

**TREASURING THE TRADITION:
The Story of the Military Museums**
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ISBN 978-1-77385-059-7

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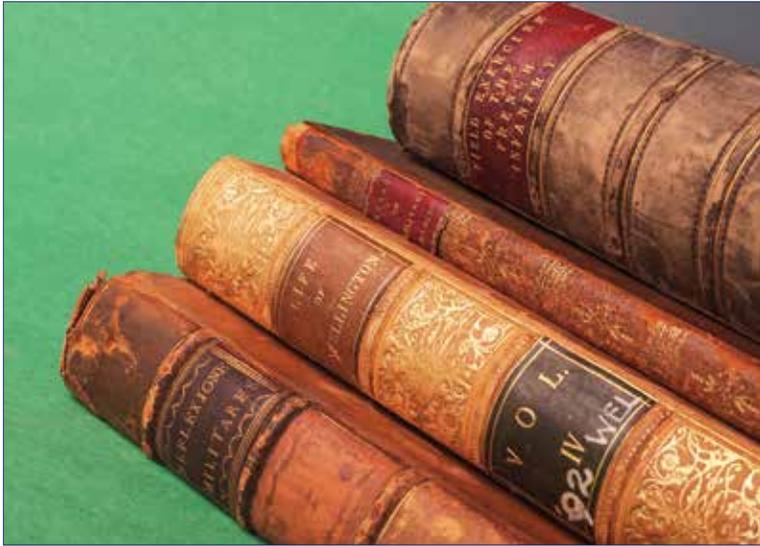
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CANADA'S MILITARY HISTORY ON DISPLAY

The complexity of Canada's, and more specifically Western Canada's, military experiences provided for engaging and distinctive exhibits at the newly renovated and expanded Museums. Key to advancing the museum's mandate was its more than two hundred and fifty volunteers, a number that had grown from just a handful when it first opened. Many were students, most commonly from Mount Royal College (or University after 2009) and the University of Calgary. Increasingly they were provided with specialized training enabling them to contribute in the library and archives, develop marketing materials, help with special events and fundraising, and give tours. Many volunteers were military veterans, such as Rose Wilkinson who joined the Canadian Women's Army Corps when it was created in 1941, and who enthralled visitors with stories about her job in Ottawa decoding secret messages. Other veterans provided stories of past battles or, with the passage of time, of peacekeeping operations and explanations on the operation of military equipment on display.

Museum volunteers received more comprehensive orientation and up-to-date handbooks describing and explaining the exhibits. With continuing management by Libraries and Cultural Resources of the University of Calgary, and assistance from the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, the library and archives relocated to an expanded and more functional space to become a major resource



(ABOVE)

The Chicksands collection (part of which is seen here) consists of textual material gathered by military attachés assigned to British high commissions and consulates between 1650 and 1996. This remarkable collection of more than 50,000 books, government documents, treatises, pamphlets, atlases, manuals, and military orders is considered to be one of the most important acquisitions of military-related textual material in Canada.



(BELOW)

Fred Mannix reviews archival material in the W.A. Howard Library at The Military Museums. Mr. Mannix was instrumental in bringing the Chicksands collection to Calgary from Britain.

PHOTO: DAVE BROWN

for military researchers. Here, a major coup was the acquisition of the Chicksands Collection. Curated by the University of Calgary and housed at the Museums, the Chicksands Collection is now an integral part of Canada's largest military library.

The new Founders' Gallery—a four-thousand-square-foot space—opened with the museum expansion with the goal of contributing to Canadians' understanding of their military experience by displaying historic and contemporary works of art and related artifacts. After years of planning, the first exhibitions offered a stunning example of exhibitions to come: *Art in the Service of War: The Emergent Group of Seven*, organized by the University of Calgary curator Colleen Sharpe, displayed First World War art now part of the Beaverbrook Collection, originally commissioned on behalf of the Canadian government by artists that would form the Group of Seven; and *For You the War is Over: Second World War POW Experiences*, an exhibit of historical artifacts and archives created by The Military Museums in partnership with the Galt Museum & Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta. As the University of Calgary assumed full management of the Founders' Gallery in 2011, its mandate expanded to explore human conflict worldwide through projects by local, international, historic, and contemporary artists that challenge viewers' knowledge of and interaction with war. Founders' also hosts historical, artifact-based exhibits organized by The Military Museums that explore the rich and complex histories of Canada's military.

The advertisement for the two inaugural exhibits in the Founders' Gallery. Both included a unique blending of art and artifacts.

The advertisement features a black header with the Military Museums logo on the left, which includes a stylized figure holding a torch. To the right of the logo, the text reads "The NEW Founders' Gallery" in a large, bold, white font, followed by "4520 Crowchild Trail SW • www.themilitarymuseums.ca" in a smaller white font.

Below the header are two exhibition posters. The left poster is titled "ART IN THE SERVICE OF WAR: THE EMERGENT GROUP OF SEVEN" and features a portrait of a young man in military uniform. The dates "June 7-Dec 6, 2009" are listed below the title. The right poster is titled "FOR YOU THE WAR IS OVER: SECOND WORLD WAR POW EXPERIENCES" and features a landscape with yellow tents and mountains. The dates "June 7, 2009 - Jan 3, 2010" are listed below the title. Several small logos are visible in the top right corner of the right poster.





PHOTO: © DICK AVERNS

In addition to the two structures housing the three Cold War era fighter aircraft, the area surrounding the museum saw expanded displays of large military items such as tanks and armoured personnel carriers. Unveiled on 3 June 2012 and “dedicated to the men and women who served in the boiler and engine rooms of the warships of the Royal Canadian Navy during the 20th Century” was a giant propeller taken from HMCS *Huron*, a tribal class destroyer that operated from December 1972 to March 2005. Also added was a Taurus Armoured Recovery Vehicle used in Afghanistan and a Leopard 1C2 German-built battle tank that Canada’s army began using in 1978 to replace aging Centurion tanks. Reflecting the recent War on Terror and to commemorate the twenty-four Canadians who perished in the 9/11 attacks on New York’s World Trade Center, some two hundred people gathered at The Military Museums on the 10th anniversary of that horrific event to witness the dedication of a 1,270 kilogram piece of steel from one of the two destroyed Twin Towers that was placed on the lawn running along Crowchild Trail. Calgary was

(OPPOSITE)
Propeller from HMCS *Huron* outside the Museum.

(ABOVE)
One of the largest World Trade Center 9/11 remnants in Canada, this exterior wall column weighs 1,277 kg, is five metres long, and is part of a long-term vision for a Canadian 9/11 monument and public installation titled *Lookout for the Future*.

The Founders' Gallery exhibit *War Stories 1917* commemorated the battles of Vimy Ridge, Hill 70, and Passchendaele. It featured specific Canadian veterans who fought during the First World War and included indigenous art. A German 77mm field gun (at left) was one of the key objects shown.

among numerous communities that applied to the New York Port Authority that had stored many pieces and made them available as memorials to mark the ten-year anniversary. On that fateful day in 2001, a dozen planes carrying 2,160 passengers were diverted to Calgary whose airport was also honoured with a plaque from the US Consulate.

The museum continues to update and enrich its permanent exhibits. Added to its coverage of naval history were a large model of a D-Day landing craft and accounts from those who served with Canada's Merchant Marine. The Founders' Gallery continues to provide rich and diverse temporary exhibitions. The Fyke Collection of Afghan war rugs, many of them acquired by foreign soldiers and civil aid workers and displaying scenes such as the Soviet withdrawal from that country in 1989 and, later, the attacks on the World Trade Centre, were seen in *Unraveling the Yarns: War Rugs* (2010). Contemporary paintings by Calgary artist Bev Tosh showed the histories of Dutch War Brides in *Trees Heeft een Canadees*, alongside a history exhibit from The Military Museums *The Maple Leaf and the Tulip: The Liberation of Holland in the Second World War* (2015). Photographs by Leslie Reid in *Mapping a*



Cold War and archival photographs in *The Cold Before the War* (2016) worked together to explore the significance of the Cold War in Canada's North. In *Behind the Lines: Contemporary Syrian Art* (2017) showed paintings by Syrian artists, evoking the cataclysmic impact of the ongoing civil war in Syria.

Most recently, the 100th anniversary of Canada's capture of Vimy Ridge was commemorated in *War Stories 1917* (2017). Many important artifacts were borrowed from the Canadian War Museum and from England's Imperial War Museum, including Calgary Private John George Pattison's Victoria Cross and a Red Ensign flag flown by Canadians at Vimy. Reflecting the fact that Vimy marked the first time that Canada's four divisions joined forces in battle, this exhibit was also the first to have all galleries comprising The Military Museums contribute to a single exhibit that also included contemporary art contributions through the Founders' curator.

Many temporary exhibits hosted in the Founders' Gallery and organized by The Military Museums have focused on major military events, such as Canada's Second World War Campaign in Italy, its role in liberating the Netherlands, or participation in the Korean and Viet Nam wars. Areas of debate have been addressed—such as the August 1942 raid on Dieppe. Always, first hand accounts are highlighted and often captured as oral histories, and such exhibitions give The Military Museums opportunities to reach out to many and varied communities of people in Calgary.

Committed to presenting military history in its full scope, the museum covered the very different impact of events on various groups. This was evident in one of its first temporary exhibits entitled *Aboriginals in the Service of Peace*. Indigenous volunteerism and other examples of wartime patriotism, sacrifice, and loss were noted, but also fierce Indigenous opposition to conscription, discrimination experienced in the armed forces and in accessing veterans' programs, and confiscation of reserve land to



A rug produced in Afghanistan and displayed at the Museum showing war related themes.



PHOTO: JULIE VINCENT PHOTOGRAPHY

Ross sniper rifle used by Henry “Ducky” Louis Norwest who was one of the most famous Canadian snipers in the First World War. He came from a Cree/French Métis family in Fort Saskatchewan and before the war worked as a farm hand and rodeo performer and served with the North-West Mounted Police. Collection of the King’s Own Calgary Regiment (RCAC) Museum & Archives.

support military training. Several extraordinary individuals were highlighted, such as First World War sniper Henry Louis Norwest, a Métis, who had more than one hundred confirmed kills as a member of Calgary’s 50th Battalion; Sergeant Tommy Prince of Manitoba’s Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, a veteran of the Second World War and the Korean conflict, who received both the Military Medal and the American Silver Star; and Private Mary Greyeyes, who was the first Indigenous woman to join the Canadian Women’s Army Corps in 1942. At the exhibit’s opening ceremony, Indigenous television and singing star Tom Jackson was moved to comment: “All the people in these displays fought for our freedom, but sometimes they’re forgotten because they’re just our neighbors. But they cannot be forgotten. It is thanks to them we can all be neighbors and live side by side ... in peace.”



Mike Mountain Horse Story Robe. Mike Mountain Horse (“Miistatisomitai”), a member of the Kainai Nation from the Blood Reserve in southern Alberta, asked artist Ambrose Two Chiefs to create a traditional representation of his wartime experiences during the First World War with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Wounded three times, he fought at Vimy Ridge, Hill 70, Cambrai, and Amiens and was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal for his bravery on the battlefield. This traditional “war deed” was on display in the Founders’ Gallery as part of *Keepsakes of Conflict* in 2019, and is in the Army Museum of Alberta on long-term loan. Courtesy the collection of Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre.

A diorama depicting the development of the Canadian Women's Army Corps in the Second World War as seen in the Army Museum of Alberta. The material for the display and the concept for the display were developed by the veterans of this unit themselves, and in particular by Rose Wilkinson.

Another early temporary exhibit examined the more than twenty-one thousand volunteers who served with the Canadian Women's Army Corps in the Second World War. Nearly three hundred people turned out for its opening, including forty-six former members of the Corps who travelled from across Canada to see an extensive collection of photographs, uniforms, and artifacts covering their many roles, not just administrative, but also in positions such as architectural engineer, mechanical draftsman, and motor mechanic. Another early exhibit covered Japanese-Canadians' participation in the First World War. With accompanying text written in both Japanese and English, it told of a population that, though small and facing blatant racism in Canada, still made very substantial contributions to the war effort, including 228 who enlisted in Alberta, 54 of whom were killed in action.





Veil and dress details, Lady Patricia Ramsay's wedding dress. Princess Patricia was Colonel-in-Chief of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry from 1919–1974. In 1919, the regiment was the Honour Guard for her wedding. It was stated that controlling the crowds of excited citizens resulted in the first time the regiment had their lines broken after four years of conflict. Her wedding dress now resides in the museum's collections, and is the only Royal wedding dress held outside of the United Kingdom. Photos: Ashley Fournier-Montalvo



PHOTO: JULIE VINCENT PHOTOGRAPHY

A Type K Enigma machine on exhibit at the Naval Museum of Alberta. Breaking this German coding machine's cipher shortened the Second World War in Europe. Collection of the Naval Museum of Alberta.

Seeking to broaden its coverage and appeal, with financial support from the India-Canada Association and the Canada Pakistan Association, the museum hosted an exhibit entitled *The Indian Army Side-by-Side with Canada's Sons and Daughters, 1914–1918, 1939–1945*. Launched with much fanfare, including the Regimental Pipes and Drums of the Calgary Highlanders, as well as Highland dancers, a sitar player, and performers of Indian dance, the opening ceremony also welcomed Maharaj Jai Singh and Omkar Nath Channan, representing the Calgary–Jaipur Development Foundation, who proudly noted that Jaipur and Calgary had been officially declared twin cities. With numerous artifacts loaned from London's Imperial War Museum, the exhibit detailed the roles served by the Indian army—comprised of Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims, and Gurkhas—often side-by-side with Canadian

forces in France, Flanders, Gallipoli, Egypt, East Africa, Mesopotamia, and Palestine in the First World War, and in Sicily, Italy, and Hong Kong in the Second World War. Visitors learned of the critically important, and often overlooked, contributions India made in shaping the course of these global conflicts, for instance by raising 800,000 soldiers in the First World War and an incredible 2.5 million in the Second, all of whom were volunteers.

The museum borrowed extensively from other places to make its exhibit comprehensive and dynamic. An early example was its 2001 Boer War exhibit covering Canada's first official overseas military campaign that cost 224 deaths and 252 wounded from a total force of 7,368. Entitled *Good-bye Dolly Gray*, after a war-related song popularized in 1901 by Canadian tenor Harry Macdonough, the exhibit included twelve-pounder artillery and a maxim machine gun borrowed from the military museum in Shilo, Manitoba; medals and uniforms belonging to Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae (author of *In Flanders Fields*) then held at the Royal Canadian Regiment's museum; and flags from the old Boer Republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, as well as a Mauser rifle used by Boer guerilla forces, acquired through the Ottawa-based South African High Commission.

Soon after there followed a much different exhibit on *Public Relations in War*. Visitors were introduced to the increasing scope and sophistication of Canadian war reporting, and to journalists who became giants in the field, such as Peter Stursberg and Alberta's Matthew Halton who, in the Second World War, reported over CBC radio near the front lines during the Mediterranean and European land campaigns. Visitors learned about the extent of censorship, such as from instructions reporters received on what was permissible to disseminate, and were prompted to consider the propagandistic aspects of wartime reporting, in print, over radio, and through material supplied by the Canadian Army Film and Photo Unit (CAFPU). Formed in June 1941, its members captured compelling images from the invasions of Italy and Normandy. This often put them in grave danger: of its 220 members, six were killed and 18 were wounded. Most famously cameraman Bill Grant provided some of the first film footage of the D-Day landings. Along with images recorded from cameras affixed to the landing craft, the material was rushed back to the CAFPU's London headquarters where it was processed into the first news clips of this epic invasion. At the exhibit, visitors could also hear some thirty wartime radio broadcasts and view artifacts: these included a motorcycle used by

a Canadian Army dispatch rider and a model of a Creed teletype/No 33 wireless set correspondents used to send information.

In 2012, the Air Force Museum Society decided to address the comparative dearth of information about Canada's Air Force during the Cold War era in the form of a dedicated gallery space that would tell this story. After nearly four years of planning, research, writing, disappointments, and triumphs, the Ken and Roma Lett Cold War Exhibit opened on 25 September 2015. Contained in two structures south of the main Military Museums building, the highlights of this exhibit are three aircraft: a F-86 Sabre, a CF-104 Starfighter, and a CF-18 painted in the 2009 airshow demonstration colours representing Canada's centennial of flight. The F-86 and CF-104, sourced from private American collections, underwent extensive restoration before going on display, logging over 9,000 volunteer hours of labour.

Compared to their work on the First and Second World Wars, researching and writing a Cold War display proved a welcome challenge for the Air Force Museum Society team. The material had to be factual yet engaging but without the often-romantic flair seen in anecdotes from the First and Second World War to buoy it up.



Depiction of a nuclear fallout shelter in the Cold War exhibit.



Dag Hammarskjöld Medal awarded posthumously to one of nine Canadians killed on 9 August 1974 in the largest loss of life for Canadian peacekeepers. Collection of the Army Museum of Alberta.

It was challenging to create storyboards that would capture visitor imagination. That's where the three aircraft and the recreated fallout shelter stepped up, supported by the clean, light, minimalist design created by Terry Gunvordahl of Beyond Design Inc. and Irene Kerr of Exhibition Planning and Design. The storyboard panels are also supplemented by a dedicated cadre of volunteer guides, most of them Cold War veterans themselves.

Between 2017 and 2018, the Cold War Exhibit underwent some adjustment. Panels were relocated to improve visitor experience fluidity and a Memorial Wall was added, listing the names of all Canadian airmen and airwomen who lost their lives on duty during this period. The wall is supplemented by a large touch-screen monitor where information about these individuals can be researched, including unit association, aircraft involved, and cause and date of death. It is a space of which the Air Force Museum and its Society is very proud and is, perhaps, the only space of its kind in Canada.

Today, The Military Museums strives to be a vibrant hub for the Calgary community, centering on a wide variety of important issues related to war, peace, and security throughout the world.

FOUNDERS' GALLERY

The exhibition mandate of the Founders' Gallery is to "explore human conflict worldwide through projects by local, international, historic, and contemporary artists that challenge viewers' knowledge of and interaction with war." Through this, the exhibitions also create vital connections between the University of Calgary and The Military Museums, between the art community and the many communities of volunteers, veterans and members of the public, and between local, national and international audiences. Because it maintains high standards for all of its environmental conditions—from temperature and humidity, to lighting and a large and flexible exhibition space—the Founders' is able to create and present a wide range of thoughtful exhibitions, rich in content and drawing from major institutions such as the Canadian War Museum and the Imperial War Museum.

Poster for one of the heritage exhibits in the Founders' Gallery. Many of the heritage exhibits have focused on increasing awareness of under-recognized groups of veterans. This exhibit focused on Korean War veterans, and was also one of several exhibits that have helped forge ties with diverse communities in Calgary—in this case the Korean community. Other exhibits have connected the museum with the Chinese, Dutch, Syrian, Sikh, and Vietnamese communities, among others.

From its inception, the Founders' Gallery has presented a number of art exhibitions that explore the legacies of Canadian war artists: from the First World War paintings by artists that would form the Group of Seven (*Art in the Service of War: The Emergent Group of Seven*, 2009, organized by the Founders' Gallery) to *A Brush With War: Military Art from Korea to Afghanistan* (2012, organized and circulated by the Canadian War Museum), to *Witness: Canadian Art of the First World War* (2018, organized and circulated by the Canadian War Museum).

While Canada's war art program had its beginnings during the First World War, it remains a vibrant and important program, and many of contemporary artists who have served as official Canadian Forces Artists Program artists have exhibited at the Founders' Gallery, including Althea Thauberger, Leslie Reid, Dick Avern, and Gertrude Kearns.

Contemporary art provides a unique vantage point for viewers to consider the social and cultural impact of war and conflict, both at home in Canada and globally. *Diabolique* (curated by Amanda Cachia, 2011) was an early and significant grouping of 22 Canadian and international artists that demonstrated



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(ABOVE)

Views of the exhibit *Tour of Duty: Canadians and the Vietnam War* in the Founders' Gallery in 2018. An estimated 40,000 Canadians served in Vietnam in the US military, but had very little recognition prior to this exhibit. The museum has become a major repository for artifacts and oral histories about Canadians in the Vietnam War as a result.

(RIGHT)

Monty Coles, a Canadian Vietnam veteran who served in the US Marine Corps. Coles was one of almost 30 local Vietnam veterans awarded a special service pin at a 2019 ceremony at the museum, as seen here. His artifacts and oral history were included in the Vietnam exhibit.



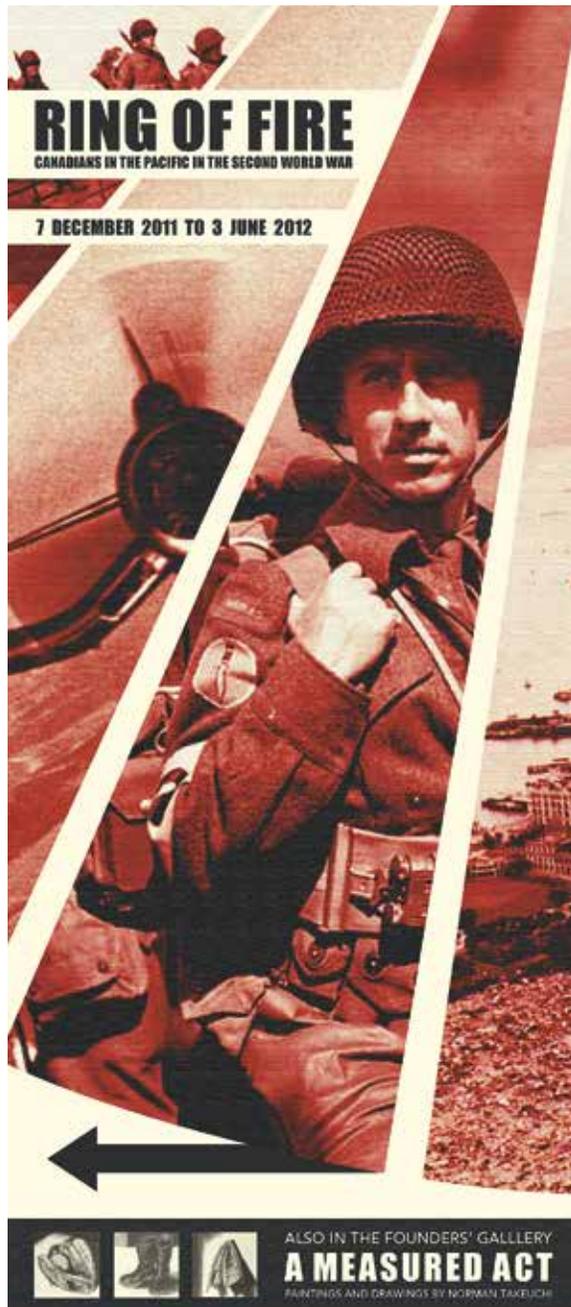


Shown in the summer of 2019, *gassed, redux* was an exhibition by Canadian artist Adad Hanna that employed live performance, photography

and video in creating a *tableaux vivant* of John Singer Sargent's massive painting *Gassed*, in the collection of the British War Museum.



PHOTO: DAVE BROWN



(LEFT)

Poster for two exhibits in the Founders' Gallery. There has often been a pairing of related art and heritage exhibits in the gallery, which has proven very successful, and in this case provided complementary narratives. *Ring of Fire* was another exhibit that increased awareness of under-recognized veterans.

(ABOVE)

Ralph MacLean, one of the veterans featured in the exhibit *Ring of Fire: Canadians in the Pacific in the Second World War*. MacLean was taken prisoner by the Japanese in Hong Kong in 1941. His grandson Mark Sakamoto wrote a book about MacLean, entitled *Forgiveness*, that won an award.

the diverse media artists now work with – from traditional painting and sculpture but also photography, video, installation and multi-media pieces.

The Founders' Gallery also hosts exhibitions that directly explore Canada's military history through artifacts and archives, typically as organized by curators within The Military Museums. A stunning example of the rich collections within The Military Museums was the 2019 exhibition *Keepsakes of Conflict: Trench Art and Other Canadian War-related Craft*. Curated by Heather Smith and circulated by the Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery, *Keepsakes of Conflict* brought together many important pieces from the regimental museums in an exhibition that toured Canada.

Whether through artifacts, historical art or contemporary art, the Founders' Gallery is a proud contributor to the rich legacies held within The Military Museums.

Beverley Tosh's fascinating exhibition *Trees Heeft een Canadees* (Teresa Has a Canadian) shared stories of Dutch-Canadian war brides through painting, letters, photographs, film and artifacts.



PHOTO: DAVE BROWN



Detail of a diorama depicting events on the night of 22 September 1944, when Sergeant Clarence Crockett led a Calgary Highlander patrol

across a ruined lock gate at the Albert Canal in Belgium. His patrol successfully established a foothold on the far bank allowing the battalion to cross

the canal. For his actions in this operation, Sergeant Crockett was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for bravery.