

Summary Report to BC Remembers: April 30, 2014 Royal Roads University

Context

BC Remembers the First World War 2014-2018: A forum to explore directions, issues and opportunities, a co-presentation of the [BC Museums Association](#) and the [School of Tourism and Hospitality Management](#), Royal Roads University, was a day-long forum that took place at [Royal Roads University](#) and online on April 30, 2014. Over 70 people attended in person in Victoria, BC, a further 30 groups interacted online from across the province and numerous people viewed the event around the world via Livestream. A variety of multicultural groups were invited and attended, including First Nations, Ukrainian and Japanese organizations. The event was sponsored by the Heritage BC, the City of Victoria and the Office of Security and Military Relations, Royal Roads University. Upon conclusion of the day, a publicly available [web page](#) was produced containing links to all of the resources discussed at the forum. The page continues to be updated and added to by the BC Museums Association as resources related to commemorating the First World War become available.

Feedback from attendees included:

“Thanks for a wonderful day – we left with a lot of great ideas and are excited to be involved in this.”

“Our staff who followed the live streaming were very impressed with the format and content.”

“This is a wonderful initiative and [we were] pleased to have been invited to be a part of it.”

“..thanks [...] for organizing a great event yesterday. It was quite invigorating and the enthusiastic response was very motivating. I also received an email from one of my board members that participated online and she was very pleased as well.”

“Yesterday’s workshop was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the opportunities we have to connect individuals and organizations to the primary documents that chronicle and personalize Canada’s military history.”

Synopsis of Group Discussions on April 30

Question 1 : What is Remembrance?

- It should be educational, especially a component available to schools
- All programming should be engaging and more than ‘just facts’ in order to provide a connection to the experience of the war
- Should include personal stories and family relationships for an emotional connection

- Remembrance should include the home front, diverse perspectives.

Question 2: What are you doing to commemorate?

- online exhibitions of a letter/diary entry a day (North Vancouver Museum and Archives)
- Pacific Opera has “Mary’s Wedding”, which encompasses musical performance, online documents, school programs
- Fort Rodd Hill Park is creating a venue for events such as the WWI picnic in August 2014
- Qualicum Beach is looking to commemorate the convalescent hospital located there
- Trench system will be recreated along Dallas Road
- Mention of digitizing documents, creating lectures, presentations and site-specific WW1 connection displays at various museums/sites

What would you like to see done?

- Royal BC Museum travelling exhibition/access to WWI collections relevant to smaller communities
- Bring together groups and associations who commemorate history/heritage
- Partner with newspapers such as the Times Colonist
- Receive help (financial? planning? not clear) to host webinars and virtual museums
- Create school, children and family programs
- Create walking tours of local commemorative sites
- Create interactive, family-focussed exhibitions
- Support veterans sharing stories, perhaps writing a book
- Use art as reflection, highlight war artists
- Recognize First Nations soldiers
- Would like more educational resources (perhaps from Ministry of Education?)
- Would like better space to tell stories/exhibit materials

Question 3: What are the issues or potential areas of controversy with remembrance in BC?

- Remembrance vs commemoration: Does commemoration sanitize?
- Four years is a long time to commemorate! (Information fatigue?)
- What about all the different voices: women, First Nations, German Canadians, Chinese Canadians, Japanese Canadians, Ukrainian Canadians, Sikh Canadians.
- Whose history is remembered, whose is not?
- Can we be all-encompassing? Can we please everyone? ‘Damned if we do, damned if we don’t’ situation/scenario.
- What really happened is/can be controversial, especially dealing with the propaganda of the time.
- Will war be romanticized? How does this sit with pacifists?
- What about today’s veterans (Afghanistan)?
- Did Canada become a better country after World War I?

Best approaches/practices

- Understand/explain/explore/acknowledge the era, including racism
- Generate dialogue, especially connect generations
- Build legacy projects
- Be respectful, authentic, relevant, use empathy in displays and discussions
- Include disclaimers within projects to address ‘2014 eyes on 1914 events’
- Find balance with different points of view
- Don’t make assumptions or judgements
- Use technology to engage, more than just walls of text

- Ask the community what they would like to see

Question 4: What are the opportunities for partnerships?

- **Collaborate**
 - o don't compete for resources and attention - pool efforts
 - o Large work with small institutions; museums, art galleries, archives, libraries combine efforts
 - o Work with national organizations, find out what they are already doing - BCMA works with CMA, LAC, Heritage BC/Canada, AABC
- **Centralize Information**
 - o Organize a 'hub' of information online
 - o Create list of funders, resources, events calendar, toolkits
 - o Hub could be done by BCMA, BC universities, larger BC museums such as Royal BC Museum
- **Continue to Meet**
 - o Create an action plan of events and collaborative opportunities
 - o Plan to meet again, in person, in different locations in the province, perhaps in association with other events/conferences
 - o use April 30 as the umbrella event future meetings fit under
 - o Keep access to information and meetings free

Next Steps and Actions since April 30

The next steps are presented as a set of recommendations to build momentum. These recommendations will be sent to the BCMA and Heritage BC for response, as well as to the relevant provincial Ministries and other organizations.

1. That one of the provincial organizations such as the BCMA or Heritage BC, create a webpage to house a calendar of BC-related events, links to various sites such as archives, museums, funding agencies and resources. Part of this could include linking through a Facebook page to allow for ongoing communications and announcements and as a site to sharing and incubating ideas and initiatives.
 - a. *The BCMA has already started with a webpage. Additional funding and staff support is required for a more robust page. Any support is welcome.*
2. That agencies involved in facilitating the provincial forum request provincial government funding to support heritage related activities in British Columbia. The fund would support a range of activities, including restoration of memorials, acts of remembrance such as, but not limited to, commemorative events, music festivals, art installations, reenactments and plays.
 - a. *Organizations will explore avenues to formally propose a provincial fund, similar in scope to the intent of funding provided by the UK Government, to support a range of community and provincial activities.*
3. That annual provincial conferences for the BCMA, and other agencies provide an opportunity for discussion and updates on this subject of First World War commemoration.
 - a. *This is being considered for the BCMA conference scheduled for October in Penticton.*
4. Explore ways for communities, museums, archives and other history and heritage related organization to partner with regard to travelling exhibitions, or other acts of remembrance that

serve to link British Columbians, as well as other nationalities, to reflect on the 1914-18 conflict, and build a commemorative legacy for future generations.

- a. Informal discussions have occurred with Canadigm and a possible province-wide partnership agreement for the tour of their [Souterraine Impressions](#) in 2017/18. If archives, museums or other heritage sites/organizations are interested in participating, please contact Geoffrey Bird at Geoff.2bird@royalroads.ca*
5. That museums, archives and universities be encouraged, by way of a First World War Research Fund, to research aspects of BC war history and heritage and to distribute findings by way of publications, public and academic conferences, and through associations.
 - a. Exploratory discussions will take place over the coming year.*
6. That another forum, similar in structure with face to face and video livestreaming across the proto the April event, occur in the Spring 2015.
 - a. Royal Roads University has volunteered to provide support - on-site and livestreaming, along with facilitation – for an event in partnership with BCMA in Spring 2015.*

Forum Organizers

Geoffrey Bird, PhD
Associate Professor
Royal Roads University
Geoff.2bird@royalroads.ca

Theresa Mackay
Executive Director
BC Museums Association
tmackay@museumsassn.bc.ca

PRESENTING PARTNERS



School of Tourism and Hospitality Management

SUPPORTERS



Office of Security and Military Relations

