

## United Through Tragedy, United Through Remembrance

I believe it was Bernie Sanders, a United States Senator from Vermont, that once said: "Difficult times often bring out the best in people." Nowhere do I think this quote fits more perfectly than in times of war. From World War 1 to the war in Afghanistan, Canada and the world have undergone a lot of change, but throughout it all, two things have remained consistent. First and foremost, the bravery and sacrifice of the countless soldiers who went out and served in those wars, some never returning home, some returning home never the same, has remained unwavering. The second thing that has remained unchanged through the decades is the effect that these horrible conflicts have had on our sense of community. Time and time again, war has brought people from every ethnicity, race, and age, closer together. Closer together through the shared grief of families torn apart by the unrelenting brutality of war, and by a common goal, to emerge victorious and preserve our freedom.

Perhaps one of the best examples of unity through the tragedies of war happened from the United Kingdom during the Second World War. In May of 1940, when World War 2 was first beginning, Winston Churchill, the prime minister of the United Kingdom at the time, united the three main political parties to form an unprecedented coalition government to fight the growing Axis powers. The mere fact that the tragedies of that war were able to get people from all different sides to work together in something as polarizing and divisive as politics sends a powerful message as to how war unites a country through a common goal.

During wartime, people at home have also historically helped the war effort in a multitude of ways. This could be by rationing food and supplies to contribute to help the war effort, or by purchasing war bonds or victory bonds to support the war effort financially. Another obvious but important way that people supported the war effort was by serving in the military, voluntarily risking their lives to ensure freedom and peace for future generations. During wartime, everyone made sacrifices for what they saw as the greater good, triumph over the enemy.

The Battle at Vimy Ridge in the First World War also saw Canadians come together like never before. As Brigadier-General Alexander Ross put it, "It was Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific on parade. I thought then, and I think today, that in those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation." The First World War, and Vimy Ridge, in particular, played a significant role in shaping the Canada we all know today, through the unity demonstrated by Canadians throughout the war.

Wars also bring people together because of the shared fear of the families of soldiers. It is difficult not to worry when a loved one is far away from home and in danger. In wartime, people at home who have one or multiple family members or friends serving in combat is nothing short of plentiful, so many of these people turn to others in similar situations for support. These support networks ensure that families and friends of soldiers serving abroad have someone to talk to about their anxiety and fears over their loved one's well being.

In all of the examples I've listed above, it was not the tragedy itself that encouraged people to work together, but rather the collective desire to fight it and ensure that it never happens again. On Remembrance Day, we wear the poppy as a symbol. A symbol of unity that we are united in fighting for peace and freedom around the world. In wearing the poppy, we show that we do not need a devastating conflict that kills hundreds or thousands of Canadians to be united as one nation. On Remembrance Day, we get together across the country through Remembrance Day ceremonies to not only to show our respect to our veterans but also to ensure that their sacrifices were not in vain. Our veterans shaped the Canada that we all know today, and so it is vital that on Remembrance Day, we remember their valiant efforts to create a more peaceful, more united world.