

Ottawa marks Great War anniversary

Kelly Roche, Ottawa Sun, August 4, 2014



Retired RCMP Staff Sgt. Garth Hampson of Blackburn Hamlet keeps a button belonging to his father, L/Cpl Sid Hampson, who was with the 10th Battalion, close to his chest.

Kelly Roche/Ottawa Sun

A commemorative ceremony at the National War Memorial marked Canada's entry into the First World War Monday morning with hundreds looking on.

Retired RCMP Staff Sgt. Garth Hampson of Blackburn Hamlet was clutching a button belonging to his father, L/Cpl Syd Hampson of Moose Jaw, Sask. from the 10th Battalion.

"Over the weekend I've listened to all the newscasts and how many people were killed, and I don't think we've learned a darn thing in 100 years," said Hampson.

More than 650,000 Canadians and Newfoundlanders fought between 1914 and 1918, leaving at least 66,000 dead and 172,000 wounded.

Serving from 1915 to 1919, Syd "didn't talk a lot about the war but he talked about good friends that never came back," said Hampson.

"And I think there was an awful lot of nostalgia. I wonder what their lives would've been if — 'cause they were all young. My dad was only 22 ... just an ordinary soldier."

His sacrifices were anything but.

On July 26, 1918, during a trench raid Syd was shot through the shoulder, said grandson and Ottawa Police Staff Sgt. Brad Hampson.

"Basically, he never went back to operational duty," he said.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper was on hand for a wreath-laying ceremony, followed by a reception at the Canadian War Museum.

"We must never forget that our place at the table was never given to us — it was bought and paid for," Harper said.

Harper announced the launch of a national sentry program at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Starting immediately, it's being expanded from two months a year to seven months and includes special military anniversaries.

Retired Canadian Forces Lt.-Cmdr. Albert Wong called it a significant undertaking, running until 2020.

"It's an opportunity for us to be able to show our appreciation for the soldiers who fought in WWI, WWII and the Korean War," said CAF Corp. Oliver Avelino from Calgary.

"It doesn't matter if they're from a different era."

Minister of Veterans Affairs Julian Fantino was in Belgium Monday.

"To this day, we struggle to comprehend the sheer scale of death and destruction unleashed by these two horrific wars," Fantino said.

"No community across our country was left unscathed by the terrible loss of life, and our nation still mourns her fallen sons and daughters."

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