

Title: Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Jacobs - African Canadian Contributions to WWII

Subtitle: Interview (Listening)/Reading/Writing

Duration: 3-5 classes

Best Courses Fit: Grade 10 Canadian History, Leadership, English



Source: <http://www.windsor-communities.com/african-military-profile-jac.php>

Tasks

1. Read the **Background Knowledge** section.
2. Listen to the interviews.
3. Respond to the questions using complete sentences.
4. Read the article.
5. Respond to the questions using complete sentences.

Background Knowledge

Lieutenant-Colonel Kenneth Jacobs was born on September 16, 1923 in Windsor, Ontario. The son of a WWI veteran (James Jacobs), Kenneth grew up in the Windsor area and served in the Canadian army during World War II. In his youth, he attended Prince Edward Public School and Kennedy Collegiate Institute in Windsor and graduated from Assumption College with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Following this, he went to the University of Toronto where he earned his Master of Social Work degree. He would go on to become the first Black social worker at the Children's Aid Society of Toronto.

Jacobs' military career began during the Second World War. He served in the Royal Canadian Medical Corps as an Operating Room Assistant at Vancouver Military Hospital. Following the war, he returned to civilian life to complete his education. In October 1954, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. He became a commissioned Pilot Officer with simultaneous promotion to Flying Officer. Jacobs combined his expertise in the field of Social Work with his military training when he was transferred to 5 Air Division Headquarters, Vancouver, B.C. As part of this new Social Work Branch of the R.C.A.F., his duties extended to include service to all of British Columbia. He continued in this role when transferred to Air Defense Command Headquarters in St. Hubert, Quebec. During this time, he also attained a level of fluency in French.



Jacobs' military career is filled with many prestigious accomplishments. In 1961, he was promoted to the rank of Flight Lieutenant. In 1968, he was promoted to the rank of Squadron Leader/Major. As Regional Social Work Officer at Mobile Command Headquarters, he was responsible for providing Social Work service to the combined Navy, Army and Air Force. In 1972, Major Jacobs became the second-in-command or DSDS2 of the Social Development Services at National Defense Headquarters in Ottawa. On April 1, 1975, Kenneth Jacobs became the first Canadian of African descent to be promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.



LCOL Jacobs retired from the Armed Forces in September 1978. He continued to serve as an active role model in the community. He served as pianist at the Baptist Church and Sunday school teacher in the British Methodist Episcopal Church. He was also a Troop leader in the 12th Scout Troop, a Junior leader in the YMCA, a baseball coach and community council president. In 1997, Jacobs was honoured by the North American Black Historical Museum at their gala. LCol Jacobs passed away on August 19, 2016. (Based upon the biographical sketch prepared by Lois Larkin)



KENNETH BARNELL JACOBS (LCol) Peacefully, at the Montfort Hospital on August 19, 2016, with his family by his side. Predeceased by his wife and soulmate, Olga Jacobs (nee Peters). Kenneth will be greatly missed by his loving children and grandchildren. An interment will take place at Beechwood, Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Services, 280 Beechwood Ave., Ottawa, in the National Military Cemetery on Tuesday, August 30, 2016, at 11:00 a.m. A Memorial Reception will follow from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to the charity of your choice in memory of Kenneth Jacobs.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/kenneth-jacobs-obituary?pid=181203502>)



Veterans Affairs
Canada

Anciens Combattants
Canada

Listen to the interview by Lt. Col. Kenneth Jacobs. The interviews are broken down into categories.

Inconsistencies in the RCAF

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/video-gallery/video/8987>

What does Mr. Jacobs' commentary reveal about life for Black people in Canada at that time? Give evidence.

Black people put pressure on the Canadian government about their racist recruiting policy. What does this reveal about them?

Why do you think it was called “a white man’s war?”

Comradery

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/video-gallery/video/6089>

Out of 5,000 men, Kenneth Jacobs only saw one other Black man. What does this reveal about the RCAF?

Based on his comments, why do you think Mr. Jacobs never advanced?

Even though the RCAF was not racially segregated at that time, why do you think so few Black men enlisted?

My Work in the Admissions Department

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/video-gallery/video/8986>

What was LCol Jacobs' role in the Admissions Department?

The Ability to Achieve

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/video-gallery/video/6110>

LCol Jacobs said that *“things still need to be done.”* What do you think he was talking about?

What did LCol Jacobs mean when he said, *“we cannot fall asleep at the switch because if we do, they’ll run over us?”* Who is “we” and “they?” How do you know?

A Social Worker in the Air Force

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/video-gallery/video/6107>

A pioneer is someone who does something for the first time. Could LCol Jacobs be described as a pioneer? Explain your reasoning.

Army Life Versus Air Force

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/video-gallery/video/6108>

Was LCol Jacobs treated well by the Army? How do you know?

Why do you think LCol Jacobs only went to the officers' mess twice? Explain your reasoning.

Remembrance Day Reflection

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/video-gallery/video/6109>

Despite the dangers of going to war, LCol Jacobs decided to do so. Who or what influenced his decision? Provide examples.

Article - Black man faced tough battle in military ranks

Read the article. Complete the graphic organizer. Use complete sentences.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Black man faced tough battle in military ranks

By **Kate McGrindle**
Star Staff Reporter

Ken Jacobs has something few blacks in the Canadian military have. Stripes. He also has scars. The retired officer battled his way through institutional prejudice to rise to the top spot of the Air Force social welfare branch, just two years short of his retirement in 1978.

And that battle wounded the Windsor native in ways the Second World War never could have.

"There was a distinct policy," Jacobs said. "Blacks would not be promoted. It's the story of every black guy that joined the service."

Little change

He says the story hasn't changed much.

"We're not a helluva lot further along now. In terms of coverup, that kind of thing happens on a much smaller scale to people like me -- people of colour -- all the time."

Jacobs was guest speaker at the

North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre's fourth annual Emancipation Gala Saturday at the Caboto Club. About 300 guests participated in the dinner and silent auction that raised about \$10,000 for the museum.

The theme of the evening was to pay tribute to war veterans of African descent.

Minister wants 'focus'

"I don't think enough has been said about the contribution members of the black community have made. It brings focus for our young people and challenges them to make a contribution," said Rev. Owen Bury of the Sandwich Baptist Church.

For Jacobs, making a contribution meant fighting a silent enemy, camouflaged in bureaucracy: prejudice.

His military career began in 1943 when he joined the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. He remained a private throughout the war. Ten years later, he joined the Air Force social welfare department and moved up through the ranks.

But once he hit the upper levels of the department and was next in line to lead the branch, his career stalled.

Years later, using freedom of information legislation and a look at records the Air Force kept, plus a moving letter from a former superior, administration's strategy became clear.

When he was due for his promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel in 1974, close to his superior's retirement, he was told there were "too many Lieutenant-Colonels" in the department and that there'd be a two-year freeze on promotions. At the time, he had the seniority and qualifications to fill the job, but

still needed the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

Two years later, he received his rank, but by then, two more Lieutenant-Colonels had transferred to the department, which had been without a leader in the interim.

"Things didn't smell right. Everybody clammed up."

One of the men became his boss, but Jacobs finally became the department head, later than he should have, he said.

Following his retirement, he spent eight years helping to establish the National Defence Medical Centre in Ottawa.

He believes institutional racism in the Canadian military can only be conquered if the black population brings political pressure to bear.

But the first order of business is to recognize the contributions blacks have made despite frustrating circumstances.

"It's long overdue," said Jacobs. "Even within the black community we have failed to recognize or promote what blacks have done."



COMRADES: Retired Lt.-Col Kenneth Jacobs, left, talks with fellow Second World War veteran Jim Watson at the Emancipation Dinner Gala. *Star photo: Bob Curran/Star*

Excerpt adapted from the above article:

Ken Jacobs has something few Blacks in the Canadian military have. Stripes. He also has scars. The retired officer battled his way through institutional prejudice to rise to the top spot of the Air Force social welfare branch, just two years short of his retirement in 1978.

And that battle wounded the Windsor native in ways the Second World War never could have.

"There was a distinct policy," Jacobs said. "Blacks would not be promoted. It's the story of every Black guy that joined the service."

He says the story hasn't changed much.

"We're not a helluva lot further along now. In terms of coverup, that kind of thing happens on a much smaller scale to people like me --people of colour--all the time."

For Jacobs, making a contribution meant fighting a silent enemy, camouflaged in bureaucracy: prejudice.

His military career began in 1943 when he joined the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. He remained a private throughout the war. Ten years later, he joined the Air Force social welfare department and moved up through the ranks.

But once he hit the upper levels of the department and was next in line to lead the branch, his career stalled. When he was due for his promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel in 1974, close to his superior's retirement, he was told there were "too many Lieutenant-Colonels" in the department. At the time, he had the seniority and qualifications to fill the job.

Two years later, he received his rank.

"Things didn't smell right. Everybody clammed up."

Jacobs finally became the department head, later than he should have.

He believes institutional racism in the military can only be conquered if the Black population brings political pressure to bear.

But the first order of business is to recognize the contributions Blacks have made despite frustrating circumstances.

"It's long overdue. Even within the Black community, we have failed to recognize or promote what Blacks have done."

Questions

<p>1. What about this source makes it good evidence about the challenges LCol Jacobs experienced?</p>	
<p>2. What does this article suggest about racism in the military?</p>	
<p>3. What is the main message of the article?</p>	
<p>4. What challenges did Lt. Col. Jacobs experience?</p>	
<p>5. Write five facts you learned from the article.</p>	

<p>What 3 character traits made him a good role model and leader? Give an example of how he displayed each character trait.</p>	
<p>Why is it important to learn about him?</p>	
<p>Write one quotation said by Lt. Col. Jacobs.</p>	