

Canada Remembers Times

Veterans' Week Special Edition – November 5 to 11, 2010

Weather



September 3, 2006

Kandahar, Afghanistan

42°C Sunny

Newfoundlanders in Gallipoli



Photo: Public Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador VAS7-1-3

Newfoundland Regiment soldiers in front line trenches in Gallipoli.

When Britain declared war in August 1914, Newfoundland, which was a colony of Britain at the time, responded quickly by recruiting its first 1,000 men for overseas service.

In September 1915, the 1st Newfoundland Regiment landed on Turkey's Gallipoli peninsula, joining British, Australian and New Zealand troops. Gallipoli would be the Newfoundlanders' first experience of the horrors of trench warfare—artillery fire, snipers, great cold and disease caused by living in such harsh conditions. The regiment also earned its first battle honour when they captured "Caribou Hill" in November. They covered the withdrawal of Allied troops from the region, being among the last to leave in January 1916. Approximately 40 Newfoundlanders had died, a taste of the great casualties the regiment would soon suffer on the Western Front.

V-J Day at Last!



Photo: LAC PA-114811

Canadian and British prisoners of war in Hong Kong awaiting liberation by landing party from HMCS Prince Robert.

During the Second World War, approximately 10,000 Canadians served in Asia. Almost 2,000 soldiers from Manitoba's Winnipeg Grenadiers and Quebec's Royal Rifles of Canada set sail for Hong Kong in late October 1941 to help defend the British Crown Colony. The Japanese invaded on December 8, 1941. Badly outnumbered, the defenders fought

bravely before being forced to surrender on Christmas Day. Approximately 290 Canadians were killed and almost 500 wounded. The survivors' ordeal was just beginning. Over the next four years, 267 more would die as a result of malnutrition, beatings by prison guards and forced labour. Ronald Routledge of Saskatchewan was there:

"Well, I went down to a hundred pounds, you know. I was maybe a hundred and eighty odd pounds when I was my normal weight, but I was down to about a hundred pounds."

Many other Canadians also saw action in Asia during the war, including thousands of Royal Canadian Air Force airmen who served in the Burma Campaign as radar operators and

members of bomber, transport, reconnaissance and fighter squadrons. Ontario's Leonard Birchall was even dubbed "the Saviour of Ceylon" by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill after detecting the Japanese invasion fleet sailing for the island of Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka). His plane was shot down, but not before the crew had radioed a warning that helped the Allies repel the attack.

Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. V-J (Victory over Japan) Day marked the end of years of fighting in the Second World War. The Canadian POWs were finally liberated and returned home.

100 Years of the Canadian Navy

The Canadian Navy was founded in 1910. At the outbreak of the First World War, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) only had two ships and fewer than 350 men. It would play such roles as controlling shipping in Canadian ports, performing radio-telegraph services and undertaking mine sweeping and patrolling operations during the war.

The Second World War saw the RCN grow greatly and play an important role in the Battle of the Atlantic — the struggle between the Allied navies, who needed to maintain the vital flow of war materials from North America to Europe, and the German U-boats (submarines) that wanted to cut off that supply. By the end of the war, Canada had the third-largest navy in the world with 434 vessels and 95,000 men and women in uniform.

During the Korean War, eight Canadian destroyers helped blockade the enemy coast,



Photo: DND HS2008-J018-006

HMCS Charlottetown serving in the Arabian Sea in 2008.

guard against amphibious landings, protect aircraft carriers, bombard coastal areas and assist isolated fishing villages.

With the unification of the Canadian military in the late 1960s, the RCN became the sea arm of the Canadian Forces. Our ships patrolled Canada's shores during the Cold War, watching for Soviet submarines,

and have served with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces over the years. The Canadian Navy tradition of service continues today, whether guarding our coasts, watching for smuggling, undertaking sovereignty operations in the North, or patrolling the waters off Southwest Asia in the fight against terrorism.



The Murmansk Run

One of the most dangerous routes sailed by the Merchant Navy during the Second World War was the notorious Murmansk Run. Despite constant German attack and extreme weather conditions, supplies were shipped to the Arctic port of Murmansk to assist the Soviet Union in its fight against Germany. It was so dangerous that if a ship was sunk, the survivors could not be rescued.

From 1941 to 1945, more than forty convoys sailed, transporting millions of tons of supplies, such as aircraft, tanks, jeeps, locomotives, flatcars, guns, ammunition, fuel and millions of pairs of boots. These supplies allowed the Soviet Union to continue fighting Germany on the Eastern Front, thus preventing the Germans from concentrating all their forces against the Allies in the West.

The Liberation of the Netherlands

The liberation of the Netherlands during the Second World War is one of the most famous chapters in our country's military heritage. In late 1944 and early 1945, the Canadians battled to push the Germans from the country they had occupied since the spring of 1940. With its challenging terrain of canals, dikes and floodlands, the Netherlands was a tough place to fight.

After opening battles in the fall of 1944, bad weather brought the

offensive to a halt. That winter was a terrible time for the Dutch—food and fuel supply reserves were gone; people ate tulip bulbs and scavenged through garbage to survive. Thousands starved or froze to death.

Early in the new year, the push began to finally liberate the country. The Canadian troops were cheered as one town after another was freed. It was a memorable period, as one Dutch teenager at the time recalled: "As the (Canadian) tank came nearer . . . there

was a big hush over all the people and it was suddenly broken by a big scream, as if it was out of the earth. And the people climbed on the tank . . . and they were crying. And we were running with the tanks and the jeeps all the way into the city."

Helping liberate the Netherlands was a proud achievement for our country, but one that came at a great cost. More than 7,600 Canadians died in the effort.



Photo: LAC PA-140417

Dutch civilians celebrating liberation of Utrecht by units of the 1st Canadian Corps.

Peacekeeping in a Place with no Peace to Keep



Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group – CANBAT 1 – Croatia 1993

In the years following the Korean War, Canada developed a well-deserved reputation for taking part in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping efforts around the world. Peacekeeping involves sending impartial troops into a war-torn area after a cease-fire has been negotiated to prevent new fighting breaking out.

In the early 1990s, the Eastern European country of Yugoslavia was torn apart by ethnic and religious differences and civil war erupted. Atrocities were committed against civilians on all sides. The UN sent in forces to try to contain the worst of the violence, but fighting was still going on. In September 1993, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry serving in the UN forces found themselves in the middle of the heaviest firefight a Canadian unit had then experienced since the Korean War.

The “Medak Pocket” was a portion of Croatia that was then under Serbian control. The Croats had launched an offensive to take the area and heavy fighting broke out. A cease-fire was arranged, with UN forces overseeing the withdrawal of both sides. Canadian and French soldiers began to move in but Croatian forces began firing on the Canadians. The Patricia's bravely repelled many attacks and held their position despite being pounded with heavy machine gun fire, grenades, cannons and small arms fire. The next morning, despite another cease-fire, the Croats still prevented UN troops from entering the pocket.

The Canadian commander held an impromptu press conference in front of their roadblock to show the world what they were doing, forcing the Croats to open the road. Tragically, the UN forces found the ethnically Serbian villages in the Medak Pocket destroyed and many civilians killed—the victims of “ethnic cleansing.”

Photo: DND

The War Comes to our Doorstep

In the early morning hours of October 14, 1942, the ferry SS *Caribou* was on its way from Cape Breton to Newfoundland with 237 people on board, many of them civilians. The dark night was lit up when the ferry was hit by a torpedo from a German U-boat. The explosion threw people from their bunks and they rushed to get off the sinking ship. Several lifeboats were damaged or could not be launched, so many were forced to jump into the cold water.



Survivors of the SS Caribou. October 14, 1942.

Photo: Cassie Brown Collection, Coll 115. Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University.

nurse to be killed due to enemy action during the war. Her colleague Margaret Brooke was named a Member of the Order of the British Empire for her brave efforts to save her good friend.

One hundred thirty-six people died that night, including at least five mothers and 11 children—a tragedy that still echoes today for many Atlantic Canadians.

Among the casualties was Royal Canadian Navy Nursing Sister Agnes Wilkie, Canada's sole military

Women on the Job!

It took the collective efforts of all Canadians, at home and overseas, to help the Allies achieve victory in the Second World War.

With so many young men in uniform, women were called upon to take up jobs that had been traditionally done by men. This included important manufacturing jobs to produce the materials so desperately needed for the war effort. One example was the Pictou Shipyards in northern Nova Scotia. Approximately 700 women picked up hammers, wrenches and rivets to help build dozens of merchant ships to carry supplies overseas.



Photo: LAC PA-112891

Mrs. A. Mackay operating a rivet gun at Pictou Shipyards.

At War in Korea



Photo: LAC PA-126820

Canadian artillery in action in Korea, June 1951.

Korea has traditionally been known as the “Land of the Morning Calm,” but for the more than 26,000 brave Canadians who travelled halfway around the world to fight with the United Nations (UN) forces in the Korean War, calmness was in short supply.

Alberta's Ray Nickerson enlisted in the Canadian Army at age 16 and served in Korea. He remembers his first encounter with the enemy:

“... We took an attack at night ... one wave and another wave behind and another wave behind, like, it seemed like they had endless, endless, endless men. ... And it was pretty damn scary when the flares were going up and you could see all these, it looked like a bunch of ants crawling around, coming up the hills ... it was scary, but you knew you had a job to do and you had to do it, you know.”

The war began on June 25, 1950 when North Korea invaded South Korea. When an armistice was finally signed on July 27, 1953, after more than three years of fighting, the border was back close to where it had been before the war. Canada had helped restore peace and freedom to the people of South Korea—a peace paid for in part by the 516 Canadian servicemen who died during the war. No formal peace treaty was ever signed, however, and tensions along the border between the two countries remain high today.

Operation Medusa

The challenges faced by Canadians serving in Afghanistan with the UN-sanctioned International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) have been great and the risks many. While much of the toll taken on Canadian Forces members has come from roadside bombs and suicide attacks, Canadians have also taken part in major combat with the Taliban.

Operation *Medusa* was a Canadian-led offensive in the Kandahar area of the country in September 2006. Afghan, American, Dutch and Danish forces were also involved. The goal was to clear the Taliban from the Panjwai district to help the Afghan government establish control over the area. The many hostile villages, terrain criss-crossed by irrigation ditches, trenches and tunnels, extreme climate and roadside bombs made it a difficult place for the Canadians to operate.



Photo: DND AR2006-G007-0071

Canadians readying to storm a compound where Taliban soldiers are hiding during Operation Medusa.

Approximately 1,400 ISAF soldiers, including more than 1,000 Canadians, took part, making it Canada's largest combat operation in more than 50 years. It was hard fighting and the Canadians took heavy fire, but the Taliban were pushed from the district. The cost was high, however—12 Canadian Forces members were killed in the two-week offensive.

Canadians in the South African War

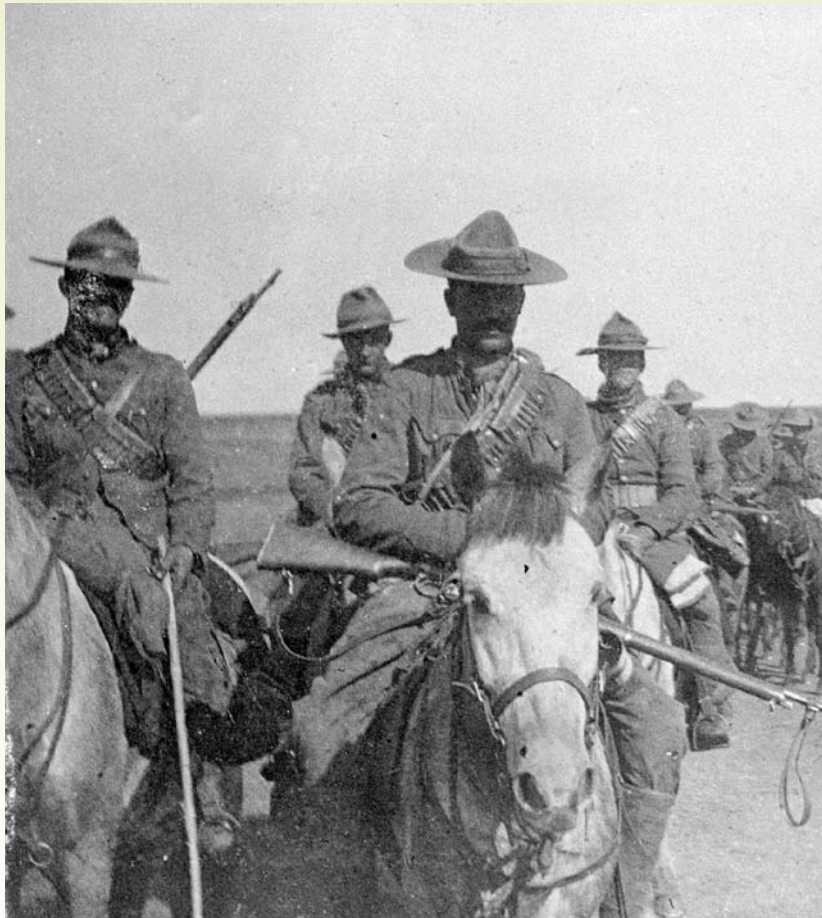


Photo: LAC PA-173029

2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles on patrol in South Africa in 1902.

The South African War was the first overseas conflict in which large contingents of Canadians served. It was a struggle between the British, who wanted to unite South Africa under their rule, and the Dutch settlers, who wanted to remain independent.

When war broke out in 1899, after decades of tensions, Britain requested military assistance from Canada and other members of the Commonwealth. Canadian opinion was split over what some saw as a “British War” in which our country should not become involved, while others were drawn to the idea of defending the British Empire. Despite the controversy, a thousand men were quickly recruited to form the First Contingent that sailed from Québec City on October 30, 1899.

The war ended in 1902 with the Dutch settlers surrendering their independence in exchange for support to the victims of the war and eventual self-government. More than 7,000 Canadians had volunteered for service with 277 dying (most from injury or disease caused by the harsh conditions), and more than 250 being wounded.

Healing the Troops

Many Canadians have looked after the wounded during war, including Drs. Frederick Banting, Norman Bethune and Cluny Macpherson. Their experiences led to impressive medical discoveries still in use today.

Dr. Cluny Macpherson +

Cluny Macpherson was born in St. John's, Newfoundland in 1879, and earned his medical degree at McGill University in Montréal.

Dr. Macpherson enlisted in September 1914, and was appointed Principal Medical Officer of the

1st Newfoundland Regiment during the First World War. He served in France, Belgium, Egypt, Salonica and Gallipoli, Turkey.

Early in the war, a soldier's only protection from gas was to breathe through a handkerchief soaked in urine.

Dr. Macpherson invented the first gas mask by modifying a helmet with a canvas hood, eyepieces and a breathing tube. This became an important protective device in the war, protecting soldiers from blindness, disfigurement and injury to their throats and lungs.



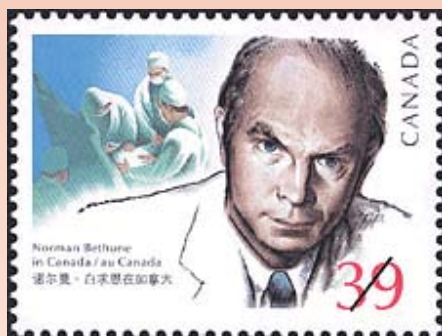
The Macpherson gas mask

Photo: Museum of Health Care at Kingston. Used with permission

Dr. Norman Bethune

Norman Bethune was born in 1890 in Gravenhurst, Ontario. At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, he enlisted in the No. 2 Field Ambulance Medical Corps, and served as a stretcher-bearer. Wounded at Ypres, Belgium, he returned to Canada to complete his medical degree in 1916. Bethune later pioneered the world's first mobile blood transfusion units, established free medical clinics in Montréal, and invented new surgical instruments.

When Japan invaded China in 1937, Dr. Bethune was determined to help. He went there with the Canadian-



1990 "Norman Bethune in Canada" stamp.

Photo: © Canada Post Corporation. Canadian Postal Archives, LAC, POSTAL 1214

American Mobile Medical Unit and worked day and night under rudimentary conditions, caring for the wounded. Tales were told across China of this extraordinary foreigner who was undaunted by hardship, and gave his clothes, his food, and even his own blood to those in need. While operating on a soldier, Bethune cut his finger and died of blood poisoning in 1939.

Dr. Frederick Banting



Dr. Frederick Banting

Photo: LAC PA-176289

Frederick Banting was born in 1891 in Alliston, Ontario. During the First World War, Dr. Banting joined the Canadian Army Medical Corps, and served as a medical officer. Just weeks before the armistice, he was wounded in the right arm but continued to treat injured soldiers, earning him the Military Cross. In 1922, he was awarded Canada's first-ever Nobel Prize for the discovery of insulin.

Banting also conducted medical research for the military during the Second World War. He died in a plane crash in Newfoundland while on a secret scientific mission to England in 1941.

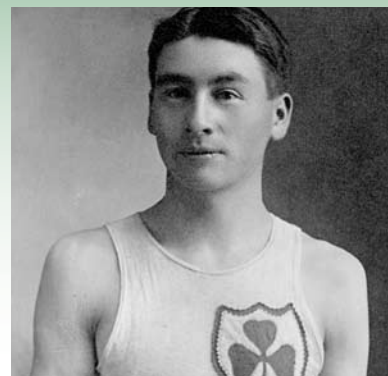
An Aboriginal-Canadian Trailblazer

Alexander Decoteau was born in Saskatchewan in 1887 and moved to Alberta as a young man. A remarkable long-distance runner, he competed in the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden. He was also our country's first Aboriginal-Canadian

police officer before enlisting in the army during the First World War.

Private Decoteau won the five-mile race during a military sports day in England and King George V awarded him his personal gold pocket watch as a

prize. Tragically, he was killed in October 1917 during the Battle of Passchendaele. It is said that the German sniper who shot him took the watch but Decoteau's comrades later killed the sniper, recovering the treasured memento and sending it home to Decoteau's mother.



Alexander Decoteau in 1912.

Photo: City of Edmonton Archives EA-10-2072



Piper James Richardson

Photo: LAC PA-C-033428

Music in the Trenches

The Canadian military has a long tradition of using music to build morale. During the First World War, playing the bagpipes even earned a British Columbia soldier the Victoria Cross (the highest award for courage).

In October 1916, James Richardson of the Seaforth Highlanders was in action on the Western Front in France. The 20-year-old piper's company was launching an attack during the Battle

of the Somme when the men were held up by thick barbed wire and intense enemy fire. Richardson coolly strode back and forth outside the wire and proudly played his pipes, inspiring his comrades to successfully capture the enemy position.

Richardson later helped in the transport of a wounded comrade and some prisoners away from the fighting. Remembering that he had left his

precious pipes behind, Richardson insisted on going back to retrieve them. He was never seen again.

Miraculously, Richardson's bagpipes were found in the mud of the Somme in 1917. On display in Scotland for decades, they were repatriated and placed on display in the British Columbia Legislature in 2006. Richardson's pipes had finally come home.

Two Wars - One Ace

Omer Levesque was born in Mont-Joli, Quebec in 1920. Early in the Second World War, Levesque joined the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) where he flew Hurricane and Spitfire fighter aircraft. Patrolling over occupied France in November 1941, he shot down a German Focke-Wulf 190, the first kill of this new fighter aircraft by an RCAF pilot. He later shot down three more German fighters during the war.

Levesque was shot down over the French coast in 1942 while battling fighters protecting German warships.

He was captured and spent the rest of the war in Stalag Luft III, the German prisoner of war camp made famous by the Hollywood movie, *The Great Escape*.

Levesque returned to action in November 1950 when he went to Korea on an exchange posting with the United States Air Force. He became the first Commonwealth pilot to shoot down a Chinese Communist MiG-15 fighter. With his total aerial combat victories from the two wars now at five, he became an "ace."



Omer Levesque in the cockpit.

Photo: Public Domain

A Naval Officer Reached the Stars

Marc Garneau was born in Quebec in 1949. He joined the Canadian Navy in 1974, working as a combat system engineer. He designed a simulator and training equipment for the Navy. In 1983, he was selected as one of Canada's first astronauts, and became the first Canadian in space in 1984.



Marc Garneau

Photo: Canadian Space Agency

A Real Life "Band of Brothers"



Photo: The Telegraph Journal

The military heritage of African-Canadians is long and proud. The Carty family of Saint John, New Brunswick, exemplifies this commitment to service. Albert Carty, a First World War Veteran, and his wife Fannie had five sons

who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) during the Second World War.

Adolphus, the oldest, was a flight sergeant and served as an airframe mechanic. William was a flight sergeant who served as an aeronautical inspector. Clyde, a leading aircraftman, served as a firefighter. Donald, an aircraftman second class, was an equipment assistant.



Gerald joined at age 18 and was one of the youngest commissioned officers in the RCAF at age 19. During more than 35 missions, he saw service as a wireless air gunner on Wellington and Lancaster bombers and was wounded in action.

In keeping with family tradition, two younger brothers at home, Robert and Malcolm, were members of the Army and Air Cadets during the war.

The Vanier Cup



Major Georges Vanier in 1918.

Photo: LAC PA-002777

The Vanier Cup is awarded each year to the Canadian university football champion. The cup is named after Major-General Georges Vanier, a Canadian soldier and diplomat. He served as an officer in the 22nd Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War, losing his right leg. Vanier received a number of decorations including the Military Cross, and served again in the Second World War. He became the first French-Canadian Governor General of Canada. An avid sports fan, he created the Vanier Cup in 1965.

A Youth Remembers



Conal Slobodin sprinkling Canadian soil on soldier's grave in the Netherlands.

Photo: VAC

In 2005, Conal Slobodin was a youth delegate on a Veterans Affairs Canada overseas event marking the liberation of the Netherlands. Travelling with many Veterans who had helped liberate the country had a great impact on the young man from the Yukon.

"I was speechless (for the first time in my life) as I sat talking to these men who, sixty years ago, were my age, and had donned a uniform and fought in a war that would forever impact the world. ... I did not know how to thank them, and I still don't today. ... Their courage and bravery go beyond our understanding of the mere words. As I often heard them say to me, 'I never want it to happen to you.' I thought, these men are true heroes."

Did you know?

John "Jack" Babcock died on February 18, 2010 at the age of 109—the last known Canadian Veteran of the First World War. He lied about his age in order to enlist in the Canadian Army at age 15, but authorities discovered he was underage and sent him to train with a reserve battalion in Britain until he was older. The war ended before he could be sent to the front line.



Mr. Babcock at age 107 and as a teenager.

Photo: VAC

Mr. Babcock's passing marked the end of an era. It is up to all of us to remember Canadians' service and

sacrifice during the First World War. Visit www.vac-acc.gc.ca today and search for "End of an Era" to learn more.

Remembrance on the Road

Canadians have long put their lives on the line in the cause of peace and freedom. Remembering their achievements and sacrifices is a great way to honour their service. People do this in many ways.

In March 2009, 20-year-old Trooper Jack "Bouts" Bouthillier of Ontario was killed by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan. His father, Raynald Bouthillier, wanted a fitting way to honour his son and other Canadians who have died in Afghanistan. He modified one of his company's trucks with pictures of "Bouts," scenes from Afghanistan, and the names of all Canadians who have died in service there.



Bouthillier's truck at Canadian Forces Base Petawawa.

Photo: DND - Base Web Developer, Eric Tractlet

ON THE WEB

La force francophone

The contributions of French-Canadians during the Second World War, both on the home front and in the military, were many. Men and women recall their war experiences in this cool interactive Web feature. To learn about their stories, visit www.vac-acc.gc.ca today and search for "La force francophone."

Veterans Affairs Canada has a new multimedia and interactive Web feature about the Korean War. Hear about the events leading up to the conflict, watch interviews with Canadian Veterans who were there, or explore an interactive time line and map. Visit www.vac-acc.gc.ca today and search for "Land of the Morning Calm."

Complete this time line by finding the missing dates from stories in the newspaper.

First Canadians leave for South African War

Canadian Navy founded

August 4 1914 First World War begins

Newfoundland Regiment comes ashore in Gallipoli

April 9-12 1917 Canadians triumph at Vimy Ridge

November 1917 Canadians capture Passchendaele

November 11 1918 Armistice ends First World War

1930s Great Depression

September 10 1939 Canada enters Second World War

Canadians surrender in Hong Kong

SS Caribou torpedoed off East Coast

September 3 1943 Canadians come ashore in mainland Italy

June 6 1944 Canadians come ashore on D-Day

May 8 1945 V-E Day – Official end of Second World War in Europe

V-J Day – Official end of Second World War in the Far East

October 24 1945 United Nations officially formed

June 25 1950 Korean War begins

Canadian ace Omer Levesque deploys to Korea

Armistice signed ending Korean War

November 1956 First Canadian peacekeepers go to Egypt

August 9 1974 Nine Canadian peacekeepers die in Middle East

Canadians fight in Medak Pocket, Croatia

Late 2001 Canadians first deploy to Afghanistan

Operation Medusa takes place in Afghanistan

"V" For Victory Nickels

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain during the Second World War, helped popularize the "V For Victory" slogan in an effort to raise Allied spirits. The people of occupied Europe were urged to paint the letter "V" on the walls of buildings.

From 1942 until 1945, Canada replaced the traditional beaver with a torch superimposed on a "V" on the back of the Canadian nickel. "WE WIN WHEN WE WORK WILLINGLY" was also etched in Morse code.

More than twenty-five million of the "V for Victory" coins were minted in 1943 alone. In 2005, during the *Year of the Veteran*, the Canadian Mint released a special commemorative "V for Victory" nickel.

1945 and 2005 'V for Victory' nickels

Photo: Terrill Dent

Remembrance in your Pocket

Did you know that on the back of the Canadian \$10 bill, you can find three remembrance-related illustrations? On the left is a verse from *In Flanders Fields*, the famous First World War poem by Canadian John McCrae. The center depicts a Canadian Forces peacekeeper, doves and a globe representing Canadian peace

support efforts around the world. On the right is a Veteran and two youth participating in a Remembrance Day service at a cenotaph.

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www.vac-acc.gc.ca