

VIMY RIDGE DAY CANDLELIGHT VIGIL 2016



WWI soldier of the 47th Battalion (BC), Canadian 4th Division; heroes that captured Hill 119 (The Pimple) at Vimy Ridge April 9-12, 1917 {along with the 44th (Man.), 46th(Sask.) and 50th (Alberta) Battalions}.

Over four hundred people attended the warm Saturday evening event this year, as the sixth annual Vimy Ridge Day Candlelight Vigil was held at Thunderbird Square. This was also the 99th anniversary of the first day of that battle in which all four Canadian Divisions fought together for the first time, making their initial attack in the face of a blizzard.

We were pleased to have present both MPs, Ed Fast and Jati Sidhu, MLA Simon Gibson, Mayor Henry Braun and some City councillors including Patricia Ross, who has always supported our Vimy Ceremony. We were also pleased to have the Air Cadets, Army Cadets, a contingent from the Royal Westminster Regiment, and the RCMP to place a candle for Constable Sarah Beckett.

This year saw some changes. First of all, research begun by Kris Foulds, Curator of Historical collections at The Reach Gallery Museum and continued by Peter Slade, into soldiers from Abbotsford whose names appeared on the Honour Rolls for WWI in newspapers and local history books, who were not listed on the Cenotaph, has yielded proof that indeed some soldiers had been "overlooked". Hence ten soldiers that should be on the cenotaph but who are not, were honoured this year by having candles placed for them. Four soldiers who are on the cenotaph but who have not been honoured in past vigils were also added to the list for candle placement.

A second major change was to have children from three local schools place candles for some of the "overlooked" soldiers. The schools were South Poplar, Mt. Lehman and Abbotsford School of Integrated Arts (A.S.I.A.) - Sumas Mountain Campus. These were schools recommended by the School Superintendent, Kevin Godden, whose blog to the schools after last Remembrance Day professed his desire to see our young people incorporate Remembrance into their lives year round not just once a year.

Not only did these youngsters place candles but one young lady, Taylor Carlson from Mt. Lehman, gave a lovely reading of a poem, "From One Who Stays". Also we had a choir for the first time for the Vimy Ridge Day ceremony, the choir from A.S.I.A.-Sumas Mtn. sang the anthems with the cadet band, but sang "The Maple Leaf Forever", "Eternal Father Strong To Save" and "Abide With Me", on their own, with piano accompaniment, and guitar played by their Band & Choral Director, Mr. Paul Luongo.

Probably not realized was that a young lady, Julia Derksen of the War Amps Operation Legacy Program, placed a candle for the overlooked soldier Sgt. Langley Latton Attwood. Peter had been approached by the War Amps Head Office from Ottawa requesting her involvement. Julia accompanied her brother, one of the Air Cadets, last year, and he was also present this year.

The format of the ceremony was unchanged except that Peter announced the soldiers and the persons placing the candles for them. These candle placers were sent down at a slower rate to give the placement ladies Veronica Tod and Catherine Holt more time to indicate where the candles needed to be placed; at the same time Peter gave some short stories on some local and some of the "overlooked" soldiers. Veronica and Catherine commented that this slower pace was much better and recommended that we maintain it for subsequent years. *With this slower pace the march on of the colour parties should begin earlier next year and hence the ceremony itself could also start a little earlier. Always we bear in mind that we need to finish at sunset (see later "Another comment").*

Hot Chocolate was available at The Reach Gallery for the first time, courtesy of Kris Foulds, Curator of Historical Collections and the Ladies Auxiliary. Our thanks are given to all those Ladies who put in their time to do this. Not many people went for hot chocolate which was a little disappointing for the volunteers.

Verbal and written responses from the public were complimentary including one comment that it was "the best ever Vimy ceremony".

Another comment: *"I thought the Ceremony's timing was perfect this year; we were finishing up just as darkness fell, so the candles placed could be fully appreciated! Thank you for all you do to recognize the sacrifices made by these men, and their families".*

Several other persons stated that the short stories about the soldiers and inclusion of young persons, were appropriate changes.

poem reading: From One Who Stays by Amy Lowell

How empty seems the town now you are gone!
A wilderness of sad streets, where gaunt walls
Hide nothing to desire; sunshine falls
Eerie, distorted, as it long had shone
On white, dead faces tombed in halls of stone.
The whirl of motors, stricken through with calls
Of playing boys, floats up at intervals;
But all these noises blur to one long moan.
What quest is worth pursuing? And how strange

That other men still go accustomed ways!
I hate their interest in the things they do.
A spectre-horde repeating without change
An old routine. Alone I know the days
Are still-born, and the world stopped,
Lacking you.

read by Taylor Carlson of Mount Lehman

photos - before and after ceremony:



John Molnar, branch 15 member, Navy (Korean War) Veteran



Julia Derksen representing The War Amps Operation Legacy Program



Marching On.....





The ladies at the candle table: (L-R), City Volunteer, Sheila Ann Slade, Barbara Roberts, Connie Smith and Cathy Morrison.

Honour Guard and Colour Parties for Abbotsford Fire Rescue and Abbotsford Police



Royal Canadian Air Force (861 Silverfox Squadron) Cadets Band facing the Choir from Abbotsford School of Integrated Arts - Sumas Mountain campus





Candle placement guides Veronica Tod and Catherine Holt assisting Julia Derksen



Choir from Abbotsford School of Integrated Arts - Sumas Mountain Campus, with Band & Choral Director Mr. Paul Luongo after dusk.....



Candle placing guides Veronica Tod and Catherine Holt





Alan Hood places candle for the Merchant Navy



Branch 15 President Robert Rohrer and branch Secretary Cathy St. John

