

A black and white photograph showing the deck of a ship. Several crew members in uniform are standing, looking out at a massive explosion in the ocean. A large plume of dark smoke and white water rises from the impact. The sky is overcast.

Stories Behind the Poppy

The Battle of the Atlantic

Impact Report 2025

Financé par Anciens Combattants Canada
Funded by Veterans Affairs Canada

Canada

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IDEAS

On 6th November 2025, Stories Behind the Poppy commemorated the Battle of the Atlantic, the longest continuous battle of World War II and the ultimate example of allyship between Canada and the UK.

These impactful events are made possible by funding from The Maple Leaf Trust, with support from Canadian High Commission, Office of Veterans Affairs Canada; engaging young people in both the UK and Canada in remembrance and creative commemoration.

Project Overview

Now in its fourth year, Stories Behind the Poppy aims to unite young people in the UK and Canada through creative commemoration of shared history. Through storytelling, historical facts and engaging activities, these events aim to engage young people to remember those who lost their lives ahead of Remembrance Day.

| Aims | Achieved |
|--|---|
| 3000 young people attend events | 11,814 young people attended digital events |
| 50/50 split between both UK and Canada | 175 registrations UK 176 registrations Canada |

Workshop Highlights

Big Ideas utilised digital tools in these workshops to engage pupils in the subject matter. Word clouds, polls and chat box contributions provided personal insights from pupils and engaged them throughout the workshops. Big Ideas continues to develop its use of digital tools to keep events as engaging and active as possible for student audiences.

Special Guests

This year, Big Ideas co-hosted the events with **Bill Law**, a Canadian descendant of a Battle of the Atlantic Veteran. Bill was able to share personal insights from his father, who served on a small corvette warship. Bill's father was a coder who translated the encrypted messages that warned of the location of the incoming German submarines. Bill shared a family photograph of his father at work, allowing students to really identify with someone who was on the front line during the Battle of the Atlantic.



A circular portrait of a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, wearing thick-rimmed black glasses. He is smiling broadly, showing his teeth. He is dressed in a dark suit jacket, a white collared shirt, and a red and black striped tie. A red poppy is pinned to his left lapel. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Epitaphs

[illegible]

3

**Though it was rough and a solemn night,
we became the light.**

Stoney Creek Primary School, Canada

**You were brave and sacrificed for us,
For our lives today it was enough.**

Mount St Joseph, UK

**Fearless today - Peaceful tomorrow.
For you to be alive today, we gave you our life.
For your life, we gave ours.**

Clarendon Primary, UK

**The waves we sailed have been forgotten
Our lives gone.
But we are remembered
Our ships on the bottom.**

Homeschool

**Don't forget me, my bravery is your
courage.**

Viola Desmond School, Canada

Your Past, Our Future.

ALIF Canada

**They gave all their strength so we could
be strong.**

Manor Park Primary, Canada

For your death we will live today.

Chancel Primary, UK

**To dream and hope is to achieve the
impossible.**

John Perry Primary, UK

**5 years, 7 months;
Created fear in their heart;
We tried, we did our best, and it worked.
Now let us have peace.**

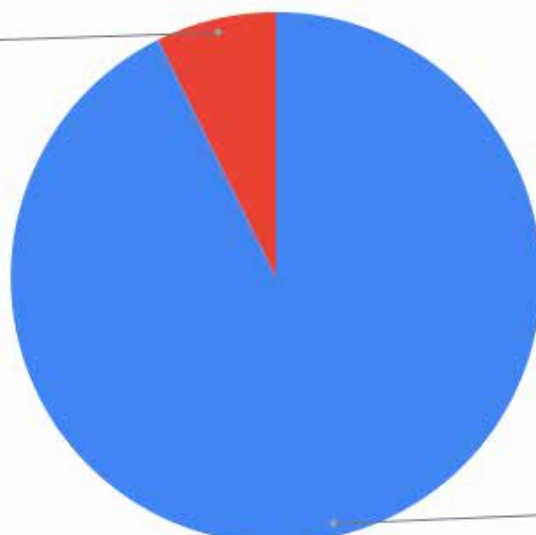
Dolphin Senior Public School, Canada

Evaluation

Upon registering for these events, teachers were asked if they had taught the Battle of the Atlantic before, of the 338 registrations, only 7% of teachers had covered the topic with their class.

Have you taught the Battle of the Atlantic before?

Yes
7.3%

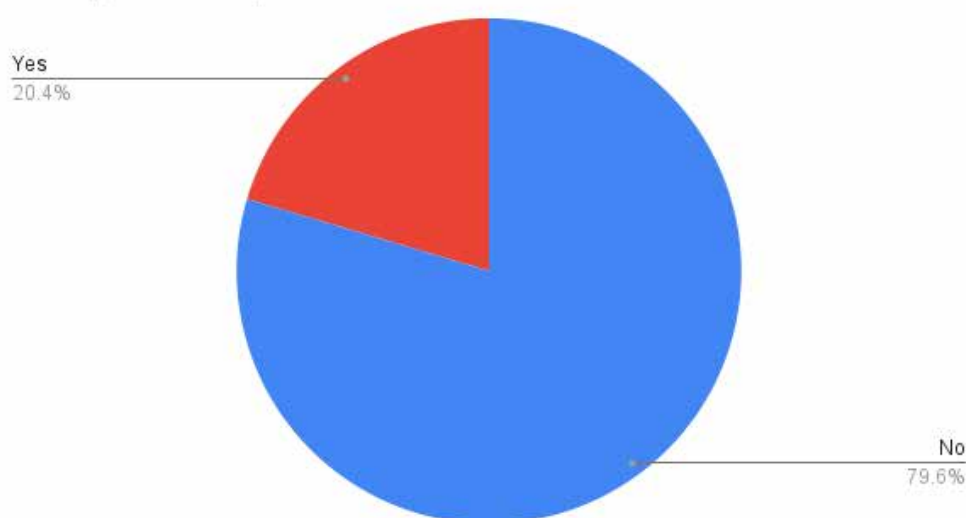


No
92.7%

Following the events, 100% of teachers will have now discussed this topic with their class throughout and following the workshop. The low number of teachers who had covered the topic with their class demonstrates how Stories Behind the Poppy continues to choose subject material which deviates from the norm taught in classrooms in the UK and Canada, providing interesting and exciting topics to engage pupils in new subject material.

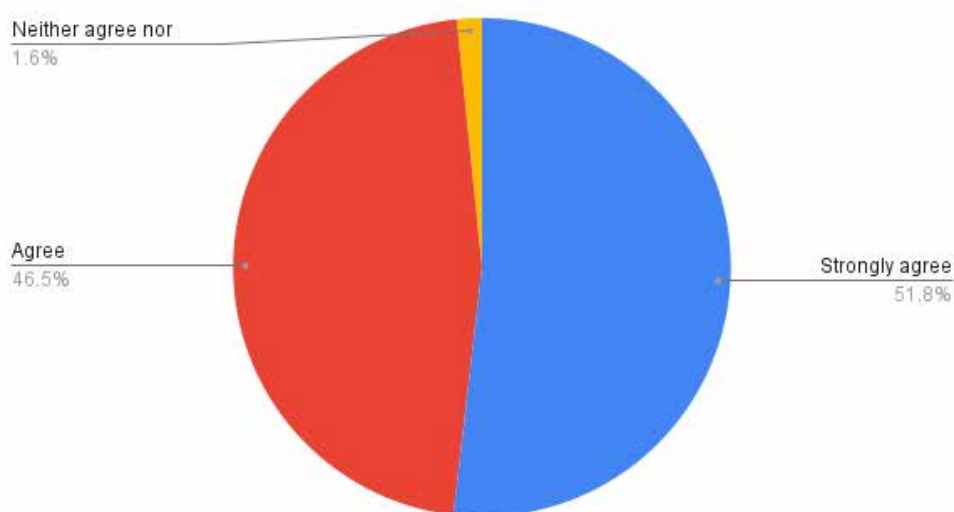
Teachers were asked if they had taken part in a Canadian/UK schools event before attending Stories Behind the Poppy. Only 20% of respondents had attended an event with schools in the UK and Canada.

Have you taken part in a UK/Canadian school event before?



This data shows that Big Ideas continues to reach new audiences through this programme, retaining schools who have attended before and welcoming new schools. This shows that schools want to engage in the programme year on year, but also that the events are of interest to new teachers when they first hear about the events.

Teachers were asked how strongly they agree with the following statement: “Through understanding the shared history of the UK and Canada we can build a stronger future together.”



The responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive with 4 individual teachers commenting they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. This response shows the want and belief

that events such as Stories Behind the Poppy not only improve shared understanding but also look positively ahead to strong community connections between Canada and the UK moving forward.

Teacher Feedback

Thank you from London, Ontario, Canada!
Grade 4 :) Stoney Creek Public School, Ontario, Canada

Thank you! This really enhanced our discussions this week.

Thank you for inviting us today, a great, thoughtful and informative zoom session. Year 6, Eastbrook School, Dagenham, London

Thank you - wonderful to be a part of such a special event.
Small Haven School, Kent, UK

Thank you very much - we enjoyed learning all about The Battle of the Atlantic and the Commander's fascinating facts about submarines.
Year 6, Hightown Primary School, Southampton, UK

Thank you for letting us be a part of this!
Viewley Hill Academy, Middlesbrough, UK

Thank you so much from all of the Year 5 children at Rhyl Community Primary School, London, UK

Merci beaucoup. Shuswap Middle School, Canada

Thank you so incredibly much. Princess Elizabeth School, London, Canada

Many thanks. This was really well done.
Berrigan Elementary, Ontario, Canada

Conclusion

Stories Behind the Poppy provided an engaging and educational experience for students and teachers in both Canada and the UK, tied in with timely commemoration activities around Remembrance Day. The esteemed guests and co-host brought the event to life and provided an opportunity for young people to hear from descendants, experts in Naval warfare and the High Commissioner of Canada to the UK. The aim to inspire and educate students was certainly achieved through this year's events on the Battle of the Atlantic.

Big Ideas looks forward to marking International Women's Day on Thursday 5th March 2026.