

History

THE NO.2 CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

Have you heard of No. 2 Construction Battalion? This Battalion was the first and only Black Battalion in Canadian history. It highlights the Black contribution during World War I and how Black people were willing and integral during the war effort. Below you will read and learn how important their contribution was, and how this battalion defied odds to be part of Canadian history.



Here is a list of activities you will work on:

- KWL Chart

- Reading
- Listening / Video
- Summary

KWL chart

Complete the KWL chart on the next page. What do you know about the No.2 Construction Battalion? What do you want to know?

K	W	L
What I know about the No.2 Construction Battalion	What I want to know about the No.2 Construction Battalion	What I learned about the No.2 Construction Battalion

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READING

The Number 2 Battalion: The No. 2 Construction Battalion was the first and only Black Battalion in Canadian history. It was authorized on July 4, 1916. The headquarters of the battalion were established at Pictou, Nova Scotia, and was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Daniel H Sutherland, a railroad contractor from River John, Nova Scotia. (p. 21). This battalion had special authority to recruit in all provinces, wherever Black people were residing. This battalion was an answer to the rejection, humiliation and segregation Black men felt when they sought to volunteer for duty. Nova Scotia led the way in providing the largest number of recruits with approximately 300 enlisting. Those employed in the coal mines were not eligible for enlistment however. Notably, Legendary Black cowboy, John Ware's sons, Arthur and William Ware also joined the battalion! Although many Nova Scotians enlisted, initially the battalion did not have enough men. For this reason, the headquarters moved to Truro, Nova Scotia in 1916. This area had more black people residing there. Later in the year, 165 black men from America were recruited. United States authorities entered into an arrangement

with Canadian authorities for Black Americans to enlist in the Canadian Army. By the end of February 1917, the Battalion had increased in numbers. It was reported that the Battalion was needed overseas in France; they were in need of steel rails. The battalion, at a strength of nineteen officers and six hundred and five other ranks embarked from Pier 2 on March 28, 1917 aboard SS Southland. Being understaffed, the Battalion's status was changed to a Company. The unit proceeded to France where it was attached to the Canadian Forestry Corps. Majority of the men served at La Joux, Jura Mountains, while smaller detachments were attached to Forestry units at Peronne and Alencon. The men proved themselves. They were commended for their discipline and faithful service while with the Forestry Corps. Some of the men even saw trench combat. After the armistice agreement in 1918, the unit returned to Canada and was officially disbanded on September 15, 1920.

VIDEO ACTIVITY

Information from the videos and audios will also be included in the quiz. Click on the link below to watch a short clip about the No 2 Construction Battalion.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PL6B221_HoQ

List at least 5 new pieces of any kind of information that you learned from the

video.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

SUMMARY

In this module you learned about the No.2 Construction Battalion, the only black battalion in Canada that made great contributions to the war effort! Do you remember everything you read? Go back to the KWL chart and write down everything that you now know!

REFERENCES

<http://www.ourroots.ca/e/page.aspx?id=3575857> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PL6B221_HoQ