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No better place to honour our war-dead than a national park

Find out what guest columnist Ray Morrison of River Ryan has to say about veterans, war memorials and more. I would like to respond to an article ('Dead Wrong: the blurred vision of 'Mother Canada') which appeared in the Cape Breton Post on Nov. 7.

I have read and re-read this article by two highly educated folks from our local university, Drs. Sean Howard and LeeAnne Broadhead.

I am in mind of a saying that goes like this: "Knowledge comes from education, learning comes from application and wisdom comes from God."

I remain shocked that two such well-educated people who are members of anything called The Peace Quest could seem so indifferent to the contribution of our veteran Canadians, most especially those who have given their lives in the pursuit of peace for those who would follow them.

Canadians, more than many other people and nations, have been blessed with many freedoms and rights, which were earned for us by men and women who went to the edge of hell to earn for us this beautiful, peaceful nation we call home.

Many of those whose lives ended in the cauldron of war would never have understood the dialectics of sociology nor did they seek immortality through grand monuments erected in their memory.

Howard and Broadhead are right in what they say about the fallen: "THEY ARE DEAD." The poet could have said those same words no better than the unschooled masses of this planet.

Howard and Broadhead began and ended their column by citing the words of a politician, Stephen Harper. How appropriate. How very like war. War itself has, is and always will be the ultimate failure of the political process. Politicians are there at the beginning of all wars, speaking of its inevitability. They are there during the battles, speaking of the valour and sacrifice of others, and they reappear at the end of all wars to deflect the blame upon everyone except themselves and when possible apply any credit to their own political coffers. As sociologists, Howard and Broadhead must have learned the difference between rhetoric and truth; don't expect both from the same person.

However, I know of no soldier, airman or naval person who wrote letters back home extolling the virtues and great times he or she was having on the battle fronts. Clearly they were thinking of their family and friends back at home. All those things they regarded as sacred.

In the Nov. 7 column, Howard and Broadhead seemed to take the words of certain people literally, especially when the speaker referred to the dead as speaking to the living. Their mocking tone wasn't necessary. Do you recall the words of poetry by Sir Walter Scott? "Breathes there the man with soul so dead who never to himself hath said, 'This is my own, my native land.' "

Our war-dead were such people and I thank God they were. I have spent my life in a peaceful and peace-loving country. Like both Howard and Broadhead, I love peace but unlike either of them I know the high cost of peace when crackpot despots attempt to rule all of us – warmongers and peace-lovers alike. Do these war-dead speak to me? Yes! Everyday. Do they speak to you? Only if you take the time to listen.

St. Francis once advised that people should preach the 'Good News' all the time and sometimes, when really necessary, even use words to do so. So then our actions are always our real message. The actions of those who died and sacrificed so much for us will always speak volumes to anyone who cares to listen.

We often hear the word 'hero' being bandied about. In my 68 years, I have noticed that sometimes the word 'hero' really had nothing whatsoever to do with the nature of the work or activity being discussed. If there is no personal attempt to leave another person or persons with a better quality of life then the word is demeaned and misused.

Howard and Broadhead spoke of the Mother Canada monument and their opinion that the Cape Breton Highlands National Park would not be a suitable location for such a monument.

I could not agree less. Ecosystems of flora and fauna should be held as national treasures for sure. But the most valued treasure, the only sacred treasure of any nation, is its people. The men, women and children of every nation must be and truly are its most valuable asset. One citizen lost to war is 100 per cent too many. I am sure we agree totally on that point.

As for me, I can think of no better place to honour our war dead than any one of our national parks. I believe that such a monument would be much better taken-care-of than many of the veterans ever were.

For over 100 years now, we Canadians have not paid our dues for the lives lost for our sake. It is time! It is time! Lest we forget.