



Why We Remember

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The Vimy Foundation's tagline is 'Building the future, informed by the past', but what does that really mean? For me, remembrance and citizenship are intimately entwined. Being an informed citizen means attempting to understand and recognise the past of society of which you are a part. The act of remembering, of thinking of the human lives changed irrevocably by war, is my responsibility as a citizen.

This also encompasses the complexity of remembrance; it is not easy and it raises uncomfortable questions. Who is remembered? How are they remembered? Why do we do this? War is one of the worst things humans can inflict on one another. It brings out our best and worst qualities, usually at the same time, and usually in ways that after the fact are hard to understand.

One of our Beaverbrook Vimy Prize recipients, Sacha, wrote after the program this year *'There's one image that keeps running through my mind every time I go to a place of remembrance: I imagine all those people, soldiers, nurses or civilians standing in front of me. It's the sight of all those lives sacrificed that makes me realise how important peace is in the world. And yet it remains fragile, even if wars change, it is still men, women and people who lose their lives. We need to restore peace where it doesn't exist and preserve it where it does.'*

I think Sacha outlines the crucial point in remembrance. Remembering is a responsibility. It is for us to remember those people and what war cost them, and in the difficult times in our world, keep that vision of humanity firmly fixed in our minds. Lest we forget.

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Image Credit: Canadian troops returning from the trenches pass pack mules. They are loaded with ammunition and are heading to the guns, Nov 1916. Canada. Dept. of National Defence/Library and Archives Canada/a000913-v8