

# The Legislative Assembly Remembers the First World War: 1914-1918

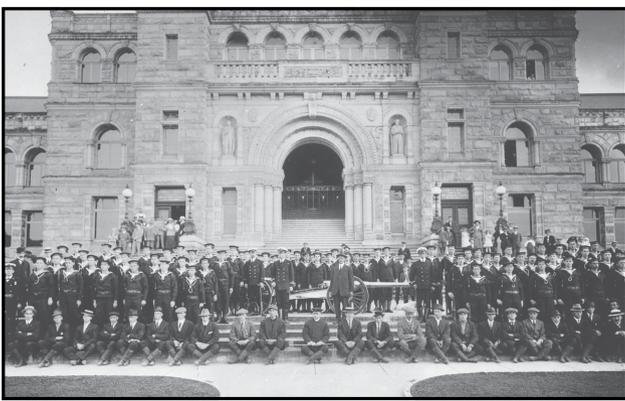
The First World War lasted from 1914 to 1918 and pitted the Allies – Great Britain and the British Empire, France, Russia, Italy, Japan, and, from 1917, the United States – against the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey. The war was fought across Europe and the Middle East with unprecedented death and destruction, ending with the defeat of the Central Powers.

Canada's military history in the war began on August 4, 1914, when Britain declared war on Germany. Canada, as a member of the British Empire, was automatically at war, too. Nearly 620,000 Canadians – including 55,570 British Columbia residents – enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). Approximately 60,000 members of the CEF died during the war, including over 6,000 British Columbians.

The first CEF division arrived in France in early 1915, and would soon become involved in combat along the Western Front, including battles in France and Belgium at Ypres, the Somme, Vimy Ridge, and Passchendaele.



*The Daily Colonist, August 5, 1914.*



*Personnel of the Royal Naval Canadian Volunteer Reserve (RNCVR) outside the Provincial Legislature, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada in 1914. Library and Archives Canada, PA-115374.*

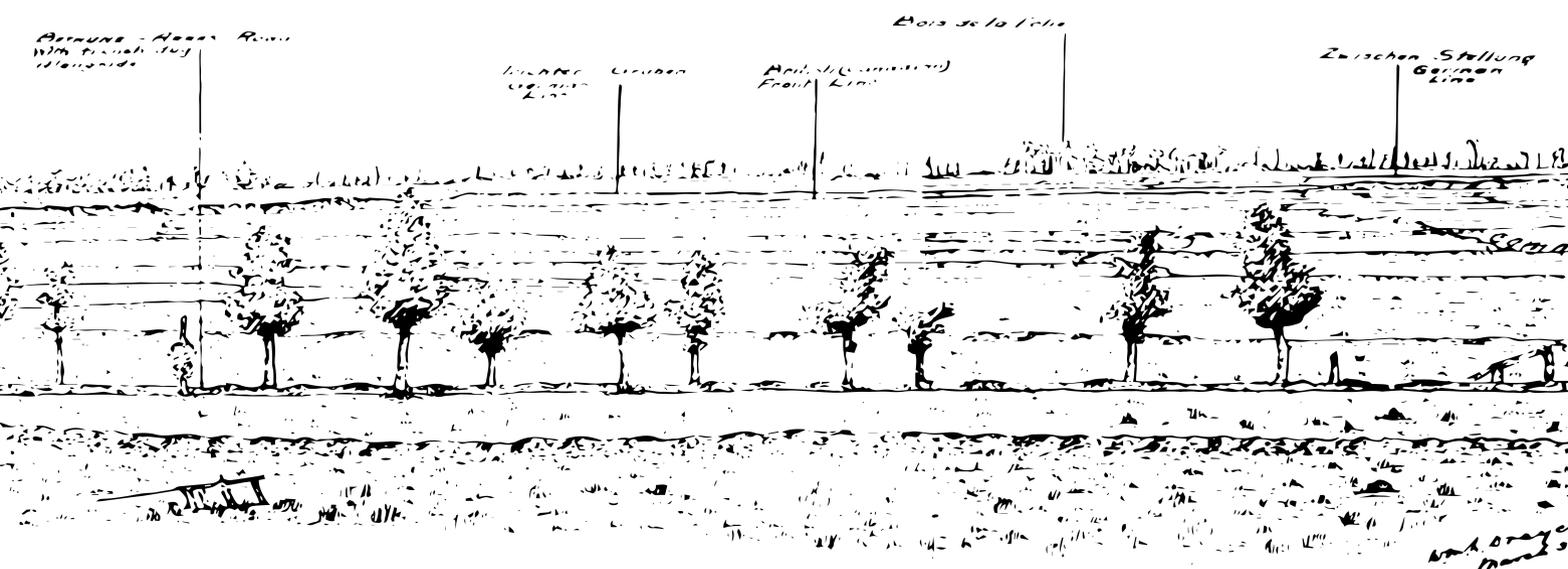


*The 30th Battalion leaving to participate in the Great War, February 14 1915. BC Archives, A-03128.*

“The Great War” brought out the best and worst in British Columbians. In addition to the CEF, many other British Columbians served on the frontlines—including women in the Nursing Sisters Corp, First Nation soldiers, and Sikh volunteers with the Indian Army. On the home front, British Columbia contributed raw materials, provisions, and equipment, including Sitka spruce, tinned salmon, and submarines. The home front was also the site of the internment of members of the Croatian, German, Hungarian, Polish, Serbian, and Ukrainian communities—the so-called enemy aliens.

More BC residents enlisted per capita than in any other province in Canada. Among them were various Members of the Legislative Assembly of BC, including: George Hanes, William Henry Hayward, John William McIntosh, Kenneth Forrest Duncan, Joseph Clearihue, Joshua Hinchcliffe, Cyrus Peck, and Nelson Spencer. Cyrus Peck received the Victoria Cross for bravery and another soldier, George Pearkes, later became the Lieutenant Governor of BC.

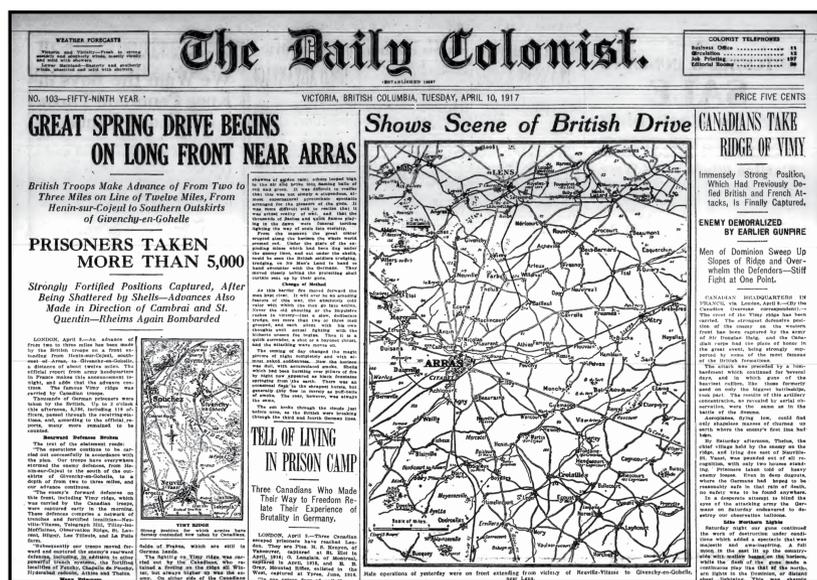
From Vimy Ridge, British Columbians soldiered on until the end of the war on November 11, 1918. “The war to end all wars” did not end as quickly as anticipated nor did it end all armed conflict. British Columbia’s contribution to the First World War will not be forgotten.



# British Columbia at the Battle of Vimy Ridge: 1917-2017

The First World War Battle of Vimy Ridge is regarded as Canada's most celebrated military victory. For the first time, soldiers from across the country fought together as a single force in the Canadian Corps.

Vimy Ridge is a seven kilometre long plateau in northern France. By early 1917, opposing Allied and German armies were stuck in a stalemate of trench warfare along the ridge. In the spring of that year, the Allied forces planned a new offensive to seize Vimy Ridge relying on Canadian troops.



The Daily Colonist, April 10, 1917.

April 9, 2017 marks the 100th anniversary of the start of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. At 5:30 a.m. on April 9, 1917, after months of intense preparation and a week of heavy Allied artillery shelling, 20,000 Canadian soldiers stormed the ridge. Over the course of four days, through countless acts of personal bravery and sacrifice, Canadian troops succeeded in taking back control of Vimy Ridge.

The victory at Vimy Ridge came at a terrible cost. More than 3,500 Canadians were killed, including 700 from British Columbia. Among them were relatives of Members of the Legislative Assembly of BC.

Members of the Legislative Assembly have often remembered their sacrifices.

*As I look around this House I see a well-lit, comfortable room that is warm and safe. 86 years ago it was a very different story. Men did not spend four years in a building such as this. They spent four years in the trenches. In the trenches, our grandfathers and great-grandfathers lived lives of filth and misery... great sacrifices that were made by those who came before us so that we could debate freely all the issues that are important to us today. (2003)*

The great achievements of Canadian soldiers at Vimy Ridge fostered a sense of national pride and confidence that Canada could stand on its own, at home and around the world.

