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**A stark reminder of Vimy Ridge; Asking a curator to choose his favourite artifact is a bit like asking a father to choose his favourite child -- socially awkward and yet truly revealing**

Tim Cook

First World War historian at the Canadian War Museum

Hidden treasure: Pawley Cross

Why it's important: This temporary wooden cross marked the first resting place of Lieut. Norman Pawley, a 28-year-old Saskatchewan farmer who died during the 1917 battle of Vimy Ridge.

When Tim Cook opened the package that contained the cross, along with Lieut. Norman Pawley's photo and medals, "I couldn't believe it, because these crosses are very rare." Most of them were burned for firewood after the soldiers' remains were moved to cemeteries and marked with permanent stones. Today, we think of the battle as a key event in Canada's evolution, but Cook says it's vital to remember how wrenching it was for Canadians at the time.

"I think that grave marker is a very stark reminder that it may have been a great event, but it certainly wasn't a bloodless one."

Even today, the loss of almost 3,600 soldiers would be devastating. But in 1917, Canada had a population of just more than eight million -- a quarter of today's total -- so almost everyone knew someone lost in the battle.

Where you can see it: Gallery 2.

Other treasures in the museum: Every second Tuesday this summer, an expert

will be positioned next to a particular artifact from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. to discuss it with visitors. Upcoming talks will focus on Hitler's car, an Iltis vehicle used by Canadian peacekeepers in Croatia, Sir Isaac Brock's tunic and a chemical suit made to protect a pig during weapons testing.

## **FAST FACTS**

Canadian War Museum

1 Vimy Place, 819-776-8600

[www.warmuseum.ca](http://www.warmuseum.ca)

- There are approximately 500,000 artifacts in the museum's collections and 55,000 volumes of books in its Military History Research Centre.

- The 'tower' -- or Regeneration Hall -- rises to a height of 24.5 metres and points toward the rising sun and the Peace Tower. The Hall contains some of Canada's most prized war art, including the plaster maquettes for the sculptures at the Vimy Memorial in France to Canada's First World War dead.

- During construction of Regeneration Hall, the wind howled through the incomplete structure. Museum officials taped that sound, which has since become a soundscape played endlessly in the building.

- In the museum at 11 a.m. on Nov. 11, the sun shines through the window of the Museum's Memorial Hall and illuminates the headstone of the Unknown Soldier.

- On the outside of the building you can see windows that spell out in Morse Code, in English and French: Lest We Forget.