

Township of
Langley



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Arbour Day Enhanced by Memorial Maple Re-plantings

A tradition that celebrates trees and honours community legacies will have special significance this year, when Langley soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice during the First World War are commemorated again, a century later.

The Township of Langley's 15th Annual Community Arbour Day Celebration will be held on Sunday, April 23, from 1:00 to 3:00pm, at Hudson Bay Park, 23022 – 88 Avenue, at the corner of Glover Road and 88 Avenue in Fort Langley.

Prior to the event, the public is invited to a First World War Memorial Tree Dedication that will take place just up the road at noon, at the site of the A.W. Wilson Memorial Tree, at 96 Avenue and Glover Road.

Close to 400 young men and boys from Langley enlisted for service in the Great War of 1914 to 1918, at a time when the Township's population was only 3,500. The Wilson Memorial Tree was one of many bigleaf maples planted at local intersections after a post-war initiative was undertaken in 1919 to honour the 36 Langley soldiers who lost their lives in the line of duty. Planted in 1923, it was named after A.W. Wilson, who was killed at Vimy Ridge in France in 1917.

Earlier this year, the Wilson Memorial Tree - the last of the three bigleaf memorial maples remaining in Fort Langley - succumbed to disease and had to be reduced in size. Its reduction followed those of the other memorial trees in recent years, located at the corners of 96 Avenue and Wright and Trattle Streets, which were originally planted in honour of Langley soldiers Alfred Trattle and Jesse Wright.

Now, new life will take root at these original sites, to continue to honour the fallen.

As part of the First World War Memorial Tree Dedication, young sugar maple saplings will be planted at all three locations with a single ceremony held at 96 Avenue and Glover Road.

“The sacrifices made during the First World War must always be remembered,” said Township of Langley Mayor Jack Froese. “The timing of the memorial tree re-plantings is significant, as April marks the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. This was such an important part of our history, and a battle that has come to signify both Canada’s achievement, as well as its considerable sacrifice in the First World War.”

“Vimy Ridge claimed the lives of many Canadian soldiers, including many of Langley’s own,” Froese said. “Their legacy will live on through these renewed sites and remind us of the extraordinary effort Langley soldiers made for our community and country for generations to come.”

Speakers at the Tree Dedication ceremony will include Langley historian Warren Sommer, and Langley Heritage Society President Fred Pepin. Sommer has guest curated a First World War exhibition for the Langley Centennial Museum, entitled *Sacrifice and Sorrow*, in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The exhibition, which traces Langley’s men and women as they volunteered for service, made their way overseas, underwent training, and faced the enemy in the trenches of the Western Front, opened April 9 and runs until July 16.

Memorial tree plantings honouring the lives of all those lost in the Great War will also be featured during the Community Arbour Day festivities in the afternoon, when several saplings grown from the original commemorative maples are presented at Hudson Bay Park. Seedlings from the century-old bigleaf maples were harvested by Township staff as an experiment, and grew into young saplings. They are a bit misshapen and better suited for a park grove than as feature street trees, but the next generation of these original memorial maples will live on in a group planting that will eventually be visible from Glover Road.

Arbour Day, which highlights the importance of trees and the need to care for the environment, is being held in celebration of Earth Day. The free, family-oriented event will feature interactive displays and activities, rope climbing, and face painting. Participants can plant a small shrub or tree in the park and take home a tree and a free bag of compost for use in their own yards.

Township of Langley Council will also plant trees in honour of residents who have recently passed away, but left lasting legacies in the community. This year, Brenda Alberts, Nadia Cooper, and Donna Passmore will be recognized.

Visit tol.ca/arbourday.

For more information, contact Heritage Planner Elaine Horricks at 604.533.6176 or ehorricks@tol.ca, or Eric Fong, Superintendent of Trees, Trails, Horticulture and Natural Areas, at 604.533.6090 x3489 or efong@tol.ca.