

Welcoming Remarks at the National Peacekeepers Day Ceremony

By Dr. Karen Ewing

On behalf of the Veterans Memorial Park Committee, all those present, and all the people of this shore, we have never been more honoured than we are today...to welcome on National Peacekeepers Day, for the planting of red maples, the families of ten soldiers killed in the War in Afghanistan.

We welcome you and your

honoured fallen with the full knowledge that you would give anything...Not to be here. Not to be among those remembering sons, husbands, fathers and friends. Men whom you have known and whom we will come to know in part today. Your memories are full of tenderness, and together with our shared grief and compassion, we will acknowledge to the best of

our ability their sacrifice, and your own. And we will offer you here a place to remember them...not only for what they have done...but for what they might have done, what they might have become. These memories we will place with those of more than 300 soldiers remembered in this place. Their memories will be safe with us.

Why do we remember? When it is so painful to do so. It would be easier to bathe in the river of forgetfulness, to make our lives close and open again without these painful chapters...to wake up whole and joyful again.

We remember because we as humans, continue to struggle with the most basic issues of humanity. We remember because, battles of conquest, ideology, despair, injustice continue.

And when humanity finally cries out against these atrocities, it is the soldier that replies. It is the soldier who stands against the tide.

Desmond Tutu said, "It always takes my breath away to see people sacrifice their comfort and even risk their lives to help others when they perceive a hurt or injustice," and here is the miracle and the hope... "it happens more often than you think."

In the fields at Flanders, at Vimy, Beaumont Hamel and Paschendale, at Dieppe, at Juno on the sea, in the air and in the deserts of Afghanistan today...it is happening every day...as the blood of Canadians made the poppy's of Flanders red, more than 90 years ago, so may our tears, help to make the desert bloom...Tears speak more eloquently than words. And when tears come as they may, remember these moments, there is truth there, your humanity is there.

The young men we honour today, believed in their mission. They fought for the most noble of causes, not for themselves but for others, not for those they know but for whom they came to know. These men fought and died for the dignity of human beings half a world away, they fought so that we would not have to... so that... with hope (please God) their children will not have to.

We will hear quotes from some of these soldiers, as trees are planted in their honour. We need to listen to these words, for the words of those who speak no longer... I believe speak to the future of humanity. Cpl. Stannix said it most clearly, "I would like to think, if I was in the same position there...somebody would be willing to step in and help me...the exact same way."

It is said the best weapon is the heart of the warrior...these hearts were worthy, and speak clearly of justice for humanity, of duty and responsibility.

We are honoured that the families of these soldiers have chosen to plant their red maple in our park. This park, designed as a living memorial to those who serve. A place of sorrow, remembrance and hope.

A peaceful place, a sacred place, a place with the regenerative power of nature. And regeneration is needed as mortal loss is a gaping wound.

Oscar Wilde said it best, "Society has no place for me, but Nature...will have cleft in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys where I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt: she will cleanse me in the great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole."

Wounded hearts...are the most tender, the most human...they are in need of the scared, whatever you deem it to be. Sacred places, peaceful places, are places of restoration a place for the wounded.

These places can teach us, if we let them, that as well as knowing grief, we may know life, we can remember what it



Dr. Karen Ewing welcomes those in attendance at the Veterans Memorial Park, while members of the 1st Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders (North) look on. (Harrington photo)

Casey Honoured for Devotion to Veteran's Memorial Park



In appreciation for her ongoing support towards the Veterans Memorial Park by Karen Ewing and Ken Jamieson, Karen Casey, MLA presented the organizing committee with a painting at the Peacekeepers Service on August 8th. The painting is of a field of poppies featuring one white poppy as a symbol of hope and is one of 3 in a series. (Submitted Photo)

In appreciation for her ongoing support for the Veteran's Memorial Park, she was presented with a painting of a field of poppies by Karen Ewing and Ken Jamieson following the Peacekeepers Service on August 8th.

The "Let it Begin with Me" painting shows of a field of poppies featuring one white poppy as a symbol of hope. It is one of 3 in a series and is a limited reproduction. The artist was inspired to create the original water colour painting during a conversation with Dr. Karen Ewing about the efforts surrounding the creation of the Park. The field of red poppies represent the remembrance of the sacrifice our soldiers have and continue to make. The solitary white poppy represents peace ... and as the hymn reminds us "let it begin with me".

"Let it Begin with Me" is a call to all of us to begin the

difficult work that will lead to a lasting peace.

Wood Spirit - Here is a background on the artist: Elizabeth Newhook-Dawe is originally from the picturesque Newfoundland and Labrador community of Dildo, Trinity Bay. As a child she spent many hours playing outside and was encouraged by her parents to study the "spirit" of beauty that's found in nature.

In 2000 she signed up for a basic water colour course and was smitten with this medium - a love affair which continues to this day. While she prefers painting landscapes she has also tried wildlife and still life. Many of her paintings are composed from images found only in her mind. Her style of painting reflects the "spirit" that she sees in nature. Works by Elizabeth Newhook-Dawe are in private collections in the Atlantic Provinces and Central Canada.

is like not to mourn, we can breathe again, and learn that although life feels different, life remains. That though we may pass through things temporal, we lose not the things eternal.

James Orbinski Canadian Nobel peace prize winner said, "when I sit in the garden...sometimes I am mournful but then...with the first birdsong...I can feel peace...I can feel myself full again."

Full of knowledge that our struggle is right and just...and that humanity must always continue...we must always...and every day...begin (try) again.

Humanity is a summons we need only respond.

And so we remember, we listen to the voices of these soldiers, these humanitarians, peacekeepers. Let their stories awake us to live the full intent of humanity as they did. Allow them to generate in us a will touch the world around

us, to make a difference...to as they have done so completely...let us make it matter that we lived.

We plant trees...Royal Red Maples...a living memorial to their sacrifice. It is said that the significance of an event is judged by how much of a shadow it casts. How appropriate then that their significance, will grow every year.

Emily Dickinson wrote...hope is a thing with feathers, that perches in the soul...and sings a tune without words and never stops at all.

So then will our hope, will our prayer be...for the families and friends of the soldiers here honored and for our world. That hope for peace will live in our hearts and direct our lives as it did for our honored fallen.

Thank you.

Editors Note- The Veterans Memorial Park was founded and designed by Dr. Karen Ewing

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