

Module 4

Legion Image, Public Relations and Community Outreach



CONTENT OUTLINE

MODULE NAME	Legion Image, Public Relations and Community Outreach
MODULE CHAPTERS	Image of the Legion Public Relations / Outreach Community Involvement
MODULE AUDIENCE	This module will assist a branch PR Chairman with the practice of managing the spread of information between members of the Legion and the public.
MODULE DESCRIPTION	The module will introduce the concept of image, exploring the Legion's history as well as its evolving future. In concert with the Legion's Public Relations manual, it will provide information on how to inform and communicate with both internal and external audiences through common activities as news releases and media interviews. A resulting goal of good public relations is the engagement of the local community in branch activities.
DURATION OF MODULE REVIEW	Members can anticipate taking 2 hours to review all module content. The material should be considered as a resource document for on-going reference.
LEARNING OUTCOMES	Members completing the module will be able to develop a branch public relations plan and gain knowledge to confidently work with the media.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION DOMINION COMMAND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM MODULE 4

IMAGE OF THE LEGION - BEGINNINGS

HISTORY

The first great catalyst was the world war of 1914-18. From a sparse population of less than eight millions, Canada raised over 600,000 servicemen and women. Of these some 60,000 able bodied people, soldiers, sailors, airmen, nursing sisters, would never return. And about 140,000 suffered wounds and disabilities.

Today, Vimy Ridge is one of the world's most magnificent war memorials and marks the spot where 10,600 Canadians fell casualty. But in a sense this monument also commemorates a birth. For it is often observed that it was on the muddy, blasted fields of Vimy that Canadians clearly established their new national identity and completed the process begun 50 years earlier at Confederation.

When the conflict finally ended with the capture of the Belgian city of Mons on November 11, 1918, the influx of Veterans began in earnest. In less than a year 350,000 returned to Canada from overseas.

The Veterans rightly wanted the rewards owed them by the country they had left to protect and that now seemed to be shutting them out.

At first the prime concerns were decent hospitals and proper treatment for the war-wounded, but soon longer term issues came to the fore: pensions, war allowances, and the care of the dependants of the dead and disabled. They pushed for claims adjustment, and the federal legislation to govern all of this.

By 1921 the post war slump saw 300,000 Canadians out of work, many of them returned soldiers. To make matters worse, they were competing for jobs with the thousands of immigrants who docked in boatloads every month.

BRITISH EMPIRE SERVICE LEAGUE

The year 1921 saw the creation of the British Legion and in the same year the formation in Canada of the Dominion Veterans Alliance, a loose federation of groups pledged to full amalgamation.

The architect of the British Legion, and later the same year, of the British Empire Service League, and who formed an international conference in Cape Town, South Africa, is the charismatic Earl Haig. Haig desperately aspired to the unification of all Veterans in the Empire and was keenly aware that Canada was the only imperial dominion lacking a united service organization.

He pleaded the cause of unity to Veterans and public alike, and though some have disputed his motive, most agree on his effect. For if critics argue that Haig's real desire was to strengthen a flagging devotion to the Empire and to secure strong military support for Britain in the event of another war, four organizations came forward in support of unity before he left Canada. These were the Great War Veterans Association (GWVA), the Tuberculosis Veterans, the Canadian Legion, and the Naval Veterans.

CANADIAN LEGION OF THE BESL

Haig had in Canada a willing trustee of the unity movement, the Quebec general Sir Richard Turner. Under the chairmanship of Turner, the GWVA organized a national conference to take place in Winnipeg's stately Malborough Hotel, November 25 through 28, 1925. Two days later most of the delegates emerged as members of a new cohesive voice, the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League. The conference unanimously elected as president Sir Percy Lake, a retired British General living in Victoria, British Columbia, who had seen service in the Middle East, Egypt, and India.

The Legion's new constitution established it as a non-sectarian, non-political body with broad objectives. These encompassed loyalty to Canada and the Empire and to the principles of the British constitution; the welfare of all veteran comrades and their dependants. It would be some months before the new Legion, based in Ottawa, was formally chartered and longer before it was able to take over the operative reins of veteran's affairs from the GWVA. It was with celebration and optimism that the delegates left Winnipeg, proud of their accomplishment and confident of the new era.

IMAGE OF THE LEGION - CITIZEN SOLDIER

CITIZEN SOLDIER

The figure of the citizen soldier is as old as human civilization. Throughout history, ordinary people, overtaken by war, have dropped their peacetime pursuits and willingly taken arms in defence of their countries. At hostilities' end, they have returned to blend back into the communities they left to defend. This was true in ancient Egypt, classical Greece and Rome, and mediaeval Europe; and it has been equally true of a country as young as Canada.

Though sparsely populated and possessing no substantial standing armies, this country contributed contingents of largely volunteer soldiers to fight in several foreign conflicts. Many servicemen lost their lives and many more suffered in body and spirit, but most returned from the crucible of military duty to add a new and tempered vitality to communities galvanized, and often transformed, by war.

On our behalf, these citizen soldiers saw and suffered things that no one should have to. And, indeed, Canadian Veterans have been determined to spare their children and grandchildren of a similar hardship.

But if our Veterans have striven to avoid any recurrence of the horrors of world war, they have also maintained a healthy respect for the qualities that made for such dedicated soldiering. They have continued to salute the exacting discipline of military training and active service that both hardened their mettle and heightened their awareness of the needs of their comrades.

The Canadian society has benefited from the fusion of Veteran's ideals with our collective national consciousness, ideals that have influenced business, industry, education, and government. But if one wishes to see those ideals at work in greater relief than

can be seen in society as a whole, one must look to the Royal Canadian Legion. It is a repository of the values of our citizen soldiers at large.

THE LEGION TODAY

Today the Legion is an organization of large numbers, and great influence. Not all its members are Veterans; and as the Veteran's population ages with the advance of the 21st century, it is clear that the Legion will have to broaden its base still further. Otherwise it cannot maintain its current strength to carry on the work it was founded to do. But that notwithstanding, the Veteran and its values will remain the central hub of the Legion wheel, and we its members will continue to serve them and carry their Torch into the future.

The Royal Canadian Legion enjoys an outstanding record of community service, legislative progressiveness, and raising the national consciousness. And, for the most part, it has carried on this work in the same volunteering spirit that has set Canadian soldiers apart from the military personnel of other lands.

Throughout its hundreds of Branches, as diverse and wide-ranging as Canada itself, the Legion fosters close ties of comradeship through social activities and social services. It is intimately involved in medical charity and research, enlightened building programs, and the welfare of the young and the elderly. It has striven to promote the generous treatment of ex-servicemen and women and their dependants.

The Legion has never broken faith with those who fell, and its works remains a living monument to them. It continues to remind Canadians that they must remember both the sacrifice and the concept of freedom, which they died for.

IMAGE OF THE LEGION -WOMEN IN THE LEGION

HISTORY

Though The Royal Canadian Legion began life as a largely masculine organization, it has grown to include thousands of dedicated women. These women reflect the same diversity of background and occupations as the men, and from their ranks have become Dominion, and provincial Presidents, zone and district commanders, and many, many branch presidents. It is likely they will follow the same patterns they do in contemporary professional life and continue to seek higher Legion office in the years ahead.

THE LADIES AUXILIARY

The Ladies Auxiliaries have existed as almost as long as the Legion itself, and are now represented in many of its branches and in some provincial commands as well. As mothers, wives, widows, daughters, grand-daughters, and nieces of Legionnaires and veterans, LA members range in age from teenagers to nonagenarians; they may be students, grandmothers, teachers, homemakers, businesswomen, and ex-service women.

From their beginnings in 1926, the LA's have never looked back. Today, many branches could simply not survive without the vital services and cohesive influence of their Ladies Auxiliaries. No challenge is too great for their organization and energy, and the Legion's renowned warmth and hospitality owes much to them.

Though relatively few LA members are graduates of military training, they operate with a disciplined efficiency that would do the service proud. And they like a rousing parade; a brisk marching band and the colour and pageantry of the Legion as well as the men. On the whole, though, their presence is an understated one, they are the very essence of the Legion's preference for modestly and a low profile.

In a sense, the time honoured term "Ladies Auxiliaries" is a misnomer, they may speak softly within the Legion, but their vital and tireless services are an essential infrastructure. They are auxiliary in name alone.

IMAGE OF THE LEGION - BRANCH LIFE

BRANCH LIFE

As we saw, the Legion took its origins from social groups in which returned soldiers could seek comfort in the comradeship and mutual help of fellow veterans. The fostering of human companionship and cooperation is still one of the Legion's primary goals. Now, of course, the organization has grown to encompass a much broader membership than war veterans, and must continue this expansion if it is to survive. Though it is still dedicated to the needs of Veterans, it has long since turned its helping hand to the community at large.

The Legion's founders could not have foreseen that it would one day be the country's largest service club. In centres large and small, urban and rural, the Legion branch hall is the focus of a well rooted social force that combines companionship with philanthropy, social activities with social activism.

Here members of every age and stripe get together for good talk, affordable food and drink, a game of darts, cards or pool. Here Legion members form competitive dart teams, ball clubs, billiards and curling teams, bridge and euchre clubs, pipe bands, and brass bands.

Legion encourages its members to reach out into their local communities wherever there is a need. All across the land, hospitals and medical clinics benefit from Legion volunteers and funds donated for vital but costly equipment. Many a school or home for handicapped children has been the beneficiary of Legion's generosity. Many a student's way is made easier by Legion's bursaries; many a young athlete's career is given a boost by Legion's Track and Field Program.

The elderly, the young, the in between, all are the targets of Legion's programmes. And the dual goals of having fun while raising funds add to an inventive, picturesque, and incredibly varied mix of events.

The Legion's innovative fund raising is testimony to the ingenuity of its members. And its community service is witness to the generosity of the Legion's spirit. For wherever it sees a need, it quickly responds with the initiative and drive, characteristic of its earliest founders, the volunteering spirit of those citizen soldiers who did not wait to be asked.

IMAGE OF THE LEGION - KEEPING FAITH

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

We will remember them. This promise, in its Latin form of *Memoriam Eorum Retinebimus*, is the official motto of the Royal Canadian Legion, and one of its most fundamental articles of faith.

By it, the Legion commits itself to preserving the memory and honouring the sacrifice of the more than 117,000 Canadians who were killed in conflicts in which Canada participated. The same motto pledges the Legion to keep faith with the ideals for which this great sacrifice was made: world peace, personal freedom, and democratic government.

The Legion has always cultivated a strong public profile in the solemn celebration of Remembrance Day. This moving ceremony, which each November 11 unites Canadian of all ages across the country, is an event of prime importance in the Legion's calendar.

From its earliest years the organization has fostered its observance. In fact, it was largely its representations to Ottawa that set aside November 11 as a special day of Remembrance.

POPPY CAMPAIGN

Closely associated with Remembrance Day is the Poppy campaign, an annual appeal for funds held by individual Legion branches in thousands of Canadian communities in a period from the last Friday in October to November 11.

The scarlet flower so familiar from Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae's stirring poem, "In Flanders Field," became an international symbol of remembrance when a French woman, Madame Guerin, borrowed the idea in 1918 from a young New York canteen worker to use as a focus

for fund raising in war-torn France. The Flanders Poppy was adopted by the British Empire Service League; in Canada, the Legion's parent, the Great War Association, held its first Poppy Day appeal for funds for needy veterans in November 1921.

Poppy campaigns are run by individual Legions branches with volunteer labour. Donations from the public are distributed by the branches in accordance with rules established by Dominion Command.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Shortly after the community Poppy campaign comes Remembrance Day. On November 11, whether in pale autumn sunshine or the first snow flurries of the year, heads bow for a two minute silence.

Some hear the mournful strains of the "Last Post", others watch the laying of wreaths, the honouring of the mothers of slain sons and daughters. There are salutes, colour, and pageantry; the momentary joining of young and old. But most of all, there is acknowledgement of the enormous contribution to today's society made by the young soldiers who died many years ago, and the ones in recent conflicts. And among the Legion members present, there is also a determination to maintain the principles they willingly defended.

IMAGE OF THE LEGION - LEGION MOSAIC

DIVERSITY

Canada emerged from status as a British colony and grew into an open society comprising many ethnic groups, and with her the Legion has expanded from its beginnings as a British-Canadian and masculine organization led by aristocrats to an egalitarian body that cuts across age, sex, nationality and class.

Legion members are drawn from many religious and political persuasions, income and educational levels, occupations, and lifestyles. They may be 95 or 25, grandmothers or students, PhD's or public school graduates. They are fishermen and farmers, business people and lawyers, civil servants, court justices, and clergymen.

Though they hail from diverse ethnic backgrounds, all Legion members are united by common ideals. They are joined by a spirit of volunteerism and a dedication to peace and democracy, patriotism and commemoration, mutual help, and wide community service.

With its large and diverse following, the Legion has become both a strong national body based in the capital region and a grass roots community movement reaching into the tiniest rural hamlets. It has spoken to the government and public with a voice as strong as any large citizen's group or labour group. At the same time, it has rivalled the service of the largest organized charities and social agencies in every aspect, with the exception of publicity received, for the Legion prefers to function in a low key, unassuming manner.

THE LEGION BRANCH

Despite their military aura, Legion branches are places where members associate and co-operate freely, leaving social status, politics,

and religion behind. The units operate quite autonomously under charter from Dominion Command in Ottawa. Branches are organized into zones and/or districts as needed that fall under the jurisdiction of a provincial command. Branches report through zone and/or districts to a provincial command.

The provincial commands report back to Dominion Command, which supervises the Legion on the national level, makes representations to the federal government, and operates the National Service Bureau.

CONVENTIONS

Bi-annual Dominion and provincial conventions play an important role in allowing the members direct participation in governance and matters of importance, particularly veteran issues. A system of standing committees addresses specific issues, from pensions and housing to sports.

LEGION HOUSE

Legion House, as it is known, is also home to Legion magazine, a lively periodical published monthly by Canvet Publication Ltd. and issued automatically to all members.

ROYAL COMMONWEALTH EX-SERVICES LEAGUE

Through the Royal Commonwealth Ex-services League, the Legion involves itself in the cause of veterans in other countries where they don't enjoy the hard won rights Canadian ex-service people do. The Legion lends financial and material support to these veterans.

THE WAY AHEAD

Though clearly absorbed in today's pressing issues, the Legion is also looking ahead. The Legions earliest Aims and Objectives focused primarily on support of veterans and dependants. Since then the Legion has, while preserving its original purpose, become involved in a wide variety of events and causes.

From educational contests and physical education for our youth, to medical equipment for hospitals and long term care centres; the Legion has taken an ever increasing role in our communities, locally and nationally.

As time passes the Legion will continue to evolve to serve the needs of our current veterans, while preparing to meet the needs of the future.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

BUILDING BLOCK

One of the building blocks of Branches is community involvement. Ideally a Branch should be creating a positive image that is attractive to potential members. Every effort should be made to involve and support local programs. Branches should take the opportunity to be represented on the local Chamber of Commerce. This allows direct contact with business leaders, and gives the opportunity to directly tell your community what the Legion is doing including future plans. Remember that the Legion is apolitical so refrain from any political involvement or statements.

Branches should take the lead and invite local service clubs to an annual meeting and exchange yearly plans. This will prevent duplication and unnecessary competition in some areas such as fund raising or social events. Service clubs can build off each other while together serving their communities.

Direct contact with schools allows the Legion the opportunity to present youth programs, i.e., Poster, Poem and Essay national contests and to the Track and Field program.

When we support our youth programs the Legion's image increases greatly; cadets, minor sports, scouting and guiding just to name a few programs.

LEGION WEEK

Legion week is an ideal time to invite the local leaders and community to the Branch to show case the building and explain what the Legion is all about. Show and explain the internal sports programs the Branch participates in and whether these are open to the public. In many Branches these programs are open to the public.

BRANCH FUNCTIONS

When having a Branch function such as a Veterans Dinner or Honours and Awards banquet, ensure to invite the local politicians as well as the serving Member of Parliament and Member of Provincial Parliament/Legislature. When preparing for this event you should ensure that Legion protocol is followed.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Branch's Public Relations Chairman should take every opportunity to involve the local press either in picture or print. This puts the Branch front and centre before the public and a constant reminder of the Branches involvement in community events.

It is critical for those involved in public events that their dress and behaviour is beyond reproach. When at a social function where other adults are gathered and alcohol is being served, Legion representative(s) should minimize alcohol consumption before, during and after the event. Remember one bad mistake can tarnish all the members of the Branch and leave a lasting bad public image.

All funds, particularly poppy funds are raised by a Branch have been generated locally and equally so every effort should be made to support local programs. The Branch Public Relations Chairman might consider publicizing those donations in the local media.

ENHANCING THE BRANCH IMAGE

Positive community involvement enhances the Branch image and encourages local residents to become more actively involved in the community and creates interest in the Legion and encourages potential new members. Citizens care about their community and if the Branch leads, many will follow.

