



**SUPPLY
LINE**

Margaret Pictou LaBillois

Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division

Originally hoping to become a nurse, Margaret joined the Air Force and served as a photo reconnaissance technician during the war.

Aircraft Woman First Class
Margaret (Pictou) LaBillois, 1944.
Copy of original watercolour, part of an RCAF competition, by Flight Sergeant D.Y. MacMillan, Private Collection.



Before the War

Born in 1923, Margaret was a member of the Eel River Bar First Nation, a small Mi'kmaq community on Chaleur Bay in northern New Brunswick.

One of five children, she attended a Residential School. After graduating from high school in 1939, she began training as a nurse.

Service in the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division

Although nursing was her ambition, Margaret worried that the school fees were too much for her family. One day, she met an air force recruiter on the train who told her that, if she enlisted, she could send part of her pay home to her mother. Margaret joined the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division (RCAF WD).

After basic training, Margaret was sent to Ottawa, Ontario to become a photo-reconnaissance technician. Here, she worked on photographs to map the Alaska Highway.

This was a massive wartime construction project that connected Alaska to the rest of the United States through Canada.

Margaret served in the air force for more than two years. Many men from her community had also enlisted, including two of her brothers and her future husband. In 1944, she and her family were devastated when her adopted brother Matthew died while serving with the Canadian Army in England.

Recognition and Remembrance

Following her service with the RCAF, Margaret returned home to the Eel River Bar First Nation. She married Michael LaBillois, and together they raised 14 children.

Margaret became an important Mi'kmaq leader and educator. She helped her community reclaim its language, culture and land.

In 1970, she became the first woman to be elected a First Nation chief in New Brunswick, and served two terms.

Margaret Pictou LaBillois was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 1996, in recognition of her life of service. She died in 2013, at the age of 89.