

## War Memories across Canada

### Conversation Kit:

# Soldier Factory

## Valcartier, Quebec



Bibliothèque et Archives Canada – Library and Archives Canada/MIKAN 3336987

On August 4, 1914 Great Britain declared war on Germany. This meant that all of the dominions of Great Britain, including Canada, were now at war with Germany. At that time, Sir Sam Hughes was Canada's Minister of Militia and Defence. Hughes sent out a "call to arms", an appeal for volunteers to enlist as soldiers. In response, thousands of enthusiastic young men from across Canada volunteered to fight for Canada and Great Britain.

Hughes needed a place to train these thousands of volunteers, so he chose a riverside stretch of farmland near the village of Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier in Quebec. This became the site of a massive training operation to prepare soldiers for battle in Europe. In just a few months, Hughes had transformed the farmland into Valcartier camp, a bustling tent city packed with more than 36,000 men training for war. It wasn't long before Canada's first contingent of soldiers sailed for England.

The base at Valcartier still exists today. If you visit, you will see a bronze statue of a First World War soldier at the entrance to the base.

### Discussion Questions:

When he became the Minister of Militia and Defence, Sir Sam Hughes was 61 years old and had already had a long career (including as a schoolteacher). Do you think age and experience make a good leader?

Why do you think young men were so enthusiastic to volunteer in response to Hughes' call to arms? Would you expect a similar response nowadays?

In less than 6 months, Valcartier went from being a quiet village in rural Quebec to hosting a military base of more than 36,000 young men in training. What do you think this was like for the villagers?

Many of the young men who trained at Valcartier had never left their hometowns before. What do you think it was like for them preparing to travel to Europe to fight in a war? What's the furthest you have been from home and what was it like?

Valcartier is still an active military base. What do you think it is like to serve somewhere with so much history?

Why is the statue at the entrance to the base at Valcartier important? What do you think visitors are meant to feel or do when they visit the statue?

### Activities:

Using the resources on the next page, research examples of First World War recruitment posters. Think about the artwork in terms of its colour, images, symbols, and message. What emotions do these posters evoke for you when you see them? What do you think is the target audience of each poster?

Create your own recruitment leaflet, newspaper advertisement, or poster asking for volunteers to train at Valcartier. Give a presentation to your class and explain the symbolism of your artwork.

Draw a map to depict Valcartier at the height of activity during the autumn of 1914. Include areas for eating, tents, horse stables, outhouses, water sources, transportation, roads and training facilities. What about a chapel and entertainment?



Special Collections & Archives, University of Victoria

## Resources:

### Websites

Canada and the First World War – Library and Archives Canada  
<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/firstworldwar/index-e.html>

First World War (1914 – 1918) – Veterans Affairs Canada  
<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/first-world-war>

First World War Recruitment Posters  
[http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/propaganda/propaganda\\_e.shtml](http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/propaganda/propaganda_e.shtml)

Training at Valcartier – Canadian War Museum  
<http://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/going-to-war/canada-enters-the-war/training-at-valcartier/>

Sir Sam Hughes – Canadian War Museum  
<http://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/people/canadian-leaders/>

The Valcartier tour de force (The Great War 1914 - 1918)  
<http://ww1.canada.com/home-front/the-valcartier-tour-de-force>

## Videos

Canadian Official War Films (First World War) [1914-1917]  
Library and Archives Canada /188460  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=do2G8XaAZVA>

## Books

Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919 : official history of the Canadian Army in the First World War, by G.W.L. Nicholson. Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962. Available online: <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/his/oh-ho/detail-eng.asp?BfBookLang=1&BfId=22>

Desperate glory : the story of World War I, by John Wilson. Napoleon Publishing, 2008.  
The story of the First World War told from a Canadian perspective.

Hold the Ox! : a teenage soldier writes home, by Marion Brooker. Dundurn Press, 2011.

Sam Hughes: The public career of a controversial Canadian, 1885-1916, by Ronald G. Haycock. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986.

Semper fidelis: Valcartier d'hier à aujourd'hui, 1914-2014. Michel Litalien, 2014.

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