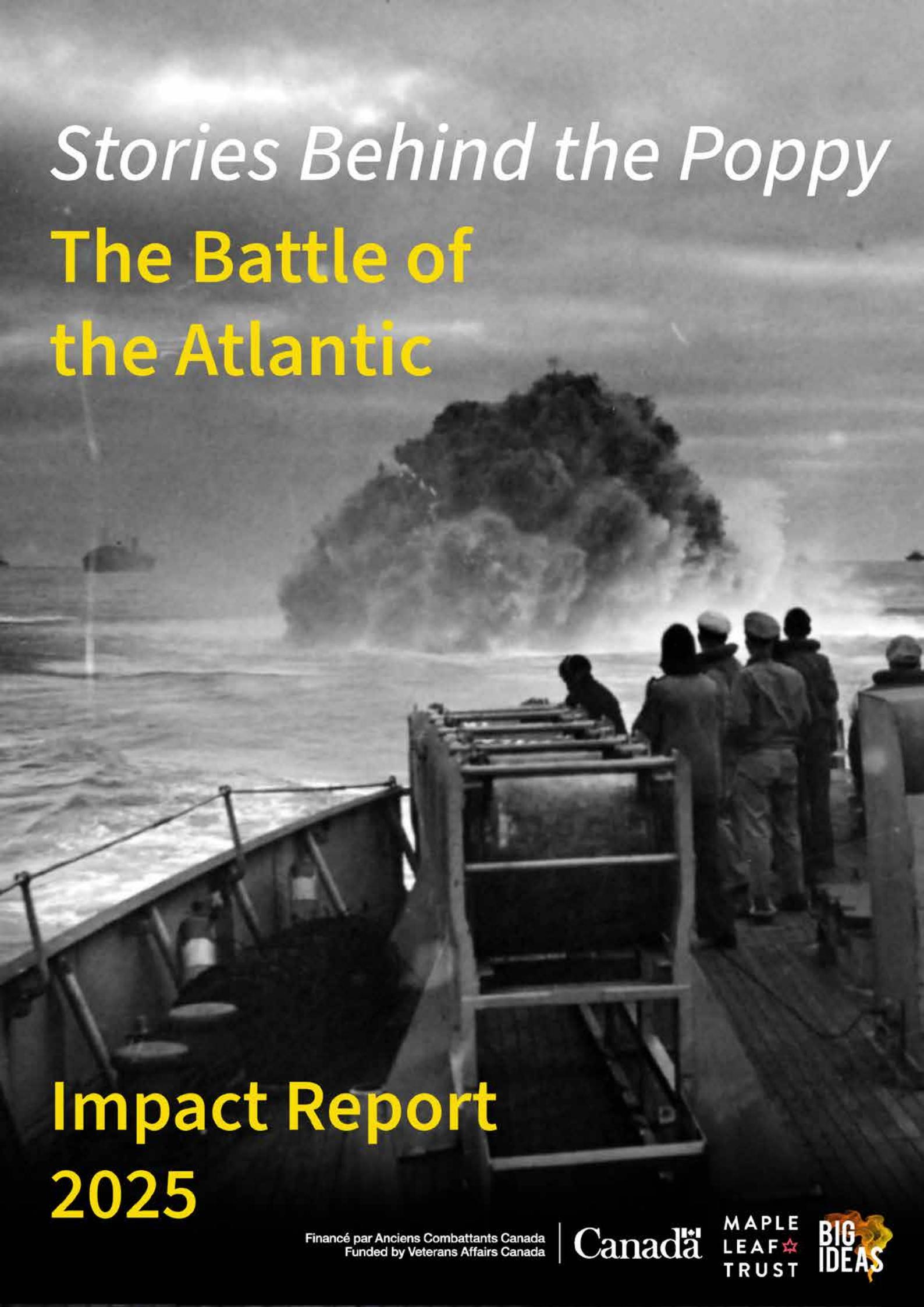


# *Stories Behind the Poppy*

## **The Battle of the Atlantic**



## **Impact Report 2025**

Financé par Anciens Combattants Canada  
Funded by Veterans Affairs Canada

Canada

MAPLE  
LEAF  
TRUST

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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.





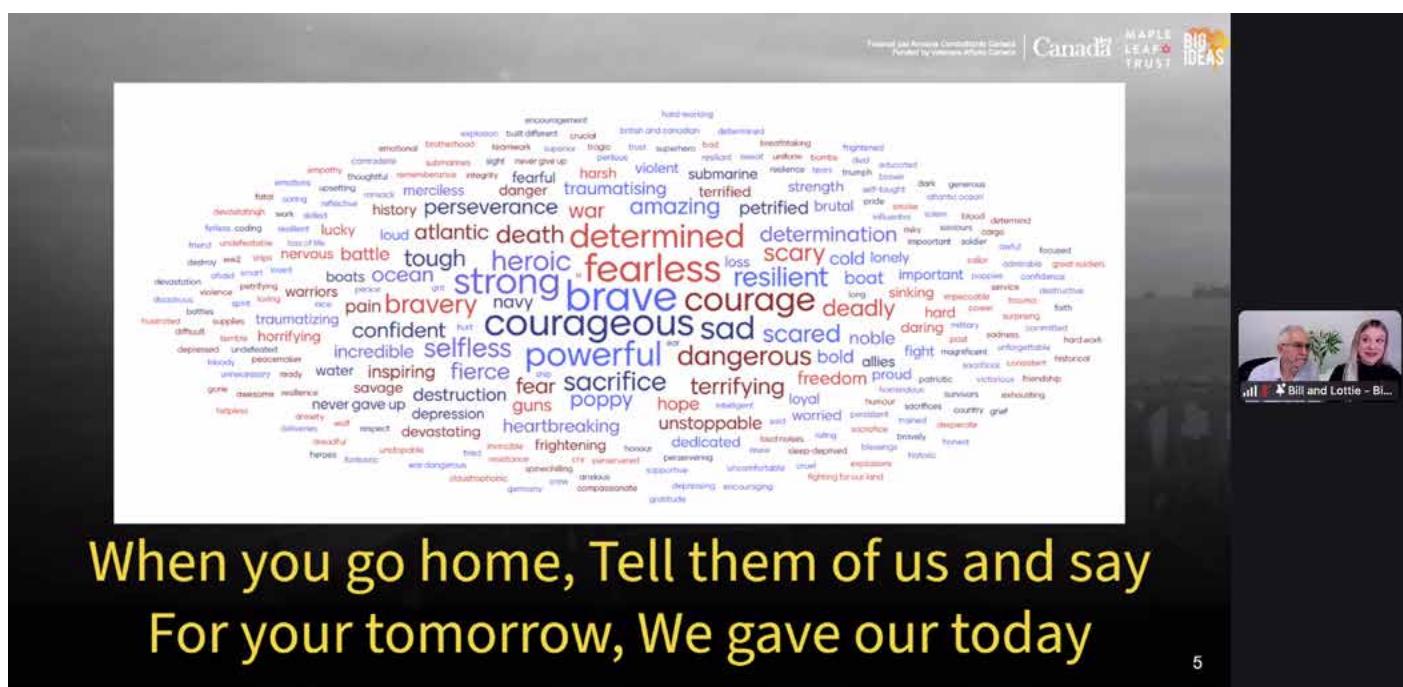
**Commander Roman Antoniewicz**, Deputy Naval Adviser of the Canadian Armed Forces at Canada House, also joined Stories Behind the Poppy. Roman brought naval expertise to the event as an expert in anti-submarine warfare and shared insights from the North Atlantic Ocean with the students in attendance - from what conditions are like for seamen in winter to what shrimp sound like (cooking bacon), Roman answered students' questions about being away from home and how you hunt submarines. His contributions concerning military experience were detailed, thoughtful and extremely insightful for all involved.

Once again we were joined by his excellency, the **High Commissioner of Canada, Ralph Goodale**. It was a privilege to host the High Commissioner in these events and his speech about the lives lost in the Battle of the Atlantic was a moving tribute. The High Commissioner added gravitas to the events, reading a Loyal Greeting received from the office of His Majesty the King of England. Thank you to the Maple Leaf Trust for organising speakers and the letter which made these events so impactful.



## Epitaphs

In each workshop, schools wrote epitaphs of remembrance, inspired by the Kohima Epitaph and reflecting on a word cloud created earlier in the session filled with students' contributions.



The word cloud contains numerous words related to sacrifice, courage, and remembrance, including: determination, determination, strong, brave, courage, powerful, selfless, sacrifice, fear, destruction, poppy, heartbreak, hope, intelligence, dedicated, unstoppable, and many others.

**When you go home, Tell them of us and say  
For your tomorrow, We gave our today**

Bill and Lottie - Bi...

In a short space of time, teachers submitted student work which was poignant and moving. Students were encouraged to use these epitaphs in remembrance activities taking place over the coming weeks. Some examples are below:

**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*

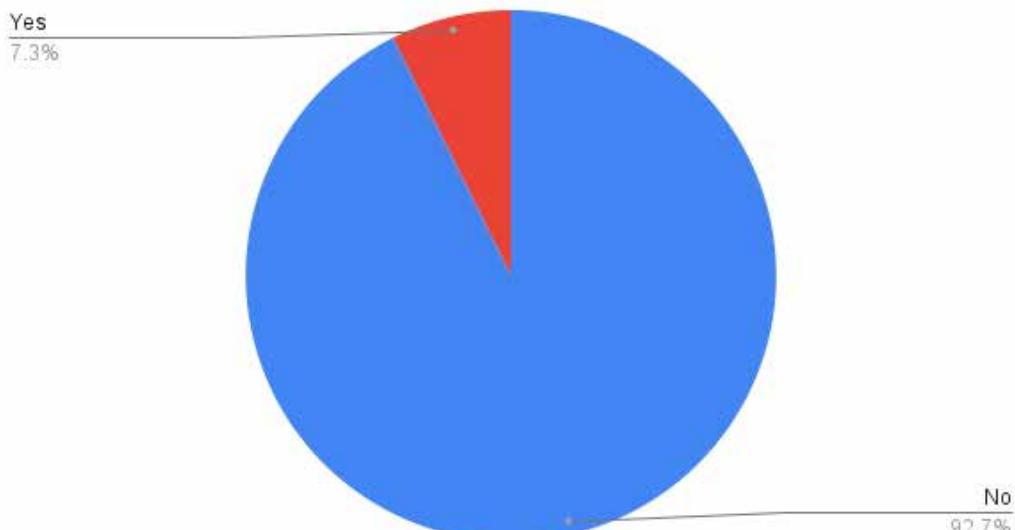
**5 years, 7 months;  
Created fear in their heart;  
We tried, we did our best, and it worked.  
Now let us have peace.**

*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.

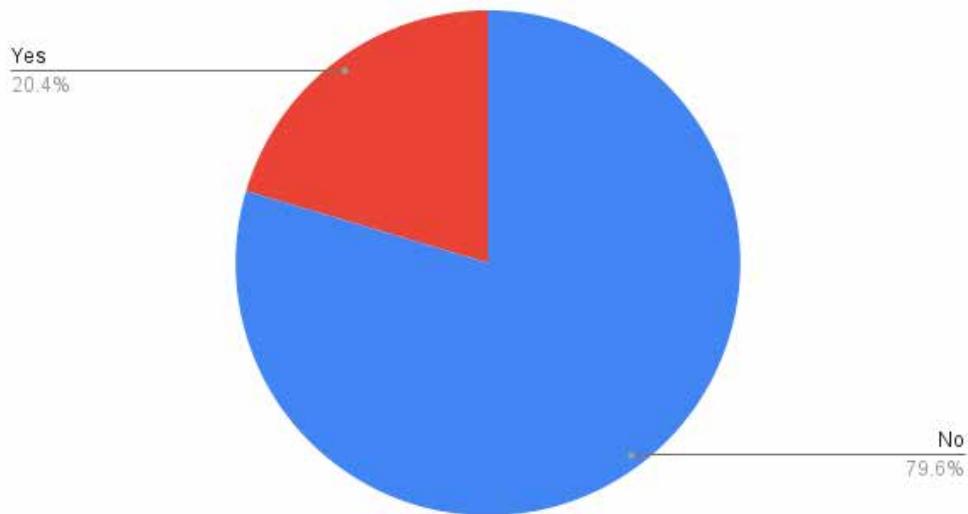
**Have you taught the Battle of the Atlantic before?**



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.

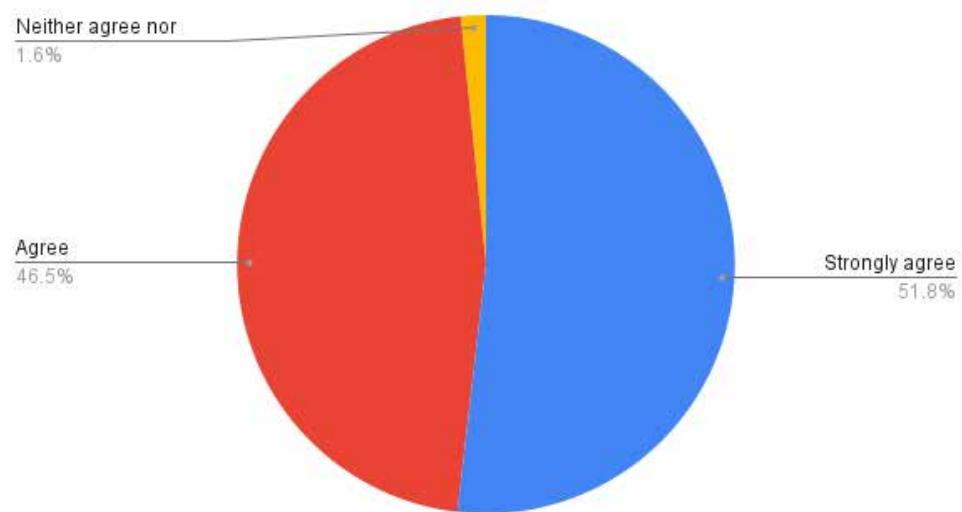
Teachers were asked if they had taken part in a Canadian/UK schools event before attending Stories Behind the Poppy. Only 20% of respondents had attended an event with schools in the UK and Canada.

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 that 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.**

Berringan 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.