



Irvin Cholette is born in North Temiskaming, Quebec on August 6, 1924. His father is Olivier Cholette, a blacksmith; his mother is Mary Louise Cholette, née McBride.

It is a large family; at the time of Irvin's birth, he already has four brothers and five sisters. One more sister will be born to the family.

The family was English-speaking and Roman Catholic.

Irvin leaves school at age 11, having completed Grade 3. He helps out at home and takes on any other job that offers him some income. He is a bush worker and, early on, takes a job in a copper mine. When he enlists for active duty in the army, he mentions that he has already worked for several years at the Aldermac copper mine.

*In the 1930s, copper mining in Quebec was concentrated in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region. The Aldermac mine near Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec, was a major polymetallic (copper) mine. The Aldermac mine was exploited from 1932 to 1943, then it was abandoned. The site was the Ministry's responsibility as the companies operating it were dissolved or could not be traced. The Abitibi-Témiscamingue region has many abandoned mining sites.*

On April 29, 1943, Irvin enlists for active service in the Canadian Army in Noranda, Quebec. The medical examiner recorded the standard characteristics: 5'6" tall, weighed 140 lbs, brown eyes, brown hair, and a distinctive scar on the forefinger of his left hand.

Irvin starts his military time at the district depot in Toronto. After four weeks, he is transferred to the infantry training center in Brantford, Ontario.

During his training, it is noted that he has difficulty picking up new tasks quickly. His limited schooling is likely working against him. He struggles with reading, among other things. He is well-intentioned and willing to put in the effort. He feels comfortable in the service and has made friends there.

Irvin repeats basic training in Toronto before being transferred to Newmarket, Ontario, at the end of August 1943. Here is the training center for the mechanized troops.

Remarkably soon, in early September 1943, he is transferred to Windsor, Nova Scotia. This is a staging area for units departing for the United Kingdom (UK).

In mid-September 1943, Irvin and many others board a troop ship which takes them to the UK. He sets foot on shore on September 20, 1943.

After serving a few weeks in a reinforcement unit, Irvin is transferred to the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada (QOR) on October 9, 1943. He is granted leave in the last week of October.

The first entry in Irvin's file in 1944 is from February. He is in hospital for two weeks because of a bladder infection.

The harsh reality of frontline service for Irvin is rapidly approaching. The QOR is assigned to take part in the Normandy landings.

On June 6, 1944, Irvin lands with "C Company" of the QOR on Juno Beach, Normandy.

Where did the men end up? A brief description of what it was like there on that historic day.

*The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada received orders to attack the beach at 8:05 a.m. They landed at 8:15 a.m. in Sector Nan White, with Company A west of Bernières and Company B in front of the strongpoint at Bernières. Company A quickly left the beach and reached the railway line before coming under mortar fire. They eventually moved inland.*

*Company B landed in front of the strongpoint, which consisted of eight machine guns in concrete emplacements, two 50 mm guns on the seawall, and two 80 mm mortar positions inland. The company suffered heavy casualties, including three officers, a sergeant major, and two sergeants. The company scaled the seawall and surrounded the position. Companies "C" and "D," along with battalion headquarters, disembarked at 8:30 a.m. The companies moved through the village and, along with "A" Company, prepared for the next task. The QOR suffered the highest casualties of all Canadian regiments on D-Day: 61 killed and 82 wounded. Nevertheless, it was the only Allied unit to have achieved its D-Day objectives within 10 km of the inland area.*



Properly dressed for the occasion, the Queen's Own Rifles move out on patrol from the Nijmegen salient, January 22, 1945. (B.J. Gloster, National Archives of Canada, PA-114073)

Irvin Cholette's file provides little further detail.

He must have witnessed the entire advance through northern France and Belgium to the southwest of the Netherlands. He also witnessed the battles to liberate the port of Antwerp and the move to the Meuse front during the winter months of 1944/1945.

He must also have participated in the daily patrols during the harsh winter period of 1944/1945; during which the regiment, despite the often-described "relative calm", suffered more than fifty casualties.

On February 8, 1945, when the Rhineland Offensive began with Operation Veritable, Irvin is on a nine days' leave, which he is allowed to spend in the UK.

On February 19, 1945, he returns to his unit, which has, by then, established defensive positions in and around Millingen aan de Rijn.

They remain there until the Allies successfully crossed the Rhine.

Irvin must have endured these actions without any major problems. In any case, his file contains no record of this.

At the end of March 1945, the QOR cross the German-Dutch border in the eastern part of the Netherlands.

They see action at Laagkeppel from April 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945; at Deventer from April 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>, 1945; and from April 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, 1945, at Wons and Witmarsum in Friesland, in the northwest of the Netherlands.

(On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, Irvin is promoted to Lance/Corporal.)

After the fierce fighting in Friesland, the QOR are allowed a few days 'rest'.

On the evening of April 20<sup>th</sup>, is communicated they have to relocate the following day. The next day, they move via Heerenveen-Leeuwarden-Groningen to Winschoten, near the German border.

Once arrived in Winschoten, they are told to continue across the border into Germany.

In the evening of April 21<sup>st</sup>, they arrive in Rhede (Germany) where they spent the night.

The next two days are spent on personal care and equipment maintenance, according to the War Diary of the QOR.

This differs from other entries; Irvin is listed as "Killed in Action" on April 23, 1945, in the Netherlands.

A report also mentions that he is given a temporary grave in Winschoten on April 23, 1945.

According to the War Dairy of the QOR there were no enemy activities on April 22 and 23.

The regiment starts the advance towards Ditzumer Verlaat in Germany during the night of April 24/25, 1945.

In that area they encounter fierce resistance and are exposed to shelling, which results in casualties.

The exact date Lance/Corporal Irvin Cholette is killed is unclear, but it is clear that it was only two weeks before the fighting in Western Europe ended.

He is given a temporary grave at the Winschoten Cemetery before being laid to rest at the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten on April 26, 1946.

The grave reference is: plot 11, row G, grave 9.

*He is awarded:*

*1939-1945 Star; France-Germany Star; Defence Medal; War Medal 1939-1945; and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.*

*Sources:*

*www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com; www.canada.ca/library-archives; wikipedia, project '44, War Diary Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*

EEB CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS  
OVERSEAS CDN RECORDS OFFICE  
GRAVES REGISTRATION FORM

P.A.  
Name CHOLETTE, Irvin. Place and Date of Birth North Temiskaming, Que. 6 Aug 1924.  
Rank L/Cpl. Regtl No. E-68757  
Unit Queens Own Rifles. Next of Kin Father.  
Address Mr Oliver CHOLETTE  
Evein, Que. Canada.

PARTICULARS OF HOSPITALISATION  
Date of Admission Name and Location of Hospital  
Diagnosis

PARTICULARS OF DEATH  
Date of Death 23 APR 45. Place of Death Holland  
Mr.  
Cause of Death KILLED.

PARTICULARS OF BURIAL  
Date of Burial 23 Apr 45. Cemetery Holland Winschoten Cem. MR 52304  
Death Cert No. Location of Cemetery  
Date of Regn of Death Cert Plot No. 1 Row 1 Grave 7  
Religion R.C.  
Date 15 Nov 45  
M. BLUTEAU (Capt.)  
For Colonel, OIC Records,  
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

Extracted from Burial Records,  
OVERSEAS CDN RECORDS OFFICE,  
ACTON, LONDON, W.2.

