

# SYMBOLS OF COMMEMORATION



**Left: The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier;  
Bottom: The National War Memorial.**

## ^ **TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER**

Every year on November 11 in front of the National War Memorial thousands of Canadians of all ages surge forward at the conclusion of the National Remembrance Ceremony and quietly surround the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. When the crowd thins and the last person moves on with their day, the tomb is left covered in red lapel Poppies. Established in May 2000 and occupying a place of honour at the foot of the National War Memorial, the tomb is the final resting place for a soldier who died in the First World War. It is also a lasting memorial to all Canadians who fell or may fall in war, past, present and future.

The Tomb is a tangible reminder of lasting commemoration, implemented as

a millenium project under the leadership of The Royal Canadian Legion and a coalition of groups, including Veterans Affairs Canada, the Department of National Defence, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and Public Works and Government Services Canada. In the days leading up to its historic consecration, Canadians everywhere focused their attention as the Unknown Soldier was brought to Ottawa from France by an honour guard. Canadian Forces and Royal Canadian Military Police personnel participated every step of the way, helping to form a national tribute while the soldier lay in state in Parliament's Hall of Honour.

The determination of Legion members to perpetuate the Tradition of Remembrance in honour of their fallen comrades can be seen across the country at cenotaphs which become the focus of community attention each November 11. Canadians, thankfully, have other impressive national reminders of the cost in war, beginning with the National War Memorial.

## **NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL** v

Every year the Legion organizes the National Remembrance Day service on behalf of the people of Canada which takes place at the National War Memorial in downtown Ottawa. The memorial is aptly described as the most outstanding monument erected in Canada. Unveiled by King George VI in the spring of 1939 to commemorate the unselfish response of Canadians in the First World War, the memorial has come to “symbolize the sacrifice of all Canadians who have served Canada in time of war in the cause of peace and freedom.”

It was a model submitted by Vernon March of England that won a 1925



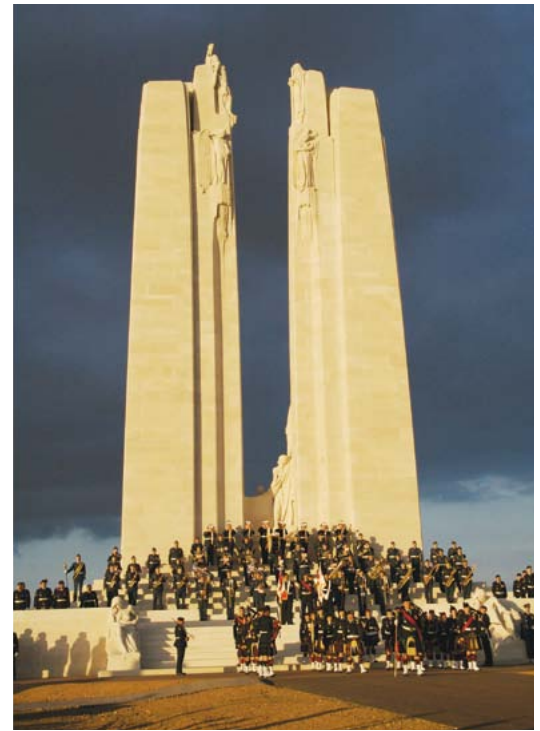
**From top: Members of the Canadian Forces commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, 2007; Silver Cross Mother Bernadette Rivait and her husband Homer find the names of three of their five sons in the Second World War Book of Remembrance in the Memorial Chamber.**

design competition. His theme focused on the “Great Response of Canada”, and the completed memorial incorporated uniformed figures of men and women representing all services, passing through a granite arch. The bronze figures are each roughly two and one-half metres high and symbolize “the going of people to the triumph of their achievements overseas in a spirit of self-sacrifice and with no suggestion of glorifying war.” The two bronze figures on top of the arch represent Victory and Liberty.

the Parliament Buildings. The chamber, designed as the repository for the books, was opened by the Prince of Wales on August 3, 1927. Occupying the second level of the Peace Tower, it attracts more than 500,000 visitors annually. For many, the visit is a solemn pilgrimage to witness the name of a loved one in one of the seven Books of Remembrance. Each day at 11 a.m. guards turn the books’ pages according to perpetual calendars for each book. The calendars allow visitors from outside Ottawa to plan a trip to the Memorial Chamber to see a specific page. For others, visits have a historical significance: the walls of the chamber are pages that tell the story of Canada’s effort in the First World War.

#### ▼ MEMORIAL CHAMBER AND SEVEN BOOKS OF REMEMBRANCE

Two of the most touching commemorative efforts are also among the least conspicuous. The Memorial Chamber and Books of Remembrance are located in the Centre Block of



#### ▲ CANADIAN NATIONAL VIMY MEMORIAL

One of the most impressive memorials to Canada’s fallen is not located in Canada, but overseas on a famous ridge in northern France. The Canadian National Vimy Memorial honours one of the finest achievements in Canadian military history and pays tribute to those Canadians who died in battle in France, but whose graves are unknown. Of the 66,000 Canadians who died in the First World War, 18,000 were never properly buried because their remains could not be found. 11,285 of them have their names chiselled into the Vimy memorial. The remainder are inscribed on various other monuments, including the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres, Belgium.

The unveiling of the Vimy memorial by King Edward VIII on July 26, 1936, was spectacular. The Legion organized a massive pilgrimage that saw thousands of veterans return in chartered ocean liners to where they had fought their battles and lost close comrades.







**Ed Fewer of Grand Falls/Windsor, NL, visits the Beaumont Hamel Newfoundland Memorial in France, 2009.**

The battle fought at Vimy Ridge began on Easter Monday, April 9, 1917, and lasted four bloody days. Thousands of Canadian infantry, supported by an impressive array of large guns, captured the ridge which had been strongly held by German defenders who at first believed no army could take it. The cost was high—approximately 3,600 dead and more than 7,000 wounded—but while it was one of the bloodiest battles in Canadian military history it stands out as a nation-building event. The battle also marked the first time all units of the Canadian Army fought together.

In honour of the Canadian achievement and sacrifice, the French government donated 250 acres at the top of the ridge, and the land became part of Canada forever. Toronto sculptor Walter Allward was chosen to design the memorial, and his work began in the mid-1920s. Constructed from nearly 6,000 tonnes of “trau” stone imported from Yugoslavia, the memorial features twin pylons that rise 40 metres above the ground as well as several sculptured figures.

In 2007, on the 90th anniversary of the battle, and after months of restorative work, the memorial was rededicated by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. There to witness the ceremony were thousands of Canadian schoolchildren who eventually returned home with a sacred promise to remember those who fought during the war, including those soldiers who never returned home. “In any national story there are moments and places, sometimes far from home, which

in retrospect can be seen as fixed points about which the course of history turns—moments which distinguish that nation forever. Those who seek the foundations of Canada’s distinction would do well to begin here at Vimy,” said the Queen on April 9, 2007.

### **REMEMBERING THE ^ NEWFOUNDLANDERS**

Newfoundland, which was not part of Canada until 1949, contributed greatly during the First and Second World Wars, and in the years beyond. The largest of the battlefield parks in memory of Newfoundlanders who fell during the First World War is at Beaumont Hamel, just north of Albert, France, on the Somme. There, a great bronze caribou, emblem of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, overlooks the sloped battlefield still marked by old shell holes and trench lines. Bronze tablets at the base of the monument list the names of 814 members of the regiment, the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve, and Mercantile Marine who died in the war and have no known grave.

It was here, on July 1, 1916, during the opening day of the Battle of the Somme, that the Newfoundland Regiment fought its first engagement in France. The results were catastrophic. In less than half an hour the regiment of some 800 men was nearly annihilated. More than 230 were killed or died of wounds; 386 were wounded and 91 were missing. No single unit had suffered more on that day. Overall, Allied casualties during the first day on the Somme totalled 57,470 of which 19,240 were fatal. The Newfoundland Regiment, however, would survive, adding greatly to its storied reputation during the war and receiving royal consent to use the word “Royal” as part of its name.

Closer to home, the Newfoundland National Memorial in St. John’s commemorates all of Newfoundland’s wartime contributions on land and sea, including the Newfoundland Forestry Corps. It is located on Water Street, facing the historic harbour. During the First World War—out of a population of 250,000, Newfoundland sent 8,500 soldiers and sailors off to war. More than 1,500 gave their lives.

### **THE HALIFAX MEMORIAL**

Canadian service and sacrifice upon the sea during two world wars is commemorated on the Halifax Memorial in Point Pleasant Park. Nearly 2,000 members of the Royal Canadian Navy died during the Second World War, many during its longest continuous battle—the Battle of the Atlantic. Sailors served and paid with their lives protecting the vital convoys that delivered supplies to

From top: The Peacekeeping Monument in Ottawa, July 2005; South Korean sentries at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery, Busan.

the United Kingdom through U-boat infested waters. Twenty-four RCN ships were lost during the war. The memorial, which features a Cross of Sacrifice with a height of more than 12 metres, was erected by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on November 11, 1967, and is visible to ships approaching Halifax Harbour. Its large bronze panels are inscribed with the names of 3,257 Canadian men and women of the navy, army and merchant navy who were buried at sea between 1914 and the end of the Second World War.

### ▼ KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL

Located in Brampton, Ontario, the Korean War Memorial Wall commemorates Canadians who served in the Korean War. Curved and made of polished granite, the wall is more than 60 metres long, and features 516 bronze plaques, one for every Canadian soldier killed in the 1950-53 war. Another bronze plaque lists all of the Canadian units that served in the war. Nowhere is the sacrifice more clear than

in South Korea at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Busan. There are 2,267 service personnel buried at the UN cemetery, including 378 Canadians. Sixteen other Canadians, with no known grave, are listed on the cemetery’s bronze plaques. In 2002, ceremonies were held to unveil the Korean War Monument to the Canadian fallen. It features a bronze sculpture of a Canadian soldier holding a Korean child in his arms with another child at his feet. An identical monument is located in Ottawa, both inscribed with the words “We will never forget you brave sons of Canada.”

### RECONCILIATION – THE PEACEKEEPING MONUMENT

The Peacekeeping Monument in Ottawa was commissioned by the federal government shortly after the 1988



Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to UN peacekeepers. At the time, Canada was the only country that had participated in all UN peacekeeping operations. The monument, titled Reconciliation, was unveiled in 1992 by Governor General Ramon Hnatyshyn. It features three 10-foot tall figures dressed as UN observers standing on converging limestone walls. The names of peacekeeping missions from Korea in 1947 to Somalia in 1992 appear on the wall. The work is the creation of sculptor Jack Harmon, urban designer Richard Henriquez and landscape architect Cornelia Hahn-Oberlander, all of British Columbia.

Tens of thousands of Canadians have served in more than 40 international peace support operations around the world. More than 120 have lost their lives and many more have returned home with injuries to both body and mind.



### READING RESOURCES

(CLICK TO GO TO LINK)

- THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER
- CANADIAN NATIONAL VIMY MEMORIAL
- WHERE NEWFOUNDLAND REMEMBERS