

War Memories across Canada Conversation Kit:

Heart of the Nation Peace Tower Ottawa, Ontario



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On Parliament Hill, at the heart of the Peace Tower, is a sanctuary created for remembrance and reflection. The Memorial Chamber was originally designed and dedicated to the Canadians who died during the First World War. Today this space of honour pays tribute to all military personnel who died in service to Canada.

The Memorial Chamber houses seven Books of Remembrance filled with the names of those who died during wartime, from the 1800s to today. Each morning at 11 o'clock a page is turned from each Book of Remembrance.

Discussion Questions:

If you were to build a memorial in your community to honour fallen soldiers today what would it look like? Would it be a monument, a building such as a hospital or something else such as a tree? What symbols or words would you include? What feelings or memories would you want the memorial to evoke?

The Memorial Chamber has carvings of military crests, patriotic emblems and religious motifs. Why do we use symbols such as these on memorials? How do these symbols inform how we remember war?

Many of the commemorative traditions and rituals we have for Remembrance Day were a result of the First World War. What commemorative rituals are practiced in the community in which you live?

The location of the Memorial Chamber is symbolically located in the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill representing the significance that the First World War has had on Canada. One hundred years later, what do you think is the importance of commemorating the war in this place? How do you think most communities remember the First World War today, so many years later?

Activities:

Travel to Ottawa and visit the Memorial Chamber. If you're not able to visit in person research the Memorial Chamber and other war memorials in Ottawa. Draw a map showing where these sites are located. Consider the meaning of each memorial or monument. What do they have in common? How do they differ?

The [Canadian Virtual War Memorial website](#) lists all the names in the Books of Remembrance. Does your family have connections to the First World War? Search for a family member in the names database. What else can you learn about this person?



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Interview a family member, friend or local veteran who served in the military during a time of conflict. Invite that person to tell stories and share memories.

Resources:

Websites

Books of Remembrance

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/books>

View individual pages, search for a name and watch a video of the daily page-turning ceremony. Available in [French](#).

Memorial Chamber – Parliament of Canada

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/About/House/memorial/main-e.htm>

Take a virtual tour of the Memorial Chamber. The site includes history, photos and detailed descriptions of symbols and architectural elements. Available in [French](#).

Memorials in Canada – Canadian War Museum
<http://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/after-the-war/remembrance/memorials-in-canada/>
Website available in [French](#).

Videos

Monumental Canadians – Valor Canada

<http://valourcanada.ca/videos-and-events/>

A series of short films to memorialize “Monumental Canadians.”

The Memorial Chamber, by Francis René (2015)

<https://vimeo.com/129663098>

An 8 minute film about the replacement of the altars in in the Memorial Chamber.

Books

Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War, by Jonathan Vance. UBC Press, 1997

The Stone Carvers by Jane Urquhart. Emblem Editions, 2001.

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