



# Kin Canada

Kinsmen • Kinettes • Kin

## The Milk for Britain Story: A Testament to Kin and Canada

75 years ago, during the middle of World War II, the service organization known today as Kin Canada set out an idea, a purpose and a way for Canadians to go beyond their borders and make a difference. Over time, the support Kin provided changed and increased as they banded together to help our neighbour in need, Britain. They had only started as an organization in 1920, but they were about to take on their biggest project yet.

Through strict rationing and very little government encouragement, Kinsmen and Kinettes across the country worked together with Canadians to collect donations and support the war effort. Their success only grew, alongside their ideas, as the war went on.

### Milk Campaign Beginnings

It started off rather simply – the selling of stamps, branded with the slogan of “Let’s lick ‘im”, and a caricature of the infamous Adolf Hitler. Started up by the Halifax Kinsmen club in early 1940, the stamps quickly spread across the country. That particular fundraising effort ended up being so successful that it drew an angry letter from a Nazi sympathizer.

Starting off as a Kinsmen club effort, magazines were also collected throughout the war to help provide some relief for the merchant marines and their constant journeys back and forth across the Atlantic. The program was quickly taken over by the Kinsmen’s wives, later becoming officially recognized under the name of Kinettes, who ended up collecting 22 million magazines before they stopped counting in 1942. There were so many magazines that they were measured in tonnes, and the collection continued throughout the war.

Then, a more specific cry for help reached Canadian shores: British children were starving, and the situation was only going to get worse as the Germans’ bombs and U-boats continued to destroy cities and shipments of supplies.

Upon hearing the cry for help, Kin Canada’s founder, Hal Allin Rogers, immediately contacted the Canadian government to find out what he could do to help. He had aged out of his own organization due to the upper age limit of 40, but he was still invited back to head the War Services Committee, and to take charge of their most important project. The government didn’t have much to offer in terms of suggestions of how to help the British, so he came up with his own plan: 1.5 million quarts of milk to be sent over to Britain, in only 12 months. In true Canadian fashion, Kin’s founder decided that if he was going to help, he was going to go above and beyond. The result was a large-scale campaign that surpassed its goals because of the profound dedication and perseverance of Kin members and the many other Canadians who helped.



Every club was expected to contribute \$5 to the War Services Committee to help start up the project. CIBC Branch Manager, Jack Houston, was immediately recruited by Hal Rogers to serve as the treasurer. While reluctant at first, Hal’s reassurances made Jack agree to the position. Little did he know that over the course of the next seven years, Jack would end up managing over \$3 million in funds for the War Services Committee and their Milk for Britain campaign. In today’s dollars, that amount is over \$42 million.



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## Kinette Contributions

Canadian women were also instrumental in ensuring the success of the Milk for Britain campaign. In fact, the Brandon Kinettes ended up taking over the entire collection and distribution of the milk bottles that helped form the basis of the fundraising. Kinettes across the country were crucial in ensuring the success of the Halloween Shellout, as well. Similar to the modern-day UNICEF collection boxes that children would take door-to-door while collecting candy, the Halloween Shellout had kids abandoning candy entirely in favour of collecting whatever they could to contribute to Milk for Britain.

In focusing on helping their fellow children in Britain, 110,000 Canadian kids ended up raising over \$75,000 – equivalent to 768,671 quarts of milk. Without the women's support, it's impossible to tell if the Halloween Shellout would have had nearly as much of an impact as it did. Their own individual efforts, as well as the help that they provided to their respective Kinsmen clubs, was invaluable.

## Inside and Outside Help

The Halloween Shellout was only a part of the unique fundraising efforts that Kinsmen came up with. The Halifax club, along with their "Help Lick Hitler" stamps, also built an entire house to be raffled off and raised \$30,000. In Chilliwack, a calf was auctioned off, only to be donated back to the Kinsmen club a total of 7 times. Saskatoon held the Ice Sweepstakes, offering people a chance to bet on when the ice would break up on the South Saskatchewan River – an event that raised over \$2,000. Banks and businesses kept milk bottles on their counters for donations in the extremely successful milk bottle campaign, and Tag Days became regular occurrences, where a quick donation resulted in the donor receiving a tag advertising their contribution.



Individual Canadians outside of Kin went out of their way to support the campaign. One particular man went above and beyond with his efforts: Tom Sample. A washroom attendant at a Montreal nightclub, Tom was 71 years old in 1943, when he happened to meet Hal Rogers by chance. He had been collecting and saving his tips for over a year, not minding that he was cutting into his sole source of income. He was struggling with medical bills for a rare form of abdominal cancer, yet getting milk to children in Britain was far more important to him than anything else. He was proud of the almost \$600 he gave

to Hal and the Kinsmen that night, as well as the \$300 he had spent on Victory Bonds in support of the war effort.

Hal would often speak very fondly of Tom after their fateful encounter, and it comes as no surprise that even today, Kin has helped raise and donate millions of dollars towards medical research. With Cystic Fibrosis Canada, Kin has helped raise over \$40 million for their research and patient care efforts. Kin continues to offer support to Canadian Blood Services, provincial organ and tissue donation organizations, and other research and health care initiatives.



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7.16/42

"KINSMEN MODEL HOME," Located at Corner Kipling Road and Devon Place, Westdale

## WIN THIS HOUSE

for **\$1.00**

(KINSMEN "MILK FOR BRITAIN" FUND)  
Buy a Ticket from **YOUR Milk Salesman**

Or, mail this coupon to A. R. ELTON, Treasurer, at  
1 Main Street East. Phone 2-4720.

For Milk for Britain, dairy farmers were truly powerhouse supporters, too. Along with milkmen collecting money during their daily runs, dairy workers went above and beyond expectations. The Hamilton Milk Distributors Association decided to help out with the campaign, and launched a truly impressive project, complete with extensive advertising. They helped raise more than \$4,000 in just a few weeks, with only \$225 of that going to administrative costs for their efforts. Without all of the dairy farmers' and milk associations' help and support, all of the quarts of Canadian milk would have never made it to kids in Britain.

How many quarts made it to British soil? Over the course of the campaign, an estimated 50 million quarts of powdered milk were sent overseas, with all of the donations and engagement from the Canadian public. Despite the many challenges and restrictions, the

Kinsmen persevered. The government stepped in to stop their purchase of whole milk, due to the need of allied POWs. Undeterred, they quickly switched to sending skim milk, which then turned into sending powdered chocolate milk, to improve the taste and encourage the kids to keep drinking.

Two separate rationing officials tried to stop Kin's purchases: one saying that no more milk could be purchased due to a shortage of sugar, the other saying that no more sugar could be purchased due to a shortage of milk. Hal refused to back down, and brought both of them together to directly address the claims. Not surprisingly, the rationing officials were the ones who backed down.

## The End of the Campaign

To keep support going at the end of the war, "Milk-for-Britain Week" was organized for June 9-16, 1945. By fall of 1945, Kinsmen had purchased all of the milk that was allowed by the Canadian government for the remainder of the year, and for 1946 as well. The campaign ran from September 14, 1940 to May 31, 1948, to help with the reconstruction after the war period was over. In total, Kinsmen and Canadians sent over 50 million quarts of powdered milk to Britain, with only two shipments ever being completely lost. Even then, they were fully insured. Another shipment was sunk in a harbour, to be retrieved by divers and sent back on its way once labels were reattached.





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The campaign helped bring Kin to national prominence, and inspired a huge period of expansion in Kinsmen clubs across Canada once the war was over. Kin even received multiple letters of recognition for their efforts from Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, both



during and after the campaign. Hal himself was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire.

In Britain, the milk containers were repurposed and ended up starting the now famous Meals on Wheels program, which delivers hot meals to people in need across the globe. The milk containers did a wonderful job at keeping food warm until it could be delivered, just as it kept the milk powder sealed and protected before it was consumed by the British children and some of the adults that needed it so desperately. Canadian railroad companies offered their services for free to get the milk to where it needed to be. The Merchant Marines

and Canadian military worked hard to ensure that the shipments safely reached their destination every time, even with the heavy German presence in the Atlantic Ocean. Other service clubs, such as the Lions Club, 20-30 Club, Rotary, and so many others became involved in the efforts of the Kinsmen, and even helped form the National Council of Service Clubs in 1944 to focus on pooling their resources to the campaign. All across Canada, organizations joined together - alongside countless dedicated Canadians - to make the Milk for Britain campaign the true, resounding success that it was.

7 years. 3 million dollars. 50 million quarts of milk. Such impressive numbers are often lost to history, but these will not. To commemorate, celebrate and preserve the tremendous efforts in this piece of Canadian history, a documentary is being created to meet curriculum criteria across the nation. Canadian humbleness helped the story disappear from view, but Canadian pride can help bring it back to prominence as the truly incredible story it is. Available in August 2016, the full story will be revealed.

Kin Canada started it; Canadians helped finish it. Along the way, they helped save the lives of the thousands of British children that needed them.

If that isn't Canadian spirit, it's hard to say what is.