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THÈMES CANADIENS

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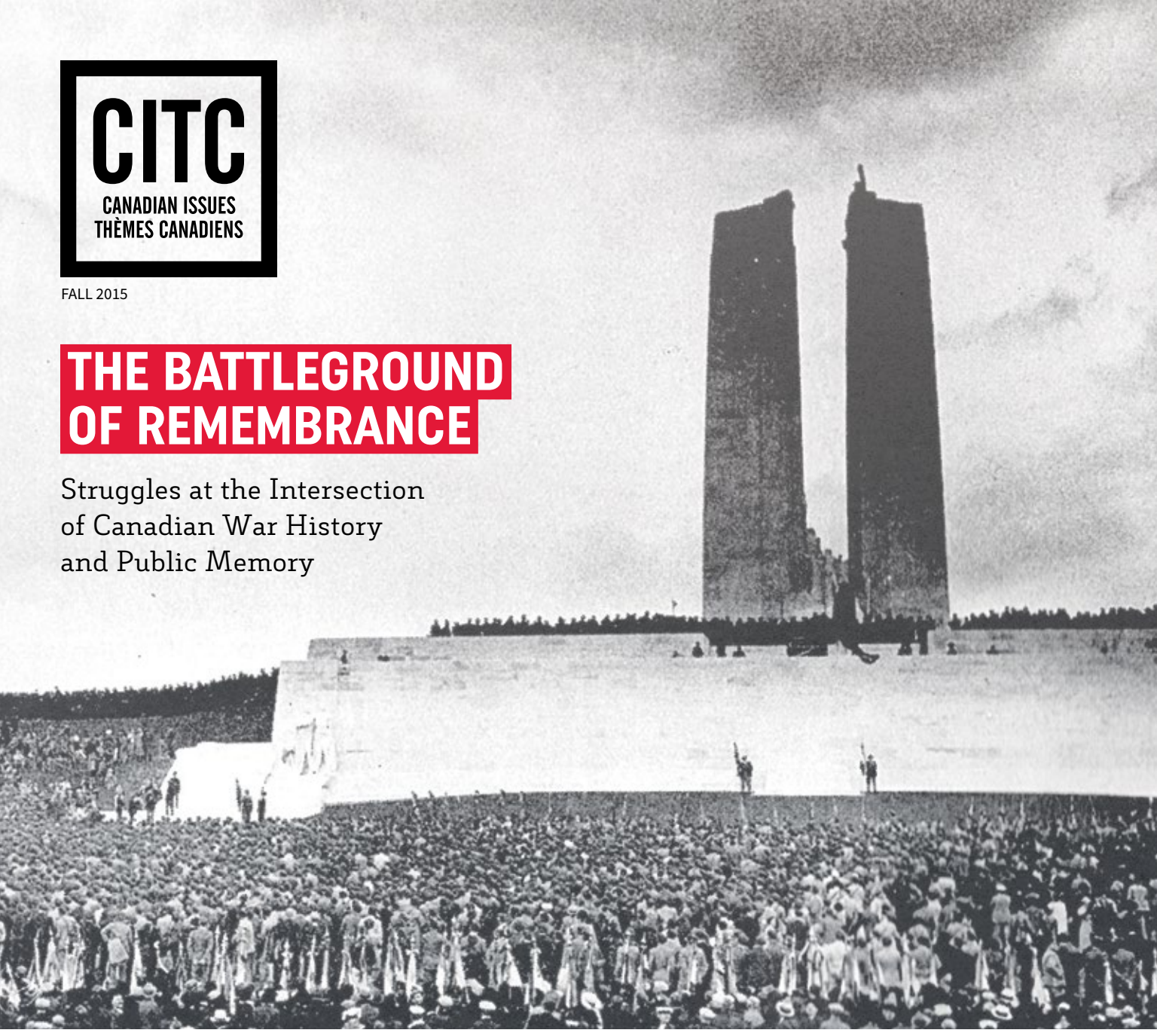
THE BATTLEGROUND OF REMEMBRANCE

Struggles at the Intersection of Canadian War History and Public Memory



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Cover image taken from *The Epic of Vimy* (1936)

INTRODUCTION

THE BATTLEGROUND OF REMEMBRANCE STRUGGLES AT THE INTERSECTION OF CANADIAN WAR HISTORY AND PUBLIC MEMORY

RANDY BOSWELL

Guest editor Randy Boswell is an assistant professor of journalism at Carleton University and a writer specializing in Canadian history.

Here in Ottawa, symbols of war remembrance are conspicuous and ubiquitous. The National War Memorial, its great solemnity shattered by gunshots a year ago and now deepened by the memory of that tragedy, remains the country's focal point every November 11 as Canadians mourn and honour more than 100,000 lives lost in the wars of the past century.

In the foreground of that monument lies another, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and a short distant behind is the Valiants Memorial, a ring of 14 statues and busts paying tribute to the heroes of Canadian military history. They range from the 17th-century French commander Comte de Frontenac to Mohawk fighter and diplomat Thayendanegea — a.k.a Joseph Brant of Seven Years' War fame — to War of 1812 icons Laura Secord, Charles de Salaberry and Isaac Brock, to First World War general Sir Arthur Currie, to navy pilot Robert Hampton Gray, posthumously awarded a Victoria Cross for daring exploits over Japan in the final days of the Second World War.

From there, visitors to Canada's capital don't need to roam far to do more remembering. Just steps away is a downtown park with a massive monument to aboriginal veterans and smaller memorials dedicated to Canadians who died in the Boer War and the airmen who flew with the Polish Home Army in the fight against Nazi Germany. There's even an Animals in War Memorial recognizing the contributions of horses, mules, dogs and carrier pigeons to the cause of freedom. We've barely scratched the surface of Ottawa's vast inventory of displayed military heritage — all of this even before a trip to the nearby Canadian War Museum. And it's no surprise, really, that Canada's political centre is also its principal hub of remembrance. The stately ambience of the entire National Capital Region, in

fact — the grand architecture, the ceremonial boulevards, the scenic driveways, the pantheon of bronze heroes — was explicitly mandated by Canada's postwar Liberal government and designed by French planner Jacques Gréber (author of a landmark 1950 report on beautifying and elevating the tone of Canada's capital) as an homage to Canadian veterans "in lieu of any other memorial of the war just ended." In short, Canada's capital is itself a war memorial. Lest we forget.

Clearly, former prime minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative governments of the past decade did not invent the impulse to revere wartime sacrifice. But the Harper era — ended in the federal election held on October 19, after the writing of the essays published here but before the penning of this note — generated considerable debate and discussion about whether there can, in fact, be too much remembering, and whether the commemorative urge is sometimes exploited for ulterior purposes, such as the psychic rebranding of Canada as a "warrior nation."

In their contributions to this collection, military histo-rians Serge Bernier and Terry Copp, Queen's University lecturer Jamie Swift and University of Toronto political historian John English all explore, each in different ways, how struggles between scholars, politicians, heritage advocates and others can make war remembrance its very own battleground.

Western University historian Jonathan Vance argues that the scale of a war memorial — occasionally a contentious matter in the chronicle of Canadian military commemoration — is typically overshadowed by the emotional power of the conceived monument. And art historian Laura Brandon repaints the conventional portrait of war artist and Group of Seven member A.Y. Jackson, urging a new understanding of his entire oeuvre as a kind of war memorial.

Jeremy Diamond, executive director of the Vimy Foundation, asserts in his article that the approaching 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge will cement that moment as a pillar of Canadian nationhood. And Jack Jedwab, executive vice-president of the Association for Canadian Studies and founding publisher of *Canadian Issues*, presents fresh polling data that probes Canadians' attitudes around remembrance and the reliability of their knowledge about the country's war history. The results offer an important reminder that the battles frequently waged over how soldiers' sacrifices and our collective military heritage are being commemorated should reflect the reality that we don't always agree on a common narrative nor even remember what truly happened in those wars gone by.

VIMY RIDGE MONUMENT: PART OF CANADIAN IDENTITY AND CULTURE

JEREMY DIAMOND

Jeremy Diamond is the executive director of The Vimy Foundation and has spearheading efforts to create the state-of-the-art Vimy Education Centre in France, set for completion in April 2017, the 100th anniversary of the Battle Wof Vimy Ridge. He was formerly the managing director at Historica Canada.

Vimy Ridge has long been considered Canada's most recognizable First World War battle. Waged from April 9-12, 1917, it was the first unreserved success of the Canadian Corps during the war; the first time Canadians fought side by side as one force during the bloody four-year conflict; and the first time a nation succeeded in taking the tactically important Ridge from the Germans. Vimy Ridge also represents the moment when the leadership of the Corps and the new styles of organization were born and would later become the signature Canadian battle style for the remainder of the war.

The numbers are still staggering. More than 170,000 combatants (the majority of whom were part of the Canadian Corps); more than 10,000 casualties; 3,598 killed; four Victoria Crosses. Many believe that out of the battle came a new sense of nationhood for a young country. As First World War Brigadier-General A.E. Ross opined after the battle, "In those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation."

But Vimy was more than just a memorable victory. Unlike much of our past, it has not been relegated to the dustbin of history. I would argue it is now a significant part of Canada's cultural identity, akin to the railway or Confederation — and with the upcoming centennial of the battle only 18 months away, the 1917 assault on Vimy Ridge is poised to become one of the best-known and appreciated events in Canadian history.

While the battle was recognized in its time as a significant victory for the Allies — and by extension for Canada — as evidenced by front-page coverage in American newspapers, it is the Vimy Memorial that has become an enduring symbol of honour and sacrifice for Canadians.

Designed by Canadian sculptor and architect Walter Seymour Allward, the Memorial stands on Hill 145, overlooking the Canadian battlefield of 1917, one of the points of the fiercest fighting. According to Veterans Affairs Canada, the custodians of the National Historic Site located in Northern France, the Memorial on Vimy Ridge "does more than mark the site of the great Canadian victory of the First World War. It stands as a tribute to all who served their country in battle and risked or gave their lives in that four-year struggle." And according to the Canadian Battlefield Memorials Commission, Allward's creation is a "memorial to no man, but a memorial to a nation."

In 1922, the site was chosen to form a memorial park commemorating the more than 11,000 Canadians missing in France. (Those missing in Belgium were already listed on the Menin Gate). Many Canadians don't realize this, but when you step foot on these hallowed grounds at Vimy, you are on Canadian soil, the land having been gifted from France to Canada.

The Vimy Memorial was meant from its inception to represent the Canadian experience as a whole; it was a place for the living to remember the human cost of war, and for the missing dead to be memorialized. Unveiled in 1936 to international fanfare, the new Vimy Memorial represented one of the few openly triumphant post-war moments for those remembering the war; the ceremony was simultaneously sombre and celebratory, and dignitaries from around the world attended. More than 50,000 people, including 6,000 Canadian veterans (and widows of those who were killed) attended the unveiling.

Nearly 100 years after the battle and 80 years after its unveiling, it is this monument, and its tribute to whole — and not the individual — that plays a central role in our cultural identity.

In 2012, the Bank of Canada, with the support of the Vimy Foundation, released the new design for the $20 banknote. They chose the theme of Canadian military contribution and sacrifice for the redesigned artwork and selected the Vimy Memorial as a universal symbol of Canada's military sacrifices. As a monument to the missing, the Memorial also symbolizes the idea of anonymous sacrifice and the contributions of a group of people.

A year later, the Government of Canada unveiled the new "ePassport", which dedicates two pages of artwork to the famous Vimy Memorial, featuring the two pillars (designed by Allward to symbolize France and Canada) and the saddened figure of the "Canada Bereft" statue (also known as "Mother Canada") mourning her dead, while facing out to the dawn of a new day. Flanked in the passport by images of other unifying cultural touchstones, such as Pier 21, the Last Spike and Confederation, the Vimy Memorial is an example of what unites us as a country. It pays tribute to the first time all four Canadian divisions fought together, under largely Canadian command, and stands as a symbol of the sacrifices made by what was then a very new and small nation on the world stage.

It is indicative of the place Vimy holds in our collective narrative that it was selected as one of the major events of Canada's First World War history to be included in the Discover Canada citizenship guide and as a question for those taking the citizenship exam. The guide notes that many who fought

at Vimy felt like they were seeing the formation of their country as they advanced. That the battle was successful went a long way to solidifying the image of the tough, resourceful but ultimately humble Canadian "citizen soldier."

The most poignant way the Vimy Memorial plays a role in our cultural history is in the design of Canada's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa. Based on Allward's empty sarcophagus at Vimy, which was topped with a Brodie helmet, sword and olive branches — symbolizing peace, victory and death — the Unknown Soldier represents Canadian war dead and is left deliberately anonymous. Both the sarcophagus at Vimy and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier were conceived to symbolize human sacrifice without honouring a specific person. The idea of the Unknown Soldier arose at the end of the war and has become a powerful symbol of the universality of the wartime experience. At the Vimy Foundation, we aim to preserve and promote Canada's First World War legacy, as symbolized by the victory at Vimy Ridge. We consider Vimy a milestone where Canada came of age and was then recognized on the world stage.

MEANING CONVEYED THROUGH "EMOTIONAL POWER", NOT SCALE

JONATHAN F. VANCE

Jonathan F. Vance, a native of Waterdown, Ontario, is a Distinguished University Professor and J.B. Smallman Chair in History at Western University, where he teaches military history, Canadian history, and social memory. He is the author of many books and articles, most recently *Unlikely Soldiers: How Two Canadians Fought the Secret War Against Nazi Occupation* (2008), *A History of Canadian Culture* (2009), and *Maple Leaf Empire: Canada, Britain and Two World Wars* (2011).

In the small town of Chesley, Ontario, sits a tiny war memorial. It is the figure of an infant looking intently into a half scallop shell, perhaps searching for something or maybe just feeling the texture. On the block beneath the figure is the inscription: "To the Boys of Geneva Church School who fought in the Great War 1914 – 1918."

It is one of the smallest, most modest war memorials to be found in Canada, yet it possesses considerable emotional power. It seems so incongruous, even mystifying, unless one is familiar with Christian iconography. The scallop shell, associated with St. James the Greater and pilgrimages of the faithful to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, was often carried by pilgrims as an emblem of their piety and devotion, an association that seems entirely appropriate for a memorial to the Great War. But not everyone walks around with a dictionary of symbolism at the ready. For the rest of us, we are struck by the apparent contradiction between childhood, symbolized by the infant and the reference to "boys," and war; if one were to list the different figures that might be suitable for a war memorial, it is unlikely that an infant at play would come to mind. But herein lies the power: one cannot help but imagine the little boys who grew up in Geneva Church School and eventually marched away to war, some of them never to return.

But it is the memorial's size that is its most striking feature. No more than a foot tall at its highest point, its inscription is often obscured by tall grass, and when the snows of winter pile up in Chesley, it disappears altogether. This begs the question: when commemorating war, does size matter?

Canadians are almost congenitally programmed to value size. To mimic the expanse of the country, we have taken to dotting the landscape with giant

reproductions of everyday objects: the big nickel in Sudbury, the giant pysanka (Ukrainian Easter egg) in Vegreville, Alberta, the world's largest axe in Nackawic, New Brunswick, the enormous fiddle in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

So it is hardly surprising that as discussion turned to the erection of war memorials towards the end of the First World War, some influential people regarded size as an important consideration. They saw an implicit correlation between size and meaning, with size often standing as proxy for commitment or loss.

That was certainly the association made by Sir Sam Hughes, Canada's Minister of Militia and Defence in the early years of the First World War. He proposed a program in which the federal government would provide all communities with an identical war memorial — identical except for the size. Communities that sent the largest proportion of their young men to war would get the largest memorials, while communities with a lower participation rate would suffer the eternal indignity of a small memorial. Hughes saw this as an exercise in civic boosterism; communities that responded eagerly to the call to arms should be able to boast about it through their civic war memorials. But he would also have endorsed it as a valuable exercise in public shaming; if a town failed to meet its obligations to the country and the British Empire, every visitor should know at a glance.

Not often was there such a blatant insistence on size as a criterion, but it was rarely absent from the design and construction work on major projects. The National War Memorial in Ottawa went through a process of expansion, designer Sidney March electing in 1933 to enlarge the arch and the plinth upon which it sat, to make the memorial more imposing — and so that it was wide enough to accommodate the artillery piece that was ostensibly to pass through it. But the wider arch demanded the addition of extra figures to maintain continuity of movement, and to address demands that more units be represented. This in turn necessitated some further enlargement of the plinth, and of the steps leading to the monument. The implicit assumption through this entire process of revision, which took a number of years and probably helped to send March to an early grave, was that in the original version, the memorial simply was not big enough.

The Vimy Memorial in northern France, on the site of the Canadian Corps' famous assault in April 1917, had few critics at the time of its unveiling in 1936. Concerns had been raised about delays in construction, but the general consensus was that the monumentality was entirely appropriate. Both the local topography and the importance of the event demanded a structure of unprecedented size. Any criticism that it was too large can be explained by other factors. Garnet Hughes, Sir Sam's son, dismissed it as "another enormous thing with steps and railings" and mused that he would quite like it if he had the contract to build it. But he was likely still smarting at his failure to secure command of a division in the field, and was prone to carping about anything that was connected to the memory of the Corps.

The present-day Never Forgotten National Memorial project, which aims to erect on the coast of Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia an enormous maternal figure, reminiscent of the figure of *Canada Bereft* on Walter Allward's Vimy memorial, has drawn much

sharper criticism. At 24 metres in height, the figure of a cloaked woman (often referred to as Mother Canada), her arms outstretched towards the sea, would tower over the landscape. It has generated ire for many reasons, not the least of which is that it is widely regarded as being too big. Federal Green Party leader Elizabeth May called it a "monstrous Colossus," and the *Globe and Mail* also questioned its "monstrous size." Other critics have compared the project to Soviet monumental statuary of the post-Second World War era, which valued size over all other considerations. Many news stories include a chart, provided by the project's main backer, showing the relative size of famous memorials, including the Statue of Liberty and Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro. Perhaps the chart is meant to respond to criticism by pointing out that Mother Canada is far from the biggest monument in the world. Or maybe its aim is to attract supporters by celebrating the fact that Canada will have one of the biggest monuments in the world. Either way, the key message is that size matters.

But we err in assuming that the size of a memorial correlates to the impact of a loss or the degree of a group's determination to remember. A large memorial is no guarantee of remembrance, nor does it prove that a community's loss was particularly substantial. To make this connection is to confuse quantity with quality; it is to confuse the height of a monument with the depth of feeling that it represents.

A war memorial is, in a very real sense, a substitute grave — even if it is not the architectural form known as the cenotaph, which is derived from the Greek term meaning "empty tomb." The majority of Canada's war dead lie buried on or near the battlefield, or they have no known grave at all. Because a visit to a war grave has always been inaccessible to most Canadians, the local war memorial serves as a gravestone for each of the dead that it represents. In this light, would we judge a family's depth of feeling for a loved one by the gravestone chosen? A gravestone that looks amply proportioned is a guarantee that the individual's family loved the departed deeply and truly; one that seems undersized indicates a shallowness of emotion. "If they really loved Grandma," we might think, "they would never have bought such a small gravestone."

The war memorial committees of the two world wars realized the folly of such thinking; they rejected Sam Hughes' idea because they knew that a community would be judged not by the size of its memorial, but by the memorial's emotional power. In reading the deliberations of dozens of memorial committees, one can only be struck by how infrequently size was mentioned as a consideration. Location, design, inscription, yes — but size, almost never. A small cairn, a modest obelisk, or a tiny infant at play had just as much meaning as the grandest arch or the most towering figure. It's a lesson that future members of memorial committees might well take to heart.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WAR IS A MUST — BUT WHAT WE MUST KNOW IS LESS CERTAIN

JACK JEDWAB

Jack Jedwab is the executive vice-president of the Montreal-based Association for Canadian Studies and the Canadian Institute for Identities and Migration. Holding a PhD in Canadian History from Concordia University, he has taught at Université du Québec à Montréal and McGill University, offering courses on the history of immigration in Quebec, on ethnic minorities in Quebec, on official language minorities in Canada and on sport in Canada. He has also written numerous essays for books, journals and newspapers across the country, in addition to being the author of many publications and government reports on issues such as immigration, multiculturalism, human rights and official languages.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CANADA'S ROLE IN THE WORLD WARS

Over the past decade, the Government of Canada has made considerable investments in enhancing knowledge about Canada's role in the two World Wars. Promoting Canada's military history has been a government priority and substantial funding has been set aside to commemorate Canada's military exploits. Nearly half of all Canadians think it is important for citizens to possess a good knowledge about the First and Second World War. They select such knowledge over other critical areas as knowledge, Confederation and Aboriginal issues. Amongst these three issues, the two World Wars are the principal choice across the entire age spectrum and are especially dominant for the youngest cohort. As observed below, it is amongst English Canadians that feeling is strongest that knowing about the two World Wars is a must.

According to a 2009 survey done by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, six in 10 Canadians believe they have a good knowledge of World War II (approximately one in five believe they have a strong knowledge). The youngest and oldest cohorts report the highest levels of knowledge, though for the latter it is more a lived history than a learned one. There is also a substantial gap on the basis of gender with women (50%) reporting far less knowledge of the conflict than men (70%). On the basis of mother tongue, francophones are least likely to report a good knowledge of the Second World War (45%) while a clear majority of Anglophones (62%) and Allophones (65%) report such knowledge.

According to surveys conducted for Veterans Affairs Canada, seven in 10 Canadians say they are knowledgeable about the role that Canada's military has played in peacekeeping missions and

TABLE 1

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL CANADIANS TO POSSESS A GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF THE FOLLOWING:										
	Total	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	French	English	Other
World War I and II	50%	50%	43%	48%	44%	55%	57%	41%	55%	43%
The 1867 Confederation	42%	28%	31%	44%	38%	51%	52%	35%	44%	42%
Aboriginal History/ Issues	38%	34%	30%	36%	33%	47%	45%	36%	39%	36%

SOURCE: LEGER MARKETING FOR THE ASSOCIATION FOR CANADIAN STUDIES

conflicts such as the World Wars, the Korean War, and the War in Afghanistan. A higher percentage (82%) takes pride in the role that Canada's military has played in peacekeeping missions and conflicts. As knowledgeable as they purport to be, some 55% of Canadians indicated they were unaware of the ongoing 75th anniversary of the Second World War (2014-2020). That noted, a clear majority of Canadians (83%) said it is at least moderately important that the anniversary be commemorated (with 61% saying it is very important).

Knowledge is conditioned on either the lived experience of a historic event or era, or on exposure to information about it that can be secured through several platforms. In the year prior to a 2013 ACS-Leger survey, 48% of Canadians reported having often or sometimes heard something about either the First or Second World War. Age was an important factor in this regard, as one-third of those under 35 reported having heard something versus nearly three in four over the age of 65. Some 38% said that they either often or sometimes read a book or essay, 32% saw a film or documentary and 15% visited a museum or exhibit on the World Wars.

The good news is a substantial majority (82%) expressed at least moderate interest in learning more about Canada's veterans, with 26% saying they were very interested in learning more.

KNOWLEDGE OF WWII FUELS PATRIOTISM

In January 2014, Canadian Chief of the Defence Staff General Tom Lawson stated in an internal memo (later reported in the *Globe and Mail*) that commemorations of military history build a "greater understanding that Canada's development as an independent country with a unique identity stems in significant part from its achievement in times of war" Leaving aside the issue of the veracity of that observation, it is clear that exposure to information about Canada's role in the First and Second World War contributes to a greater sense of pride in Canada's history and strengthens attachment to the country. As observed below, those who have often or sometimes heard about Canada's role in the World Wars, read about them or visited an

exhibit on them are far more likely to express pride in Canada's history than those who have rarely or never heard about these conflicts. It's also true that greater exposure to information about Canada's role in the World Wars results in a higher endorsement of the view that serving with the military is an act of patriotism.

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE THAT STRONGLY AGREE THAT THEY ARE PROUD OF CANADA'S HISTORY BY THE DEGREE TO WHICH THEY HAVE OFTEN, SOMETIMES, RARELY OR NEVER HEARD, READ OR VISITED A MUSEUM EXHIBIT ABOUT CANADA'S ROLE IN WWI OR WW II

Strongly agree In general I am proud of Canada's history	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Over the past year heard about Canada's role WW1 and WW2	74%	48%	33%	30%
Over the past year read something about Canada's role WW1 and WW2	76%	53%	35%	32%
Over the past year visited a museum exhibit about Canada's role in WW1 and WW2	66%	56%	44%	39%

SOURCE: LEGER MARKETING FOR THE ASSOCIATION FOR CANADIAN STUDIES

THE NARRATIVE AROUND CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD WAR II

We've established that there is a relatively high self-assessment of knowledge on the part of Canadians about the First and Second World Wars and the country's role in the conflicts. There is also a healthy degree of interest among Canadians in learning more. But it is important to examine what citizens actually know and the extent to which such knowledge is an accurate reflection of what transpired during that era.

There is a substantial literature that describes Canada's involvement in the Second World War. A few examples of readily accessible Canadian sources of information with succinct summaries illustrate the relative importance of Canada's role in the conflict. The Canadian Encyclopedia points out that "The Second World War was a defining event in Canadian history, transforming a quiet country on the fringes of global affairs into a critical player in the 20th century's most important struggle. Canada carried out a vital role in the Battle of the Atlantic and the air war over Germany, and contributed forces to the campaigns of Western Europe beyond what might be expected of a small nation of then only 11 million people."

The Canadian Battlefields Foundation notes that "from a population of only 11.5 million, slightly more than one million Canadians served in uniform during the conflict. Overseas, following the tragedies of Hong Kong (December 1941) and Dieppe

(August 1942), Canada's army distinguished itself in Sicily (July-August 1943), Italy (September 1943 to February 1945), and the invasion and campaign in Normandy (June 6 – August 22, 1944), and throughout the campaign to liberate northwest Europe until victory in May 1945. The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) grew 50-fold to a force of nearly 100,000 and played a crucial role in winning the Battle of the Atlantic and maintaining open the vital sea lanes to Britain in the face of a determined German submarine offensive. The RCN also served in the Mediterranean, Caribbean, Pacific, and Arctic. At war's end it had become the world's third-largest navy. From a meagre force of largely obsolete aircraft in 1939, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), which enlisted almost 250,000 men and women during the war, came to be an essential player in the Allies' gaining air superiority in Europe and in mounting devastating bomber raids against enemy targets."

Veterans Affairs Canada offers a somewhat more tempered description of the country's role in the Second World War. It declares that "while the great powers 'made more significant contributions' to the war effort; for a country of only 11 million people Canada's contribution was remarkable. At war's end, Canada had become a significant military power with the world's third largest navy, the fourth largest air force and an army of six divisions. Canada had grown significantly through the ordeal of war and assumed new responsibilities as a leading member of the world community."

Certain non-Canadian data bases offer a somewhat different conclusion in assessing Canada's role. One American source (http://ww2db.com/country/canada) on World War II, which cites the "Armchair Reader on World War II" as its source, lists Canada as a "Minor Member Nation or Possession". By "possession," it means belonging to the United Kingdom. It is pointed out that, "Despite the lack of military strength, she had great war potential. When Britain declared war on Germany, Prime Minister Mackenzie King called for Parliament debates on whether Canada should also join in the war beside Britain. On September 10, 1939, Canada produced a declaration of war for the approval of King George VI of the United Kingdom, which was approved immediately." It then goes on to provide much of the same information that is provided by the Canadian Battlefields Foundation.

Some 75 years after the start of World War II, a significant majority of Canadians agree that "Canada's soldiers played a very important role in the victory of the Allied Forces in the Second World War." That view is held by over eight in ten Canadians, with 52% *strongly* in agreement. Although there is a difference in opinion on the basis of age, much of this can be explained by the lesser degree of knowledge about the role of Canada in the Second World War.

If indeed there is a consensus amongst Canadians as regards the importance of Canada's role amongst Second World War allies, there is evidence of some uncertainty as to whether the contribution is widely acknowledged. A May 2012 survey conducted by U.K. pollster Lord Ashcroft amongst 1,007 children in Great Britain aged 11 to 18 reveals that when asked about Britain's allies in the Second World War, not a single one gave Canada as a response. Respondents were unprompted and allowed to give more than one response, and offered the following list: America/USA 61%, France 44%, Russia/Soviet

Union 13%, Australia/New Zealand 9%, Italy 7%, China 2%, Germany 2%, Japan 1%, Other 7% and Don't Know 21% Canada's absence is notable and perhaps even more surprising because of its strong ties to Britain.

MILITARY PRIDE AND MYTH ABOUT DOMESTIC UNITY

There is good reason to be proud of Canadian soldiers in World War II independent of the assessment of our role on the global stage during that era. But there is a risk that the effort to make Canada's role in the First and Second World War so central to a unifying national historic narrative is distorting our recollection of the domestic debates of the period — both the lived experience (in the case of World War II) and the learned one.

Surprisingly, the majority of Canadians surveyed incorrectly conclude that "World War II rallied all Canadians behind the Allied war effort". That view is held by some 51% of Quebecers and 70% of Ontarians. This impression is clearly incorrect, as in both the First and Second World War there were divisive debates over military participation. In the Second World War, a referendum on conscription produced a most polarizing outcome between English and French Canada, with the latter firmly opposed to forced military service. Paradoxically, even though they were more likely to have lived through some of the Second World War, the oldest segment of Canadians surveyed is more likely to agree that all Canadians rallied behind the Allied war effort. A further irony is offered in the table below, which implies that the more one gets information about the Canadians' role in the war effort, the more one believes that the country was firmly united at that time.

The myth of domestic unity during the Second World War is closely tied to the idea that Canada played an important role. In other words, those who are most persuaded of the importance of the country's role are also the most persuaded that the country was united by the experience of war. The myth, therefore, appears to be somewhat self-serving. Those most likely to disagree about the importance of Canada's role in World War II are correct in observing that the country was not united at that time.

TABLE 3

AGREE THAT CANADA'S SOLDIERS PLAYED A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE VICTORY OF THE ALLIED FORCES IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR BY AGE COHORT

	Total	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Net Agree	81%	65%	69%	76%	81%	91%	94%
Net Disagree	6%	12%	8%	9%	4%	2%	1%
I don't know	13%	22%	21%	15%	14%	6%	4%

TABLE 4

AGREEMENT THAT WORLD WAR 2 RALLIED ALL CANADIANS BEHIND THE ALLIED WAR EFFORT BY AGE

	Total	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Net Agree	63%	43%	55%	55%	64%	75%	80%
Strongly agree	27%	11%	18%	26%	29%	34%	40%
Somewhat agree	36%	32%	37%	29%	35%	41%	40%
Somewhat disagree	11%	12%	13%	9%	11%	10%	10%
Strongly disagree	3%	5%	3%	4%	4%	2%	3%
I don't know	22%	38%	28%	30%	21%	11%	7%
I prefer not to answer	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%

TABLE 5

CANADA SOLDIERS PLAYED A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE VICTORY OF THE ALLIED FORCES IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

World War 2 rallied all Canadians behind the Allied War effort	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Strongly agree	48%	8%	2%	7%
Somewhat agree	35%	54%	32%	11%
Somewhat disagree	7%	18%	33%	20%
Strongly disagree	2%	3%	15%	46%
I don't know / prefer not to answer	8%	17%	18%	16%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

CONCLUSION

There are likely many Canadians who won't acknowledge when there is a disjunction between contemporary pride in past achievements and assumptions of a historic sense of solidarity. A revisionist and/or ahistorical narrative that allows the perpetuation of myths will risk undercutting the credibility of the entire story. In the case of the contribution of Canada to the military effort in the Second World War, there is no need to neglect the domestic disunity that prevailed during that era to honour the contribution of the country's veterans in the 1939-45 conflict. It is sufficient that there is a contemporary recognition of the country's war veterans. There is also no need to elevate the already significant contributions of our country to mythic proportions. Canadians can feel quite good about their contribution without this kind of exaggeration. Veterans Affairs Canada is right to point out that "while the great powers 'made more significant contributions' to the war effort; for a country of only 11 million people Canada's contribution was remarkable." In the final analysis, making that acknowledgement detracts nothing from the genuine role played by the country's soldiers in the conflict.

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HOW OUR IMPULSE TO RECALL WAR HAS EBBED AND FLOWED OVER TIME

JOHN ENGLISH

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In his recent study of history and popular memory, Paul Cohen, a historian of China, reflects upon how stories acquire particular meaning and strength in times of crisis. The stories of the Battle of Kosovo, Joan of Arc, and the fall of Masada drew upon historical events, but popular memory of Serbs, the French, and Jews adapted them to troubled later times, and Serbs, the French, and Jews used them to strengthen their sense of collectivity. The cavils of professional historians who, for example, argued that a previous battle was more militarily significant than the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 do not shatter or even pierce the "truths" of Kosovo enshrined in popular memory.[1] When times are troubled, popular memory turns towards stories that promise a positive outcome.

European wars deeply marked Canada's twentieth century, but official Canadian recognition of the wars was curiously delayed, haphazard, and regionally concentrated. The cenotaphs in the centres of small towns, the long bronze plaques in university residences listing those who died, and the Canadian Legion branches that served an important social purpose in places where the temperance spirit abided were found in cities whose residents were of English, Scotch, and Irish Protestant ancestry. But the war had divided Canada, left bitter memories, and Ottawa had no story to tell. The official history of World War I was much delayed and generally ignored while few artifacts of Canadian wars were publicly displayed. The extraordinary collection of war art that Lord Beaverbrook had commissioned in

1 Paul Cohen, The Power of Story in Moments of Crisis (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

the hope that it would find a place in town halls and public buildings across Canada remained largely in storage, although a few giant pieces adorned the somnolent Canadian Senate.

In 1967, the Canadian War Museum finally took independent physical form in the old Public Archives of Canada building on Sussex Drive. While the location was superb, the building was decrepit and fell far short of contemporary museology standards. The contrast between Canada's modest effort with the grandeur of Britain's Imperial War Museum and Australia's peerless War Memorial was striking. But Canada's wars added an acrid taste to the English Canadian liberal nationalist blend of the mid-sixties while Quebec nationalism recalled the wars as times of oppression and, of course, conscription.

Remembrance Day ceremonies and observance of silence at 11 a.m. on November 11th became increasingly irregular in the 1960s, and tales of valour were less frequently told. Increasingly, popular media stressed the horrors of war or the deep divisions that marked Canada in wartime. Vietnam, the first war fought on television, shattered the Cold War coalition between Canada and the United States and left deep scars on the North American alliance. Protests swelled beyond North American college campuses to affect deeply Canadian politics and the perception of war itself. "Make love not war" was not Pierre Trudeau's campaign slogan of 1968, but it lingered near the exuberance of Trudeaumania. Although Trudeau had publicly and vociferously opposed Canada's participation in World War II, attempts to raise the issue by outraged conservative columnists failed utterly. Radical Canadians turned to different stories. In Quebec, the Front de libération du Québec hailed *les patriotes* of 1837 while Montrealers and Torontonians enthusiastically cheered Harry Somers' 1967 opera Louis Riel as the Métis traitor became a tragic hero, the victim of John A. Macdonald's ambitions and eventually, in the statement on Manitoba's official website, "the Father of Manitoba."[2]

The metamorphosis of Riel paralleled the reimagining of Canada as a bilingual and multicultural nation with a distinct flag. The past confronted the future in 1964 when Prime Minister Lester Pearson, wearing his war service medals, presented the new flag before the Canadian Legion in Winnipeg and the veterans heartily booed Pearson's rejection of the Union Jack. Donald Creighton, Macdonald's biographer and a colleague of Pearson when they both taught in the University of Toronto History Department in the 1920s, told his wife that Pearson's action had left him "terribly depressed." Canada, he declared, had become "a wretched place" and he wished "he had lived elsewhere."[3]

The Legion and Creighton detested the "insipid" new flag that cast aside the Union Jack under which Canadians, including Pearson himself, had fought.

2 On the controversy over Trudeau's Both Riel and Gabriel Dumont were subjects of popular books of the period notably professional historian George Stanley's Louis Riel (1963) and celebrated writer George Woodcock's Gabriel Dumont: *The Métis and His Lost World* (1975).

3 Creighton quoted in Donald Wright, "Donald Grant Creighton" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography online* at: http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/creighton_donald_grant_20E.html. Accessed on August 2, 2015.

But in the bitter debate on the new flag, John Diefenbaker, the only other prime minister who had served in the military, alienated the French Canadians in his caucus and francophones more generally by his angry defence of Canada's British past. Diefenbaker's passion embarrassed his Progressive Conservative successors as they accepted the ruling Liberal Party's argument that the crisis of Canadian federalism created by the rise of Quebec separatism required new symbols and a different understanding of Canada's past.

The Canadian War Museum on Sussex Drive was a secondary stop for most Ottawa tourists, but it reflected the times when it added a major "peacekeeping" gallery in its limited space. In 1988, just before the Cold War's end, Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government, which had strong Quebec representation, commissioned a peacekeeping monument also on Sussex Drive.[4] The celebration of peacekeeping came easily because, as Granatstein argues, the Canadian military, despite its tradition drenched in British battles, practices, and customs, adapted with remarkable ease to the bilingual and bicultural ways of late-twentieth century Canada and, with much private grumbling, to the notion that most of Canada's soldiers wore blue hats.[5]

The end of the Cold War, ironically, dealt a fatal blow to traditional peacekeeping and to the comfortable political assumptions about what Canada soldiers did and had done. Moreover, Canada had not been neutral in the Cold War and professional soldiers valued most Canada's membership in NATO and NORAD, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and North American Aerospace Defence Command. Moreover, the Department of National Defence maintained a directorate of history staffed by professional historians that produced a stream of publications on Canada's military history that complemented those produced by its allies in the two world wars. Frustrated by the absence of Canadian military historians at Canadian universities, the department shrewdly supported the creation of military study centres at Canadian universities, several of which were headed by historians. For the cost of a few minor weapons, the department received a massive return.

The Mulroney and Chrétien governments moved quickly to cash the peace dividend and defence spending plummeted with little public dissent. But as support for the contemporary military waned, interest in its more distant past increased. The military historians toiling in back offices at DND or the increasingly inadequate War Museum or the military studies centres. David Bercuson at the University of Calgary, Terry Copp at Wilfrid Laurier University, Mark Milner at the University of New Brunswick but, unexpectedly, the Cold War's end brought the bloodiest encounters since Korea for Canada's Army.

4 Paul Gough, "Peacekeeping, Peace, Memory: Reflections on the Peacekeeping Monument in Ottawa," Canadian Military History, Volume 11, Number 3 (Summer 2002), pp.65-74.

5 Granatstein wrote: "The resulting army was better reflection of the country's duality than almost any federal institution-indeed, better than any Canadian institution of any kind." J.L. Granatstein, Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 372.

Military history made few inroads in most Canadian academic history departments, but it flourished in a few and among popular historians as never before in the new millennium. The 1992 CBC series on World War II, *The Valour and the Horror*, which reflected the critiques of war so common in cinema and popular culture since Vietnam, aroused unexpected fury and even provoked a Senate inquiry. In 1998, Granatstein ferociously denounced it as a cause of the "death" of Canadian history.[6] In the same year, *Saving Private Ryan* reshaped American understanding of World War II as vicious but heroic. In its gruesome battle scenes, it explained why, in U.S. newsman Tom Brokaw's words, the wartime generation was the best. The Senate inquiry on the CBC series flowed directly into increasing demands for Canadian recognition of Canada's military past. In 1998, Granatstein went to Ottawa as the director of the Canadian War Museum. And in 2005, a magnificent new museum took form on Ottawa's LeBreton Flats, remembering what Canadians until very recently had largely forgotten.

Cohen argued that "troubled" times go to the past for "stories" that promise a "positive" ending. As the lives of those who had fought came near their end and their personal memory disappeared, there developed, within families and Western nations, a need for commemoration and, in a broader sense, for a sense of collectivity in a new millennium where Western dominance would ever more become "stories" of the past.

6 J.L.Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1998), 116-120. When I asked Granatstein why he thought that Canada became willing to build a new war museum, he answered, "*Saving Private Ryan*."

THE WAR MEMORIALS — EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT — OF A. Y. JACKSON

LAURA BRANDON

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Remembering and commemorating the First World War is a grim business. So many millions of deaths, so much potential extinguished. It's depressing. For many Canadians brought up and educated to remember the conflict annually on 11 November, the years 1914-1918 are encapsulated in John McCrae's 1915 poem, mass-produced red poppies, and the Vimy Ridge monument. These are primarily memorials to the dead — in McCrae's case to his friend, Alexis Helmer, in whose memory he wrote *In Flanders Fields*. Drawn from the poem's imagery, poppies notably commemorate Canadians killed in the First World War. Even the Vimy monument, unveiled in 1936 as a memorial to the 11,285 Canadians who died in France, includes the figure of Charity distributing poppies. None of these commemorative icons encourages a more uplifting perspective on the conflict. None reveals any alternative ways of thinking about the consequences of battle. More than 100 years after the First World War began, with the exception of some recognition of greater political independence for Canada, any possibility of more positive outcomes from the struggle drowns in the long-established rituals and symbols of mourning.

I would like to put forward for consideration recognition of another kind of Canadian war memorial. This one already exists, albeit unacknowledged as such. Since 1917, the life's work of an individual who survived the Great War has publicly honoured the conflict in art and deed. Painter A. Y. Jackson was not killed, but he was wounded, an event that largely directed his post-war career. Unlike the Vimy monument and McCrae's poppies, which draw us to sorrow once a year, in Jackson's paintings such as *Winter, Quebec* (1926) Canadians are reminded of the rugged beauty of Canada in all its seasons, unblemished by the ravages of war. *Winter, Quebec*'s glittering white panorama centred

on a church steeple perhaps deliberately evokes notions of stability and permanence. Nevertheless, it is fashionable to dismiss Jackson's paintings as so much chocolate-box art, so it is important that we recollect what event it was that drove him to paint and promote his country on wood, paper and canvas so assiduously. Beginning in 1917, he did it for nearly 60 years, until he died in 1974.

It is not a huge stretch to imagine Jackson's body of work as a war memorial. Certain of his war paintings — House of Ypres, for example, and A Copse, Evening, from the First World War, and his Alaska Highway paintings from the Second World War — are essentially thought of as war "memorials" in a fairly conventional sense already. They depict memorable places and actions related to the wars of those two eras and were produced as part of two official war art programs — the Canadian War Memorials and the Canadian War Records — both consciously designed to capture images of the conflict for future generations. But we should see all of Jackson's life achievements — his advocacy for art and his entire oeuvre of artistic works (including the famous Canadian landscape pictures of snowed-in Quebec farmhouses and of the radiant tundra in Fall — Northern Landscape, Great Bear Lake (1938-39), for example) as an unconventional war memorial. Everything that came after he was wounded at Maple Copse during the Battle of Mont Sorrell in 1916 is really a result and celebration of surviving that moment in that horrific conflict.

Both the Vimy monument and McCrae's poem can claim the burgeoning pre-conflict Canadian arts as a foundation: Canadian poetry in the case of McCrae and Canadian painting in the example of the monument. Before Canada had the Group of Seven, it had the Arts and Letters Club in downtown Toronto, founded in 1908. There, Walter Allward, up and coming Toronto sculptor and eventual designer of the Vimy monument, engaged with artists, poets, writers, architects, musicians and academics. When he designed the memorial he drew on the richness of knowledge and experience about the arts that the club had nurtured. Before the war, John McCrae was a member of Montreal's equivalent organization, the Pen and Pencil Club, formed in 1890 to promote the arts and letters in Montreal. There he regularly dined or lunched with artists, architects and designers and exchanged ideas with other poets, such as William H. Drummond and Charles Gill. Not surprisingly, Jackson at various times was a member of both clubs.Indeed, after the Great War he was a stout defender of Allward's vision for the Vimy monument. His views on McCrae's poem are not known.

Jackson did not design a national memorial nor did he write a world-famous poem, but his post-war life and career in art arguably comprise a memorial. The difference between his memorial and those of Allward and McCrae is one of understanding. Our myopia is rooted in what we think war memorials should be. If we are prepared to consider Jackson's art as the most notable aspect of his war memorial activity, then, rather than sorrow, we will feel pride and affection for Canada. These are not emotions normally associated with commemorative monuments of war. But why should we exclude positive feelings? Indeed, I would argue that Jackson — once he stopped feeling gloomy about the war (around 1920) — consistently presented as his war memorial his joy at being alive in a country as splendid and free as Canada. Think of 1924's *Lake Superior Country* with its almost psychedelic colours and jazzy dan-

cing lines. In the past, I have suggested, like many others, that his dedicated proselytism in the interests of Canadian art was a form of nationalism, but I would now like to nuance this conclusion to argue that Jackson's nationalism was his way of paying tribute to the sacrifices he witnessed.

His post-conflict career is viewed through a nationalist lens largely because he is so closely associated with the Group of Seven, which is so closely identified with Canadian post-war nationalism. The Group was a surprisingly short-lived exhibiting phenomenon, surviving for only 11 years, yet it had an enduring impact in Canada, in many ways determining the country's ongoing visual understanding of itself. It was the Group's success that gave Jackson as an individual artist a lifelong reputation — and, after 1931, when the Group disbanded, a public platform from which to disseminate his ideas. Examining his much longer post-war life and career as a veteran and social activist rather than as a member of the Group of Seven allows us to reevaluate his significance to Canadian society, and not just to art history. While there is no doubt he was a Canadian nationalist, his art advocacy had a broader mandate that encompassed a highly positive and life-affirming recognition of what victory in the First World War meant for Canada.

His early letters, written at a time when he was travelling and studying in Europe between 1905 and 1913, give little inkling of the national proselytizer and arts activist he would become. By the time the war was over, however, he seemed genuinely to have believed that art could transform society for the good. In this he was undoubtedly influenced by his growing acquaintance with the social philosophies of the British Arts and Crafts movement, exemplified in the figures of William Morris and, earlier, John Ruskin and much discussed and admired in his circle, which saw the arts as transformative. Shortly after the Armistice of 1918, and in reference to the Winnipeg General Strike that had just concluded, for example, Jackson wrote in the 30 August 1919 edition of the *Canadian Courier* that art could become "one of the most potent factors in overcoming the problems of social unrest."

Also beginning in 1919, the success of the post-conflict Canadian War Memorials exhibitions in which his work and that of many other Canadian artists featured prominently had a huge impact on his recognition of art's power. One can cite, for example, the fact that the catalogue for the Group's first exhibition in 1920 at the Art Gallery of Toronto made use of the same quotation that had appeared in the lavishly illustrated volume that accompanied the opening exhibition of war art in London in 1919. "Great nations," Hungarian art impresario Paul Konody (quoting John Ruskin) had written: "write their autobiographies in three manuscripts: — the book of their deeds, the book of their words, and the book of their art." "The greatness of a country," wrote the Group in its first catalogue, "depends on three things: 'its Words, its Deeds and its Art.'" The message that art can play a part in nation-building as much as the deeds of war is clearly understood but is not directly stated.

By 1936, the Group, five years disbanded, had re-emerged as a pan-Canadian art organization — the Canadian Group of Artists — with Jackson as its vice-president. With the outbreak of war in 1939, Jackson was indefatigable. Amongst numerous endeavours, he successfully helped lobby for a new military art scheme and undertook most of the

responsibility for the choice of artists and the selection of works that went on exhibition. The Canadian War Museum houses the nearly 8,000 artworks that resulted from that program. In fact, Jackson himself again became a war artist, sketching and painting along the Alaska Highway. To encourage soldiers to paint in their spare time when training or waiting to go overseas, he wrote a "how to paint" book and regularly judged the art competitions organized for the troops. He lobbied for, and participated in, Canadian wartime poster production, organized a scheme to get thousands of reproductions of Canadian art onto the walls of barracks in Canada and overseas (one of his own featured the rolling Alberta Peace River country), and published many articles on the importance of war art. Throughout the Second World War, Jackson clearly demonstrated his mission to put art to work in society's interests. He would have had much support from fellow artists in this undertaking. Many in the arts world of his time shared the conviction that artists had a social responsibility to work in their country's interests.

The importance of the First World War in Jackson's post-war life is rarely discussed and yet the memory of that conflict was a constant impetus to his career going forward. His life was divided in two by that struggle and all his life he kept the markers of that division, the bullet and shrapnel piece that wounded him in the hip and shoulder at Maple Copse in Belgium in June 1916. Recovered, Jackson's probable future annihilation at Passchendaele in 1917 was avoided when he became an official war artist. Thereafter, art became this bachelor's wife, child, friend, muse, passion and salvation. For the rest of his long life, he put his talents to work in the service of his country. Personally saved by art, in the form of the Canadian War Memorials scheme, from inevitable death, he believed art could make people feel better and help create a stronger nation. Isn't it time we recognized his life and work as a war memorial?

NOTE

Library and Archives Canada, the McMichael Canadian Collection, and the National Gallery of Canada hold much of A. Y. Jackson's copious original correspondence. His autobiography A Painter's Country (1958 & 1967) and Wayne Larsen's biography *A. Y. Jackson: the Life of a Landscape Painter* (2009) are helpful and engaging resources. In terms of Canadian war art in general, I refer readers to my web site www.laurabrandon.ca, which includes an extensive publications list on the subject.

COMMEMORATIONS AND MILITARY HISTORY IN CANADA

SERGE BERNIER

Serge Bernier became the Director of the Directorate of History and Heritage of the Dept. of National Defence in 1995. Born in Montreal, he received an Honours B.A. (History) from Royal Military College. He then completed his Doctorate in contemporary history from Strasbourg, France, while serving as staff-officer at National Defence Headquarters.

Although Canada has no military heroes that are easily recognized by all or a unifying history, the country commemorates some military events, although not in such a feverish manner as it is sometimes done in other Western countries. As Pierre Nora said, commemorating is of course a way to avoid loosing our past[1]. But commemoration has its dangers, the past being revisited and sculpted by the present[2], a present which is often tainted by strong political influences and selective memories: pleasant memories are often exalted whereas unpleasant ones are swept under the rug.[3]

Throughout this year of 2015, the federal government is keeping busy preparing commemorative events for 2017, a year that will highlight, among others, the 100th anniversary of the Canadian deployment at Vimy and, most importantly, the 150th anniversary of the Canadian Confederation. Let's consider Vimy and what will likely be said about it; it constitutes the victory of the Canadian Corps operating for the first time with its four divisions during a major battle. But will the name of the British commander of the corps, Julian Byng, an extremely competent charismatic military leader, who was made Viscount Byng of Vimy by the King (a British victory?),and who then became Canada's Governor General in 1920, and whose

1 Nora, Pierre, "L'ère des commémorations", in *Les lieux de mémoire, Paris Gallimard* (Quarto), vol. 3, 1997, p. 4687.

2 Bernier, Serge, "Histoire et commémorations militaires — le cas canadien", in *Présentations de l'Académie des lettres et des sciences humaines*, vol. 54, Société royale du Canada, 2001, p. 184.

3 Ibid., p. 185.

involvement in Canadian politics was deemed inappropriate, be mentioned? And when Vimy is going to be discussed as being a founding moment for the Canadian nation, will there be someone there to ask "what nation(s) are we talking about"?

Will the events' organizers revisit every moment that surrounded the 1917 Military Service Act and its April 1918 aftermath, where civilians were killed by troops in Quebec during anti-conscription riots? What were these soldiers doing in Quebec City when they were urgently needed overseas? Will we talk about how the votes were tampered with during the elections of December 1917? Will we talk about how the victory at Vimy is directly linked to conscription, when volunteers were too scarce to replace sufficiently the losses — 10,602 lives were lost, including 3,600 which were killed in five days during that victorious battle? Will we discuss how the war was entrusted to a mentally unstable general until the end of 1916? Will the impact of the decisions made by this man, whose voice was heard until the end of the war and even after, be deemed worthy of a few lines during the official commemorations?

And what about the events that occurred during that year? Will there be time allowed to seriously consider, for example, one of the greatest collateral damages of the Great War that happened in 1917? Will we talk with appropriate seriousness of the terrible explosion that occurred in Halifax in December when a ship loaded with explosives and ammunition, an absolute disaster waiting to happen at sea, exploded in the harbor after a collision, killing nearly 2,000 people, injuring over 9,000 and obliterating much of the city? Will we be reminded that more than 7 million Canadians experienced the Great War without leaving the country, participating in the war effort in every way, including through the sacrifice of their loved ones drafted overseas?

This is the type of considerations that render the historian skeptical towards large scale commemorations. On the one hand, it is difficult to dismiss these necessary exercises of remembering history. But on the other hand, it is also hard to completely put the fact aside that a big part of history is omitted during these events and that only one interpretation will be retained, and not necessarily the most serious one.

Moreover, what are the military events that Canada should commemorate? Let's consider the battle of the Plains of Abraham of 1759. Do Canadians know that this fight, whose outcome had a decisive impact on shaping present-day Canada, is not officially recognized by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada? This board, which, amongst other tasks, has been advising the government since 1919 on events that have marked and shaped the country, has selected the "Siege of Quebec" as a defining moment. One may recall that in 2009 a group of people wanted to reproduce the battle for its 250th anniversary, which resulted in heated debates, the failure of the enterprise and an engrossing book on the subject.[4] As for the 1760 Battle of Sainte-Foy,

4 Tremblay, Yves. *Plaines d'Abraham. Essai sur l'égo-mémoire des Québécois. Montréal,* Athéna Éditions, 2009. 248p.

a victorious battle for the French, but which was mainly fought as an honor issue, was hardly even mentioned in 2010 while it was strongly stressed in 1910.[5]

In 2012, the federal government embarked on a mission called the war of 1812, a moment in our history which a good part of the population, having limited historical knowledge, ignored almost everything about. Who was part of the organizing committee in this enterprise? Some federal officials whose independence of mind is, to say the least, questionable? We were reminded of some of the great British victories to which Canadians contributed. However, in view of the Ghent peace treaty (December 1814) and of what followed, notably that the British abandoned all inclination of confronting the Americans directly in North America, one may wonder who won. Can we really wonder why Maine extends so far north or why Alaska cuts so deep down south? Not to mention the clashes that were becoming increasingly difficult for the English between 1812 and 1814 during this so-called war of 1812: they lost a major battle around Lake Champlain in September 1814 and suffered a crushing defeat in Louisiana in January 1815, all the while the war was technically over, something the soldiers at the time didn't know.

During the 1812 history lesson, in which the government was closely involved, one important aspect was virtually not discussed. Canadian units can now write on their flag "Detroit" to signal the presence of militiamen that fought there in July 1812, which led the British to occupy the American city. However, the system of Canadian military distinctions only recognized, until then, notable moments that occurred after 1867. Since we can now connect battles that occurred before 1867 to current units (usually of the Reserve), why not also do it for indigenous and militiamen of Quebec, Trois-Rivières and Montreal who were involved in many victorious battles between 1608 and 1759? The Quebec Armoury, which is currently under renovation and whose military mission will more or less disappear, could be used for a while as a research center that could help us link these fighters of the past to units of the 21st century.

So, what is going to be done in 2017? It is difficult, if not impossible, in 2015, to determine what is planned by Veterans Affairs Canada and the Vimy Foundation for the occasion. Of course, there will be the official opening of the permanent interpretation center of the battle at Vimy in Vimy itself, but how many Canadians have had, have or will have the opportunity to visit this place during their lifetime? Who is part of the organizing committee of Vimy 2017? Where is it? If it exists, is it independent of all political interference? We know all too well how such an occasion for remembrance can easily become, first and foremost, an opportunity for many politicians to be seen. Competence is not lacking in the high Canadian public service, but independence of thought is. Why hasn't the organization of military and political celebrations for 2017 been entrusted to a totally independent committee that would have provided the government

5 On this topic, see Groulx, Patrice. "La commémoration de la bataille de Sainte-Foy, du discours de la loyauté à la 'fusion des races'", in *Revue de l'Amérique française*, vol. 55, numéro 21, été 2001, p. 45-83. The first part of the article elaborates on the issue of commemoration.

with a program of activities around a central theme whose purpose would be to mark our collective memory in a profound way? Canada is a country of immigration where the teaching of history, which is a provincial responsibility, is far from significant, even more so in regards to its military past. The few opportunities that arise to put this subject under appropriate scrutiny should not be missed. A common base of historical knowledge, however small it may be, is important, in this country as well as anywhere else in the world. Maybe is it already too late for 2017.

CANADA'S OWN D-DAY: A CASE STUDY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY

TERRY COPP

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The 70th anniversary of D-Day, 6 June 2014, drew large crowds to the Normandy landing beaches and included Queen Elizabeth, U.S. President Barack Obama and other world leaders. The main ceremony at Sword Beach in the British sector attracted most of the attention, but late in the afternoon Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Minister of Veterans Affairs Julian Fantino joined the crowd gathering at the Juno Beach Centre for the Canadian ceremony.

There were solemn moments and the usual dull, overlong speeches from the politicians, but the general mood was festive, a celebration of the achievements of the young Canadians, who in the words of the War Diary of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles "had to storm the enemy positions 'cold' and did so without hesitation." These D-Day ceremonies, which have become major tourist events in Normandy and elsewhere, are an especially interesting example of how memory is constructed and used to promote various agendas.

The process began in 1984 during the 40th anniversary ceremonies. The French government had invited western leaders to Normandy and U.S. president Ronald Reagan, then in the midst of his re-election campaign, delivered a beautifully crafted talk timed to coincide with morning television programs. His brief, seemingly informal comments "to the boys at Pointe du Hoc" were heard by millions, including Canadians, who were thrilled by Reagan's reference "to the unsurpassed courage of the Canadians who had already seen the horrors of war on this coast. They knew what awaited them here but they could not be deterred; once they hit Juno Beach they never looked back."

The audience at Pointe du Hoc included European leaders and Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

It would have been entirely out of character for Trudeau, who was on the verge of retirement and engaged in a world tour promoting peace and disarmament, to offer such sentiments and he did not try. Other Canadians did become involved. A chance meeting between veterans of the Queen's Own Rifles and the owner of the house the regiment had liberated in the first hours of the landings sparked interest in Toronto and the QORs arranged to have "Maison Queen's Own Rifles" become a centre of activity each June.

The first large-scale attempt by Canadians to create a public memory in and of Normandy began in 1992 when representatives of a new museum in Caen, *Le Memorial*, visited Ottawa to seek partners to develop a Canadian memorial garden for the 50th anniversary in 1994. The American Battle of Normandy Foundation was building an elaborate garden to include a "wall of Liberty" with the names of all Americans who lost their lives in Normandy. Neither the Canadian government nor the Canadian War Museum was willing to become involved, but Hamilton Southam, a Second World War veteran and prominent member of the family that owned the Southam newspapers, began to organize the Canadian Battle of Normandy Foundation to respond to the invitation from Caen.

A student design competition was organized with teams drawn from the Université de Montreal and Carleton University. The students in their graduating year were the age of many of the soldiers in 1944. Before leaving for a site visit in France, they met with veterans who had joined the board of the new foundation and were encouraged to develop their own approach to the project. Professor Nan Griffiths, who with her colleague Professor Bernard Lafargue supervised the students, described the process of creating the garden in a 1999 article:

> *"On arrival in Normandy in became apparent that there was no agreement on what the project should be, where it should be located, or what funding might be available to build it. A model of the American garden, designed by professional architects with a budget of millions, offered little guidance and the students began their work as individuals developing ideas before forming three teams for competition. A site was then selected, partly for its remoteness from the American garden and partly because it lent itself to the symbolic, metaphorical approach the students preferred."*

Garth Webb, a D-Day veteran, like many other visitors to the Canadian Memorial Garden, found the space too abstract and impersonal. They also resented the almost total failure of the curators at *Le Memorial* to include references to Canadians in their exhibits. Webb began to plan a new modern building on the beach where the Royal Winnipeg Rifles landed. The Canadian government wanted nothing to do with this private initiative until Webb persuaded U.S.-based retail giant Walmart to take up the cause and encourage Canadians to donate to a Juno Beach Centre. Enlisting the support of Walmart was a stroke of genius. Many Canadians opposed the entry of the company into Canada when it purchased the Woolco chain of stores in 1994. Walmart sought to counter criticism of its low-wage and aggressive anti-union policies with community involvement, and eagerly responded to the opportunity to identify the company with Canada by persuading customers to donate one dollar to help build the Juno Beach Centre. Ultimately, Walmart itself donated $1.8 million in addition to the

several hundred thousand dollars received from customers.

Webb employed an abrasive, take-no-prisoners approach to fundraising, which offended many people. Neither he nor any of his core group of supporters had any experience in building or running a museum and they were unwilling to seek advice. Officials at Veterans Affairs Canada, the Canadian War Museum, and other organizations with an interest in war commemoration were ignored as the fundraising campaign proceeded. Walmart's well-publicized role embarrassed both the federal and provincial governments. When construction began in 2001, government contributions accounted for 40 per cent of the $10-million budget with a further $2.2 million from the regional governments in France.[1] Despite this, the Juno Beach Centre remained fully under Webb's control.

It is difficult to estimate how much impact the Juno Beach project had on popular opinion, but what we do know is that when *Saving Private Ryan* reached Canadian theatres in 1998, curiosity about D-Day and Canada's role in this iconic event reached a new high. Many Canadians complained that the film, like *The Longest Day*, ignored their countrymen. But as one reviewer put it:

> *The unschooled may emerge from* "Private Ryan" *asking what Canadians were doing on 6 June while the American soldiers were pushing ashore through a barrage of Nazi shells, mines and bullets. Those who know that nine battalions of Canadian troops were busy assaulting German-held beaches in Normandy might ask instead what Canadian film and TV producers were doing while Spielberg made this movie... The answer is, worse than nothing. A quick survey of Canadian film and TV treatments of the Second World War suggests that if we'd made "*Saving Private Ryan*," the Allies never would have gotten off the beach. Private Ryan himself would have been flattened by a German Tiger tank, with the rescue squad dead to the last man in a circle around him.*[2]

The short-term impact of *Saving Private Ryan* was enormous and may account for the extraordinary selection of D-Day as the number one "Canadian" story of the Century in a top ten list compiled by print and broadcast journalists in November 1999.[3] Steven Spielberg had created a memory that is still going strong well into the new century.

Construction of the Juno Beach Centre began the next year, and when it opened in 2003 television and press coverage was extensive. Visitors entered the display via a simulated landing craft with audio and visual cues to the D-Day experience, but once inside the exhibits provided little insight into the events of 6 June 1944 or the Battle of Normandy. One historian who toured the facility complained that "what little military history there is contains numerous errors."[4] The public response was very different. The Centre is a striking building located

1 See www.junobeachcentre.org/centre/pdf/jbc_press_document_2011.pdf.

2 Steve Weatherbe, "Saving Private Canada," *Globe and Mail*, August 24, 1998.

3 *Globe and Mail*, November 7, 1999.

4 Jack Granatstein as quoted in *National Post*, June 18, 2004.

on the edge of a stretch of coast that contained several intact bunkers lending the area a unique air of authenticity. As preparations for the 2004 anniversary began, the Canadian officials selected the centre as the site for an elaborate 60th anniversary ceremony that was to include the presence of the Queen. Over 6,000 people attended the ceremonies at the Juno Beach Centre, which included a flypast of a Lancaster bomber escorted by two Spitfires. The day ended with a lone piper playing a lament at the edge of the beach.

A site of memory, with broad public appeal, had been created, constructing a specifically Canadian version of D-Day. Ten years later, the story had become part of our collective memory.

NOTE

The essay is based on Terry Copp and Matt Symes, *"Canada's D-Day: Politics, Media and the Fluidity of Memory,"* in Michael Dolski (et al) *D-Day in History and Memory (Denton*, University of North Texas Press 2014)

HOW THE YEARNING FOR PEACE AFTER A TRENCH WAR'S HORROR GAVE WAY TO VAPID "VIMYISM"

JAMIE SWIFT

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Like so many combat veterans, Harold Innis didn't talk much about his war. He had enlisted as a humble private because of his devout Baptist beliefs, but the war destroyed that faith. A devastating shrapnel wound to his thigh put the artilleryman and Vimy Ridge veteran out of action.

His peripatetic "dirt research" of the 1920s took him to the remotest parts of the country, enriching Canadian economic history with new understandings of early resource industries. His staples studies and subsequent analysis of communications made Innis one of most influential intellectuals Canada ever produced. Even though the ceremonies unfolded a few steps from his office, he attended Armistice (later Remembrance) Day events at the University of Toronto but once, when he spoke about the Depression in the 1930s.

Innis bore the Great War's psychic scars until he died in 1952. Hence the subtitle of John Watson's comprehensive 2006 biography, *The Dark Vision of Harold Innis*. (The cover photo of Private Innis in his tin hat is almost as mournful as Walter Allward's *Canada Bereft* statue on the Vimy Memorial.) Here was a scholar who had been brought up when the glory-of-empire tales of G.H. Henty and Rider Haggard were popular among the boys of late Victorian Canada. The lads absorbed schoolroom history that told tales of great men striding across great battlefields, achieving monumental feats of valour. And building nations by vanquishing Aboriginal peoples then routinely labeled — and reviled — as "savages".

Innis would develop a different understanding of the forces that shape nations. And he was clear about the Great War. As Innis lay dying, the

veteran confided in his close friend, the prominent journalist George Ferguson, discussing the war.

"He regarded it as the ultimate obscenity," recalled Ferguson. "He talked to me in those last months for the first time in his life about the war... All he could say about it was the horror of the performance... The more he thought about the thing, the more he thought of young men being destroyed, who would have been so valuably useful. And he would speak with real bitterness... bitterness I've never seen in another man about the stupidity of the whole performance which he had embarked on *himself*!... By God he had come to some pretty violent conclusions about it... about the idea of war."

Some Canadian ideas that had emerged 50 years later would, we can safely assume, leave Harold Innis utterly aghast. This is the notion constantly bruited about by journalists, politicians, schoolteachers and a host of other opinion makers that World War I — and particularly the Battle of Vimy Ridge — was somehow the formative moment for Canada. That Canada came of age on battlefields from Ypres to Mons. That we should return to Victorian-era reverence for valiant soldiers and remember them as the true founders of our nation. That World War I was indeed a "great" war — for democracy, civilization, freedom.

This is "Vimyism," a virulent form of martial patriotism that obscures Great War reality. Vimyism emerged as the Official Story after those who could directly and personally remember the magnitude of the war's tragedy were no longer alive. The mourning and sadness of the postwar period — not to mention anger like that of Innis — was replaced by something quite different. The war was wrapped up in a gauze of chivalrous soldiery and patriotic certainty.

One prominent war historian felt able, by 2006, to refer in passing to the Battle of Vimy Ridge as a "coming of age battle." In 2007, at the 90th anniversary of the battle, a former *Canadian Military Journal* copy editor came out with a book called *Valour at Vimy Ridge: Canadian Heroes of World War I.* It included a dose of Vimyist mythology: "Legend has it that when a French officer heard of the victory, he replied, *C'est impossible*. Upon learning it was the Canadians who captured the ridge, he added, *Ah! Les Canadiens! C'est possible!*"

When the Canadian government unveiled the restored Vimy Memorial that year, it was accompanied by a three-day creeping barrage of Vimy retrospective. "A nation's pride restored," headlined the *Ottawa Citizen*. "A 'proud nation' is honoured" chimed in the *National Post*. CBC television reporter Adrienne Arseneault contributed to the CBC's coverage (later released as a 90-minute DVD) of the rededication by reporting from the streets of Arras, the staging point for much battlefield tourism. "Walk through the streets, you'll get a sense of the anecdotes and stories that are passed on for generations. Like the tale of a French soldier who, when he was first told that Vimy Ridge had been taken, said 'No it's impossible'. But then when he was told that it had been taken by the Canadians, said 'Oh! The Canadians. Then it *is* possible.'"

Ms. Arsenault's coverage included shots of Canadians walking through Arras with a banner reading. "Keeping the memory alive."

Which memories are kept alive? For whom? Why?[1]

In 2014, at the centenary of the war's beginning, the venerable *Canadian Geographic* magazine produced a glossy edition describing the hundred ways that the Great War "shaped Canada." Editors described Vimy Ridge as "A battle to unite us." Yet a visit to the Vimy Memorial to inspect the names of the Canadians killed in France but without a known grave (the so-called "missing") reveals some 40 men by the name of Taylor. But one lonely Tremblay. There *was* a modest conscription sidebar. The popular magazine devoted as much space to "women hockeyists" and Winnie the Pooh as it did to the Conscription Crisis that tore the country apart. A three-page splash heralded the heroic battlefield deeds of three Winnipeg men who lived on Pine Street and won medals for heroism. Pine Street, we learn, became Valour Road.

In 1936, when the Vimy Monument was unveiled, the same magazine had struck a very different tone. Rather than celebrating militarism, it conveyed the widespread yearning for peace — which is how most people interpreted Allward's majestic towers and mournful sculptures, unveiled with a minimum of militarism and an abundance of peace symbolism.

Twenty-first century Vimyism, by contrast, is all about war as the foundation of the nation. It is the kind of mythologizing that masks the horrors that Harold Innis witnessed. Looking at myth and modern war, the historian Eric Leed explained in *No Man's Land: Combat & Identity in World War I* that this sort of story serves as a "flight from contradiction." Repeating the tale of Vimy Ridge with liturgical regularity "mediates the contradictions, tensions, and conflicts inherent in the real world of social relations." (119)

Vimyist narratives of individual valour and patriotic achievement can become particularly pervasive when backed by the state. Canada's Citizenship Guide, complete with full-colour illustrations of gallant soldiers on horseback and missing even the emblematic word "trench" — eminent Canadian documentary film maker Donald Brittain called them "ditches of death" in a 1964 war retrospective prepared for Veterans Affairs — tells a tale of sanitized war and individual heroism. As Canadian philosopher Joseph Heath explains, the guide was strongly influenced by a politician with a world view tinged by nostalgia:

> *"In this day and age, the romantic militarist is a bit of an odd duck, despite the fact that it used to be a very popular view. Consider the passages in Tolstoy's* War and Peace, *where Count Rostov expresses his fervent desire to die for the Tsar. This is the sort of romanticism that the mechanized slaughter of the First World War largely put an end to. At the same time, you can still find echoes of it, particularly among those who are intensely patriotic, or committed to the virtue of 'sacrifice' – which always seems to mean dying rather than, say, paying taxes – or who think that war helps the nation to achieve 'moral clarity.'"*

1 For a fine exploration of these themes, see the outstanding *Landscapes of War and Memory: The Two World Wars in Canadian Literature and the Arts, 1977-2007* by the prominent Canadian literary critic and teacher Sherrill Grace, University of Alberta Press, 2014.

The Vimyist story echoes loudly, telling us an anti-modern lie about the nature of industrialized killing, encouraging us to think of modern war as a clash of arms, not as a clash of economies and political orders. The harsh truth that Vimy made little difference to the Great War is obscured in the Victorian-individualistic reverence for the valiant soldier, the singled-out battle, the inspiring military leader. Far more decisive than Vimy — and far more revelatory with respect to the real world of modern war — was the economic blockade of Germany. Modern war is an impersonal clash of orders driven by impersonal logics. It is not decided by deeds of valour on the battlefield. A myth-symbol complex that claims otherwise is an exercise in willful denial about the world in which we live, a demonstration of an utter disregard of the lessons of the 20th century: an immature and irrationalist form of adolescent anti-modernism. Moreover, the harsh lesson of the 20th century is that there are no longer any significant borders between civilians and soldiers.

The Vimy Trap (the title of a forthcoming book I am writing with historian Ian McKay on contending political cultures of commemoration) mythologizes the Great War in a way that attempts to paper over contradiction and conflict. It preserves in amber the antiquated ideals of the white dominion, by anchoring Canadian national identity on a war that, as Jack Granatstein explained so well in 2005, was in reality a "battle of rival imperialisms." Making the war the foundation of Canada minimizes and exiles Quebec. It constitutes a regressive return to the Great Man Theory of History, with all its gender-specific simplicities. It deliberately slams the door on the indispensable historical insights that social and cultural historians have developed since the 1960s on the gendered, racialized and class-based dynamics of power. It replaces history with patriotic fantasy.

Certainly, the Great War changed Harold Innis, just as it transformed Canada. Innis recognized that modern war required state manipulation of public opinion and the manufacture of jingoism. This would inform his understanding of communications. World War also strengthened his sense of Canadian nationalism, though it wasn't patriotism of a Vimyist caste. He recalled his resentment, not only of military authoritarianism, but of English feelings that he had come to "help the Mother Country. We had felt that we were concerned with fighting for Canada and Canada alone. It was this feeling which strengthened my determination to work in the general field of Canadian Economics." Innis's economic nationalism has come in for critical reevaluation and his staples thesis is now but one of many with which Canadian historians work. But with respect to a terrible war he personally experienced, his was an outlook whose maturity and subtlety is light years removed from today's puerile propaganda.