

War Memories across Canada Conversation Kit:

Soldier Factory Valcartier, Quebec



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On August 4, 1914 Great Britain, her dominions (including Canada) and allies, declared war on Germany. Canada's Minister of Militia and Defence, Sir Sam Hughes, sent out a call to arms, which drew thousands of enthusiastic volunteers from across the country. Hughes chose a riverside stretch of farmland near the village of Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier, Quebec as the site of Canada's massive training operation to prepare an expeditionary force for battle.

In a few months Hughes transformed the Valcartier camp to a bustling tent city packed with 36,000 men training for war. It wasn't long before Canada's first contingent of soldiers sailed for England.

At the entrance of present day Canadian Forces Base Valcartier a bronze statue of a soldier commemorates Canada's contribution to the First World War.

Discussion Questions:

Why did Sam Hughes select Valcartier as the location for his training camp? What remains of the original camp today?

What training did the soldiers receive at Valcartier? Were the troops ready for battle? Explain your answer.

What was Canada's relationship to England when war was declared? Compare Canadian loyalties to the "Mother Country" a century ago with attitudes about Britain today.

Describe the Ross rifle scandal and how it affected Hughes's career. Was Hughes a brilliant military leader? Explain your answer.

Why were young Canadian men so enthusiastic to join the war effort? Did this change over time?

Activities:

Using the resources on the next page, research examples of First World War recruitment posters. Analyze the artwork in terms of colour, symbolic images, graphic appeal and message. What emotions do these posters evoke? What 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. Your map should 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

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 Oxol!: 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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