

= Francis Pegahmagabow =

Francis Pegahmagabow MM & Two bars (March 9 , 1889 ? August 5 , 1952) was the First Nations soldier most highly decorated for bravery in Canadian military history and the most effective sniper of World War I. Three times awarded the Military Medal and seriously wounded , he was an expert marksman and scout , credited with killing 378 Germans and capturing 300 more . Later in life , he served as chief and a councilor for the Wasauksing First Nation , and as an activist and leader in several First Nations organizations . He corresponded with and met other noted aboriginal figures including Fred Loft , Jules Sioui , Andrew Paull and John Tootoosis .

= = Early life = =

Francis Pegahmagabow was born on March 9 , 1889 , on what is now the Shawanaga First Nation reserve in Nobel , Ontario . In Ojibwe his name was Binaaswi (" the wind that blows off ") . His father was a man of the First Nation and his mother of the First Nation , located further up Bay 's north shore . His father Michael had been raised by Noah Nebimanyquod after the deaths of his parents ; Michael died of an unspecified severe illness in April 1891 , and his mother Mary Contin returned to her native Henvey Inlet First Nation after contracting the same illness . Francis was raised by Nebimanyquod and grew up in Shawanaga , where he learned traditional skills such as hunting , fishing , and practised a mix of Catholicism and Anishnaabe spirituality .

In January 1912 Pegahmagabow received financial aid for room and board to complete his education with the help of the Parry Sound Crown attorney Walter Lockwood Haight . That summer he worked for the Department of Marine and Fisheries on the Great Lakes as a marine fire fighter .

= = Military career = =

Following the outbreak of World War I , Pegahmagabow volunteered for service with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in August 1914 , despite Canadian government discrimination that initially excluded minorities . He was posted to the 23rd Canadian Regiment (Northern Pioneers) . After joining the Canadian force he was based at CFB Valcartier . While there he decorated his army tent with traditional symbols including a deer , the symbol of his clan . In February 1915 he was deployed overseas with the 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion of the 1st Canadian Division ? the first contingent of Canadian troops sent to fight in Europe . His companions there nicknamed him " Peggy " .

Shortly after his arrival on the continent , Pegahmagabow fought in the Second Battle of Ypres , where the Germans used chlorine gas for the first time on the Western Front , and it was during this battle that he began to establish a reputation as a sniper and scout . Following the battle he was promoted to lance corporal . His battalion took part in the Battle of the Somme in 1916 , during which he was wounded in the left leg . He recovered in time to return to the 1st Battalion as they moved to Belgium . He received the Military Medal for carrying messages along the lines during these two battles . Initially , his commanding officer , Lieutenant Colonel Frank Albert Creighton , had nominated him for the Distinguished Conduct Medal , citing his disregard for danger and " faithfulness to duty " , but it was downgraded .

On November 6 / 7 , 1917 , Pegahmagabow earned a Bar to his Military Medal for his actions in the Second Battle of Passchendaele . During the fighting there Pegahmagabow 's battalion was given the task of launching an attack at Passchendaele . By this time , he had been promoted to the rank of corporal and during the battle he was recorded playing an important role as a link between the units on the 1st Battalion 's flank . When the battalion 's reinforcements became lost , Pegahmagabow was instrumental in guiding them and ensuring that they reached their allocated spot in the line .

On August 30 , 1918 , during the Battle of the Scarpe , Pegahmagabow was involved in fighting off a German attack at Orix Trench near Upton Wood . His company was almost out of ammunition and in danger of being surrounded . Pegahmagabow braved heavy machine gun and rifle fire by going into no @-@ man 's land and brought back enough ammunition to enable his post to carry on and

assist in repulsing heavy enemy counter @-@ attacks . For these efforts he received a second Bar to his Military Medal , becoming one of only 38 Canadians to receive this honour .

The war ended in November 1918 and in 1919 Pegahmagabow was invalided back to Canada . He had served for almost the whole war , and had built a reputation as a skilled marksman . Using the much @-@ maligned Ross rifle , he was credited with killing 378 Germans and capturing 300 more . By the time of his discharge he had attained the rank of sergeant @-@ major and had been awarded the 1914 ? 15 Star , the British War Medal , and the Victory Medal .

= = Political life = =

Upon his return to Canada he continued to serve in the Algonquin Regiment militia as a non @-@ permanent active member . Following in his father 's and grandfather 's footsteps , he was elected chief of the Parry Island Band from February 1921 . Once in office he caused a schism in the band after he wrote a letter calling for certain individuals and those of mixed race to be expelled from the reserve . He was re @-@ elected in 1924 and served until he was deposed via an internal power struggle in April 1925 . Before the motion could go through , Pegahmagabow resigned . A decade later , he was appointed councillor from 1933 to 1936 . In 1933 the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) changed its policies and forbade First Nation chiefs from corresponding with the DIA . They directed that all correspondence , as of the spring of 1933 , go through the Indian Agent . This gave huge power to the Agent , something that grated on Pegahmagabow , who did not get along with his Indian Agent , John Daly . First Nation members who served in the army during World War I were particularly active as political activists . They had travelled the world , earned the respect of the comrades in the trenches , and refused to be sidelined by the newly empowered Indian Agent . Historian Paul Williams termed these advocates " returned soldier chiefs " , and singled out a few , including Pegahmagabow , as being especially active . This caused intense disagreements with Daly and eventually led to Pegahmagabow being deposed as chief . Daly and other agents who came in contact with Pegahmagabow were incredibly frustrated by his attempts , in his words , to free his people from " white slavery " . The Indian agents labelled him a " mental case " and strove to sideline him and his supporters .

In addition to the power struggle between the Indian council and the DIA with which Pegahmagabow took issue , he was a constant agitator over the islands in Georgian Bay of the Huron . The Regional First Nation governments claimed the islands as their own and Pegahmagabow and other chiefs tried in vain to get recognition of their status .

During World War II Pegahmagabow worked as a guard at a munitions plant near Nobel , Ontario , and was a Sergeant @-@ major in the local militia . In 1943 , he became the Supreme Chief of the Native Independent Government , an early First Nations organization .

= = Family and legacy = =

A married father of six children , Pegahmagabow died on the Parry Island reserve in 1952 at the age of 61 . He is a member of the Indian Hall of Fame at the Woodland Centre in Brantford , Ontario , and his memory is also commemorated on a plaque honouring him and his regiment on the Rotary and Algonquin Regiment Fitness Trail in Parry Sound . Honoured by the Canadian Forces by naming the 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group HQ Building at CFB Borden after him .

Canadian journalist Adrian Hayes wrote a biography of Pegahmagabow titled Pegahmagabow : Legendary Warrior , Forgotten Hero , published in 2003 , and another titled Pegahmagabow : Life @-@ Long Warrior , published in 2009 . Canadian novelist Joseph Boyden 's 2005 novel Three Day Road was inspired in part by Pegahmagabow . The novel 's protagonist is a fictional character who , like Pegahmagabow , serves as a military sniper during World War I , although Pegahmagabow also appears as a minor character .

A life @-@ sized bronze statue of Pegahmagabow was erected in his honour on National Aboriginal Day , June 21 , 2016 , in Parry Sound , near Georgian Bay . The figure has an eagle on one arm , a Ross rifle slung from its shoulder , and a caribou at its feet , representing the Caribou

Clan that Pegahmagabow belonged to . The Eagle was his spirit animal . The artist Tyler Fauvelle spent eight months sculpting the statue , which spent a further year in casting . Fauvelle chose to erect it in Parry Sound rather than Wasauksing to reach a larger public and educate them on the contributions of First Nations people to Canada .

= = = Awards = = =

He was first awarded the Military Medal while fighting at the second battle of Ypres , Festubert and Givenchy , for courage above fire in getting important messages through to the rear .

Earned his first bar to the Military Medal at the bloody Battle of Passchendaele .

His second bar to the Military Medal came at the battle of The Scarpe , in 1918 . Only 37 other Canadian men received the honour of two bars .

The 1914 ? 15 Star

The British War Medal

The Victory Medal

In 2003 the Pegahmagabow family donated his medals and chief head dress to the Canadian War Museum where they can be seen as of 2010 as part of the World War I display . While researching his 2005 novel Three Day Road , Boyden was asked about why he thought that Pegahmagabow had not received a higher award like the Distinguished Conduct Medal or the Victoria Cross . Boyden speculated it was due to Pegahmagabow being a First Nations soldier , and that there may have been jealousy on the part of some officers who he felt might have been suspicious of the number of Germans Pegahmagabow claimed to have shot because he did not use an observer while sniping .