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Royal Canadian Military Institute launches ?born in Dufferin? project

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On May 2nd, ?Defining Moments Canada? spearheaded by retired Centre Dufferin District High School teacher, Neil Orford, and historian Blake Heathcote, officially launched its new digital platform commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Spanish Flu pandemic in Canada.

In partnership with the Department of Canadian Heritage, the launch was held at the Royal Canadian Military Institute in Toronto with ?an audience of approximately 50 people,? Neil Orford told the Free Press, ?including government officials, sponsors and partners, students and invited guests.? Those in attendance enjoyed a first look at the site which draws on Canadian Flu stories to engage and educate students about this historical event which took place in 1918.

The aim of the project is to create an ?online, historical mosaic memorializing the heroes of this pandemic.? This will be achieved through stories, photos, and videos collected from across the country between now and 2019.

Present at the launch event, from the government of Canada, was the Honourable Mélanie Joly Minister of Canadian Heritage, along with the Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor Minister of Health who said, ?We've come a long way since then (1918,) thanks in large part to developments in modern medicine like safe and effective vaccines. This anniversary is a chance to reflect on the importance of these live-saving developments and recognize those helped get us to where we are today.?

?Needless, to say, we are very excited to bring this project to the classrooms of Canada, built upon the Digital History Project model born in Dufferin County,? says Neil Orford. ?The DMC platform can change the way Canadians approach their history and tell their stories - the 1918 Pandemic is ?the greatest Canadian story never told?...and the ?citizen-curators' who will work with Defining Moments Canada in schools, museums and communities across Canada will change that.?

As the Project Leader for ?Defining Moments Canada,? Mr. Orford says, ?The Spanish Flu pandemic had a massive impact on the shared history of Canadians. The participants are the driving force behind this commemoration and our hope is to shine a light on the importance of this historical event and uncover stories untold from voices unheard.?

?As a ?capstone' event in the commemoration of the Pandemic centenary,? Mr. Orford reports that ?work has also begun on a National Symposium scheduled for May 2019, at which the ?best' of the commemorative projects from across Canada will be featured and honoured.?