

HISTORY OF THE MILITARY MUSEUMS

The Museum of the Regiments

In the mid-1980s, a group of civic-minded Calgarians formed the Calgary Military Museums Society (CMMS) to promote an interest in military history in Western Canada. When Sir Sam Steele Junior High School was declared surplus by the Department of National Defence (DND), CMMS steered a fundraising campaign to raise \$6.5 million to convert the school into the Museum of the Regiments (MOR). With the support of DND, they brought Calgary's four regimental museums under one roof, thereby enhancing the esprit de corps of serving members of the Canadian Forces and connecting the Canadian public, particularly youth, to Canada's military heritage.

In 1990, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II officially opened the MOR to the public as the upgraded home to four regimental museums: Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), the King's Own Calgary Regiment, and the Calgary Highlanders. Later, a fifth museum was added, the Alberta Gallery (later renamed the Army Museum of Alberta), which tells the proud story of the province's army heritage. In the following decade, when Canadian Forces Base Calgary moved to Edmonton, the MOR came to be viewed by Calgarians as the public face of the Canadian Forces in Calgary.

The Military Museums

In the early 2000s, CMMS joined forces with the Naval Museum of Alberta, Canadian Air Force veterans, three levels of government, corporations, charitable foundations, and the Canadian public to raise \$26 million to expand the scope and size of the MOR. CMMS aimed to convert the MOR into Western Canada's only tri-service museum and military history education centre. Construction began in 2006 and the MOR changed its name to The Military Museums (TMM).

While DND provided for the upkeep of the facility, CMMS was responsible for TMM's education, volunteer, special events, communications, and marketing programs. Museum attendance skyrocketed by 80% within two years. On 6 June 2009, the 65th anniversary of D-Day, Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex officially opened the new and expanded TMM, which includes the Naval Museum of Alberta, the Air Force Museum of Alberta, the University of Calgary Military Museums Library & Archives, the Founders' Gallery, the Education Centre, and the Discovery Centre. Remaining funds raised by CMMS were used to renovate the existing structure, including gallery services.

On 31 December 2009, CMMS ended a 22 year relationship with The Military Museums – Museum of the Regiments, as DND assumed the TMM responsibilities to provide education, volunteer, special events, marketing, and communications programs. CMMS thanks the Community for its longstanding support for the evolving CMMS vision, whose result is a national treasure – the Military Museums. CMMS is proud to have played a vital part in conceptualizing and bringing to life what exists today. CMMS looks forward to lending a supporting hand to the community in new ways over the coming years.