

# REMEMBERING CANADA'S WAR DEAD

## Introduction



Download the mp3 of this Introduction at [newsinreview.cbclearning.ca](http://newsinreview.cbclearning.ca).

### Focus

Remembrance Day is an important event for most Canadians. This *News in Review* story will explain the historical origins and meaning of this day, as well as note its continuing relevance for Canadians today.

### Further Research

To learn and see more on this important topic, visit the Canadian War Museum online at [www.warmuseum.ca](http://www.warmuseum.ca).

At the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month in 1918, the First World War finally ended. It was a war with four years of bloody conflict, conflict fought in mud and trenches, with rats and lice and with the loss of thousands of lives. The armistice was signed on this day, bringing to a close the “war to end all wars.” Canadians had eagerly volunteered, travelling to distant lands many had never seen before to fight for King and country. Many young men saw it as an adventure, convinced they would be “home by Christmas.” Sadly, for many, this was not to be the case. While there were impressive victories against enormous odds—like the battle at Vimy Ridge—there was also a massive, senseless loss of life on muddy, crater-filled battlefields of soldiers commanded by generals unfamiliar with the new mechanization of war—the machine gun, the tank, and the airplane.

Twenty short years later, after a crushing world-wide depression and drought, Canadians again signed up to fight—this time against the sweeping tyranny of Hitler’s Germany. Canada was now considered a nation in its own right—one to be respected. The battles had moved out from the trenches into the air with large-scale bombing raids, and onto the open seas with submarines and destroyers. Victorious campaigns at Ortona, Juno Beach, and the liberation of Holland confirmed Canada’s reputation for hard-fighting, honourable soldiers. On the home front everyone helped out, recycling everything, buying war bonds, and living

on thin rations to “help out the boys” overseas. Six long years of war and large losses of life occurred, but Canada stayed strong, contributing men, machinery, and food throughout the war years.

By 1945 the United Nations, an international body promoting peace and security, had been created and, shortly thereafter, Canadians served on a UN mission in Korea. Since then many peace operations have been supported by Canadians. “Peace operations” is a simple label for a range of military, diplomatic, and humanitarian tasks that have included supporting democratic elections, ensuring safety in neutral zones, or supporting and protecting human rights ([www.international.gc.ca](http://www.international.gc.ca)). In 1957 Lester B. Pearson won a Nobel Peace Prize for his handling of the Suez Canal crisis in Egypt, and the made-in-Canada concept of “peacekeeping” was born. Most recently Canadians have been called to serve in Afghanistan and have actively worked to protect the lives, rights, and freedoms of the Afghan people.

Canada has much to be proud of in its short history. We have been willing volunteers fighting for freedom around the world, and often our efforts have been to keep the peace rather than fight a war. This commitment has improved the lives of many around the globe.

Each Remembrance Day we remember the enormous sacrifices that Canadians and their families have made to help and protect and enhance the lives of others beyond our borders.

## To Consider

1. What is the origin of Remembrance Day?
2. How is Remembrance Day noted in your community?
3. What is your personal response to Remembrance Day?

# REMEMBERING CANADA'S WAR DEAD

## Video Review

### Helpful Vocabulary

Armistice: A ceasefire or a truce

Conscription: Required (forced) enrolment for military service

### Further Research

Visit CBC Archives at [www.cbc.ca/archives](http://www.cbc.ca/archives) to explore audio-visual materials about Canada's involvement in major conflicts. Investigate the files under the theme *War and Conflict*.

### Pre-viewing Activity

By yourself, or with a partner, jot down answers to the following questions.

1. Do you think it is important to remember those who have fought for our freedom or are currently in battle to protect Canada's interests and champion the freedom of others? Why or why not?

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2. What do you personally do on Remembrance Day?

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### Viewing Questions

1. When was the Unknown Soldier returned to Canada?

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2. What is known about the Unknown Soldier?

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3. What was the battle that "forged Canada's identity"? Why?

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4. How many Canadians were killed in the First World War?

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5. Who did the Canadians fight against during the Second World War?

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6. How many Canadians died in the Second World War?

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7. What terrible things does George Couture describe seeing at Juno Beach?

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8. What was the inscription on Lt. A.P. Ladas's headstone?

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9. Where did Canadian soldiers fight next?

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10. Name two of the UN peacekeeping missions in which Canada participated.

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11. In what country have over 130 Canadian soldiers recently died?

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12. What are some of the reasons it is important to remember the sacrifices of our soldiers?

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### **Post-viewing Questions**

1. Would you like to visit a war memorial in Europe some day? Why or why not?

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2. Would you consider joining the Canadian Forces? Why or why not?

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3. Do you think Remembrance Day is important? Explain.

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# REMEMBERING CANADA'S WAR DEAD

## *Ways of Remembering in Canada*

### **Did you know . . .**

There are Books of Remembrance with the name of every soldier who has died in or as a result of Canadian conflicts. They are kept in the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill in Ottawa and online at [www.vcc-acc.gc.ca](http://www.vcc-acc.gc.ca).

### **Remembrance Day in Canada**

Remembrance Day was formally declared in November 1919 by King George V. It was officially dedicated as a day to honour those who had died in the First World War. Around the world, this day is also called Armistice Day, Poppy Day, or Veterans Day.

In Canada, Remembrance Day is a public holiday in most provinces and territories. The official national ceremonies are held at the National War Memorial in Ottawa and are presided over by the Governor General of Canada, the Queen's representative in Canada. The event begins with the tolling of the bell in the Peace Tower. At this time current members of the Canadian Forces arrive at Confederation Square, followed by a number of other dignitaries that may include members of the Royal Canadian Legion and the royal family.

Before the start of the ceremony, four armed sentries and three sentinels are posted at the foot of the cenotaph (a tomb or a monument erected in honor of a person or group of persons whose remains are elsewhere). A sentinel is a soldier stationed as a guard to watch over the ceremony, or to stand guard.

The arrival of the Queen or Governor General is announced by a trumpeter sounding the "Alert," and the monarch or monarch's representative is met by the Dominion President of the Royal Canadian Legion. The national anthem is then played. The moment of remembrance begins with the bugle playing of "Last Post" just before 11:00 a.m. At exactly 11:00 a.m. a gun salute fires and the bells of the Peace Tower toll the hour. Another gun salute signals the end of the two minutes of silence and cues the playing of the bugle again. The

Canadian Air Command does a fly-past after which there is a 21-gun salute. The choir then presents the famous Canadian poem "In Flanders Fields."

Various parties lay their wreaths at the base of the memorial. One wreath is set by the Silver Cross Mother, a mother who has lost a child in conflict who represents all mothers who have lost a child in battle. "God Save the Queen" is then played, and the assembled Canadian Forces personnel and veterans parade before the Governor General or royal family, bringing about the end of the official ceremonies.

After this, the general public pay their respects to the fallen by placing poppies on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This monument was erected in Ottawa in 2000 and holds the remains of an unknown soldier who died in France in the First World War.

Similar ceremonies take place in provincial capitals across the country—presided over by each province's Lieutenant Governor—as well as in other cities, towns, and villages. Schools usually hold special assemblies in the morning of November 11.

### **Remembrance Day around the World**

Remembering the fallen from past conflicts is practised in different ways around the world. In Australia November 11 is not a holiday, although public services are held. In Bermuda, which sent the first volunteer unit to the Western Front, Remembrance Day is an important holiday. There is a colourful parade and a ceremony in the capital city of Hamilton. New Zealand honours its fallen soldiers on Poppy Day, the Friday before April 25 as well as on Armistice

**Further Research**

For further details on cenotaph/monument conservation/restoration project guidelines visit [www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=memorials/cenotaph/guidelines](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=memorials/cenotaph/guidelines).

Day, November 11. South Africa honours its fallen soldiers on Poppy Day, the Saturday closest to November 11, and the South African Legion collects donations for military veterans. In England two minutes of silence are observed at 11a.m. on November 11, but the main ceremonies to honour the dead are held on the second Sunday of November. The United States calls November 11 Veterans Day, an important holiday across the entire nation.

**In Your Community**

There are approximately 6 000 local cenotaphs/monuments dedicated to Canada's war dead and veterans across the country. Most of the monuments in Canada have been erected as a result of efforts by community groups, provinces, or veterans' organizations. Over time

many of these monuments have fallen into disrepair.

The Government of Canada, in partnership with community groups, local organizations, and Veterans Affairs Canada, wishes to preserve the memory of our nation's war dead and our veterans through proper conservation, ensuring that cenotaphs and monuments are conserved to the highest standard of care and dignity.

With help from the Cenotaph/Monument Restoration Program, communities and organizations across Canada will be able to restore cenotaphs and monuments that promote and preserve the memory of all those who have served Canada since 1867.

Source: Veterans Affairs Canada and <http://en.wikipedia.org>

**Analysis**

1. In your opinion, is it important to remember the wars in which Canada has been involved?
2. Do you think it is important to honour the memories of fallen soldiers?
3. What kinds of rituals do you think are meaningful when honouring the dead?

# REMEMBERING CANADA'S WAR DEAD

## Our Wars

### Did you know. . .

Munitions from both world wars are found in Germany each year. Barely a week goes by without emergency crews blocking off a road when a bomb is found. Belgian bomb-disposal teams still clear many tonnes of munitions from Flanders fields each year (*The Globe and Mail*, November 11, 2008).

### The First World War (1914-1918)

“We’ll be home by Christmas!” was a common refrain as the boys set out for sea in the summer of 1914. Waves and kisses to loved ones in Halifax tried to reassure those left behind. Sadly, home by Christmas was not possible. The assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the shot heard around the world, led to four long years of muddy trench battles in France. Soldiers also faced personal battles with rats, lice, and new diseases such as trench foot. Canadian soldiers also endured the brutal technological innovations of the time: mustard gas, machine guns, and tanks.

Waves of soldiers were gunned down, but none as brutally as the Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont-Hamel, where almost every single soldier was dead within 30 minutes. Planes, first used for reconnaissance photography, were equipped with bolted-down rifles. Pilots soon became known as the walking dead, with an average lifespan of only 21 days. Billy Bishop, from Owen Sound, Ontario, became Canada’s famous flying ace, awarded the highest military honour, the Victoria Cross.

### To Do

Imagine what it would have felt like to live in a muddy ditch for weeks on end. Write a letter home to a loved one to try to explain what it was like to be a trench soldier during the First World War.

### The Second World War (1939-1945)

Canada had earned the right to declare war separately from Britain, and it did just that in 1939. Canadians again volunteered to defend the United Kingdom when it appeared that a Nazi invasion was imminent. Scattered throughout Europe, from Juno Beach in France to the hard terrain of Italy,

Canada performed surprisingly well for a young colonial nation. Hard-fought battles like Passchendaele, the Somme, and Ypres may be familiar to many high-school history students today, but it was the success at Vimy Ridge that earned Canada the right to sit at the table with the “big boys” (Britain, France, and the U.S.) to negotiate the Treaty of Versailles. “The enormous exertion of the Canadian forces in Europe (during the First World War) brought a new-found respect for Canada and led to greater autonomy for the nation on the world stage” (from an opinion piece written by Lynton Wilson, *Toronto Star*, November 11, 2008). Canada became a nation now recognizably separate from Britain and its King—one to be respected as a result of successes in those bloody battles. Sadly, the loss of life was profound. Over 65 000 Canadians were killed in the First World War, and more than double that number were wounded. The so-called “war to end all wars” was not to be, and Canadians served again, in record numbers, just 20 short years later when Nazi aggression raged across Europe.

they fought valiantly. With bravery and dedication they also fought, unsuccessfully, to defend Hong Kong against the Japanese. At Dieppe, they bore the heavy losses of an ill-fated raid against the Nazi-controlled coast of France. Canadians fought for 20 months in Italy and were in the front lines when the Allies returned to Continental Europe on D-Day in 1944. They liberated

### Further Research

Want to see the last of the Second World War Tribal class destroyers? You can visit one in person in Hamilton, Ontario, or see it online at [www.hmcshaida.ca](http://www.hmcshaida.ca).

The Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, located just outside Hamilton, is a living museum featuring the aircraft used by Canadians or Canada's military from the beginning of the Second World War to the present. The museum's collection includes aircraft that really fly and several that remain on display. Check out [www.warplane.com](http://www.warplane.com).

Holland when it was starved throughout a winter of blockades and are warmly honoured to this day by the Dutch people. The French public, too, has a high regard for the Canadian troops, as France was a country in which many important battles were waged.

While most of the fighting took place overseas, there was also "Canada's unknown war." It was in the St. Lawrence Seaway that 15 Nazi U-boats (submarines) launched attacks, mainly on merchant ships. These ships were loaded with food, medicine, and other supplies for Canadian troops. The torpedo attacks sank 24 ships and claimed over 250 Canadian lives.

These brave veterans of the air, land, and sea brought honour and new respect to their country. Most of all they helped to win the struggle against the tyranny that threatened to overpower the world.

More than one million Canadians and Newfoundlanders served in the Second World War. Of these more than 45 000 gave their lives, and another 55 000 were wounded. Countless others shared the suffering and hardship of war.

### Korea (1950-53)

By 1950 the Second World War had been over for five years. The United Nations (UN) had been in place since that time and was working to promote global peace. Canadian soldiers had returned home, and Canada was looking forward to a prosperous and peaceful second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately it was not to be.

At the end of the Second World War, Japan's empire was taken apart and the Soviet Union took over North Korea, establishing a communist government. The U.S. moved into South Korea and established a democratic, capitalist government. Tensions between the two Koreas grew to a climax and, on June 25, 1950, the military forces of

North Korea crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel into South Korea. This marked the beginning of the Korean War.

The UN, working to resolve conflict between member nations through talk and negotiation, had the flexibility to use force in the pursuit of peace. Korea would require armed intervention, and 16 member nations, including Canada, contributed military forces. By mid-February of 1951, troops from Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and India joined to form one Commonwealth force.

Early in July of 1951, ceasefire negotiations began. However, there would be two more years of fighting until the signing of the Armistice. In total, 516 Canadians died.

### Canadian Mission to Afghanistan (2002- )

After the World Trade Center attacks in New York City on September 11, 2001, the United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan to root out those deemed responsible. Taliban-controlled Afghanistan had allowed Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda terrorist network to operate freely in the rugged, unforgiving terrain. In 2003, following the initial invasion and toppling of the Taliban government, NATO troops entered Afghanistan as the International Security Assistance Force under the United Nations. NATO's main role in Afghanistan is now to assist the Afghan government, provide stability and security, and pave the way for reconstruction and effective governance ([www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)).

For soldiers and civilians, 2009 has been the most violent year yet. The United Nations August report showed that civilian deaths in the first six months of this year were up 24 per cent compared with the same time period last year (from 818 to 1013). The report

**Further Research**

To listen to a radio drama about Canada's experience in Afghanistan, tune into the CBC Radio One program "Afghanada" at [www.cbc.ca/afghanada](http://www.cbc.ca/afghanada).

concludes that the main causes are suicide attacks and roadside bombs set by the Taliban and other anti-government insurgents (*The Globe and Mail*, August 3, 2009).

Since 2002 more than 130 Canadian soldiers have lost their lives in this struggle. These are our newest veterans

to be remembered for their sacrifices to secure peace and freedom from oppression around the world. The Canadian mission is set to be completed by 2011.

Source: First and Second World Wars and Korea: [www.vac-acc.gc.ca](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca)

**Analysis**

1. Do you think that Canada should have participated in all the wars noted in this section? Explain clearly.
2. Which of the above wars do you think was most important? Why?

# REMEMBERING CANADA'S WAR DEAD

## *Beaumont-Hamel*

**Did you know . . .**  
Newfoundland did not join Confederation until 1949. It was a colony of Britain in 1914. Did you know that almost the entire Newfoundland regiment was wiped out in approximately 30 minutes at the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel?

### **The Call to Arms**

Britain declared war on August 4, 1914, and by August 12 Newfoundland had created the Newfoundland Patriotic Association (NPA) to organize and equip an army. Nearly 12 000 enlisted in the Newfoundland forces. These enlistees were nearly 10 per cent of the total male population of Newfoundland, or over one third of the young men between the ages of 19 and 35.

### **The Battle of Beaumont-Hamel**

The Newfoundland Regiment, as part of the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade, were involved in a horrific battle near the small town of Beaumont-Hamel, located in a valley in northern France. The Germans had established a powerful trench system in the area, which provided the Germans with a clear, unobstructed view of the valley. To reach the German trenches, approaching troops had to cross the valley in open view of the Germans.

The 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade moved into the area on April 22 and began preparations for battle. One of the crucial elements of the battle plan was that the soldiers would not begin their attack until the German trenches had been hit by a heavy artillery barrage. The military commanders knew that the foot soldiers would have trouble getting through the reinforced barbed wire that protected the German trenches. As well, those soldiers would be an easy target for the German sharpshooters and riflemen in the forward trenches who therefore had to be killed before the battle began on the ground.

By the end of June, the troops were trained and ready to go. Their objective was to smash through the German lines after the artillery had crushed all their defences. But unfortunately, the

Germans were dug in so deeply, and so well protected by their trenches, that they were largely unaffected by the advance artillery barrage. Soon after the Newfoundland Regiment and the rest of the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade went over the top and began to advance toward the German trenches, it was clear that the German machine guns had not been silenced nor had the barbed wire been destroyed.

The first brigade to charge were immediately cut down, soon to be followed by the next wave. It was all over in about 30 minutes. Every officer who went forward was either killed or wounded. Casualties in the 29<sup>th</sup> Division alone amounted to 223 officers and 5 017 from other ranks. Of the 801 Newfoundlanders who left their trenches on July 1, 1916, only 69 returned.

### **The Memorials**

When the First World War ended, there was debate over the kind of memorial that should be erected to commemorate Newfoundland's war dead. Many favoured a traditional monument, but others strongly advocated for the foundation of a post-secondary institution, primarily to train teachers. The second suggestion was supported by the leaders of the prominent churches in the province. In the end, the Patriotic Association recommended that there should be two national memorials. One would be a statue, "of imperishable material, as dignified and beautiful as our means will allow," the other an educational institution: Memorial University in St. John's. The government accepted these recommendations. In addition, it was also decided to erect five battlefield memorials in France.

One of them was the park at

### Further Research

Go to [www.firstworldwar.com](http://www.firstworldwar.com) for a variety of in-depth resources on the causes of, important players in, and battles fought during First World War.

Beaumont-Hamel, France, which opened June 7, 1925. Purchased by the people of Newfoundland, the site is the largest battalion memorial on the Western Front and the largest area of the Somme battlefield that has been preserved. Along with preserved trench lines, there are a number of memorials and cemeteries contained within the site. The park itself is 16 hectares in size and is located about 35 minutes south of Arras, France, and about 10 minutes north of Albert, France.

The caribou is the emblem of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, and a large bronze caribou stag overlooks the trenches and battlefield. The names of

those Newfoundlanders who died that day are inscribed at the monument.

A massive crater, caused by the Hawthorn Mine explosion, is still easily visible.

July 1, being both Canada Day and the anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel, has taken on a very special meaning, as Newfoundlanders honour their fallen soldiers as well as their country.

Sources: [www.heritage.nf.ca/greatwar/articles/regiment.html](http://www.heritage.nf.ca/greatwar/articles/regiment.html); <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaumont-Hamel>; [www.firstworldwar.com](http://www.firstworldwar.com); [www.canadaonline.about.com](http://www.canadaonline.about.com)

### Inquiry

1. Why do you think Newfoundlanders were so eager to support the war effort even though they were not Canadians at the time?
2. What might have been the effects on Newfoundland of losing so many young men so quickly?

# REMEMBERING CANADA'S WAR DEAD

## Point-Counterpoint

### Instructions

Read the following quotes carefully. What is the speaker trying to say about war or remembering those who have fought in a war? Think about whether you agree or disagree with the quote. Then, choose one that you think best reflects your feelings and the one you most disagree with. Be prepared to explain why you feel that way.

“The best way to express our gratitude to the many Canadians who have given their lives to defend our country, and the right we cherish, is not by wearing a poppy but to vote in every single federal, provincial, and municipal election. Those who do not choose to vote dishonour the memory of the fallen.” — Janet Ablett, Thornhill, Ontario (*Toronto Star*, November 11, 2008)

**Agree** \_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_

“I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.” — Albert Einstein

**Agree** \_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_

“Regrettably, Remembrance Day appears to be about much more than honouring our dead. It seems to be serving the political purpose of stoking patriotism while normalizing the concept of war as something that, while tragic, is necessary to protect our freedom and values. At the same time that we are remembering the awful human consequences of war, the rhetoric encourages us to view war as a key part of our national identity and to be prepared for future wars as the price for our liberty.” — Michael J. Gaspar, Barrie, Ontario (*Toronto Star*, November 11, 2008)

**Agree** \_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_

“It becomes even more important today as a new generation of heroes in our armed forces is currently deployed in Afghanistan where they risk their lives to promote freedom and justice. I ask all Canadians to please consider this and show our veterans we will never forget the sacrifices they made for our country.” — Mike McIntyre, Guelph, Ontario (*Toronto Star*, November 11, 2008)

**Agree** \_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_

“What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty and democracy?” — Mohandas Gandhi

**Agree** \_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_

“There is tremendous power in memory. It allows us to learn from our mistakes and allows us to grow. It is our memories of World War I, World War II, Korea, and most recently Afghanistan that remind us the world is not a peaceful place. It is the memory of the over 120 000 Canadians who died for us.” — *Revelstoke Times Review* (November, 10, 2008)

**Agree** \_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_

“Remembrance Day is always a time of conflict for me. While not a strict pacifist, I do believe that humankind’s worst shortcoming is the enduring belief that military violence is an acceptable way of settling our differences and advancing our interests. Many fear that our persistence in this mindset will inevitably lead to a global nuclear war.” — Michael J. Gaspar, Barrie, Ontario (*Toronto Star*, November 11, 2008)

**Agree** \_\_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_\_

“Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime.”  
— Ernest Hemingway

**Agree** \_\_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_\_

“But I would argue that nowhere is remembering more important than in Canada, for nowhere has a nation’s military sacrifices beyond its borders so profoundly defined our national character. Canada’s contributions to the Great War, and subsequently to World War II, to Korea, Afghanistan, and dozens of peacekeeping missions, are an integral part of the way we view ourselves and the way the world views Canada and Canadians.” — Lynton Wilson, chancellor of McMaster University (*Toronto Star*, November 11, 2008)

**Agree** \_\_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_\_

“When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace.”  
— Jimi Hendrix

**Agree** \_\_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_\_

“The poppy serves a greater purpose to remind us of the duality of mankind. While we pay respect to the angels among us and their sacrifice, we must also take heed of the seeds of conflict that haunt us still—lest we forget the horrors of war and tyranny.” — Gregory Cawsey (*Guelph Mercury*, November 10, 2008)

**Agree** \_\_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_\_

“Wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows.” — Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Agree** \_\_\_\_ **Disagree** \_\_\_\_

### **Activity**

Write your own statement about war and remembering. Be prepared to share it with your peers.

# REMEMBERING CANADA'S WAR DEAD

## *In Flanders Fields*

### Further Research

There were several great soldier-poets who experienced and wrote about the First World War. Visit [www.english.emory.edu/LostPoets](http://www.english.emory.edu/LostPoets) to read their work.

### Poppies

Poppies are sold every year as an act of remembrance to fallen soldiers. It is in his poem "In Flanders Fields" that Canadian John McCrae made the flower famous. Red poppies bloomed over the battlefields of Flanders in the First World War and became a symbol of the bloodshed of trench warfare. Poppies were chosen to be worn close to the heart as a Remembrance Day symbol in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as early as 1921. They are now worn throughout the Commonwealth as a symbol of remembrance. Some people choose to wear white poppies to symbolize the desire for peace instead of war.

Until 1996, poppies were made by disabled veterans in Canada. In 2007 a poppy sticker was developed for children, the elderly, and health-care and food-industry workers so they could wear a poppy safely.

### Who was John McCrae?

Dr. John Alexander McCrae was born on November 12, 1872, in Guelph, Ontario. He was a gifted student, graduating from high school at the age of 16. He headed straight to the University of Toronto. While at university, he was also a reservist in the military. McCrae graduated with a medical degree in 1898 and pursued post-graduate work at John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland.

Shortly after completing his university studies, McCrae joined the Canadian

Field Artillery and sailed for South Africa. He spent almost five years in military service before he resigned in 1904. But when the First World War broke out in 1914, McCrae joined the military again.

His skill as a physician in very difficult situations resulted in rapid promotion and before long he was brigade-surgeon, one of the top medical positions in the army. A year later, he found himself surrounded by misery and rocked by the death of his dear friend and fellow officer Alexis Helmer. Helmer was killed by a German shell attack in Flanders Field, Belgium, on May 12, 1915. One day later, Dr. McCrae wrote his famous poem.

Source: [www.suite101.com](http://www.suite101.com)).

### In Flanders Fields

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch, be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields*

### Analysis

1. What is your general reaction to this famous poem?
2. What appears to be the central message of the poem?
3. Do you think that the message is still relevant today? Explain fully.

# REMEMBERING CANADA'S WAR DEAD

## **Aboriginal Warriors**

### **Further Research**

Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*, winner of the McNally Robinson Aboriginal Book Award Winner of 2005 and short-listed for the Governor General's Literary Award, was a Canadian bestseller describing an Aboriginal Canadian soldier's experience in the killing fields of the Somme and Ypres during the First World War.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples from many regions of Canada served in the armed forces during the First and Second World Wars, fighting in major battles and campaigns. All Canadian soldiers made very significant sacrifices to serve Canada, but Aboriginal Canadians are a unique group because they chose to serve a country that in many ways was not their "own."

Aboriginal Canadians lived in Canada for thousands of years before Europeans came to the area. In many cases, they lost access to their land and possessions through treaties with "new" Canadians. So

it is understandable that many Aboriginal Canadians have mixed feelings about the Canadian government and their approach to governing the country.

Despite these conflicting emotions, many Aboriginal Canadians chose to serve in the armed forces. During the First World War, at least 3 000 status Indians—including 72 women—enlisted to serve Canada. As well, an unknown number of Inuit, Métis, and other First Nations members served in the war. Seventeen of these soldiers were awarded decorations for bravery in action.

### **Activity**

The section below provides a description of three Aboriginal Canadians who performed outstanding service while in the Canadian Forces. As you read the information ask yourself:

1. Why might a Métis, Inuit, or First Nations individual feel compelled to fight for Canada? Would it be because the person feels they are as much a "Canadian" as an Aboriginal person?
2. Would you be more or less willing to enlist in the Canadian Forces if you came from a group that had been treated unfairly by the country going to war? Or do you think that when you enlist you are fighting for a country you love rather than the government of that country?"

### **Profile: Chief Joe Dreaver**

Chief Joe Dreaver was from the Mistawasis Cree First Nation in Saskatchewan. Dreaver was unusual in that he served in both world wars. During the First World War, he was a sapper—a soldier employed in the construction of fortifications, trenches, or tunnels that approach or undermine enemy positions. He earned the Military Medal—an award for bravery in the field—for the work he conducted in Belgium.

When the Second World War began, joined the forces once again. He left his farm behind and brought 17 men with him

to enlist, including three of his sons. But because he was 48, he was considered too old for overseas service and remained in Canada with the Veterans Guard, watching over prisoners of war in Alberta. He is one of that rare group of veterans who served Canada in both world wars.

### **Profile: The McLeod Family**

John McLeod was an Ojibwa who served overseas in the First World War and was a member of the Veterans Guard during the Second World War, in which six of his sons and one of his daughters also enlisted. It is rare that eight members of one family sign up to serve in the forces.

Tragically, two of McLeod's sons were killed in action, and another two were wounded.

In 1972, McLeod's wife, Mary, became the first Aboriginal woman to be named Canada's Silver Cross Mother. In this role, she placed a wreath at the National War Memorial in Ottawa on Remembrance Day on behalf of all Canadian mothers who had lost children in war.

### **Profile: Oliver Milton Martin**

Oliver Martin was a Mohawk from the Six Nations Grand River Reserve.

A teacher by trade, Martin took leave from his school to enlist in the regular forces in 1915. He was 22 at the time, and two of his brothers enlisted as well. He spent seven months in France and Belgium, where he survived a gas attack.

In 1917, he earned his pilot's wings. When the war ended, Martin returned to teaching and became a school principal in Toronto, Ontario.

During the Second World War, Martin oversaw the training of hundreds of recruits in Canada. In October 1944 he retired from active service. He is remembered because he is a prominent figure, having reached the highest rank—brigadier—ever held by a Canadian Aboriginal person.

After leaving the armed forces, Martin became a justice of the peace. He was the first Aboriginal Canadian to hold a judicial post in Ontario. He remained in this position until his death in 1957.

Source: Veterans Affairs Canada/Anciens Combattants Canada – [www.vac-acc.gc.ca](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca)

### **Analysis**

Reread the responses you made to the opening questions of this feature. Now that you have read this information, is there anything you'd like to add to your initial responses? Why or why not?

# REMEMBERING CANADA'S WAR DEAD

## **Activity: Canadian War Memorial Project**

This project will be divided into three tasks:

1. the proposal for a memorial
2. the creation of a memorial
3. the presentation of your memorial

### **Your Proposal**

Your proposal should include the following:

- An explanation of the people who you believe—based on your research—deserve to have a permanent memorial honouring their sacrifices and ideals
- An explanation of what your memorial will represent and how you will symbolize this (e.g., for nurses – a Red Cross; for peace activists – a dove)
- A physical description of the memorial that includes the materials used, shape/structure, engravings, location, and other relevant features

### **Your Memorial**

Create a mini model of your memorial. Use materials to represent your proposal (e.g., modelling clay instead of granite, popsicle sticks instead of logs). Ensure that your model incorporates and illustrates the significant symbols of your proposal (images, colours, engravings).

### **The Presentation**

You will be presenting your research and your memorial ideas to small groups in the class. All of the memorials will be displayed gallery style. Your presentation will take your classmates through your findings and what the memorial represents. Be prepared to fully explain what contribution these Canadians have made and why they deserve special recognition. Expect to answer questions.

Things to remember:

- Your time period is the present.
- Your perspective is that of an educated teenager.
- Your purpose is to consider who deserves recognition for contributions to Canadian conflicts.
- Good presentations require eye contact, talking not reading, and enthusiasm.