

photo: Veterans Affairs Canada



Canada's newly created Juno Beach Centre at Courseulles-sur-Mer, Normandy.

Netherlands, where Canada's Lieutenant-General Charles Foulkes accepted the surrender of the occupying German forces on May 5, 1945.

While their contribution to the Allied campaigns in Normandy, Sicily, the Rhineland and elsewhere was vital, it is the Dutch who have a particularly strong bond with Canadians.

Dutch schoolchildren born half a century after the war can name the Canadian regiments that liberated their towns, says Martin van Denzen, who hosts a weekly Dutch-language radio program in Toronto and lives next door to a Canadian war veteran. This May 5, reports van Denzen, "I went over to my neighbour and gave him a big hug and said, 'thank you very much.'"

Wartime memories remain strong among Canadians as well, and the 60th anniversary ceremonies for D-Day and the Italian and Netherlands campaigns will be the largest ever. "I can't believe these big anniversary events have gone on this long," says Bruce Evans.

Yet there is a general understanding that the commemoration will not be repeated on this scale. "Because of the age of our veterans, this is probably the last big opportunity," says Maude Desjardins, Senior Communications Adviser at Veterans Affairs Canada in Charlottetown.

There's no doubt that living war veterans make the history—and linkages between Canada and

Europe—more vivid. This year's commemorations have included a Veterans Affairs-supported program of the Dominion Institute's Memory Project, which has seen 1,000 Canadian veterans address children in schools across the country about their war experience.

"Our objective is to provide greater knowledge of Canadian history," says Rudyard Griffiths, 34, the Dominion Institute's co-founder. While the Institute works to create educational connections at home, Canada's memorializing of the facts on the ground in Europe includes such landmarks as the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and several others throughout Western Europe.

Canada's newly created Juno Beach Centre at Courseulles-sur-Mer, Normandy, with a significant financial contribution from France, is a major addition to this network of permanent memorials. The Centre anticipates some 60,000 visitors this year, including school groups from Canada, France and across Europe.

"There is no better teaching place," remarks Canadian Xavier Paturel, 28, the Centre's project manager who, with wife and fellow staffer Laura Paturel, was a student guide at the Vimy Memorial and sees the power of memory in the Juno facility. "We have German bunkers right at our doorstep. We have guides who are



photo: Denise Arsenault

A memorial in Wilnis, the Netherlands, to Canadians who died in the crash of a Vickers Wellington bomber shot down by the Nazis on May 5, 1943.

well informed. We use video, film and archives, and allow children to manipulate objects."

So, at the very place on the French shoreline where modern history took its decisive turn toward the triumph of democracy, a Canadian flag flies and Europeans of every generation come to remember the accomplishment and sacrifice of their distant liberators. 🍁

Learn about the Dominion Institute's Memory Project at www.thememoryproject.com and the Veterans Affairs Canada Remembers Program at www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers.



photo: Jan Reuvers

A monument in Rha, the Netherlands, commemorates eight Canadians killed in battle.