

VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA

# Commemoration Strategic Plan

The future of remembrance  
and recognition in Canada



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# Laying the groundwork

## Our role

### ***We are storytellers***

... who share Canada's military history and the experiences of Canadians who bravely served and sacrificed on our behalf.

### ***We are stewards***

... of 15 war memorials in France, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Republic of Türkiye and, in Canada, of seven Books of Remembrance, two cemeteries, graves, grave markers and other commemorative resources.

### ***We are guides***

... to Canadians and visitors from around the world at Canada's only two National Historic Sites outside of Canada: the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial. Together, the sites welcome about 900,000 visitors each year. We offer opportunities to discover, learn, reflect and appreciate Canada's military history.

### ***We are partners***

... with Veterans, communities, schools, national and international organizations, and colleagues across many levels of government in Canada and abroad. Together, we create innovative recognition and commemorative initiatives.

## Our commemorative mandate

On behalf of the people of Canada, Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) is the lead department responsible for commemorating the country's war dead since Confederation and for recognizing the achievements of former members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). We fulfil this core responsibility through two distinct programs: the Canada Remembers Program and the Funeral and Burial Program.

The **Canada Remembers Program** keeps alive the achievements and sacrifices of those who served Canada in times of war and peace. We engage communities in remembering these achievements and sacrifices, and promote an understanding of their significance in Canadian life as we know it today. We ensure Canadians are aware of and value the contributions of all those who served. We tell the story of our military history and of Canadians who served in uniform. Communities across the

country receive program funding to lead a wide range of commemorative initiatives. Veterans and those who died in service are publicly recognized through ceremonies and events, honours and awards, and the preservation and perpetual care of memorials, cemeteries and grave markers.

The **Funeral and Burial Program** provides financial assistance for the funeral, burial and grave marking expenses of qualified Veterans to recognize their service to Canada. VAC provides funding for Second World War and Korean War Veterans as well as CAF Veterans (Veterans with service post-Korean War) whose deaths were service-related or whose estates lack funds for a dignified funeral, burial and grave marking.

## **Our commitment**

### ***To commemorate***

... the achievements of Canadians whose service and sacrifice while in uniform have inspired the character and values of our country.

### ***To protect***

... nationally significant cultural resources commemorating Canada's military heritage to ensure they are preserved for future generations.

### ***To present***

... our national historic sites and military history to help Canadians experience, understand and appreciate how the courage, determination and ingenuity of those who served has shaped our nation.

## Changing demographic landscape

**The Canadian Veteran population is evolving** and VAC's December 2021 Facts and Figures report<sup>1</sup> estimates there are 617,800 Veterans in Canada, about 96% of whom are CAF Veterans with an average age of 59.



Seven images of people representing different ages and genders.

By comparison, the average age for War Service Veterans (who served in the Second World War and/or the Korean War) is 94. By 2026, one third of Veterans with service since 1954 will be older than age 70.<sup>2</sup>

Not everyone who served Canada sees themselves as a Veteran, nor do they necessarily identify with the idea of commemoration. Many younger individuals who served in the CAF more recently, those who did not serve for very long, and some who were in the Primary Reserve, often do not see themselves as Veterans despite the fact that they are indeed Veterans. This may be attributed to the social perception that people have of what a Veteran is (i.e., a 'traditional' Veteran of the World Wars or the Korean War), rather than as defined by VAC, which considers 'any former

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<sup>1</sup> Canada, V. A. (2022, June 29). 1.0 demographics. Facts and Figures - Veterans Affairs Canada. Retrieved 29 December 2022 from <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/news-media/facts-figures/1-0>

<sup>2</sup> VAC CORI Consultations Phase I – Pre-engagement interviews summary report, September 2018, page 3.

member of the CAF who releases with an honourable discharge and who successfully underwent basic training' to be a Veteran.<sup>3</sup>

**Canada's diverse population** is reflected not only in race and ethnicity, but also in sex, gender, language, religion, age, disability, geography, culture, income, sexual orientation, and education<sup>4</sup>. Approximately one million people in Canada (or 4% of Canada's population) belong to the 2SLGBTQI+ community, with bisexual women making up the largest portion of this group.<sup>5</sup> More than 450 ethnic and cultural origins, 200 places of birth, 100 religions and 450 languages were reported in the 2021 census.<sup>6</sup> Thousands of people immigrate to Canada each year. The 2021 census found that just under 6.4 million people born in Canada had at least one foreign-born parent in 2021, representing 17.6% of the total Canadian population.<sup>7</sup> Some immigrants may have limited or no connection to Canada's military history. Recent user testing of our website shows new Canadians would like to learn more about the topic. Given Canada's diversity, we must adapt and target our programming to reach more segments of the Canadian population in a way that is relevant to them.

**Canadian youth** form an important population for our programming – and that population is changing. According to Statistics Canada's, *A portrait of Canadian youth*,<sup>8</sup> today's youth are unlike any previous generation. They are more diverse, digitally connected, socially engaged and educated. The report emphasizes an important consideration for us. Today's youth will become Canada's future parents, prime age workers and seniors. Forty percent of Canadian youth are first or second

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<sup>3</sup> VanTil L, MacLean MB, Sweet J and McKinnon K: Understanding future needs of Canadian veterans. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 82-003-X. Health Reports, Vol. 29, no. 11, pp. 20-25, November 2018, page 23.

<sup>4</sup> Canada, W. and G. E. (2022, June 16). Government of Canada. Women and Gender Equality Canada. Retrieved 29 December 2022, from <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-analysis-plus/government-approach.html>

<sup>5</sup> Prokopenko, E. (2021, August 5). LGBTQ2+ communities in Canada: A demographic snapshot. Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. Retrieved 29 December 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2021062-eng.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Government of Canada, S. C. (2022, October 26). The Canadian Census: A rich portrait of the country's religious and ethnocultural diversity. The Daily &nbsp;-&nbsp;. Retrieved 29 December 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026b-eng.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Government of Canada, S. C. (2022, October 26). Immigrants make up the largest share of the population in over 150 years and continue to shape who we are as Canadians. The Daily &nbsp;-&nbsp;. Retrieved 29 December 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026a-eng.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Government of Canada, S. C. (2021, March 4). A portrait of Canadian youth. A Portrait of Canadian Youth. Retrieved 29 December 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2018001-eng.htm>

generation immigrants and many do not have a familial connection to Canadian Veterans. We can develop their interest in commemoration and foster a lifetime appreciation for those who served by highlighting Canada's contributions to international peace, security and humanitarian efforts in different regions of the world.



Two youths lay a wreath in a remembrance ceremony.

**Digital technology** is changing our economy and our society. How we access information, work and connect with each other is very dynamic. In 2021, 88.1% of Canadians owned smart phones – broken down by age group, as follows: 97.9% aged 15-24 year-old, 97.1% aged 25-44 year-old, 87% aged 45-64 years-old, and 60.4% aged 65 years and older.<sup>9</sup> Facing these changes, we are modernizing our approach and processes to support commemoration and recognition, and to explore innovative ways to design and deliver our initiatives. Doing so will help meet the evolving needs and expectations of Canadians, especially youth.

**Reconciliation** between Indigenous peoples and the Government of Canada is a priority and VAC's commemorative programming includes an Indigenous

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<sup>9</sup> Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2021, June 22). Smartphone use and smartphone habits by gender and age group, inactive. Retrieved 29 December 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=2210011501>

commemorative approach. “There is a higher share of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada’s military and Veteran population than among the total population aged 17 and over.”<sup>10</sup>



A member of the Canadian Armed Forces holds the Eagle Staff with other Indigenous Veterans during a ceremony at Dieppe, France, 18 August 2017.

VAC’s Commemorative Partnership Program provides greater support to Indigenous Communities, including remote and northern communities, to honour all those who served. Culturally appropriate commemorative initiatives must resonate with Indigenous Veterans, through increased inclusion of Indigenous Veterans, survivors and their communities in commemorative activities in Canada and internationally.

## We are learning

**Canadians, Veterans and educators** are helping us plan our way forward. Across the board, we learned that Canadians want to hear Veterans’ personal stories, experiences and achievements.

A November 2019 Angus Reid Institute study found:

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<sup>10</sup> Jakobsen, W. (2022, November 9). Based on 2021 census data, this infographic presents highlights of the diversity of the military and veteran population in Canada. Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. Retrieved 29 December 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2022074-eng.htm>

- The vast majority of Canadians (80%) say that Canada should do more to honour Veterans. Four-in-five Canadians (79%) say that they feel proud when they think about this nation's armed forces.
- More than 60% of Canadians have had conversations with someone who serves, or who has served recently, about their experience.<sup>11</sup>



A group of Veterans participate in a commemorative ceremony.

A May 2020 IPSOS study found:

- 75% of the Canadians surveyed agree that it is important to hold ceremonies in remembrance of the Second World War.
- 48% of the Canadians surveyed report that some of their relatives or ancestors served in the armed forces during the Second World War.<sup>12</sup>

**The Minister of Veterans Affairs' Commemoration Advisory Group<sup>13</sup>** wants us to recognize Veterans' service in the different regions of the world, and here at home,

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<sup>11</sup> Reid, A. (2022, March 31). Venerating our veterans: Four-in-five say Canada should do more to honour those who served in armed forces. Angus Reid Institute. Retrieved 29 December 2022, from <https://angusreid.org/remembrance-day/>

<sup>12</sup> 75 years later, honouring World War II still matters to Canadians - ipsos. (n.d.). Retrieved 29 December 2022, from <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/75-Years-Later-Honouring-World-War-II-Still-Matters-to-Canadians>

<sup>13</sup> Canada, V. A. (2022, October 27). Commemoration advisory group. Ministerial advisory groups - Stakeholder engagement - About VAC - Veterans Affairs Canada. Retrieved 18 January 2023, from

across all eras of our military history. They want us to tell the story of the diversity of the different jobs and roles our Veterans filled in the army, navy and air force. The advisory group remains in support of commemorating the First World War and prefer that we maintain the five-year cycle of commemorating the Second World War and Korean War milestones. They want us to renew our focus on youth and bring commemoration to the wider Canadian public with events in Canada being more prominent in our programming.

**Between May and July of 2021, VAC invited all Canadians** including Veterans, CAF members, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), other persons involved in international peace support operations, their families, Veterans organizations, and the general public to share their thoughts on the future of remembrance in Canada. Over 1,800 Canadians responded to our “Let’s Talk Veterans” consultation and provided their ideas on how we can evolve our remembrance programming.<sup>14</sup> The top three themes from the consultations on the future of remembrance were:

- Highlight diversity and shared experience in service in commemorative efforts.
- Expand the scope of remembrance to emphasize modern missions and service.
- Educate Canadians, especially youth in schools, through personal and compelling Veteran stories and interactive digital experiences.

### What Canadians tell us...

An August 2019 Government of Canada-led public opinion poll measured Canadians’ awareness and interest in a variety of approaches to remembrance. For example, 88% of Canadians said that Canada’s military history should be taught in schools. In response to the question “If you wanted to learn more about Canada’s military history and those who served, how would you prefer to obtain the information?”

- 72% would prefer videos about Canada’s military accomplishments and sacrifices.
- 65% would read articles or booklets about Canada’s military accomplishments and sacrifices.
- 61% would prefer virtual tours of sites where Canada’s military served.
- 54% would use an interactive online tool, such as an app.

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/what-we-do/public-engagement/advisory-groups/commemoration-advisory-group>

<sup>14</sup> Canada, V. A. (2022, July 26). Summary of consultations on the Future of Remembrance. Veterans Affairs Canada. Retrieved 29 December 2022, from <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/what-we-do/public-engagement/remembrance-planning/summary-of-consultations-on-the-future-of-remembrance>



A map showing some of Canada's military missions internationally.

**We consulted over 750 Canadian teachers and other educators** in October 2020. We asked them to identify their needs and interests related to remembrance programming.<sup>15</sup> Educators seek content about modern conflicts and younger Veterans. Given the increase of newcomers to Canada, more youth are coming from areas where CAF has served and some may have family members or know Veterans who served in areas such as Afghanistan. Providing additional resources and content on more recent operations will help young Canadians make even stronger connections with the Veterans we serve. Additionally, every fall we consult educators who ordered our Veterans' Week learning resources. Educators agree or strongly agree (99%) that VAC learning resources contribute to students' understanding and appreciation of remembrance.

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<sup>15</sup> Canada, V. A. (2022, January 27). Consultations with educators regarding the future of remembrance in the classroom. Consultations with educators regarding the future of remembrance in the classroom - Veterans Affairs Canada. Retrieved 29 December 2022, from <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/what-we-do/public-engagement/remembrance-planning/consultations-with-educators>

### What educators tell us...

- Most educators prefer printed materials (87.5%) and hands-on learning activities (86.3%), including digital products (77.3%).
- The most requested materials were topics related to helping Canadians after natural disasters (78.3%), peacekeeping and peace support efforts with a focus on different regions of the world each year (77.6%).
- Learning materials must be inclusive and mindful of the diversity of students across the country (e.g., Indigenous, immigrant, 2SLGBTQI+, racialized, other minorities and students affected by trauma).

## The bottom line

**The Canadian population is evolving and diverse.** There are more and more new citizens with connections to Canada’s military contribution to peace and security in the world. Building on the success of our current practices, we will expand and adapt our programming to engage more Canadians in remembrance.



A VAC-organized learning activity with a group of school children highlighting the “CAF response to Natural Disasters at Home: From Ice Storm 1998 to Hurricane Fiona 2022” at Grand Portage School, Sackville, Nova Scotia, 9 November 2022.

# Our commemoration vision and how to get there

## Our vision

Canadians understand and appreciate the contributions and sacrifices made by those in uniform. All Veterans and their families feel recognized.



## Our mission

To lead, support and create opportunities for Canadians to honour the service, sacrifice and achievements of all Veterans who served Canada. Preserve the memory of those who died in the pursuit of peace and freedom in the world. Achieve this through commemoration and recognition initiatives, learning and memorials.

## Recognition supports Veterans' well-being

Veterans' well-being improves when they feel recognized<sup>16</sup> and VAC plays an important role in promoting this recognition. Canadians learn about our military history and the role Canadians in uniform have played during the conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to today. Canadians commemorate Canada's contributions and sacrifices and recognize our Veterans in a variety of ways. Canadians, who know how Veterans have contributed to the defence of Canada and to promote peace, security and stability the world, create supportive communities that value Veterans, hire them and support their life after service.

## Our regional approach to commemoration

More than 1.7 million Canadians volunteered to defend peace and freedom around the world during the First World War, Second World War and Korean War. Since

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<sup>16</sup> Thompson JM, MacLean MB, Roach MB, Banman M, Mabior J, Pedlar D. Charlottetown PE: Research Directorate, Veterans Affairs Canada. A Well-being Construct for Veterans' Policy, Programming and Research. Research Directorate Technical Report. Charlottetown. 7 September 2016.

then, several hundred thousand Canadian military personnel have served our country as part of international peace and security efforts, to help promote peace and stability and to respond to humanitarian emergencies in many regions around the world.

Service in many geographical regions around the world points to the need for a new approach to understanding the experiences, sacrifices and contributions of all Veterans to promote values that Canada considers important for building and sustaining peace. We will highlight the contributions of Canadian military members, police officers and other skilled personnel to international peace, security, post-conflict recovery and humanitarian efforts through a “CAF Around the World” approach. Specifically, we will draw attention to our efforts in the Middle East, Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean. Through the stories of those who served, our new approach will help Canadians understand our military’s contribution in different regions of the globe, including here at home, and why our military history is relevant today. Annex A sets out our multi-year themes and notable military milestones.

## Guiding principles

VAC is a leader in military commemoration, both at home and on the world stage. Three principles will guide our commemorative efforts:

- **Honour the service, sacrifice and achievements of all those who served.** We will create opportunities to bring together Veterans of multiple generations, their families and the families of those who died. In this way, Canadians will recognize the connections across the eras of Canada’s military history and the shared legacy of all who have put on a military uniform for our country. We will also recognize the work of former members of the RCMP and municipal police, as well as Canadian diplomats and civilians who served on a variety of peace support operations around the world. By helping Veterans share their stories, we will create opportunities for many voices, including younger Veterans, and women, Indigenous, racialized and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans. Through Veterans’ stories, we will highlight the diversity of roles within our military and the valuable contributions of all those who have served, including in the defence of North America, and in domestic operations such as wildfires, ice storms and floods.
- **Bring remembrance to all Canadians.** We will lead and expand our support activities and events in communities across our country. We will strengthen how all Canadians, including Indigenous peoples and new citizens, connect with our country’s proud military heritage.

- **Engage youth in active remembrance.** We will build on our successful youth learning activities, ceremonies and guide programs. We will encourage youth to have an even stronger voice, inviting them to play a greater, more active role in leading commemorative initiatives and engaging Canadians in social discussions. We will look to youth for new ideas and fresh perspectives to keep commemoration a vibrant part of our society so that we, as Canadians, never forget.



A Canadian youth delivers a presentation on a fallen soldier during a ceremony at Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery in Normandy, France.

# Our goals and objectives

Canadian soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen have played a difficult and essential role on the world stage. By remembering their service and their sacrifice, we recognize the tradition of freedom these individuals fought to preserve. They were ordinary Canadians who made extraordinary sacrifices. They believed that their actions in the present would make a significant difference for the future, but it is up to us to ensure that their dream of peace is realized. By remembering all who have served, we recognize the willingly-endured hardships and fears they took on so that we could live in peace.

It is vital that Veterans' service to our nation be adequately recognized. The Commemoration Strategic Plan serves as our blueprint for future programming and invites Canadians to honour and learn about our long military history, while ensuring that Veterans are valued and recognized for their service to Canada. Building on our past work, we will ensure that our Veterans' contributions to Canada and our public life are acknowledged and that Canadians understand what it means to be a Veteran – in particular, those retired members of the CAF who have not previously felt that they are Veterans. The plan includes four goals, with supporting objectives, and articulates how we will move forward in the coming years.

The Commemoration Strategic Plan delivers with four goals:

**Goal 1. Help Canadians understand how those who served our country have helped advance peace and security around the world.** We honour Canada's military members' service to Canada. Their service will never be forgotten and will remain relevant to our society. We will help Canadians learn about our Veterans, the diverse roles they've fulfilled and the experiences they've had in keeping Canada safe. Veterans and their families will feel recognized, no matter when or where they served.

**Goal 2. Inspire Canadians to actively celebrate and recognize the service and sacrifices of all who have served our country in uniform.** We will lead military commemoration in the Government of Canada with innovative programming and inspirational events. Our federal and community partners will look to VAC for leadership and expertise. We will support communities across Canada as they organize commemorative events as well as restore and build cenotaphs and other memorials. We will also engage Canada's diverse cultural communities, including those who are from countries where the CAF has had an impact. We will maintain a strong ongoing focus on engaging youth in remembrance.

**Goal 3. Preserve, maintain and enhance Government of Canada memorials, including the Books of Remembrance and Veteran grave markers, in a sustainable and dignified way.** Our memorials, sites and cemeteries will be cared for and presented with the greatest integrity so that future generations can also appreciate them for years to come. Many of these resources have heritage value due to their historical or cultural significance. In partnership with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, we maintain more than 110,000 war dead graves found in more than 70 countries as well as almost 210,000 Veteran grave markers in Canada and overseas.

**Goal 4. Align Departmental resources to better serve Canadians.** We will work with our internal and external government partners and stakeholders to deliver our mandate. We will ensure that our employees have the right training, tools and resources to do their job and feel empowered to deliver bold and innovative remembrance and recognition programming.



A Veteran wearing military medals at a Remembrance Day ceremony.

## **Goal 1: Help Canadians understand how those who served our country have helped advance peace and security around the world.**

We will highlight the contributions of Canada's military in defending peace, ensuring security and supporting humanitarian efforts around the world and the relevance of these contributions to today's society. Canadian Veterans and their families will feel recognized, no matter when or where they served. Without the right data to measure Canadians' level of participation in remembrance activities, their attitudes toward those who served in Canada's military and their level of support for VAC's work related to remembrance, we cannot properly develop commemorative programming and determine its effectiveness. We will continue to evaluate existing studies of Canadians and educators, and consult partners and stakeholders, to inform the development of our commemorative programming.

**Objective 1.1 – Public opinion research and evaluations.** Conduct public opinion research and other evaluations to better understand the needs and views of Veterans and Canadians to meet the goals of our commemorative programming that honours the service, sacrifice and contributions of all who have served Canada in uniform, including underrepresented groups, whether at home or abroad. We will:

- Continue to conduct our Attitudes Towards Remembrance and Veterans' Week Survey to measure Canadians' level of participation in remembrance activities, their attitudes toward those who served in Canada's military and their level of support for VAC's work related to remembrance. The results of these surveys support the development and improvement of remembrance activities and initiatives, determine their effectiveness in supporting desired outcomes and report on performance to Canadians.
- Conduct and analyze online voluntary evaluations by educators who ordered Veterans' Week learning resources. The results are used to improve and enhance our Veterans' Week learning resources to meet the needs and expectations of educators and students.

**Objective 1.2 – Consultation and engagement.** Consult with our stakeholders, partners and the public on a range of issues to inform our remembrance programming. We will:

- Consult with employees across the Department to identify innovative and engaging programming opportunities.
- Consult with stakeholder groups to assess the existing commemorative content provided in the Remembrance section of our website, in our social media posts and in print format to identify gaps in recognizing the diversity of Veteran service. This includes the great conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Cold War, peacekeeping and peace support, in-Canada service, domestic operations and the variety of roles Veterans have fulfilled.
- Engage with provincial and territorial teacher education programs to explore opportunities to instill an interest in, and capacity to, integrate remembrance activities into new educator teaching activities. VAC will continue to have a presence at pre-service teacher conferences.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen existing partnerships and develop relationships with a wide range of Veterans organizations, Indigenous organizations, social and cultural groups, youth organizations, schools and multicultural and diverse communities (including new Canadians) to help inform VAC's commemorative programming approach.



The signing of a Joint Letter of Understanding, with representatives of the Assembly of First Nations, advances VAC's work with First Nations communities, including increasing access to benefits, services, and commemorative components.

- Develop a youth engagement strategy and examine opportunities to increase engagement, strengthen consultation and involve youth in planning commemorative events, learning resources and interactive digital experiences.

### Our Commemoration results sought<sup>17</sup>

Departmental results	Departmental result indicators	Target
Veterans and those who died in service are honoured.	% of Veterans Affairs Canada clients who are satisfied with the way VAC's commemorative initiatives honour Veterans and those who died in service.	80 %
Veterans and those who died in service are honoured.	# of page views of Canadian Virtual War Memorial.	2,000,000
Veterans and those who died in service are honoured.	% of visitors to Vimy and Beaumont-Hamel overseas memorials who report they have a better understanding of the sacrifice and contribution of those who served.	95%
Canadians remember and appreciate Veterans and those who died in service.	% of Canadians who indicate they make an effort to appreciate Veterans and those who died in service.	75%
Canadians remember and appreciate Veterans and those who died in service.	# of Canadians who participated in community engagement activities financially supported by VAC.	200,000

<sup>17</sup> Canada, V. A. (2022, October 21). 2021–2022 Departmental Results Report. Veterans Affairs Canada. Retrieved 6 January 2023, from <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/publications-reports/reports/departmental-results-report/2021-2022>

**Objective 1.3 – Education and learning products.** Design learning materials to encourage youth and Canadians to learn about the importance of remembrance and the roles played by Canadians during times of war, military conflict and peace. We will:

- Provide innovative and accessible learning materials that will help educators teach youth about the role of Canada’s military in the world and their achievements and sacrifices.
- Continue to design and test new learning products such as short video clips, live-streamed commemorative events, and interactive digital experiences (virtual memorial or battlefield tours).
- Renew our collection of first-person Veteran stories on modern Veterans and underrepresented groups.
- Ensure that achievements of modern Veterans, women, Indigenous and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans from all conflicts and missions are commemorated and recognized.
- Develop tools and resources and proactively reach out to assist Veteran organizations, community groups and schools as they plan and conduct commemoration or recognition ceremonies or activities.
- Work with the National Capital Commission and Canadian Heritage to enhance interpretation at the National War Memorial at Confederation Square National Historic Site of Canada.
- Develop, test and release the “CAF around the World” multimedia learning resource.

**Objective 1.4 – Digitization and the web.** Expand the use of digital technology to improve the Remembrance section of our website, our collection of first-person Veteran stories and learning materials to enhance accessibility and the online experience and engagement of users. This includes:

- Updating and redesigning the Remembrance section on [the Department's website](#) to improve the format to have a positive impact and appeal to potential users. We will ensure intuitive navigation, and employ plain language to feature our historical information and stories of Veterans and the fallen. This will be supported by usability research and testing. We launched the new Remembrance webpage information architecture and revised the most requested content in early 2020. The intent is to update the Remembrance section of our website once every three years so it remains fresh to our users.
- Continuing to adapt to emerging social media tools and trends, especially those that engage youth. Working with Communications Division, we will use digital and social media analytics to guide social media strategies and plans to engage more of our target audiences in virtual commemoration, recognition and learning activities.

- Invest in the infrastructure and redesign architecture that supports the user experience of our Canadian Virtual War Memorial, the National Inventory of Military Memorials and the VAC Events Calendar to expand functionality, continue to increase content and better meet user needs.
- Digitizing the Commemorative Partnerships Program by creating an online application process to provide a better user experience, reduce processing time and provide applicants with faster access to funding decisions.

## People and stories

Discover the stories of those who have served Canada, and those who have made significant contributions to commemoration.

Featured people and stories

**PEACE75PAIX**

**Cletus Cheng**  
Highly respected by his peers, he led by example and made the ultimate sacrifice for his country.



### Video interviews

Explore our collection of Heroes Remember interviews to hear personal stories from those who were there.



### Faces of Freedom

Explore stories of fellow Canadians, some of whom bravely defended our freedom. Their faces tell the story and their legacy will live on.



### They proudly served

Hailing from coast to coast to coast they proudly served our country, at home and abroad.



### Articles for Veterans and family

View our collection of articles related to VAC programs and services.

## **Goal 2. Inspire Canadians to actively celebrate and recognize the service and sacrifices of all who have served our country in uniform.**

We will lead military commemoration in the Government of Canada and continue to support stakeholders, partners and communities across Canada to bring the remembrance experience to Canadians where they live. We will maintain a strong ongoing focus on encouraging youth involvement and leadership in remembrance. By recognizing the contributions, achievements and sacrifices of all Veterans across our history, we will strengthen how Canadians connect with our country's military heritage.

**Objective 2.1 – Commemorative Programming, Activities and Events.** Support and deliver commemorative programming, activities and events, focusing on service and sacrifice around the world and recognizing important military milestones across Canadian history in order to honour the contributions and accomplishments of all Veterans. This includes:

- Leading Government of Canada military commemoration by coordinating planning, consistent messaging and complementary programming to maximize federal partnership opportunities for commemoration.
- Working with partners and stakeholders to develop a renewed calendar of military milestones to be shared with other Government of Canada departments and agencies, as well as on the VAC website. The calendar will include traditional anniversaries as well as dates marking modern missions, operations and events.



A large crowd participates in a ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of the Dieppe Raid held in Dieppe Gardens, Windsor, Ontario, on 19 August 2022.

- Establishing a wreath-laying program at the Canadian National War Memorial in Ottawa and the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France to mark anniversaries and milestones of Canada's military history from traditional battles to more recent military efforts. We will explore opportunities to partner with the CAF Sentry Program and the Canadian Student Guide Program on wreath placement.
- Continuing to mark important First World War milestones with annual events at related memorials in Europe, wreath-layings at the Canadian National War Memorial in Ottawa, and support for partner and stakeholder initiatives at home and abroad.
- Planning for future commemoration of Second World War and the Korean War milestones at home. We will work with Allied countries to determine the way forward for the current five-year anniversary commemoration cycle. This includes the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs Revisit Korea Program to determine the best options for supporting Veterans attending international ceremonies.
- Consulting and working with Canadian and international partners to align and coordinate commemorative events and initiatives.
- Developing plans to recognize the death of the last known living Veterans of the Second World War and of the Korean War.



A youth shakes the hand of a Veteran at a ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of D Day, Normandy, France.

- Identifying ways to involve more youth in commemorative ceremonies in communities across Canada and abroad, whether in person or virtually.
- Supporting the Invictus Games 2025 Vancouver-Whistler, an international sporting competition for ill and injured active-duty members or Veterans. The mission of the Games is to honour people who have sacrificed for their country, using the power of rehabilitative sports to help them on their journey of recovery. For the Invictus Games 2025, one of VAC's primary partners is Soldier On, a program of the CAF, which leads and manages the Team Canada and Canadian Friends and Family program at the Invictus Games. Approximately 550 competitors from up to 25 nations will be invited to participate in the Games. The 2025 Invictus Games will provide Canada with an exceptional opportunity to highlight the stories of modern Veterans, and still-serving members, including those who have traditionally been underrepresented.

### Did you know?

- The first Invictus Games were held in 2014.
- Governments of Canada and British Columbia committed \$15 million each, to support the Invictus Games 2025.
- An additional \$1 million will be provided to the Soldier On program to support Canadian Veteran participation in the Games from the Government of Canada.
- The Invictus Games 2025 sport program will include five summer adaptive sports and, for the first time, will also include four winter adaptive sports which will expand the range and profile of winter adaptive sports.



Members of Team Canada at the INVICTUS Games 2022, The Hague.

### **Goal 3. Preserve, maintain and enhance Government of Canada memorials, including the Books of Remembrance and Veteran grave markers in a sustainable and dignified way.**

Our responsibilities include 15 overseas memorial sites, two Departmental cemeteries in Canada, the Books of Remembrance and artifacts and collection pieces used for commemorative and interpretive purposes. Many of these resources have heritage value due to their historical or cultural significance.

**Objective 3.1 – Overseas memorials and sites.** Maintain, preserve and present the Government of Canada’s international monuments, memorials and battlefields in accordance with our commemorative integrity statements so they may be enjoyed in perpetuity. We will:

- Implement resource management plans governing the operation and maintenance of overseas memorial sites to ensure their long-term sustainability and dignity. Doing so will require indexed operating funding that keeps pace with increased costs in horticulture, maintenance, utility rates and professional services.
- Develop asset management work plans to identify priority projects and large infrastructure investment needs at memorial sites. Actions may include the refurbishment or repurposing of existing buildings, electrical, water or sewage repairs and upgrades, accessibility enhancements and redesign of visitor experience elements such as traffic flow at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial.

- Develop and implement a forest management plan at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial. These memorial sites have mature forests with trees averaging 85 years of age that are dying off at a rate of 2-3% per year. To manage and maintain them, we will seek advice from local authorities and other stakeholders on the necessary forest removal, regrowth strategies, cut patterns and demining requirements.
- Leverage and enhance the Canadian Student Guide Program in France by increasing the profile of the 45+ Canadian students hired annually to provide interpretive services at our memorial sites in Europe. This may include development of new narratives to support guided visits, exchanges with other organizations offering similar programming, outreach to universities in Canada to promote offerings, outreach to schools in Canada to promote recruitment and increased participation in commemorative events and activities in the region.
- Develop a visitor experience strategy for our interpretive spaces and memorial sites. Activities may include improving online resources to attract and assist visitors planning trips to overseas memorials, developing a mobile application for self-guided visits, investing in permanent and temporary exhibits and installing interpretive panels that highlight the diversity of those who served at our memorial sites.
- Work with other Government of Canada partners to identify and implement approaches and best practices to help maintain, present and interpret Canada's overseas memorials.

### Did you know?

- The Government of Canada will invest \$11.7M over six years and almost \$300K annually to maintain, modernize and enhance visitors' experience at Canada's 15 overseas memorial sites.
- VAC launched a project to plant 70,000 trees at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial in France as part of a 10-year forest conservation project to rejuvenate the forests.
- Canada is a member nation of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). On behalf of Member Nations, including that of Canada, the CWGC cares for the graves of 110,355 Canadian First and Second World War dead in cemeteries around the world, as well as more than 210,000 Veteran grave markers in Canada and overseas.
- As part of our commitment to sustainability and preservation, VAC utilizes more than 500 sheep to keep the grass short on First World War battlefields at Vimy and Beaumont-



The Canadian National Vimy Memorial Visitor Education Centre, Vimy, France.

**Objective 3.2 – In-Canada monuments, memorials and awards.** Develop and enhance interpretation of Government of Canada national military memorials and other monuments in Canada. This includes:

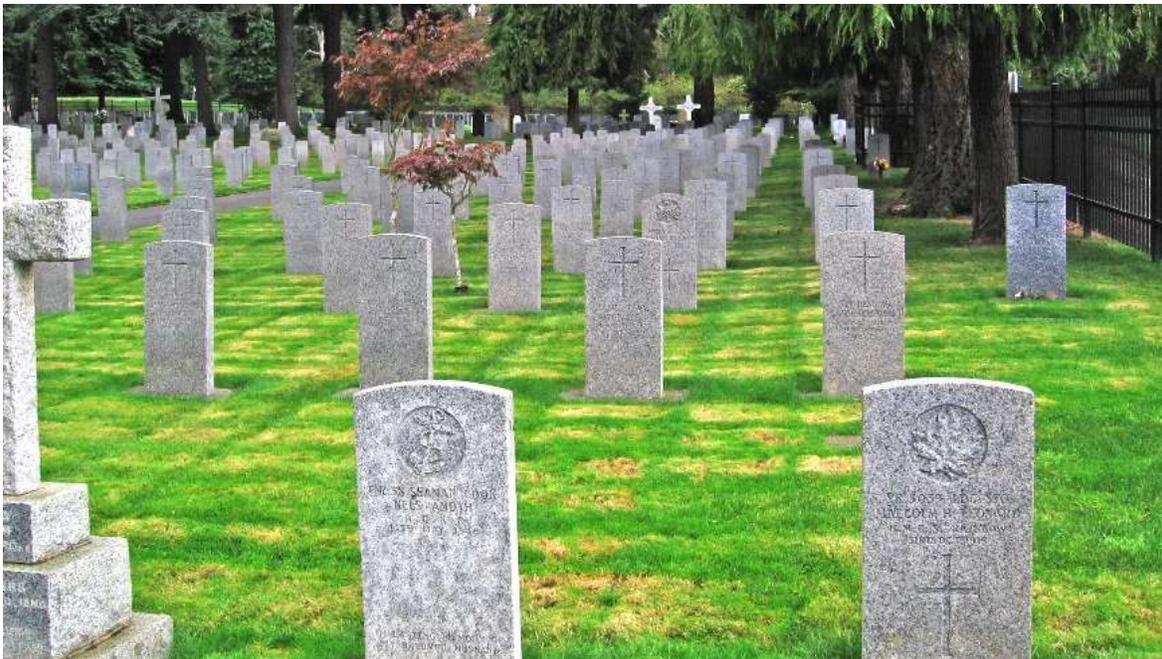
- Working with our partners to complete the construction and unveiling of the National Monument to Canada’s Mission in Afghanistan.
- Advocating for a Government of Canada project to update the National Peacekeeping Monument and enhance the interpretation of the monument and site (design, symbology and purpose of the monument, the ‘Mission Wall” and purpose of the Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal), so that all those who served on peacekeeping missions feel that they are represented and honoured at the site.
- Working with our partners to explore opportunities to enhance interpretation at the National War Memorial site (design, symbology and original purpose of the memorial, the rededications and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier) so that all those who served feel that they are represented and honoured at the site.



A sailor standing in front of a war memorial.

**Objective 3.3 – Commemoration programs.** Respond to requests for increased Commemorative Partnership Program support for third party community engagement, war memorial restoration and construction initiatives and ensure the maintenance and preservation of Veteran graves in Canada. We will:

- Streamline and simplify the Funeral and Burial Program.
- Eliminate the backlog of Veteran grave maintenance repairs.
- Review the Cemetery and Grave Marker Maintenance program to ensure it can keep up with the demand for grave marker repair and replacement. This includes reviewing the inspection cycle and identifying the human and financial resources required to support the program.
- Work with owners/stewards of cemeteries to ensure the long-term monitoring and maintenance/repair of fields of honour in Canada.
- Work with the Department of National Defence to streamline delivery of the Memorial Cross program.
- Develop a plan to discontinue issuing military medals and decorations for the Veterans of the Second World War and Korean War.



Veterans Affairs Cemetery in Esquimalt, British Columbia, where more than 2,500 military personnel and their family members are buried.

## **Goal 4. Align Departmental resources to better serve Canadians.**

We will align and clarify roles and responsibilities to use our valuable human resources to best effect. We will ensure that our employees have training and tools to do their job to deliver our commemorative programming. We will provide the necessary resources to meet the modern needs of the Department and those we serve.

**Objective 4.1 – Support for employees.** Clarify roles, responsibilities and accountabilities to better support Commemoration Division and other internal partners within VAC. This includes:

- Aligning Commemoration Division and Communications Division efforts and planning to better clarify roles and responsibilities to best support the Department's commemorative mandate.
- Identifying inter-departmental supports required (policy, information technology, procurement and real property) to ensure Commemoration Division receives the same supports provided to other areas within the Department.
- Reviewing Commemoration Division's organizational structure to best align our skills and resources for delivery of current and future commitments.
- Supporting public-facing employees to represent the Department at commemorative events to help them become ambassadors of commemoration.
- Implementing a professional development program for employees to increase knowledge of Canada's military history and actions post-Korean War.

### **Objective 4.2 – Commemoration Division operational plan and future forecasting.**

Develop and implement an operational plan that clearly identifies the resources and technical tools/enhancements required to support the delivery of initiatives within the Commemoration Strategic Plan or vision. The plan will include International Operations requirements for conservation and visitor experience. This includes:

- Developing and implementing a three-year operational plan, with a two-year forecast, that identifies priorities, action items and provides the technical capability to better manage and deliver projects and initiatives.
- Seeking stable, long-term funding to efficiently plan and implement day-to-day work to deliver the Canada Remembers Program and the Funeral and Burial Program through carefully considered budget submissions.

### **Moving forward**

Our principles guide and inform our "CAF Around the World" regional approach to understand the experiences, sacrifices and contributions of all who served. We will help the members of our country's diverse population understand the contributions of all those who served in the cause of bringing peace and security to different regions of the

world, including here at home. Canadians' recognition of Veterans' service and sacrifice, and of those who died in service will contribute positively to the well-being of today's Veterans and their families.

It is important to know if we are accomplishing this. We will measure our success in this plan through consultations with stakeholders to determine if we are meeting their expectations. The Departmental Audit and Evaluation Division will evaluate how effectively we have achieved our objectives.

Veterans want Canadians to remember the efforts and sacrifices they and their predecessors have made. They want Canadians to recognize and proudly display the values for which they fought. We will be stewards of remembrance and recognition on their behalf and on behalf of those we have lost.

### **Lest we forget.**



The "In the Service of Canada", one of eight Books of Remembrance, lists the names of more than 1,900 military personnel who have lost their lives since 1 October 1947, excluding those who are commemorated in the Korean War Book of Remembrance. This figure includes CAF members who have died during peacekeeping and peace support efforts, conflicts, training exercises and other duties.

## Annex A: Multi-year themes and notable military milestones

### 2024 CAF Around the World - Africa

- 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of Canada's participation in the United Nations Cambodia Mine Action Center (1 March 1994)
- 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Afghanistan mission (12 March 2014)
- 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of Canadian peacekeeping in Cyprus (15 March 1964)
- 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Royal Canadian Air Force (1 April 2024)
- 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of beginning of the Rwandan genocide and the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda (7 April 1994)
- 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the National War Memorial (21 May 1939)
- 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy (6 June 1944)
- 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of Operation Python and Canadian participation in the UN peace support mission to Western Sahara (29 June 1994)
- Dedication of the new Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Newfoundland National War Memorial in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, (1 July 2024)
- 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the shooting down of a CAF UN Buffalo aircraft in Syria which was the greatest single day loss of Canadian lives on a peacekeeping mission (9 August 1974)
- National Peacekeepers' Day (August 9)
- 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of Canada's participation in the International Commissions for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (10 August 1954)
- 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of the Atlantic (3 September 1939)
- 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation of Belgium/Battle of the Scheldt (2 October – 8 November 1944)
- Cyprus 2024: Veterans pilgrimage to Cyprus to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the defence of the Nicosia airport (November)

**2025 CAF Around the World - The Americas (Caribbean and here at home)**

- 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the major earthquake in Haiti, resulting in CAF disaster assistance mission Operation Hestia (12 January 2010)
- Invictus Games Vancouver/Whistler (9-16 February 2025)
- 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Ypres and the Battle of St. Julien – Canada’s first major action in the First World War (22-25 April 1915)
- 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the writing of ‘In Flanders Fields’ (3 May 1915)
- 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands (5 May 1945)
- 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Battle of the Atlantic (8 May 1945)
- 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory in Europe (V-E) Day (8 May 1945)
- 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada’s Unknown Soldier being laid to rest in a tomb in front of the National War Memorial in Ottawa (28 May 2000)
- 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial by Field Marshal Earl Haig (7 June 1925)
- National Peacekeepers’ Day (August 9)
- 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of Canada’s participation Opération des Nations unies au Congo (ONUC), the first major Canadian UN mission to the Congo (9 August 1960)
- 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory over Japan (V-J) Day (15 August 1945)
- 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Newfoundland Regiment landing in Gallipoli (19-20 September 1915)
- 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of September (1940)

**2026 CAF Around the World - Middle East**

- 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CAF response to the Indian Ocean tsunami on 26 December 2004 that damaged much of the Ampara district of Sri Lanka (6 January 2005)
- 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of end of the Gulf War (28 February 1991)
- 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of end of large-scale Canadian peacekeeping mission in the Golan Heights (24 March 2006)
- 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong (22-25 April 1951)
- 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of Canada’s participation with the International Force in East Timor (14 May 2001)

- 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Mont Sorrel (Hill 62) (2-13 June 1916)
- 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of Operation Eclipse, Canada's participation in the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (11 June 2001)
- 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Battles of the Somme and Beaumont-Hamel (1 July 1916)
- 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of No. 2 Construction Battalion (5 July 1916)
- 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unveiling of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial (26 July 1936)
- National Peacekeepers' Day (August 9)
- 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 9-11 terrorist attacks (11 September 2001)
- 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada's military response in Southwest Asia and Afghanistan in the aftermath of 9-11 terrorist attacks (7 October 2001)
- 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the first large-scale UN peacekeeping effort with the UN Emergency Force in Egypt (7 November 1956)
- 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Defence of Hong Kong (8-25 December 1941)

## **2027 CAF Around the World - Europe (Western Europe, the Balkans and the Mediterranean)**

- 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of Operation Marquis, Canada's participation in the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (15 March 1992)
- 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge (9-12 April 1917)
- 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of large-scale Canadian participation in UN peacekeeping efforts in the former Yugoslavia (mid-April 1992)
- 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CAF response to the 1997 Red River Floods (April/May 1997)
- 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the South African War (31 May 1902)
- 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inauguration of the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing in Ypres, Belgium, which includes the names of 6,940 Canadians with no known graves (24 July 1927)
- National Peacekeepers' Day (August 9)
- 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dieppe Raid (19 August 1942)

- 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of Reconciliation – the Peacekeeping Monument in Ottawa (8 October 1992)
- 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the announcement that Lester Pearson would be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in the creation of the United Nations Emergency Force in Egypt during the 1956 Suez Crisis (14 October 1957)
- 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canadian soldiers seeing heavy action in the Defence of Hill 355 during the Korean War (23-24 October 1952)
- 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Battle of Passchendaele (10 November 1917)
- 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Halifax explosion (6 December 1917)

## **2028 CAF Around the World - Asia**

- 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Operation Recuperation in response to the 1998 Ice Storms in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick (4 January 1998)
- 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of CAF participation in International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC) efforts in Vietnam (29 January 1973)
- 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Peacekeeping and International Day of UN Peacekeepers (May 29)
- 105<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unveiling of the St. Julien Canadian Memorial – the Brooding Soldier (8 July 1923)
- 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the invasion of Sicily and the beginning of the Italian Campaign (10 July 1943)
- 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Korean War Armistice (27 July 1953)
- 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of Canada's Hundred Days (8 August – 11 November 1918)
- National Peacekeepers' Day (August 9)
- 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CAF response to Swissair Flight 111 (2 September 1998)
- 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Medak Pocket (15-16 September 1993)
- 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nobel Peace Prize being presented to UN Peacekeeping Forces (10 December 1988)

- 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Ortona and Christmas in Ortona (20-28 December 1943)