



Portraits of Honour

Summary Report

May 2017





Table of Contents

1. Portraits of Honour: An Introduction	Page 1
The painting	
2. Kin Canada: A History	Page 2
Hal	
Milk for Britain	
Portraits of Honour	
3. Portraits of Honour: The Tour	Page 3
The scope	
The audience	
Logistics	Page 4
Key players	
4. Portraits of Honour: The Impact	Page 5
Donations	
Awareness	
Recognition	Page 6
Support	
Legacy	Page 7



Portraits of Honour: An Introduction

The concept for Portraits of Honour was a simple one: a mural to honour those who have given all for flag and country, and to honour the families of those who have fallen while protecting the rights and freedoms of our global community.

The painting was a labour of love started by Kin Canada Life Member Dave Sopha who was impacted when he heard the news that the 100th Canadian soldier had fallen in Afghanistan on December 5, 2008. He spent over 6,500 hours employing his vast artistic skills, painting the faces of 158 soldiers; every face the face of a daughter, son, mother, father, sister or brother. Every face so realistic that digital cameras were fooled into thinking they are real.

It was decided that the painting would go on tour to communities across the country that were home to fallen soldiers. And while the tour would go on to raise nearly \$300,000 in support of the Military Families Fund and other causes, it also helped bring increased recognition to the sacrifices made by our troops and helped to bring healing to many families across the country. It created a narrative of respect and established an enduring legacy of support for Canadian troops.

The Portraits of Honour Project is the embodiment of the mission of Kin Canada. It is a reflection of our pride in Canada and our wish to honour our troops through this national service project.

The painting

The “Portraits of Honour” painting was created by Cambridge (Preston) Kinsman and artist Dave Sopha. It took over 6,500 hours to paint. The Mural stretches 10 feet high by 40 feet wide and features the 158 Canadian soldiers, sailors and aircrew who lost their lives in Afghanistan.



At the top centre of the painting is a single white dove that is watching over our fallen, symbolizing peace, love and serenity. The fallen are embraced in a bed of poppies and poppy petals which Dave paints every day, thoughtfully placing one poppy petal for each Canadian that has fallen since the First World War. To date, Canada has lost 114, 485.



Kin Canada: A History of Support

Hal

Kin Canada has a long history of supporting Canadian troops. Founder Hal Rogers served during the First World War and was present for the battles fought at Vimy Ridge and Ypres. It's was his desire to replicate the comradery he experienced during his time spent with the army that led him to form Kin Canada in 1920, the year following his return from war.

Milk for Britain

The Association's first national project occurred during WWII and speaks to these roots of kinship in a time of crisis. At that time, Britain was faced with a grave situation: they did not have enough milk to feed their children. In response to pleas for assistance, Hal activated Kin from across Canada with the creation of a campaign called "Milk for Britain", dedicated to raising funds for the purchase of powdered milk. By the end of the Milk for Britain campaign, the Kin family had raised more than \$2 million and sent 50 million quarts of milk to Britain. For his efforts, Mr. Rogers was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire and subsequently was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada.



Portraits of Honour

On December 5, 2008, three soldiers—Warrant Officer Robert Wilson, Private Demetrios Diplaros, Corporal Mark McLaren—all from 1st Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, were killed by an IED. Private Diplaros' death brought the number of Canadian troops killed in the war to 100. Dave sought to honour their lives through an artistic endeavor that would become Portraits of Honour.

With many among the Kin family having served, and some fallen, in Afghanistan, Portraits of Honour is an important expression of this continuing respect for our troops.



Portraits of Honour: The Tour

Portraits of Honour as an official National Project of Kin Canada was launched at the Halifax National Convention in 2010 to overwhelming support, with then National President Sean Thompson presiding. The tour began on May 28, 2011 in Kitchener, Ontario and came to an end on December 10, 2011, in Cambridge, Ontario. Over 199 days, the mural travelled 47,000 kilometres, paying respect to Canada's 158 fallen soldiers, sailors and aircrew from 118 different communities across the country. It visited the hometowns and personally touched the families of countless veterans and fallen soldiers.

The scope

The travelling mural brought our mandate of honour and respect to hundreds of thousands of Canadians through pancake breakfasts, BBQs and gala events. Tens of thousands of school children were educated on the subject. Our military was revered in parades, candlelight vigils and simple gatherings across the country. Partnerships and ongoing friendships were forged between military families, Kin Clubs, Legions and Service Clubs. We have built an important foundation for programs in the future and a continued bond of respect.

Dave Sopha took the mural to the Juno Beach Centre in France where it was on display from September 21 to October 13, 2013 and helped bring our message to the international stage.

The audience

Incredible effort went into organizing mural visits from prominent leaders and dignitaries. Amongst Silver Cross families, friends and comrades viewing the mural have been the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge (Prince William and Kate); Right Hon. Stephen Harper, P.C.; Governor General David Johnston; General Walt Natynczyk; Chief of the Defense Staff; and Hon. Peter MacKay, Minister of National Defense.

Countless other Canadians who weren't able to see the mural in person followed the story and sent their heartfelt words of encouragement and thanks. This recognition has continued long after the tour's final stop.





Portraits of Honour: The Tour

The logistics

The efforts surrounding Portraits of Honour were immense. Marketing initiatives, event planning and the day-to-day logistics of carrying the mural across the country required a great deal of careful planning. Kin Canada and the Kin Canada Foundation worked together with Dave Sopha and event management company Ralph Basset Associates to make this vision a reality. Marketing materials like the Honours our Troops Legacy brochure were created and distributed to countless people across the country, a trailer was purchased and branded to carry the mural vast distances, and over 100 strategically planned visits were made possible through a committed on-road team which included Sopha and his family.

Key players

Several national, provincial and regional partners helped bring this vision to life, including Trans-Frt McNamara, Syncrude and BMO Bank of Montreal. The largest sponsor was Veterans Affairs Canada who donated \$100,000 to help support the tour's many operational expenses. Veterans Affairs Minister Steven Blaney had this to say about the concept:

"As Canadians, it is our responsibility to ensure that we actively remember and express our gratitude to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve our values and way of life. Our government is proud to support an initiative that respectfully memorializes these men and women," Veterans Affairs Minister Steven Blaney said in a release announcing the funding.

In addition to Dave's efforts, many people inside and outside of Kin contributed a great deal of time and effort into the project, and a committee was formed to oversee the day to day operations. Special thanks goes out to then National President Lee Burry, then Executive Director Ric McDonald, National Project Manager Bruce Lloyd, National Operations Manager Sean Libin, Ed Wynette, Gord Trecartin, Diane Rogers and Past National Presidents Leona Thorogood, Curtis Kimpton and Roger Hebblethwaite.

The role of Kin clubs in the success of the project cannot be understated. The Tour was supported by 74 Kinsmen/Kinette/Kin clubs, 43 sponsors, 64 individual donors and 14 other clubs and associations who collectively raised over \$80,000. Rarely in Kin Canada's history has there been an event of national scope to bring us together in such an impactful manner.



Portraits of Honour: The Impact

The tour has a legacy that reaches far beyond the money raised and donated. Because of Portraits of Honour there's increased recognition for the sacrifices made by Canadians in Afghanistan, an increased public profile for Kin Canada, and, perhaps most importantly, a sense of support, recognition and comfort for those who lost their loved ones.

Considerable donations

The Portraits of Honour tour raised \$200,000 to support the Military Families Fund and established military charities that provide financial support to the families of the fallen heroes of Afghanistan; as well as to those aircrew, sailors and soldiers returning from the war with emotional, physical and psychological scars. There were also individual club donations raised at events and donated to the following causes:

- \$2,500 to RCL Homeless Veterans
- \$2,500 to Ottawa Service Bureau
- \$50,000 to Red Deer Military Scholarship
- \$15,00 to Preston MRFC Scholarship
- \$3,000 to Saskatoon Dundurn

Increased awareness

The Portraits of Honour National Tour saw extensive media coverage as it made its way across the country. Media coverage took the form of newspaper articles, radio interviews and television interviews. It was picked up by seven national media outlets including CBC, CTV, Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star, as well as a host of provincial and local media outlets who brought the name Kin Canada and this important message to a wide audience.

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube rounded out the wide range of coverage for this initiative, as well as the project's dedicated website which saw over 300,000 visits from engaged users.

The Portraits also travelled to France, bringing international exposure to both the cause and the Association. Large quantities of custom merchandise like T-shirts, pins, badges, dogtags and DVDs was purchased and will help endure the legacy, and a school curriculum was developed around the project to educate future generations on its importance.



Portraits of Honour: The Impact

Dave`s recognition

For his amazing achievements surrounding Portraits of Honour, Dave Sopha was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal by His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnson, Governor General of Canada. This high honour was created by Queen Elizabeth II to recognize Canadians for deeds that bring honour to their country, and this medal joins Dave's many other accolades, including a Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Through his work, Dave has helped Canadians realize they were welcoming home a whole new generation of veterans who needed our support and our compassion.

Support for the families of the fallen

Perhaps the most poignant impact of the project is the support it provided to the families of the fallen, whose words and expressions of gratitude reflect an important outcome of the project. Portraits of Honour was warmly received by many family and community members who took great comfort in the honour, knowing that efforts were being made to document the efforts of their loved ones and to keep their memory alive.

My wife Margie and I had the great opportunity of seeing the Portraits on Friday the 26 August in Regina. We met many, many dedicated Kinsmen and Kinettes. As family members of a fallen soldier, our son, M/Cpl Jeffrey Scott Walsh, we say "Thank YOU KINSMEN and KINETTES" A job well done... We met so many wonderful, caring, considerate people at this showing. We met relatives, neighbours, politicians and just the general public who had concern and love and caring not only for our son but all fallen soldiers and those that are now serving.

Margie and I thank you from the bottom of our heart for the great job you have and are doing by bringing this viewing to as many Canadians as possible. It is great to see that all of our fallen in all wars are not forgotten.

Thank You;

*Ben and Margie Walsh
Parents of M/Cpl Jeffrey Scott Walsh*



An enduring legacy: the POH trailer

At Kin Canada's 2016 National Convention, it was announced that the POH trailer was being drawn into service in a very different way. During the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfires, it became evident that that more could be done to support our first responders. With typical Kin resolve, the trailer was purchased by the Kinsmen Club of Stampede City, for the purpose of donating it to Canada Task Force 2 (CAN-TF2), an 'all-hazards' Disaster Response Team composed of over 100 volunteer Rescue Specialists, Doctors, Paramedics, Structural Engineers, Communications Specialists, Canine & Technical Searchers, Logistics Specialists and Command Staff.

CAN-TF2 responds as a highly specialized team, capable of handling a wide variety of demanding disaster and rescue situations. CAN-TF2 is in the process of repurposing the Portraits of Honour trailer to suit their operational and deployment requirements. Stampede City Kinsmen and CAN-TF2 are working together to produce and incorporate a permanent recognition component into the trailer's design that will forever recognize the important contribution that this trailer made to Kin Canada, to the Portraits of Honour National Tour and to the 158 Canadian troops that the Tour honoured.



Portraits of Honour touched thousands of Canadians' hearts, educated the young and old, brought national attention to recognize our country's heroes, forged partnerships from coast-to-coast and brought the family of Kin together again. There simply is no measure for the impact the Portraits of Honour mural and tour has made. Like the heroes the mural honours, we, in Kin, will never forget.