

## **The Royal Canadian Legion**

The Royal Canadian Legion as it exists today is the result of 80 years of evolution and progress. It is the direct result of Canada going to war. Even before the end of World War I veterans were organizing into affinity groups, and more formal associations, to maintain the comradeship they had known in the trenches of Europe. Even more importantly they felt the need to assist and support the many disabled veterans, and the families of those killed. In 1917 the members of 147 veterans associations merged to form the Great War Veterans Association which became one of the major players in the formation of The Legion. By the mid 1920's specialized groups like the Tubercular Veterans Association, Amputees Association and the Royal North West Mounted Police Veterans Association formed again and there were almost twenty organizations that had risen from the need of "Returned Men" to continue to serve.

The Royal Canadian Legion began as the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League. It was an umbrella organization created at the founding convention in Regina, Saskatchewan in early 1926 after a unity conference in Winnipeg in November 1925. About a dozen of the veteran's organizations that had been created by Canadian veterans of World War I voted to join this new national organization. It became the Canadian Legion 1958 and in 1960 Her Majesty; Queen Elizabeth, granted permission to rename the organization The Royal Canadian Legion.

Today The Royal Canadian Legion is Canada's largest membership organization with over 360,000 members in more than 1600 branches across Canada, in the United States of America and in Europe.

The adoption of the new Veterans Charter has resulted in expanding the definition of a Canadian veteran beyond that of the traditional veterans and it is hoped that it will result in more interest in an organization that has not varied from its original mission to serve veterans and their families, to promote Remembrance and to act in the service of Canada and its communities.

## **Alberta NWT Command**

Alberta Command was created in 1926 along with other provincial commands at the founding convention of the Legion. It remained a separate entity, although it had a couple of branches in The Yukon, until 1974 when the branches of the Northwest Territories joined to form Alberta-NWT Command.

Like all other Commands Alberta's grew most rapidly after World War II. At its membership peak there were almost three hundred branches and over 70,000 members in communities from one corner of the province to the other. Between the creation of The Royal Canadian Legion in 1926 and 1940 there were 145 charters issued to branches in the command. Between 1941 and 1950 there were 109 more charters were issued; from 1981 to 1990 only 2 new branches were chartered and since then there have only been sporadic requests to gain a charter.