

Wapos Bay

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER episode 4

Episode Description

At school, T-Bear volunteers for an unknown task to avoid decorating the community skating rink for the Wapos Bay Remembrance Day ceremony. He is to deliver the Remembrance Day tribute speech that will be broadcast on Wapos Bay Aboriginal Radio and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN). The enormity of the task sinks in as he prepares gifts of fabric and sweetgrass for the interviews with the Wapos Bay elders. T-Bear is impressed with their involvement in historical Canadian military efforts and the use of the Cree language for secret missions. As he gathers information to include in his speech for the Remembrance Day tribute, he gains new understanding of the words “Lest We Forget.” Meanwhile, Raven explores the meaning of “appreciation” when her own gestures of gratitude to a departing teacher are not understood and as kohkum intones, “Truth depends on our point of view.”

Background information on this episode

- Many Aboriginal men and women were decorated for their contributions and continued in leadership roles when they returned home from the wars. Aboriginal veterans experienced discrimination when the wars ended—for example, they were not paid tribute in the manner that other veterans were.
- The real code talkers in the Second World War were Navajo language speakers. The creators of the *Wapos Bay* series used creative licence by imagining the use of the Cree language among Cree veterans in the war; however, no evidence of such tactics was found.
- In Cree and other Aboriginal cultures children learn early to give special gifts to those who have had a positive impact on them. Respectful conduct requires offering a gift of material, sweetgrass, or tobacco to elders when asking for their knowledge and assistance.



Key themes

- Aboriginal men and women made invaluable contributions to all of the military efforts that Canada became involved in.
- On Remembrance Day we show those who made sacrifices in military service gratitude and appreciation through public tributes.
- War and military conflict can have a devastating emotional effect on those who experience the loss of their fellow soldiers.
- For Cree and other Aboriginal peoples gift giving is an important aspect of respectful conduct.

PREVIEWING ACTIVITIES (Refer to Background Information guide for series' preview activities)

- 1 ► Introduce the Cree words used in *Something to Remember*.

CREE GLOSSARY

tansi – Hello, how are you?

kohkum – grandmother

mushom – grandfather

wapos – rabbit

astum – come here

akosi – that's it

na moya natow – no problems

- 2 ► A) Why are public tributes to war veterans important for our communities?
B) How did the war affect the spouses of the soldiers?
- 3 ► Do you know that Aboriginal men and women made invaluable contributions to all of the military efforts for Canada? An important contribution was the use of Aboriginal languages in transmitting messages. Why would an Indigenous language be helpful in transmitting messages during war? *The enemy wouldn't understand it.*
- 4 ► Have you heard stories about family or community member's experiences in military service? What was it like for them?
- 5 ► Have you read stories about the war experiences of Canadians? Describe them.
- 6 ► What does "taking an oath" mean?
- 7 ► What is Morse code? What is it used for?

VIEW EPISODE

Introduce and View *Wapos Bay: Something to Remember*.

POST-VIEWING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- 1 ► A) What tributes did you see in the program? *The tributes to Wapos Bay war veterans and their spouses. Raven paid tribute to her teacher, Mrs. Chalmers.*
B) How did mushom pay tribute? Why?
C) How did the teacher respond to her tribute? Explain.
D) What did you learn from T-Bear's speech?

- 2 ► **A)** How did T-Bear show appreciation to elders when asking them to share their stories?
B) How did Raven show appreciation to her teacher?
C) What are the values and ethics observed by the Cree people in giving gifts?
- 3 ► How did mushom feel about his fellow soldiers? How do you think they felt about him?
- 4 ► What contributions did members of the Wapos Bay make to Canada's military efforts?

PROJECT IDEAS

- Research and report on the discrimination that some Aboriginal veterans faced when they returned from wars, e.g., they were not paid the same tributes as other war veterans.
- Research and report on the military experiences of Aboriginal war veterans.
- Research and report on the Navajo Code Talkers.
- Brainstorm questions to ask in interviews with veterans. Invite an Aboriginal war veteran to talk about their experiences.
- Read *When the Spirits Dance* (Theytus Books) by Cree author Larry Loyie, who recounts his experiences learning the meaning of war when his father leaves to join the Canadian military effort. The book includes historic photographs on the Second World War.

The “Morris” code introduced in this episode of **Wapos Bay** is a play on Morse code.

Discuss the history and development of the Morse code, which is also known as Continuous Wave. Morse code was first developed for transmitting messages by telegraph and today is transmitted over radio waves. Originally the telegraph made indentations on a paper tape. Telegraph operators would read and translate the marks into the message. The short marks were known as “dots” and the longer marks were “dashes.” As the technology developed, the operators became experts at listening to the sounds and pauses made by the telegraph machine and were able to record the messages that way.

When Morse code was adapted for radio, the dash became known as the “dah” sound and a dot became known as a “dit.” The original Morse code specification became known as American Morse Code and the Morse code used up until 1999 for aeronautical navigation and almost exclusively now by amateur radio operators is International Morse code. Morse code is also used to some extent by people who have mobility disabilities.

Learn the Morse code and use musical instruments to send messages. Listen to popular songs that use Morse code, such as “Brown Eyed Girl” by Van Morrison and “Radioactivity” by Kraftwerk.