

# BELLS OF PEACE – A REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR





## **INTRODUCTION**

The Royal Canadian Legion was born from the ashes of the First World War (WWI). As Canada's largest veterans' organization and in partnership with Veterans Affairs Canada, we have been handed this torch of remembrance by our founders to hold high and to never forget the sacrifices made in the name of Canada and for Canadians.

On 11 November 2018, 100 years will have passed since the signing of the armistice that officially ended WWI. As a tribute to all Canadians that served in this horrific struggle we are producing a program of remembrance for those from that era — an event that allows Canadians, if only for a moment, to stop, to remember and to feel, perhaps for a second, the joy that peace brought after so much death and destruction. In order to achieve this we are asking all Religious Organizations across the Country to assist us in achieving this goal by reaching out to their different branches and asking if they would participate by ringing their Bells at sunset on November 11, 2018. Our hope is all who hear the Bells will stop and focus on the loss and sacrifice both on the battlefield and at home. This document contains details regarding our request, requested actions and timing. We thank you in advance for your cooperation and assistance in helping us remember the Veterans who served in WW1.

## **AIM**

To create a remembrance event that highlights the sacrifices of Canadians who served in WWI.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **General**

The war to end all wars left an indelible impression on Canada.

Some 619,636 Canadians enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the war, and approximately 424,000 served overseas. Close to 61,000 Canadians were killed during the war, and another 172,000 were wounded. Many more returned home broken in mind and body. The Dominion of Newfoundland suffered 1,305 killed and several thousand wounded. Of the more than 172,000 Canadians who reported wounds during the war, medical authorities classified approximately 138,000 as battle casualties. Of the wounded who survived, 3,461 men and one woman had a limb amputated. No reliable method existed for tracking or treating psychological casualties, but authorities identified over 9,000 Canadians as suffering from "shell shock". (<https://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/after-the-war/legacy/>)

This was an enormous contribution from a population of just under 8 million in 1914. Approximately seven percent of the total population of Canada was in uniform at some point during the war, and hundreds of thousands of additional Canadians worked on the home front in support of the war.

If you were to extrapolate from the numbers listed above, it could be claimed that the majority of the population in Canada at that time was touched in some capacity by the war. Further to this



you could also state that there were at least 425,000 families that were intimately affected as their loved ones faced the brunt of the tragedy that is war.

If we are to remember those that fought, we need to drive home the message of the horror of war and its effect on the society that wages it. That includes the families that had to live with the unknown and after the war with the after-effects related to those who returned with injuries both visible and invisible.

### **Remembrance Event – The Ringing of Bells**

Bells call us to wake, to pray, to work, to arms, to feast and, in times of crisis, to come together. “On November 11, 1918, the ringing of church bells erupted spontaneously across the country, as an outpouring of relief that four years of war had come to an end. (BBC news <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41957521> ).”

The Bells of Peace initiative is designed to emulate that moment of remembrance in honour of our veterans who served in WWI.

### **Activities requested**

In order to create a unified remembrance action in Canada we are requesting that all Churches/House of Worships/Religious Organizations in Canada who possess a bell(s) participate Nationally in the following activities:

- Engage all community Churches/Houses of Worship/Religious Organizations (equipped with bells) to request their individual assistance;
- The bell(s) would be tolled 100 times with 5 seconds between tolls;
- Each community bell would start the ringing at the going down of the sun on November 11, 2018 as per the sunset timing in their area;
- If possible engage the youth in the community to be part of the bell ringing process; and
- As a prelude to this event we are contacting all schools across Canada to request that Canadian youth search out those that served in WWI and place a small Canadian flag on that person’s grave.

It is also requested that any community Churches/Houses of Worship/Religious Organizations that are willing to be involved in this activity to please send an email to [PGagne@legion.ca](mailto:PGagne@legion.ca) advising of the following –

- What areas/locations will be participating in the ringing of the Bells?
- The contact name of the person who is distributing the information.
- Will you be conducting other initiatives that will commemorate the 100 year signing of the Armistice in your Community and if yes what are the activities?

You should also be aware that local Legion Branches in your Communities may also be reaching out to your local Communities to request their involvement in this initiative.



We wish to thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation in helping to make the Bells of Peace initiative a success in honoring and remembering those veterans who served in WW1.

**DANNY MARTIN**

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**For all questions related to the Bells of Peace initiative please contact:**

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Memoriam Eorum Retinebimus (We Will Remember Them)