Remembering the Newfoundlanders at Beaumont-Hamel

Forget-me-nots

Tiny forget-me-not flowers have a special meaning in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, where they are often worn as symbols of remembrance on July 1st, just as many of us wear poppies for Remembrance Day on November 11.

Many of you might know that July 1st is Canada Day in our country and reason for celebration and fireworks! But in Newfoundland and Labrador, the day has another meaning–and not one for celebration.

Before joining Canada many years ago in 1949, Newfoundlanders traditionally had Memorial Day on July 1st each year. This date was chosen as a reminder of the hundreds of young soldiers from the Royal Newfoundland Regiment who died on July 1st, 1916 at a place called Beaumont-Hamel, in the country of France during the First World War. It was a very sad day for the nation of Newfoundland, and almost everyone knew someone who had died.

They were very sad to lose their loved ones, but wearing the little tiny forget-me-not flowers made them feel a little bit better, and helped them to remember.

The forget-me-not is a good symbol to remember the Newfoundland soldiers. The blue symbolizes the loyalty of those young soldiers to their country of Newfoundland as they fought very bravely. The flower, (which can survive in harsh climates and grow in the toughest terrain), symbolizes the strength and courage of those young Newfoundland men on the battlefield.

Bud Davidge, a songwriter from Newfoundland, wrote a song called "The Little Blue-Forget-Me Not" to help keep the tradition of Memorial Day and the famous flower alive in Newfoundland and Labrador's history.

A verse in the song goes:

Forget-me-not, wee flower of beauty,
Your royal symbol proudly stands,
Blue as the loyal men that wore them,
Far from their homes in Newfoundland.

Let us not forget the Newfoundlanders who died one hundred years ago at Beaumont-Hamel.

Newfoundland soldier holding forget-me-nots.
Photo: Sharon Adams, Legion Magazine

Forget-me-not flowers