

Tell Me a Story Soldier! (774 words)

A year ago a group of volunteers launched a project called “Afghanistan: A Soldier’s Story” www.afghanistancanadianstory.ca The objective was to collect the human stories and images of those who served - military, civilian and media, to compile them in a legacy album to share with Canadians. Publication is planned for November 2014.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a special thanks to Don MacKinnon, President of the Power Workers' Union (PWU), and all the PWU members, for their generous donation. This is the same organization that was the principal supporter of the documentary series “The Veterans” <http://vimeo.com/channels/theveterans> MacKinnon, by the way, was awarded the CF Meritorious Service Medallion by the CDS for his outstanding support of Canada's veterans and the serving men and women in the CF.

A big thank you also goes out to Colonel (retired) Andrew Nellestyn. He has been relentless over the summer putting out calls for personal stories to a number of CF associated web sites and organizations. He has also been instrumental in raising project awareness with Canadian leadership in the military, political, corporate, and academic communities.

MGen Vance has accepted our invitation to serve as the CF Project Champion and agreed to write an afterword for the book. The CDS, General Walter Natynczyk has written an introduction for the book <http://afghanistancanadianstory.ca/about/afghanistan-a-soldiers-story-intros-and-champions/> and military historian, Dr. Jack Granatstein, has agreed to write a historical introduction. In addition the Prime Minister, the Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada and the Royal Canadian Legion have agreed to provide message(s) and/or content.

Since the inception of this project, as far back as the summer of 2010, there have been many who assured us they would share their stories and images. We look forward to receiving these promised submissions but want to remind you that though the deadline is May 2014, it would be nice to see content come in sooner than that. Otherwise our volunteer editors will be overwhelmed with a flood of promised content just before publication.

There has also been a good deal of enthusiasm for the project among CF members, coupled with a peculiar reluctance. Many appear to struggle with the idea, suggesting their stories are either not worth sharing, or too colourful or covert to share. I ask you to think again. The stories we seek are not the grand stories. They are the human stories, the moments that stand out like a bright moment, perhaps complete with distinctive sounds and smells, burned in the back of your mind. Perhaps they are not all upbeat, happy or funny stories. Some may be angry, some sad, some terrified. All, however, represent the human face of a Canadian experience that captured the hearts of Canadians for a time and has been defining and even transforming for our military. An experience that, though it continues with nearly 1000 Canadian soldiers still serving in Afghanistan, has already begun to fade from public and political relevance.

Before you shrug and discount this as the norm in Canada, I’d like you to consider the importance of sharing your experiences in a story rather than leaving the responsibility for recording Canada’s involvement in the Afghan conflict to the journalists and historians.

Storytelling is a traditional and even ancient means of passing on wisdom and culture, not just a chronicling of key events. Historically, it has been how subsequent generations were inspired and informed, not just with skills and knowledge, but with values and ideals, and a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves. Today, we rely on formalized education along with movies and television to provide the models that will shape our youth, and our leaders of the future. Far too many of us, as a result, have lost the individual art of storytelling.

Your stories, simple and unimportant though they might seem to you, are very important. When you share your experiences through storytelling, you are contributing to a powerful individual exchange, and an accumulation and consolidation of priceless knowledge beyond what is formalized in manuals and history books. Your shared narrative builds trust and understanding with your communities and with those who will come to serve after you. Your stories will also help to perpetuate a standard of professional excellence that has, more often than not, been the hallmark of those who have served Canada in the profession of arms before you.

So please, if you have a story, an image, or a video clip from your Afghan experience to share, or if you know someone else with an experience to share, please direct them to contact@afghanistancanadianstory.ca or to consult@mywrdrwx.com Your stories and photos are more important than you may realize!

Visit our site at www.afghanistancanadianstory.ca

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/Canadian.Afghanistan.Combat.Mission?ref=hl>

Youtube - <http://www.youtube.com/user/ASoldiersStory>

Linkedin - http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4256579&trk=hb_side_g

Flickr - <http://www.flickr.com/groups/canafghanstory/>

Photo Caption

Pte. Jarred Braybrook), early May 2010, on guard watch at Out Post Nightmare, Route Nightmare, Panjaw'i (Photo by Cpl. James Hudson)

