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Mike Lotoski, a veteran of the Korean War, lays a wreath at the St. Paul cenotaph. The Korean War claimed 516 Canadian lives. JEFF GAYE

Local Legions brave the cold to mark Remembrance Day

Jeff Gaye

St. Paul and Cold Lake Legions held small Remembrance Day ceremonies last Wednesday, and urged the public to mark their own observances at home. At both locations, some people still came out to watch and participate from a distance.

The Bonnyville branch proceeded with a Covid-compliant public ceremony, which drew approximately 200 people.

“It was different this year, and it’s unfortunate that because of Covid we’re not able to have the large gathering,” said Connie Landseidl, president of the Royal Canadian Legion’s St. Paul Branch 100. “But I think people were there in spirit and a few people did show up and it was still an honour to be there.”

About two dozen Legion members, along with RCMP, and Alberta Sheriff personnel, marched from the Legion to the cenotaph for a short ceremony.

“I even saw people as we were coming down the street, they were standing in the windows and waving and recognizing the people that were marching,” Landseidl said. “And it was a good feeling.”

The scene was similar in Cold Lake, where Legion Branch 211 members were accompanied at the cenotaph by invited dignitaries to remember Canada’s war dead on behalf of all citizens.

In Bonnyville, Branch 183 president Jamie Beaupre said the branch was confident they could hold a service and maintain Covid protocols. He was pleased with the people who braved the -15C weather to attend.

“It was the younger crowd that showed up. We had all the firemen, the Junior ‘A’ team, we had our search and rescue units, Cold Lake soldiers,” he said.

“And it shows that this isn’t a tradition that’s going to go anywhere. It’s our job to keep this going.”

Landseidl agreed that whether the gathering was large or small, it was important to formally observe Remembrance Day.

“We as Canadians need to appreciate what those men and women did to ensure our freedom,” she said. “When this pandemic is over and we can return to large gatherings, we hope that the people of St. Paul will come out and support us when the Legion is open again. And we can have next year’s Remembrance Day ceremony at the Rec Centre again.”

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