

Vic High's Banner Highlighted at Armoury Centenary



Victoria High School's Great War Banner was prominent during the celebrations of the Bay Street Armoury's 100th anniversary.

The well-attended event was held Sunday November 22, about 18 days before actual centennial of the 1915 event when Parfitt Bros. Construction handed the Canadian Army the keys to the newly built Armoury.

Lt.-Gov. Judith Guichon took the royal salute and inspected an honour guard before embarking on a 45-minute tour of the facilities. Among the other guests were mayors Lisa Helps of Victoria and Richard Atwell of Saanich.

Three grandsons of one of the original Parfitt brothers spoke during the formal ceremonies which had the Vic High banner as the main backdrop to the stage.

Vic High Alumni Association Chair Barry Gough, noted Canadian military historian and author of *From Classroom to Battlefield: Victoria High School and the First World War*, spoke on the theme of "Community Ties."

Gough reminded the audience that the construction of Vic High's current Grant Street building was completed only about a year and a half before the Bay Street Armoury was finished. He said many Victoria High School students trained at the Armoury before heading off to fight in the Great War.

Gough pointed to the seven white maple leaves at the top of the banner, which he has described as a "great Canadian historical treasure," and said they represented the seven Vic High students who were nursing sisters during the war. The next three rows of three maple leaves each, the top and bottom rows in blue and the middle trio in red, represented the nine Vic High staff members who enlisted in the Canadian Army, three of whom (represented by the red maple leaves) died on the battlefields.

The remaining 450 symbols were for the students of Vic High who served during the war, the 53 in red representing those who died as a result of the war.

The total of 466, he said, did not count the additional 35 Vic High students who volunteered for the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

