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## Unmarked veteran graves in Cranbrook to get headstones

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OCTOBER 13, 2010

BY BONNIE BRYAN  
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The Cranbrook Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion is hoping the weather stays warm for just a little bit longer so the ground doesn't freeze. They are expecting a shipment of 11 headstones next week to mark the graves in the Veterans Cemetery that do not have any markers. They are expecting a further shipment of another 11 headstones hopefully soon after and would like to put them in the ground as soon as possible.



Courtesy Larry Miller.

A year ago Legion members began cleaning and upgrading the Veterans Cemetery, which included a new sign and a new flagpole being put up. In the spring volunteers did more work at the cemetery, lifting a number of headstones that had sunk in the ground and straightening them.

The crew of Legion volunteers that lifted and straightened sunken headstones in Cranbrook's Veterans Cemetery in the spring. From left: Larry Miller, Kevin Smith, Henry Ford, Bill Crossen and Bob Muir.

Larry Miller, Legion member, had a copy of the cemetery plot plan and he noticed some markers were missing.

"I went through the plot plan and here were these with no headstones but their names were on the plot plan so I wondered why there was no headstones," he said.

In the spring at Zone Convention in Fernie Miller asked if there was funding available to get headstones for the graves. Miller was told about the Last Post Fund, supported through Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), which makes funds available every year just for that purpose.

He came up with a list of 30 names from the plot plan and sent the names away to see if they qualified.

"Qualifications are that you must have served in the Canadian or Allied Forces and after serving be qualified to receive VAC benefits," Miller said.

Of the 30 names on the list Miller submitted for approval, 22 qualified to receive a headstone. Three of those who didn't qualify were the spouses of people who served and the others likely served with Allied Forces and came to Canada afterwards and therefore were not eligible to receive VAC benefits.

A special rush was put on the order in an effort to have them installed this year before the ground freezes. Miller spoke to Mortimer's Monumental Works Ltd. in Victoria, which is producing the headstones, on Tuesday and they were manufacturing the first order of 11 markers that afternoon. A shortage of granite means the other 11 markers will be made as soon as the material is available. Miller expects the headstones, which he estimates cost about \$500 each, will get to Cranbrook next week.

### Related Links:

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- Cranbrook poppy campaign launches
- Veterans Garden unveiled downtown
- Hats off to volunteers
- Cranbrook cemetery vandalised
- City reminds residents of adornment bylaw at cemetery
- Legion seeking any and all who served for commemorative publication
- Legion Zone Convention
- Cranbrook photographer recognized with ultimate Legion award
- Local Legion charges into the new year
- Cranbrook remembers
- Ceremony set for new headstones at Cranbrook's Veterans Cemetery

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Volunteers from the Legion will then install the headstones as long as the ground is still soft enough.

Miller said family members of those whose graves have been unmarked all this time (see information box) can contact the Legion (250-426-4512) and he would be glad to show them where their family member is buried and perhaps the family of those who didn't qualify for a headstone would like to purchase one.

A ceremony for the newly marked graves is planned once all the headstones are in place. Miller is hoping it can be held this year before Remembrance Day, but if not, it will be held in the spring.

In other Legion news, commemorative First World War pins are available at the Cranbrook Legion (in the Heritage Inn) for just \$3.50. Miller said this is a one time offer and they will not be available after this batch is sold out.

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