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As six cities across Canada prepare for a week-long national Vigil to remember those who died during the First World War, a new Canada's National History Society - Pollara Research poll probes Canadian interest and participation in Remembrance Day

- *86% of Canadians support making Remembrance Day a national statutory holiday in all provinces and territories*
- *75% of Canadians showed their support by wearing a Poppy last year*
- *50% of Canadians feel that individuals should do more to recognize and observe Remembrance Day*
 - *However, only one fifth of Canadians (22%) indicated they personally had participated in Remembrance Day-related events last year, with still fewer planning to do so this year (20%).*

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86% of Canadians think Remembrance Day should be a national holiday

--National poll findings also show strong majority feel elementary and high school Remembrance Day ceremonies should be mandatory--

(WINNIPEG - October 30, 2008) - As six cities across Canada make their final preparations for *Vigil 1914-1918 Vigile* a week-long national project to remember those who died during the First World War, a new *Pollara Strategic Insights* poll, conducted on behalf of Canada's National History Society reveals that 86% of respondents support making Remembrance Day a national statutory holiday in all provinces and territories.

"Past research experience has shown us that Canadians do not provide kneejerk support for any new statutory holiday proposal. There has to be a meaningful purpose. It cannot be frivolous," said Craig Worden, Senior Vice-President, Public Affairs. "The level, and especially the intensity, of support for this holiday is significant and deserves attention."

Although a strong majority of respondents (88%) agreed that Remembrance Day was an important and meaningful day for Canadians, less than one-fifth (17%) were able to correctly identify the original purpose of the day, to mark the end of the First World War. *The Vigil Project* is a special initiative of the History Society produced in association with R.H. Thomson, Martin Conboy, to mark the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War by broadcasting each the names of those who were lost across the National War Memorial and supporting simultaneous broadcasts in six other cities and through a live Internet webcast.

The survey findings also revealed that while the importance of Remembrance Day was not lost to the majority of Canadians, only 22% indicated that they personally had participated in organized ceremonies of Remembrance last year. With fewer (20%) expressing an intention to participate this year.

50% of respondents felt that individual Canadians should do more to recognize and observe Remembrance Day, and also indicated that all three levels of government had a role to play to encourage them. Four-in-ten respondents indicated the federal government (44%), their provincial government (43%), or their local or municipal government (42%) should all do more to recognize and observe Remembrance Day in 2008.

The majority of respondents (75%) reported having worn a poppy last year as their way of honoring Remembrance Day with 63% intending to wear one this year

Older respondents (from 75% to 89% of those 35 and older) are more likely to report having worn a poppy or other symbol last year than younger respondents (61% of those 18 to 34). Similarly, older respondents (from 59% to 79% of those 35 and older) are more likely to report the intention to wear one this upcoming Remembrance Day (compared to 49% of those 18 to 34).

"As time takes us further away from the First World War, and those with the ability to share their experiences pass on, it clearly becomes even more difficult to connect younger generations to this important part of our past. However, I believe these results show a lot of interest among Canadians and a recognition that Remembrance Day should have a more meaningful role in the daily lives of Canadians," stated Deborah Morrison, President and C.E.O. of Canada's National History Society. "These results indicate to me that when encourage to take initiative, like wearing a poppy, Canadians are keen to embrace the opportunity. They are

looking for more leadership to inspire more direct and meaningful acts of Remembrance. But frankly, that's hard to accomplish when the day is treated like a regular working day."

The poll asked respondents a series of questions about how they spent Remembrance Day last year, and how they intended to mark the day this year.

- o Three-fifths report they stayed at home last Remembrance Day (58%), while fewer (36%) intend to stay at home this year. Less than one-in-ten report they went shopping last year (8%), or intend to shop this year (4%) on Remembrance Day. Similarly, only 3% were on vacation on Remembrance Day last year, while fewer (2%) plan to be on vacation this Remembrance Day.
- o Other Remembrance Day activities respondents plan to do this year to mark the day include spending the day with family (37%), watching or listening to a TV, radio, or online broadcast (36%), thinking or learning about Canada's war casualties (25%), or spending time with friends (20%) Only one-fifth (19%) of respondents say they plan to do nothing special.
- o Those who have attended a Remembrance Day ceremony in the past (78%) are much more likely to strongly support making Remembrance Day ceremonies mandatory in all elementary and secondary schools than those who have not previously attended a Remembrance Day ceremony (53%). Women (61%, compared to 53% of men) and those who were born in Canada (61%, compared to 41% of those who were not) are more likely to feel the same.
- o Younger respondents (67% of those 18 to 24) are least likely to support implementing mandatory Remembrance Day ceremonies for students in elementary and secondary schools (compared to 75% to 89% of those 25 and older).

Although Remembrance Day was originally established throughout the Commonwealth to mark the end of the First World War, it would appear that for most Canadians it has become a day to honour all military service. The largest proportion of respondents (36%) feel that Remembrance Day was first established to honour all Canadians who served in all military conflicts, while one-quarter (25%) believes that it was first established to honour the Canadians who served in the First World War. Equal proportions feel that the day was established to mark the end of the First World War (17%), and to honour Canadians who served in World War I, II, and the Korean War (17%).

On behalf of Canada's National History Society, from October 8 to 16, 2008, Pollara Strategic Insights conducted this online survey of 1,902 Canadians. The data were weighted to demographic and regional characteristics according to the most recent Census data, in order to approximate a probability sample. An unweighted probability sample of this size with a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of ± 2.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Pollara is Canada's largest strategic insights, market research and polling firm, with offices in Toronto, New York, Ottawa, Vancouver, Montreal, Bathurst and Caraquet N.B.

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Vigil 1914-1918 Vigile A Project of Remembrance

From sunset November 4th through to sunrise November 11th, Canadians are invited to participate in a national public vigil commemorating the 68,000 Canadians who lost their lives in WWI. The names of the 68,000 war dead will be projected over a week of nights onto the National War Memorial in Ottawa, onto the side of Canada House in Trafalgar Square in London, England, and in public spaces in five other Canadian cities: Halifax, Fredericton, Toronto, Regina, and Edmonton. Vigil 1914-1918 Vigile will also be broadcast in Trafalgar Square in London, England with Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II in attendance for the opening ceremonies.

Local school, community groups, and individuals are invited to join in the Vigil. Canadians can log into www.1914-1918.ca to look up the names of loved ones and confirm the night and the minute when their name will appear in this innovative tribute to remember the individual men and women who were lost during the First World War.

The website will enable Canadians to join in and participate in the Vigil, wherever they are, watching the live broadcast from Ottawa, or via the virtual Vigil that will be keyed to broadcast using local times. It will also enable them to leave comments and personal reflections about their Vigil experience, or post pictures from other Vigil sites across the country to share with the rest of us.

Veterans Affairs Canada's Community Engagement Partnership Fund has generously contributed \$340,000 towards the production of the national Vigil on the War Memorial in Ottawa, the simultaneous webcast of the event, and support for the coordination of other Vigil sites.

Those interested in participating in the vigil can go to www.historysociety.ca/vigil for event information. Teachers are encouraged to explore the educational resources available for classes at the website.

About The Creators of Vigil 1914-1918 Vigile

Martin Conboy is a renowned lighting designer with a background that includes direction, producing, scenic and design. He has credits for over 150 productions in Dance, Theatre, special events, light shows and many site specific light art installations. In architectural lighting, he has worked on projects with design firms across Canada, and government projects in Canada and abroad. The latter includes the Canadian National War Memorial in Ottawa and Vimy Memorial in France.

RH Thomson is one of Canada's foremost actors/directors has received national awards over his 30 year career. In 2001, RH Thomson wrote and performed a highly personal play, *The Lost Boys*, based on letters written home by his five great-uncles who fought in WWI. Its television version delivered his second Gemini Award. In 2007, he co-created and produced the *Vimy Vigil* in Ottawa with Martin Conboy, for Veterans Affairs Canada.

Canada's National History Society is a Winnipeg-based charitable organization established in 1993 by the Hudson's Bay Company with the mission to promote greater popular interest in Canadian History, mainly through its publishing programs. The Society publishes Canada's second oldest magazine, *The Beaver: Canada's History Magazine*, as well as *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*. It also administers the

country's top history honours: The Pierre Berton Award; and the Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History.

Ecentricarts Inc. is a web design and development company, which works on many arts, culture and education-based projects. This innovative studio is based in Toronto and has clients across Canada and internationally. Ecentricarts Inc. designed and built the online Vimy Vigil project and is honoured to be working on the 1914-1918 Vigil project. Visit www.ecentricarts.com for more information.

The organizers wish to thank the Canadian High Commission in London, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the National Capital Commission and the Canadian War Museum. For further information on Canadians in the First World War please link to the Virtual War Memorial at www.vac-acc.gc.ca or go to www.cwgc.org , www.historysociety.ca/vigil or www.warmuseum.ca.

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