

**TREASURING THE TRADITION:
The Story of the Military Museums**
by Jeff Keshen and David Bercuson

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Treasuring *the* Tradition

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INTRODUCTION

Friday, 6 June 2009, the 65th anniversary of D-Day, started miserably in Calgary with a mixture of rain and hail. Still, a growing crowd gathered outside the city's new Military Museums, including federal and provincial politicians and the mayor. They awaited Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex, who was to preside at the opening of the new \$26.4 million facility. Three years earlier, also in June, she had turned the sod to announce officially the museum's expansion, which more than doubled its size to 107,000 square feet compared to when Queen Elizabeth II first opened it in June 1990 as the Museum of the Regiments.

Numerous veterans were among the hundreds gathered around the eternal flame by the main entrance. They included Elly Raskin, then eighty-nine years old, who fought at Dieppe and had pulled shrapnel from his left leg when wounded at Ortona, Italy, in December 1943. Also present was Master Corporal Paul Franklin, a casualty of Canada's latest conflict, having lost both his legs in a suicide bombing attack in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 2006.

As the ceremony got underway, the press reported "slivers of sunlight split the dark clouds." Referring to the new facility as a "magnificent achievement," the Countess said that it would be a "focal point to remind us" of the tremendous sacrifices endured by Canadians in war, and the military's impact in shaping both the local and national experience. Bruce McDonald, chair of the Calgary Military Museums Society, the organization that spearheaded the campaign to create the new facility, declared that it would ensure "future generations get a balanced



The *Mural of Honour* by Louis Lavoie with a portrait of the Queen above it and windows of regiments and organizations which contributed to the completion of the museum. The front entrance is to the rear of the photographer's viewpoint.

perspective as to what sacrifices their forefathers made ... because freedom does come with a price."

The weekend that followed continued the celebration with a royal tea for six hundred soldiers and veterans, and a D-Day Dance at the Hyatt Regency. The opening of the museum was the culmination of a drive that transpired over a quarter century. This was the dream of several societal leaders—a majority of whom had military backgrounds—all familiar with Calgary's rich military heritage, which they saw neglected for far too long. They drew together support from prominent figures in business, education, politics, the military, as well as citizens in general, to raise millions from both governments and private sources.

Initially christened in 1990 as the Museum of the Regiments, it brought together the substantial collections of the city's main historic regiments: the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), the King's Own Calgary Regiment (KOCR), Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI), and the Calgary Highlanders. In its present, expanded form as The Military Museums, its ground floor contains one of Canada's largest collections of naval artifacts. A substantial Air Force museum on the main gallery leads to an impressive two-storey library and archives. Two flexible-walled structures erected near the parking lot contain a Canadair Sabre fighter jet, a Lockheed CF-104, and a CF-188 (most often referred to as a CF-18),



Original entrance to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Museum prior to 2013 renovations.





(OPPOSITE)

A diorama depicts Sergeant A.H.L. Richardson saving Corporal MacArthur of Lord Strathcona's Horse during the Battle of Wolve Spruit, 5 July 1900, in the South African War. For this action, he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

(ABOVE)

Another diorama in the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) gallery depicts a Lynx reconnaissance vehicle. It was used by the Canadian Forces from 1968 until it was phased out in the early 1990s.



all in RCAF livery with the CF-18 painted to represent the 100th year of flight in Canada.

The Military Museums is the second largest military museum in Canada; only the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa is bigger. Although managed by civilian museum professionals, it remains part of Canada's Armed Forces, and the most significant of some seventy museum collections the Department of National Defence operates across the country. Its mission statement is to "Remember, Preserve and Educate." It accomplishes this through multiple means: artifact displays, lectures, community outreach, and by hosting groups of Calgary students. It provides a venue for major art exhibits, displays artifacts spanning the scope of Canada's military experience, and draws researchers worldwide to its extensive library and archival collection. It also serves as Calgary's chief gathering place for Remembrance Day ceremonies that now attract more than ten thousand people. In just a generation, the Museum has become a world class facility and one of Calgary's principal cultural, educational, and tourist sites.



THE FOUNDERS' GALLERY
GALERIE DES FONDATEURS

(OPPOSITE, ABOVE)

CF-104 846 located in the west hangar of the Cold War Exhibit in 2015 prior to opening.

(OPPOSITE, BELOW)

Canadair CF-104 846 halfway through restoration in a hangar at Springbank Airport. The restoration work was spearheaded by Gary Watson, Jim Kulak, and Vic Lukawitski.

(ABOVE)

The Military Museums logo. It was based on the much earlier Museum of the Regiments logo which replicated the original front entrance to the museum.

(BELOW)

Original logo for the Founders' Gallery designed by Calgary illustrator Brad Yeo in 2009. It represents both the art and heritage exhibits featured in the gallery.

THE REGIMENTS

(RIGHT)

Modern cap badge of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. "VP" stands for "Victoria Patricia," after the Regiment's first Colonel-in-Chief, Princess Patricia.



(FAR RIGHT)

Badge of the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) Regiment. It is based on the personal coat of arms of Donald Alexander Smith, 1st Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal.



(FAR LEFT)

This Calgary Highlanders regimental cap badge/museum logo evolved from a First World War badge which featured the beaver with maple leaves surmounted by the Crown. The new badge added the cross of St. Andrew among other elements.



(LEFT)

Badge of the King's Own Calgary Regiment. The crown represents service to the sovereign. The badge incorporates the shield, horse, steer, roses, thistles and shamrocks, as adopted by the City of Calgary in 1902.



(ABOVE, LEFT)

The Army Museum of Alberta logo. The central crest is the provincial shield of Alberta. The crossed swords represent the crest of the Canadian Army.



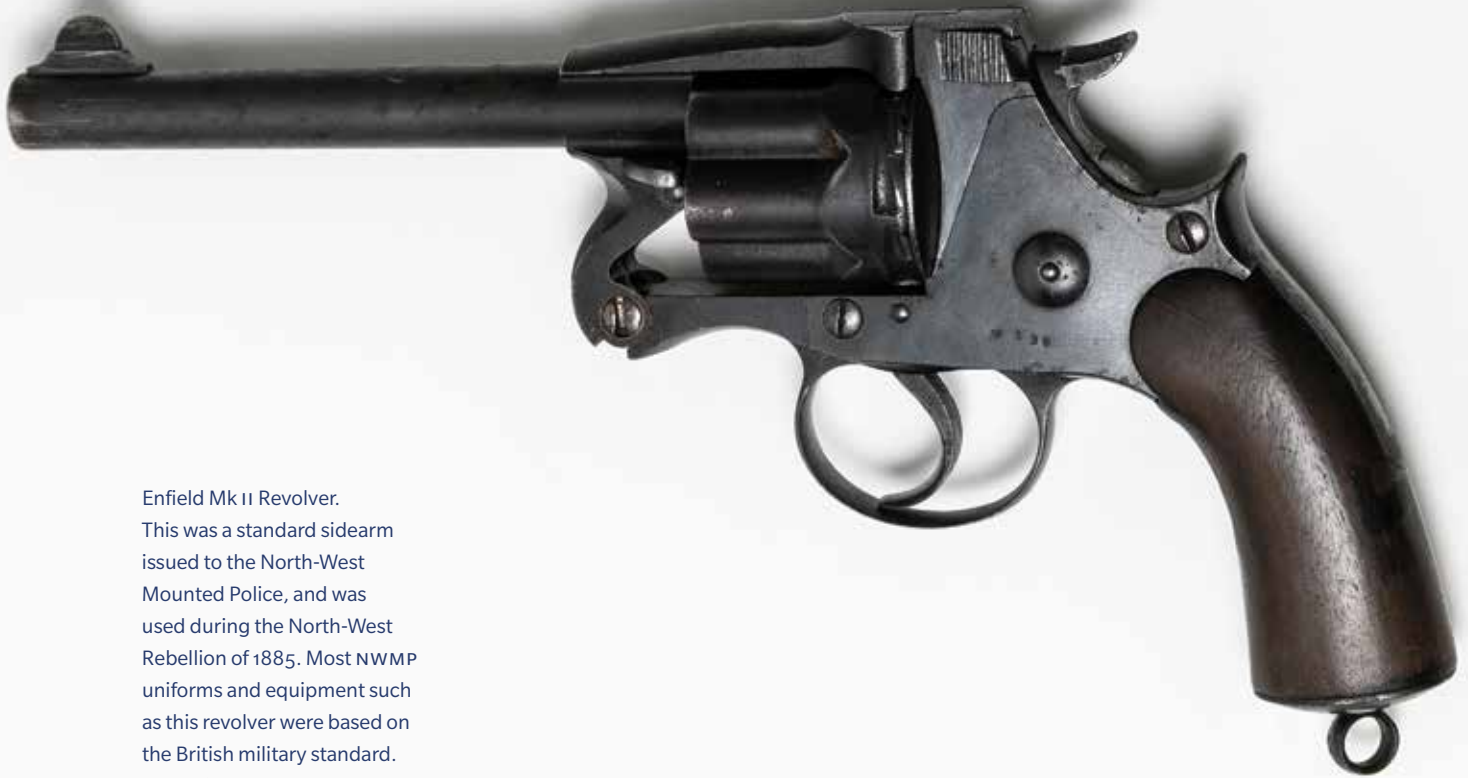
(ABOVE, RIGHT)

The badge of the Naval Museum of Alberta features a Supermarine Seafire and anchor. The White Ensign behind the anchor was flown on ships from 1910–64.



(BELOW)

The Air Force Museum of Alberta logo reflects the crest of the Royal Canadian Air Force. *Per Ardua ad Astra* means "Through Adversity to the Stars."



Enfield Mk II Revolver.
This was a standard sidearm
issued to the North-West
Mounted Police, and was
used during the North-West
Rebellion of 1885. Most NWMP
uniforms and equipment such
as this revolver were based on
the British military standard.
Collection of the Army Museum
of Alberta.

PHOTO: JULIE VINCENT PHOTOGRAPHY