent of the Board in the majority of cases where rehabilitation assistance is afforded to Maori ex-servicemen by way of loans. . . .

[T]he Maori ex-serviceman, if fully qualified, is offered the choice of proceeding with his application for any form of rehabilitation assistance provided by the Board either through the standard procedures or through special channels in the Native Department designed to meet any peculiar need or problem . . . [particularly] in all cases where land settlement involves clarification of title and taking of title to Native land, a procedure which entails considerable specialized knowledge.²⁵

This implies a smooth joint system of administration, and the government was keen to reassure veterans that no difference in services occurred regardless of which channel a Māori veteran chose. Nevertheless, differences in philosophy and belief in Māori capacity led to some disagreements in the execution of programs like trade training and employing Māori graduates to build homes for Māori.²⁶

Despite claims of equality in both regular and Māori channels of re-establishment, special policies distinguished and at times disadvantaged returning Māori servicemen and servicewomen. The specific venues for Māori farm training, for instance, were on blocks or farms operated or controlled by the Native Department; "in special cases where no Native land is available, on the land development blocks controlled by the Lands Department"; at agricultural colleges; on Rehabilitation Board training farms; or with private farmers, under subsidy.²⁷ The fact that Māori access to Land Department development blocks was only "in special cases" limited Māori to the often marginal remaining Māori lands.

What is more, once they had completed agricultural training, Māori veterans were graded differently from Pākehā veterans. While the letter grades were the same, Māori veterans had an extra layer of constraining caveats:

Where a Maori was a competent farmer and capable of farming in a wide area, irrespective of whether there were other Maoris there or not, he received an "A" grade certificate for that area without any qualification. On the other hand, if it is felt that he could satisfy the same conditions only within the boundary of the Maori Land Court district in which he normally resided, his grading was limited to that district. If it was considered that a Maori applicant was up to "A" grade standard except in respect of ability to manage his finances to obtain the best results, the grading certificate indicated this by the endorsement "subject to supervision from the Department of Maori Affairs," and the department maintained supervision of the ex-serviceman's affairs after settlement until such time as the

settler, in the opinion of the Maori Rehabilitation Finance Committee, was capable of assuming full control.²⁸

The trouble with this structure was widespread Pākehā assumptions of Māori financial incapacity. For example, one member of the Whangerai Rehabilitation Committee “considered that ninety-seven per cent of Maori applicants for farm settlement were unable to handle their own finances, and added that after thirty-three years working among Maoris he had still to meet a Maori farmer who would succeed if left to his own resources.”²⁹ In a similar vein, Māori applicants could opt for regular rehabilitation channels, except where “the applicant was living in a Maori community or where his application involved the occupation or acquisition of Maori land or of land through Maori channels, or where the use of any other facilities provided by the Department of Maori Affairs was required.”³⁰ These conditions would have funneled a large proportion of Māori applicants through Māori Affairs whether they wished it or not.

The separate administrative regimes for Indigenous veterans may have been as efficient as normal veterans’ programs, but there are reasons to suspect otherwise. This issue has received the most attention in Canada. The onus for managing First Nations reestablishment shifted from the veterans to the local Indian agents. During Wilfred Westeste’s demobilization, he recalled:

In the final stages of our process of getting discharged and either an NCO or an officer, was talking to us, and he was giving information about all the reserve personnel, like from the University, . . . and from farmers and also some other different, like storekeepers and whatever, they wanted to put us into these groups, some joined while they were still in University, never finished University, they were to go with . . . professor so-and-so and he will brief you on getting back into University, and those of you who were in stores or whatever, and you farmers—oh by the way, he said, you Indian boys here, he says, you don’t go to any of these, he said, you go back to the reserve, and the Indian Agent will look after you.³¹

This left Westeste and other First Nations veterans almost entirely dependent on their Indian agent for accurate information, for sympathetic and appropriate counseling, for completing and submitting applications, and often for a positive recommendation. Mistakes or problems in any of these categories could undermine the veteran’s reestablishment.

Despite theoretical equality of access, the final report of the National Round Table on First Nations Veterans Issues in Canada suggested that in practice, “First Nations veterans faced systemic disadvan-

tages, not faced by most other veterans, in obtaining information, counseling and applications for all of the options that were open to them.³² More generally, Indian Affairs and the Indian Act added additional bureaucracy and regulations for First Nations veterans that resulted in delays, hardship, and frustration. Indian agents sometimes failed to inform veterans of all options, or they dissuaded veterans from options the agent felt beyond their capacity, such as education and training opportunities. The Indian Affairs Branch also used Veterans Land Act grants to subsidize their branch's overstretched welfare budget for on-reserve housing. While making houses available to veterans may have improved their quality of life in the short term, it was not the purpose of the program, which was intended to help veterans re-establish themselves in a livelihood that provided long-term stability.³³ The Canadian report claimed that "the result for many First Nations veterans was an unequal access to the Veterans Charter, and a steeper climb to successfully re-establish themselves than that faced by most Canadian veterans . . . in the crucial ten years after 1945."³⁴ Whether Indigenous administrative regimes were as disruptive to the reestablishment of Native American or Aboriginal ex-service personnel in the United States or in Australia is still not entirely clear, though it seems likely in light of assimilation policies.³⁵

All too often, the insinuation of state Indigenous administrators into the reestablishment of veterans brought a reassertion of traditional paternalism and control. Benefits placed substantial sums of money in the hands of ex-servicemen and servicewomen, something that many settler administrators viewed as counterproductive to Indigenous people's well-being. The habits of surveillance and intervention evident in all four countries frequently led to individual veterans losing control over their own benefits, funds, and farms or businesses.

In New Zealand, one of the primary responsibilities of the Department of Māori Affairs was what the official history euphemistically termed "post-settlement supervision."³⁶ Veterans often resented such patronizing intervention, as evident by the following Māori veteran, who recalled that "you have to borrow money from Maori Affairs and they send a broken-down bloody Pakeha contract painter to administer your finances. You're not even allowed to write your own cheques to pay for your bills."³⁷ In Canada, Status Indian dependents of Indian soldiers similarly lost control over funds during the war when their Dependant's Allowance checks were sent to the Indian agents to manage for their rightful recipients.³⁸ This control extended into the post-war reestablishment of veterans. One veteran recalled: "I went to war to fight for freedom, but upon coming back to Canada and the Reserve, I found I was back to a lifestyle of no freedom. Once again I had to abide by the wishes of the Indian Agent and Farm Instructor. The cattle I bought with my \$2320.00 was branded with the Indian Department

brand I.D. [and] I could not sell one or kill one for my families [sic] consumption without his approval."³⁹ Such patronizing and overt state control seemed out of step with the freedom that these returned service personnel had been fighting to achieve during the conflict.

There are indications that even as late as 1955, paternalism permeated rehabilitation benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian ex-service personnel.⁴⁰ During a fascinating internal bureaucratic discussion in 1955 about the potential liability of the Commonwealth to pay pensions and benefits to veterans of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion under the Repatriation Act and the Re-establishment and Employment Act, it was made clear that current pensions for Torres Strait Islander veterans were paid to the Queensland director of Native Affairs.⁴¹ A report on the matter by the attorney general raised doubts about the legality of paying pensions directly to the director of Native Affairs, Queensland, but recommended a legal arrangement that would have the same result.⁴² The overall pattern for returned service personnel is one of separate structures and often little direct access to their benefits or control of their own postwar reestablishment.

However problematically, those who actually received benefits were the lucky ones, as not all Indigenous service personnel even gained veterans' status and the standard array of benefits that flowed from that identity. This was particularly the case in Australia, where two groups of Indigenous people were either provided a separate, less generous re-establishment package or shut out altogether by the quasi or unofficial nature of their military service.

The first instance refers to the postwar experience of Torres Strait Islander veterans. The same rationales about Indigenous improvidence and lower cost of living that had underpinned their low wartime wages extended to veterans' benefits. A 1953 Treasury report noted that in 1944 the War Cabinet had approved a pension scheme for Torres Strait Islanders who served in the Australian Forces "based on the Repatriation Act but the rates were adjusted in accordance with the rates of pay granted to Torres Strait Islanders—roughly two-thirds of the corresponding A.M.F. rates."⁴³ Based on advice from the Queensland director of Native Affairs and an assessment of the cost of living in the Torres Strait, "the Cabinet fixed the pension rates at, on the average, one-third of the equivalent Repatriation pension." But rather than alter the regular benefit for Torres Strait Islanders, the Cabinet decided to shift their benefits to a different regime under the Act of Grace Schemes. The Repatriation Commission acknowledged, "These benefits were, of course, far less than those available under the Repatriation and Re-establishment and Employment Acts."⁴⁴

Even reduced rates were denied to those Aboriginal Australians across the threatened north of the country who had served in quasi-official or ad hoc capacities and whose service was deemed insufficient

to qualify them as veterans. Thus men who conducted patrols around mission airfields like Bathurst Island and Groote Eylandt, capturing the enemy and saving Allied airmen, or even those individuals enlisted in the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit in Arnhem Land were largely shut out of compensation. Noah Riseman suggests that residents in the region were frustrated and bitter at their lack of recognition and compensation when the war ended.⁴⁵ According to Yolngu wartime participant Gerry Blitner, "I didn't come out with no bars on my shoulder, no ribbons on my chest, no money in my pocket, no deserved [likely reserved] pay, no land to go back to and say this is my land."⁴⁶

Along Canada's threatened west coast, the more than fifteen thousand unpaid volunteers of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, a substantial minority of whom were of Canadian Aboriginal descent, ended the war with nothing more than the right to keep their uniform and purchase their rifle for the nominal fee of five dollars.⁴⁷ The status of Indigenous members of the Alaskan Territorial Guard, formed during the Second World War, vis-à-vis postwar support appears similarly doubtful as well, though the literature is quieter on this.⁴⁸

Given all the issues raised thus far, was it reasonable to believe that veterans' benefits could really have made a difference in the lives of Indigenous returned service personnel in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States? The mythology and popular memory that enshroud veterans' reestablishment in all four countries suggest that those benefits could and should have been a difference maker. Yet Indigenous returned service personnel were often unable to translate their benefits into a successful postwar civilian reestablishment, as was the norm among settler veterans. The addition of state Indigenous agencies into Indigenous benefits administration led to greater frustrations in qualifying or applying for programs or to interminable bureaucratic delays. Veterans who had survived the war and undergone profound personal transformation as a result of their war service grew disillusioned with the heavy-handed, paternalistic, and stifling administration of their benefits. Some Indigenous ex-service personnel gave up fighting for their full measure through exhaustion; others, despairing, turned their backs on any benefits. And, of course, some could not qualify at all.

More fundamentally, even if Indigenous veterans did have access to benefits and qualified for comparable amounts, the programs developed to smooth veterans' transition to civilian life, while quite diverse and flexible, were almost always predicated on building upon an individual's prewar foundation of work experience, education, skills, and capital/land. The marginal economic and social space occupied by Indigenous peoples in these four settler societies during the interwar years, combined with widespread Indigenous land insufficiency and generally poor access to education and health care, meant that the bulk

of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Māori, First Nations, and Native American veterans lacked some or all of that foundation.

The Australian deputy director of the Re-establishment Division saw few possibilities “for normal training under the [Re-establishment and Employment Act] Scheme owing to the general lack of educational qualifications and it is felt that the practical assistance which could be rendered would be in the form of financial assistance to enable the purchase of necessary equipment such as boats, nets, etc., for fishermen, rabbit traps, means of transportation for rabbiters, etc. Any purchases of the nature indicated should be effected by the Department of Native Affairs in preference to making the money available direct to the aborigine.”⁴⁹ New Zealand administrators likewise noted the discrepancy and sought to overcome the shortfall in part through special emphasis on trade training, which Māori veterans were nearly four times more likely to choose than the national average and which Jane Thomson dubs “the one conspicuous success story in Maori rehabilitation.”⁵⁰ More typically, without the prewar foundation, Indigenous veterans struggled to translate their reestablishment programs and benefits into long-term economic stability. Far from closing the gap between Indigenous veterans and their non-Indigenous comrades in arms, these provisions, so warmly remembered by the bulk of veterans in all four countries may even have widened the gap.

How, then, do we assess the intersection of indigeneity and veteran status in the years after the Second World War? The answer is that the inclusivity and acceptance embodied by military service sustained some of its inclusive magic into the postwar years. Veterans’ benefits were designed to accommodate as many individual needs and aspirations as possible and in all four countries offered powerful rhetoric of equality of access. In the wake of the Second World War, such claims were not just hollow platitudes; the scale and pain of sacrifice were still too fresh and raw to permit the **rhetoric of equality being disingenuous**. Thus many Indigenous veterans were able to access some benefits and programs in most jurisdictions, giving some credence to the rhetoric of equality so hard won through military service. For some, the benefits provided life-changing opportunities; for most, the funds and programs enhanced veterans’ quality of life in the wake of the conflict. However, the colonial structures of each settler state remained intact at the end of the war; indeed, these structures were reinvigorated and reasserted.

The rehabilitation of assimilationist systems was evident in the involvement of Indigenous administrations in the reestablishment procedures and special provisions developed for Indigenous veterans. More often than not, indigeneity trumped veteran status, to the detriment of returned Indigenous service personnel. The same pattern occurred writ large for Indigenous populations in the immediate postwar years.

There was some change in the realm of policy, some conditional or partial admittance to social citizenship; but on the ground, the patterns in New Zealand, the United States, Australia, and Canada were more akin to a postwar return to "normal" colonial status and social marginalization.

A U T H O R B I O G R A P H Y

R. Scott Sheffield is associate professor of history at the University of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia, Canada. His publications include *The Red Man's on the Warpath: The Image of the "Indian" and the Second World War*, in addition to numerous chapters and articles. He is working on a major transnational examination of Indigenous contributions to and experiences in the Second World War in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States.

N O T E S

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- 1 Hollis D. Stabler, *No One Ever Asked Me: The World War II Memoirs of an Omaha Soldier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 118.
- 2 Kenneth William Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 215.
- 3 Anonymous interview, in Robert Alexander Innes, "'I'm on Home Ground Now. I'm Safe': Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans in the Immediate Postwar Years, 1945–46," *American Indian Quarterly* 28, nos. 3–4 (2004): 695.
- 4 There is some work in each country, but it is dispersed across dif-

ferent genres. See Noah Riseman, "The Rise of Indigenous Military History," *History Compass* 12, no. 12 (December 2014): 901–11; and P. Whitney Lackenbauer and R. Scott Sheffield, "Moving beyond Forgotten: The Historiography of Native Peoples in the World Wars," in *Aboriginal People and the Canadian Military: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Craig Mantle and Whitney Lackenbauer (Kingston: CDI Press, 2007), 209–32. Explicit examinations of Indigenous veterans are limited to Innes, "'I'm on Home Ground Now,'" 685–718; Al Carroll, *Medicine Bags & Dog Tags: American Indian Veterans from Colonial Times to the Second Iraq War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Jane R. M. Thomson, "The Rehabilitation of Servicemen of World War II in New Zealand, 1940–1954" (Ph.D. diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 1983); and, to some extent, Noah Riseman, *Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

- 5 Indigenous veterans' organizations drove this political campaign, which revolved around claims of unequal access to benefits after

the Second World War and the Korean War. Persistent lobbying culminated in a pair of federal government reports in the mid-1990s. Subsequent reports focused on First Nations and Métis veterans, respectively, and eventually a government apology and offer of compensation to Status Indian veterans in 2003. See the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, "The Aboriginal Soldier after the Wars," Senate Report (March 1995); Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, vol. 1, *Looking Forward, Looking Back* (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1996); R. Scott Sheffield, "A Search for Equity: A Study of the Treatment Accorded to First Nations Veterans and Dependents of the Second World War and the Korean Conflict. The Final Report of the National Round Table on First Nations Veterans' Issues," Assembly of First Nations, Ottawa, May 2001; Sheffield, "Veterans' Charter Canada's and Métis Veterans of the Second World War and Korea," unpublished report, Métis National Council, 2012.

- 6 See, for instance, Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *The G.I. Bill: A New Deal for Veterans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Peter Neary and J. L. Granatstein, eds., *The Veterans' Charter and Post-World War II Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998); Thomson, "Rehabilitation of Servicemen"; Stuart Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2015).
- 7 Thomson, "Rehabilitation of Servicemen," chap. 1; Jeff Keshen, "Getting It Right the Second Time Around: The Reintegration of Canadian Veterans of World War II," in Neary and Granatstein, *The Veterans' Charter*, 62–84; Altschuler and Blumin, *The G.I. Bill*, 24–33;

Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees, *The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994); Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 198. In Australia, where pension and repatriation support had remained stronger through the interwar years than in the other countries, this motivation was somewhat less fervent. Nevertheless, through the war, the Australian government liberalized and expanded repatriation provisions. See Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 266, 273–75.

- 8 Stephen Garton suggests that the repatriation system in Australia "represented a second welfare state, running parallel to, and almost as large as, the official one." See *The Cost of War: Australians Return* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), vii–viii.
- 9 *The Serviceman's Guide to Demobilization and Rehabilitation*, 23, WAI 1 DA550.1.1, Archives New Zealand, Wellington (hereafter ANZ). This pamphlet was originally intended for distribution to all returning service personnel. However, sufficient copies could not be printed in time, so it was distributed to military and governmental officials. See Brig. A. E. Conway, memorandum, February 5, 1946, WAI 1 DA550.1.1, ANZ.
- 10 A. O. Neville to the Minister for Native Affairs, April 18, 1947, file 135-47, State Records Office of Western Australia.
- 11 R. Scott Sheffield, "Canadian Aboriginal Veterans and the Veterans' Charter after the Second World War," in *Aboriginal Peoples and Military Participation: Canadian & International Perspectives*, ed. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, R. Scott Sheffield, and Craig Mantle (Kingston, Ont.: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 80.

- 12 For example, the National Native American Veterans Association, the only national-level association in the United States, only organized in 2004 to “represent the unique needs of Native American Veterans across America” (<http://www.nnava.org/pdf/history.pdf>). There is no mention of historical grievances in the stated mission or the history of the NNAVA; instead, there is a concern with the present challenges of navigating between the federal Department of Veterans Affairs and Indigenous governance structures. Similarly, the Twenty-Eighth Māori Battalion Association existed for more than sixty years before shutting down in 2012, but it does not appear to have organized any substantive campaigns regarding veterans’ benefits. The secondary literature on Māori war service contains little mention of veterans’ reestablishment but offers tantalizing clues about problems; see Monty Soutar, *Nga Tama Toa: C Company 28 (Maori) Battalion 1939–1945* (Auckland: David Bateman, 2008), 370–77; Wira Gardiner, *Te Mura o Te Abi: The Story of the Maori Battalion* (Auckland: Reed, 1992), 178–88.
- 13 *The Serviceman’s Guide*, 23.
- 14 Thomson, “Rehabilitation of Servicemen,” 319.
- 15 “To All Indian Agents, Inspectors and the Indian Commissioner for BC, from R. A. Hoey,” March 3, 1945, pt. 1, vol. 10712, file #43/39-6, RG 10, Libraries and Archives Canada, Ottawa (hereafter LAC).
- 16 During the research for the report “A Search for Equity,” Veterans Affairs could find virtually no evidence of Status Indians qualifying for VLA off reserve, although the majority of identified Status Indian veterans obtained VLA support.
- 17 RCAP, *Report of the Royal Commission*, 1:33.
- 18 Lawrence C. Kelly, *John Collier and the Origins of Indian Policy Reform* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982).
- 19 Alison R. Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II: Towards a New Era in Indian Affairs* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 142–44.
- 20 See “Re-establishment Training Scheme for Natives,” file 135-47, State Records Office of Western Australia. The file contains correspondence and reports about joint state-Commonwealth conferences on the subject of Aboriginal reestablishment in 1947 and a few memos in 1950 seeking demographic information about Aboriginal veterans.
- 21 Commissioner of Native Affairs to K. W. Growcott, Ministry of Post-war Reconstruction, September 1, 1947, file 135-47, State Records Office of Western Australia.
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 “Report—Welfare Division—Indian Veterans’ Affairs,” 1946, vol. 8927, file 68/39-1, RG 10, LAC.
- 24 “Office Manual—Rehabilitation Department,” A/3, WAI 21 68a cn121 pt. 2, ANZ.
- 25 *Ibid.*, A/10.
- 26 Thomson, “Rehabilitation of Servicemen,” 313–14.
- 27 *The Serviceman’s Guide*, 23–24, emphasis added.
- 28 “War History of Rehabilitation in NZ, 1939–65,” 179, WAI 21 79a cn129, ANZ.
- 29 John Parkin to Director, February 14, 1944, Re 10/1, ANZ, cited in Thomson, “Rehabilitation of Servicemen,” 317.
- 30 “War History of Rehabilitation,” 177.

- 31 Wilfred Westeste, interview quoted in Sheffield, "A Search for Equity," 51.
- 32 Ibid., viii.
- 33 Ibid., 49.
- 34 Ibid., viii.
- 35 Russell McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011); Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945–1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986).
- 36 "War History of Rehabilitation," 177.
- 37 Soutar, *Nga Tama Toa*, 373.
- 38 Sheffield, "A Search for Equity," 21–29.
- 39 Howard S. Anderson, from a questionnaire filled out for the Saskatchewan Indian Veterans Association, question 16, cited in *ibid.*, 53.
- 40 Such practices were pervasive in Queensland's Aboriginal administration and common across Australia. See Rosalind Kidd, *Trustees on Trial: Recovering the Stolen Wages* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006); Andrew Gunstone and S. Heckenberg, "The Government Owes a Lot of Money to Our People": A History of Indigenous Stolen Wages in Victoria (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009).
- 41 G. F. Wooten, Chairman, Repatriation Commission, to the Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, July 27, 1955, A463 1956-1096, National Archives of Australia, Canberra (hereafter NAA).
- 42 L. D. Lyons, Attorney General's Department, memorandum to the Secretary, Repatriation Commission, May 3, 1955, A463 1956-1096, NAA.
- 43 Report, Assistant Secretary to the Treasurer, March 17, 1953, A1308 762-2-135, NAA. The report advocated slight increases to the Torres Strait Islander pension rates to keep them in line with incremental rises for regular veterans.
- 44 Wooten to the Secretary, July 27, 1955. The letter went on to say that "up to the present only a few persons have applied for benefits under the Act of Grace Schemes related to Torres Strait Islanders." Efforts to put Torres Strait Islander veterans' benefits on an equal footing were not successful until 1971, when their benefits were to be shifted to the Repatriation Act from the Native Members of the Forces Benefits Act. See R. Kelly to the Director-General, January 27, 1971, A884 A6931, NAA.
- 45 Riseman, *Defending Whose Country?*, 95–97.
- 46 Gerry Blitner, in *No Bugles, No Drums*, directed by John Burnett, 1990, cited in *ibid.*, 96n79.
- 47 P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Guerillas in Our Midst: The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, 1942–45," *BC Studies* 155 (Autumn 2007): 65. This reward was only for those who had served at least ninety days.
- 48 Charles Hendricks is silent on any veterans' compensation in "The Eskimos and the Defense of Alaska," *Pacific Historical Review* 54 (August 1985): 271–95.
- 49 H. T. Glover to the Director, Re-establishment Division, June 4, 1947, MP513 A1684 pt. 2, NAA.
- 50 Thomson, "Rehabilitation of Servicemen," quotation from 312, but discussion of this program extends to 316. Thomson suggests that much of the reason for

success in the "A" training scheme among Māori was that they were often able to train alongside fellow Māori ex-servicemen and could thus "pursue inclusion in European economic life without abandoning group solidarity or Maori social values" (315). By comparison, the "B" class trade

training, via subsidized training with an employer, was underutilized by Māori ex-servicemen because "there were few openings in Maori districts; Maoris disliked employment without their cobbers; and Pakehas preferred to employ Pakehas" (315).