

Remember

A soldier lies in the mud, desperately trying to keep his rifle clean. It's his only lifeline, and yet he can barely keep his hands from shaking as he wipes grime off the weapon. Rain batters his metal helmet as if the heavens themselves are crying for the young men manning these hellish trenches. He remembers his wife and child that he left behind. He may never see them again. He turns his aching body and heart around to face no-man's land, a barren moonscape of what was once a beautiful French forest. Shattered trees and fallen soldiers litter the wasteland while vultures circle, waiting for the corpses to again pile. A dreaded piercing whistle breaks the momentary silence of the battlefield, followed by hundreds of yells as brave young men climb out of their trenches and begin sprinting as fast as they can across the shattered landscape. Bullets fly like streaking flashes of fire and artillery shells explode like thunder as soldiers charge towards their enemy. Blood stains the ground. The screams of broken souls fill the air. Yet they don't stop.

600,000 Canadians fought in World War One. 66,000 never came home. Many of them died like this, sitting in trenches with explosions raining down on them. Fighting alongside our allies of France, Britain and the USA, the Canadian forces pushed the Central powers back restoring peace to Europe. Sadly, many of the soldiers who died were not counted for or identified due to the danger in retrieving bodies and lack of forensic identification. This leaves many unknown corpses of brave men who fought in WWI. Those who are known often fade into obscurity. Even if they did survive the frontlines, former soldiers suffered from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) after experiencing countless horrors and losing their brothers-in-arms. Many did not receive the recognition they deserved. They died believing that no one cared about what they did for their nation. So let's honor them today.

"Courage isn't the absence of fear. It's acting in spite of it."

-Mark Twain

Does this quote not describe the actions of the brave soldiers of the Canadian Expeditionary Force fighting in World War I? Certainly they were afraid. Everyday shells rained down upon them and being ordered to take the enemy's trench was almost guaranteed death. But these brave men endured it, fighting their way from Vimy to Victory. Yet many remain forgotten as newer generations fail to understand their bravery and perseverance. Should we forget the soldiers who stood fast in defense of Ypres? Or should we cast away the memory of the men who took Passchendaele when everyone else tried and failed? They are the reason our society exists today. They fought not with hate for the enemy in front of them but with love for their nation behind them. They say that a man only truly dies when he is forgotten. Many Canadians have been. The unsung heroes of World War One must be remembered.

Lest we forget