

Folio:

A SALUTE FOR THE PATRICIAS AN



Princess Patricia's
Canadian Light
Infantry

Founder: At the outbreak of the First World War, Andrew Hamilton Gault – a British-born, Quebec-raised Boer War veteran – headed to Ottawa to offer the government \$100,000 to start a cavalry regiment. The deal struck was for an infantry regiment, which the government raised with Mr. Gault's money. He named it for Princess Patricia of Connaught – daughter of the Governor-General – and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry regiment was born.

Famous soldier: The Battle of Frezenberg was a coming of age for the regiment, its first full test. Agar Adamson led the Patricias in part of the battle and throughout much of the rest of the First World War. But one of his lasting contributions was made off the battlefield: He wrote regularly to his wife, a collection of letters later published. Former governor-general Adrienne Clarkson, the Patricias' colonel-in-chief, paid tribute to him as part of 100th anniversary celebrations, saying the letters are an exemplary account of the war.

Battle honours: PPCLI has battle honours spanning the First World War, Second World War and the Korean War – 39 honours in all, according to the regimental PPCLI Association. They were awarded for landmark Canadian battles – including Ypres, Passchendaele and Vimy in the First World War and Sicily, where the Patricias landed, in the Second World War.

Size: The PPCLI have approximately 1,595 members in three battalions based in Edmonton and Shilo, Man.



The Patricias, with roots that run deep in the Canadian Prairies, pride themselves for being the first Canadian troops to answer the call, whether in the First World War or Afghanistan

JOSH WINGROVE OTTAWA

In the storied history of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, Croatia was yet another milestone – albeit of a different sort.

The front had been largely quiet for decades when the regiment's soldiers were deployed to the former Yugoslavia as part of a United Nations Protection Force. It wasn't easy. In the fall of 1993, the Patricias were dispatched to Medak Pocket, between Croatian forces and Serbian forces.

"We basically took the ground between them to be a buffer," recalls Captain Ryan Cooper, who was 21 at the time. "... We were young troops, curious to what's going on. You knew something could happen, but in the history of the UN and Canada, not a lot has happened in these instances."

This time, the Patricias – an estimated 40 per cent of them reservists – soon found themselves pinned in the fiercest fighting Canadian soldiers had seen since Korea, facing mortar and artillery fire, gunfire and anti-tank mines in the standoff.

"It was just surreal. There were burning buildings. The deeper we got into Medak to where our lines were, it just got gloomier ... You could smell it, so you knew there was something amiss," Capt. Cooper says.

Four Canadians were wounded in Medak Pocket. It was "a relatively small operation," historian David Bercuson writes in *The Patricias: A Century of Service*. "Yet the Patricias' resolute stance sig-



Captain Ryan Cooper: 'It's always a willing bunch of individuals, willing to answer the call.'

nalled that Canada was prepared to meet force with force in this new and difficult environment."

A regiment born out of necessity in the First World War, the Patricias celebrate their 100th anniversary this year. The unofficial motto is "First in the field," something of an ethos for some PPCLI soldiers.

As a Patricia, "you're not just going on someone else's coattails in history," says Sergeant Michael Prokop, 31, who did three tours in Afghanistan. "Pretty much, we're going to go get the job done, and that's what we've been doing."

The Patricia battalions are based in Shilo, Man., and Edmonton – "We're a little more cowboy than the other regiments," Sgt. Prokop says – and grew from unusual roots. The PPCLI regiment was founded with a \$100,000 gift from Andrew Hamilton Gault, formed by government and named for the daughter of Canada's governor-

ing like that kind of experience that will weld a regiment together," Prof. Bercuson said in an interview.

They fought throughout the First World War, during which they suffered 4,076 killed, wounded or missing, Prof. Bercuson writes – four times the initial force. Their Second World War service included the invasion of Sicily, and they were called on once again in Korea. They were first into Afghanistan in 2002, a mission the regiment wrapped up this year.

To mark this year's anniversary, PPCLI held a 23-city relay across Canada that culminated Thursday in Ottawa. It included a scroll with the names of fallen PPCLI soldiers. At one stop, the family of deceased soldier Richard Steven Leary, whom one of the relay runners, Sgt. Prokop, knew, was waiting. "Certain stops mean a lot more to me than other stops, because I know some of the names on that scroll," he says. "We've touched a lot of lives just by serving."

With the Afghan mission wound down, the Patricias enter another period of transition, but with a long history behind them.

"We're very proud. Not just of our traditions, but the fact that, if ever called, we always want to be or always are the first ones there to answer the call," Capt. Cooper says. "And I think that's kind of resonated since World War One. It's always a willing bunch of individuals, willing to answer the call."

Friday at sunset: Governor-General David Johnston leads a national salute of the two infantry regiments' 100th anniversaries and the