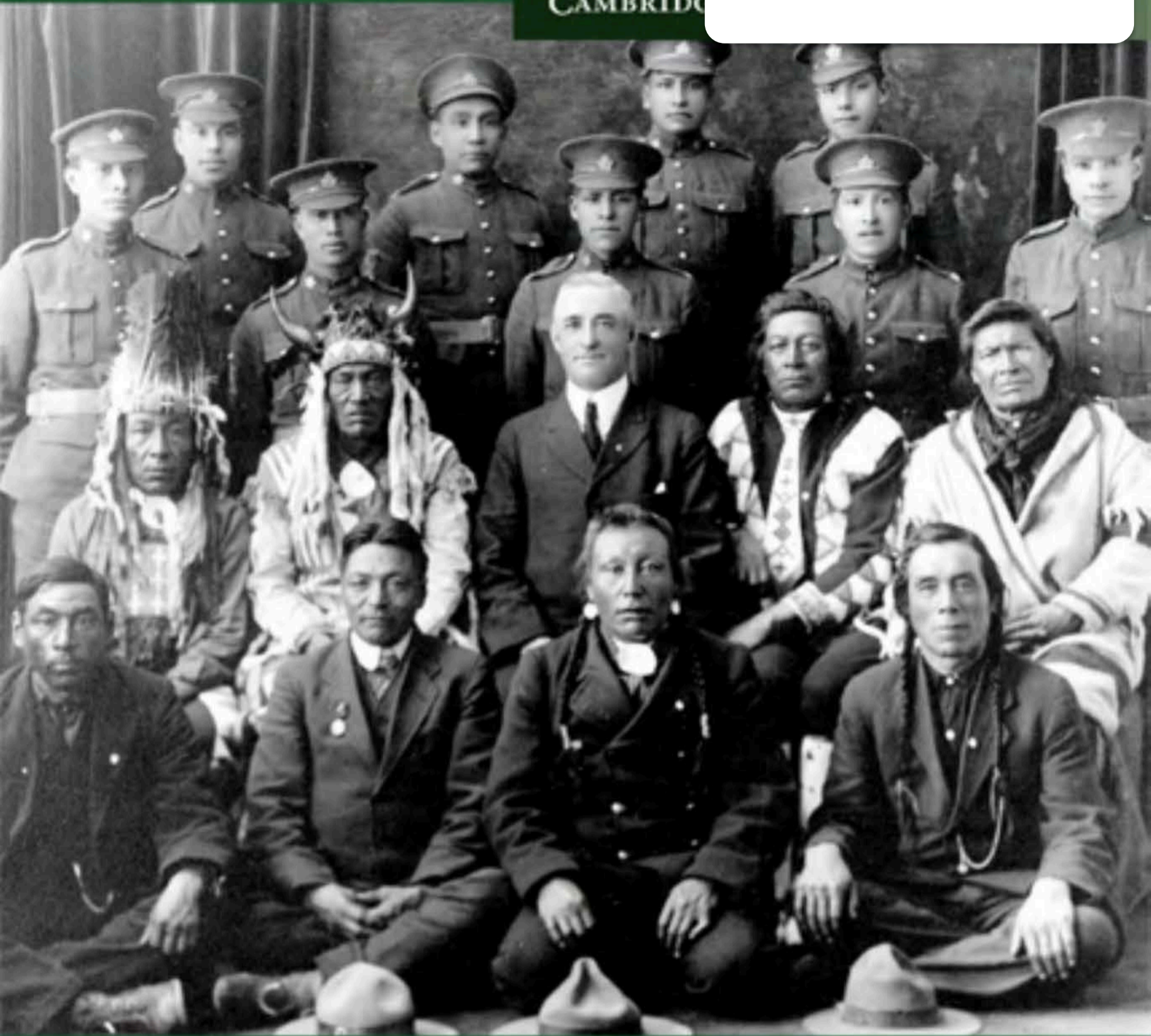


(Wineguard, T., 2012: 80)

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# Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War

Timothy Winegard

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outbreak of war, Maori chiefs and tribes had been lobbying the government and the five Maori MPs to create a distinct Maori unit for overseas service. Many Maori chiefs wrote directly to the King offering troops in the name of Queen Victoria, under whom the Treaty of Waitangi was signed.<sup>44</sup>

Unlike the indigenes of all other Dominions, Maori were equal to *Pakeha* under New Zealand law and in 1914 were represented in government by five Maori Members of Parliament. New Zealand was also witnessing a revival of the King Movement under King Te Rata and Princess Te Puea, in addition to more localized spiritual organizations on the north island, led by prophetic leaders such as Rua Kenana in Urewera. Between April and August 1914 (at the same time as members of the SANNC were in London remonstrating against the 1913 Natives Land Act), a delegation of the King Movement was in England protesting that the 1909 Native Land Act was an infringement of Maori rights as outlined in the Treaty of Waitangi. Maori leaders held an audience with King George V on 4 June 1914 and with representatives of the Colonial Office in early August, before leaving for New Zealand on 10 August, six days after the British declaration of war.<sup>45</sup>

The New Zealand government never intended to deny Maori the ability to serve: 'It is our earnest hope that, though the Maori Race is among the smallest of those within the British Empire, its name may not be omitted from the roll of the peoples who are rallying to maintain the "mana" of King George the Fifth.' The question, however, was in what capacity Maori could serve within the overall British imperial forces, as the War Office had barred them from the New Zealand force raised during the Boer War.<sup>46</sup> Although the Department of Defence stated on 11 August that, 'it is unlikely that a Native Contingent will be sent to the front', on 1 September, Prime Minister William Massey addressed the issue and alluded to indigenes active on the Western Front: 'There is an embargo that a Native force should not take part in wars between the White races. But as Native troops from India have arrived in Europe ... a way has been paved for the offer of the Maori people ... our equals in the sight of the law. Why then should they be deprived of the privilege of fighting and upholding the Empire when assailed by the enemy?' On

<sup>44</sup> Archives New Zealand (ANZ), AD1, box 734, record 9/32: Maoris: Offering Services in Expeditionary Force; AD1, box 734, record 9/32/1: Maori Contingents NZEF

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