

Photo: Melanie Reid



MARY GREYEVES REID

1920-2011, Laundress, cook

First Aboriginal woman to enlist in the Canadian Army

Mary Greyeyes Reid, the first Aboriginal woman to join the Canadian Army, was a warm-hearted, selfless woman of great determination and tremendous self-discipline.

Born on the Muskeg Lake Cree National Reserve in Saskatchewan, Mary entered the residential school system at age five. Although she was a keen student, her formal education stopped after she finished grade eight, the point at which Aboriginal students' education ended. A nun continued to tutor Mary, while she helped at the school by cooking, cleaning, sewing and doing laundry.

In 1942, Mary joined the army, thus becoming the first Aboriginal woman in Canada's Armed Forces. She was stationed in Aldershot, England, where she worked in the laundry and as a cook. She served there until 1946, then returned to Canada, and met her husband, Alexander "Bud" Reid. They had two children, living first in Victoria and later, in Vancouver. Mary worked hard to give her children a good life, and was a deeply valued member of the staff at the restaurant where she worked. She later became an industrial seamstress.

Mary was in her 91st year when she died in March 2011. She is buried on the Muskeg Lake Cree National Reserve.

OCTOBER 2011

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

WOMEN IN CANADIAN MILITARY FORCES:
A PROUD LEGACY



Status of Women
Canada

Condition féminine
Canada

