

## COMMEMORATION OF VETERANS LOST TO SUICIDE

- Veterans Affairs Canada commemorates and pays tribute to ALL those who served.
- Through its Canada Remembers Program, Veterans Affairs Canada commemorates all those who served, including those who are no longer with us.
- All men and women in uniform are recognized through honours and awards, events, memorials, learning resources, community funding for commemorative initiatives and, where applicable, financial assistance for a dignified funeral and burial.

## **BACKGROUND – Commemoration of Veterans Lost to Suicide**

The commemoration of all those who served needs to be carried out with the greatest sensitivity and respect. Any loss of a Canadian Armed Forces member or Veteran is a tragedy, and the Canada Remembers Program at Veterans Affairs Canada commemorates ALL those who served, regardless of the nature of their death. The families of these men and women in uniform have suffered a tragic loss, and we owe them the honour of recognizing their personal sacrifice. If the death of a Veteran (i.e. death by suicide or any other reason) is attributable to his or her military service, his or her family receives a Memorial Cross as well as funeral and burial and grave marking assistance. If the Veteran's death is within two years of his or her release, his or her name is added to the In the Service of Canada Book of Remembrance.

### **The Memorial Cross**

The Memorial Cross (often referred to as the Silver Cross) was created in 1919 and was awarded to mothers and widows (next of kin) of Canadian soldiers who died in service.

The Memorial Cross and Ribbon are presented to recipients identified by the member whose death is directly attributed to military service or the result of a duty-related injury or illness. The Memorial Cross is granted to up to three recipients while the Memorial Ribbon is granted to up to five recipients who were not in receipt of a Memorial Cross.

Canadian Armed Forces members are asked to fill out a Memorial Cross Recipients form as part of their basic administration. This is done upon enrolment and members are asked to review the form on a regular basis throughout their careers.

When the death is clearly attributable to service, for instance in the case of direct hostile action, or accidents while on training, the Memorial Crosses and Ribbons will be issued immediately. When the death is not clearly and undeniably attributable to service, for instance in cases of natural deaths while at work, fatal illnesses, or suicides, the Crosses and Ribbons will not be issued until Veterans Affairs Canada has made a determination regarding the cause of death.

The Veterans Affairs Canada determination is made under specific legislation to decide upon benefits, and this same decision is used to determine commemoration (through entry in the Book of Remembrance and the granting of honours such as the Memorial Cross). Because of their different nature, purpose and processes, it does happen that the Canadian Armed Forces and the Veterans Affairs determination reach different conclusions. While this is rare, Veterans Affairs makes the final decision.

The administration of the Memorial Cross is shared between Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence. Since 2008, National Defence's Directorate of Honours and Recognition has been responsible for the administration of the Memorial Cross for deaths while in service after October 2001, while Veterans Affairs Canada now manages the Crosses for those who pass away after their release as well as for pre-2001 deaths.