

JUNIOR RED CROSS VOLUNTEER KNITTING IN WINNIPEG SCHOOL
DIVISION NO. 1 DURING AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER WORLD WAR II
(1939-1946)

BY

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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For my family (Dad, Mom, Greg, Linda, Theresa, John, James,
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enabled me to complete this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine and document the knitting activities of Junior Red Cross volunteers in the city of Winnipeg, Manitoba during, and immediately after World War II (1939-1946) in order to determine the significance of this work.

The specific objectives of this study were: (a) to ascertain how Junior Red Cross knitting was organized in Winnipeg School Division No. 1, (b) to establish the role of home economics teachers in the organization of Junior Red Cross knitting in Winnipeg School Division No. 1, (c) to verify what the members of the Junior Red Cross in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 were knitting and for whom, (d) to determine the significance of Junior Red Cross knitting in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 during, and immediately after World War II.

Information from documents relevant to this study was recorded on data collection sheets, developed by the researcher, based on initial research questions and information from the literature review. The majority of material to be recorded on the data collection sheets was found in archives. Several former members of the Winnipeg Junior Red Cross were interviewed to supplement this data.

The significance of the Junior Red Cross knitting activities was analyzed by making numerical comparisons and by comparing activities between schools. The importance of

the knitting was assessed by confirming whether Junior Red Cross work became part of the school curriculum, and by determining who considered the knitting to be meaningful.

Student members of the Junior Red Cross thought the work they were doing was worthwhile and rewarding. Throughout World War II the Canadian Red Cross and Junior Red Cross provided food, clothing and other supplies to various groups and individuals in many parts of the world. This research shows that children played an important part in one particular world event.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

"God Bless the Canadians, Says Victim of Nazi Bombs" ("God bless," 1940). This was the headline of a newspaper article from 1940 praising the Canadian Red Cross for parcels they had sent overseas. Canadian Red Cross Society volunteers were involved in giving international aid to many groups of people during World War II. Volunteers raised money for the war effort and packed food parcels for prisoners of war (POW's). They also made a variety of clothing articles for POW's, military casualties, military personnel engaged in combat, refugees, and civilians whose lives were affected by the hostile activities of the war (Whitton, 1942; Porter, 1960; Gordon, 1969; Broadfoot, 1974). During 1941-42, the total number of items made by Red Cross volunteers and other organizations doing work for the Red Cross surpassed 6,800,000 (Whitton, 1942). Some of the volunteers were children, many of whom became part of the Junior Red Cross at school (Porter, 1960; Wilson, 1966; Gordon, 1969). The activities performed by the Junior Red Cross were similar to those being done by the adult Red Cross and included knitting clothing items to send overseas.

Canada's official involvement in World War II began on September 10, 1939. During the war, Canada's population grew from 11,267,000 in 1939 to 12,072,000 in 1945. Approximately 1,100,000 of these people served in Canada's armed forces

during World War II (Douglas & Greenhous, 1977; Bothwell, Drummond, & English, 1987). Considering that the nearly 12 million Canadian people represented all ages, one-twelfth of the population serving in the armed forces was a substantial percentage. In addition, Pierson (1986) stated that approximately 3 million Canadian women were performing volunteer work in support of the war, almost three times the number of men and women serving in Canada's armed forces. According to Whitton (1942) and Porter (1960) over 750,000 women volunteers worked for the National Women's War Work Committee of the Canadian Red Cross during World War II. Therefore, one-quarter of the Canadian female volunteers described by Pierson were working for the Red Cross.

Volunteers affiliated with other groups and organizations were also performing work for the Red Cross during the war. There were 12,500 groups across Canada which included the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.), Women's Institutes (W.I.), women's political associations, and church groups (Porter, 1960). The W.I. raised generous amounts of money and made large numbers of garments for the Red Cross and others (Pierson, 1986). In 1940, Mennonites from all over western Canada donated clothing (mainly for babies and women) to the Red Cross to be sent to London, England ("Mennonites ship," 1940). The I.O.D.E. knitted a variety of clothing items for the Red Cross ("Mrs. James Jenkins," 1941; "I.O.D.E. sends," 1941).

It is no wonder then that Canadians were praised by victims of the war.

The Junior Red Cross was well established in school systems across Canada at the time of World War II (Laine, 1944; Gordon, 1969). The group was officially recognized in Canada in 1922 by a parliamentary amendment to the Red Cross Act (Porter, 1960). Its initial emphasis was on health education, disease prevention, and proper nutrition (Porter, 1960). Gordon (1969) stated that without teachers the Canadian Junior Red Cross would not have been the success it was. Home Economics teachers were instrumental in the organization of some Canadian Junior Red Cross groups (Wilson, 1966). In Manitoba during World War II the Junior Red Cross, through the school system, was active in performing war work. Teachers such as Miss Isabel Robson, the home economics supervisor of knitting done at the Luxton school in Winnipeg during World War II, "saw to it that the articles turned in were correctly made and well pressed" ("Winnipeg school," 1941).

Throughout World War II the Canadian Red Cross provided food, clothing, and medical aid to military in active combat, military who were sick or wounded, POW's, and countries in need because of the effects of the war (Whitton, 1942; Porter, 1960; Gordon, 1969). At the same time the Canadian Junior Red Cross maintained nurseries for war orphans in Britain, sent musical instruments to POW's,

and provided mobile canteens for troops (Porter, 1960). The Junior Red Cross in Winnipeg knit thousands of clothing articles for the war effort during World War II ("Winnipeg school," 1941; Garrioch, 1945).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine and document the knitting activities of Junior Red Cross volunteers in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in the city of Winnipeg, Manitoba, during, and immediately after World War II.

Many newspaper articles were printed about volunteer work done by the Winnipeg Junior Red Cross during World War II, suggesting that the Junior Red Cross in Winnipeg made a significant contribution to the knitted articles sent overseas by the Canadian Red Cross at that time. The newspaper articles also suggest that knitting was being done by a great number of students in Winnipeg, both boys and girls ("St. James inspector", 1940; "Winnipeg school", 1941; Garrioch, 1945). The annual reports of the Manitoba Department of Education (1940-1946) document the membership of the Manitoba Junior Red Cross as fluctuating between 60,000 and 70,000 during the war years. Did the Junior Red Cross really make a significant contribution? How important was this work and to whom was it important?

Objectives

Wilson (1966) stated that during World War II the Junior Red Cross was organized in Manitoba schools mainly by

home economics teachers and that a request was made in the senior high schools for volunteers to perform war work. The absence of any mention of the elementary schools suggests that it was organized differently there. By 1946, there were approximately 98,650 children between the ages of 5 and 14 who had attended school in Manitoba for a period ranging from 1 to 12 years (Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1949). Were all students in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 involved in the Junior Red Cross or was it purely volunteer work? Which schools in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 were involved? If most schools were participating, they would have needed a large quantity of yarn and knitting needles. Where did they obtain their supplies?

The following were specific objectives of this study:

1. To ascertain how Junior Red Cross knitting was organized in Winnipeg School Division No. 1.
2. To establish the role of home economics teachers in the organization of Junior Red Cross knitting in Winnipeg School Division No. 1.
3. To verify what the members of the Junior Red Cross in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 were knitting and for whom.
4. To determine the significance of Junior Red Cross knitting in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 during, and immediately after World War II.

Justification: In case of crisis, open door

It is worthwhile to examine volunteer work within the context of World War II, especially as it relates to these children. This work was crucial at the time it was being done because the volunteers were performing a necessary service by providing clothing to people in need. It is important to examine this work now because volunteer work by school children is still valuable today. Canadian Red Cross Society activities during World War II illustrate how much work can be done by volunteers, both adults and children. According to Strong-Boag (1990) "different choices about what is historically significant are now needed if we are to have a balanced and accurate portrait of how Canadians lived" (p. 176). In this statement, Strong-Boag refers to the need to include women in recorded history. Children's history must be documented as well.

Since its inception in 1864, the Red Cross Society has played a major role in world crises. This was the original purpose of the Society. While many associate the Red Cross with blood donations, the organization only became active in blood collection during World War II, as part of the war effort. Red Cross involvement in blood donations in peacetime only commenced in 1947 (Gordon, 1969). Other peacetime work of the Red Cross began after the First World War (Gordon, 1969; Strong-Boag, 1988). We need to be reminded of the valuable contribution the Red Cross has made

in past crises and the contribution which it continues to make today.

Definitions

The following definitions, taken from Gordon (1969), were used in this study:

The Red Cross - An international organization, governed by the Geneva Conventions, which brings help and support to victims of wars or natural disasters. The Red Cross relies on volunteers to perform most of this work.

Junior Red Cross - Lower branches of the Red Cross developed after World War I, in schools, for the purpose of educating young people about improving health, preventing disease and alleviating suffering around the world.

Volunteer - A person who takes on a job voluntarily. In this case, without expecting payment.

Volunteer Work - Work performed by volunteers. Examples of this work could include, answering phones, delivering messages or packages, knitting and/or sewing clothing items, serving food and/or beverages, packing parcels, giving people information.

Parameters

The time period covered in this study was during and immediately after World War II (1939-1946). This study involved Junior Red Cross knitting done in the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 from 1939 to 1946. It did not consider work done outside the school system, work done outside

Winnipeg, or any of the other work done by the Winnipeg Junior Red Cross. Since the work of the Women's War Work Committee of the Red Cross continued after the war was over (Weaver Wright, personal communication, 1994), it was conceivable that the work of the Junior Red Cross continued on as well. According to Joyce (1959), the League of Red Cross Societies continued to provide "relief for civilian war victims" in the years following the war (p. 146). For these reasons, the study included the first postwar year, 1946.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The information contained in this chapter outlines the origins, functions, and mandates of both the Red Cross and the Junior Red Cross. It also indicates the amount and scope of volunteer work done in Canada during World War II, highlighting the Red Cross and Junior Red Cross.

Canada During World War II

When World War II began in 1939, Canada was still struggling with the Depression (Douglas & Greenhous, 1977; Bothwell, et al., 1987). Jobs in the armed forces and the war industry helped to relieve the problem of unemployment. According to Bothwell, et al. (1987), there were shortages of labour in some industries, most notably lumber and coal.

In order to maintain control of the job market, and ensure that essential industries did not lose workers, the federal government imposed various restrictions on employment. In October of 1941, wages and salaries were frozen except for cost-of-living bonuses (Bothwell, et al., 1987). After 1941, the government controlled the movement of workers among industries through the National Employment Service (Bothwell, et al., 1987). This service was the only way to find both work and workers. By 1943 persons working in essential industries had to receive government permission to leave their jobs (Chafe, 1967; Bothwell, et al., 1987).

The government also controlled prices and production

during the war. The War Measures Act enabled "the government to avoid parliamentary debate" (Bothwell, et al., 1987, p. 351) on these and other issues and simply do what was deemed best for the country. Even though unemployment brought on by the depression was alleviated because of the war, people still had to make many sacrifices.

On top of wage, price, and employment controls, rationing was introduced in the winter of 1941-42. Rationed items included: tires and tubes, sugar, gasoline, tea, coffee, butter, meat, preserved fruits, sugar substitutes, and evaporated milk (Bothwell, et al., 1987). As the war continued, rationing became more severe (Bothwell, et al., 1987). Clothing and textiles were not rationed but were simplified and standardized (Routh, 1993). Colours, patterns, and amounts of fabric used to make clothing were regulated, as were lengths of zippers and hems (Routh, 1993; Turnbull Caton, 1994). Sometimes clothing, textiles, and footwear were difficult to find (Wilson, 1966; Bothwell, et al., 1987; Turnbull Caton, 1994).

The people of Canada supported the war effort in a variety of ways. Many purchased Victory Bonds and/or War Savings Stamps and Certificates (Chafe, 1967; Bothwell, et al., 1987). Some planted 'victory gardens' and grew a variety of vegetables to supplement the rationed foods (Bothwell, et al., 1987). Numerous volunteers performed work to support the armed forces overseas.

Volunteer Work in Canada During World War II

Volunteer work in Canada during World War II was not a government directive. According to Pierson (1986), the mainly women volunteers were organized before the autumn of 1941 when the government created the Women's Voluntary Services Division of the Department of National War Services. The National Women's War Work Committee of the Canadian Red Cross was established in 1939, soon after war was declared (Porter, 1960). Volunteer work was considered by some to be an obligation which involved making sacrifices for one's country (Pierson, 1986).

There was a considerable amount of work done by volunteers in Canada during World War II. Blankets were sent overseas ("Blankets needed," 1940; "62,000 blankets," 1940; "Back-to-the-land," 1941). A variety of clothing items were knit and sewn by volunteers ("Red Cross makes," 1941; "Winnipeg school," 1941; Whitton, 1942; Garrioch, 1945; Broadfoot, 1974; Pierson, 1986). Clothing was collected to send overseas ("Volunteer bureau," 1945). Parcels of food, clothing, and medical supplies were shipped overseas ("God bless," 1940; "Manitoba Red Cross shipments," 1940; "Mennonites ship," 1940; "Wife of Finnish minister," 1940; "Lies about," 1941; "War work committee," 1945; Gordon, 1969). Money was collected to aid the war effort ("Manitoba prisoner," 1940; Chafe, 1967). Much of this work involved gathering or producing clothing.

The Women's Voluntary Services Division established Centres in forty-four Canadian cities. These Centres kept track of groups doing volunteer work, recruited volunteers, placed people where their skills would be most useful, and distributed information which was received from the war departments of the federal government (Pierson, 1986). Volunteers from the Centres also dispensed wool to various organizations which were knitting many different articles of clothing (Pierson, 1986).

Numerous women's groups in Canada were raising money for the war effort, collecting salvage, providing ambulances for the Red Cross, providing mobile canteens for military personnel, purchasing War Bonds, and providing books, games, cards, puzzles, gramophones, and records to military, internment, and POW camps (Whitton, 1942; Pierson, 1986). In addition to all this, the W.I., Women's church groups (Women of the United Church of Canada, The Catholic Women's League of Canada, Canadian Hadassah), the I.O.D.E., the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women, and the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada were all knitting or sewing articles of clothing or collecting used clothing to send to those in need (Whitton, 1942; Pierson, 1986). Much of this work was done for the Canadian Red Cross Society which was active in dispensing needed clothing to war victims (Whitton, 1942; Pierson, 1986). Some clothing items were also being produced by the Junior Red Cross.

The Red Cross

Many authors have documented the history and organization of the Red Cross, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the League of Red Cross Societies. The references cited in this chapter cover a broad time interval. While Red Cross policies have changed over time, the altruistic beliefs behind these policies have not (Geraldson, R. I., Moreillon, J., & Forsythe, D. P., 1982; Dreaver, 1989). The references utilised were chosen because they contained information about the 1939-1946 time period being examined in this study.

Origins.

The idea of the Red Cross began with Henri Dunant, a young businessman from Geneva. Dunant accidentally found himself in the middle of a battle near Solferino (involving France, Italy, and Austria), while in Italy in June of 1859 (Gumpert, 1942; Joyce, 1959; Porter, 1960; Gordon, 1969; Friedlander, 1976-77). Gumpert (1942) stated that the condition and treatment of the wounded after the battle so appalled Dunant that he felt compelled to give assistance where he could. In 1862, Dunant wrote and published a book about the experience, entitled Souvenir de Solferino (Porter, 1960; Blondel, 1987). According to Gumpert (1942) the book drew so much public attention in Europe that in 1863 a commission consisting of five prominent Swiss citizens was appointed in Geneva to study the matter. The

members of the commission had varying backgrounds, yet all realized the importance of Dunant's ideas (Gumpert, 1942; Huber, 1946; Joyce, 1959; Porter, 1960). The commission organized a conference in Geneva in 1863 at which Dunant's proposals were introduced (Gumpert, 1942; Porter, 1960).

In August 1864, the first Geneva Convention was held. It was attended by sixteen states (Gumpert, 1942). At the convention the Red Cross Society was officially established. 'The Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field' was drafted at the same time (Gumpert, 1942; Joyce, 1959; Porter, 1960; Gordon, 1969). This treaty outlined the rules which governed the treatment of wounded during a war, and stipulated that voluntary organizations could help the Army Medical Corps in this work. The Convention also identified a red cross on a white background as a symbol of neutrality and protection to be used by the Army Medical Corps and any voluntary organization giving them aid (Joyce, 1959; Porter, 1960; Gordon, 1969). As a British colony, Canada became bound by this Convention when Britain signed it in February of 1865 (Porter, 1960; Gordon, 1969). The Convention has been revised and expanded several times since then, but the humanitarian principles have remained the same (Porter, 1960). Later Conventions enabled some countries to substitute the red cross symbol with either a red crescent or a red lion and sun on a white background (Joyce, 1959).

Geneva Conventions.

The Geneva Conventions direct the actions of the Red Cross. The four Geneva Conventions which exist today were drafted in 1949 (Gordon, 1969), and became part of international law in October 1950 (Joyce, 1959; International Committee of the Red Cross, 1971), after World War II. The Conventions in place during World War II were drafted in 1864, and revised in 1906 and 1929 (Porter, 1960; Gordon, 1969). The original Convention dealt with 'the wounded and sick in armies in the field' (Porter, 1960; Joyce, 1959; Gordon, 1969). It was then extended to cover sailors in 1906 and POW's in 1929 (International Peace Conference, 1915; International Committee of the Red Cross, 1929; Frick-Cramer, 1945; Porter, 1969; Joyce, 1959).

The Convention covering POW's made several references to clothing. It was first mentioned indirectly in Part II, Article 6, which stated that POW's were allowed to keep all their personal effects, including their metal helmets and gas masks. The Convention then stipulated that clothing, underwear, and footwear were to be provided for POW's by the Detaining Power (the country which captured and incarcerated the prisoners) (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1929). Clothing was to be repaired and replaced regularly. Special clothing, if needed for assigned work, was also to be supplied by the Detaining Power (Part III, Section II, Chapter 2, Article 12).

The Convention also specified that prisoners were allowed to receive postal parcels containing food, other consumables, or clothing (Part III, Section IV, Article 37). These were referred to as next-of-kin parcels as they were usually sent by the prisoners' families (Porter, 1960; Gordon, 1969). Another indirect mention of clothing is found in Part VI, Article 78, which stated:

Societies for the relief of prisoners of war, regularly constituted in accordance with the laws of their country, and having for their object to serve as intermediaries for charitable purposes, shall receive from the belligerents, for themselves and their duly accredited agents, all facilities for the efficacious performance of their humane task within the limits imposed by military exigencies. Representatives of these societies shall be permitted to distribute relief in the camps and at the halting places of repatriated prisoners under a personal permit issued by the military authority, and on giving an undertaking in writing to comply with all routine and police orders which the said authority shall prescribe (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1929, p. 25).

It is this last article which enabled the Red Cross to supply POW's with food and clothing parcels.

Functions and goals of the organization.

From its straightforward beginnings, the organization grew to become very complex. The supreme body of the Red Cross is the International Red Cross Conference. As shown in Figure 1, this group is composed of representatives from the ICRC, from the League of Red Cross Societies, from all of the National Red Cross Societies, and from all states that have signed the Geneva Conventions.

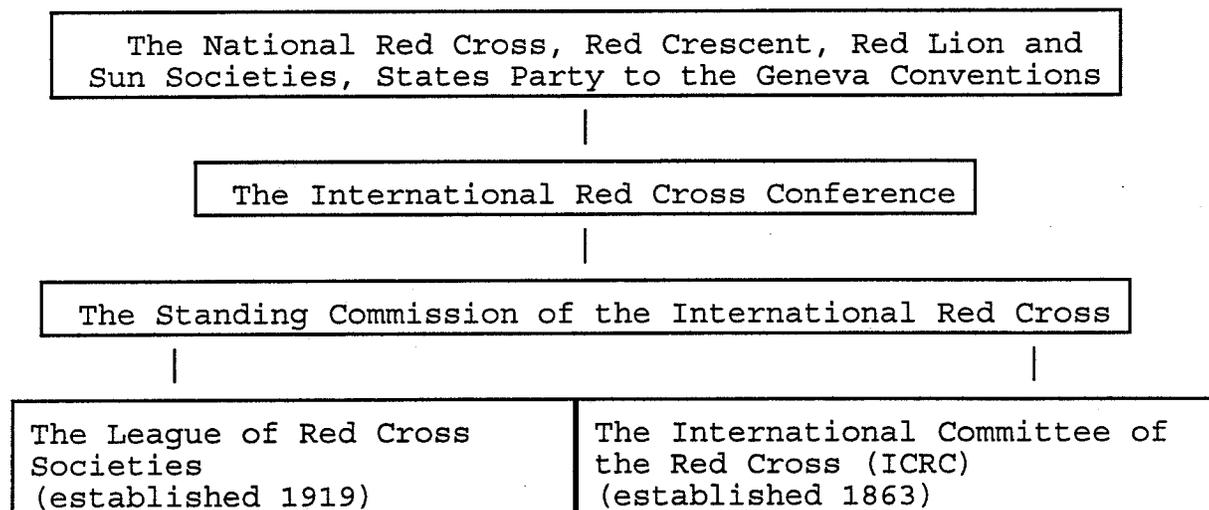


Figure 1. The chart above, taken from Joyce (1959, p. 111), illustrates the hierarchy of the Red Cross.