

Remembering the Unforgettable

On the **10th anniversary of 9/11**, DFAIT staffers helped Canada pay heartfelt tribute to the people who died and to those who offered help in a tragic moment.

The main tributes were in the two cities that were attacked—New York, where the World Trade Center towers once stood, and Washington, D.C. just across the Potomac River from the Pentagon, which was struck, like the towers, by a hijacked commercial airliner.

The department's point person in coordinating the commemoration activities was Kibui Pyron, senior public affairs officer at the Consulate General in New York City. "Kibui was the hub of the wheel—the person who kept everyone up to speed on the entire team's activities," says Nadia Ahmad, Director, North American Partnerships and Operations.

Pyron had a technological ally—the departmental wiki, where missions could post running updates of their plans and progress. "The wiki simplified everything," Pyron says. "At a glance, anyone could tell exactly how things stood with any of our projects."

On September 11, Prime Minister Stephen Harper spoke at a memorial concert at the British Garden in Lower Manhattan, which honours Commonwealth victims of September 11. The Prime Minister said Canada would not only remember the innocent who were killed, but "remain vigilant to protect all those they left behind and to thwart all those who would do them harm."

There were other events in New York as well—a reception at the consul general's official residence for the families of Canadian victims, a policy conference partly sponsored by the mission, during which Defence Minister Peter MacKay said Canada would remain vigilant in defence of democracy, and a concert where Canadian singers performed classic American songs to mark the anniversary.

"We had to work hard to bring all of this together, but we were honoured and moved to do so," Pyron says. "New York, so viciously attacked, is our city—and our solidarity with the U.S. and New York could not be more heartfelt."

In Washington, embassy staff arranged the visit of a delegation from Gander, N.L., to the Nine Eleven Tenth Anniversary Summit, which was sponsored by the Center for National Policy, Voices of September 11th, and the Rockefeller Foundation. The delegation, accompanied by Newfoundland and Labrador's Premier Kathy Dunderdale, was given a special award for welcoming 6,600 Americans after U.S. airspace was shut down following the 9/11 attacks.

Embassy staff also arranged a meeting between the Gander delegation and congresswoman Louise Slaughter, who presented the group with a copy of her resolution thanking the people of Gander for their help in the aftermath of the attacks. Ms. Slaughter said Americans would remember "how, in our darkest hour, the world's better angels brought comfort, peace and love to a nation in need. And the people of Gander are our world's better angels."

At the embassy, the Public Affairs section curated an exhibit entitled Canada and the U.S.: Remembrance and Resilience that showed, through stories and photos, the compassionate response of Canadians after the 9/11 attacks.

"We were remembering a tragedy," says Lisette Ramcharan, Minister-Counsellor for Public Affairs. "Everything we did for the 10th anniversary came from a heartfelt place—our wish to remember what happened and to underline the affection and empathy we share with our American friends."

Those sentiments were felt just as strongly at Headquarters, says Nadia Ahmad. "Ten years later, those sad events still resonate. We aimed for—and I hope achieved—a graceful and sincere commemoration."



Gander mayor Claude Elliot receives International Community Resilience Award from Sean Burke of the Center for National Policy (CNP) at the Nine Eleven Tenth Anniversary Summit: Remembrance, Renewal, Resilience. From left to right: unidentified man, CNP president Steve Flynn, Mayor Elliot, Hazel Bishop, Sean Burke, Jake Turner - photos: DFAIT