



From the West Coast to the Western Front: British Columbians and the Great War

Mark Forsythe, Greg Dickson

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It has often been observed that the First World War jolted Canada into nationhood, and as Mark Forsythe and Greg Dickson show in this compelling book, no province participated more eagerly in that transformation or felt the aftershock more harshly than British Columbia. In *From the West Coast to the Western Front*, Forsythe, host of CBC Radio's mid-day show *BC Almanac*, marks the 100th anniversary of World War I by teaming with historian Greg Dickson and the ever resourceful *BC Almanac* audience to compile a sweeping portrayal of that crucial chapter of BC history.

Of the 611,000 Canadians who fought for King and Country, 55,570 were from British Columbia—the highest per capita rate of enlistment in the country. Of that contingent, 6,225 died in battle, a critical loss to a fledgling province of barely 400,000.

Compiling stories, artifacts and photos sent in by *BC Almanac* listeners from across the province, this volume tells of submarine smuggling, bagpipes lost on the battlefield and of the ongoing struggles by soldiers who made it home. It tells of battles that set records for mass death amid conditions of unequalled squalor, but also of the heroism of front-line nurses and soldiers like George Maclean, a First Nations man from the Okanagan, who won the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

By turns devastating, harrowing, insightful and miraculous, these stories reveal much about the spirit and resilience of a people who survived one of history's greatest disasters to build the province we have today.

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