

MEDALS AND MEMORIES

Memorials and Memories

Character Education

- Explore Canadian memorials and the purpose of remembering
- Integrate the past into the student's present
- Build character education upon local experiences

Facts

- There are cenotaphs and war memorials throughout Ontario communities from Aylmer, Orono, North Bay and Port Colborne to Tavistock and Temagami
- The *Book of Remembrance* in the Peace Tower in Ottawa contains the names of over 112,000 Canadians killed in wars since the 19th century
- When the Vimy Ridge monument was dedicated in July 26, 1936 there were as many people present as there had been at the battle April 9, 1917

Before the Reading

- List all the local area cenotaphs and war memorials in your community and surrounding area. Where are they located in your community?
- Discuss the design of the cenotaph or war memorial in your area. If you had to relate it to an artistic or an architectural style, what is it most like?
- May virtual museums or virtual sites replace the cenotaphs of previous generations?

Reading

In the middle of a blinding snow storm on April 9th, Easter Monday 1917, 30,000 young Canadian soldiers stormed Vimy Ridge in France. The British and French forces had failed to take the strategic position; the Canadians succeeded. Nearly 4000 young soldiers lost their lives, but, the Canadians, then considered 'colonials' saw them-

elves very clearly in a can-do light that day. A Canadian identify was forged in the fighting at Vimy Ridge and it was only fitting that a Canadian memorial was built there.

The Canadian government announced in 1920 that they had acquired the land at the highest point of the ridge. In Dec. 1922, the government concluded an agreement with France that granted Canada the use of 250 acres of land on Vimy Ridge in recognition of Canada's war effort. Walter Seymour Allward's design was selected from a Canadian sculpture competition. In 1936, when the sculpture was finally ready for unveiling, five trans-Atlantic liners departed from Montreal, bringing over 6,400 people from all over Canada. 1,365 Canadian sailed from Britain. In total, there were over 50,000 Canadian, British and French veterans and their families present when King Edward VIII, King of Canada, unfurled the Union Jack from an imposing figure carved out of single 30 tonne block of stone. There stood "Canada Bereft" a single female figure before two massive pylons that rose 30 metres above a large, lonely platform, representing a young nation mourning her dead. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Guard of Honour and the Canadian Naval Guard stood at attention as two Canadian and two French squadrons flew by overhead. The names of 11,285 Canadians killed in France, whose final resting place was unknown, stood out, carved in stone, on a monument that commemorated Canada's 65,000 war dead.

April 9, 2007, Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, and the prime ministers of Canada and France stood at the Vimy Ridge memorial once again with the largest



crowd that had been there since 1936. They were part of the 90 year re-dedication ceremony of the newly restored memorial. Among the crowd were thousands of Canadian students including some from Silverthorn Collegiate in Etobicoke. In a CBC feature, Nevena Vivic stated, "Being at Vimy was an honour and I am glad I was given the chance to experience something so great."ⁱ Her classmate Jelena Perovic added, "Incredible ... I've never seen anything like it, nor felt anything remotely that amazing ... I've never felt so Canadian in my life."ⁱⁱ

The 1936 Vimy Memorial dedication was not the first European memorial to Canada's missing soldiers. Sunday July 24th, 1927, near the Ypres Salient in Belgium, crowds gathered near the Menin Gate. Albert, King of the Belgians, was present and millions listened on wireless radios, as Field Marshall Lord Plumer, spoke about the 54,896 Commonwealth soldiers whose names were carved into the Menin Mausoleum's Hall of Memory. "It was resolved that here at Ypres, where so many of the "Missing" are known to have fallen, there should be erected a memorial worthy of them which should give expression to the nation's gratitude for their sacrifice and its sympathy with those who mourned them."

In a 2006 a spiritual journey to Europe, Canada's First Nations contributed to the Last Post ceremony that has been held every day at sunset at the Menin Gate since Nov. 11, 1929. Two thousand people stood silently shoulder to shoulder as aboriginal Canadian dancers moved rhythmically under the colossal arches of the Menin Gate. Following the Last Post, a young Canadian native woman read a lament written for her great-grandmother; then hundreds of poppies wafted to the ground from the top of the memorial as the Canadian Forces Central Band played. A 14 year old Belgian girl stated, "It was spectacular. It grabbed you by the heart." The 2006 spiritual journey included a "Calling Home Ceremony" so that the spirits of the dead warriors would return to be with their families in Canada.

June 21, 2001, during the unveiling of the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument in Confederation Park, Ottawa, Governor General of Canada and Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Forces, Adrienne Clarkson, had made a reference to "Calling Home". "For as much as this Monument commemorates specific battles and campaigns, it also honours the eternal spiritual elements that

ⁱ Vivic, Nevena "Remembering Vimy Ridge" CBC News in Brief, May 2007, p. 17

ⁱⁱ Perovic, Jelena *ibid*, p17

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The WWI Memorial at Osgoode Hall, Toronto by Frances Loring
Image: The Law Society of Upper Canada

Frances Loring

Mary-Ann Liu of Mission, B.C. designed the bronze overlay for Canada's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier unveiled in 2000. Marlene Hilton-Moore co-designed the Valiants Memorial unveiled in 2006. These two artists have a forerunner in Frances Loring (1887-1968). Loring and fellow sculptor, Florence Wyle, met while art students in Chicago and moved to Toronto in 1913. Their studio/home (formerly a church) on Glenrose Avenue was a focal point for artists, scholars and students for almost 50 years. In 1918 they received a commission from the Canadian War Records Department to portray civilians in the war industry. Loring created seven bronzes including a bronze plaque "Noon Hour at the Munitions Plant" which depicted active, strong women in a positive way. Loring's reputation became so great that she worked tirelessly on memorials throughout the 1920s. In 1928 in Italy she completed her finest memorial for the Great Library in Osgoode Hall. Loring's seven-foot tall Carrara marble statue depicted a draped, nude young man, palms upward, before a panel of names of those who lost their lives in the Great War. The unveiling ceremony took place Nov. 11, 1928. At the head of a grand procession were Bishop Sweeney and Canon Baynes followed by the choir of St. James cathedral, the Lieutenant Governor and the justices of the Supreme Court. Then came all the benchers, in full regalia with robes and war medals, followed by the relatives of those who fell in battle. In the awesome silence thereafter Col. G.R. Geary read the roll of the fallen. At the same time as Loring worked on the Osgoode Memorial, she sculpted "The War Widow", a mother and two children and a tympanum figure panel, "The Recording Angel" for the memorial chamber of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa—a work all Silver Cross Mothers have seen. The Art Gallery of Ontario has 250 Loring and Wyle works in storage and evidence of their creativity waits to be re-discovered in many Ontario communities.

are so essential to the culture of Aboriginal peoples. For it has been erected by Aboriginal peoples themselves. Its message of respect and honour will travel in the four directions and be heard by all who listen. It is a message of remembrance; it is a Calling Home."

The need to commemorate and call home the valiant souls who sacrificed and continue to sacrifice their lives for Canada runs deep. In 2000, the remains of a young soldier who died in the Vimy area of France during WWI were selected from among the anonymous dead in the Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery in Souchez, France to represent the 27,500 Canadian service people who have no known grave. For three days his repatriated remains lay in state in the Hall of Honour on Parliament Hill as thousands of Canadians of all ages passed by his flag-draped casket.

On May 28, 2000, a hundred year old horse drawn gun carriage took the Unknown Soldier on his last journey through the streets of Ottawa to the Nation's war memorial. At 2 p.m. his silver maple casket was laid to rest with full military honours as a respectful nation watched. Handfuls of soil brought from Canada's 10 provinces and three territories by Canadian Legion members were mixed with soil collected from the soldier's grave in France.

The remains of this unidentified young man were placed in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The four corners of the fine, three-tiered granite sarcophagus, based on elements of the Vimy memorial, featured three Memorial Crosses and one poppy in bronze relief. More than 20,000 people, including 1,200 veterans attended the solemn ceremony. Canadian Forces Chaplain General, Brigadier-General Murray Farwell captured the moment when he prayed, "Ultimately, we pray that Canada's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier will make Canadians more committed to peace within our borders, and eager to promote this peace throughout the world."

As young people today follow the deaths of Canadian peacekeepers in the media and join the emotional throngs on the Highway of Heroes overpasses, Canada's memorials and community cenotaphs also cry out with names for their attention. These memorials and cenotaphs hold lives and life lessons, stories and memories. For young people willing to undertake voyages of discovery, there are new memories to be made—values to explore—identities to create.

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Valiants Memorial

Nov. 5, 2006, Governor General Michaëlle Jean unveiled a collection of five statues and nine busts in Ottawa. The 14 life-sized men and women were selected by the Valiants Foundation to commemorate Canadian military history from the 17th to 20th centuries. Seven of the 14 portray individuals from WWI and WWII, including Lieutenant Hampton Gray featured in one of the Reading and Remembrance lessons on the Victoria Cross. The sculptural works, designed by artists Marlene Hilton-Moore and John McEwen, circle the Sappers Staircase underpass on a corner of Confederation Square. A wall nearby bears a Virgil quotation, *Nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet aevo* No day will ever erase you from the memory of time. Sculptor Hilton-Moore, who was active in the Durham Region arts scene for years, stated that she wanted to make the sculptures at real scale so that the historical figures would be 'one-to-one' with the public. The Valiants Memorial website includes a lengthy quotation by Pierre Berton, part of which says, "Canadians are not a warlike people. Yet when the trumpets sound and the cannons roar, we have, throughout our history, answered the call. The men and women memorialized here stand as symbols for a nation shaped by conflict and strengthened by sacrifice ... we know, deep in our hearts, that without the hard example provided by the kind of Canadian remembered here, this country would not dare call itself a nation."

After the Reading

- List the memorials mentioned in the reading and note their locations. Why were these locations selected?
- What were the chief reasons for creating these memorials? Why were they re-dedicated?
- The Governor General was described as the Commander-in-Chief of Canada's Armed Forces and King Edward VIII as King and Queen Elizabeth as Queen of Canada. Are these honorary roles or do they hold power?

Extensions

- There are more European and Canadian War Memorials than those mentioned in this reading. Research and write about one other War Memorial
- Present a report on the Sept. 1, 2000, *Legion Magazine* article by Dan Black "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" which includes most of the Governor General's dedication speech
- Create a virtual memorial for your community cenotaph

Sources

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Audio | Video

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