

Commemorating the First World War

Remembering Thunder Bay's role November 2 to 4



Each year on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, Canadians pause to remember "the men and women who have served, and continue to serve our country during times of war, conflict and peace." Remembrance Day this year will be even more poignant as it falls on the

hundredth anniversary of the armistice that would end the First World War.

Over 6,000 women and men from Northwestern Ontario would sign up for military service at home and overseas between 1914 and 1918. Men served in various capacities within the Canadian

and British navies, the various flying units that became the Royal Air Force, and numerous army units, most notably the 52nd (New Ontario) Battalion raised locally. Relegated to non-combat roles, women served in the Canadian Army Medical Corps as nurses, medical orderlies, ambulance drivers, or served

with the Voluntary Aid Detachment and the Red Cross. Those who served came from all segments of society, including many of the Indigenous communities throughout the region.

A majority of citizens at home supported Canada's war effort by providing care packages for soldiers and raising funds for patriotic causes like the Belgian Relief Fund or to provide financial assistance to soldiers families and veterans. However, the war was not a completely united front, especially when the issue of



Section No. 1 52nd Battalion - Thunder Bay Historical Museum

conscription was debated in late 1917 or for those such as Ukrainian-Canadians who were unfairly targeted as enemy aliens and subject to internment in camps and forced labour.

Nonetheless, people in Thunder Bay have a reason to remember. Approximately 300 during the conflict would be killed overseas or die of illness due to their war service. Thousands more were wounded in body and mind. Some, such as Elizabeth Smellie were awarded medals for their distinguished conduct, others, like Augustin Belanger and Ernest Potter, were decorated for bravery, but all those who served did so hoping for peace.

Over the past few years various community groups have partnered to commemorate those fateful years. Four years of activities will culminate on the weekend of the 2 to 4 November 2018, with various events sponsored by the City of Thunder Bay.

A public reception at the O'Kelly Armoury featuring music by the Royal Canadian Air Force Band, historical displays by the Thunder Bay Military Museum, and the launch of the book *Thunder Bay and the First World War, 1914-1919* will be held on the evening of Friday November 2nd. During the evening of Saturday 3 November the City will host a gala ball at the Victoria Inn. On Sunday 4 November



Thunder Bay men in the trenches - Thunder Bay Military Museum

a military parade will be held on Memorial Avenue, ending at the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium where a free public civic ceremony with musical performances, historical presentations, and commemorations will occur. The event will also feature the premiere of a film commemorating Thunder Bay's contribution to the First World War.

For more information and details on how to get tickets for 3 November gala go to www.thunderbay.ca/ww1

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Brothers Peter and Augustin Belanger - Thunder Bay Public Library



Dr. James Crozier, 8th Battalion in the trenches - Thunder Bay Military Museum

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