

BELLS OF PEACE – A REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR





INTRODUCTION

The Royal Canadian Legion was born from the ashes of the First World War (WWI). As Canada's largest veterans' organization and in partnership with Veterans Affairs Canada, we have been handed this torch of remembrance by our founders to hold high and to never forget the sacrifices made in the name of Canada and for Canadians.

On 11 November 2018, 100 years will have passed since the signing of the armistice that officially ended WWI. As a tribute to all Canadians that served in this horrific struggle we are obligated to produce a program of remembrance for those from that era — an event that allows Canadians, if only for a moment, to stop, to remember and to feel, perhaps for a second, the joy that peace brought after so much death and destruction. In order to achieve this in such a short period of time, plans will have to be simple, involve all Legion branches and communities across the country and focus on the loss and sacrifice both on the battlefield and at home.

AIM

To create a remembrance event that highlights the sacrifices of Canadians who served in WWI.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The war to end all wars left an indelible impression on Canada.

Some 619,636 Canadians enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the war, and approximately 424,000 served overseas. Close to 61,000 Canadians were killed during the war, and another 172,000 were wounded. Many more returned home broken in mind and body. The Dominion of Newfoundland suffered 1,305 killed and several thousand wounded. Of the more than 172,000 Canadians who reported wounds during the war, medical authorities classified approximately 138,000 as battle casualties. Of the wounded who survived, 3,461 men and one woman had a limb amputated. No reliable method existed for tracking or treating psychological casualties, but authorities identified over 9,000 Canadians as suffering from "shell shock". (<https://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/after-the-war/legacy/>)

This was an enormous contribution from a population of just under 8 million in 1914. Approximately seven percent of the total population of Canada was in uniform at some point during the war, and hundreds of thousands of additional Canadians worked on the home front in support of the war.

If you were to extrapolate from the numbers listed above, it could be claimed that the majority of the population in Canada at that time was touched in some capacity by the war. Further to this you could also state that there were at least 425,000 families that were intimately affected as their loved ones faced the brunt of the tragedy that is war.

If we are to remember those that fought, we need to drive home the message of the horror of war and its effect on the society that wages it. That includes the families that had to live with the



unknown and after the war with the after-effects related to those who returned with injuries both visible and invisible.

Remembrance Event 1 – The Ringing of Bells

Bells call us to wake, to pray, to work, to arms, to feast and, in times of crisis, to come together. “On November 11, 1918, the ringing of church bells erupted spontaneously across the country, as an outpouring of relief that four years of war had come to an end. (BBC news <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41957521>).”

The Bells of Peace initiative is designed to emulate that moment of remembrance in honour of our veterans who served in WWI.

Components

In order to create a unified remembrance action in Canada it is proposed that all communities in Canada who possess a bell(s) participate in this activity as follows:

- Engage all communities, the military, relevant historical sites and churches (equipped with bells) in this endeavor.
- The bell(s) would be tolled 100 times with 5 seconds between tolls,
- Each community/bell would start the ringing at the going down of the sun on 11 Nov as per the sunset timing in their area.
- Several communities will be asked to enhance this remembrance activity to highlight a significant historical event within the context of WWI (see coordinating instructions),
- All communities are encouraged to add their own community tradition or WWI experience in addition to the ringing of the bells.

Remembrance Event 2 – The Marking of the Graves of WWI Soldiers

Those that served in WWI and returned to Canada have now passed into history and in many cases have been forgotten. Canada’s last WWI veteran Mr. John Babcock died at the age of 109 in February 2010. Unlike those killed in battle and buried in Europe whose graves are well marked and maintained our returned veterans lie for the most part in ordinary graves scattered throughout the land unrecognized for the remarkable sacrifices that they endured. As a prelude to the Ringing of the Bells at sunset on 11 Nov 2018 it is asked that those of our youngest generation (Canadian school children) search out those that served in WWI and place a small Canadian flag on that person’s grave.

Components

- Using digital technology and the Archives Canada data base search out and mark with a Canadian flag all WWI veterans graves.
- Through the local Legion Branch or directly from Dominion Command acquire the required flags.
- Record on an excel data sheet those veterans that were located and submit to Dominion Command.



- Share your images or videos online using #100Bells or uploading to the Woobox campaign page.

Note: Legion branches will lead the way in the communities where they are located.

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations are in support of this initiative:

- Veterans Affairs Canada
- The Canadian Armed Forces
- Parks Canada
- Cadets

EXECUTION

GENERAL

This is a collective Legion effort. All Branches are asked to coordinate the ringing of the bells within their community and those of neighbouring communities that don't have a Legion branch. This program will follow the outlined priorities:

- Pri 1: All community bells will ring 100 times at the setting of the sun in their local area.
- Pri 2: Engage the youth in the community to be part of the bell ringing process.
- Pri 3: Create a gathering of WWI descendants at the setting of the sun.
- Pri 4: Promote the marking, with a Canadian flag, of the graves of all who served in WWI.

TASKS

Dominion Command (DC): Dominion Command in concert with Veterans Affairs will be the lead organization on this effort. Specific tasks are as follows:

- Establish the national coordination cell and information centre.
- Notifying and distributing material to all branches.
- Notify all church organizations within Canada of this initiative and request their support.
- Notify all communities within Canada of this initiative and request their support.
- Notify the Canadian Armed Forces of this initiative and request their support.



- Coordinate the national carillonneur's effort across Canada.
- Create the graphics and ads required to promote this initiative.
- Create the national social media campaign.
- Assist Provincial Commands and branches in this effort.
- Designate the WWI Canadian historical focus sites and assist branches in these areas to draw attention to these sites.

Provincial Commands: Provincial Commands are asked to designate a coordinating person or person(s) to help facilitate this initiative to include:

- Encouraging their branches to participate in this national effort.
- Coordinating efforts between branches in major urban centers.
- Approving the use of branch Poppy Funds as per the coordinating instructions.
- Assist in the remembrance activity in the designated WWI Historical sites.

Branches: Legion Branches are asked to designate an individual or individuals to coordinate the activities listed below:

Priority:

- Coordinate the ringing of the bells within their community.
- Select a descendant to assist with the ringing of the bells.
- Provide a piper or equivalent to play Amazing Grace at the cessation of the bells.
- Ensure your community is aware of the significance of this remembrance activity.

Secondary:

- Initialize a cemetery search in concert with the youth of your community to identify WWI veteran's gravesites and mark with a Canadian flag.
- Acquire the necessary flags from Dominion Command for grave placement.
- Organize a gathering of WWI descendants in concert with the ringing of the bells.
- Organize and conduct any activity that reflects the remembrance of WWI that would be specific to your community.

Branches located in Specific WWI Historical Focus Sites: The branches in these locations are asked to coordinate the priority tasks listed above as well as draw attention to the WWI



historical relevance of their identified sites. Dominion Command will assist these branches in this endeavor. These sites are listed from East to West:

- **St Johns NL** – Representing the start of the Bells of Remembrance initiative and the departure point of the RNR.
- **Halifax, NS** – The Halifax explosion.
- **Charlottetown, PE** - Artillerymen from the 4th Regiment Canadian Garrison Artillery were among the first to set sail off to war from the harbor in Charlottetown.
- **Fredericton, NB** - More than a century after losing his life on a battlefield in France, a Canadian man who left a New Brunswick farm to fight in the First World War will be laid to rest. The Canadian Armed Forces has confirmed that remains found in 2016 in France belong to Private John Henry Thomas. He grew up in Birch Ridge, N.B. On Aug. 19, 1917, he was killed in action while his battalion was holding its forward position against German counter-attacks. Private Thomas is the most recent missing in action Canadian soldier to be found and identified.
- **Val Cartier, QC** – The training site of the CEF.
- **Guelph, ON** – The birthplace of LCol J. McRae.
- **Winnipeg, MB** – Valour Road representing all WWI VC recipients.
- **Saskatoon, SK.** Alex Decoteau was born on Nov. 19, 1887 on the Red Pheasant Reserve near North Battleford, Sask. An Olympian and Canada's first aboriginal police officer. Killed at Passchendaele.
- **Edmonton, AB** - In Jasper National Park there are five mountains named for First World War Victoria Cross recipients with Alberta connections. The peaks are located within a series of mountains known as the Victoria Cross Ranges. The names of these mountains honour Private John Chipman Kerr, Private Cecil John Kinross, Captain George Burdon McKean, Private John George Pattison and Sergeant Raphael Louis Zenge
- **Victoria, BC** – Recognize Sir Arthur Currie and the ending of the Bells of Peace initiative.

Note: There are many other significant people and events that occurred as a direct result of WWI and other communities are encouraged to identify and promote these through their own remembrance activities and through the social media campaign.

COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS

Remembrance Event 1A: Coordinate the Ringing of Bells Across Canada

Organizations to be Notified – Churches, communities, Legion branches, military, carillonners, communities, Members of Parliament, MLA's.



Method – Phone, email or letter

Feedback: woo box / social media. Encourage feedback on success.

Participants: All communities in Canada

Legion:

- Coordinate all activities.
- Notify the churches, Legion Branches, carillonneur's, media.
- Provide the information centre contact.
- Provide the Social Media Plan.
- Provide the Bells of Peace Web Page and drive all traffic toward this site.
- Sanction use of Poppy Funds for certain remembrance activities.

VAC:

- Inform communities, Members of Parliament, MLA's, media.
- Organize and coordinate territory participation.
- In concert with the Legion approach the First Nations to conduct a special ceremony to bring the spirits home of those lost and remain buried in France/Belgium. SK - Red Pheasant Reserve near North Battleford, Sask.
- Communicate activities to Canadians through media channels and links to Legion web page.
- Provide 30K grant.
- Solicit support from the 100 Days Commemoration Working Group.

Remembrance Event 1B: Coordinate the Ringing of Bells at Specific WWI Historical Focus Sites

Dominion Command will take the lead of the coordination of these specific sites (listed above on page 8)

Remembrance Event 2 - Place Canadian Flags on WWI Veterans graves.

Draft and conduct the grave search for all WWI Veterans

Method: Gravesites researched in communities by Canadian youth and flags placed at each.



Canadian Flags: Supplied by Legion through Poppy Funds.
Distribution by Legion Supply
Additional Flags - Heritage Canada – thru Veterans Affairs

Information Source: Library and Archives Canada WWI data base

Method: Cell phone or computer based research.

Feedback: woo box / social media. Encourage feedback on success.

Participants: Cadets/schools/relatives

Legion: Will provide flags and distribution
Provide coordinating paper for distribution to schools.
Distribute material to Cadet Corps HQ.

VAC: Distribute instructions to schools.
Confirm number of flags that can be provided by Heritage Canada

TIMINGS

21 Sep – Legion branch packages sent.
24 Sep – Confirm number of Flags from Heritage Canada.
12 October – All communications sent.
15 Oct – VAC confirmatory meeting
24 Oct – Official launch
11 Nov - Initiate

SERVICE SUPPORT

Funding

Legion: The Dominion Executive Council has authorized the use of Poppy Funds for the purpose of this initiative.

VAC: 30K grant under the Commemorative Partnership Program.

COMMUNICATIONS

Formal launch will be at the Perley Rideau on 24 Oct in concert with Canada Post



Possible invite to Ambassadors of warring nations. Coordinated by the Legion – may require VAC assistance with invites.

Social media program: Legion – Woo Box – coordinated by Legion Marketing and comms

Community Newspapers – Legion Branches (material provided by Dominion Command)

VAC – Posted on social media and web resources.

Contacts:

Legion:	Administration	Marketing	Media
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Memoriam Eorum Retinebimus (We Will Remember Them)