



# THE POPPY CAMPAIGN

**F**For several decades the Legion has depended on a small, but sacred symbol to express the importance of remembering those killed in war or on other Canadian Forces missions. Each year, millions of red Poppies blossom on jackets, dresses and hats, but where did the idea come from?

## A BRIEF HISTORY

The origins of the Poppy's use in Remembrance date back a full hundred years before it was adopted in Canada. During the Napoleonic Wars a news correspondent noted how quickly Poppies grew over the graves of soldiers in French Flanders. No one strengthened Canada's bond to the Poppy more than

Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae of Guelph, Ont., a Canadian medical officer who served in the First World War. The soldier-poet penned "In Flanders Fields" on a scrap of paper while serving on the Western Front, and to this day the words of that poem remain enshrined in the inner-most thoughts and hearts of all soldiers who hear them.

In the United States, a woman working in a New York City canteen began wearing a Poppy in memory of the thousands who died on First World War battlefields. Moina Michael's simple show of respect inspired others, and the American Legion soon adopted the Poppy as the symbol of Remembrance.

From left: Princess Alice (centre), wife of Canada's Governor General the Earl of Athlone, launches the Poppy Campaign during the Second World War; veterans assemble wreaths and Poppies in Montreal.





In 1920, a French woman, Anna E. Guerin, visited the U.S. and was also inspired. After returning to France, she used handmade Poppies to raise money for destitute children in wartorn areas of the country.

In addition to the famous John McCrae poem, first published in December 1915, Canada's connection to the Poppy gained official status when it was adopted by the Great War Veterans' Association in 1921. There is little doubt that the decision was influenced by the poem and by Mme. Guerin's work.

Since then, generations of Canadians have proudly worn the Poppy each November.

#### WHY WEAR A POPPY?

By making a donation and wearing a Poppy, Canadians of all ages support the Legion's mission to serve veterans and their dependants while also promoting Remembrance. The sale of wreaths and the Poppy Campaign make it possible for the Legion to operate a national Service Bureau which acts

as an advocate for veterans and their dependants seeking compensation from government for service-incurred disabilities. Every year, more than a million dollars of the money raised through the campaign is used for direct assistance for ex-service people and their dependants in financial distress. The funds are used to pay for food, accommodation, utilities, dental and optical services and hospital comforts. It is also important to note that over the years many millions of dollars have been given to worthy charities or spent providing valuable services, such as Meals on Wheels, to seniors. The campaign's expenses, meanwhile, remain low owing in large part to the national network of volunteers who distribute the Poppies. The money collected is held in trust and cannot be spent on anything other than the purposes specifically authorized in the General By-laws of the Legion.



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Clockwise from top left: Legion members in Fort William (now Thunder Bay), Ont., distribute Poppies to students; the Peterborough, Ont., Ladies Auxiliary assist with the campaign; a school visit in the mid-1970s emphasizes the importance of wearing a Poppy.



#### READING RESOURCES

(CLICK TO GO TO LINK)

- THE ROOTS OF THE POPPY
- SUMMER'S BLOOM
- FROM FIELDS OF RED
- WHERE POPPIES BLOW