



Ontario History Society Takes the Lead

By Angie Littlefield, Project Manager

The Durham West Arts Centre (DWAC), a charitable arts organization in Durham Region, started the provincial project *Reading and Remembrance*, in the Year of the Veteran 2005. The goal, to have Ontario school children read *In Flanders Fields* at the same time on Remembrance Day, was supported with arts lessons, links and reading materials on the poem and its background. In four years the project reached approximately 100,000 children with a new theme and new materials each year: *Anti-Racist and Holocaust Education 2006*, *Women and War 2007* and *The Art of Dissent 2008*.

The one-stop resource for educators supplies free ready-made lessons that emphasize literacy, history and character education. Partially bilingual in 2007, the project will be totally bilingual in 2009 thanks to Durham M.P. Mark Holland. Under the aegis of the Ontario Historical Society for a two year pilot, *Reading and Remembrance* hopes to grow from there, hopefully to a national project.

The Ontario Library Association, founding sponsor Ontario Power Generation and the Ontario Historical Society will use their networks to promote the 2009 theme *Medals and Memories*. To feature the project's emphasis on diversity, the first 2009 lesson is on First Nations and Inuit contributions to Canadian identity in times of war and peace. The lesson starts with Joseph Brant and ends with the Arctic Rangers weaving together the past and the present so that young people see Remembrance Day as a day of discovery about veterans and themselves. Other 2009 materials feature the Victoria Cross, Royal Red Cross, Dickin Medal for animal heroes and awards for young cadets and rangers.

A new 2009 feature allows educators, librarians and school children to research local veterans and provide their stories to an electronic community of learners. "This feature provides a wonderful opportunity for our member societies to assist young people with research on a local level", says John Sabeau, Past Chair of the Durham West Arts Centre and currently Second Vice-President of the OHS.

The materials archived on the site www.readingandremembrance.ca are available year round. Teachers looking for stand-alone lessons for *Civics, History, World Issues, Law, Character Education, Arts or English* will find a ready resource to support the Ontario curricula.



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