Lesson 6: D-Day to Surrender

A Second Front

• In 1944, the allies were ready to open a second front.
• After Dieppe, lessons had been learned and plans rehearsed.
• Extreme measures were taken to maintain the secret.
• Gr. knew it would eventually happen, but didn’t know where.
• Gr. fortified the entire coast, but expected the attack at Calais.
• Thousands of Allied soldiers waited for the signal.
Lesson 6: D-Day to Surrender

• Weather, tides and poor moonlight all delayed the attack.
• On June 6, 1944 they attacked.
Lesson 6: D-Day to Surrender

Landing Sites

- Five landing beaches were designated on the Normandy coast.
  - Utah   US
  - Omaha  US
  - Gold   Britain
  - Juno   Canada
  - Sword  Britain
Lesson 6: D-Day to Surrender

The Attack (Juno Beach)

- The night before, paratroopers landed in Normandy, and artillery pounded the beaches.
- ~16,000 Canadians landed at Juno Beach on D-Day
- Canadians lost 359 soldiers, and had 715 wounded.
- With surprise on their side, they were successful in establishing a foothold, and began to push inland.
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The Cauldron
Lesson 6: D-Day to Surrender

Caen

- After Juno, the next major task for the Canadians was to continue to engage the enemy; then take the city of Caen.
- July 9: they took Caen, but almost a month later than planned.
- In taking Caen, they suffered higher losses than on D-Day.
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Capturing Caen and Normandy

• Further advances beyond Caen brought more casualties.
• In one four day period, Canadians suffered 2,000 casualties.
• On July 25, Canada suffered 1500 casualties, 450 of them were deaths. After Dieppe, it was Canada’s bloodiest day in the war.
• Canadian & Polish troops, formed 1 part of a pincer movement
• They met with US troops to encircle Nazi troops in Normandy.
• Canadians then moved north to clear the French port towns like Dieppe, Boulogne & Calais.
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The BATTLE of the SCHELDT

- The British liberated Antwerp, Europe’s 2nd largest port with its 45km of deepwater docks intact, but the Nazis controlled the estuaries.
- The 1st Canadian Army, (also commanding some British & Polish units), was given the task of clearing the Nazi’s from the Scheldt estuary.
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Capturing the Scheldt

- German defences were strong & the terrain difficult.
  - Bombing flooded the low lands, forcing Canadians to move in the open, on the top of the levees.
  - One island was considered to be the strongest concentration of defenses the Nazis had ever built.

- After 5 weeks of heavy fighting, including amphibious assaults, the channel was cleared.

- Nov. 28, the first convoy to enter the port was led by a Canadian freighter Fort Cataraqui.

- The 1st Canadian Army took 41,043 prisoners, and suffered 12,873 casualties, (~ half Canadians, half British & Polish).
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Hongerwinter (The Hunger Winter) 1944-1945

• Some of the Netherlands were liberated, most of the Netherlands faced another winter under Nazi occupation.
• Dutch rail workers had assisted the allies and the Nazi’s retaliated by stopping delivery of all food supplies.
• A hard winter & war damage to infrastructure & land resulted in a famine; 18,000 Dutch citizens starved to death.
• Conditions were so bad that the Nazis allowed the RAF to make air drop food in the spring, (Operation Manna).
Lesson 6: D-Day to Surrender

Spring Operations

- Over the winter, Canadians were to hold the line along the Maas River; a period of reduced fighting, spent planning and preparing for the spring offensive.
- From Feb. 8, to March 10th, the Allies made a major push across the Rhine River, into Germany.
- In March 1945, the 1st Canadian Corps arrived from Italy to replace 1st British Corps and for the first time in history, 2 Canadian army corps were fighting side by side.
- In this final phase of the war, the Canadians were to clear the Netherlands.
Spring Liberation

- The 1st Canadian Corps liberated the western Netherlands north of the Maas River, & the 2nd Canadian Corps cleared the northeastern Netherlands & the German coast.
- In every town they entered, the Canadian soldiers were greeted as heroes with heartfelt enthusiasm.
Lesson 6: D-Day to Surrender

Surrender/Liberation

• The west, where conditions were the worst, had to wait until the surrender of German forces.

• May 5: Gen. Simonds of the 2nd Canadian Corps accepted the surrender of the German troops in the Netherlands on his front.

• May 7: Germany surrendered, and May 8 became V-E Day.

• Canadians cleared surrendered Nazi forces in western Holland, including Rotterdam, The Hague, & Amsterdam.

• Canadians were welcomed enthusiastically and the Dutch called the following season “Canadian summer”.

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THE KELOWNA-VEENDAM SISTER CITY CONNECTION
Map of Holland

The blue star represents the approximate location of Veendam, Holland.
To ensure the baby’s Dutch citizenship, the Canadian government declared a room at the Ottawa Civic Hospital to be international territory, allowing Princess Margriet to maintain her mother’s Dutch citizenship. The new Princess was a symbol of hope and a source of inspiration for the Dutch people. The only royal baby ever born in North America, her birth created a living bond between the people of Canada and the Netherlands.
NATIONAL REMEMBRANCE
Every year since 1945, the Dutch royal family has sent 100,000 tulip bulbs to Canada as a symbol of friendship and remembrance. More than 7,000 Canadian soldiers died in the liberation of Holland. At the end of the war, more than 1,800 Dutch war-brides entered Canada and over 400 children. More than 1 million tulips bloom in Ottawa every year.

REMEMBERING CANADIANS - Holland

COMMUNITY REMEMBRANCE
At the end of May 1945, the BC Dragoons were stationed in Veendam. They helped move and guard German prisoners of war, as well as restore services to the town. Brigadier Angle was present in Veendam during this time. The terrible treatment of Dutch civilians, coupled with the BC Dragoons’ service in Veendam created a relationship between Kelowna and the Dutch town. The area around the Kelowna Cenotaph is known as “Veendam Gardens” and was restored with the help of the Veendam Sister Association. The city of Veendam often sponsors Canadian veterans to attend VE-Day celebrations.
BC Dragoons in Victory Parade, Veendam, Holland
"Cenotaph and Park, Kelowna, B.C."
Dedicated on Sunday August 7, 1921

The Cenotaph at the Kelowna City Park. In the background is the entrance to the park, Bernard Avenue and Mill Street (1950)

Image: S:\Archives\KMA Photos\KMA#8141.jpg.

THE KELOWNA-VEENDAM SISTER CITY CONNECTION

Image: S:\Archives\KMA Photos\KMA#9964.jpg.
Welcome Home Parade in Kelowna - 1946
THE KELOWNA-VEENDAM SISTER CITY CONNECTION

- The BCD’s lived and stayed with many Veendam families and established strong relationships. In 1971 delegates from the BCD revisited the City of Veendam for the first time since 1945.
- Following the efforts of a group of BCD Veterans to get a more formal association between the two cities, in 1979 the Kelowna – Veendam Sister City Association was created.
THE KELOWNA-VEENDAM SISTER CITY CONNECTION

- With the 40th anniversary of the Liberation of Holland in May 1985, four hundred and ten people from Canada, *(including Okanagan Veterans, Rep.’s from Kelowna City Council, Branch 26 Royal Canadian Legion / Pipe Band)*, participated in a memorable celebration of the liberation in Veendam and other parts of the Netherlands.

- Along with excitement, formalities, and renewing friendships there was great solemnity on this occasion – only the Veterans and the Dutch themselves fully understood the depth of meaning to the anniversary celebrations.
THE KELOWNA-VEENDAM SISTER CITY CONNECTION

• In 1986 nearly one hundred Veendam and area citizens visited Kelowna to reciprocate the Canadian visit.

• In July of 1986 two plaques at the entrance to Veendam Way (Kelowna City Park Cenotaph) were unveiled.

Dedication of the Veendam Gardens, march from the Cenotaph/July 1986. The march is led by Nigel Taylor.
The Student Exchange Program remains a core objective of the Kelowna Veendam Sister City Association, in part to foster a growing understanding between the two cities through education.

Interested students should contact SD23 Trustee Wayne Horning at whornin2@sd23.bc.ca or ask your Social Studies teacher for assistance.

Students wanting to know more about this topic can visit the Kelowna City Museum or the Kelowna Military Museum.