

# Canada Remembers Times

Veterans' Week Special Edition - November 5 to 11, 2006

**Weather** *April 9, 1917*  
*Vimy Ridge, France*  
 36°F Sleet

## 1st Newfoundland Regiment Suffers Grave Losses at Beaumont-Hamel

### Canada's "Black Battalion"

Young African-Canadians were eager to serve their country during the First World War. At the time, an informal segregation policy made it difficult for these men to join the Canadian Army. However, like anyone else, they wanted the chance to do their part.



Second Construction Battalion members

Ninety years ago, on the morning of July 1, 1916, an event shook Newfoundland which still echoes in the province today. While July 1 is known as Canada Day, in Newfoundland and Labrador it has an additional and more sombre meaning. There, it is Memorial Day—a time to think back and remember those who gave so much in the cause of peace and freedom.

On this day in 1916, 801 men from the 1st Newfoundland Regiment went forward into a thick hail of enemy fire on the first day of the First World War's Battle of the Somme. They tucked their chins in as they walked through the bullets and shrapnel, as if they were walking through a snow storm. But, it was not snow that was flying all around them and, in less than half an hour, the Regiment was torn apart: 255 were killed; 386 were wounded; and 91 were missing. It was a day that would never be forgotten in Newfoundland.

This day was just the first of more than four and a half months of fighting during the Battle of the Somme. The Newfoundlanders would rebuild and go on to earn the name Royal Newfoundland



Newfoundlanders in their trench before the attack at Beaumont-Hamel.

PANL NA 3105 - Courtesy of The Rooms Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador, Provincial Archives

On July 5, 1916, the 2nd Construction Battalion was formed in Pictou, Nova Scotia—the first black battalion in Canadian history. Recruitment took place across Canada, but the majority of recruits came from the Maritimes. Eventually, 605 men were accepted.

The unit was intended for non-combatant support roles and served honourably in France as part of the Canadian Forestry Corps. They provided the necessary lumber to maintain trenches on the front lines. Some of the members would go on to distinguished service in combat units and earn medals for bravery.

Today, the dedicated service of the "Black Battalion" is remembered and celebrated as the foundation of a proud African-Canadian tradition of military service in our country. This interesting chapter of our country's history has been recorded in a book called *Canada's Black Battalion* and a documentary on the subject has also been produced.

Regiment for their brave actions and successes in battles during the war. They gave so much to the Allied forces' effort to restore peace to Europe.

## Sports



Tom Longboat

LAC PA-49991

Tom Longboat, the famous Aboriginal-Canadian runner and winner of the 1907 Boston Marathon, did not let serving in the Canadian Army stop him from doing what he did best. Private Longboat served as a dispatch carrier with the 107th Pioneer Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He used his athletic skills to deliver messages between units on the front lines in France. He also found the chance to race competitively while overseas. On July 1, 1918, the athlete from the Six Nations Grand Reserve in Ontario won the eight-mile (13 km) race at the Canadian Corps Dominion Day competitions.



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### Nine Canadian Nursing Sisters Lose Lives in Sinking of Hospital Ship



Canadian Nursing Sisters aboard a hospital ship

LAC PA 128182

Nurses who tended to injured servicemen in the First and Second World Wars were referred to as Nursing Sisters. Life for Canada's Nursing Sisters was dangerous. They often served close to the front lines so they could better help those who were hurt. This put them within range of enemy attack.

On June 27, 1918, this danger was proven tragically true when the Canadian hospital ship *Llandoverly Castle* was torpedoed by a German submarine. In all, 234 people lost their lives, including all 14 Nursing Sisters—nine of whom were Canadian—who had been helping the wounded on board the floating hospital.

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## FIRST HAND

### First hand

#### Letters from the Front - Herbert H. King

During the First World War, letters were a vital lifeline between Canadians serving overseas and their families back home in Canada. Sometimes these brave people would share their thoughts in verse...

#### A Newfoundlander's Thoughts of Home

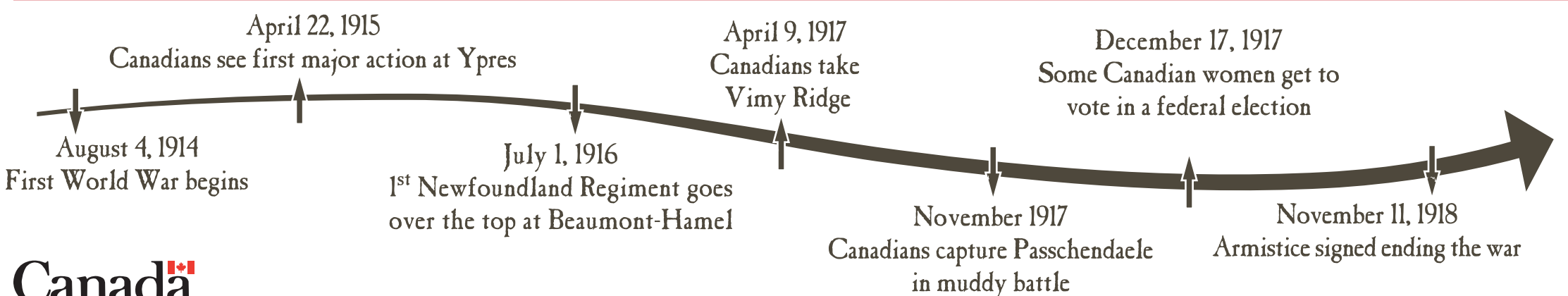
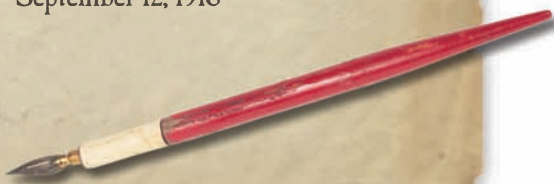
Dear Mother, if thou could only be  
 Close to my heart far o'er the sea;  
 For every night I kneel and pray  
 That we shall meet again some day.

And every night before you sleep,  
 O'er thy flock a watch still keep  
 An eye of bliss and not of shame  
 To comfort them and keep thy name.

For as I watch with tearful eye  
 The motor cars as they go by  
 British soldiers, without arms, legs or feet,  
 Going to their last place to sleep.

And as I rest in bed I pray  
 That this great war is o'er next day;  
 For shot and shell and big steel guns  
 Are made to kill some mother's sons.

Herbert H. King  
 Newfoundland Regiment  
 British Expeditionary Force, France  
 September 12, 1916



# The Merchant Navy Saves the Day!



Convoy in Bedford Basin

Canadians would make many great efforts and sacrifices to help the Allies triumph in the Second World War. One important job was carried out by the sailors of the Merchant Navy. They kept the flow of supplies moving from North America to England and the Allied forces fighting in continental Europe. Without this vital lifeline, the war could not have been won.

These brave sailors criss-crossed the dangerous waters of the North Atlantic for almost six years in the face of the deadly threat of German U-boats. The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest campaign of the war, lasting from the first day of the conflict to the last.

Despite the best efforts of the enemy to break the supply lines, the Merchant Navy prevailed. This was not without a great cost however. More than 1,600 Canadian and Newfoundlander merchant sailors lost their lives in the effort.



## Reduce, Reuse and Recycle on the Home Front

Canadians on the home front contributed a lot to the war effort. It was a time of coming together as a country. We also reduced our consumption of goods that were in short supply, recycling and helping support the men and women serving overseas.

Goals were set to collect tons of used rubber products (which could be recycled into vitally-needed tires and other products important in the war effort). If these goals were not met, people were warned that the tires of non-essential vehicles could be seized! In this time of great need and sacrifice, everyone had to share the load and help Canada "roll on" to victory!

Gasoline was also rationed, with strict limits being set on how much could be used for different needs, such as personal use or agricultural requirements. Ration books were distributed to keep track of what people were allowed to have. This reduced waste so more gas could be sent overseas to help those fighting the enemy.

Women on the home front also contributed in other ways. Often they got together to make use of their domestic skills to support the war effort, doing things like knitting socks and gloves for the Canadians fighting overseas.

# Canada's own "Rosie the Riveter" with a Twist!



During the Second World War, hundreds of thousands of Canadian women answered the call to work in factories. They contributed greatly to the war effort by keeping our country's industrial production growing while freeing men to fight overseas. However, not many women pitched in quite the way Elsie McGill did.

McGill was the first woman to receive an Electrical Engineering degree in Canada and the first female aircraft designer in the world. In 1942, the aeronautical engineer took on the important job of supervising the Canadian production of Hawker Hurricane fighter planes at the Canadian Car and Foundry Company in Fort

William, Ontario. In the process, she would win acclaim for her trail blazing contributions and earn the nickname "Queen of the Hurricanes."



Elsie McGill

# Youth Sharing the Story of Someone Who Cannot Share His Own



Kristy Bergman, Youth Ambassador 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands.

There is a hero that I was never taught about in school... a hero that gave all that it is possible to give. His name was Leonard Gordon Davies, and like myself, he called the vast plains of Saskatchewan his home.

Leonard, joined his regiment overseas in Aldershot. They relocated to Northwest Europe. Leonard faithfully sent letters to his wife an

ocean away twice a week for four years—letters which she has kept for all this time. I was able to read a letter that Leonard sent to his sister-in-law. He revealed his longing for his homeland, saying, "If I ever set foot on Canadian soil again, all the horses in Canada couldn't drag me off."

Leonard never did again see the shores of the country that he loved so much. Nor did he ever look into the eyes of his beloved wife. Just two months later, on April 9, 1945, Leonard was killed in action near the village of Haarle. He was 35 years old. He and the nine other soldiers that were killed that day were buried in Haarle, where the townspeople promised that they would lovingly care for their graves until their own deaths, and their children and grandchildren after them.

# Asian Canadians Behind Enemy Lines

Asian-Canadians contributed to our country's efforts during the Second World War in several ways. One role some of them played was unique and very perilous.

Britain had a special group called Force 136 that secretly operated behind enemy lines in the large areas of Southeast Asia which Japan had invaded and occupied. Since they often could blend in with local populations of occupied countries and speak the local language, hundreds of Asian-Canadians applied to join. While the war would end before

many of them saw service, some did parachute into enemy territory and undertake dangerous tasks like recruiting and training native guerrillas, engaging in sabotage and ambush, and reporting on Japanese activities.

These brave men, like 19-year old Henry Fung of Vancouver who carried out strikes on Japanese communication lines and road convoys in Malaysia, were part of the great Allied effort that defeated Japan and finally brought the Second World War to an end.

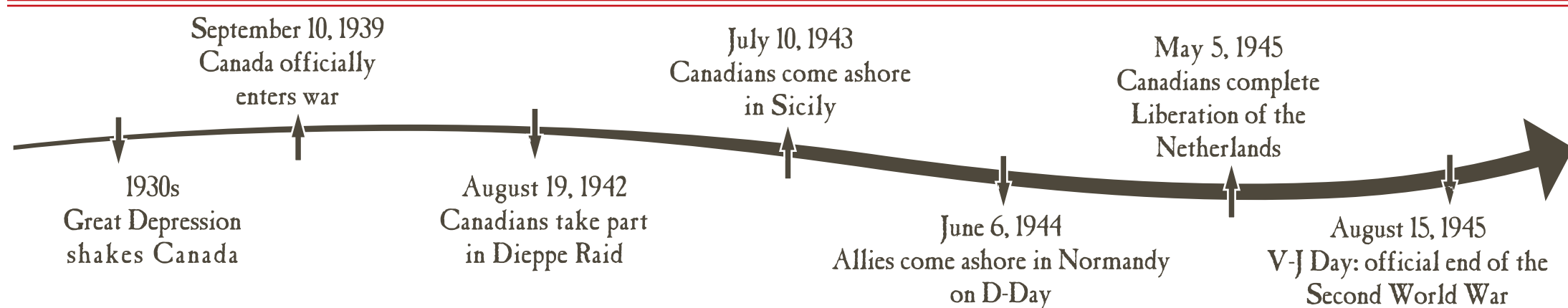


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# Train Crash Takes the Lives of 17 Canadian Soldiers on Their Way to the War in Korea.

The dangers of serving in times of war are not only the obvious ones of guns and bombs. Often the risks begin with enlistment and training. The tragedy that struck the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery on November 21, 1950, shows how true this is.

The soldiers were on their way from Camp Shilo in Manitoba, to Fort Lewis in Washington State for additional training and then shipping out for Korea. Near Canoe River, B.C., the troop train collided head-on with another train. The engine and front passenger cars derailed and slid down an embankment. Some of the unhurt soldiers frantically dug out the injured and dead from the wreckage, using their rifles to pry the twisted debris to get their comrades free. Twelve soldiers died in the crash and another five would die of their injuries soon after. The names of these 17 men can be found in the Korean War Book of Remembrance, that is kept on Parliament Hill in the Memorial

Chamber of the Peace Tower. It can also be viewed on-line by going to [www.vac-acc.gc.ca](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca), selecting "Canada Remembers" and clicking on "Books of Remembrance."



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HMCS Iroquois DND Image

## HMCS Iroquois hit off Coast of Korea

The Royal Canadian Navy played a role in the Korean War for most of the conflict. Canadian destroyers saw action off both the east and west coasts of the Korean peninsula. It was a difficult job and danger was always close by.

On October 2, 1952, HMCS *Iroquois* was exchanging fire with an enemy gun battery on shore when the ship took a direct hit. Three Canadian sailors died and 10 were wounded in the explosion.

The Canadian destroyers which served off the east coast of Korea were part of the "Trainbusters' Club." The terrain in that part of the country often forced local rail lines to hug the coast which made tempting targets. Canadian ships and others serving with the United Nations naval force were able to stop enemy trains from delivering their cargo.

2 5 18 5 1 11 16 18  
**Break**  
 the Code

In times of conflict, those in the battle need to communicate with their own forces ... but they don't want their enemy to know what they are saying. Carrier pigeons, field telephones, signal lamps and even Aboriginal-Canadian "codetalkers" have all been used to send secret messages during conflict. Most commonly, messages were encoded. However, there were always code-breakers who did their best to decipher the messages. Why don't you try to crack this message? The key to the code is that 1=A, 2=B, 3=C, etc.

20 8 1 14 11 25 15 21  
 22 5 20 5 18 1 14 19 6 15 18  
 19 8 1 18 9 14 7 25 15 21 18  
 19 20 15 18 9 5 19

Clue: What would you say to Veterans who came to speak to your class?

## Sports Highlights — Hockey Night in Korea?

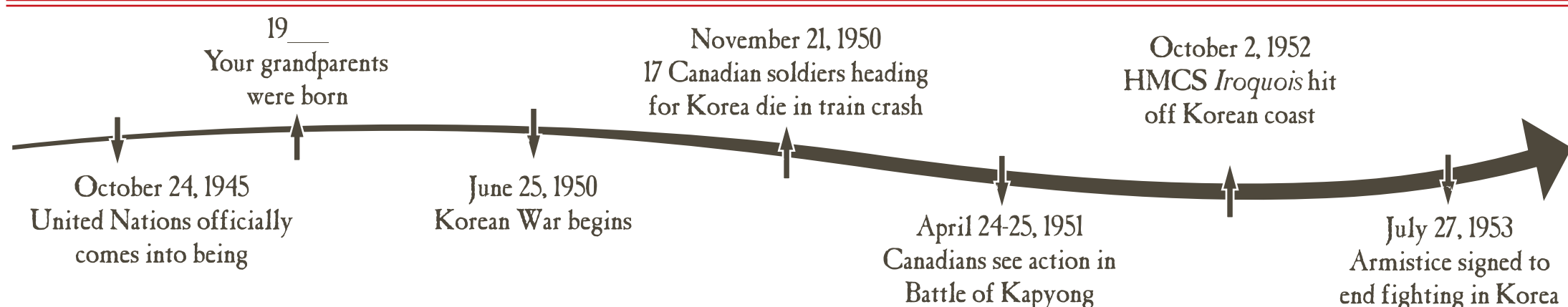
Canadians will be Canadians, no matter where in the world they are. Our country's servicemen who served in the Korean War were no different. In the winter, hockey games would be played on patches of ice near the front lines. The games were often between different units and pride would be at stake, such as on March 11, 1952, when soldiers

from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry took on soldiers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment (the "Vandoo's"). This championship match was held on a makeshift rink they dubbed "Imjin Gardens," a sporting event that created a little piece of normal Canadian life half a world away in war-torn Korea.



Canadian soldiers playing hockey in Korea

LAC PA-128859



# Canada and International Peace Support Operations 50 Years and Counting...



Photo: DND

2006 marks a special milestone in the international pursuit of peace. This is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of large-scale United Nations (UN) peacekeeping efforts—the pioneering approach to diffusing conflicts by sending in neutral forces to monitor ceasefires and nurture peace in regions of the world in turmoil. Canada has been involved in these peace support missions from the beginning, dating back to the Suez Crisis. This 1956 Middle East standoff between Egypt on one side and Israel, Britain and France on the other threatened to draw the world into war.

The situation was extremely tense and the UN worked to find a solution. Canada would play a pivotal role in dealing with

the crisis, suggesting an approach which would have a lasting impact in the way the international community deals with unrest in different corners of the globe.

Lester B. Pearson, Canada's Minister of External Affairs and future Prime Minister, proposed that a multinational force drawn from UN countries (including Canada) would go to Egypt to enforce a cease-fire and oversee the pull out of foreign forces. This idea would have a huge impact on the way the world responded to conflicts and would help define Canada's international military role for the next five decades. In recognition for his contribution, Pearson was awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize.

## Canadian Peacekeepers Under Fire in Cyprus

From 1964 to 1993, Canadian Forces members served in Cyprus, working to maintain an uneasy peace between the Greek and Turkish populations of the Mediterranean island.

In 1974, the situation boiled over when 40,000 troops from Turkey invaded Cyprus and active fighting broke out. In the days following the invasion, Canadian UN peacekeeping troops suddenly found there was no peace to keep. On July 23, 1974, in the midst of this chaos, a group of Canadian soldiers came under fire in a rocky gully. Several men were hit, including the officer leading the patrol. Private Joseph Plouffe went at once to try to give the injured officer first aid but was wounded as well. The two injured Canadians were left in a very vulnerable position and threatened by machine gun fire. Corporal Joseph Whelan and Privates Joseph Belley and Joseph Pelletier would not leave their comrades and braved the shooting to rescue the wounded men.



Mark Isfeld - photo courtesy of Isfeld family

## Master Corporal Mark Isfeld and his "Izzy Dolls"

Canadian Forces members have put their lives on the line countless times in the course of international peace support efforts over the years. Approximately 125 have paid the ultimate sacrifice. One of these was Master Corporal Mark Isfeld, a combat engineer who lost his life in Croatia on June 21, 1994, in a landmine explosion. It had been his third tour of duty in a peace mission within a three-year span.

In addition to his important work in removing mines so they could no longer hurt anyone, Isfeld was known for distributing small homemade dolls of little peacekeepers to the young people living in the conflict areas where he served. After his death, other soldiers took up this work and began to call them "Izzy Dolls."



## Where in the World?

Part of sharing stories is knowing where the stories take place. Canadians have served around the globe over the past century, putting their lives on the line to help restore peace and freedom to countries

in turmoil. Let's see if we can find where some of these places have been...

Here is a world map with maple leaves representing some of the places in which Canadians have served in times

of war, military conflict and peace. Match the names of the countries where Canada has taken part in peace support operations over the past 50 years with the correct numbers on the map.

- A. Egypt: 1956-67; 1973-78; 1987-present
- B. Cyprus: 1963-92
- C. Cambodia: 1972
- D. Syria: 1978-present

- E. Persian Gulf: 1990-91
- F. Bosnia: 1991-97
- G. Somalia: 1993-96
- H. Rwanda: 1994-95
- I. Haiti: 1995-98; 2004

- J. East Timor: 1999-2001
- K. Ethiopia and Eritrea: 2000-03
- L. Afghanistan: 2001-present

## Canadian Tradition of War Art Continues



"Homecoming" - image courtesy of John Horton

Since the days of the First World War, Canada has had artists create works that capture the efforts of our soldiers, sailors and air force personnel as they serve and sacrifice in the cause of peace.

The Canadian Forces Artists Program continues this tradition today and has resulted in a fresh collection of artwork. This painting is by John Horton and shows the HMCS *Algonquin* being enthusiastically greeted on its return home from the waters off Southwest Asia in October 2002.

