

# Who are Canada's Heroes?

## Terry Fox admired for his courage

National Post

Wednesday, June 30, 1999

1999 Dominion Institute Survey

### Terry Fox

Terry Fox galvanized the nation with the sheer will and boundless determination he showed during his cross-country Marathon of Hope in 1980.

Mr. Fox, from Port Coquitlam, BC, had been diagnosed with bone cancer in 1977 at the age of 18, and his right leg was amputated six inches above the knee. He was so moved by the suffering he witnessed while in hospital, he vowed to run across Canada to raise money for cancer research.

On April 12, 1980, after dipping his artificial foot in the Atlantic Ocean in St. John's, Mr. Fox began his cross-country run. People lined the road to see him. Donations poured in. For 143 consecutive days, he ran 42 kilometres a day – the distance of a marathon.

On Sept. 1, just east of Thunder Bay, Ont., he was forced to stop. His cancer had returned. He had run 5,565 km through six provinces and was two-thirds of the way home. But his goal of raising \$1 for every Canadian was met on Feb. 1, 1981, when the total raised reached \$24 million.

In June, 1981, Terry Fox died, one month before his 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday. The Marathon of Hope, now called the Terry Fox Run, has become an annual event and is the largest single day fundraiser for cancer research in the world. In all, more than \$250 million has been raised in the name of Terry Fox.

### Frederick Banting

Frederick Banting, discoverer of insulin and Nobel Prize winner, decided on his life's work before he was 10 years old. After watching a doctor save an accident victim, he later recalled: "The greatest service to man is in the medical profession."

Dr. Banting was born in Alliston, Ont., and practiced medicine in London, Ont. After reading an article on diabetes in the fall of 1920, he became interested in the disease. He began working on it the next spring in the offices of J.R.R. Macleod, a professor at the University of Toronto. Within two years, assisted by Charles Best, a graduate student, he had isolated insulin, which is produced by the pancreas, and successfully treated a patient. Dr. Banting and Prof. Macleod were awarded the Nobel Prize in medicine in 1923, with Dr. Banting splitting his share of the money with Charles Best. Dr. Banting died in 1941, in a plane crash while flying to England to take a wartime post. He was 49.

### Lester B. Pearson

Lester B. Pearson was at home on the world stage, winning the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in resolving the Suez Crisis of 1956.

Mr. Pearson, born in 1897 in rural Ontario, went on to become Canada's 14<sup>th</sup> prime minister. He began his diplomatic career in 1928, rising through the ranks to become Canada's ambassador to the U.S. in 1945. Elected as a Liberal MP in 1948, he served as minister of external affairs until 1957 and became party leader the following year. He led the Liberals to minority governments in 1963 and 1965, and it was during his tenure that many of the fundamental components of the modern Canadian states were laid: the Canada Pension Plan (1965), the maple leaf flag (1965), and universal medicare (1966).

The legacy of Lester B. Pearson, who died in 1972, lives on in the idea of international peacekeeping forces that came out of the Suez Crisis. On receiving the Nobel Prize in 1957, "Mike" Pearson said, characteristically, "Gee thanks."

### Sir John A. Macdonald

Like the politics of his time, Sir John A. Macdonald, the country's first prime minister, was a complicated man, a fully foibled human being who never met a glass of whisky he didn't like, and a reluctant Father of Confederation.

A Scottish immigrant who became, at age 19, a lawyer in Kingston, Ont., Mr. Macdonald got his first taste of politics as a city alderman in 1843. He became a Conservative representative for Kingston in the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, and would go on to serve as joint premier. Mr. Macdonald was a late convert to the idea of Confederation, but once convinced, became one of its greatest exponents, and his vision and constitutional expertise gave him a leading role in the drafting of the British North America Act.

Mr. Macdonald led the national Conservative party for 24 years (1867-91), serving as prime minister for all but five of those years. During his first term, three provinces – Manitoba (1870), British Columbia (1871) and Prince Edward Island (1873) – joined Canada. The Canadian Pacific Railway, built between 1871 and 1885, was perhaps his greatest achievement, though it also led to scandal that unseated his government in 1874. Sir John A. Macdonald died three months after winning the 1891 election.

## **Louis Riel**

Louis Riel, labeled a traitor by some and a hero/Father of Confederation by others, still stirs passions 114 years after he was hanged for rebellion.

The Métis leader was born in the Red River settlement in 1844. His studies in Montreal to become a priest and then a lawyer failed, and by 1868, he was back in the Red River area. Unable to gain redress from the Canadian government for land claim grievances, the Métis stormed Fort Garry in 1869 and formed a provisional government headed by the young firebrand. He negotiated with Ottawa and the talks led to the Manitoba Act, which established the province of Manitoba (187), and included French language rights guarantees.

Mr. Riel's actions, coupled with his role in the "execution" of an English settler, produced a backlash in Ontario. Canadian troops came to resume command of Fort Garry, and Mr. Riel fled. To many in Manitoba, he was a hero. They elected him to the House of Commons three times, but Riel was unable to take his seat because a price had been put on his head.

In 1875, he was exiled from Canada for five years. Unbeknownst to authorities, two of those years were spent in asylums in Quebec during which time Mr. Riel became convinced he had a religious mission to lead the Métis. He took to calling himself, "the prophet of the New World." Released in 1878, he moved to Montana, only to return to fight again in the Métis rebellion of 1885. The Métis were defeated by the Canadian army at Batoche that May. Mr. Riel surrendered, was tried and found guilty of treason, and was hanged on Nov. 16, 1885.

## **Sir Isaac Brock**

Sir Isaac Brock, a fallen hero of the War of 1812, was a military man through and through.

Born on Channel Island of Guernsey in 1769, he was a soldier for Britain at age 15, rising to take command of the 49<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

In 1802, he and his men were assigned to Canada. He worked tirelessly to improve the colony's inadequate defenses, but when war with the U.S. erupted in 1812, he still had only 1,200 regulars in Upper Canada.

But on July 12, after the American army took the town of Sandwich (Windsor) before retreating to Detroit, General Brock followed them back across the border. Acting contrary to the orders of the Governor of Canada, Gen. Brock laid siege to Fort Detroit. Though his force was outnumbered nearly two to one, he demanded the fort's surrender, and after a day of shelling, it did. From there, Brock traveled to Niagara, where, on Oct. 13, a U.S. force crossed at Queenston, and overwhelmed a battery on a nearby hill. After two counter-offensives, Gen. Brock's forces retook the hill, though he was killed in battle.

## **T.C. "Tommy" Douglas**

It was said in Saskatchewan of T.C. "Tommy" Douglas that he "doesn't have to kiss babies. Babies kiss him."

Mr. Douglas led the first socialist government in North America – the Canadian Commonwealth Federation (CCF) government, which ruled Saskatchewan and pioneered universal health insurance in Canada. It was the forerunner of today's New Democratic Party.

He was first elected as an MP for the CCF in 1935, in the midst of the Great Depression which blighted the prairies and spawned many radical political movements. In 1944, Mr. Douglas resigned his federal seat to head the Saskatchewan CCF, leading it to a massive victory in the provincial election that year.

In the first CCF budget, 70% of all spending was on health, welfare and education, including free medical, hospital and dental services for pensioners. Treatment of cancer, tuberculosis, mental illness and venereal disease was made free for all.

In 1961, after 17 years as premier, he returned to federal politics, and served as national NDP leader for the next decade. He died in 1986.

## **Laura Secord**

Laura Secord, better known to generations of Canadians as the lady on the eponymous chocolates, took a walk in the woods in June, 1813, and came back a heroine. Kind of.

Ms. Secord moved north to Canada with her family, who were Loyalists, after the War of Independence. In the War of 1812, her town was captured by the Americans, and Ms. Secord overheard American officers, drunk and boisterous, boasting of how they would surprise and crush the British at Beaver Dams, opening the Niagara Peninsula to the Americans. The British commander had to be warned.

Ms. Secord set out before dawn. Main roads had to be avoided because of American patrols; the punishment for spies was death by firing squad. After struggling through the dreaded Black Swamp, she was surrounded by a band of Iroquois, who could not understand her, but provided an escort to the British camp. She delivered her message, then collapsed, exhausted from the ordeal. Two days later, the American force was ambushed and defeated. Laura Secord, who would not receive any formal recognition for her feat until 1860, died in 1868.

## **William "Billy" Bishop**

By the time, William "Billy" Bishop was 23, he had become Canada's air ace of the First World War with 72 German "kills" to his credit.

Mr. Bishop was originally commissioned in to a cavalry regiment, but on arriving in England, transferred to the Royal Flying Corps. He proved to be a mediocre pilot, but possessed a superior grasp of tactics and was an accurate shot.

In early 1917, Mr. Bishop was sent to Arras in France. The life expectancy for a rookie pilot was 11 days. Mr. Bishop beat the odds. On March 25, he made his first kill during his first dogfight. Scarcely a month later, he had brought down 17 aircraft and was the squadron's leading ace.

Ultimately, the Canadian government, worried about the impact on public opinion if Mr. Bishop were killed, exerted pressure to have him removed from the front. After receiving orders to return to England, he flew one last mission. In 15 furious minutes, he shot down five enemy aircraft. Billy Bishop died in 1956.

### **Nellie McClung**

Nellie McClung, internationally celebrated feminist, political activist and author of 16 books, knew how to win attention for her causes: In 1912, she and the Manitoba Political Equality League, which she had helped found, held a mock parliament to debate whether men should have the right to vote. Following the presentation of a male delegation, Ms. McClung, in the role of premier, praised the delegation for its gentlemanly appearance and demeanor before launching into a scathing satiric attack that was well received by the audience. In 1916, Manitoba became the first province to give women the vote.

Ms. McClung was first a teacher, and then a political activist, profoundly influenced by here mother-in-law, Mrs. J.W. McClung, a temperance worker and suffragette. She was active in the Edmonton Equal Franchise League and was elected to the Alberta legislature in 1921.

In the late 1920's, she and four other women – known as “The Famous Five” – fought to have women recognized as “person” under the law. They took their case all the way to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, and in 1929, the council ruled in their favour.

Nellie McClung, who died in 1951, was once moved to say: “The world has suffered long enough from too much masculinity and enough humanity.”