

July 29, 2014

Rare First World War film footage on display at the Royal BC Museum

VICTORIA, BC -- On Monday, August 4, the Royal BC Museum will launch its commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the First World War – also known as the Great War – with a new installation in Clifford Carl Hall, the first part of a continuing project to mark this important milestone.

The centrepiece of the Great War installation is a series of four videos painstakingly put together by Royal BC Museum archivist Dennis J. Duffy. *Answering the Call* features rare footage of Canadian troops training in Victoria, Vancouver and Comox and of their departure for Eastern Canada and, ultimately, the battlefields of Europe.

“Our task at the museum is to cultivate a spirit of remembrance, especially when there are no more survivors of the Great War,” said Prof. Jack Lohman, Royal BC Museum CEO. “Through projects like this we hope more objects, archives, photographs and films emerge from the depths of our collections and are shared for the benefit of all”.

Footage for *Answering the Call* comes from 10 reels of film preserved in Library and Archives Canada. Eight of the reels contain raw, unedited footage, with little information about their content. The other two reels were shot by pioneering BC filmmaker A.D. “Cowboy” Kean, who attempted to document every unit that left the province to serve in the Great War.

Duffy has taken all of this footage – some severely deteriorated, most of it unidentified – and constructed a poignant and meaningful visual story, set to music, conveying the optimism and enthusiasm of recruits as they trained and departed for a conflict of unimaginable violence.

Commemoration will continue in fall 2014 with the digitization and online publishing of 5,000 pages of letters and diaries from the BC Archives related to the First World War, allowing access to these important materials for all in British Columbia. This online component will also include a pilot crowd-sourced transcription project, one of the first of its kind in Canada.

The Royal BC Museum will also commemorate the Great War by participating in a special concert by **the Victoria Symphony, “Lest We Forget,” at the Bay St. Armoury on October 25. The concert will** include excerpts from the First World War-era raw footage and will feature the premiere of a new work from local composer Tobin Stokes.

August 4 marks the official beginning of British Columbia’s Commemoration of the First and Second World Wars, a period of remembrance and reflection proclaimed by the provincial government.

The Royal BC Museum will continually add displays of images, artifacts and archival records until 2019 to recognize this important historical event and highlight its ongoing legacy.

About the Royal BC Museum

The Royal BC Museum explores the province’s human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. The museum and archives celebrate culture and history, telling the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Looking to the future, by 2017 the Royal BC Museum will be a refreshed, modern museum, extending its reach far beyond Victoria as a world-class cultural venue and repository of digital treasures.

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