

## **Mother Canada**

My given name is Samuel, named after my father Samuel, who was named after his uncle Samuel. My father's uncle Samuel lies buried at Lapugnoy in Northern France, in close proximity to Vimy Ridge where he was mortally wounded at the age of 19. We had the privilege to visit his grave and to pay our respects. As a parent I cannot imagine dealing with such a loss so far away from home. Today, almost 100 years after his death, I still feel that sense of loss even though he died serving his country long before I was born.

At the time of our visit to that cemetery in France, I was taken aback at the number of Canadian graves and wished I could take them all back home with us. Back to Canada where they were born. Canada where they grew up and Canada where they were loved. It just didn't seem right that they would forever lay in French soil, out of sight but certainly not out of mind.

Then came the idea of Mother Canada standing in the middle of all the awe that we call Cape Breton, welcoming them back to this place where they had so gallantly left. Welcoming them back to where they were so loved and cherished. Welcoming them home, with her loving and open arms. I thought there could be no better symbol, no better sign of remembrance and respect, and no better signal to future generations of our appreciation for their sacrifice.

Siting such an important remembrance in our national park is brilliant given the importance and gravity of this project. Our national parks protect. They protect our natural world, our vegetation and wildlife and most importantly our sense of wonderment. They provide us a place to think about life without the noise of the everyday. What an absolutely perfect place to remember those who gave everything so that we could live free. What better role could our park provide than protecting the Mother as she welcomes her children home?

I fully understand that there are different views on this project. There is, all too often, a tendency to remain quiet and not express your true feelings. This is not that time. I believe this project is long overdue and that we owe it to those lost to us forever in body to be welcomed home in soul.

Samuel Boutilier Jr.  
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