

## VIMY DAY COMMEMORATION

April 9<sup>th</sup> marks the 94<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historical battle of Vimy Ridge which many consider to be the defining event in Canada's nationhood. The battle was a military triumph and a shining example of what can be achieved when Canadians work together. It is in this spirit of cooperation that the 2370 and 155 RCACCs, working closely with the Army Cadet League of Canada (Saskatchewan), invited corps from the Regina area to participate in our province's first annual Vimy Day Commemoration event!

The event is designed to increase inter-corps familiarity while giving cadets an understanding of the importance of the battle of Vimy Ridge. Members of the 155 and 2370 have volunteered to undertake a special fundraising event that is expected to cover the cost of meals, movie, theatre rental, and Vimy pins! Corps that attend are responsible for their own transportation costs.

### ITINERARY

11:00 – meet in Regina at the Legion Hall (down town). Cadets are in full dress.

11:15 – Cadets are fed lunch.

12:15 – Form up outside Legion Hall (approximately 60 cadets and 10 officers representing 4/5 corps).

12:30 – Parade for 5 block to the Central Library.

12:55 – Await outside for arrival of dignitaries, veterans, and special guests.

13:10 – Enter the Library Film Theater.

13:20 – Opening comments by host.

13:30 – Watch movie, "Vimy Ridge: Heaven to Hell" – an excellent, modern documentary in HiDef (1 hour long).

14:30 – Corps presentations (each Corps delivers a 4 to 5 minutes presentation on a topic of their choosing related to Vimy)

14:50 – Special presentation by guest speaker.

15:10 – Closing remarks by host, tying the role of Army Cadets to the story of Vimy Ridge; acknowledgements and thanks.

15:20 – depart theater and attend display of WW1 artefacts on loan for the event, and which are located in the anti-chamber outside the theater (WW1 photographs, letters, newspapers, gas mask, shell casings, postcards, uniforms, etc.).

16:15 – Form up outside the Library.

16:25 – Presentation and placement of Vimy Pins on each cadet.

16:35 – Parade for 5 blocks to Legion Hall. Cadets will be singing a WW1 marching song on cue – it is a fun song, easy to learn, and the cadets will have a lot of fun singing it in public.

17:00 – Await outside Legion Hall. Gift from Cadets to Veterans, including a pledge to become bearers of the story of Vimy Ridge.

17:15 – Enter Legion Hall. Each cadet is issued a 20 question, multiple-choice survey relating to Vimy Ridge. Each cadet must complete it, working in groups if desired, and submit it to a League representative in attendance.

18:00 – Dinner with Veterans. Social activities are planned to help build inter-corps relations and promote interaction between cadets and veterans – emphasis here is on FUN! Get ready to eat, sing, and laugh!

20:00 – End of event.

This will be an entirely new type of event for Saskatchewan Army Cadets: it is a celebration of a great military victory that inspired the very idea of our nation. Our Vimy Ridge Commemoration will be interesting, informative and, above all, fun! It is a great opportunity to strengthen the bonds between cadets, and to help make real for them their important role as honorary bearers of the Vimy Ridge story.

### **Prior to April 9<sup>th</sup>**

Prior to April 9, the participating corps will engage in activities intended to increase cadet's knowledge of and appreciation for the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Some activities being considered include:

1. Investigate your CF unit's role in the battle of Vimy or tell the story of someone from your community that was there – involve cadets in research, summarizing and presenting findings;
2. Invite individual cadets to write a short essay about some aspect of Vimy Ridge with the winner being chosen by your CO – award special honours.
3. Invite individual cadets to design a poster commemorating Vimy Ridge with the winner being chosen by your CO.
4. Create a wreath using maple leaves for use in a commemorative event.
5. Create a "spread the word" Facebook initiative that involves creating a cadet-designed and moderated Facebook page for Vimy Ridge. Endeavours to attract as many friends as possible by April 9<sup>th</sup>.

Additionally, Saskatchewan intends to follow the lead of Ontario and Manitoba in asking our provincial legislature and all municipal councils to adopt a resolution or otherwise pass a proclamation conferring that April 9<sup>th</sup> is officially regarded as "Vimy Day."

### **Ideas for Vimy beyond 2011**

1. Repatriate fallen seeds from Vimy Ridge Memorial and distribute them to the corps, each year and Canada-wide, for ceremonial planting each April 9<sup>th</sup>.
2. Expand the Vimy Ridge maple tree planting program: create a "Vimy Maple" brand and sell to the public through normal distribution chains – each maple carries a tag with the story of Vimy Ridge and \$20 being donated to the Army Cadets and Vimy Ridge Foundation.
3. Establish a program where a Cadet travels to Vimy each fall (perhaps for Remembrance Day) then tours Canada (in March) giving interviews about the experience, conveying the message that visiting Vimy is a profound experience.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

At Vimy Ridge, an unnamed soldier carved an ornate figure of a maple leaf into a large timber used to support one of the many trenches. The fate of the carver is unknown but that maple leaf remains, having survived innumerable assaults by bullets, gas, and mortar and even the seasons of nearly 100 years. A well-known Canadian icon by 1965, this very carving undoubtedly served as inspiration when designing the official Canadian flag. Moreover, as part of Canada's efforts in creating a war memorial at Vimy Ridge, and further testament to the importance of the maple leaf our national identity, maple

trees were brought from Canada and planted throughout the Vimy Ridge park, taking nourishment from the very soil where so many Canadian sons still lie.

One idea is to repatriate some of the seeds from the maple trees on Vimy Ridge, and bring them home to the Cadet Corps so that they can plant them in a special place. This could be done each spring as part of our commemoration of Vimy. Each corps could choose its place and the ceremony that might accompany such, but it would be done in April to coincide with either the start or else end of the battle. Special efforts must be made to involve local veterans in the ceremony. It might also be a good idea for individual Corps to work together on this project since the success of Vimy is a testament to co-operation. ...One can imagine 30 years hence, a small wooded area, tall and proud: a living reminder of what was lost and what was gained at the battle of Vimy Ridge.

### **A POEM**

It has been suggested that a poem might help guide our efforts. This one might serve the purpose:

#### ***ALL YE GAVE***

*In Vimy Ridge, where remains decay,  
Lies so much more than hallowed graves:  
Do ye sweet sons know all ye gave  
To thee, oh Canada?*

*On Vimy ground, valour hailed as  
souls triumphed and bodies failed:  
So many lost; still ye prevailed,  
Dear sons O'Canada*

*The battle won was more than scored:  
With virtue proved before the Lord,  
A blessed union, he restored,  
Praise be, thy Canada.*

*Birth from death is a sacred thing:  
From your sainted soil, our Maples spring,  
Teaching all what it means to sing  
Forever, "O Canada."*